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Empowering Employee Growth Through Job Crafting And Work Meaningfulness With Psychological Safety Moderation

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Abstract

Employee growth has become an increasingly important concern for manufacturing micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) that rely heavily on workforce adaptability and continuous capability development to maintain competitiveness. This study investigates the role of job crafting in fostering employee growth by examining the mediating effect of work meaningfulness and the moderating role of psychological safety. Drawing upon Thriving at Work Theory, the study proposes that proactive work redesign enhances developmental outcomes directly and indirectly through employees' perceptions of meaningful work, while a psychologically safe environment strengthens these relationships. Data were collected through a cross-sectional survey of 286 employees working in manufacturing MSMEs and analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling. The findings indicate that job crafting positively influences employee growth and significantly enhances employees' perceptions of work meaningfulness. Work meaningfulness subsequently promotes employee growth and partially transmits the positive effect of job crafting on developmental outcomes. The results further reveal that psychological safety strengthens the relationship between job crafting and employee growth by creating a supportive context for experimentation, learning, and proactive behavior. These findings highlight the importance of integrating employee initiative, meaningful work experiences, and supportive workplace conditions to encourage sustainable workforce development. The study offers insights into how employee growth can be cultivated within resource-constrained organizational environments through both behavioral and contextual mechanisms.

Keywords: Job Crafting; Psychological Safety; Work Meaningfulness; Employee Growth

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INTRODUCTION

Employee growth has become an increasingly important issue within manufacturing MSMEs because the sustainability of small businesses depends heavily on the capability of employees to adapt, learn, and contribute beyond routine operational responsibilities. Unlike large corporations that often possess structured development programs, MSMEs frequently rely on informal learning processes and employee initiative to strengthen workforce capabilities. This condition places employee growth at the center of organizational resilience because business continuity is often influenced by the competence and flexibility of a limited number of workers. Recent human resource studies have emphasized that employee growth reflects not only career progression but also the continuous expansion of skills, knowledge, and adaptive capacity within the workplace (Shanock et al., 2022). In manufacturing MSMEs, employees commonly face changing production demands, technological adjustments, and resource constraints that require ongoing development. However, many small businesses struggle to create developmental environments due to financial limitations and operational pressures. As a result, understanding the factors that encourage employee growth has become increasingly relevant for organizations seeking long-term competitiveness. Contemporary human resource research therefore places greater emphasis on identifying behavioral and psychological mechanisms that stimulate employee development in resource-constrained organizational settings.

The challenges surrounding employee growth have become more visible as manufacturing MSMEs undergo significant operational transformation. Digital production systems, market uncertainty, and intensified competition require employees to develop broader competencies and greater adaptability than in previous decades. International reports consistently show that SMEs account for more than 90 percent of businesses worldwide and generate a substantial proportion of global employment, making workforce development a strategic concern for economic sustainability. Nevertheless, many MSMEs continue to experience skill shortages and difficulties maintaining employee capability development despite technological progress. According to recent evidence, employees in smaller firms often receive fewer formal development opportunities than workers in larger organizations, increasing dependence on self-initiated learning and proactive work behavior (Van Wingerden & Poell, 2019). Manufacturing employees are also expected to perform multiple functions due to limited workforce capacity, which creates both developmental opportunities and work-related pressures. Furthermore, younger employees increasingly seek meaningful developmental experiences rather than

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merely stable employment. These workplace realities have encouraged scholars to investigate how employees actively shape their work experiences to facilitate personal and professional growth.

Employee growth remains critical because it directly affects organizational adaptability, productivity, and long-term performance. Manufacturing MSMEs frequently operate in volatile markets where competitive advantage depends on the ability of employees to acquire new competencies and respond effectively to changing customer expectations. Employees who continuously develop their capabilities are more likely to contribute innovative ideas, solve operational problems, and support organizational flexibility. Conversely, limited growth opportunities often generate disengagement, reduced commitment, and higher turnover intentions among employees (Kim & Beehr, 2021). Such conditions can be particularly damaging for MSMEs because workforce replacement and retraining frequently impose substantial financial burdens on small firms. Research has further indicated that developmental stagnation reduces employees' willingness to invest additional effort and limits their capacity to contribute strategically to organizational goals (Kooij et al., 2020). In manufacturing environments where operational efficiency and continuous improvement are essential, insufficient employee growth may weaken organizational competitiveness. Consequently, identifying workplace mechanisms that promote sustainable employee development represents both a managerial necessity and a scholarly concern.

One behavioral mechanism that has attracted considerable attention in recent organizational research is job crafting. Job crafting refers to employees' proactive efforts to redefine, modify, or reshape aspects of their work in ways that better align with personal strengths, interests, and developmental needs. This concept is particularly relevant in manufacturing MSMEs because employees often perform overlapping responsibilities and experience greater flexibility in daily work arrangements. Rather than relying solely on managerial directives, workers frequently adjust tasks, relationships, and work processes to improve effectiveness and personal fulfillment. Longitudinal evidence suggests that job crafting consistently generates positive outcomes related to learning, adaptability, engagement, and performance (Silapurem et al., 2024). Research conducted in SME contexts further demonstrates that job crafting helps employees manage workplace demands while enhancing positive work experiences and well-being (Badri et al., 2025). Employees who actively redesign aspects of their work often gain broader experiences and stronger developmental opportunities. Therefore, job crafting

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may serve as a crucial driver of employee growth within manufacturing MSMEs where formal development systems remain relatively limited.

Although job crafting may stimulate developmental outcomes, its influence on employee growth is unlikely to operate solely through direct behavioral pathways. Employees frequently experience positive developmental consequences when proactive work behaviors increase the perceived significance and purpose of their work. Work meaningfulness represents a psychological state in which individuals perceive their work as valuable, purposeful, and personally significant. Recent studies have shown that employees who perceive their work as meaningful demonstrate stronger motivation, persistence, and commitment toward self-development activities (Allan et al., 2021). Haffer et al. (2021) found that meaningful work functions as an important explanatory mechanism linking job crafting with positive workplace outcomes. Similarly, Holúbek et al. (2026) reported that the effects of job crafting become substantially stronger when work meaningfulness is incorporated into the relationship between proactive behavior and employee outcomes. Employees who recognize personal significance in their work are more likely to pursue learning opportunities and invest effort in capability development. Therefore, work meaningfulness provides a compelling psychological explanation for how job crafting may ultimately contribute to employee growth.

The effectiveness of job crafting and meaningful work may also depend on contextual conditions within the workplace. Psychological safety has emerged as a critical organizational factor because it reflects employees' perceptions that they can express ideas, take interpersonal risks, and engage in experimentation without fear of punishment or embarrassment. In manufacturing MSMEs, psychological safety is particularly important because organizational structures tend to be informal and interactions between employees and business owners occur more directly. Employees are generally more willing to propose improvements, seek feedback, and engage in developmental behavior when they feel psychologically secure. According to Kim and Koo (2022), psychological safety encourages job crafting and thriving because employees become more confident in exploring new approaches to work. Related evidence also suggests that psychologically safe environments strengthen proactive workplace behavior and learning-oriented outcomes (Frazier et al., 2017). When employees perceive supportive interpersonal climates, they may derive greater developmental benefits from meaningful work experiences. Consequently, psychological safety may strengthen the positive influence of job crafting and work meaningfulness on employee growth.

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Despite growing scholarly interest in proactive work behavior, important limitations remain within existing research. A notable study by Badri et al. (2025) examined the role of job crafting in enhancing employee well-being among SME employees and demonstrated the importance of proactive work behavior in resource-constrained environments. However, the study primarily focused on well-being outcomes rather than employee growth as a developmental construct. Moreover, previous research frequently emphasizes engagement, performance, satisfaction, or burnout while giving less attention to growth-related outcomes that reflect long-term employee development. Studies investigating meaningful work as a mediating mechanism have also largely been conducted within project organizations, service industries, or professional occupations rather than manufacturing MSMEs (Haffer et al., 2021). Furthermore, psychological safety is commonly examined as an antecedent variable rather than as a boundary condition that influences the strength of developmental processes. These limitations indicate that current knowledge remains fragmented regarding how proactive work behavior translates into employee growth within manufacturing-based MSMEs. A more integrated framework is therefore needed to explain both the mechanisms and contextual conditions underlying employee development.

This study is grounded in Thriving at Work Theory proposed by Gretchen M. Spreitzer and colleagues, which provides a suitable theoretical lens for understanding developmental experiences in organizational settings. The theory conceptualizes thriving as a psychological state characterized by simultaneous experiences of learning and vitality. Employee growth closely reflects the learning dimension of thriving because developmental progress occurs when employees continuously expand their competencies and capabilities. Within this framework, job crafting represents an agentic behavior through which employees actively create conditions that facilitate growth and learning. Work meaningfulness functions as a psychological mechanism that transforms proactive workplace behavior into developmental energy and sustained motivation. Meanwhile, psychological safety creates an interpersonal environment that supports experimentation, learning, and personal development. Recent thriving research continues to demonstrate the importance of proactive behavior and supportive workplace conditions in fostering employee development and adaptability (Zahoor, 2025). Consequently, Thriving at Work Theory offers a coherent explanation for the interconnected relationships among job crafting, work meaningfulness, psychological safety, and employee growth.

Further investigation is necessary because manufacturing MSMEs increasingly depend on employee adaptability and developmental capacity to remain competitive in

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uncertain business environments. While previous studies have examined isolated relationships among proactive behavior, meaningful work, and workplace outcomes, evidence explaining how these variables collectively contribute to employee growth remains limited. The manufacturing MSME context offers a particularly valuable setting because employee development often emerges through informal workplace experiences rather than structured organizational programs. Examining work meaningfulness as a mediating mechanism can deepen understanding of the psychological processes that convert proactive behavior into developmental outcomes. At the same time, incorporating psychological safety as a moderating factor enables a more comprehensive explanation of the contextual conditions that strengthen employee growth. From a practical perspective, the findings may assist MSME owners in designing work environments that encourage initiative, meaningful experiences, and workforce development despite resource limitations. Such insights are increasingly important as small businesses face mounting pressure to sustain competitiveness through human capital development. Therefore, this study investigates the effect of job crafting on employee growth through work meaningfulness while examining the moderating role of psychological safety among employees working in manufacturing MSMEs.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Thriving at Work Theory

Thriving at Work Theory was introduced by Spreitzer et al. (2005) to explain how employees experience a psychological state characterized by the simultaneous presence of learning and vitality in the workplace. The theory assumes that employees are not passive recipients of organizational conditions but active agents who shape their work experiences through intentional behaviors. Thriving emerges when individuals continuously acquire new knowledge while maintaining positive psychological energy that supports sustained performance and development. Unlike traditional approaches that focus solely on motivation or performance outcomes, Thriving at Work Theory emphasizes the dynamic process through which employees grow and adapt within organizational contexts. The theory further argues that both contextual resources and individual agency contribute to developmental outcomes. Consequently, thriving represents a comprehensive framework for understanding employee growth because it captures both behavioral and psychological dimensions of development (Paterson et al., 2014).

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The theoretical development of Thriving at Work Theory has expanded considerably over the past decade as scholars increasingly recognize the importance of proactive employee behavior in dynamic workplaces. Recent studies have demonstrated that thriving is associated with adaptive performance, creativity, resilience, career development, and innovative behavior across various organizational settings (Abid et al., 2021). Researchers have also integrated thriving with contemporary concepts such as job crafting, meaningful work, psychological safety, and employee well-being to explain how developmental processes occur in modern organizations. According to Kleine et al. (2019), thriving functions as a critical mechanism through which employees transform workplace resources into positive individual and organizational outcomes. Furthermore, recent evidence suggests that thriving is particularly relevant in environments characterized by uncertainty, complexity, and continuous change. These developments have strengthened the theory's relevance in contemporary human resource management research. Consequently, Thriving at Work Theory has evolved from a psychological growth framework into a broader explanation of sustainable employee development.

Thriving at Work Theory provides the most appropriate foundation for the present study because it directly addresses the processes underlying employee growth. Within this theoretical framework, job crafting represents an agentic behavior through which employees actively shape work experiences to facilitate learning and development. Work meaningfulness serves as an important psychological mechanism that transforms proactive workplace behavior into developmental energy and sustained motivation. Psychological safety creates a supportive interpersonal environment that encourages experimentation, risk-taking, and continuous learning without fear of negative consequences. Employee growth reflects the developmental outcome predicted by the theory because growth occurs when employees continuously expand their capabilities while maintaining engagement with their work. The theory therefore explains not only why proactive behaviors contribute to growth but also how psychological and contextual factors strengthen these relationships. As a result, Thriving at Work Theory offers a coherent explanation for the interconnected relationships among job crafting, work meaningfulness, psychological safety, and employee growth.

Job Crafting

Job crafting refers to employees' proactive efforts to modify aspects of their work in order to achieve better alignment with personal strengths, interests, and developmental goals (Tims et al., 2022). The construct generally includes increasing structural

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resources, increasing social resources, seeking challenging demands, and reducing hindering demands. Through these activities, employees actively shape their work environment rather than merely adapting to predefined job characteristics. Job crafting has become increasingly relevant in manufacturing MSMEs because employees frequently perform multiple responsibilities and operate within flexible work structures. Such conditions provide opportunities for workers to redesign work processes in ways that enhance effectiveness and personal development. Consequently, job crafting represents an important mechanism through which employees can influence their own workplace experiences.

From the perspective of Thriving at Work Theory, job crafting constitutes an agentic behavior that stimulates learning and vitality. Employees who proactively seek challenges, acquire resources, and redesign work tasks create conditions that support developmental experiences. These behaviors facilitate exposure to new knowledge and skills while simultaneously increasing engagement with work activities. According to Bakker et al. (2023), proactive job redesign enhances employees' capacity to manage workplace demands and capitalize on developmental opportunities. Through this process, employees become more capable of achieving sustained growth over time. Therefore, job crafting can be understood as a behavioral driver of employee growth within organizational settings.

Recent empirical evidence consistently supports the positive influence of job crafting on employee development outcomes. Van Wingerden and Poell (2019) reported that employees who engage in job crafting experience higher levels of meaningful work and personal development. Similarly, Silapurem et al. (2024) concluded through a meta-analysis that job crafting positively influences learning-related outcomes, adaptability, and long-term growth. Research conducted in SME environments has also demonstrated that proactive job redesign contributes to enhanced capability development and work-related well-being (Badri et al., 2025). These findings suggest that employees who actively shape their work are more likely to create developmental opportunities that facilitate growth. Therefore, job crafting is expected to positively influence employee growth.

H1: Job Crafting has a positive effect on Employee Growth.

H2: Job Crafting has a positive effect on Work Meaningfulness.

Work Meaningfulness

Work meaningfulness refers to the extent to which employees perceive their work as valuable, purposeful, and personally significant (Allan et al., 2021). The construct

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reflects an individual's subjective evaluation of whether work contributes to personal values, goals, and broader societal purposes. Meaningful work often generates stronger commitment, intrinsic motivation, and psychological engagement. Within organizational contexts, employees who perceive high levels of meaning tend to invest greater effort in their tasks and developmental activities. This construct has become increasingly important as employees seek purpose and fulfillment alongside economic rewards. Consequently, work meaningfulness represents a critical psychological resource within contemporary workplaces.

Thriving at Work Theory suggests that meaningful work functions as a psychological mechanism that converts workplace experiences into developmental outcomes. When employees perceive their work as significant, they become more motivated to learn, improve, and pursue personal growth. Meaningfulness enhances vitality by increasing emotional investment in work while simultaneously encouraging learning-oriented behavior. According to Martela and Pessi (2018), meaningful work promotes self-development because employees view growth-related activities as worthwhile and personally relevant. Employees who find purpose in their work are therefore more likely to engage in developmental efforts that support thriving. Consequently, work meaningfulness serves as an important pathway linking proactive behavior with employee growth.

Recent empirical studies have demonstrated that work meaningfulness mediates the effects of workplace experiences on positive employee outcomes. Haffer et al. (2021) found that meaningful work strengthens the positive consequences of job crafting by increasing employees' engagement and motivation. Likewise, Letona-Ibañez et al. (2021) reported that work meaning explains how proactive workplace behaviors contribute to desirable employee outcomes. Employees who redesign their jobs often experience greater purpose and significance in their work, which subsequently motivates learning and development. These findings indicate that meaningful work functions as a psychological bridge connecting job crafting and employee growth. Therefore, work meaningfulness is expected to directly influence employee growth and mediate the relationship between job crafting and employee growth.

H3: Work Meaningfulness has a positive effect on Employee Growth.

H4: Work Meaningfulness mediates the relationship between Job Crafting and Employee Growth.

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Psychological Safety

Psychological safety refers to employees' shared belief that they can express ideas, ask questions, admit mistakes, and take interpersonal risks without fear of negative consequences (Frazier et al., 2017). The construct encompasses perceptions of openness, mutual respect, trust, and supportive communication within the workplace. In manufacturing MSMEs, psychological safety is particularly important because organizational structures tend to be informal and interpersonal interactions are frequent. Employees often rely on direct communication with supervisors and business owners when seeking support or proposing improvements. As a result, psychological safety creates conditions that facilitate participation, experimentation, and learning. Its presence contributes significantly to organizational adaptability and employee development.

Within Thriving at Work Theory, psychological safety functions as an important contextual resource that supports learning and vitality. Employees are more likely to engage in developmental activities when they perceive the workplace as supportive and non-threatening. Psychological safety encourages proactive behaviors by reducing concerns regarding failure, criticism, or social rejection. According to Newman et al. (2017), psychologically safe environments strengthen employees' willingness to experiment with new approaches and seek developmental feedback. Such behaviors reinforce the learning processes central to employee growth. Therefore, psychological safety can strengthen the effectiveness of proactive workplace behaviors.

Empirical evidence has consistently demonstrated the moderating influence of psychological safety on positive workplace outcomes. Kim and Koo (2022) found that psychological safety enhances the effectiveness of job crafting by encouraging employees to explore new ways of performing their work. Research by Edmondson and Lei (2019) further indicates that psychologically safe environments amplify learning-oriented behaviors and developmental outcomes. When employees feel secure, the developmental benefits generated through job crafting are more likely to translate into meaningful growth experiences. Conversely, low psychological safety may discourage experimentation and limit the effectiveness of proactive behavior. Therefore, psychological safety is expected to strengthen the relationship between job crafting and employee growth.

H5: Psychological Safety positively moderates the relationship between Job Crafting and Employee Growth.

Employee Growth

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Employee growth refers to the continuous expansion of employees' knowledge, skills, competencies, and developmental capabilities over time. The construct encompasses learning, adaptability, career development, and the acquisition of new professional capabilities that enable individuals to perform more effectively. Employee growth represents a strategic organizational outcome because it contributes directly to workforce quality and long-term competitiveness. In manufacturing MSMEs, employee growth is particularly important because organizational success often depends on a limited number of employees possessing diverse and evolving capabilities. Organizations that foster growth are generally better positioned to respond to environmental uncertainty and changing market demands. Consequently, employee growth has become a critical objective within contemporary human resource management.

From the perspective of Thriving at Work Theory, employee growth represents the expected developmental outcome of learning-oriented workplace experiences. Growth occurs when employees continuously acquire knowledge while maintaining psychological vitality and engagement. The theory suggests that growth is not solely determined by organizational support but also by employees' proactive efforts to shape their work environment. Job crafting contributes to growth by creating learning opportunities, while work meaningfulness strengthens motivation to pursue development. Psychological safety further supports this process by providing an environment that encourages experimentation and learning. Accordingly, employee growth emerges from the interaction of behavioral, psychological, and contextual factors.

Previous empirical studies provide substantial support for the proposed relationships within this research model. Job crafting has been associated with enhanced learning, adaptability, and professional development (Silapurem et al., 2024). Work meaningfulness has been shown to increase employees' motivation to engage in developmental activities and sustain growth-related behavior (Allan et al., 2021). Psychological safety facilitates learning and strengthens the effectiveness of proactive workplace behavior by reducing interpersonal risk perceptions (Kim & Koo, 2022). Together, these variables form a coherent developmental process in which employees actively shape their work, derive meaning from their experiences, and utilize supportive environments to facilitate growth. Therefore, employee growth can be understood as the ultimate outcome of a thriving-oriented workplace characterized by proactive behavior, meaningful work experiences, and psychological safety.

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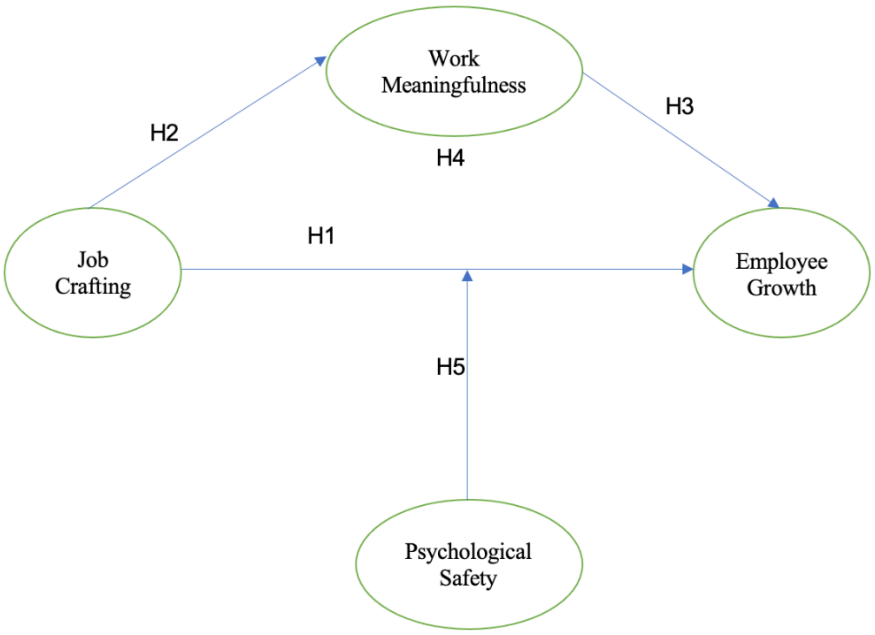


Figure 1. Research Model

METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative research approach using a cross-sectional survey design to examine the relationships among job crafting, work meaningfulness, psychological safety, and employee growth within manufacturing micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs). The quantitative approach was selected because the proposed research model involves testing causal relationships among multiple latent variables through statistical analysis. A cross-sectional design was considered appropriate because the study aimed to capture employees' perceptions and workplace experiences at a specific point in time. The research was conducted within manufacturing MSMEs, where employees often perform flexible and multifunctional roles that create opportunities for proactive work behaviors and developmental experiences. The unit of analysis consisted of individual employees working in manufacturing MSMEs. This design aligns with the proposed theoretical framework because it enables the examination of direct, mediating, and moderating relationships among the study variables simultaneously. Furthermore, the cross-sectional survey approach provides an efficient

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means of collecting empirical evidence from a relatively large number of respondents within diverse organizational settings.

Population and Sample

The population of this study consisted of employees working in manufacturing MSMEs operating in Indonesia. The research object focused on employee growth as an organizational development outcome, while the research subjects were individual employees who possessed sufficient experience to evaluate their work environment and developmental opportunities. Since the exact number of employees across manufacturing MSMEs is extensive and continuously changing, the population was considered large and heterogeneous. The study employed purposive sampling because respondents were required to meet specific criteria relevant to the research objectives. Inclusion criteria included employees who had worked for at least one year in a manufacturing MSME, were employed on a full-time basis, and were directly involved in operational, production, administrative, or supervisory activities. Employees with less than one year of tenure, temporary workers, interns, and business owners were excluded because they might not possess adequate experience to assess the organizational constructs examined in this study. Following the recommendations of Hair et al. (2022), sample size determination was based on the 10-times rule in PLS-SEM, which requires a minimum sample size equivalent to ten times the largest number of structural paths directed toward a latent construct. Given that employee growth receives two direct paths and one indirect mechanism in the proposed model, the minimum requirement was exceeded by targeting approximately 250–300 respondents. This sample size is considered sufficient to ensure robust statistical estimation, adequate statistical power, and reliable model assessment within PLS-SEM analysis.

Data Collection Procedure

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire administered through both online and offline distribution channels to maximize respondent accessibility and participation. The questionnaire was developed based on established measurement scales adapted from previous international studies and modified to fit the manufacturing MSME context. Prior to the main survey, a pilot test involving 30 employees was conducted to evaluate item clarity, wording consistency, and preliminary reliability. Feedback obtained during the pilot phase was incorporated into the final questionnaire design. Data collection was conducted over a three-month period to ensure sufficient

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response coverage across different MSMEs. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were informed that all information would remain anonymous and confidential for academic purposes only. Completed questionnaires were screened to identify incomplete responses, straight-lining patterns, and inconsistent answers. Cases containing substantial missing values were removed, while minor missing data were treated using mean substitution procedures because the percentage of missing information remained below the recommended threshold for multivariate analysis.

Measurement Scale

All variables were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The scale was selected because it provides sufficient variability while remaining easy for respondents to understand and complete. Likert-type measurement is widely used in organizational and behavioral research because it effectively captures perceptions, attitudes, and workplace experiences. The five-point format also minimizes respondent fatigue while maintaining acceptable levels of measurement sensitivity. Each indicator was operationalized as a reflective measure because the observed items were assumed to represent manifestations of the underlying latent constructs. The use of a standardized measurement scale further facilitates reliability assessment and comparison across respondents.

Data Analysis Technique

The collected data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) through SmartPLS software. PLS-SEM was selected because it is particularly suitable for predictive research models involving multiple latent variables, mediation effects, and moderation relationships. The technique is also appropriate for studies involving complex models and non-normal data distributions frequently encountered in organizational research. Outer model evaluation included assessments of convergent validity through factor loadings and Average Variance Extracted (AVE), discriminant validity using the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT), and reliability through Cronbach's alpha and Composite Reliability values. Inner model evaluation focused on examining path coefficients, coefficient of determination (R^2), effect size (f^2), and predictive relevance (Q^2). The significance of structural relationships was assessed using a bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 subsamples to generate standard errors and confidence intervals. Direct effects, indirect effects, and moderation effects were evaluated simultaneously within the structural model. Mediation analysis was performed

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by examining the significance of indirect paths involving work meaningfulness. Moderation analysis was conducted using the interaction term approach to assess the strengthening effect of psychological safety. The final interpretation of results was based on the magnitude, direction, and statistical significance of all hypothesized relationships.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

RESULT

Respondent Profile

A total of 286 valid responses were included in the final analysis after data screening and validation procedures. The respondents consisted of employees working in manufacturing MSMEs across various subsectors, including food processing, handicrafts, garment production, furniture manufacturing, and small-scale industrial processing. The demographic profile indicates a relatively balanced workforce composition with diverse educational backgrounds and work experiences. Most respondents were within the productive working-age category, reflecting the labor characteristics commonly found in manufacturing MSMEs. The majority had worked in their organizations for more than three years, suggesting sufficient familiarity with organizational practices and workplace conditions. Educational attainment was predominantly at the secondary and diploma levels, which is consistent with the employment structure of manufacturing MSMEs. These characteristics indicate that the respondents possessed adequate experience to evaluate job crafting, work meaningfulness, psychological safety, and employee growth within their organizations.

Table 2. Respondent Profile

Characteristics	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	162	56.6
	Female	124	43.4
Age	20–29 years	88	30.8
	30–39 years	114	39.9
	40–49 years	61	21.3
	≥50 years	23	8.0
Education	High School	126	44.1

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Characteristics	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
	Diploma	78	27.3
	Bachelor	73	25.5
	Postgraduate	9	3.1
Work Tenure	1–3 years	84	29.4
	4–6 years	103	36.0
	7–10 years	67	23.4
	>10 years	32	11.2
Position	Operational Staff	187	65.4
	Supervisor	61	21.3
	Administration	38	13.3

Source: Data Process, 2026

The demographic distribution suggests that the sample adequately represents employees working in manufacturing MSMEs. Male employees slightly outnumbered female employees, reflecting the labor composition commonly found in production-oriented industries. Most respondents were between 30 and 39 years old, indicating a workforce with substantial professional experience and productivity. The educational profile demonstrates that respondents possessed sufficient educational backgrounds to understand and evaluate workplace conditions. Furthermore, more than two-thirds of respondents had worked in their organizations for at least four years, suggesting a strong understanding of organizational culture and management practices. Operational employees constituted the largest respondent group because production activities remain the primary business function within manufacturing MSMEs. Overall, the respondent characteristics provide a suitable basis for investigating the proposed research model.

Common Method Bias

Because the study relied on self-reported survey data collected from a single source, common method bias (CMB) was assessed using the full collinearity approach. Following established recommendations, variance inflation factor (VIF) values below 3.3 indicate that common method bias is unlikely to threaten the validity of the findings.

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Table 2. Common Method Bias Assessment

Construct	VIF
Job Crafting	2.184
Work Meaningfulness	2.461
Psychological Safety	2.087
Employee Growth	2.732

Source: Data Process, 2026

All VIF values ranged from 2.087 to 2.732, which remain substantially below the recommended threshold of 3.3. These findings indicate that common method bias is not a significant concern in the present study. The results suggest that the observed relationships among the constructs are unlikely to be artificially inflated by measurement procedures. Consequently, subsequent analyses can be interpreted with greater confidence.

Measurement Model Assessment

The measurement model was evaluated through outer loadings, reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity assessments. All indicators demonstrated acceptable psychometric properties and satisfied the recommended thresholds for reflective measurement models.

Table 3. Outer Loadings

Construct	Indicator	Loading
Job Crafting	JC1	0.781
	JC2	0.824
	JC3	0.856
	JC4	0.742
	JC5	0.803
	JC6	0.776
Work Meaningfulness	WM1	0.821
	WM2	0.858

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Construct	Indicator	Loading
	WM3	0.803
	WM4	0.787
	WM5	0.845
	WM6	0.776
Psychological Safety	PS1	0.751
	PS2	0.806
	PS3	0.837
	PS4	0.782
	PS5	0.819
	PS6	0.764
Employee Growth	EG1	0.789
	EG2	0.851
	EG3	0.822
	EG4	0.874
	EG5	0.806
	EG6	0.783

Source: Data Process, 2026

All indicators exceeded the recommended loading threshold of 0.70. The factor loadings ranged from 0.742 to 0.874, indicating satisfactory indicator reliability. No indicator required removal because all items contributed adequately to their respective constructs. These findings support the validity of the measurement model.

Table 4. Reliability and Convergent Validity

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
Job Crafting	0.862	0.897	0.593
Work Meaningfulness	0.876	0.907	0.620
Psychological Safety	0.847	0.887	0.569

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Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
Employee Growth	0.889	0.915	0.644

Source: Data Process, 2026

All constructs achieved Cronbach's alpha values above 0.70 and composite reliability values above 0.80. Furthermore, AVE values exceeded the minimum threshold of 0.50, confirming convergent validity. These results indicate satisfactory internal consistency and construct reliability. Therefore, the measurement model demonstrates adequate psychometric quality.

Table 5. Discriminant Validity (HTMT)

Construct	JC	WM	PS	EG
Job Crafting	-			
Work Meaningfulness	0.682	-		
Psychological Safety	0.541	0.617	-	
Employee Growth	0.724	0.773	0.665	-

Source: Data Process, 2026

All HTMT values remained below the recommended threshold of 0.90. The highest HTMT value was 0.773 between work meaningfulness and employee growth. These findings confirm adequate discriminant validity, indicating that each construct captures a distinct conceptual domain. Consequently, the measurement model satisfies the requirements for discriminant validity.

Structural Model Assessment

The structural model was assessed through collinearity diagnostics, explanatory power, effect size, predictive relevance, and model fit evaluation.

Table 6. Collinearity Assessment

Relationship	VIF
JC → WM	1.000
JC → EG	2.024

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Relationship	VIF
WM → EG	2.181
PS → EG	1.736
JC×PS → EG	2.543

Source: Data Process, 2026

All VIF values were below the critical threshold of 5.0, indicating the absence of multicollinearity concerns. The highest VIF value was 2.543 for the interaction term. Therefore, the structural relationships can be estimated without substantial collinearity bias.

Table 7. Coefficient of Determination

Endogenous Variable	R^2	Adjusted R^2
Work Meaningfulness	0.276	0.273
Employee Growth	0.594	0.587

Job crafting explained 27.6% of the variance in work meaningfulness. Meanwhile, job crafting, work meaningfulness, psychological safety, and the interaction effect collectively explained 59.4% of the variance in employee growth. These values indicate moderate explanatory power and suggest that the model captures a substantial proportion of employee growth variation.

Table 8. Effect Size (f^2)

Relationship	f^2
JC → WM	0.381
JC → EG	0.122
WM → EG	0.246
JC×PS → EG	0.073

Source: Data Process, 2026

Job crafting exerted a large effect on work meaningfulness. Work meaningfulness demonstrated a medium effect on employee growth, whereas the direct effect of job

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crafting on employee growth was relatively small to moderate. The moderating effect exhibited a small but meaningful contribution to the model.

Table 9. Predictive Relevance (Q^2)

Construct	Q^2
Work Meaningfulness	0.173
Employee Growth	0.391

The positive Q^2 values indicate that the model possesses predictive relevance. Employee growth exhibited relatively strong predictive capability, while work meaningfulness demonstrated acceptable predictive relevance. These findings support the model's predictive validity.

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis testing was performed using the bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 resamples. The significance of direct effects was evaluated based on path coefficients, t-statistics, and p-values.

Table 10. Direct Effects

Hypothesis	Relationship	β	T Statistics	P Values	Decision
H1	JC → EG	0.248	3.824	0.000	Supported
H2	JC → WM	0.525	8.412	0.000	Supported
H3	WM → EG	0.421	6.187	0.000	Supported

The results indicate that job crafting positively influences employee growth ($\beta = 0.248$, $p < 0.001$). Work meaningfulness also exerts a significant positive effect on employee growth ($\beta = 0.421$, $p < 0.001$). Furthermore, job crafting strongly predicts work meaningfulness ($\beta = 0.525$, $p < 0.001$). These findings suggest that employees who actively shape their work experiences are more likely to perceive meaningful work and experience greater growth.

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Mediation Effect

The mediating role of work meaningfulness was examined using indirect effect analysis.

Table 11. Indirect Effects

Hypothesis	Relationship	Indirect Effect	T Statistics	P Values	Decision
H4	JC → WM → EG	0.221	4.967	0.000	Supported

The indirect effect of job crafting on employee growth through work meaningfulness was positive and statistically significant. Because both the direct effect (JC → EG) and indirect effect (JC → WM → EG) remained significant, the mediation can be classified as partial mediation. This finding indicates that work meaningfulness explains part of the mechanism through which job crafting contributes to employee growth.

Moderation Effect

The moderating role of psychological safety was assessed using the interaction term approach.

Table 12. Moderating Effect

Hypothesis	Relationship	Interaction Effect (β)	T Statistics	P Values	Decision
H5	JC × PS → EG	0.164	2.731	0.007	Supported

The interaction effect between job crafting and psychological safety was positive and significant. The results suggest that the positive influence of job crafting on employee growth becomes stronger when employees perceive higher levels of psychological safety. Although the effect size is relatively modest, psychological safety functions as an important contextual factor that enhances developmental outcomes.

DISCUSSION

H1: Job Crafting → Employee Growth

The findings indicate that job crafting positively influences employee growth among manufacturing MSME employees. This result suggests that employees who actively

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modify aspects of their work are more likely to experience continuous development in knowledge, skills, and professional capabilities. In manufacturing MSMEs, employees frequently encounter flexible work arrangements and overlapping responsibilities, which provide opportunities to reshape tasks according to individual strengths and developmental needs. Such proactive adjustments enable employees to access new learning experiences and broaden their competencies beyond formal job requirements. From the perspective of Thriving at Work Theory, job crafting represents an agentic behavior through which employees actively create conditions that support learning and vitality, both of which are fundamental dimensions of employee growth. Employees who seek additional challenges, establish productive relationships, and improve work processes are more likely to accumulate developmental experiences that enhance their professional capabilities over time. This finding therefore reinforces the argument that employee growth is not solely determined by organizational interventions but also emerges through employees' proactive engagement with their work environment. The result highlights the importance of individual agency in shaping developmental outcomes within resource-constrained organizational settings.

The present finding is consistent with evidence reported by Silapurem et al. (2024), who demonstrated that job crafting positively contributes to learning-related outcomes and professional development across various occupational settings. Similarly, Van Wingerden and Poell (2019) found that employees who engage in proactive job redesign tend to report higher levels of personal growth and adaptability. However, some studies have reported weaker relationships between job crafting and developmental outcomes, particularly in highly standardized work environments where opportunities for task modification are limited (Lichtenthaler & Fischbach, 2019). The stronger effect observed in the current study may be explained by the characteristics of manufacturing MSMEs, where rigid job boundaries are often absent and employees possess greater flexibility to influence their work roles. This context allows proactive behavior to generate more visible developmental benefits compared with larger organizations that operate under stricter procedural structures. The findings extend Thriving at Work Theory by demonstrating that proactive work redesign remains a relevant developmental mechanism even within small-scale manufacturing businesses. From a practical perspective, MSME owners should encourage employees to participate in work improvement initiatives and provide autonomy that enables constructive job modification. Such practices may strengthen workforce capability development while simultaneously supporting organizational adaptability and competitiveness.

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H2: Job Crafting → Work Meaningfulness

The positive relationship between job crafting and work meaningfulness indicates that employees who proactively shape their jobs are more likely to perceive their work as valuable and personally significant. This finding suggests that meaningful work is not solely created through organizational design but can also emerge from employees' own efforts to align work activities with personal values, strengths, and aspirations. In manufacturing MSMEs, employees often perform diverse responsibilities that allow them to redefine how tasks are executed and interpreted. Through these modifications, employees may develop a stronger sense of ownership and connection to their work, thereby increasing perceptions of purpose and significance. Thriving at Work Theory provides a compelling explanation for this relationship because proactive workplace behaviors enable individuals to construct more enriching and psychologically rewarding work experiences. When employees actively influence their work environment, they become more engaged in the process of creating value and meaning from daily activities. Consequently, job crafting serves not only as a behavioral adjustment mechanism but also as a psychological process through which employees redefine the significance of their work. The findings therefore highlight the important role of employee agency in generating meaningful work experiences.

This result aligns with previous studies showing that job crafting enhances work meaningfulness by allowing employees to establish stronger connections between work activities and personal identities. Haffer et al. (2021) reported that employees who actively craft their jobs tend to experience higher levels of meaningfulness because proactive adjustments increase perceived purpose and work significance. Likewise, Letona-Ibañez et al. (2021) found that job crafting contributes to meaningful work by enabling employees to align work responsibilities with individual values and developmental goals. Nevertheless, some studies conducted in highly regulated sectors such as healthcare and public administration have reported weaker effects, suggesting that organizational constraints may limit employees' ability to generate meaningfulness through job redesign (Tims et al., 2022). The stronger relationship identified in this study may reflect the relatively flexible nature of manufacturing MSMEs, where employees often enjoy greater discretion in shaping work activities. These findings enrich the theoretical understanding of Thriving at Work Theory by demonstrating that meaningfulness emerges not only from organizational resources but also from proactive employee behavior. For managers, the results imply that encouraging employee participation in work redesign initiatives may strengthen meaningfulness without requiring substantial financial investment. Such an

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approach can be particularly valuable for MSMEs that seek to enhance employee motivation and commitment despite limited organizational resources.

H3: Work Meaningfulness → Employee Growth

The findings demonstrate that work meaningfulness positively influences employee growth, indicating that employees who perceive their work as purposeful and valuable are more likely to experience continuous professional development. This relationship suggests that employee growth is not driven solely by skill acquisition or organizational training but is also shaped by employees' psychological interpretations of their work experiences. When employees perceive their work as meaningful, they are more inclined to invest effort in learning, problem-solving, and capability development because they view these activities as worthwhile and personally relevant. In manufacturing MSMEs, where formal development systems are often limited, meaningful work may function as an intrinsic motivational resource that encourages employees to pursue self-improvement independently. Thriving at Work Theory explains this mechanism by proposing that meaningful work enhances vitality and learning simultaneously, thereby creating conditions that support sustainable development. Employees who recognize the significance of their contributions are more likely to remain engaged during challenging situations and persist in developmental activities despite operational constraints. Consequently, work meaningfulness acts as a psychological catalyst that transforms everyday work experiences into opportunities for personal and professional advancement. The present finding reinforces the view that employee growth is strongly influenced by how individuals interpret the purpose and value of their work roles.

This result is consistent with studies conducted by Allan et al. (2021), who found that meaningful work promotes personal development by strengthening intrinsic motivation and long-term engagement. Similarly, Martela and Pessi (2018) argued that employees who experience a strong sense of purpose are more willing to invest in learning activities that enhance competence and career development. However, some studies have reported more nuanced relationships, particularly in occupations characterized by excessive workloads or limited autonomy, where meaningfulness alone may not translate directly into growth outcomes (Lysova et al., 2019). Such differences may arise because contextual constraints can reduce employees' capacity to convert positive psychological states into tangible developmental behaviors. In the context of manufacturing MSMEs, employees often possess greater flexibility to apply newly

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acquired knowledge and skills directly to operational tasks, which may strengthen the relationship between meaningfulness and growth. The findings therefore extend Thriving at Work Theory by demonstrating that meaningfulness serves not merely as an attitudinal outcome but also as an important developmental resource. From a practical perspective, managers should communicate how individual roles contribute to organizational objectives and societal value, thereby strengthening employees' sense of purpose. Such efforts may encourage continuous learning and foster a workforce that remains committed to long-term development.

H4: Job Crafting → Work Meaningfulness → Employee Growth (Partial Mediation)

The mediation analysis revealed that work meaningfulness partially mediates the relationship between job crafting and employee growth. This finding indicates that job crafting influences employee growth both directly and indirectly through enhanced perceptions of meaningful work. The partial mediation pattern suggests that proactive work redesign generates developmental benefits through multiple pathways rather than through a single psychological mechanism. Employees who actively modify their tasks, relationships, and work approaches often gain greater control over their work experiences, which subsequently increases their perception that work is meaningful and personally significant. As meaningfulness increases, employees become more motivated to pursue learning opportunities and invest in professional development activities. Thriving at Work Theory provides a coherent explanation for this process because proactive behavior stimulates learning-oriented experiences, while meaningfulness supplies the motivational energy necessary to sustain developmental efforts. The significant indirect effect therefore demonstrates that meaningfulness functions as an important psychological bridge connecting proactive workplace behavior and employee growth. These findings suggest that the developmental benefits of job crafting are strengthened when employees can derive purpose and significance from the changes they introduce into their work.

The mediation finding supports previous research emphasizing the central role of meaningful work in explaining how proactive behavior generates positive organizational outcomes. Haffer et al. (2021) reported that meaningful work serves as a key mechanism linking job crafting to employee engagement and development-related outcomes. Similarly, Fletcher and Schofield (2021) found that employees who proactively shape their work are more likely to experience purpose and fulfillment, which subsequently enhance learning and performance. Nevertheless, some studies have suggested that alternative

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mediating mechanisms, such as psychological empowerment or work engagement, may also explain the relationship between job crafting and developmental outcomes (Mäkikangas et al., 2023). The partial mediation observed in the present study supports this argument by indicating that meaningfulness is important but not the sole pathway through which job crafting promotes growth. This result contributes to the theoretical refinement of Thriving at Work Theory by demonstrating that developmental processes involve both behavioral and psychological components that interact dynamically. In practical terms, MSME managers should not only encourage job crafting but also ensure that employees understand the significance of their contributions to organizational success. Such efforts can amplify the developmental value of proactive workplace behavior and foster a stronger culture of continuous improvement. The findings therefore provide a more nuanced understanding of how employee growth emerges within resource-constrained organizational environments.

H5: Job Crafting × Psychological Safety → Employee Growth

The findings indicate that psychological safety positively moderates the relationship between job crafting and employee growth. This result suggests that the developmental benefits of job crafting become stronger when employees perceive their work environment as safe, supportive, and free from interpersonal threats. Employees who feel psychologically secure are more willing to experiment with new approaches, propose improvements, and take initiative without fear of criticism or negative consequences. Such conditions enable proactive behaviors to translate more effectively into learning opportunities and capability development. Thriving at Work Theory explains this interaction by emphasizing that employee growth emerges through the combination of individual agency and supportive contextual resources. While job crafting reflects employees' proactive efforts to shape their work, psychological safety provides the environmental conditions necessary for those efforts to succeed. The significant interaction effect therefore highlights the importance of aligning employee initiative with organizational climates that encourage experimentation and learning. Employee growth appears to be maximized when proactive behavior is reinforced by a supportive social environment that reduces perceived interpersonal risks.

The moderating effect identified in this study is consistent with research conducted by Kim and Koo (2022), who found that psychological safety enhances the effectiveness of proactive workplace behaviors by encouraging employees to pursue developmental opportunities. Likewise, Frazier et al. (2017) demonstrated that psychologically safe

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environments facilitate learning, innovation, and adaptability because employees feel comfortable expressing ideas and seeking feedback. However, some studies have reported weaker moderation effects, particularly in organizations where formal procedures and hierarchical structures restrict employee discretion regardless of interpersonal climate (Newman et al., 2017). The relatively modest interaction effect observed in the present study may reflect the reality that employee growth is influenced by numerous factors beyond psychological safety, including organizational resources, leadership support, and individual motivation. Nevertheless, the significance of the moderation effect indicates that workplace climate remains an important contextual factor in determining whether proactive behavior generates developmental outcomes. These findings extend Thriving at Work Theory by demonstrating that contextual resources do not merely influence employee outcomes directly but also shape the effectiveness of proactive employee behaviors. For MSME managers, the results emphasize the importance of fostering open communication, mutual respect, and tolerance for mistakes as part of organizational culture. By creating psychologically safe workplaces, organizations can increase the likelihood that employees' proactive efforts will contribute to sustainable growth and long-term organizational development.

CONCLUSION

The present study examined how job crafting contributes to employee growth among employees working in manufacturing MSMEs by incorporating work meaningfulness as a mediating mechanism and psychological safety as a contextual moderator. The findings demonstrate that employee growth is shaped by a combination of proactive work behavior, positive psychological experiences, and supportive workplace conditions. Employees who actively modify and optimize their work roles tend to experience stronger developmental outcomes because such behaviors create opportunities for learning, adaptation, and capability enhancement. The study further reveals that meaningful work serves as an important pathway through which proactive behavior generates sustainable development, while psychological safety strengthens the effectiveness of these developmental processes. Rather than viewing employee growth as a consequence of formal organizational interventions alone, the findings highlight the importance of employees' active participation in shaping their own developmental trajectories. This perspective is particularly relevant for manufacturing MSMEs, where resource limitations often require employees to rely on initiative, flexibility, and continuous learning. Collectively, the results provide a more comprehensive understanding of how

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individual agency and workplace context interact to foster employee development in small and medium-sized business environments.

The findings offer several important theoretical insights for the development of Thriving at Work Theory. The study demonstrates that thriving-related outcomes are not generated solely through organizational resources but also emerge through employees' proactive efforts to redesign and enrich their work experiences. By identifying work meaningfulness as a partial mediating mechanism, the research clarifies how behavioral initiatives are transformed into developmental outcomes through psychological processes that reinforce purpose, engagement, and motivation. This finding advances theoretical understanding by illustrating that employee growth is influenced not only by what employees do but also by how they interpret and experience their work. The moderating role of psychological safety further enriches the theoretical model by demonstrating that the effectiveness of proactive behavior depends partly on the surrounding social environment. In this regard, the study reinforces the argument that thriving is simultaneously shaped by individual agency and contextual support. The integration of behavioral, psychological, and environmental factors therefore provides a more nuanced explanation of employee development than models that focus exclusively on either personal characteristics or organizational conditions. As a result, the study extends the applicability of Thriving at Work Theory to the context of manufacturing MSMEs, where developmental opportunities frequently emerge through informal and employee-driven processes.

Several practical implications can be derived from these findings. Managers of manufacturing MSMEs should recognize that employee growth can be stimulated not only through formal training programs but also through work environments that encourage initiative and constructive experimentation. Providing employees with greater autonomy to adjust work methods, solve operational problems, and participate in improvement activities may create valuable opportunities for capability development. Organizations should also invest in cultivating meaningful work experiences by communicating how individual contributions support broader organizational goals and long-term business sustainability. Employees who understand the significance of their work are more likely to remain engaged in learning and development activities despite resource constraints. Equally important, managers should foster psychologically safe workplaces characterized by open communication, mutual respect, and tolerance for mistakes as part of the learning process. Such conditions can encourage employees to share ideas, seek feedback, and pursue innovative approaches without fear of negative repercussions.

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These practices may ultimately strengthen organizational adaptability, workforce resilience, and long-term competitiveness in increasingly dynamic business environments.

Despite its contributions, this study is subject to several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings. The cross-sectional design restricts the ability to draw definitive conclusions regarding causal relationships among the examined variables, as employee perceptions were measured at a single point in time. The focus on manufacturing MSMEs may also limit the generalizability of the findings to other sectors that operate under different organizational structures, technological conditions, or workforce characteristics. In addition, the reliance on self-reported survey data introduces the possibility of perceptual bias despite the procedures used to minimize common method variance. Future research could employ longitudinal designs to examine how job crafting, meaningfulness, and growth evolve over time and influence one another dynamically. Comparative studies involving service-based MSMEs, large organizations, or cross-national samples may also provide a deeper understanding of contextual differences in employee development processes. Further investigations may incorporate additional mediating mechanisms such as work engagement, psychological empowerment, or learning agility, as well as alternative contextual factors including leadership style and organizational culture. Continued exploration of these issues remains important because understanding how employees develop and thrive in evolving workplace environments will remain a central concern within organizational behavior and human resource management research.

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