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How perceived control drives approach job crafting through a psychological authentic climate and perceived insider status

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Abstract: This study investigates the mechanisms through which perceived control influences approach job crafting and the key factors involved. It also deepens understanding of the internal logic of the approach job crafting. Drawing on self-determination theory, a research model was developed that posits psychological authentic climate and perceived insider status serve as mediators, with informal leadership emergence functioning as a moderator. This study collected 532 valid samples from employed individuals in Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, and Shenzhen using purposive sampling. Results indicate that psychological authentic climate and perceived insider status partially mediate the relationships under examination. Additionally, the emergence of informal leadership positively moderates the relationships linking perceived control and perceived insider status to approach job crafting. This study extends the theoretical framework connecting perceived control with approach job crafting and offers practical guidance for organizations seeking to stimulate employee proactivity by fostering a psychological authentic climate and a supportive environment.

Keywords: *Approach job crafting, Informal leadership emergence, Perceived control, Perceived insider status, Psychological authentic climate.*

1. Introduction

Rapid advances in information technology have significantly affected organizations, placing high demands on them; this context exposes the limitations of traditional top-down management when facing fast-changing markets, where employee enthusiasm and creativity remain underutilized [1]. By contrast, bottom-up work approaches, which emphasize proactivity and autonomy, have gained prominence [2]. Job crafting theory highlights the importance of employees proactively adjusting and optimizing task, relational, and cognitive aspects of work to enhance meaning and facilitate personal growth [3, 4]. Empirical evidence shows that the approach job crafting not only boosts job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and performance but also helps employees cope more effectively with work stress to sustain career development [5-9].

Although prior studies have documented the effects of approach job crafting, the psychological mechanisms that sustain employees' proactive modification of their work roles remain underexplored. Perceived control, defined as employees' belief that they can influence their immediate work environment, therefore emerges as a particularly promising avenue for inquiry [10]. Simultaneously, it constitutes a basic psychological need highlighted by self-determination theory and a critical resource that energizes proactive behavior [11]. Integrating perceived control into the promotion-focused job-crafting framework can compensate for the insufficient attention to psychological aspects in existing research; advance understanding of self-initiated, bottom-up behaviors; and yield novel theoretical and practical insights for organizations seeking to foster sustained proactive work.

Furthermore, although prior studies have enriched the understanding of approach job crafting, explanations remain limited regarding how employees translate perceived control into concrete

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behaviors through subjective perceptions. A psychological authentic climate, an organizational climate that emphasizes genuine expression and sincere interaction, allows employees to experience value recognition and psychological safety at work; this is instrumental to understanding how employees shape their jobs [12]. Perceived insider status reflects the degree to which employees feel recognized and accepted in the organization; this psychological experience not only underpins psychological safety and belonging but also constitutes a key factor in explaining employees' positive organizational behaviors [13, 14]. Incorporating a psychological authentic climate and perceived insider status into the model thus reveals potential psychological pathways of perceived control and provides an explanatory route for the behavioral formation of employees.

Recognizing that the effects of approach job crafting do not manifest uniformly across contexts is also crucial. Other organizational factors often condition the strength of these processes [15]. Evidence suggests that in modern, flattened, and agile organizations, informal leadership plays a critical role. Informal leaders can motivate teams, resolve conflicts, and facilitate knowledge sharing, complementing formal leadership [16]. When individuals are spontaneously recognized by others as leaders, this naturally emergent allocation of influence establishes implicit patterns of resource flow and trust within teams [17, 18]. In settings characterized by higher levels of informal leadership, employees are more likely to experience psychological safety [19] and social identification, which, in turn, exerts positive effects on their own behaviors [20].

Focusing on employees' psychological factors, this study examines how and under what conditions perceived control influences approach job crafting. Building on self-determination theory, the roles of psychological authentic climate, perceived insider status, and informal leadership emergence in shaping employee behaviors are investigated. This inquiry addresses gaps in existing research, deepens understanding of the internal logic of the approach job crafting, and offers guidance for organizations seeking to elicit employee proactivity and enhance organizational adaptability.

2. Literature Review and Hypotheses

2.1. Theoretical Framework

Job crafting is a common phenomenon. Prior research has centered on personality traits, leadership styles, and organizational factors, while paying insufficient attention to the psychological mechanisms that activate intrinsic motivation and translate it into approach job crafting [1, 15]. To address this gap, self-determination theory [21] is adopted to explain the approach of job crafting from an intrinsic motivation perspective. The theory posits that the proactivity and persistence of behavior depend on the satisfaction of the needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness [22, 23]. Perceived control is regarded as a key manifestation of employees' autonomy need, whereas psychological authenticity climate and perceived insider status correspond to relatedness needs. Satisfying these basic psychological needs triggers intrinsic motivation, which then translates into approach job crafting. In organizations, informal leaders occupy positions of influence over organizational practices and potential individual benefits; consequently, the emergence of informal leadership strengthens goal norms prior to task execution and serves as a key motivational factor that encourages persistence in the face of challenges [20]. Figure 1 presents the research framework.

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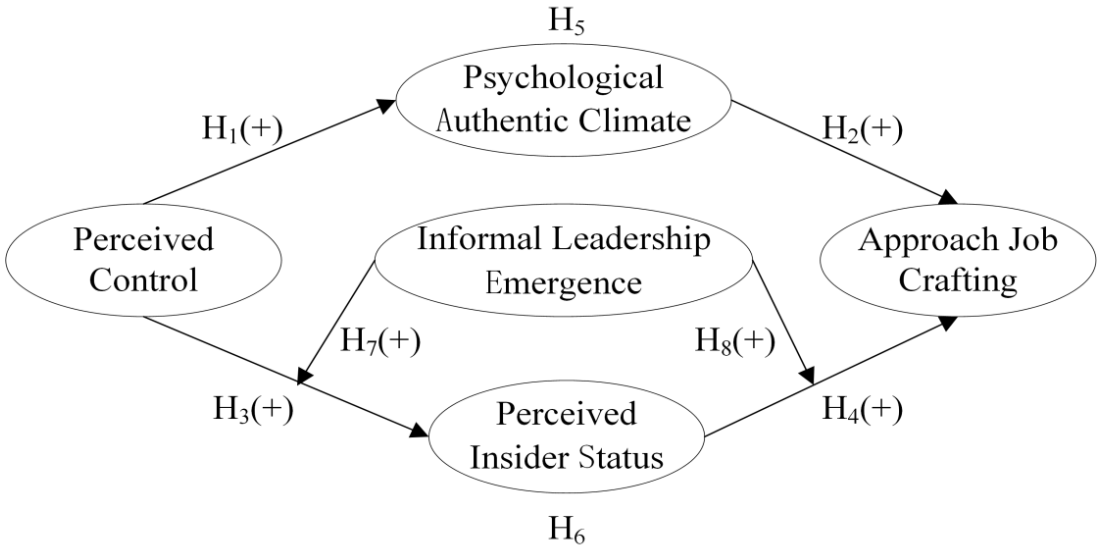

Figure 1.
Conceptual Framework.

2.2. Perceived Control and Psychological Authentic Climate

When employees perceive control over their work environment and tasks, they can more autonomously decide how to allocate time, sequence tasks, and address challenges [24]. Perceived control is not only a cognitive appraisal of capability but also a psychological experience that enables employees to feel autonomous even amid organizational norms and others' expectations [11, 25]. Self-determination theory holds that motivation stems from the satisfaction of autonomy, competence, and relatedness needs [22, 24]. From a basic psychological needs perspective, perceived control helps employees identify and leverage supportive cues in the organizational environment, thereby strengthening interpersonal trust and a sense of environmental safety [24]. In other words, perceived control shapes the motivation and behavior of individuals [26], which helps lower uncertainty and psychological stress and can even energize action [27], thereby supporting the formation of a psychological authentic climate [22]. Accordingly, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H_1. Perceived control positively influences psychological authentic climate.

2.3. Psychological Authentic Climate and Approach Job Crafting

A psychological authentic climate reflects employees' perceptions that the organization encourages and provides a safe environment in which they can express their authentic selves at work [12]. In such a climate, employees do not fear negative evaluation or punishment for voicing personal opinions; thus, they feel psychological safe and accepted [12]. Self-determination theory suggests that intrinsic motivation is more likely to emerge in environments that satisfy autonomy, competence, and relatedness needs, increasing behaviors that benefit personal growth and organizational development [22]. Specifically, a psychological authentic climate provides a sense of "being oneself," a process realized through goal selection; such goals channel individuals' positive tendencies and developmental trajectories [28]. Hence, when employees perceive a psychological authentic climate, they are more inclined to proactively adjust tasks, optimize relationships, and redefine work cognition to enhance meaning and development, core elements of approach job crafting [7, 12]. Prior research indicates that psychological safety and supportive environments stimulate employees' proactivity and innovative behaviors, constituting a critical linkage between psychological safety space and positive work optimization. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

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H_2. Psychological authentic climate positively influences approach job crafting.

2.4. Perceived Control and Perceived Insider Status

Within organizations, perceived insider status reflects the extent to which individuals feel recognized, accepted, and valued by their team or organization [13]. Self-determination theory posits that individuals' competence and relatedness needs are core drivers of intrinsic motivation [22, 24]. When employees perceive greater control over work processes and outcomes, they strengthen their perceptions that leaders communicate with and treat organizational members in a differentiated manner [29]; and they become more confident in task accomplishment, decision participation, and interactions with colleagues [30]. Such confidence signals status-enhancing capability; these employees are more likely to gain informal status at work and even prospects for future promotion [31], thereby strengthening perceived insider status [13]. Moreover, when employees believe they can exert influence within the team and receive fair evaluations, their perceived insider status increases [32]. In sum, high perceived control elevates employees' confidence, proactivity, and fairness perceptions in relationships [33], creating conditions that bolster an "insider" self-concept. Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H_3. Perceived control positively influences perceived insider status.

2.5. Perceived Insider Status and Approach Job Crafting

Employees with high perceived insider status obtain greater trust and support within teams, along with additional resources and latitude [34]. When endowed with abundant work resources (e.g., coworker support and leader empowerment), employees feel safer and more capable of engaging in proactive behaviors [35]. Approach job crafting is an active adjustment of tasks, relationships, and cognitions; the more resources employees possess, the more confidence and capacity they have to experiment with new approaches [35]. According to self-determination theory, when individuals perceive recognition and acceptance from others, relatedness needs are satisfied, which further energizes intrinsic motivation and fosters a willingness to enhance personal value through proactive action [22, 24]. Moreover, higher perceived insider status is closely associated with positive organizational behaviors, including taking initiative, improving work performance, and engaging in constructive organizational activities [14, 34, 36]. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H_4. Perceived insider status positively influences approach job crafting.

2.6. Mediating Role of Psychological Authentic Climate

A sense of control experienced at work not only reduces uncertainty and stress stemming from the external environment but can also serve as a cohesive "glue" that binds individuals and the organization [37], thereby reinforcing trust and commitment to the organization. When employees are confident that they have a certain degree of control over task execution and outcomes, they are more likely to experience a strong sense of authenticity and positive psychological expectations [38]. Such psychological safety reduces concerns about failure or punishment, creating conditions for open communication and genuine interaction [30]. When the organizational environment provides greater autonomy and feedback, employees demonstrate higher engagement [38] and responsibility, gradually forming a climate that permits self-expression [39]. Within such a climate, intrinsic motivation is more readily transformed into positive work behaviors [30]. Overall, authenticity facilitates healthy forms of self-regulation, and the authentic self guides decisions and actions [40]. When employees, driven by perceived control, contribute to an organizational climate that is more authentic and psychological safe, they are more likely to break rigid work patterns and proactively seek ways that enhance meaningfulness and a sense of accomplishment, thereby exhibiting approach job crafting [12]. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

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H_5. Psychological authentic climate mediates the relationship between perceived control and approach job crafting.

2.7. Mediating Role of Perceived Insider Status

Perceived control denotes the belief that one possesses resources and capabilities to influence outcomes [25]. The adaptive capacity granted by such capabilities leads employees, when they feel empowered, to apply their surplus talents to proactive and collaborative behaviors. Perceived control can strengthen employees' confidence in their abilities and contributions, encouraging more active displays of responsibility and initiative within the organization [41]. Such positive behaviors are more likely to be noticed and recognized by colleagues and supervisors, thereby enhancing the individuals' status identification and sense of belonging in the organization [36]. In addition, high perceived control not only shapes confidence in task accomplishment but also earns respect and trust from team members, which, in turn, raises perceived insider status [34]. Moreover, perceived insider status is a key social resource [42] that affords employees more opportunities for participation and information sharing and reduces uncertainty and role ambiguity [32]. When employees are viewed as organizational insiders, they more readily obtain extra support and resources, which not only enhances psychological safety but also strengthens motivation to experiment and explore [14]. Consequently, perceived control indirectly promotes employees' engagement in approach job crafting by elevating perceived insider status. In effect, as employees perceive recognition and appreciation from the organization, they become more motivated to proactively adjust work content and interaction patterns to achieve high meaningfulness and growth opportunities [34]. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H_6. Perceived insider status mediates the relationship between perceived control and approach job crafting.

2.8. Moderating Effect of Informal Leadership Emergence on the Relationship between Perceived Control and Perceived Insider Status

Individuals' status and identity in organizations are often influenced by team climate and interaction patterns [43]. Informal leadership emergence, as a natural phenomenon in group interactions, reflects the process by which members are spontaneously recognized by others as leaders in informal contexts [20, 44]. When team members spontaneously recognize a colleague as an informal leader, this signifies trust in that individual's abilities and character [16]. This informal flow of resources, based on trust and influence, may alter the strength of the effect of perceived control on perceived insider status. When employees perceive higher levels of informal leadership emergence, a more supportive resource allocation and social identification climate will be formed in the organization [45]. Individuals' efforts and contributions are more visible and more likely to be acknowledged, and proactive behaviors energized by perceived control are more likely to be interpreted by the team as value creation, thereby substantially elevating perceived insider status. Informal leadership emergence thus strengthens the relationship between perceived control and perceived insider status. Conversely, when informal leadership emergence is low, teams lack naturally formed networks of trust and support; even if employees exhibit strong perceived control, the absence of others' recognition may hinder its translation into perceived insider status. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H_7. Informal leadership emergence positively moderates the relationship between perceived control and perceived insider status.

2.9. Moderating Effect of Informal Leadership Emergence on the Relationship between Perceived Insider Status and Approach Job Crafting

The stronger employees' perceived insider status, the greater their willingness to engage in collective behaviors and identify with organizational goals and values [46]. When employees perceive acceptance and appreciation from the organization, they are more inclined to engage in approach job crafting, proactively adjusting task boundaries and interpersonal relationships [31] to further strengthen personal value. From a social interaction perspective, informal influence structures in teams

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stabilize and absorb fluctuations in the internal environment, thereby determining the efficiency with which individuals convert resources [20, 47]. Informal leadership emergence embodies team members' spontaneous recognition of certain individuals' leadership status in interactions [44, 48, 49]. This naturally generated leadership fosters trust and support and substantiates that leadership is a process of exerting influence within a group toward shared goals [50], thereby strengthening internal resource flows. For employees who already possess high perceived insider status, a team context with elevated informal leadership emergence makes recognition and resources more readily convertible into motivation to construct work proactively, thereby manifesting higher levels of approach job crafting. Informal leadership emergence, therefore strengthens the relationship between perceived insider status and approach job crafting. Conversely, when informal leadership emergence is insufficient, employees, even those perceiving high status, may find their resource advantages constrained and less able to translate into actual proactive behaviors. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H_5. Informal leadership emergence positively moderates the relationship between perceived insider status and approach job crafting.

3. Research Method

3.1. Research Participants and Data Collection

A large labor force and limited high-quality employment opportunities have created a labor market characterized by a preference for overqualification [51]. With the transition of higher education from elite to mass systems, employees often experience a pronounced gap between expectations and reality. When highly qualified employees' expectations for challenging work conflict with the repetitive, low-challenge tasks encountered in reality, the tendency to transform work becomes particularly salient. Considering the economic advantages of the eastern region and its greater capacity to absorb highly educated talent [52], employed individuals with higher education in first-tier cities within eastern provinces, such as university staff, medical personnel, and researchers, were selected as the objects of study. This study collected 532 valid questionnaires from eligible employees using purposive sampling. Contacts were established with HR departments or managers in multiple organizations, and questionnaires were obtained after obtaining consent. Participation was voluntary; before completing the survey, participants were informed of the study's purpose and relevant details, and the questionnaire was completed anonymously. All participants completed the survey during working hours. The sample was concentrated in the 34–49 age group (54.9%). A total of 327 participants held a master's degree (61.5%). Tenure was most concentrated in 4–6 years (37.4%), followed by 7–9 years (25.4%), indicating that participants had substantial work experience and, overall, a high level of education. Participants came from different industries: wholesale and transportation (27.4%); information and finance (19.4%); science, education, culture, and health (18.3%); public administration and services (15.6%); agriculture, forestry, animal husbandry, and fishery (10.5%); and mining and manufacturing (8.8%).

3.2. Measures

All constructs were assessed using established scales with high reliability. Responses were recorded on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Higher scores indicate higher levels of the corresponding construct.

Perceived control [11] was measured using the 11-item scale. A sample item is: "Sometimes I feel I have enough control over the direction of my life."

Approach job crafting [8] was measured using the 24-item scale, which assesses the extent to which employees spontaneously adjust and expand work boundaries. A sample item is: "I proactively take on additional work tasks."

Psychological authentic climate was measured using the five-item scale from Ostermeier et al. [12], which assesses employees' perceptions of a psychological safe and authentic organizational environment. A sample item is: "I feel encouraged to be my true self in my current workplace."

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Perceived insider status [13] was assessed using the nine-item unidimensional scale to evaluate the degree to which individuals feel accepted within the organization. A sample item is: "I feel accepted by my current organization."

Informal leadership emergence was measured using the four-item scale by Schaubroeck, et al. [48], which assesses perceptions of leadership displayed by other members in the absence of formal authority. A sample item is: "I believe other members can provide inspiration and motivation for our team."

4. Data Analysis

4.1. Descriptive and Correlational Analyses

Means and standard deviations for all variables are shown in Table 1. All variables exhibit significant correlations and are generally positively skewed. In terms of distributions, skewness values range from −1.443 to −0.470, and kurtosis values range from 0.266 to 2.234. The absolute values of skewness are below 5, and those of kurtosis are below 10, indicating that the data approximate a normal distribution [53].

Table 1.
Descriptive and Correlation Analyses.

	1	2	3	4	5
1 Perceived Control	1				
2 Approach Job Crafting	0.532**	1			
3 Psychological Authentic Climate	0.599**	0.547**	1		
4 Perceived Insider Status	0.536**	0.508**	0.398**	1	
5 Informal Leadership Emergence	0.254**	0.328**	0.311**	0.205**	1
Mean	3.778	3.752	3.810	3.733	3.918
Standard Deviation	0.680	0.613	0.767	0.831	0.725
Skewness	−1.250	−0.470	−1.028	−1.108	−1.443
Kurtosis	1.922	0.266	1.273	1.180	2.234

Note: $^{**}p < 0.01$. This study compiled the data.

4.2. Common Method Bias

Given the specific time window of data collection, Harman's single-factor test was employed to assess research error and examine potential common method bias [54]. As shown in Table 2, the KMO measure is 0.974 ($p < 0.001$), indicating adequacy for factor analysis. The first factor has an eigenvalue of 19.235 and accounts for 36.29% of the variance, which is below the 40% threshold. This suggests that a single factor does not explain the majority of the variance and that no salient common method bias exists [54]

Table 2.
Single Factor Analysis.

Component	Total	Percentage of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	Percentage of Variance	Cumulative %
1	19.235	36.292	36.292	19.235	36.292	36.292
2	4.330	8.169	44.461	4.330	8.169	44.461
3	2.941	5.550	50.011	2.941	5.550	50.011
4	2.376	4.484	54.494	2.376	4.484	54.494
5	1.582	2.984	57.479	1.582	2.984	57.479

Note: This table presents the Harman single-factor analysis. This study compiled the data.

4.3. Validity Analyses

To determine whether the fit between the theoretical model and competing models (e.g., single-factor and multifactor models) is optimal, a series of model comparisons was conducted. The five variables in the study were specified in a five-factor model. One variable was then randomly loaded onto another factor to form a four-factor model; this procedure was repeated until a single-factor model was

obtained. Finally, the overall model fit was compared. As shown in Table 3, the five-factor model demonstrates markedly superior fit. The model's χ^2 is 1384.539 with df = 1315, yielding $\chi^2/df = 1.053$, which is below 5. Other fit indices are GFI = 0.913, AGFI = 0.905, CFI = 0.996, and NFI = 0.918, all exceeding 0.8; RMSEA = 0.010 and SRMR = 0.024, which are below 0.08. These results indicate good model fit [52, 55, 56].

Table 3.
Multifactor Model Comparison.

Indicator	χ^2	*df*	χ^2/df	GFI	AGFI	CFI	NFI	RMSEA	SRMR
5 Factor	1384.539	1315	1.053	0.913	0.905	0.996	0.918	0.010	0.024
4 Factor	3318.064	1319	2.516	0.670	0.642	0.871	0.803	0.067	0.063
3 Factor	4787.265	1322	3.621	0.556	0.519	0.776	0.716	0.070	0.076
2 Factor	5382.832	1324	4.066	0.526	0.488	0.738	0.681	0.076	0.079
1 Factor	6074.548	1325	4.585	0.509	0.470	0.693	0.640	0.082	0.083

Note: This table presents the results of the multifactor model comparison. This study compiled the data.

Confirmatory factor analysis shows standardized factor loadings for all measurement items ranging from 0.690 to 0.767, composite reliabilities (CR) from 0.842 to 0.962, and average variance extracted (AVE) from 0.514 to 0.571, indicating adequate convergent validity [57]. The square roots of AVE range from 0.717 to 0.755 and exceed the inter-construct correlations, supporting discriminant validity [57]. Detailed results are provided in the Appendix.

4.4. Regression Analyses

Hierarchical regression was used to test the hypothesized relationships among the variables [58]. Table 4 presents the direct and mediated relationships. In Model 1 (M1), age, education, and tenure have no significant effects on approach job crafting. In Model 3 (M3), the standardized regression coefficient of perceived control on psychological authentic climate is 0.598 ($p < 0.001$), with $R^2 = 36\%$, a t-statistic of 17.062 ($t > 3.29$), and VIF = 1.011, indicating a significantly positive effect of perceived control on authentic climate; thus, hypothesis 1 (H_1) is supported [59]. In Model 4 (M4), psychological authentic climate has a standardized regression coefficient of 0.354 ($p < 0.001$) on approach job crafting, with $R^2 = 37.8\%$, a t-statistic of 8.242 ($t > 3.29$), and VIF = 1.564, indicating a significantly positive effect of authentic climate on approach job crafting; hence, hypothesis 2 (H_2) is supported. When the mediator is included, the standardized regression coefficient of perceived control on approach job crafting decreases to 0.329 ($p < 0.001$), from 0.541 in Model 2 (M2), indicating a reduction in effect. This suggests that authentic climate partially mediates the relationship between perceived control and approach job crafting, thereby supporting hypothesis 5 (H_5).

In Model 5, perceived control has a standardized regression coefficient of 0.537 ($p < 0.001$) on perceived insider status, with an R^2 of 28.7%, a t-statistic of 14.510 ($t > 3.29$), and a Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) of 1.011, indicating a significantly positive effect; therefore, hypothesis 3 (H_3) is supported. In Model 6, perceived insider status has a standardized regression coefficient of 0.312 ($p < 0.001$) on approach job crafting, with an R^2 of 36.7%, a t-statistic of 7.587 ($t > 3.29$), and a VIF of 1.402, indicating a significantly positive effect; thus, hypothesis 4 (H_4) is supported. When the mediator is included, the standardized regression coefficient of perceived control on approach job crafting decreases to 0.374 ($p < 0.001$) from 0.541 in Model 2, indicating a reduction in effect. This suggests that perceived insider status partially mediates the relationship between perceived control and approach job crafting, which supports hypothesis 6 (H_6).

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Table 4.
Regression Analyses.

Model	Approach Job Crafting				Psychological Authentic Climate		Approach Job Crafting		Perceived Insider Status		Approach Job Crafting	
	M1		M2		M3		M4		M5		M6	
	***β* (*t*)**	***VIF***	***β* (*t*)**	***VIF***	***β* (*t*)**	***VIF***	***β* (*t*)**	***VIF***	***β* (*t*)**	***VIF***	***β* (*t*)**	***VIF***
Age	0.035 (0.795)	1.012	0.076 (2.065)	1.018	−0.004 (−0.104)	1.018	0.077 (2.230)	1.018	0.008 (0.228)	1.018	0.073 (2.097)	1.018
Education Level	0.063 (1.454)	1.003	0.086 (2.352)	1.005	0.015 (0.439)	1.005	0.081 (2.339)	1.005	−0.002 (−0.046)	1.005	0.087 (2.491)	1.005
Years of Working	−0.056 (−1.275)	1.010	−0.029 (−0.786)	1.012	−0.033 (−0.956)	1.012	−0.017 (−0.495)	1.014	0.010 (0.275)	1.012	−0.032 (−0.918)	1.012
Perceived Control			0.541*** (14.740)	1.011	0.598*** (17.062)	1.011	0.329*** (7.643)	1.570	0.537*** (14.510)	1.011	0.374*** (9.058)	1.415
Psychological Authenticity Climate							0.354*** (8.242)	1.564				
Perceived Insider Status											0.312*** (7.587)	1.402
R^2	0.008		0.298		0.360		0.378		0.287		0.367	
Adj. R^2	0.002		0.292		0.356		0.372		0.282		0.361	
Change in R^2	0.008		0.290		0.353		0.080		0.285		0.069	
F value	1.424		55.823***		74.256***		63.917***		53.028***		60.965***	

Note: *p < 0.05, **p < 0.01, ***p < 0.001.

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Table 5 reports the moderating effects of informal leadership emergence on the relationships among perceived control, perceived insider status, and approach job crafting. In Model 9 (M9), the interaction term between perceived control and informal leadership emergence has a standardized regression coefficient of 0.280 ($p < 0.001$) on perceived insider status, with $R^2 = 35.2\%$, a t-statistic of 6.994, and VIF = 1.297, indicating a significantly positive moderating effect; thus, hypothesis 7 (H_7) is supported. In Model 12 (M12), the interaction term between perceived insider status and informal leadership emergence has a standardized regression coefficient of 0.231 ($p < 0.001$) on approach job crafting, with $R^2 = 36.5\%$, a t-statistic of 6.268, and VIF = 1.118, indicating a significantly positive moderating effect; hence, hypothesis 8 (H_8) is supported. The F-statistics for all models are significant, indicating that each model is statistically valid.

Table 5.
Moderation Analysis.

Model	Dependent variable					
	Perceived Insider Status			Approach Job Crafting		
	M7	M8	M9	M10	M11	M12
	β *(t)* *VIF*	*β* *(t)* *VIF*	*β* *(t)* *VIF*	*β* *(t)* *VIF*	*β* *(t)* *VIF*	*β* *(t)* *VIF*
Age	−0.033 (−0.745) 1.012	−0.005 (−0.136) 1.055	−0.019 (−0.529) 1.058	0.035 (0.795) 1.012	0.013 (0.346) 1.044	0.010 (0.268) 1.044
Education Level	−0.024 (−0.562) 1.003	−0.003 (−0.076) 1.005	−0.011 (−0.303) 1.006	0.063 (1.454) 1.003	0.074 (2.041) 1.004	0.046 (1.321) 1.019
Years of Working	−0.016 (−0.372) 1.010	0.012 (0.327) 1.013	0.011 (0.320) 1.013	−0.056 (−1.275) 1.010	−0.039 (−1.081) 1.011	−0.016 (−0.463) 1.022
Perceived Control		0.517*** (13.483) 1.091	0.579*** (15.332) 1.155			
Informal Leadership Emergence		0.075 (1.936) 1.108	0.179*** (4.487) 1.287		0.229*** (6.135) 1.076	0.298*** (7.902) 1.175
Perceived Control × Informal Leadership Emergence			0.280*** (6.994) 1.297			
Perceived Insider Status					0.462*** (12.523) 1.050	0.453*** (12.695) 1.052
Perceived Insider Status × Informal Leadership Emergence						0.231*** (6.268) 1.118
R^2	0.002	0.292	0.352	0.008	0.317	0.365
Adj. R^2	0.001	0.285	0.345	0.002	0.311	0.357
change in R^2	0.002	0.290	0.060	0.008	0.309	0.048
F value	0.375	43.393***	47.607***	1.424	48.831***	50.201***

Note: *p < 0.05, **p < 0.01, ***p < 0.001

Figures 2 and 3 illustrate the moderating effects of informal leadership emergence on the relationships among perceived control, perceived insider status, and approach job crafting. In Figure 2, under low informal leadership emergence, perceived insider status increases more slowly as perceived control rises; under high informal leadership emergence, perceived insider status increases more rapidly with perceived control. This indicates that informal leadership emergence strengthens the effect of perceived control on perceived insider status, thereby exerting a positive moderating effect. In Figure 3,

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under low informal leadership emergence, approach job crafting increases more slowly as perceived insider status rises; conversely, under high informal leadership emergence, approach job crafting increases more rapidly with perceived insider status. This indicates that informal leadership emergence strengthens the effect of perceived insider status on approach job crafting, thereby exerting a positive moderating effect.

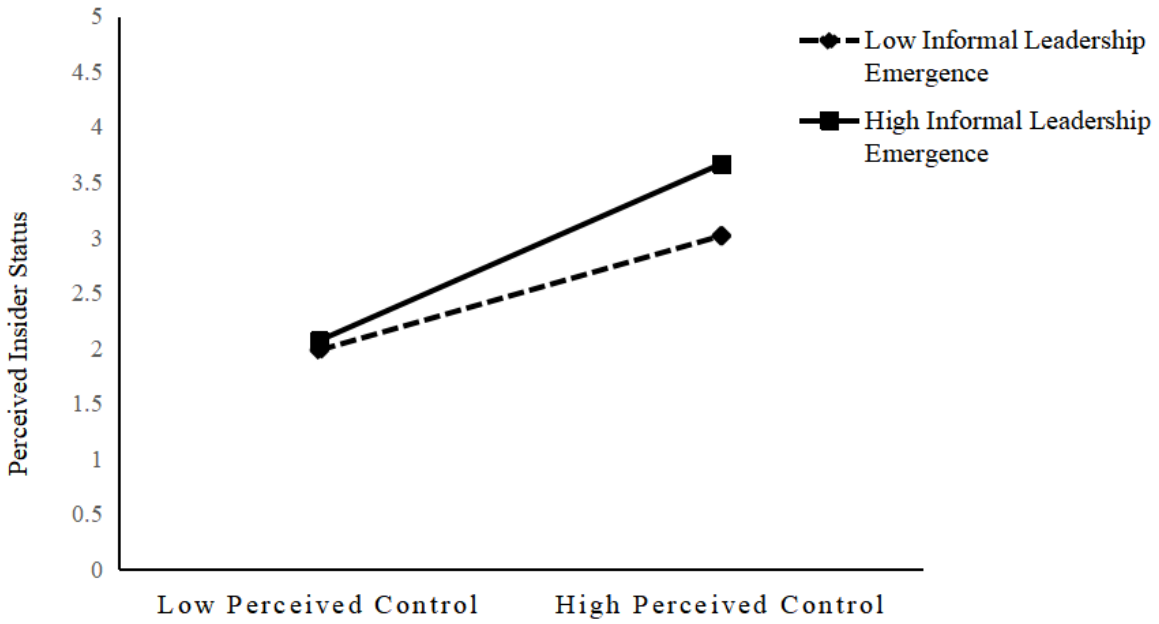

Figure 2.
Moderating Effect of Informal Leadership Emergence on the Relationship between Perceived Control and Perceived Insider Status.

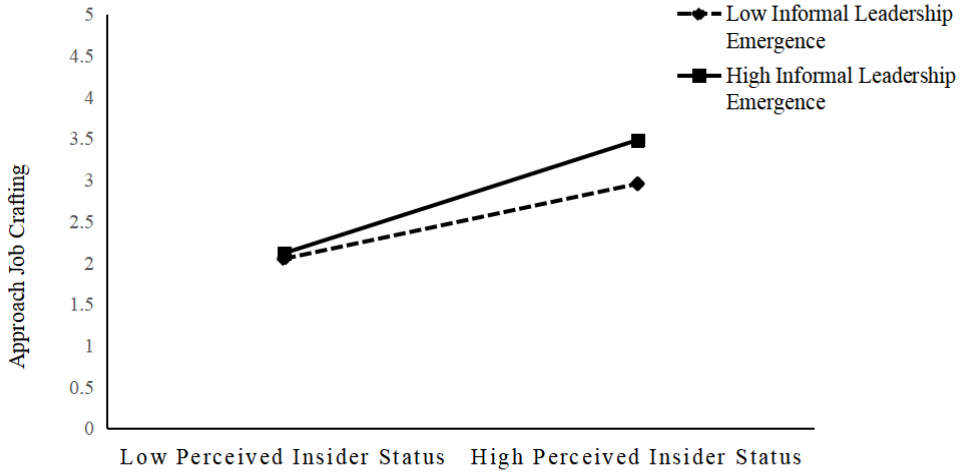

Figure 3.
Moderating Effect of Informal Leadership Emergence on the Relationship between Perceived Insider Status and Approach Job Crafting.

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Vol. 9, No. 12: 789-805, 2025
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Figure 4 presents the structural equation model results that test the hypotheses. Standardized path coefficients are labeled along the arrows, and solid lines denote significant relationships. The results indicate that all hypotheses are supported.

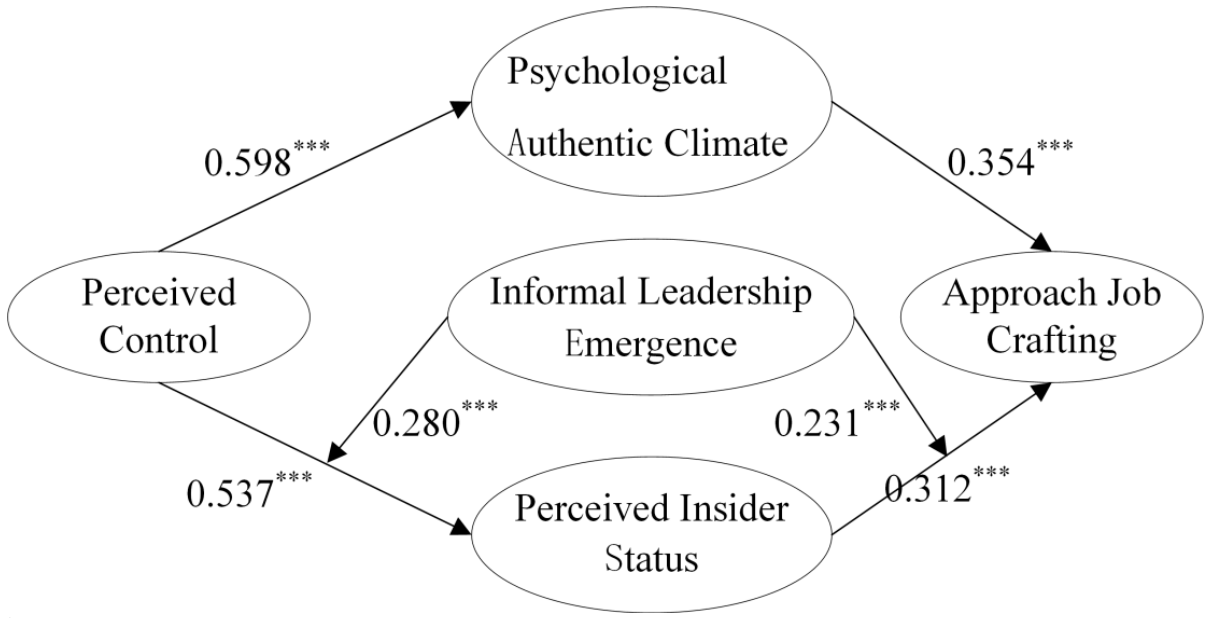

Figure 4.
Research Results.

5. Conclusion and Implication

5.1. Findings

The findings indicate that the influence of perceived control is not direct; rather, it is transmitted through psychological authentic climate and perceived insider status, and ultimately translates into actual behavior. When employees experience greater autonomy and control, they tend to proactively seek ways to enhance the value of their work [24]. This result aligns with Aziz and Abdullah [25] and Hervé and Oh [11], suggesting that control stimulates employee proactivity. From a self-determination theory perspective, this is not a simple unidirectional psychological driver; it operates through a dual psychological mechanism. On the one hand, a psychological authentic climate reduces employees' concerns about risk when attempting change, enabling more assured engagement in transformative work practices [12]. On the other hand, perceived insider status reflects the degree to which employees feel accepted and supported within the organization; such recognition and resource support increase the willingness to engage in job crafting [13]. Furthermore, when teams exhibit higher levels of informal leadership, employees are more likely to convert perceived status into proactive behavior. This echoes Judge et al. [17], who found that naturally formed leadership forces exert important behavioral-shaping effects within teams, while differing from research that places excessive emphasis on formal leadership roles. The study also responds to calls for establishing informal communication structures within organizations to foster an atmosphere of trust [60], thereby guiding individuals' actions in ways that formal leadership cannot reach.

Overall, strong perceived control enhances employees' sense of mastery over work processes and outcomes, supporting the formation of an authentic climate and perceived insider status. This dual support creates a safe, developmental, and recognized environment that fuels proactive adjustment and optimization of tasks, relationships, and cognitions. Informal leadership emergence strengthens the

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translation of individual psychological resources into environmental perceptions and proactive behaviors, thereby facilitating the realization of approach job crafting.

5.2. Theoretical Contributions

This study offers several theoretical contributions to the approach to job crafting. First, prior research has largely focused on the effects of individual traits (e.g., proactive personality and self-efficacy) or leadership styles (e.g., transformational leadership) on job crafting, while underemphasizing the role of perceived control [15]. As a psychological resource, perceived control provides the motivational foundation for approach job crafting, thereby extending the theoretical lens of related studies [10]. Second, by introducing psychological authentic climate and perceived insider status, the study addresses gaps regarding how perceived control is converted into proactive behavior in prior research. It reveals the synergistic roles of authentic climate and status recognition, deepening understanding of the inner logic of job crafting. Third, the study underscores the role of informal leadership in teams. Unlike formal leadership, informal leadership emergence represents the spontaneous distribution of influence among group members [20, 43]. When teams exhibit higher levels of informal leadership emergence, perceived insider status is more readily translated into promotive job crafting, offering new avenues for the intersection of informal leadership and job crafting research.

5.3. Managerial Implications

The study provides practical guidance for organizational management. First, organizations should enhance employees' perceived control through transparent feedback mechanisms and appropriate empowerment, thereby stimulating motivation to proactively optimize work. Second, managers should cultivate a psychological authentic climate in which employees can freely express genuine ideas, reducing concerns and defensive attitudes. At the same time, increasing perceived insider status, through fair evaluation systems, open communication channels, and resource support, can strengthen employees' sense of belonging and proactivity. Finally, under resource constraints in talent investments, prioritizing high-potential employees with strong foundations may yield the fastest returns, as they are more capable of leveraging resources to solve problems, coordinate relationships, and demonstrate outcomes. These employees can more quickly convert latent support into visible performance and leadership behaviors, thereby more easily garnering peer followership. This is consistent with prior findings that concentrating resources on informal leader members can be the most efficient strategy [61].

5.4. Limitations and Future Directions

Despite the valuable conclusions drawn, this study has several limitations. First, the data were collected using self-report questionnaires, which may introduce common method bias. Although every effort was made to minimize error in this study and the results were validated using single-factor testing, this only demonstrates that no major errors were introduced. Therefore, if circumstances permit, future research should adopt longitudinal or objective data-collection approaches to further reduce potential bias. Second, job crafting can be categorized in multiple ways, including forms such as avoidance and prevention-oriented job crafting. This study focuses solely on approach job crafting, whereas some studies on other forms are also valuable and meaningful. Future research can further compare the mechanisms across different forms of job crafting to build a more comprehensive theoretical framework.

Transparency:

The authors confirm that the manuscript is an honest, accurate, and transparent account of the study; that no vital features of the study have been omitted; and that any discrepancies from the study as planned have been explained. This study followed all ethical practices during writing.

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Appendix A.
Confirmatory Factor Analysis.

Variable	Items	Standardized Factor Loading	Cronbach's α	CR	AVE	AVE Square Root
Perceived Control	PC1	0.718	0.921	0.921	0.515	0.718
	PC2	0.715				
	PC3	0.728				
	PC4	0.713				
	PC5	0.711				
	PC6	0.707				
	PC7	0.733				
	PC8	0.745				
	PC9	0.695				
	PC10	0.721				
	PC11	0.705				
Approach Job Crafting	JC1	0.696	0.962	0.962	0.514	0.717
	JC2	0.727				
	JC3	0.715				
	JC4	0.724				
	JC5	0.711				
	JC6	0.727				
	JC7	0.718				
	JC8	0.713				
	JC9	0.743				
	JC10	0.708				
	JC11	0.708				
	JC12	0.733				
	JC13	0.695				
	JC14	0.723				
	JC15	0.710				
	JC16	0.736				
	JC17	0.716				
	JC18	0.740				
	JC19	0.740				
	JC20	0.712				
	JC21	0.708				
	JC22	0.690				
	JC23	0.704				
	JC24	0.709				
Psychological Authentic Climate	PA1	0.767	0.866	0.866	0.564	0.751
	PA2	0.754				
	PA3	0.739				
	PA4	0.744				
	PA5	0.751				
Perceived Insider Status	PIS1	0.737	0.912	0.912	0.536	0.732
	PIS2	0.736				
	PIS3	0.734				
	PIS4	0.732				
	PIS5	0.752				
	PIS6	0.725				
	PIS7	0.701				
	PIS8	0.721				
	PIS9	0.749				
Informal Leadership Emergence	LE1	0.747	0.841	0.842	0.571	0.755
	LE2	0.754				
	LE3	0.769				
	LE4	0.751				

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