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# HOW CAN I THRIVE AT WORK? THE INTERPLAY OF EMPLOYEES' ENVIRONMENT, WORK CULTURE AND JOB-RELATED FACTORS

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## Abstract

*This study investigates how three organizational antecedents – environment, work culture, and job design – jointly shape employees' thriving at work. We propose that these factors create a supportive ecosystem that fosters both vitality and learning. Using a survey of 316 employees in the ICT industry in North Macedonia, we conducted multiple linear regression analyses to assess the predictive power of environment, work culture, and job design on thriving at work. Results reveal that the environmental factors emerged as the strongest predictor, followed by job design and work culture. Altogether, these factors accounted for a substantial portion of the variability in thriving at work, underscoring their collective importance for employee well-being and development. From a practical standpoint, these findings suggest that enhancing physical, social, and structural job dimensions can substantially boost employees' vitality and learning. For managers and human resource professionals, the insights encourage a holistic approach by integrating ergonomic practices, cultivating a positive organizational culture, and thoughtfully designing job roles to promote thriving in contemporary, often remote, work settings.*

**Keywords:** thriving at work, work culture, job design



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## 1. INTRODUCTION

As modern offices struggle between maintaining flexible working arrangements and return-to-office mandates, and the business environment grows as unpredictable and dynamic as ever, making sure that the employees feel like they are becoming better versions of themselves while at work becomes a new priority. This is especially true in the information, communication, and technology (ICT) industry, which is one of the industries that keep a step ahead when it comes to enhancing what is referred to as employee thriving – a state of constant learning, vitality, and well-being in the workplace.

Moreover, in today's rapidly evolving workplace, thriving, which is characterized by vitality and learning (Porath et al., 2022), has drawn growing attention from organizational researchers and practitioners. Thriving reflects more than simple satisfaction or engagement; it captures employees' capacity to sustain a sense of energy while continually learning on the job (Liu et al., 2021). Scholars have increasingly recognized that this state hinges on a multifaceted interplay of personal, interpersonal, and contextual drivers (Spreitzer et al., 2019).

Despite this heightened interest, questions remain about how diverse organizational factors simultaneously influence thriving. Both the job demands-resources model (Bakker et al., 2023) and self-determination theory (Jiang & Wei, 2024) underline the importance of environments and job structures that support autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Yet, most studies tend to explore these factors in isolation, focusing on, for instance, only job design or only the organizational environment, rather than investigating their combined effect (Zhai et al., 2023). Moreover, much of the existing research has examined traditional on-site work settings, offering limited insight into the growing workforce within the ICT sector, which mostly relies on flexible working arrangements such as remote work, hybrid work, working from home, and similar (Mahmoud et al., 2024).

The present study addresses this gap by examining how environment, work culture, and job design collectively shape thriving at work among ICT professionals. We propose that these three antecedents function as resources that not only sustain employees' energy but also spur continuous learning (Nawaz et al., 2020). Drawing on empirical evidence from 316 respondents, we use multiple linear regression to demonstrate the relative contributions of each antecedent to thriving. Hence, this research offers an additional perspective on how physical and social conditions, as well as the structural features of jobs, drive employees' capacity to flourish in contemporary, digitally oriented workplaces.

We structure the paper as follows: the next section develops the theoretical background, outlining key perspectives and prior research on thriving and its antecedents. We then detail our methodological approach, including data collection, measurement instruments, and analytical techniques. After presenting the main findings, we discuss their implications for both theory and practice, highlighting how managers can leverage the interplay of environment, culture, and job design to foster thriving. Finally, we conclude by reflecting on the study's limitations and suggesting directions for future research. By integrating these elements, our study aims to offer clear, actionable insights into how organizations can empower employees to truly thrive at work.

## 2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Thriving at work, defined as a psychological state characterized by both vitality and learning (Porath et al., 2022), has gained significant attention in the human resource management literature. Scholars have argued that a convergence of individual, interpersonal, and contextual factors shapes the extent to which employees thrive (Liu et al., 2021). In particular, work environment, culture, and job design can be viewed as key antecedents of thriving, as they provide resources and social cues that energize employees, foster intellectual growth, and enhance their

sense of purpose (Spreitzer et al., 2019; Mansour & Tremblay, 2021). These constructs in the organizational context are explained below.

*Thriving at work.* Thriving at work represents a significant psychological state encompassing vitality and continuous learning, profoundly influenced by both individual characteristics and organizational contexts. Individual factors, such as psychological capital, proactive personality, positive affect, and core self-evaluations, notably enhance employees' thriving, suggesting that personal resilience and proactive behaviour are essential in cultivating this state (Kleine et al. 2019; Walumbwa et al., 2018). Concurrently, relational and contextual characteristics, including supportive leadership behaviours, perceived organizational support, servant leadership, and coworker interactions, significantly bolster thriving at multiple organizational levels (Goh et al., 2022; Kleine et al., 2019; Walumbwa et al., 2018). Leaders who display and convey grit, particularly when perceived as supportive, play a crucial role in nurturing employee thriving, highlighting the importance of leader attributes and behaviours as boundary conditions shaping employee perceptions and experiences (Rego et al., 2021). Furthermore, thriving functions as a vital mechanism connecting workplace support to broader life outcomes, such as life satisfaction, suggesting that organizations fostering supportive environments not only enhance employee well-being at work but also positively impact overall life quality (Zhai et al., 2020).

*Employees' environment.* Recent research emphasizes the role of the working environment in shaping employee attitudes, performance, and overall well-being. In this research, we view it as a set of factors in the employee's personal and professional lives that relate to the environment such as family support, conditions, trends in the business environment, and similar. The transition to remote and hybrid work, accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, introduced both opportunities and challenges, particularly around the components of the employees' environment for improving work-life balance, alongside concerns about social isolation and diminished team cohesion (Babapour Chafi et al., 2021). Complementing this, Zhenjing et al. (2022) provided evidence that a positive workplace environment significantly enhances employee performance, mediated by increased employee commitment and achievement-striving behaviours.

Moreover, the physical and organizational workplace environment can be used as a strategic tool for attracting and retaining talent, suggesting that well-designed workplaces can foster communication, teamwork, and creativity, thereby sustaining a culture of innovation (Earle, 2003). Taheri (2021) further underscores the importance of family-supportive organizational environments, demonstrating their effectiveness in reducing employee turnover intentions through improved job satisfaction and work-life enrichment. Not just familial support, workplace support from supervisors and coworkers can contribute positively to employees' thriving at work, which in turn enhances life satisfaction, highlighting workplace support as crucial for both individual and organizational success (Zhai et al., 2020).

*Work culture.* Workplace culture is increasingly recognized as a dynamic and multifaceted construct influenced by technological advancements, leadership styles, and organizational practices. Thus, in our context, we consider it as an intangible element of organizational success which is the result of leadership styles, organizational traditions, values, customs, events, and the workplace atmosphere, in general. Cole et al. (2014) discussed how the integration of information and communication technologies has redefined workplace boundaries, blurring traditional distinctions between work and leisure, thereby reshaping workplace culture. This shift significantly affects employee expectations and requires organizations to reconsider how they manage comfort, flexibility, and spatial dynamics within office environments.

Similarly, Holmes and Marra (2002) highlight humour as a key aspect of workplace discourse, revealing insights into workplace subcultures and contributing significantly to organizational identity and cohesion. In this sense, it was found that cultivating an ideal work culture is characterized by safety, efficiency, and positive employee attitudes as precursors to enhancing organizational productivity and reputation (Golwalkar, 2025). Contemporary

management research puts into focus transformational leadership as a vital aspect of modern workplace culture, showing that organizational culture effectively mediates leadership and successful change management in increasingly digital workplaces (Bagga et al., 2023).

*Job design.* Nowadays, closely aligned with job crafting, job design underscores how employees actively modify tasks to align better with their strengths, preferences, and motivations, enhancing personal satisfaction and productivity (Oldham & Fried, 2016), recognizing individual agency, the characteristics of a certain job, the provided resources and demands from the supervisors. Parker and Grote (2022) extend this view, highlighting the increasing relevance of job design in a digitalized workplace, which is in line with the focus of our study. Namely, they argue for proactive integration of human-centred design principles during technological implementation, stressing the importance of maintaining employee autonomy, skill utilization, and relational aspects to mitigate negative effects associated with automation and algorithmic management. The role of well-designed jobs is shown to have a positive impact thanks to the direct correlation with improved job performance (Lee & Lee, 2018). Lee and Lee (2018) further advocated for greater emphasis on job crafting within human resource development strategies, urging organizations to cultivate environments that support and facilitate employees' ability to personalize their roles.

The interplay among these factors is supported by theoretical frameworks such as the job demands-resources (JD-R) model, which posits that organizational resources can counterbalance job demands, thereby promoting well-being and growth (Bakker et al., 2023). The model emphasizes that influencing factors may range from physical conditions and the employees' environment to collaborative norms, and well-structured tasks (Shi et al., 2021).

Aligned with this perspective, the self-determination theory (SDT) suggests that environments fulfil employees' basic psychological needs, including autonomy, competence, and relatedness, amplify their intrinsic motivation and, ultimately, their capacity for thriving (Jiang & Wei, 2024; Iqbal et al., 2024). When the physical and social dimensions of work are constructed to encourage voice, collaboration, and meaningful role configurations, employees experience greater vitality and continuous learning (Alwahhabi et al., 2023). Such favourable conditions also foster higher levels of psychological capital, which Basinska and Rozkwitalska (2022) identify as critical for happiness and thriving in multinational corporations. By contrast, when organizational settings are misaligned with employees' needs, such as those lacking safety, support, or developmental opportunities, thriving is more likely to be undermined (Iqbal et al., 2024).

Further, when employees perceive investments in their well-being, which is accomplished through a constructive work culture, sound job designs, or supportive environmental resources, they are inclined to reciprocate with greater engagement and personal growth (Elahi et al., 2020; Walumbwa et al., 2018). Zhai et al. (2023) reinforce this notion, demonstrating that organizational culture meaningfully predicts thriving via mechanisms such as affective commitment and work engagement. Likewise, Alikaj et al. (2021) show that high involvement of human resource management practices that complement job design can further stimulate employees' proactive behaviours and creative outputs, outcomes that are intimately tied to thriving.

Taken together, these insights pinpoint that thriving is not solely a function of individual dispositions but is deeply embedded in the structure and climate of the organization (Nawaz et al., 2020). Transformational and servant leadership behaviours (Jang et al., 2023), opportunities for job crafting (Harju et al., 2021), and culturally embedded support systems (Basinska & Rozkwitalska, 2022) have all been linked to thriving across diverse occupational settings. By integrating these theoretical principles, our study posits that an enabling environment (in terms of support from family, digital trends, and similar), a positive work culture (reflected from a collaborative atmosphere in the workplace, which is evident even through remote work), and well-thought-out job design on an individual level collectively pave the way for employees to experience vitality, continual learning, and sustained performance (Porath et al., 2022).

### 3. RESEARCH METHODS AND SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS

To fulfil the research objective of analysing the impact of the work environment, job design, and the work culture and employees' thriving at work, we applied a multiple linear regression methodological approach. For this purpose, the data was collected from employees working in organizations from the ICT sector in North Macedonia as the target population, using a questionnaire, disseminated in September 2024 and lasted for four months.

The questionnaire was distributed online through two channels – direct emails to ICT companies operating in North Macedonia and online social media groups for conversations happening in the Macedonian ICT industry. In relation to the sent emails, the authors sent 249 emails, which resulted in 220 responses, making up around 70% of the final sample. Hence, the response rate was around 88%.

The questionnaire consisted of 31 questions out of which 26 related to the items describing the constructs of interest (work environment – five items, while work culture, job design, and thriving at work were represented with seven items each), three questions related to the demographics of the respondents (their work experience, age, and gender), and two questions were so-called eliminatory ones, where the participants had to state the status of their employment and the industry where they worked. In this sense, only those who were employed and those working in the ICT industry were selected for further analysis. We opted for this approach, considering our research purpose for this study which focused on analyzing just the current situation in the ICT industry. With that in mind, a total of 374 responses were collected, but only 316 were considered for the analysis, fulfilling the desired criteria.

The measurement items for each construct were measured on a five-point Likert scale, where 1 indicated "strongly disagree" and 5 "strongly agree. More precisely, the items in the questionnaire were adapted from previous studies on thriving at work and organizational phenomena (Porath et al., 2012; Schriber & Gutek, 1987; Morgeson & Humphrey, 2006; Lu et al., 2018).

With that being said, the work environment construct was represented with statements like "I receive a great deal of feedback from members in my environment about my job performance," and "My family members support me working in this job." Some of the items related to workplace culture were "Work activities are consistently planned well in advance." "This organization values results more than the specific hours worked." "There is a clear distinction between work time and personal time in this organization," and more. The statements that referred to the job design elements encompassed "The job allows me to make decisions about what methods I use to complete my work." "The job itself is very significant and important in the broader scheme of things." "The job requires a variety of skills," and more. In relation to thriving at work, some of the items included "At work, I see myself continually improving." "At work, I have developed a lot as a person." "At work, I feel alert and awake," and similar.

First, a pilot test of the questionnaire was administered to professionals for assessment. The final version of the questionnaire was administered to workers in the ICT industry in North Macedonia. They were informed that the data would be anonymized and thus were encouraged to be truthful in their answers, after which they gave their consent.

316 responses were valid for analysis and thus were included in this study. More than half of respondents (54.4%) have 0-5 years of work experience, indicating a relatively novice workforce (Figure 1). Another 22.8% fall into the 6-10 years category, while 18.0% have accrued 11-20 years of experience. Only a small fraction (4.7%) report 21-30 years of work experience. Overall, the sample skews heavily toward those early in their careers.

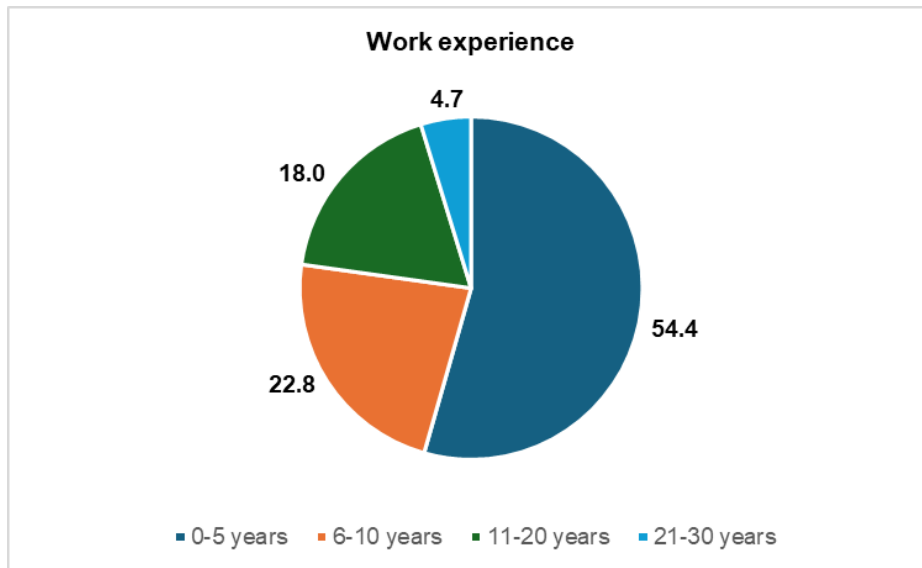


Figure 1 Work experience profiles of respondents

Source: Authors' own analysis

Moreover, most participants identify as male (58.5%), with female respondents making up 41.1% of the sample. A very small subset (0.3%) selected Other/Prefer not to say. While not an exact balance, there is still a substantial representation of both male and female participants (Figure 2).

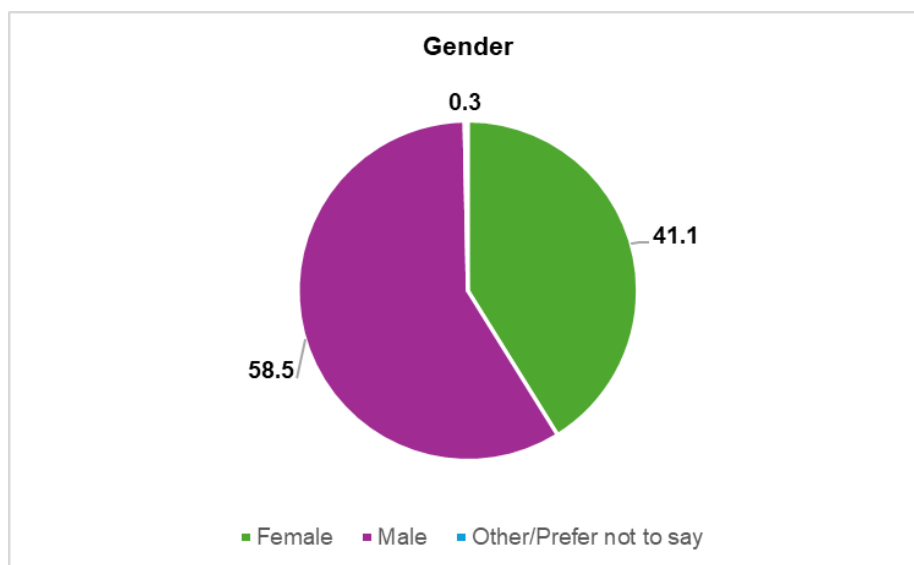


Figure 2 Gender characteristics of respondents

Source: Authors' own analysis

A clear majority (59.8%) are between 18-25 years old, followed by 17.7% in the 26-35 age range. Those aged 36-45 represent 15.5% of the sample, while 6.6% are 46-55, and only 0.3% fall into the 56-65 bracket. This suggests that most respondents are relatively young, which aligns with the high proportion of individuals who also have fewer years of work experience (Figure 3). Also, this corresponds to the perceived growing interest of younger professionals who choose flexible work arrangements and the ICT industry as their path to building their careers (Mahmoud et al., 2024).

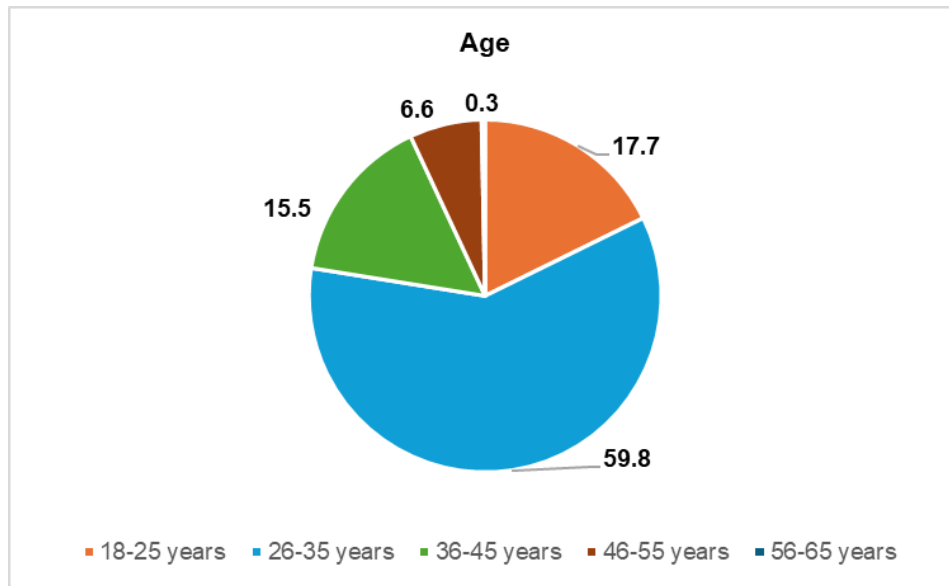


Figure 3 Age characteristics of respondents

Source: Authors' own analysis

For analysing the data, we employed a multiple linear regression approach, which was carried out using the Statistical Packages for Social Scientists (SPSS) version 25. An in-depth description and presentation of the research results are provided in the following section.

#### 4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Multiple regression analysis was used to investigate the impact of the organizational environment, work culture, and job design on thriving at work as a dependent variable. This methodological approach finds a wide range of applications when testing relationships between several independent variables and a dependent one (Hair et al., 2006).

Before the actual regression analysis was performed, we verified multicollinearity, construct reliability, and construct validity using a factor analysis approach. The results of the reliability measurement are indicated in Table 1. Namely, all factor loadings, which were below 0.5 were eliminated from the analysis (Hair et al., 2006).

Table 1 Results of reliability measurement

Constructs	Maximum factor loadings	Alpha coefficients
Employees' environment (EE)	0.885	0.720
Work culture (WC)	0.895	0.830
Job design (JD)	0.917	0.803
Thriving at work (TW)	0.909	0.771

Source: Authors' own analysis

These loadings reflect how strongly the items for each construct correlate with the underlying factor (i.e., the construct they are supposed to measure). In the table, all four constructs have maximum factor loadings between 0.885 and 0.917, indicating that their measurement items

are strongly associated with the intended construct. In terms of Cronbach's alpha, all four constructs exceed the usual threshold of 0.70 (ranging from 0.720 to 0.830) as suggested by Nunnally (1978), meaning the items within each scale are consistently measuring the same underlying concept.

Table 2 presents an overview of the descriptive statistics, including standard deviation and mean scores and the correlations between the variables, demonstrating the level of linear association among the independent variables and their correlation with thriving at work. Each variable (environment, work culture, job design, and thriving at work) has a mean score of around 4.0, suggesting that on average respondents reported relatively favourable perceptions of their environment, work culture, job design, and a high sense of thriving. Standard deviations (all around 0.66 – 0.71) indicate a moderate spread in responses. In other words, while most participants view these factors positively, there is still some minor variation in how they rate their experiences.

Table 2 Descriptive statistics and correlation matrix

Variables	E	WC	JD	TW
Mean	4.023	4.039	3.985	4.086
S.D.	0.665	0.709	0.698	0.678
EE	1			
WC	0.695**	1		
JD	0.742**	0.688**	1	
TW	0.660**	0.744**	0.771**	1

Note: \*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed).

Source: Authors' own analysis

Moreover, the results point out that the bivariate correlations of independent variables are less than 0.9 as a maximum threshold (Hair et al., 2006). All correlations are positive and statistically significant, among which the strongest relationship appears between job design and thriving at work with a correlation of 0.771, implying that effective job design is closely linked to higher levels of thriving. Similarly, work culture and thriving also show a high correlation (0.744), highlighting the importance of a supportive cultural climate for employees' sense of vitality and learning at work. Environment correlates strongly with both job design (0.742) and work culture (0.695), indicating that a favourable environment tends to go hand in hand with constructive job structures and positive organizational culture.

Additionally, we assessed multicollinearity using the variance inflated factor (VIF), which in our case ranged from 2.393 to 3.273. Hair et al. (2006) suggest that VIF should be less than five, which confirms there is no significant multicollinearity issue within the study.

A summary of the regression model and the results of the regression analysis are presented in Table 3. The regression analysis focuses on three key predictors – environment, work culture, and job design – in explaining the dependent variable, thriving at work. Collectively, these predictors account for a substantial amount of variability in thriving at work, as indicated by an R-square of 0.697 and an adjusted R-square of 0.654. This means that over 65% of the variation in thriving at work can be explained by these three factors even after adjusting for the number of variables in the model, which is deemed acceptable in social science research (Ozili, 2023).

Table 3 Regression model

Variables	B	SE B	Beta	t-value	Sig.	VIF
EE	0.363	0.049	0.356	7.379	<0.001	2.393
WC	0.247	0.050	0.258	4.910	<0.001	2.843
JD	0.295	0.055	0.303	5.376	<0.001	3.273
Model Summary	R-square				0.697	
	Adjusted R-square				0.654	
	Std. error of the estimate				0.3756	
	Durbin-Watson				1.929	
ANOVA Regression	F = 238.814, Sig = <0.001					

Source: Authors' own analysis

In terms of individual contributions, environment ( $B = 0.363$ ,  $Beta = 0.356$ ) emerges as the strongest predictor. This suggests that improvements in the individual settings of IT professionals, such as digital orientation, family support, and facilitating external conditions, can have the largest relative impact on employees' sense of vitality and learning. Job design ( $B = 0.295$ ,  $Beta = 0.303$ ) follows, underscoring how thoughtfully structured roles, tasks, and responsibilities also drive employees' capacity to thrive, considering the growing practices of individual-level job crafting in contemporary organizations. Work culture ( $B = 0.247$ ,  $Beta = 0.258$ ) is likewise important, indicating that an inclusive, collaborative, and value-driven culture significantly enhances thriving outcomes.

Subsequently, all predictors are statistically significant at  $p < 0.001$ , suggesting robust findings rather than chance results. Moreover, the F-statistic ( $F = 238.814$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) indicates that the overall regression model is significant, meaning the three predictors together explain thriving at work better than a model with no predictors. The Durbin-Watson score (1.929) is near the ideal value of 2, signalling no major concern for autocorrelation in the residuals (Turner, 2020).

Our results are consistent with prior research that highlights organizational climate and culture as critical enablers of thriving (Zhai et al., 2023). In particular, the positive relationship between work culture and thriving at work aligns with studies that identify culture as an important contextual factor for employees' sense of energy, commitment, and engagement (Nawaz et al., 2020). Likewise, Liu et al. (2021) noted, in their meta-analytic review, that thriving at work is best understood through multiple organizational dimensions, reinforcing our finding that an inclusive, supportive culture significantly bolsters employees' capacity to thrive.

The strong influence of the environment on thriving at work is in line with the research by Spreitzer et al. (2019), who argue that the physical and social features of the workplace play a pivotal role in cultivating employee flourishing. Our data similarly indicates that providing employees with an encouraging, resource-rich, and comfortable environment can be a powerful catalyst for thriving behaviours. These outcomes echo Walumbwa et al. (2018), who suggested that thriving is not merely an individual phenomenon, but one shaped by broader contexts, including the employees' individual one.

Job design likewise emerged as a significant driver of thriving, which is an effect observed in previous studies emphasizing the interplay of job autonomy, task identity, and developmental opportunities (Jiang et al., 2020; Mansour & Tremblay, 2021). When employees perceive their roles as meaningful and well-structured, they are more likely to be energized and engage in growth-oriented behaviours (Harju et al., 2021). Importantly, although Job design was not the single strongest predictor in our model, its sizable effect nonetheless highlights the fact that thoughtful role configuration can profoundly enhance employees' sense of vitality and learning (Alikaj et al., 2021).

Taken together, these findings contribute to the thriving literature by underscoring how distinct yet interrelated organizational factors jointly foster employee growth and well-being. The

interplay among environment, work culture, and job design supports Jang et al. (2023), who stressed that leadership, climate, and job-specific elements operate in synergy to nurture thriving. Furthermore, our results extend prior theoretical frameworks by demonstrating the particularly pivotal influence of the broader workplace setting, joining in the calls to place the physical and contextual environment at the forefront of discussions on thriving (Spreitzer et al., 2019).

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

With our study, we set out to examine the roles of environment, work culture, and job design as antecedents to thriving at work through a regression model, which was grounded in quantitative survey data from 316 employees from the ICT industry. Furthermore, our regression model explained a substantial portion of the variance in thriving (69.7%), with all three predictors making statistically significant contributions. Among them, the environmental factors emerged as the strongest predictor, closely followed by job design and work culture. These findings underline the complex nature of thriving in the organizational context, whereby physical settings, cultural norms, and the structure of work itself collectively shape employees' vitality and learning experiences.

Regarding the study's implications, this study provides practical insights for managers and practitioners seeking to support employee thriving, especially business leaders and human resource management professionals. Interventions that enhance workplace design such as collaborative spaces and ergonomic facilities cultivate a positive organizational culture, open communication, and shared values, and offer well-crafted roles with high levels of autonomy and skill variety, to name a few. Hence, combining these is more likely to yield substantive improvements in employees' vitality and learning.

Yet, the study does not come free of some limitations, which at the same time represent pathways for future research. In this sense, future research could build on these findings by examining longitudinal data or complementing the study with a qualitative methodological approach through in-depth interviews with representatives from the target population. Moreover, potential mediators such as affective commitment (Zhai et al., 2023) or investigating boundary conditions like leadership style and individual attributes (Jang et al., 2023), can be included for scaling up the research model.

By doing so, scholars and practitioners can further refine strategies for creating flourishing workplaces and ensuring that employees not only survive but truly thrive at work. Subsequently, leaders and human resource professionals can leverage these insights by creating environments that support employees' physical, cognitive, and emotional well-being, designing roles that promote autonomy and purpose, and nurturing an inclusive work culture.

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