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Employees' Consciousness Around Meaningful Work

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Abstract

This study aims to investigate employees' consciousness around meaningful work via a quantitative research methodology, to try and find out *if employees are conscious about the work having a meaning and if certain employee characteristics show signs of more consciousness around meaningful work*. This research question is broken down into three sub-questions: (1) *Does meaningful work affect employees' efforts while at work?* (2) *Does meaningful work affect employees' attendance?* (3) *Were people conscious about meaningful work when they made their career choice?* In the recent few decades, discussion about motivation started emerging in organizations. Theories emphasizing organizational performance, system, and productivity has made way for emerging theories about intrinsic motivation, for instance meaning, purpose, job satisfaction, and commitment, and how these factors work as motivators on employees. Additionally, statistics show that organizations experience change in the bottom line as a result of change in motivation among employees. A survey was conducted via an online platform and sent out to people via social media. Based on a sample size of a hundred and nine respondents, this study found out that the majority of employees were conscious about meaningful work, although it was very difficult to pinpoint exact characteristics that made certain people more conscious around meaningful work. Meaningfulness affected efforts, although it was not possible with the current dataset to claim that there were any certain employees whose efforts were more likely to be affected. Surprisingly, meaningful work did not affect attendance, but there were reasonable explanations for this. The majority of people were conscious regarding career choice and meaningful work, and many people pursued what they initially believed was meaningful. Reassuringly, those who were more conscious about meaningful work were less likely to be financially incentivized.

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Foreword

This study is a concluding master's thesis and conducted as part of a Master's of Science degree in Business Administration, with a major in Strategy and Management, from University of Stavanger Business School.

I became aware of this thesis' topic through the course «Economics of Motivation», and it immediately caught my attention as I find the topic motivation, particularly meaningful work, very interesting.

The data for this thesis was acquired from respondents whom I reached via social media, with a little bit of help from family and friends, and thus they all deserve a huge thanks for their participation. Finally, a special thanks goes out to my supervisor, Ingeborg Foldøy Solli, for all her help and guidance throughout this challenging process.

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Momin Talat Mohammad

1 Introduction

This study will shed light on one of the factors that motivates employees and their behavior. This factor is called ‘meaningful work’, one of the behavioral mechanisms in the topic motivation. Organizations are striving to understand what motivates employees and what makes them stay in their positions, and most importantly how to motivate them to work towards the organizations goals and its best interest.

In the recent few decades, discussion about motivation started emerging in organizations. Theories emphasizing organizational performance, system, and productivity has made way for emerging theories about intrinsic motivation, for instance meaning, purpose, job satisfaction, and commitment, and how these factors work as motivators on employees (Chalofsky and Krishna, 2009). Meaningful work can also impact other important mechanisms such as morale, attitude, and mindset. Statistics show that organizations experience change in the bottom line as a result of change in motivation among employees (BrandonGaille, 2018; Greatify, 2018).

Motivation is defined as a psychological process that provides an individual’s behavior purpose and direction (Kreitner, 1995). Meaning is defined as something that ‘serves a purpose’ (Byrne et al., 2013). The term ‘meaningful work’ became used to capture the degree of significance employees believed their work had, and often referred to work that employees believed served a purpose and thus had some sort of significance (Pratt and Ashforth, 2003; Rosso et al., 2010). Ariely et al. (2008) defined purpose as a link between the work and objectives.

Judge and Watanabe (1993) stated that a person’s experiences at work strongly influence their general well-being and their satisfaction with life in general. In addition to the economic securities that the work provides, people may find happiness, meaning, and self-realization through their work (Ryan and Deci, 2001). They also stated that a person is often identified through their choice of profession.

In 1959, Frederick Herzberg developed his own theory on motivation, called the Two-Factor Theory. In this theory he separated the factors that provided positive satisfaction and factors that provided negative satisfaction. This is the theory that this study is based on the most.

It is also important to distinguish between meaning *of* work and meaning *at* work. Schaefer and Darling (1996) defined meaning of work as an opportunity to offer services to others and not distinct from other areas of life. Richards (1995) stated that meaning at work is found when employees are engaged and committed to the organization or workplace. The work will then become more joyful.

The conditions within an organization can also affect an employee's motivation. A company that has negative environmental effects and a high degree of pollution may impact several factors such as recruiting, productivity, or salary. Negative environmental effects may negatively affect employee's motivation in terms of meaningful work. In recent years, there has been a lot of focus on sustainable energy and a cleaner environment, and constantly more people are being made aware of these factors.

Employees who wish to positively contribute towards the environment and the society, will seek to work in an organization that prioritizes these factors. Employees may face moral and ethical concerns when working in an organization that has high negative environmental effects. These employees will feel that they are, either directly or indirectly, damaging the environment, which in many cases can be demotivating. It is also expected that when environmental quality decreases, worker productivity will also decrease, and worker health may be negatively affected as well, while also increasing employment cost.

This study will try to investigate if the *meaning of* the work affects employees motivation. Because motivation is an individual matter, managers should adjust to each and every employee. If the managers do understand employees' behavior, then they will be better equipped to increase the employees' and organization's productivity. The cost of developing employees' motivation is very small compared to the increase in the organizations productivity, as such, such research as this may be useful in most, if not all, workplaces and professions. This study will hopefully serve as a guideline for managers to develop employees' motivation with respect to meaningful work.

The purpose of this study is to conduct a quantitative research to try and find out *if employees are conscious about the work having a meaning and if certain employee characteristics show signs of more consciousness around meaningful work*. In this study, '*conscious about the work*' is about finding out if employees are aware of the work having a meaning as they go about their

daily work. The characteristics refer to variables such as age, gender, and types of education. As mentioned earlier, meaningful work is a behavioral mechanism in the topic motivation. This main research question is broken down into three sub-questions, which each taking on a ‘consequence’ of meaningful work; efforts while at work, attendance, and career choice:

- (1) *Does meaningful work affect employees’ efforts while at work?* In other words, if the employees *themselves* feel there is a purpose behind their efforts. This study will try to find out if there are employees with certain types of education, as well as the type of work that they perform, that have any effect on efforts exerted while working.

- (2) *Does meaningful work affect employees’ attendance?* In addition to answering this question, the goal is also to find out if there are certain types of employees (age and gender, as well as the type of education that they have and what they work with) that show signs of showing up at work more.

- (3) *Were people conscious about meaningful work when they made their career choice?* The objective is to understand if the choice of profession was affected by any underlying values, or simply by financial incentives. This question directly approaches the subject by using Herzberg’s Two-Factor Theory, and tries to find out the effect of intrinsic and extrinsic motivational factors on employees.

Numerous research has previously been conducted around these topics, however, what this study aims to achieve is an understanding and seeing if employees are aware of the meaningfulness in the work as they go about their daily work. Further on in this study, answers to these questions will be provided and the three sub-questions will be used to answer the main research question.

This research was conducted by surveying employees. First, a pilot survey was conducted to test the validity of the questions. Upon completing this initial trial, the questions needed a few improvements. The survey was run again and the results were satisfactory this time around. The survey design and the phrasing of the questions were partly motivated by the approach that Herzberg et al. used for the Two-Factor Theory.

This study found out that the majority of employees are conscious around meaningful work, although it is very difficult to pinpoint exact characteristics that makes people more conscious

about meaningful work. Meaningfulness affects efforts, although it is not possible with the current dataset to claim that there are any certain employees whose efforts are more likely to be affected. Surprisingly, meaningful work does not affect attendance, but there are reasonable explanations for this. The majority are conscious regarding career choice and meaningful work, and many people pursue what they initially believed was meaningful. Reassuringly, those who are more conscious about meaningful work were less likely to be financially incentivized.

2 Theory

2.1 Theoretical Background

2.1.1 Motivation and Meaning

Motivation is defined as a psychological process that provides an individual's behavior purpose and direction (Kreitner, 1995). Meaning is defined as something that 'serves a purpose' (Byrne et al., 2013). Purpose is a link between the work and objectives. Some people perceive meaning as an intrinsic motivation, while others perceive meaning as an incentive (Ariely et al., 2008). This study perceives meaningful work as an intrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation is where an employee's behavior is influenced by factors within the individual, typically job satisfaction or the feeling of helping other people, for instance.

The term 'meaningful work' is used to capture the degree of significance employees believe their work has, and often refers to work that employees believe serves a purpose and thus being of significance (Pratt and Ashforth, 2003; Rosso et al., 2010). The term is also related to several work-related benefits, such as job satisfaction and performance (Grant, 2007; Hackman and Oldham, 1980; Rosso et al., 2010). Maslow (1971) stated that employees who do not view their workplace as meaningful and purposeful will not exert efforts up to their professional capacity.

It is important to distinguish between meaning *of* work and meaning *at* work. Schaefer and Darling (1996) concluded in their study that meaning of work can be defined as an opportunity to offer services to others and not distinct from other areas of life. Meaning at work on the other hand is when the employee is engaged and committed to the organization or workplace. When there is meaning at work, the work will then become more joyful (Richards, 1995). An employee that is motivated has their goals aligned with the goals of the organization (Kamalian et al., 2010), and will therefore increase the organizations productivity.

2.1.2 Various Theories

Aristotle wrote in his book *Rhetoric*, that each action is influenced by one of seven causes: chance, nature, compulsion, habit, reasoning, anger, or appetite (Aristotle et al., 1954). Abraham Maslow builds on the theory regarding motivation through his famous hierarchy of needs (figure 2.1.1). According to Maslow, all humans have these needs and they shall be satisfied in the given order. For instance, physiological needs must be satisfied before moving upwards in the pyramid/hierarchy. Physiological needs are factors such as hunger, thirst, reproduction, and sleep. Safety needs are those needs that provide safety and security, and these factors typically influence a person's behavior. Belongingness needs are those needs that involve emotion; we all want to love and be loved. Esteem needs are factors that increase a person's self-esteem, be that respect or recognition. Finally, self-actualization needs, which basically is about a person being the best they can be; to fulfill their potential (Jacobsen and Thorsvik, 2007; Maslow, 1943).

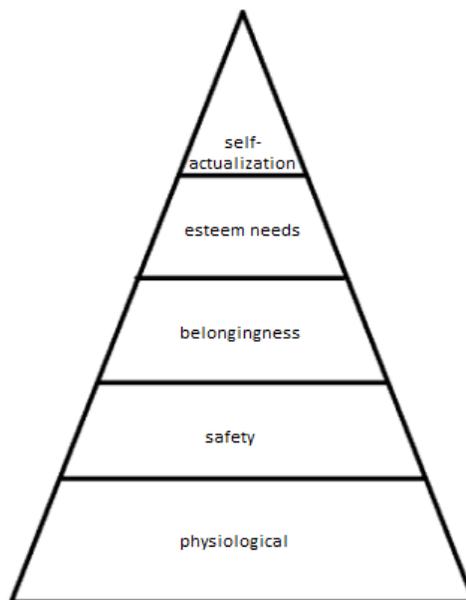


Figure 2.1.1: a simplified version of Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs.

Frederick Herzberg developed his own theory regarding motivation in 1959, called the Two-Factor Theory. He separates motivators and hygiene factors. Motivators are called intrinsic motivation and are those factors that provide positive satisfaction, for instance performance, the work itself, recognition, or personal growth. Hygiene is called extrinsic motivation and are those factors that do not necessarily increase satisfaction if they are present, but that provide negative

satisfaction if they disappear, for instance salary and good work conditions (Herzberg et al., 1959; Jacobsen and Thorsvik, 2007).

Herzberg et al. collected data from over 200 workers for their study. They based their interviews on three specific measurements of job attitudes. The first one was about the workers overall attitude, and whether they liked or disliked their work. The second was about the factors that led to said attitudes. The worker's morale was observed. The aim was to find out what the workers themselves wanted from their jobs. In the third measurement the goal was simply to observe the workers to find out about the consequences of said attitudes (Herzberg et al., 1959). The conclusions Herzberg later stated in another publication were of particular interest. As mentioned earlier, motivators were those factors that provided positive satisfaction, while hygiene were those factors that provided dissatisfaction if not present. He came to a conclusion that satisfaction and dissatisfaction were not the opposites of each other, i.e. the opposite of satisfaction was not dissatisfaction. Instead, 'no satisfaction' was understood to be the opposite of 'satisfaction' and 'no dissatisfaction' the opposite of 'dissatisfaction' (Herzberg, 1968).

Hackman and Oldham (1976) developed the 'Job Characteristics Model' using Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, among others, as motivation and basis for the study. The model illustrates five job dimensions, that prompt three psychological states, which finally leads to several outcomes. The main relevant part of this model for my study is the psychological states. They stated that an individual employee experiences positive effects to the extent that they *learn* (knowledge of results) that they *personally* (experienced responsibility) have performed a certain task that they *care about* (experienced meaningfulness). This experience will then reinforce and motivate the employee with incentives to continue performing well in the future.

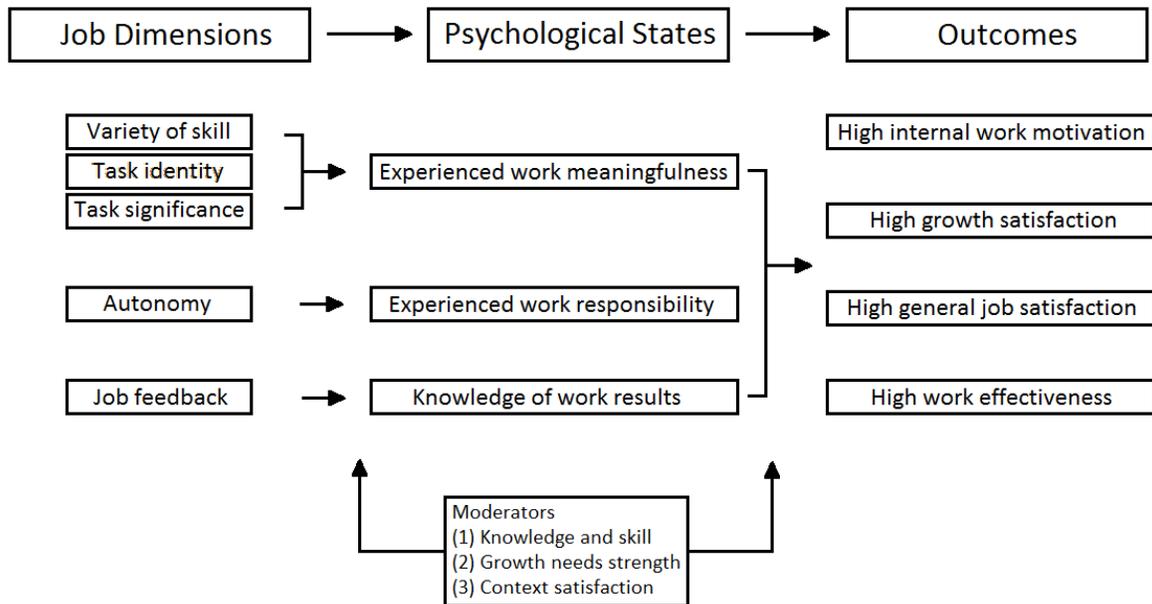


Figure 2.1.2: a simplified version of Hackman and Oldham’s Job Characteristics Model.

These theories and definitions are all linked together in that each employee is unique, with their own individual needs and preferences, but common for everyone is that they are all motivated by at least one of the factors that are mentioned, and these theories shed light on those factors. These theories will therefore serve as tools to conduct this study. My theoretical approach will be Herzberg’s Two-Factor Theory, which will be used as basis for the survey that will be conducted. It will also be used regarding some discussion around the findings and other eventual remarks, but will also be supplied by the theories and literature. This study will focus on the ‘motivator’ part of the model, which sheds light on the needs the work itself satisfies, and therefore provide employees with meaning and purpose.

The general hypothesis of this study is that an employee whose work is perceived as meaningful, both in personal terms and in social terms, will have a higher degree of motivation and exerts efforts more efficiently while at work in addition to having a higher attendance.

$H_0 : \beta = 0$ meaningfulness does affect motivation, effort, and attendance

$H_1 : \beta \neq 0$ meaningfulness does not affect motivation, effort, and attendance

2.2 Literature and Empirical Background

During 1960s till 1970s, motivation theorists realized that individual employees expressed a need for a work and a workplace that they believed was meaningful, otherwise they would not achieve that sense of higher purpose and fulfillment (Herzberg et al., 1959; Maslow, 1943; McClelland, 1965). Wrzesniewski et al. (1997) suggested that most people see their work either as a job (where the focus lies hugely on the financial aspect and the necessities the job fulfills), as a career (where the focus is on the possibilities for advancement and personal growth), or as a calling (where the focus is on personal fulfillment, be that something that is joyful, or taking on the responsibilities of providing benefits for the society). They argued that the people who have found meaning in their work and who perceive their work as a calling generally show symptoms of greater work satisfaction and spend more time working without necessarily being rewarded financially. They also hinted at the idea that those who see their work as a calling showed symptoms of better health and lifestyle, but this is something that has yet to be fully proven.

Some people may perceive meaningfulness of work as negative, while others may see it as a positive thing. It can be argued that some people may identify meaningfulness of work as to being bound to one profession, which in return may lead these people to view their work as a moral duty, and in some cases make sacrifices in other areas of life for the work's sake. On the other hand, the work can be made meaningful and potential sacrifices justified. This can happen when the work is seen as a calling. People may choose a profession or a task out of availability, curiosity, or importance. This will then motivate them to make sense of their work (Bunderson and Thompson, 2009).

Previous research also suggests that the level of meaningfulness of work significantly affects how employees exert their efforts. An experiment showed that work with a low level of meaningfulness decreased the quality of output, while a high level of meaningfulness increased the quantity of output. The level of meaningfulness affected the employees' accuracy and the length in time in which they were at work (Chandler and Kapelner, 2013).

It is also pointed out that when employees have the opportunity to customize their work in personally, meaningful ways, also called job crafting, then that will have a significant importance with regards to their motivation (Byrne et al., 2013; Wrzesniewski and Dutton, 2001). Rogers

(1959) stated that employees view their work as purposeful when they have the freedom to express themselves as who they really are in a flexible and changing way.

Locke (1975) claimed that people strive to accomplish their goals to satisfy their desires, emotions, and needs. Organizations, on the other hand, who exert efforts to develop motivation among their employees and make the employee's well-being a priority tend to have employees who are more committed to the company (Dessler, 1999). Steger et al. (2012) came to a conclusion that meaningfulness of work is important to employees' job satisfaction, well-being, and generally being content with the organization they are working at. At the same time, because they were suspecting biased participants for their study, it was not clear to them that employees who were more interested in meaningful work were more likely to be more content with their work.

The financial aspect of work is one of the most concerning for many people. Chapman et al. (2005) emphasized that financial compensation was a strong indicator in terms of job selection. In their study, they found out that one of the factors that determined career choice was pay. However, an interesting research was conducted by Hu and Hirsh (2017) using a set of four different approaches. Interestingly enough, all four approaches resulted in the same conclusion in that employees were willing to accept lower salaries in exchange for more personally meaningful work.

Dempsey and Sanders (2010) mentioned in their study that in some cases financial sacrifices are made in order to pursue meaning and satisfaction in a person's work. Such cases can very often be found in voluntary and charity work. Two other studies came to similar observations, claiming that the level of financial compensation is only marginally correlated with job satisfaction (Judge and Church, 2000; Judge et al, 2010).

Keeping all the previous researches and findings in mind, this research will investigate if employees are aware of the work having a meaning as they go about their daily work. The three sub-questions mentioned in the introduction will hopefully serve as a guideline in achieving this objective; if meaningful work affects efforts while at work, if meaningful work affects attendance, and if career choice was motivated by any underlying values or simply by financial

incentives. Answering these questions will hopefully increase the knowledge base in this topic and also pave way for future research, which will be discussed further on.

3 Methodology and Data

3.1 Empirical Strategy

The research design was set up so that this study would have a quantitative approach. A quantitative research methodology is used when there is a need to collect data for quantification and subsection to statistical analysis (Creswell, 2003). A quantitative research also usually ends with a hypothesis being confirmed or rejected. Leedy (1993) stated that a quantitative approach was used when there were measurable variables involved, and such an approach helps «control, explain, or predict» a situation.

The purpose was to find out if employees were conscious about the work having a meaning. The general hypothesis was that an employee whose work is perceived as meaningful, both in personal terms and in social terms, will have a higher degree of motivation and exerts efforts more efficiently while at work in addition to having a higher attendance. The aim with this research was also to find out what kind of incentives career choice was based on.

The analysis would consist of two regression models. In the first regression, seven models will be used, mainly to answer the first two sub research questions; ‘*Does meaningful work affect employees’ efforts while at work?*’ and ‘*Does meaningful work affect employees’ attendance?*’ The objective was to find out if the employees *themselves* felt there was a purpose behind their efforts, as well as investigating if attendance would be affected by meaningful work. Each model will have a different dependent variable, but all of the models will have a similar structure to this:

$$y = \alpha + \beta_1 \text{female} + \beta_2 \text{age} + \beta_3 \text{education} + \beta_4 \text{meaningful} + \beta_5 \text{decision} + \beta_6 \text{ownership} + \beta_7 \text{conscious} + \beta_8 \text{likelihood} + \varepsilon$$

All the models will use the gender, age, and education variables, but not all models will have all of the remaining independent variables. In the main research question it was mentioned ‘*finding out if certain employee characteristics show signs of more consciousness around meaningful work*’. The characteristics refer to the gender, age, and education variables. The objective is to find out if there are employees in a certain age group that consider their work more meaningful

than others, or if the same applies for females and males. At the same time it is also of particular interest to find out how these characteristics work with other variables such as education and the different types of work that the employees perform.

The dependent variables (y) are perceived meaningfulness (whether the employees perceived their work as meaningful), efforts while at work (the degree of efforts exerted while working), having decision-making responsibilities, having a sense of ownership towards the company, attendance (whether the employees were motivated to show up at work every single day), conscious career choice (whether people made a conscious career choice), and the likelihood dummy variable (whether they based their career choice exactly on what they initially thought was meaningful).

As for the independent variables, in addition to gender, age, and education, five of the dependent variables will also be used as independent variables; meaningful, decision, ownership, conscious, and likelihood. The intention is to see how the different variables affect each other. A different dependent variable may present new results and conclusions, as well as changing the significance of the independent variables.

It may not be usual to use some variables as both dependent and independent variables. The goal in the beginning, when starting to work with the dataset, was to construct one dependent variable and several independent variables. However, while working with the dataset and while trying to figure out how best to answer the research questions, it seemed like many of the variables could be used as both dependent and independent variables, partly because of having three sub research questions and using several dependent variables would help both explaining the dataset better and answering the sub research questions better. This idea also seemed more convincing because the questions asked in the survey were closely related to each other and would help explain each other.

Apart from the aforementioned regression model, a test regression was run using only a few of the dummy variables that were created for the age and education variables. This was done to test and see if these dummy variables held any major power in the model. The exclusion of these dummy variables did alter the regression results a little bit but not significantly in terms of the

coefficients, and reassuringly the interpretation of the coefficients and the analytical results of the models remained the same and presented the same conclusions.

The beta (β) coefficients will be interpreted in the following manner; if β is positive, then it is positively correlated with the dependent variable (y), meaning the dependent variable will increase, and if negative, then it will result in a decrease in the dependent variable. For instance, if the dependent variable is attendance and we have a positive β coefficient for females, then the interpretation is that being female increases attendance by said coefficient.

Another model was constructed to answer the third sub-question; '*Were people conscious about meaningful work when they made their career choice?*' The objective was to understand if the choice of profession was affected by any underlying values, or did financial incentives have a significant effect.

$$y = \alpha + \beta_1\text{education} + \beta_2\text{most} + \beta_3\text{influence} + \varepsilon$$

In this model, the dependent variable is conscious career choice (whether people made a conscious career choice), and the independent variables are types of education, the factor the employees considered the most meaningful, and the factor that actually influenced their career choice. The most meaningful factors are related to question six in the survey; '*Which of these factors do you consider the most meaningful?*' The influencing factors are related to question eight in the survey; '*Which of these factors influenced your career choice the most?*' It is important to note that question eight had a few extra alternatives and that it was possible to select multiple alternatives. The alternatives in both questions were outcomes of Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory.

Regarding the 'conscious career choice' variable in both models, it is possible that it presents a slight weakness to the models. One would assume that most people make their career choice in their late teens or early twenties. It is possible to argue that many people in this age group may not be fully thinking about meaningful work just yet. For many people in this age group, career choice is about building a future for themselves, perhaps doing something they like that is enjoyable or something that is not so boring, or that many people are mostly motivated by the financial aspect of the work. The point is that when more mature people answer question seven

in the survey (*‘Was meaningfulness important to you when you made your career choice?’*), their perception of career choice and meaningfulness may have changed over the years compared to their initial belief when they were younger, and this is something that is not being tested for or controlled in these models.

3.2 Data Acquisition

This research was conducted via a survey using an online survey platform. A written survey was outlined (attached in the appendix) with regards to the questions that were asked in the beginning of the study. As mentioned earlier, the survey design and how the questions were phrased were partly motivated by Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory. Additionally, the survey contained no 'open questions' and were as short as possible, so that people would actually be bothered to answer. The thought was that a time-wise long survey would result in some people abandoning the survey, or quickly getting through it without giving it much thought.

The survey was then sent out to people, who were reached via social media with a little bit of help from family and friends. The participants were informed that the survey was completely anonymous. The whole survey would require approximately two minutes to complete. First, a pilot/trial survey was conducted and upon receiving the answers, it was understood that the survey contained some errors that needed improvements in terms of how the questions were phrased. Finally, another improved survey was sent out again and this time the results were satisfactory.

The collected data was then analyzed using a data analysis and statistical software called STATA, with the help of the theories and literature mentioned earlier. Two regressions were run using various variables from the dataset, to test for the significance of the models. The variables were direct outcomes of the questions asked in the survey, and all the collected answers were included in the analysis; no information from the survey was subject to exclusion. Additionally, dummy variables were created for the various age groups and types of education, as well as one called 'likelihood'; the likelihood that a person chooses the same factor in question six (*'Which of these factors do you consider the most meaningful?'*) and question eight (*'Which of these factors influenced your career choice the most?'*). This last dummy variable was also meant as a possible way to check for some truth in the respondents' answers.

In the beginning of this study, the hopes were achieving a sample size of somewhere between fifty and hundred (albeit not a lot) respondents. However, the survey resulted in a hundred and nine respondents. Now, since the respondents were geographically dispersed, the dataset

acquired would be ‘challenging’ in terms of how representative the sample was. As mentioned earlier, the survey was sent out via social media and through personal connections. This meant that the sample size consisted of a variety of age groups, types of education, and also another factor that was not the focus of this study; cultural background (how meaningful work and work in general is perceived in other cultures).

Kruskal and Mosteller (1979) stated that samples should be selected bearing in mind some sort of probability mechanism. In other words, the sample should be a fair representation of the population, i.e. the different characteristics in the sample should be fairly distributed, such as the same amount of females and males, or the same amount of respondents in each age group.

That could also present another ‘concern’ regarding how reliable the dataset was. The survey that was conducted was valid to a certain degree. The survey measured what it was supposed to measure. The questions in the survey directly approached the research questions that were asked in the beginning of this study. One area of concern was whether the respondents understood the questions in the same way. As mentioned earlier, the topic for this thesis was decided after completing a university course on motivation. This means that the respondents may not have the same understanding of the research area as the researcher who is conducting the survey. Another concern is whether the survey provided the kind of answers that the research was seeking. For the survey, this is an area that was put a lot of effort into, in order to phrase the questions as good as possible so that there are no confusions for the respondents.

However, the survey had a low degree of reliability. If the survey was to be conducted using the same approach, i.e. social media, we would get a different result every single time. The results would not be consistent because there would be a very slim probability that the exact same people, or type of people (e.g. characteristics), would participate over and over again. The consequence of such an approach is that the dataset may not be so much trustworthy. To check the reliability, the survey would have to be conducted in the same manner multiple times and perhaps achieve similar results. Now even though the dataset for this research has a low degree of reliability, it should still be possible to present a good analysis. After all, results and analysis are based on the dataset that is presently at hand.

The conclusions that are presented later in this paper are based on a sample size of a hundred and nine respondents. Looking at 3.2.1 table below (summary statistics for the whole dataset), we can see that gender-wise, the sample included a fair distribution between females and males, with 44% females and 56% males. Ideally, having a fair distribution between such characteristics provides an argument that it is a good percentage to draw conclusions from. However, the distribution regarding the different age groups was a little bit different. There was a higher percentage of respondents in the ages of 21-29 and 30-39. Another thing to note is that 26% of the respondents were teachers. One would assume that many of those who become a teacher might have a higher degree of intrinsic motivation than people with other professions, and so this makes the results a little biased. This argument is boosted even further especially when looking at the ‘likelihood’ variable.

This variable refers to a dummy variable created for questions six (*‘Which of these factors do you consider the most meaningful?’*) and eight (*‘Which of these factors influenced your career choice the most?’*). If both answers did not match, then the dummy variable would be assigned a numerical value of ‘0’, and if both answers matched, then a numerical value of ‘1’ would be assigned. The way this was interpreted was that if both answers matched then there was a positive likelihood of the respondent being more conscious around meaningful work. One thing to note is that the answer for question eight had a few extra alternatives than question six, and these alternatives were a direct outcome of Herzberg’s Two-Factor Theory. This implication in the dataset was dealt with the same way as earlier. If the answers did not match, a numerical value of ‘0’ would be assigned. It is also important to note that the respondents were able to select multiple alternatives in question eight, and again, if the answers matched then a numerical value of ‘1’ would be assigned to that respondent.

One reason this dummy variable was created was to check for some truth in the respondents’ answers. 60% chose the same factor in both questions, providing a good argument for the analysis. These respondents based their career choice exactly on what they initially thought was meaningful. Meanwhile in table 3.2.2, it is shown 22% correlation between ‘conscious’ and ‘likelihood’ variables. This number can be used as a reliability measure when analyzing the results. So the way this variable boosts the argument that the results are a little biased is that those with a teaching education are 60% more likely to answer the same factor in questions six

and eight, meaning that it increases the likelihood of the results leaning more positively towards a higher degree of intrinsic motivation and thus more meaningfulness.

‘Meaningful’ is the variable for question one (*‘Do you think your work is meaningful, in the sense that your work contributes to society’s welfare?’*). 79% of the respondents said that their work was meaningful. ‘Efforts’ refers to question two (*‘Does this affect your motivation and how you exert your efforts while working?’*). 21% of the respondents were not able to answer this question because they answered ‘no’ in question one. The way this implication was dealt with in the dataset was that a numerical value of ‘1’ was assigned to those who answered ‘yes’, and a numerical value of ‘0’ was assigned to those who answered ‘no’. This made the dataset able to find a correlation between the ‘meaningful’ and ‘efforts’ variables. This was not possible earlier because of the ‘missing’ respondents in the dataset for question two.

90% of those who found their work meaningful felt that it affected their efforts while at work. 47% had decision-making responsibilities at work (question three: *‘Do you have any decision-making responsibilities?’*), while only 20% felt that they had a sense of ownership at work and that they were able to influence the company in one way or another (question four: *‘Do you feel a sense of ownership towards the company, and feel that you are able to influence the company in any way?’*). Interestingly enough, only 45% answered that they were motivated to show up at work every day (question five: *‘Are you motivated to show up at work every day?’*). Meanwhile, a healthy 70% felt that meaningfulness was important to them when they made their career choice (question seven: *‘Was meaningfulness important to you when you made your career choice?’*).

Table 3.2.1: summary statistics.

	mean	sd
Meaningful (MEA)	.7981651	(.4032235)
Efforts (EFF)	.7247706	(.4486927)
Decision (DEC)	.4770642	(.5017807)
Ownership (OWN)	.2018349	(.4032235)
Attendance (ATT)	.4587156	(.5005943)
Conscious (CON)	.706422	(.4575043)
Likelihood (LIK)	.6055046	(.4909995)
Female	.440367	(.4987242)
Age, < 20	.0183486	(.1348285)
Age, 21-29	.4495413	(.4997451)
Age, 30-39	.266055	(.4439345)
Age, 40-49	.2018349	(.4032235)
Age, 50 <	.0642202	(.2462771)
Education, engineer	.1376147	(.3460863)
Education, innovation	.0458716	(.2101728)
Education, health services	.1284404	(.3361249)
Education, economy	.1376147	(.3460863)
Education, teaching	.266055	(.4439345)
Education, law	.0275229	(.1643571)
Education, physical labor	.0275229	(.1643571)
Education, sales	.0825688	(.2765006)
Education, technology	.0825688	(.2765006)
Education, service	.0366972	(.1888859)
Education, other	.0275229	(.1643571)
N = 109		

Table 3.2.2 shows the correlation and the significance level between all the variables that will be used as dependent variables (and some as independent variables as well) in the regression models for the analysis. The first row in the table shows the correlation, while the second row shows the significance level. The table shows a very high 81% correlation between perceived meaningfulness (MEA) and efforts while at work (EFF). Having decision-making responsibilities (DEC) has a 44% correlation with attendance (ATT). Surprisingly though, having a sense of ownership (OWN) towards the company correlates negatively with efforts exerted. Noteworthy is that conscious career choice (CON) does not have a high correlation with either of the other variables.

Table 3.2.2: correlation matrix.

	MEA	EFF	DEC	OWN	ATT	CON	LIK
MEA	1.0000						
EFF	0.8160	1.0000					
DEC	0.1142	0.2185	1.0000				
OWN	-0.1458	-0.0995	0.5265	1.0000			
ATT	0.1418	0.2375	0.4478	-0.0501	1.0000		
CON	0.2781	0.2342	0.0511	-0.0774	0.1083	1.0000	
LIK	0.2489	0.2171	0.1321	0.0785	0.1026	0.2216	1.0000

Table 3.2.3 shows the summary statistics for the variables used in the second regression model. The table shows that the factors that were the most important to people were factors that could make people’s lives better, such as teaching and improved quality of life. Interestingly, when looking at the factors that actually influenced peoples career choice, the same factors show a slightly lower correlation coefficient, whereas 32% of the respondents were influenced partly or wholly by financial incentives (people were able to select multiple factors that they were influenced by). Perhaps surprisingly, considering previous research and literature, recognition in the workplace had no influence on a single respondent.

Table 3.2.3: consciousness summary statistics.

	mean	sd
Conscious (CON)	.706422	(.4575043)
Education, engineer	.1376147	(.3460863)
Education, innovation	.0458716	(.2101728)
Education, health services	.1284404	(.3361249)
Education, economy	.1376147	(.3460863)
Education, teaching	.266055	(.4439345)
Education, law	.0275229	(.1643571)
Education, physical labor	.0275229	(.1643571)
Education, sales	.0825688	(.2765006)
Education, technology	.0825688	(.2765006)
Education, service	.0366972	(.1888859)
Education, other	.0275229	(.1643571)
Most meaningful, helping others	.2018349	(.4032235)
Most meaningful, teaching	.266055	(.4439345)
Most meaningful, cleaner environment	.0275229	(.1643571)
Most meaningful, improved quality	.2568807	(.4389311)
Most meaningful, innovation	.0275229	(.1643571)
Most meaningful, technology	.0550459	(.2291232)
Most meaningful, other	.1651376	(.3730197)
Influenced, helping others	.2201835	(.4162842)
Influenced, teaching	.1651376	(.3730197)
Influenced, cleaner environment	.0183486	(.1348285)
Influenced, financial incentives	.3211009	(.4690561)
Influenced, improved quality	.2385321	(.4281546)
Influenced, recognition	0	(0)
Influenced, status	.0275229	(.1643571)
Influenced, innovation	.0366972	(.1888859)
Influenced, technology	.0642202	(.2462771)
Influenced, other	.1559633	(.3644964)
N = 109		

4 Results, Analysis, and Discussion

The acquired dataset was used to run two regression analyses using the data analysis and statistical software STATA. The first regression was used mainly to answer the first two sub research questions; ‘*Does meaningful work affect employees’ mentality while at work?*’ and ‘*Does meaningful work affect employees’ attendance?*’ This regression was based on the following model:

$$y = \beta_1x_1 + \beta_2x_2 + \beta_3x_3 + \beta_4x_4 + \beta_5x_5 + \beta_6x_6 + \beta_7x_7 + \beta_8x_8$$

The regression consisted of seven models using seven different dependent variables (y), as shown in table 4.1. These dependent variables were perceived meaningfulness (MEA), efforts while at work (EFF), having decision-making responsibilities (DEC), having a sense of ownership towards the company (OWN), attendance (ATT), conscious career choice (CON), and the likelihood dummy variable (LIK).

Five of these dependent variables were also used as independent variables in the various models; perceived meaningfulness (x_4), decision-making responsibilities (x_5), sense of ownership towards the company (x_6), conscious career choice (x_7), and the likelihood dummy variable (x_8), as well as x_1 , x_2 , and x_3 for gender, age, and education respectively. The intention was to see how the different variables affected each other. A different dependent variable may present new results and conclusions, as well as changing the significance of the independent variables.

The two dependent variables that were not used as independent variables were efforts while at work (EFF) and attendance (ATT). These two variables were initially set out to be used as independent variables alongside the rest, but when trying to interpret the models, it seemed like efforts and attendance would be best suited *only* as dependent variables, and so they were excluded from the models. Including these variables in the models simply did not provide reasonable arguments to stay away from the decision of excluding them. For instance, it did not seem logical that exerting more or less efforts would have an effect on the meaningfulness of the work, decision-making responsibilities, sense of ownership, attendance, conscious career choice, and the likelihood dummy variable that the respondents based their career choice exactly on what they initially thought was meaningful. On the other hand, the other variables would present

reasonable explanations for the efforts variable. The same applied to attendance. It did not seem logical that a shift in attendance would present a shift in the meaningfulness of the work, efforts while at work, decision-making responsibilities, sense of ownership, conscious career choice, and the likelihood dummy variable that the respondents based their career choice exactly on what they initially thought was meaningful.

The same concept was applied to the independent variables. As shown in table 4.1, not all of the independent variables have been used in each and every model. The reasoning behind this is that not all of the independent variables would provide a reasonable argument for explaining the dependent variable. The reason seven models were used was to fully use the data collected and present as good and meaningful conclusions as possible and best answer the research questions.

Table 4.1: regression results.

	Model 1 MEA	Model 2 EFF	Model 3 DEC	Model 4 OWN	Model 5 ATT	Model 6 CON	Model 7 LIK
Female	-0.0297 (0.0994)	-0.101 (0.0647)	-0.0927 (0.126)	-0.185* (0.0853)	-0.342** (0.112)	0.0753 (0.103)	-0.403** (0.128)
Age, < 20	0.144 (0.345)	0.0324 (0.212)	0.259 (0.436)	-0.121 (0.297)	-0.559 (0.367)	0.0772 (0.358)	-0.641 (0.443)
Age, 21-29	0.215 (0.224)	-0.0755 (0.139)	-0.101 (0.284)	-0.195 (0.193)	-0.442 (0.241)	0.0895 (0.233)	-0.472 (0.288)
Age, 30-39	0.192 (0.225)	-0.0768 (0.139)	0.184 (0.285)	0.0435 (0.193)	-0.287 (0.239)	0.216 (0.233)	-0.259 (0.290)
Age, 40-49	0.0102 (0.226)	-0.00420 (0.140)	0.0397 (0.286)	-0.185 (0.194)	-0.748** (0.242)	0.0270 (0.235)	-0.536 (0.290)
Education, engineer	-0.469 (0.313)	-0.193 (0.153)	-0.129 (0.396)	-0.00102 (0.269)	-0.918*** (0.265)	-0.340 (0.325)	0.0903 (0.404)
Education, innovation	-0.415 (0.338)	0.0452 (0.158)	0.308 (0.426)	0.742* (0.290)	-0.893** (0.274)	-0.130 (0.350)	-0.267 (0.433)
Education, health	-0.130 (0.315)	-0.150 (0.161)	0.136 (0.398)	-0.0886 (0.271)	-0.262 (0.279)	-0.127 (0.327)	0.409 (0.404)
Education, economics	-0.572 (0.316)	-0.0537 (0.159)	-0.505 (0.397)	-0.0721 (0.269)	-0.904** (0.274)	-0.465 (0.325)	-0.228 (0.407)
Education, teaching	-0.166 (0.306)	-0.0686 (0.156)	-0.311 (0.386)	-0.153 (0.262)	-0.538* (0.270)	-0.308 (0.316)	0.222 (0.393)
Education, law	0 (.)	-0.116 (0.229)	0 (.)	0 (.)	-0.900* (0.395)	0 (.)	0 (.)
Education, physical	-0.207 (0.366)	-1.078*** (0.200)	-0.692 (0.458)	-0.279 (0.311)	-1.083** (0.346)	-0.773* (0.376)	0.392 (0.475)
Education, sales	-0.485 (0.318)	-0.0472 (0.173)	-0.190 (0.402)	0.192 (0.273)	-0.510 (0.299)	-1.154*** (0.330)	0.0459 (0.434)
Education, technology	-0.411 (0.289)	-0.217 (0.159)	-0.106 (0.365)	0.127 (0.248)	-0.929** (0.275)	-0.367 (0.300)	0.0804 (0.373)
Education, service	-1.065*** (0.298)	-0.0586 (0.230)	-0.697 (0.371)	-0.232 (0.252)	-1.013* (0.398)	-1.158*** (0.304)	-0.163 (0.404)
Education, other	-0.231 (0.365)	0 (.)	0.403 (0.461)	0.800* (0.313)	0 (.)	-0.0644 (0.378)	0.338 (0.467)
Meaningful (MEA)		0.922*** (0.0652)			-0.210 (0.113)		
Decision (DEC)	0.0164 (0.0819)	0.130* (0.0573)			0.631*** (0.0991)		
Ownership (OWN)		-0.177* (0.0846)			-0.674*** (0.146)		
Conscious (CON)		-0.0476 (0.0628)			0.0179 (0.109)		0.189 (0.128)
Likelihood (LIK)		0.0669 (0.0497)			-0.0960 (0.0858)		
N	109	109	109	109	109	109	109
R-sq	0.368	0.821	0.339	0.528	0.571	0.466	0.298

Note: this table shows the regression results of the dataset collected from the survey. Each of the seven models has a different dependent variable. A complete description of the independent variables is shown in table 3.2.1 'summary statistics'. The variable 'Age, 50 <' along with variables with a value of '0' were omitted because of collinearity.

* p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

Firstly, in model one, where the dependent variable is perceived meaningfulness of the respondents' work, it indicates that having decision-making responsibilities increases meaningfulness but only by the slightest of margins (0.0164). It also shows that females, when holding all else constant, have a negative coefficient (-0.0297), indicating that females are less likely to perceive work as meaningful, but again, only by the slightest of margins.

Surprisingly, all the different professions have provided a negative coefficient (compared to the education dummy variable that was constructed for lawyers that was omitted from the model). One would assume that some professions might result in more meaningful jobs than others, especially teachers, who are assumed to have a higher degree of intrinsic motivation, and lawyers in this case. Regarding age, we can see that those between the ages of 21 and 29 regard work

more meaningful than those under 20, while the coefficients decrease for the remaining age groups. One would argue the importance or relevance of these young respondents to this study. The assumption used in this study is that these respondents started working at a young age. Still, one would ask questions regarding the extent of how much young people perceive work as meaningful. One would assume that some young people choose a career path based on financial incentives or based on how enjoyable it is.

A test regression was run using and excluding the different age dummy variables. Reassuringly, the results were not sensitive to the exclusion of the younger age groups. The coefficients in the regression were a little different but not significantly, and the analytical results and conclusions remained the same. Nevertheless, one would assume that the conclusions would have been better with a slightly bigger sample size.

In model two, where the dependent variable is the degree of efforts exerted while working, we still see that females have a negative coefficient, which seems to be the case for all but model six. 1.8% of the respondents, who were under the age of 20, which maybe not be drawn any significant conclusions from in terms of how big the sample was, show that their efforts are more likely to be affected by the level of meaningfulness in the work. Out of all the educations, only innovation positively affects efforts, which seems logical in that these types of jobs require some higher degree of efforts and creativity.

Out of all the models, model two presents by far the highest r^2 (the percentage of the model that is described by the variables). Unsurprisingly, meaningfulness has a very high effect on efforts (0.922), while having decision-making responsibilities also increases efforts. The surprising part is that having a sense of ownership towards the company (holding the other variables constant) does not increase efforts, which it should in the sense that when you have a personal stake in the company, you would increase your efforts for the benefits of the company.

Model three, where decision-making responsibilities is the dependent variable, present the same conclusions as model two in terms of gender and age. The noteworthy part is that some professions, notably innovation and health services, have a positive effect on the decision-making aspect of the work, which also seems logical; these types of jobs regularly puts employees in decision-making situations.

Model four, where the dependent variable is whether the respondent has a sense of ownership towards the company, also presents the same conclusions as earlier in terms of gender. One particular age group, those between 30 and 39 years, felt they had a higher sense of ownership towards the company. Perhaps this could have something to do with how long they have stayed in a company (tenure). Again, with a higher sample population, a more significant conclusion would have been achieved. Some professions felt they had a higher sense of ownership in the company, notably innovation, sales, and technology.

In model five, where the dependent variable is whether the respondents were motivated to show up at work every day, we can see that most variables have a negative coefficient. This is not surprising considering the 45% (from table 3.2.1) that were not motivated to show up at work every day, even though meaningfulness and attendance are positively correlated (table 3.2.2). What is perhaps the most surprising finding though, is that the degree of meaningfulness of the work is still not enough to motivate employees to show up at work, with a coefficient of -0.210. Having controlled for the other variables, the model shows that even when employees felt that their work was meaningful and purposeful, it was still not enough for them to show up at work every single day.

A possible explanation for this is that a high degree of intrinsic motivation was not a big enough incentive; in other words, the meaning of the work was not strong enough. This argument is made stronger when looking at the likelihood variable, with meaningfulness and likelihood variables having a positive correlation (table 3.2.2). Employees who based their career choice on what they initially thought was meaningful, were now less likely to show up at work, which seems very illogical. What seems more logical is that having decision-making responsibilities and having made a conscious career choice positively affects attendance, especially the former, with a coefficient of 0.631. This could typically be relevant in managerial positions; managers are typically those who make the decisions, and it is important for them to be present at work.

Model six, where the dependent variable is whether people made a conscious career choice, we see that females were more likely to put more thought into their career path. As for the age groups, the conclusions were the same as in model one. There is a slight increase in consciousness from those below 20 years and those between 21 and 29 years of age. For the other age groups, again a bigger sample population and a more fair age distribution would have

presented better conclusions. On the other hand, the coefficients could be strongly argued for as well. Most people make their career choice in their late teens or early twenties. Perhaps people in these age groups put more thought into their future and what kind of path they are willing to take.

Finally, model seven, where the dependent variable is the likelihood dummy variable. Perhaps the most noteworthy in this model is that making a conscious career choice increases the likelihood that the respondent based their career choice on what they initially thought was meaningful (albeit not significantly), boosting the statement from earlier that this could be used as a reliability measure and check whether the respondents answered truthfully.

Many of these findings can be supported by previous research. In the theory chapter, it was stated that employees who do not view their workplace as meaningful and purposeful will not exert efforts up to their professional capacity. Empirical studies also suggest that meaningfulness of work impacts work life satisfaction and general well-being. It was also discussed that the level of meaningfulness has a significant effect on the amount of efforts exerted and the output of an employee, which resonates very well with the findings of this study. We can clearly see in model two that meaningfulness greatly increases efforts exerted. Another research slightly touched on this topic by suggesting that motivated employees are more likely to increase the organizations productivity.

Several studies also suggested that for employees to have the opportunity to redesign their work in personally, meaningful ways will have a significant effect on their motivation. Some of the conclusions in this study are similar to what have previously been found. The models show that having decision-making responsibilities increases meaningfulness and attendance. This can be slightly linked to literature regarding job crafting; those who customize their work are more content with their work. This study also found out that certain professions increase efforts and the sense of ownership towards the work, as well as providing more decision-making responsibilities, albeit in the respondents' point of view.

The surprising finding is that meaningful work is not enough to motivate employees to show up at work every single day, even though table 3.2.2 shows a positive correlation between meaningfulness and attendance. Though this could very much so happen even if there is a

positive correlation between the variables, and this is because in the regression model many other variables are being controlled for as well. This finding slightly deviates from what Hackman and Oldham found out in 1980, that meaningfulness affects job attendance. Another research found out that employees who find their work meaningful show a higher willingness to spend more time working without necessarily being rewarded financially. The conclusion from this study is that the level of meaningfulness may not have been very strong, but again, just maybe with a bigger sample size, the conclusion could have possibly been different. On the other hand, if this finding was to be true, it is very possible to argue reasons that make employees attend less even though the work is meaningful; perhaps few opportunities for personal growth, or dissatisfactory work conditions.

This study also found out that being in different age groups, being male or female, or having different types of education does not necessarily affect motivation or if the work is perceived as meaningful. A possible reason for this is that everyone is unique and therefore have different preferences, and that is why work can be made meaningful regardless of employee characteristics. It is about what individuals themselves believe is meaningful. We could argue that a primary factor to meaningful work is human or ethical values that an individual appreciates.

Moving on to the second regression, which was constructed to answer the third sub research question; *‘Were people conscious about meaningful work when they made their career choice?’* This regression was based on the following model:

$$y = \beta_1x_1 + \beta_2x_2 + \beta_3x_3$$

This model shows the how types of education (x_1), the most meaningful factor (x_2), and the influencing factor (x_3) affects people’s consciousness regarding career choice. The dependent variable (y) in this model is whether people made a conscious career choice. Table 4.1 model six showed that education mostly had a positive effect on conscious career choice (compared to lawyers). Table 4.2 shows that education mostly has a positive effect, but this time compared to those with an education involving physical labor, perhaps suggesting that employees with such an education are less likely to have made a conscious career choice.

Table 4.2: consciousness around profession.

	CON
Education, engineer	0.774*** (0.186)
Education, innovation	0.749** (0.236)
Education, health	0.681*** (0.182)
Education, economics	0.473* (0.198)
Education, teaching	0.547** (0.201)
Education, law	1.131*** (0.287)
Education, sales	-0.130 (0.211)
Education, technology	0.629** (0.214)
Education, service	0.194 (0.386)
Education, other	1.227*** (0.257)
Most meaningful, helping others	0.122 (0.378)
Most meaningful, teaching	0.403 (0.382)
Most meaningful, improved quality	0.247 (0.365)
Most meaningful, innovation	-0.599 (0.423)
Most meaningful, technology	-0.348 (0.439)
Most meaningful, other	0.0609 (0.441)
Influenced, helping others	0.0598 (0.0928)
Influenced, teaching	0.145 (0.120)
Influenced, cleaner environment	-0.177 (0.241)
Influenced, financial incentives	-0.153 (0.104)
Influenced, improved quality	0.109 (0.124)
Influenced, status	-0.0630 (0.202)
Influenced, innovation	0.298 (0.175)
Influenced, technology	0.433* (0.189)
Influenced, other	-0.266 (0.162)
N	109
R-sq	0.723

Note: 'Education, physical', 'Most meaningful, cleaner environment', and 'Influenced, recognition' were omitted because of collinearity.
 * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

Previous literature suggested that people may choose a career path out of what was available to them, out of their curiosity, or out of importance. In this study, the finding is that the majority of people were conscious regarding career choice and meaningful work. This was clearly visible among those below the age of 20 and between the ages of 21 and 29 (table 4.1). Additionally, people were more likely to pursue a career that they initially believed was meaningful. This claim is supported by 60% of respondents (table 3.2.1). Tables 3.2.3 and 4.2 show that the factors that were the most important to people were factors that could make people's lives better, such as teaching and improved quality of life. Of course, we can ask questions regarding how truthfully people answered the questions, something that has to do with the reliability of the

survey, as discussed earlier. However, when looking at what actually influenced people's career choice, these factors show a slightly lower coefficient, whereas 32% of the respondents were influenced partly or wholly by financial incentives.

It is safe to assume that all people work to make a living. However, what is surprising and reassuring is that the people surveyed responded by not being solely motivated by financial incentives. Table 4.2 shows that financial incentives has a negative coefficient (-0.153). In other words, those who were more conscious regarding career choice were less motivated by financial incentives than others. This resonates very well with the findings of previous research. Several studies suggested that even though financial incentives were one of the most influencing factors regarding job selection, people were willing to accept lower salaries in order to obtain more meaningful work, similar to what this study has found out.

Table 3.2.1 showed a 60% correlation coefficient for the likelihood variable. This suggests that for a majority of the people, what they considered meaningful is generally what they ended up working with. For instance, a person who considered technological advancement the most meaningful factor was influenced by the same factor. This suggests that employees often find meaning in their work and personally make their work meaningful. For the remaining 40%, it is possible to argue that when making career choice, you are not necessarily conscious about your future profession having a significant meaning and that you could end up finding meaning and making sense of your work as you go on.

In the beginning of this study, the main research question was to find out '*if employees are conscious about the work having a meaning and if certain employee characteristics show signs of more consciousness around meaningful work*'. The conclusion is that the majority of people were conscious about meaningful work, and exerted efforts accordingly. However, in terms of employee characteristics and if some showed signs of more consciousness around meaningful work, no clear conclusions could be presented with the data that was at hand. Surprisingly, even though people were aware of meaningful work, it was still not big enough an incentive to motivate them to increase their attendance.

To conclude this chapter, we can, based on the arguments listed, accept the null hypothesis and suggest that meaningfulness does in fact affect motivation and effort, and could *possibly* also affect attendance.

5 Conclusion

This study investigated whether employees were conscious about meaningful work. A survey was conducted via an online platform and sent out to people via social media. This study concludes that the majority of employees were conscious around meaningful work, although it was very difficult to pinpoint exact characteristics that made certain people more conscious around meaningful work. Meaningfulness greatly increased efforts exerted, although it was not possible with the current dataset to claim that there were any certain employees whose efforts were more likely to be affected. The study showed that having decision-making responsibilities increased meaningfulness and attendance. Certain professions increased efforts and the sense of ownership towards the work, as well as providing more decision-making responsibilities.

The surprising finding is that meaningful work was not enough to motivate employees to show up at work every single day, even though there was a positive correlation between meaningfulness and attendance. There are reasonable explanations for this. It is very possible to argue reasons that make employees attend less even though the work is meaningful; perhaps few opportunities for personal growth, or dissatisfactory work conditions.

The majority were conscious regarding career choice and meaningful work, and many people were more likely to pursue what they initially believed was meaningful. However, what is surprising and reassuring is that the people surveyed responded by not being solely motivated by financial incentives. Those who were more conscious regarding career choice were less motivated by financial incentives than others.

A possible weakness in this study is how truthful the participants actually were regarding their work. That is one implication of conducting such a study using platforms such as social media and through personal connections. Such studies would obtain more solid results if conducted within an organization, instead of surveying random people, because using social media would present a sample population consisting of a wide range of age groups and types of education.

Another weakness is the sample size. In chapter 3.2 it is mentioned that a sample size of a hundred respondents is not a lot. Even though the conclusions that have been presented in this study are solid, a bigger sample is always better, increasing the chance of receiving more reliable

data. Regarding the data itself, it could have been beneficial to collect information regarding tenure (how many years the employees have worked in the organization), what kind of position they have in the organization, and how many years of education they have had. One would assume that tenure and position are significant factors regarding meaningful work. Employees who have been in their position for a longer period of time may show signs of more contentment with their work. Having this extra information could contribute to strengthening the dataset.

Chapter 3.2 slightly touched on a weakness in the ‘conscious’ variable. Most people make their career choice in their late teens or early twenties. The point is that when more mature people answer question seven in the survey (*‘Was meaningfulness important to you when you made your career choice?’*), their perception of career choice and meaningfulness may have changed over the years, and so what might have previously been meaningful or significant may not be any longer and vice versa.

Regarding the research itself, a quantitative approach to such a study is what gives it strength. A quantitative approach is more likely to give in depth analysis of the findings than a qualitative approach. Regression models and tables can provide reliable evidence to support the hypotheses.

The extent to which the presented results from this study can be generalized may differ between organizations. Different organizations may have different values, goals, and tasks, and thus impact how employees perceive their workplace. As mentioned, further research could conduct such a study in an organization, and through multiple and different samples may we find more reliable results. Additionally, this study aims to investigate if the employees themselves are conscious about the meaning of the work. Future research may possibly try to study how managers and people in even higher positions regard this topic.

Another area for future research is that, even though there has been numerous research regarding job satisfaction, it would still have been very interesting to see how employee satisfaction and their work contentment would correlate with the variables that was used in this study.

6 Reference List

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8 Appendix

Appendix 1: the survey in English

Motivation at the Workplace

This survey investigates motivation at the workplace. The survey will take approximately two minutes to complete and is completely anonymous, meaning that the answers cannot be used to identify specific persons.

Gender: Female Male

Age: < 20 Years 21 - 29 30 - 39 40 - 49 50 <

Educational / Professional Background:

- Engineering
- Innovation
- Doctor / medicine / health services
- Economics / business
- Education / knowledge / teaching
- Law / politics
- Physical labor
- Sales / marketing
- Technology
- Service
- Other

1. Do you think your work is meaningful, in the sense that your work contributes to society's welfare?

- Yes (if yes, proceed with question 2) No (if no, skip question 2)

2. Does this affect your motivation and how you exert your efforts while working?

- Yes No

3. Do you have any decision-making responsibilities?

- Yes No

4. Do you feel a sense of ownership towards the company, and feel that you are able to influence the company in any way?

- Yes No

5. Are you motivated to show up at work every day?

- Yes No

6. Which of these factors do you consider the most meaningful?

- Helping others (i.e. charity work)
- Teaching / dissemination/transfer of knowledge
- Cleaner environment
- Improved quality of life (i.e. better housing, better health services, better nutrition)
- Innovation
- Technological advancement
- Other

7. Was meaningfulness important to you when you made your career choice?

- Yes No

8. Which of these factors influenced your career choice the most? (you can select multiple factors)

- Helping others (i.e. charity work)
- Teaching / dissemination/transfer of knowledge
- Cleaner environment
- Financial incentives
- Improved quality of life (i.e. better housing, better health services, better nutrition)
- Recognition / praise
- Status

- Innovation
- Technological advancement
- Other

Appendix 2: the survey in Norwegian

Motivasjon i Arbeidsplassen

Denne undersøkelsen belyser motivasjon i arbeidsplassen. Undersøkelsen tar omtrent to minutter å gjennomføre og er fullstendig anonym, det vil si at svarene kan ikke brukes til å identifisere enkelte personer.

Kjønn: Kvinne Mann

Alder: < 20 År 21 - 29 30 - 39 40 - 49 50 <

Utdanning / Profesjonell Bakgrunn:

- Ingeniør
- Innovasjon
- Lege / medisin / helsetjenester
- Økonomi / virksomhet
- Kunnskapsformidling / utdanning
- Rettsvitenskap / politikk
- Fysisk arbeid
- Salg / markedsføring
- Teknologi
- Service
- Annet

1. Synes du at ditt arbeid er meningsfullt, i den forstand at ditt arbeid bidrar til samfunnets velferd?

- Ja (hvis ja, fortsett med spørsmål 2) Nei (hvis nei, hopp over spørsmål 2)

2. Har dette en effekt på motivasjonen din og hvordan du disponerer innsatsen din på jobb?

- Ja Nei

3. Har du myndighet til å foreta vesentlige beslutninger på jobb?

- Ja Nei

4. Føler du noe "eierskap" til bedriften, og føler at du har muligheten til å påvirke bedriften på noen som helst måte?

- Ja Nei

5. Er du motivert til å møte på jobb hver dag?

- Ja Nei

6. Hvilken av disse faktorene synes du er mest meningsfullt?

- hjelpe andre (f.eks. veldedighetsarbeid)
- Kunnskapsformidling
- Renere miljø
- Forbedret livskvalitet (f.eks. bedre helsetjenester, bedre boforhold, bedre næring)
- Innovasjon
- Teknologisk fremgang
- Annet

7. Var «meningsfullt arbeid» viktig for deg når du foretok karrierevalg?

- Ja Nei

8. Hvilken av disse faktorene påvirket karrierevalget ditt mest? (du kan krysse av flere alternativer)

- hjelpe andre (f.eks. veldedighetsarbeid)
- Kunnskapsformidling
- Renere miljø
- Finansielle insentiver
- Forbedret livskvalitet (f.eks. bedre helsetjenester, bedre boforhold, bedre næring)
- Anerkjennelse / ros
- Status
- Innovasjon

- Teknologisk fremgang
- Annet