THE EFFECT OF SENSE OF PURPOSE, SOCIAL CONNECTION, AND SELF-ESTEEM ON MEANINGFUL WORK

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ABSTRACT

Meaningful work has gained increasing attention due to dissatisfaction with job demands and a search for purpose. Drawing on extensive prior research, this study explores the significance of a sense of purpose, social connection, and self-esteem in meaningful work. The researcher's approach combines a thorough review of past research to establish a robust foundation by administering questionnaires to 309 participants. Rigorous statistical analysis was then employed to reveal the intricate relationships between these psychological factors and the perception of meaningful work. Individuals with a sense of purpose tend to find their work imbued with meaning, providing direction to their daily lives. Additionally, positive correlations emerge between social support, pro-social behaviours, and meaningful work experience. Conversely, underemployed individuals tend to report fewer interactions with co-workers. This research underscores the central roles of sense of purpose, social connection, and self-esteem in shaping perceptions of meaningful work. Insights gained from this study can inform strategies to enhance meaningful work experiences and promote well-being in the workplace.

Keywords: meaningful work, sense of purpose, social connection, self-esteem

1.0   INTRODUCTION

Meaningful work has gained significant attention among scholars and practitioners in recent years due to dissatisfaction with organisational requirements, rising concerns about job quality, and a growing focus on work as a venue for individuals to discover meaning and purpose (Lepisto & Pratt, 2017; Taylor, 2017). Recent research has also revealed that individuals nowadays prioritise meaningful work over other work-related benefits, such as financial rewards (Hu & Hirsh, 2017). In this context, some scholars adopt a one-dimensional definition of meaningful work, emphasising work that makes a substantial contribution, while others highlight the alignment of work with individual attainment of a larger purpose and one's identity to encompass the overall features or processes of meaningful work (Allan et al., 2019). Consequently, these researchers consider meaningful work a complex phenomenon (Nwabuwe et al., 2017; Bailey et al., 2019). In a 2019 Ipsos survey on the level of happiness in Malaysia, 44 per cent of respondents stated that having meaningful work provides them with the most happiness (Hirschmann, 2019). Across the board, 79 per cent of respondents found this a source of joy. Notably, these studies often overlooked recent trends and developments in workplace digitalisation, which could potentially impact employees' feelings of meaningfulness (Symon & Whiting, 2019). While some scholars have speculated on the potential consequences of digitalisation for experienced levels of meaningfulness at work (e.g., Smids, Nyholm, & Berkers, 2019), these hypotheses fail to capture how employees can consider meaningful work in the implementation of these digitised tools and what actions could be taken to ensure meaningful work in a digitised workplace. Additionally, some studies have considered the significance of various individual-level factors for meaningful work. However, fewer studies have focused on meaningful work's individual-level factors than

organizational-level factors (e.g., Zeglat & Janbeik, 2019). Building on prior research, this study explores whether a sense of purpose and social connection are associated with meaningful work.

2.0   LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1   Sense of Purpose

Work plays a vital role in people's lives, as most working-age adults spend a significant percentage of their waking hours at work (Hu & Hirsh, 2017). One of the key drivers of work motivation has been theorised as the need to experience a sense of significance in one's actions (Hackman & Oldham, 1980; Barrick et al., 2013). It gives our daily lives focus and intentionality when having goals or striving for a worthwhile cause. As a result of having goals, individuals will regard their lives as meaningful. (Baumeister & Vohs 2002; Ryff 2014). A person's labour is objectively meaningful as long as it provides a true purpose for others and generates lasting value (Veltman, 2016). To have a purpose, one must be a part of something larger than oneself (Seligman, 2010). As a result, meaningful work and purposefulness, in general, are closely linked.

According to previous studies, the experience of meaningful work is based on an individual's subjective assessment of the work's personal and social relevance, with more meaningful occupations delivering a greater sense of purpose and value (Pratt & Ashforth, 2003; Grant, 2008; Rosso et al., 2010; Schnell et al., 2013). Similarly, seeking a purpose and contributing along the way are commonly seen as making work meaningful (Grant, 2008; Martela & Pessi, 2018; Rosso et al., 2010). For example, Andrea Veltman (2016) states, "Work might be objectively meaningful by providing a personal purpose or fulfilling a beneficial function for others, and especially producing something of enduring value." Chandler and Kapelner (2013) used their findings in a field study (Kosfeld et al., 2017). The authors hired Amazon Mechanical Turk employees to label tumour cells. Still, only some employees knew their job was to help researchers identify tumour cells, while others did not. Workers were more likely to participate when the assignment was framed in terms of purpose, and they labelled a more significant number of photographs due to their participation.

Even outside the work context, purposefulness is often considered a vital characteristic of a meaningful life. Our daily lives are focused and intentional when we have goals or strive for a purpose. Having a purpose allows us to connect our current activities to desired future states and perceive our lives as significant (Baumeister & Vohs, 2002; Ryff, 2014). Meaningful work experiences are generally important because they can help employees feel like their lives are more meaningful (Steger & Dik, 2009). Therefore, people should be driven to pursue meaningful work, giving them a sense of purpose and significance, assuming all other factors are equal (Hu & Hirsh, 2017).

Tummers and Knies (2013) describe work meaningfulness as "an employee's view that he or she can understand the organisation's complicated system of goals and how it relates to his or her own work." However, they appear to be referring to meaning rather than work meaningfulness. The sensation of having a sense of meaningfulness is a socially and individually formed cognitive and emotional appraisal of the presence of purpose and worth in one's life or activity (Wong, 1998; Park, 2010). Put another way, having a purposeful job means making a positive difference in the world through employment (Martela & Ryan, 2016). This positive impact can be large-scale aims like battling diseases, bringing about political change, or conserving the environment. However, it can also be smaller-scale goals like assisting customers or making consumers happy (Martela & Pessi, 2018).

Moving on to whether workplace digitalisation can nurture meaningful work experiences, Lent (2018) argues that positive and negative circumstances are possible, depending on the individual's skill set, which may include repetitive or non-repetitive tasks and their capacity to

adapt in performing their jobs. In addition, Smids et al. (2019), in their conceptual article on robotisation and meaningful work, mentioned that if robots take over the most demanding activities, employees may feel as if they are meaningless. In other words, if employees' contributions to worthwhile causes were limited, they might lose their purpose. However, if employees perceive themselves as collaborating with technology (e.g., robots, artificial intelligence, algorithms), they may be more focused on obtaining greater results together with the technology. According to Walsh (2019), "automation itself will create difficulties to the nature of work, our identity, and how individuals view their purpose." However, on the other side, he believes that applying artificial intelligence (AI) could allow employees to be more engaged in their jobs.

People's roles will become more ambiguous when AI takes over the workforce. Many people discover their life's purpose due to their employment obligations. Finding a sense of purpose would be difficult if people were no longer needed in the workplace. (Smith & Waldeau, 2021). The white-collar and blue-collar industries will be impacted by using AI. Intelligent algorithms can replace the sooner employees, the faster the division of labour occurs, and the single working or process stages may be specified in depth. In the future, machines or intelligent software will perform one-third of present employment requiring a bachelor's degree. Individual jobs will vanish totally, and new job categories will emerge. However, it is essential to highlight that no jobs will be lost abruptly. Instead, a gradual transition will occur, which has already begun and varies from industry to industry and firm to company (Wisskirchen et al., 2017). AI is utilised in prediction analysis, such as weather, stock market, and fare forecasting in ride-sharing apps like Lyft and Uber. Tesla Inc. has 100% self-driving capability, meaning it can drive itself using camera vision. A plagiarism checker, which analyses hundreds of thousands of documents, is another primary AI application. Teachers and students can utilize AI to analyse the quality of their work. It has also been utilised on e-commerce sites like Amazon to track client purchasing behaviour. When a customer looks for a product, AI personalises it depending on their preferences. AI is also employed in social networking sites like Facebook and Instagram to propose friends based on personal history. Voice assistants like Google Now, SIRI, Alexa and Cortana use AI. The capability of these voice assistants will drastically improve in the future (Smith & Waldeau, 2021).

Brynjolfsson and McAfee (2014) and Ford (2016) also provide an example of adopting AI in the workplace. Computer software has already mechanised various white-collar employees in retail, wholesale, and business services. For example, information can now be retrieved, logistics and inventories can be coordinated and handled, taxes and legal briefs can be prepared, financial services can be provided, and complex documents and business reports can be translated and written. Also, computer bugs can be diagnosed using software and AI-powered technologies. In their study, Agrawal et al. (2019) demonstrate that automation is about generating more productive vintages of current equipment and introducing new technology to perform occupations previously performed by humans. On the other hand, Acemoglu and Restrepo (2016) have a contradictory opinion that this technological advancement never results in job losses and always promotes labour demand and earnings. Agrawal et al. (2019) further state that automation does not immediately replace labour; instead, it alters the manufacturing process so that new technology can undertake additional activities.

2.2   Social Connection

Meaningful work relies heavily on social connections because the workplace is often filled with various social relationships. Feeling recognised and accounted for by colleagues, cooperating positively, and receiving guidance or other assistance are all necessary for workers to find purpose in their work (Ward & King, 2017; Madden & Bailey, 2016; Martela & Riekki 2018). The experience of meaningfulness is a fundamental human need and an indication of healthy psychological functioning (Frankl, 1962; Routledge et al., 2011).

Individual characteristics have changed due to the widespread use of the Internet. As a result, communication and socialisation in society have undergone significant changes (Park, 2021). Texting and emailing, for example, have rendered synchronous communication asynchronous, reducing the need to spend time in person with family and friends (Turel & Serenko, 2012). Subsequently, family and social values are essential in achieving meaningful work, as stated in the Psychology of Working Theory (PWT) by Duffy, Blustein,Diemer,&Autin (2016). PWT explains the concept of decent work, which comprises employment that provides (a) a physically and mentally safe work environment, (b) sufficient compensation, (c) access to health care, (d) hours that allow sufficient rest and free time, and (e) values of an organisation that incorporates family and social values (Duffy et al., 2016). In other words, employees can have meaningful work if they can meet their fundamental and psychological needs through decent work (Blustein et al., 2008; Duffy et al., 2016).

Previous research by Tre'panier, Fernet, and Austin (2013) found positive links between social support and psychological needs, such as work engagement. Pro-social behaviour, such as helping others and recognising the positive influence of one's work, has also been linked to meaningful work in a few research (Allan et al., 2018; Schnell et al., 2013). However, Kim and Allan (2019) discovered that underemployed employees are less associated with others in the workplace. For instance, underemployed employees with limited contracts shift their jobs frequently because they cannot build good relationships with co-workers. Surprisingly, Kim and Allan (2019) found no correlation between connectedness and meaningful work. This finding contradicts Deci and Ryan's (2008) Self Determination Theory's claims that all three needs, 1) Autonomy, 2) Competence, and 3) Relatedness, are critical to employee well-being. However, since this finding contradicts past research, Kim and Allan (2019) recommend that future studies examine this conclusion further. Another variable, for example, could moderate the relationship between connectedness and meaningful work.

Furthermore, given past research indicating a positive relationship between social class and meaningful work (Allan et al., 2014), employees from higher social classes have higher chances of discovering meaningful work. They also have more time to engage in online surveys. As a result, researchers suggest that future research should purposefully seek underrepresented individuals, such as those from lower social classes (Kim & Allan, 2019).

According to Lepisto and Pratt (2017), the main obstacle to meaningful work is subjective confusion and ambiguity about why one's work is worthwhile and what some refer to as anomie. Employees are confronted with situations in which the social meanings surrounding them are insufficient to justify their work. The situation assumes that meaningful work entails account-making, in which people try to justify their efforts as having positive value. Building on the initial ideas, individuals' "accounts" for justifying the value of their work are mostly a product of social, cultural, and institutional circumstances (Baumeister, 1991; Wuthnow, 1996). Social, cultural, and institutional situations constrain individuals' acceptable, logical, and feasible ways of explaining, justifying, and making sense of their actions. These contexts serve as the "toolkits," or resources, scripts, schemas, narratives, symbolic boundaries, collective identities, or symbols that individuals use to construct an account for the worth of their work (Weber & Dacin, 2011).

The idea that an individual's ability to account for the worthiness of their work is primarily a function of social, cultural, and institutional circumstances is found in scholarship attributed to a justification perspective. Furthermore, according to Lepisto and Pratt (2017), better social validation and support can create meaningful job experiences. When employment is portrayed as beneficial because it benefits the environment rather than, for instance, enriching shareholders, employees might feel connected to common cultural norms of what is moral, appropriate, and meaningful. As a result, remedies have tended to focus on enhancing this account-making activity, frequently by enhancing their surroundings' social meanings. Thus, the ability to account for

one's effort as worthy is the "positivity" inherent in meaningful activity from a justification viewpoint.

In the digital era, communication tools have revolutionised how individuals communicate with one another, and the digital world now accounts for most of people's interpersonal relationships. Emphasising social connection in the digital age appears appropriate in this setting (Jafari & Moharrami, 2019). Digital technologies are used in every element of organisations' operations, control, and coordinate activities. They are used to automate and augment processes, communicate internally among organisation members and externally with clients and partners and make collaborative decisions between digital and human agents (Snow et al., 2017). Governments embrace digital technology and Internet resources to interact with citizens as access to and widespread use of these tools increases (Mandarano et al., 2010).

Zooming into an individual level, studies have highlighted the benefits of online social networking for expanding job opportunities, mobilising like-minded others, and finding health support. In contrast, the outcome-oriented studies insightfully reveal the empowering potential of the Internet in generating social support, life betterment, or community building (Safiollah, 2009). Since the dawn of the twenty-first century, additional information has been recorded, digitalised, and shared due to social media, social networks, and the advancement of sensor technology, such as social life activities and physical data of life. Non-digitalized products are becoming increasingly digital as they obtain tracking sensors to help find them or network connections to offer status information.

One of the distinguishing features of the digital workplace and how each influences people, processes, and technology is the Social. Social media has changed how we connect with people and ideas across the globe. Internal social applications and systems are no different regarding allowing workers to connect, share thoughts and ideas, and enable work to occur more naturally and less hierarchically (Jafari & Moharrami, 2019). In this case, social connection is essential to achieving meaningful work. Social connection is a personal requirement for an individual to feel appreciation and a sense of belonging to a society or an organisation; it also allows them to express themselves and, at the same time, receive social validation. In another aspect, pro-social behaviour, such as helping others and recognising the positive impact of one's work, can also help an employee achieve meaningful work.

2.3 Self-esteem

The significance of meaningful work in a person's life lies in shaping their identity and bolstering their self-esteem, reflecting their capacity to undertake socially valued responsibilities (Kay, 2013). In the context of the connection between meaningful work and self-esteem, the workplace serves as the arena where this identity-building process unfolds. As an individual assumes a role within an organisation, they cultivate the skills and gather the knowledge required to fulfil the associated duties. Their self-esteem is positively impacted when they perceive themselves as successfully meeting the performance expectations tied to their job (Grimes, 2018).

Work becomes meaningful for individuals when it aligns with their aspirations and enhances their self-esteem through the successful completion of professional tasks (Scroggins, 2008). When work experiences correspond with a person's self-perception, they can elevate self-esteem and render work more meaningful (Magnano et al., 2019). Previous research has revealed that health, happiness, and overall well-being have varying degrees of influence on the labour market, affecting behaviours like job performance, absenteeism, and turnover. These constructs often exhibit strong and positive interconnections, suggesting a reciprocal relationship where one's emotions, attitudes, and actions at work can impact one's life outside work and vice versa (Warr, 2011).

According to Georgellis (2012), an individual's job satisfaction can also affect their family members' health, happiness, and well-being. Moreover, self-esteem plays a role in bolstering self-confidence and the ability to manage stress and fatigue (Sanz-Vergel et al., 2014). It can influence the levels of job satisfaction among workers and subsequently affect their performance outcomes (Peng et al., 2014). It's worth noting that a negative self-perception can adversely affect how workers assess their skills and abilities (Kuster et al., 2013), potentially leading to a lack of recognition of their potential (Zhang et al., 2013).

The relationship between meaningful work, self-esteem, and overall well-being is complex and intertwined. Meaningful work gives individuals a sense of purpose and identity and contributes to their self-esteem by affirming their capability to fulfil socially valued responsibilities. This connection between meaningful work and self-esteem is further strengthened when work aligns with personal aspirations and beliefs, creating a positive feedback loop. Moreover, the influence of work extends beyond the workplace, impacting various aspects of life, including health, happiness, and well-being, as demonstrated by research highlighting the interconnections between these factors. Job satisfaction and self-esteem play pivotal roles in this dynamic, affecting an individual's professional performance and ability to handle stress and fatigue. Recognising the significance of meaningful work and its impact on self-esteem underscores the importance of fostering work environments that enable individuals to find purpose and fulfilment in their roles, ultimately promoting their overall quality of life.

3.0   METHODS

This research is conducted based on a quantitative study among higher education employees at UniMAP, Perlis and is categorised in the explanatory study. Following that, deductive reasoning is utilised where the basis of this research starts by referring to the theory, developing hypotheses, and collecting and analysing data before the hypothesis can be accepted or rejected (Borgers et al., 2020). The sample size for this research is about 309 respondents from 1933 employees in UniMAP, Perlis. The questionnaire has several sections, including sections A to F, to gain data on demographics and all the tested variables. The 6-point Likert scale is used to obtain responses from respondents. The items for all of the tested variables were as follows: Meaningful work (22 items), a sense of purpose (3 items), social connection (10 items), and self-esteem (13 items).

4. 0   RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1   Demographic Analysis of Respondents

The participants of this research consisted of 309 higher education institute employees. The dominant gender for this research is female, with a frequency of 215 and 94 of the respondents are male. In this case, the total number of respondents is 309, and if converted into a percentage, male respondents consist of 30.4% and female respondents consist of 69.6%. As for age analysis, most respondents fall within the age range of 31 to 40, comprising 66% of the total. The second highest age group is 41 to 50, with 23.9%, followed by 51 to 60 at 6.5%. The smallest group is 21 to 30, accounting for 3.6% of respondents. The data shows a diverse range of employee tenures in terms of service duration. Most respondents have worked for 1 to 10 years, with 9 years being the most common tenure, followed by 14 years. A notable number of employees have tenures below 1 year, suggesting a relatively high turnover or ongoing hiring. Next, on the race categories, among the 309 respondents, Malay is the most prevalent race at 96.8% or 299 respondents, followed by others at 1.9% or 6 respondents. Indians comprise 1% or 3 respondents of the sample, and Chinese constitute only 0.3%, 1 respondent. Next, in terms of educational qualification, the most prevalent educational qualification is a bachelor's degree, with 27.8% of respondents holding this qualification. SPM is the second most frequent at 63 respondents or 20.4%, followed by a Doctor of Philosophy at 47 or 15.2%. Master's degree holders make up 45

respondents or 14.6% of respondents, while diplomas and equivalent qualifications represent 49 respondents or 15.9%. STPM qualifications are the least frequent, accounting for 19 respondents or 6.1% of the sample. In the analysis of job scope, it is observed that 220 respondents, constituting 71.2% of the total sample, occupy roles within the administration job category, whereas 89 respondents, representing 28.8% of the overall sample, are engaged in the academician job category.

4.2 Mean Analysis of the Study Variables

Table 1 presents the mean values for tested variables in the research. The mean scores provide insights into the average level of each psychological factor within the sample. Notably, "Sense of purpose" exhibits the highest mean score at $\mu = 5.34$, indicating a relatively strong sense of purpose among respondents. "Self-esteem" follows closely with a mean score of $\mu = 5.17$, suggesting a healthy level of self-esteem on average. Conversely, "Social connection" demonstrates the lowest mean score at $\mu = 4.88$, implying a somewhat lower perception of social connection. "Meaningful work" falls in between with a mean score of $\mu = 5.09$, indicating a moderate level of perceived meaningfulness in one's work. These findings shed light on the participants' psychological experiences within their work and social environments.

Table 1 Mean Analysis

Variable	Mean
Meaningful Work	5.09
Sense of Purpose	5.34
Social Connection	4.88
Self-esteem	5.17

4.3 Reliability Analysis

Previous studies have proposed that alpha values falling within the range of 0.65 and higher are deemed satisfactory, indicating the acceptability of the data in reliability analysis, where various scales and ratings need to be considered (Vaske et al., 2016). Table 2 displays the Cronbach's Alpha values for this research's dependent and independent variables. The Cronbach's Alpha for the dependent variable "meaningful work" is 0.903, while for the independent variables, it is 0.894 for "sense of purpose," 0.923 for "social connection," and 0.891 for "self-esteem." As a result, it can be deduced that the scale's reliability in this study is considered satisfactory, as it meets the recommended threshold mentioned earlier.

Table 2 Reliability Analysis

Variable	Cronbach's alpha (a)
Meaningful Work	0.903
Sense of Purpose	0.894
Social Connection	0.923
Self-esteem	0.891

4.4 Pearson Correlation Analysis of the Study Variables

As indicated in Table 3, correlation analysis was presented for the relationship between the tested variables. The purpose of the correlation test was to show how strongly those variables were related to each other or to show the degree of association between those two variables. This analysis estimated the association between the independent (sense of purpose, social connection, and self-esteem) and dependent (meaningful work) variables. This analysis has been divided into five clusters, where approximately ± 0.20 signifies a very weak correlation, ± 0.20 to ± 0.35

suggests a weak correlation, ± 0.35 to ± 0.50 indicates a moderate correlation, ± 0.50 to ± 0.70 represents a significantly strong correlation, and ± 0.70 to ± 1.00 corresponds to a highly substantial correlation. The correlation between "Meaningful Work" and "Sense of Purpose" ($r = 0.622$, $p < 0.001$), "Social Connection" ($r = 0.677$, $p < 0.001$), and "Self-esteem" ($r = 0.615$, $p < 0.001$) all fall within the "significantly strong correlation" range, indicating that as these independent variables increase, the perception of meaningful work also significantly increases. Additionally, "Sense of Purpose" and "Social Connection" exhibit a "significantly strong correlation" ($r = 0.624$, $p < 0.001$), as does the relationship between "Sense of Purpose" and "Self-esteem" ($r = 0.542$, $p < 0.001$). However, the correlation between "Social Connection" and "Self-esteem" ($r = 0.486$, $p < 0.001$) is in the "moderate correlation" range, suggesting a somewhat less strong but still statistically significant relationship between these two variables.

Table 3 Pearson Correlation Analysis

Variables	Meaningful Work	Sense of Purpose	Social Connection	Self-esteem
Meaningful Work	-			
Sense of Purpose	0.622** 0.000	-		
Social Connection	0.677** 0.000	0.624** 0.000	-	
Self-esteem	0.615** 0.000	0.542** 0.000	0.486** 0.000	-

4.5 Regression Analysis

Table 4 shows the regression result for the study, which is that the R-square value is used to determine the strength of the independent variable that the dependent variable can explain. The presented table displays the outcomes of a regression analysis, aiming to understand the impact of three independent variables—Sense of Purpose, Social Connection, and Self-esteem—on a dependent variable. The model proves highly effective in explaining the variance in the dependent variable ($R^2 = 0.588$), with approximately 58.8% of the variability elucidated by the independent variables. The overall model is statistically significant, as demonstrated by a substantial F-statistic of 145.095. Examining each independent variable's influence, we observe that all three (Sense of Purpose, Social Connection, and Self-esteem) exhibit statistically significant effects on the dependent variable. Sense of Purpose (t-Ratio = 4.100, $p = 0.000$), Social Connection (t-Ratio = 8.242, $p = 0.000$), and Self-esteem (t-Ratio = 6.913, $p = 0.000$) each contribute positively to the dependent variable, Furthermore, the constant term (t-Ratio = 12.023, $p = 0.000$) represents the expected value of the dependent variable when all independent variables are zero. This regression model underscores the significance of these three independent variables in explaining variations in the dependent variable, contributing to a deeper understanding of the examined relationships.

Table 4 Regression Analysis

		R	R^2	R^2 Change	F
Model 1		0.767	0.588	0.588	145.095
		β	t-Ratio	Sig.	
	(Constant)	1.894	12.023	0.000	
	Sense of Purpose	0.148	4.100	0.000	
	Social Connection	0.466	8.242	0.000	
	Self-esteem	0.189	6.913	0.000	

5.0   DISCUSSION

A sense of purpose is paramount in cultivating meaningful work among Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) employees. It serves as a motivational cornerstone, inspiring educators, administrators, and support staff to recognise the significance of their roles within the institution's broader mission. Employees who believe their work contributes to a noble cause are more motivated, satisfied and committed to the institution's goals. This commitment positively impacts students, as purpose-driven educators provide mentorship and foster a meaningful educational experience.

Furthermore, the role of social connection in cultivating meaningful work within HEIs is equally profound. Social connections provide emotional sustenance and a platform for exchanging ideas, feedback, and mentorship, fostering a continuous learning environment. These connections empower employees to engage with students more effectively, enriching the educational experience. In HEIs, where a strong sense of community is often integral, social connections deepen the commitment to the institution's mission and promote diversity and inclusion.

Moreover, self-esteem assumes a vital role in the cultivation of meaningful work among employees in HEIs. It is the bedrock upon which their confidence, resilience, and overall well-being are built. Employees with healthy self-esteem are more likely to approach their roles with a sense of competence and self-worth, fostering job satisfaction and an unwavering commitment to the institution's mission.

This research shows that the importance of meaningful work in the workplace cannot be overstated. It serves as a linchpin that enhances both individual and organisational well-being. Employees who find meaning in their roles experience heightened job satisfaction, reduced stress, and increased motivation, leading to higher engagement and productivity. Moreover, meaningful work fosters a sense of purpose, linking individual tasks to broader organisational goals, and promotes positive social connections within the workplace, contributing to a cohesive and supportive work environment. The psychological constructs of a sense of purpose, social connection, and self-esteem are intricately intertwined with meaningful work, amplifying its significance.

Recognising the symbiotic relationship between meaningful work and these psychological constructs underscores the importance of holistic approaches to employee well-being and organisational effectiveness. By fostering a workplace culture that prioritises purpose, fosters social connections, and bolsters self-esteem, organisations can unlock the full potential of their workforce. This leads to improved employee satisfaction and retention and positions the organisation for sustained growth and prosperity in an increasingly competitive landscape. In an era where employee well-being and engagement are central to organisational success, meaningful work is a foundational pillar upon which a thriving workplace and a prosperous organisation are built.

6.0   CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the researcher has identified that a strong sense of purpose, social connections, and self-esteem significantly influence the perception of meaningful work. This study has been conducted among employees at a university in Malaysia, and previous research has consistently demonstrated the importance of these independent variables in shaping the experience of meaningful work. The research employed online questionnaires through Google Forms and printed booklets to collect data, which were distributed to the participants. A total of 309 responses were collected and subsequently analysed using SPSS. The regression analysis results indicated that all of these variables significantly impact the perception of meaningful work among the participants. However, it is important to acknowledge certain limitations encountered during

this study. One significant limitation was the scarcity of prior research focused on meaningful work among HEIs employees. The existing body of research on meaningful work concentrates more on fields other than HEIs. The researcher anticipates and encourages future studies to delve deeper into meaningful work, encompassing a broader array of independent variables to gain a more comprehensive understanding of this topic. In closing, the researcher hopes this study will be a valuable resource for readers and fellow researchers as a reference point and guide for further exploring related topics in the meaningful work domain.

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