Antecedents And Consequences Of Meaningful Work: A Systematic Literature Review

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Abstract

This paper conducts a theoretical review of meaningful work at the individual level, organizational level, and society contribution by identifying the limitations of previous research. The Systematic literature review (SLR) was used in this research design using the PRISMA protocol, which systematizes various conceptualizations of meaningful work into a coherent business, management and accounting and psychology study in the 2000-2020 period from 57 relevant articles. The research findings are the first body of literature in this field, the second is the antecedent and consequences variables in previous research and the third is the perspectives harmonization of meaningful work at multi levels that are formed among individual level, organizational levels and contribution to society. The research implication is to identify important issues that can be used in future research about meaningful work studies by replicating new or existing variables. This study is expected to provide a basis consideration for future researchers regarding the antecedents and consequences variables of meaningful work by developing concepts at different levels of analysis but interrelated to provide an in-depth and complementary perspective on the phenomenon of meaningful work with regard to benefits to society.

Keywords: Meaningful work, multi-level analysis, important issues, psychology, human resources, Quality Job

JEL Classification: J81

INTRODUCTION

Work has various meanings and self-identities from various research sources regardless of affiliation, religion, nationality, and professional background (Rosso et al., 2010). Meaningful work is a way for employees to balance tasks and activities with employees' personal life (Shaimerdenova et al., 2019). When employees view their job as an obligation, not a job, they display higher levels of commitment and higher levels of job involvement. One study that focuses on the causal relationship between meaningful work and employee motivation was conducted by Chadi et al. (2017). Meanwhile, a research that highlights the relationship between leadership, meaningful-self and its meaning at work with a large sample of respondents from the United States, China, Germany, India and South Korea was conducted by Busse et al. (2018). While a study that puts attention on the overall meaning of a person's life and identifies several specific work experiences that enhance the meaning of life was done by Ward & King (2017).

Employees understand the extent to which they are doing in the workplace and how important what they have done. This study provides an overview of employees and managers' beliefs about the importance of work relative to human activities, the centrality of work, social norms, and work results' importance. Research conducted by Colbert (2015) provides the results of a unique relationship between functions and outcomes in work relationships. A positive work relationship is a complex series of functions that can support career advancement, give emotional support and personal growth, provide opportunities to work for others and create friendships. The working relationship between the organization and employees, has the potential to increase job satisfaction, increase the perception of meaning of work, encourage positive emotions (Busse et al., 2018), life satisfaction(Cheney et al., 2008) and mutually beneficial employee growth (Bianchi, 2018).

The term meaningful work refers to an essential job and has a more positive individual meaning. Several studies on meaningful work state that "meaning" is highly dependent on specific job roles (Lysova et al., 2019). Different professionals will also have different dimensions about their work when defining the meaning of their job. For example, teachers, doctors and military forces will have different representations when describing the meaning of their work and have different experiences in their organizations(Bhaskar & Mishra, 2019).

From the state of the art, several previous studies are related to meaningful work, however there has been no research that conducts a multi-level analysis of meaningful work perceptions at the individual level, organization level and society contribution related to antecedent and consequences variables and important issues related to context meaningful work.This study aims to answer research questions related to meaningful work:
- RQ1: What antecedent variable affects meaningful work at the individual level, organizational level and society?
- RQ2: What are variable consequences in meaningful work?
- RQ3: How is the relationship between individual level, organizations level and society on perceptions of meaningful work?

MATERIALS AND METHOD

The method used in this study is the Systematic Literature Review (SLR). SLR is a process of identifying, assessing and interpreting several available research evidences to provide answers to research questions in specific fields or on interesting phenomena (Moher et al., 2007)and performed using the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta Analysis (PRISMA)protocol (see Figure 1). The PRISMA steps in this study are:
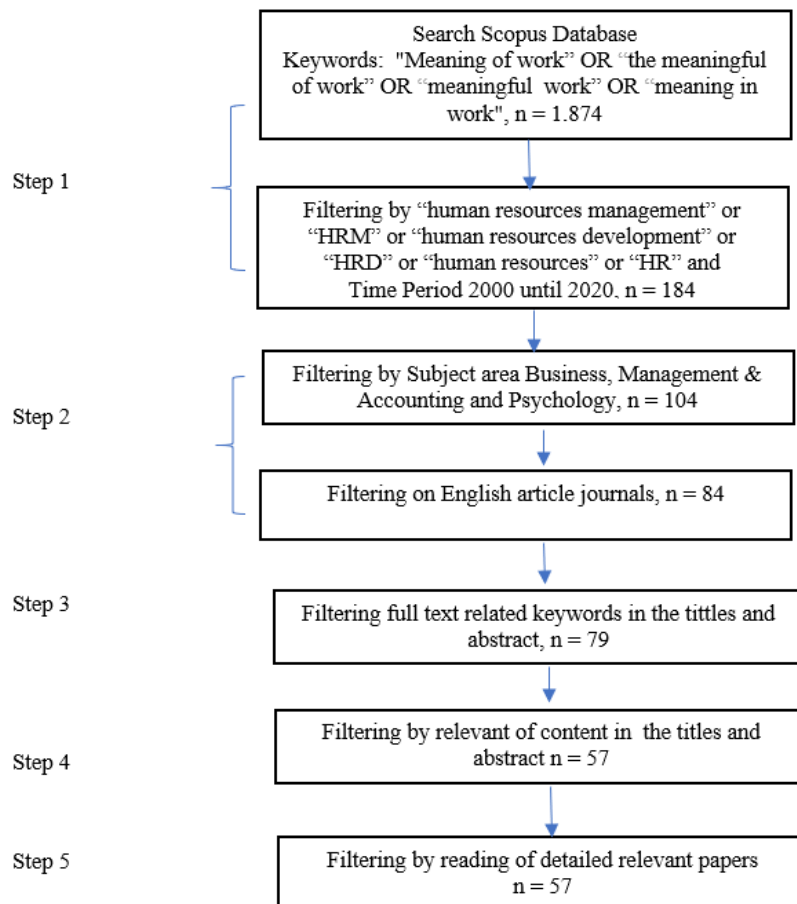

Figure 1. PRISMA protocol in Systematic Literature Review

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Body of Literature Meaningful Work
Construction on the network of meaningful work in building and development in Human Resources is built with the VOS Viewer application using the author's keywords. Four clusters meet the threshold of the study theme (see Figure 2), namely:
1. The meaningful work cluster (red) is dominated by the keywords meaningful work, organizational management, work centrality, work values, human.
2. The work engagement cluster (yellow) is dominated by the keywords work engagement, job crafting, work, meaningfulness, mental health.

3. The organizational commitment cluster (green) is dominated by employee engagement, organizational commitment, turnover, attitude, personality, psychology, burnout, quality of life.

4. The human resources management cluster (blue) is dominated by human resources, job satisfaction, leadership and workplace spirituality.
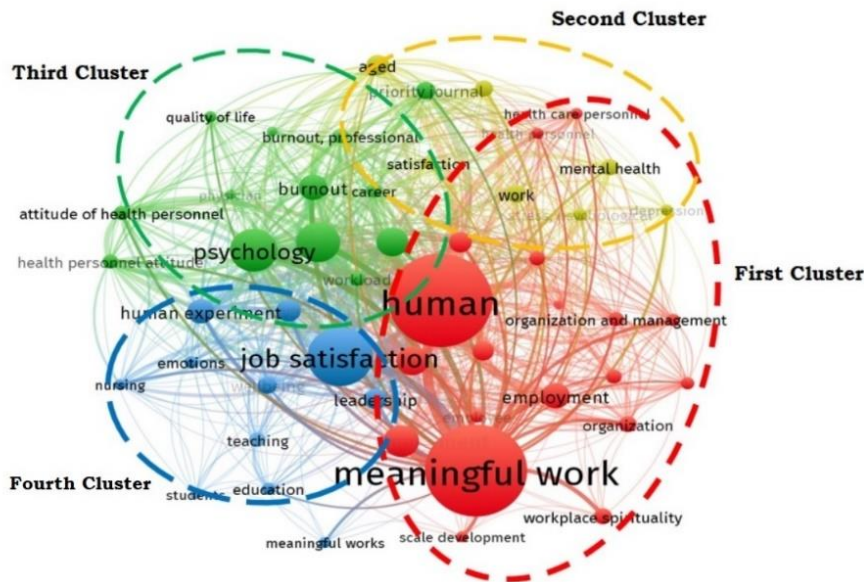

Figure 2.Document by theme mapping

Antecedents Variables in Meaningful Work

In understanding the literature review of meaningful work, the chart below is used. The first step is to discuss the antecedent variables based on theoretical and empirical research by showing the three categories: individual/organizational characteristics, meaningful context andperceived benefits (see Figure 3). Based on the review results, the various categories can be identified at the individual level, organizational level, and society contribution.
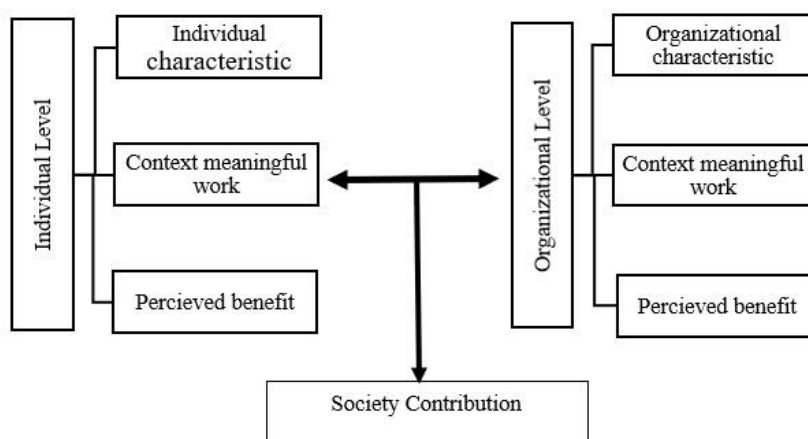

Figure 3. Antecedents of meaningful work in individual, organization and society

At the individual level, it consists ofthree categories: individual characteristics, meaningful context, and perceived benefits.

Individual Characteristics

Antecedent variables for individual characteristics consisted of calling, intrinsic motivation, personal trait, proactive personality and demographic (see Table 1).

Table 1. Antecedent variables on individual characteristics

No	Individual characteristic	Number of articles	References
1	Calling	2	(Dik et al., 2009; Duffy et al., 2014)
2	Motivation	5	(Bawuro et al., 2019; Chadi et al., 2017; Fouché et al., 2017; Martela & Riekki, 2018; Singh et al., 2020)
3	Personal trait	1	(Nawrin, 2018)
4	Proactive personality	4	(Akgunduz et al., 2018; Hulshof et al., 2020; Presbiteros, 2015; Vermooten et al., 2019)
5	Demographic	5	(Bianchi, 2018; Chen et al., 2017; Colbert et al., 2016; Mandeville et al., 2019; Pradhan et al., 2017)

Calling

Meaningful work describes the work being carried out as important and has a positive meaning for individuals. Meaningful work is viewed from a job or career perspective or calling. Individuals with a calling orientation describe their work as an important part(Dik et al., 2009). Individuals view their work as a form of personal satisfaction. Vocationally oriented individuals find their work meaningful and are willing to carry out their duties and develop better relationships.

Motivation

Employees' perceptions of meaningful work are influenced by motivation, which gives an understanding that increased intrinsic motivation will improve employees' desire to contribute positively to the success and goodness of their business (Bawuro et al., 2019). Individual motivation offers a powerful drive for people to work and helps people realize what is required in meaningful work to assist organizations accomplish their goals.

Personal Trait

Personal trait consists of personal resources and job demand resources. Individuals with personal resources will have meaningful work experiences(Nawrin, 2018). Meanwhile, job demand resources express individual psychological processes about job tension and

motivation. By having appropriate job resources, employees can enjoy a higher level of engagement, job satisfaction(Bawuro et al., 2019; Lysova et al., 2019).

Proactive Personality
Employees can improve their job performance with initiatives that grow in themselves and work enthusiastically(Presbiteros, 2015). Employees will actively provide feedback to their superiors. Moreover, proactive employees will seek opportunities and challenges in achieving their goals(Akgunduz et al., 2018). Proactive employees consider meaningful work and lead to high creativity.

Demographics
In much literature related to individual attitudes and understanding of meaningful work in human resources management, demography plays an important role in individual behavior. It provides a cognitive picture of individuals, including gender, age, profession, country, education level, and income level(Bianchi, 2018; Chen et al., 2017; Colbert et al., 2016; Mandeville et al., 2019).

Meaningful Work Context
Meaningful work context discusses how individual and organizational perspectives interpret a job by understanding the work being done. In the antecedent context meaningful work consists of worthy work, spirituality, psychological empowerment, meaning making of work and co-worker (see Table 2).

Table 2 Antecedent variables on context meaningful work

No	Context meaningful work	Number of articles	References
1	Worthy work	2	(Ciulla, 2012; Lips-Wiersma et al., 2020)
2	Spirituality	7	(Bhaskar & Mishra, 2019)(Pradhan et al., 2017)(Gupta et al., 2014)(Albuquerque et al., 2014)(Ahmad & Omar, 2016)(Tayebiniya & Khorasgani, 2018)(Ghosh & Mukherjee, 2020)
3	Psychological empowerment	3	(Martela & Riekki, 2018)(Vermooten et al., 2019)(Jena et al., 2019)
4	Meaning making of work	1	(Scott, 2019)
5	Co-worker	3	(Colbert et al., 2016; Fouché et al., 2017; Lysova et al., 2019; Thomas & Lucas, 2019)

Worthy work
Work is a job in which individuals serve others, alleviate pain, reduce obstacles, make someone healthier and happier, enhance them artistically or intellectually, or enhance their living environment (Pradhan et al., 2017).

Spirituality

Spirituality is an attitude or feeling about a relationship manifested regardless of individual religion, ritual or belief (Ghosh & Mukherjee, 2020). Interconnection and unity encourage compassion and generosity(Bhaskar & Mishra, 2019). A person sees himself as part of a large community by acting altruistic or generous, which benefits both the organization, employees and society.

Psychological empowerment

Research conducted by Jena et al. (2019) states that psychological empowerment affects meaningful work. Psychological empowerment is an important instrument that makes an employee able to pass several standard requirements set by the organization related to work, apply self-knowledge insights at work, and be an important element in organizational success (Martela & Riekki, 2018).

Meaning-making

When employees perceive that their work has meaning, many positive things will be obtained, fostering the belief that they have a central and essential role (Scott, 2019). Employees will show a level of satisfaction and create a high commitment to work (Dash & Vohra, 2019), show the development of a strong sense of identity, dignity, and worth (Thomas & Lucas, 2019).

Co-workers

Several research results related to co-workers show that relationships or ties with colleagues have a related influence on meaning (Fouché et al., 2017). Social interaction can deepen meaning. Working in conditions of mutual care and pleasure with co-workers tends to encourage a sense of connection that leads to psychological meaning (Jena et al., 2019).

Perceived Benefit

By receiving benefits, employees get positive experiences that will encourage them to build confidence that what they do has meaning for themselves, the organization and the surrounding community(Bianchi, 2018). There are three antecedent variables for perceived benefit in this literature study: giving to others, creative self-concept, and learning goal orientation (see Table 3).

Table 3 Antecedent variables on perceived benefits

No	Perceived Benefit	Number of articles	References
1	Giving to others	2	(Beukes & Botha, 2013; Colbert et al., 2016)
2	Creative self-concept	1	(Onça & Bido, 2019)
3	Learning goal	2	(Matsuo et al., 2019)(Bianchi, 2018)

	orientation		

Giving to others

Giving to others is the awareness of workers having a work environment that supports individually or as a team in providing resources such as assistance with assignments, career advice, or emotional support to help employees achieve workplace goals (Beukes & Botha, 2013). Employees understand the working relationship for organizations that can make appropriate contributions and provide reciprocity for providing services to others(Colbert et al., 2016).

Creative Self-Concept

Research related to creative self-concept that has been conducted by Onca &Bido (2019) provides findings that creative self-concept affects meaningful work. This concept consists of characteristics related to self-efficacy or a strong belief that an individual has in his own ability to provide creative results and provide an image as a creative personal identity and a confident self-description.

Learning Goal Orientation

Meaningful work is strongly influenced by how a person's awareness of their values, goals, and beliefs in identifying the meaning of the work being undertaken self-involvement and goal orientation affect meaningful work. The study conducted by Matsuo et al. (2019) conceptualized that the work environment can influence goal orientation, which is a situational goal preference and points to the development of competencies aimed at gaining new skills and the ability to control new situations. At the organizational level, it consists with three categories: organizational characteristics, meaningful context and perceived benefits.

Organizational Characteristic

Antecedent variables for organizational characteristics consisted of fairness and job autonomy (see Table 4).

Table 4 Antecedent variables on organizational characteristic

No	Organizational characteristics	Number of articles	References
1	Fairness	2	(Lips-Wiersma et al., 2020; Nawrin, 2018)
2	Job autonomy	3	(Cardador et al., 2019; Martela & Riekki, 2018; Scott, 2019)

Fairness

Research conducted by Lips-Wiersma et al. (2020) states that worthy work, fairness, and responsible leadership positively influence the meaningful work dimensions of employees. A

sense of fairness will increase trust in the organization, and employees will see this as positive support for their career development. Research conducted by Nawrin (2018) related to justice as an essential means of giving employees equal opportunities based on justice about results (distributive justice) and processes (procedural justice). It will bring growth opportunities for employees and organizations that priorities the holistic development of employee engagement.

Job Autonomy

Scott's research results (2019) state that works autonomy influences meaningful work. This study is the strongest predictor for workers who have long experience and have high educational background. This condition describes a person's authority in fulfilling his needs in self-expression, achievement, independence and his role and existence for others. Job autonomy that accompanies a job will affect meaningful work.

Organizational Context

Antecedent variables for organizational context consisted of job design, leadership, workplace dignity, organizational resources, staffing and Training (see Table 5).

Table 5 Antecedent variables on organizational context

No	Organizational context	Number of articles	References
1	Job design	3	(Fouché et al., 2017; Hulshof et al., 2020; Vermooten et al., 2019)
2	Leadership	4	(Chen et al., 2017; Lips-Wiersma et al., 2020; Matsuo et al., 2019; Tummers & Bronkhorst, 2014)
3	Workplace dignity	2	(Gupta et al., 2014; Thomas & Lucas, 2019)
4	Perceived organization support	3	(Akgunduz et al., 2018; Bhaskar & Mishra, 2019; Bhatnagar & Aggarwal, 2020)
5	Organizational resources	1	(Nawrin, 2018)
6	Staffing and Training	1	(Singh et al., 2020)

Job design

They are related to the job characteristics model by Hackman and Oldham (1980) has several characteristics: autonomy, skill variation, task identity, significance and feedback, which influence meaningful work. Jobs that have a positive impact on others will increase the importance of meaningful work(Hulshof et al., 2020). Job design influences meaningful work where organizations need to regulate work assignments according to organizational behavior and needs that encourage individuals to interpret meaningful work in their work(Fouché et al., 2017).

Leadership

Leadership influences meaningful work (Chen et al., 2017), leading to higher psychological well-being. Leadership consists of inspirational motivation (being able to motivate and articulate a shared vision); idealized influence leads to the role of leader; intellectual stimulation (encouraging creativity and innovation) and individualized consideration that leaders treat individuals according to their strengths and needs (Matsuo et al., 2019).

Workplace dignity

Workplace dignity is the self-recognized and other-recognized form of involvement in work activities, consisting of being communicatively bound and interacting(Thomas & Lucas, 2019). Workplace dignity is related to respectful interaction, competence & contribution, equality, inherent value. The focus of the humanistic management paradigm is a commitment to advocating for and engaging in management practices that protect human dignity and promote well-being (Gupta et al., 2014).

Perceived organization support

Perceived organization support is the belief of employees that the organization cares for and contributes to the welfare of its employees. Employees feel secure in their organization, and use the perceived organization as having high support will increase employee creativity as long as they care about employee welfare (Bhatnagar & Aggarwal, 2020).

Organizational Resources

Research conducted by Nawrin (2018) states that organizational affect meaningful work. The concept of organizational resources is an arrangement of motivational constructions presented by organizations to increase employee efficiency and encourage self-development and high job demands. The organization provides the resources needed by employees to meet their needs.

Staffing and Training

Research conducted by Singh et al (2020) found that staffing and training influences meaningful work, which confirms that selectivity in recruitment is essential because it can help companies identify the best talent. Staffing helps companies find talent in the market and save costs. The recruitment and selection process in HRM practice influences developing employee innovation related to skills, knowledge and abilities (Singh et al., 2020).

Organizational Benefits

Antecedent variables for organizational benefits consisted of performance, job involvement, participation and competence (see Table 6).

Table 6 Antecedent variables on organizational benefit

No	Organizational	Number of	References

	benefits	articles	
1	Performance	1	(Singh et al., 2020)
2	Job involvement	1	(Scott, 2019)
3	Participation	2	(Busse et al., 2018; Kashyap & Arora, 2020)
4	Competence	2	(Cardador et al., 2019; Martela & Riekki, 2018)

Performance

In a study by Singh et al. (2020), performance-based evaluation and rewards influence meaningful work. This indicates the willingness of the organization to act fairly and impartially in providing rewards based on employee performance. Evaluation and awards carried out by companies based on performance are closely related to meaningful work where employees feel the company appreciates what they contribute to the company with a fair assessment.

Job involvement

In the research conducted by Scott (2019), it was found that job involvement is one of the factors that influence meaningful work. This causes the relationship of the participation and meaning to become a two-way relationship, a reciprocal relationship that is expected so that this condition can build meaningful work.

Participation

Workers who can participate in making effective decisions will provide experiences that can increase workers' perceptions of the meaning in the workplace (Kashyap & Arora, 2020). It is also about how decent work is perceived as related to a family environment with interpersonal closeness and togetherness (Busse et al., 2018).

Competence

Research that has been done (Steger et al., 2012) states that meaningful work benefits the development of meaning in employees in their lives. Individuals perceive that self-development in increasing competence and skills are essential. It strengthens meaningful work through personal development (Cardador et al., 2019).

Society contribution

One of organization success is measured with financial parameters. Still, the interaction with the surrounding community will make the organization valuable because it has a genuine concern for the community's welfare.Meaningfulness for individuals and organizations associated with the community in their environment at the society contribution consists of beneficence, social interaction, participation and decent work (see Table 7).

Table 7 Antecedent variables on society contribution

No	Society contribution	Number of articles	References
1	Beneficence	1	(Mandeville et al., 2019)
2	Social interaction	1	(Onça & Bido, 2019)
3	Participation	1	(Singh et al., 2020)
4	Decent work	2	(Duffy et al., 2020; Kashyap & Arora, 2020)

Beneficence

Beneficence describes pro-social behavior, which means doing something that will benefit others about welfare. Someone does things that are beneficial and useful, which can be a source of meaningful work (Mandeville et al., 2019). Work is a social activity in which the individual knows the organization is striving for specific endeavors without expecting anything in return which based on the individual feeling obliged to others around him.

Social Interaction

Research conducted by Onca (2019) has proven that social and interpersonal work positively and significantly influences perceptions of meaningful work. In social work discourse, individuals feel that they have contributed to social events in the broader scope. Social problems in the context of a job can contribute to psychological well-being because these individuals can connect with the community through cooperative and interpersonal relationships(Tummers & Bronkhorst, 2014).

Participation

Employee involvement in CSR activities, namely CSR participation and CSR perceptions, could create meaningful work in the form of initiatives from employees who were initially unconscious to become actively involved (Supanti & Butcher, 2019).Employees see positive things from the company when the company can share with the surrounding environment in carrying out CSR with real applications and interpret it as meaningful work that builds trust in the company (Ghosh & Mukherjee, 2020).

Decent work

Organizational support in realizing employee welfare raises motivation for employees to make a positive contribution to work assignments(Duffy et al., 2020). Family and community values aligned with organizational values have an important role in meaningful work (Kashyap & Arora, 2020).

Consequences Variables on Meaningful Work

Consequences variables for meaningful work consisted of job satisfaction, life satisfaction, psychological well-being, commitment, engagement, and job embeddedness (see Table 8).

Table 8 Consequences variables on meaningful work

No	Consequence variables	Number of articles	References
1	Job satisfaction	7	(Fouché et al., 2017)(Ghislieri et al., 2019)(Fairlie, 2011)(Steger et al., 2012)(Allan et al., 2018)
2	Life satisfaction	3	(Cheney et al., 2008)(Colbert et al., 2016)(Steger et al., 2012)
3	Psychological well being	5	(Ward & King, 2017)(Wrzesniewski et al., 2013)(Duffy et al., 2014)(Jena et al., 2019)(Wallace, 2019)
4	Commitment	5	(Duffy et al., 2014)(Dash & Vohra, 2019)(Kazemipour & Mohd Amin, 2012)(Djafri et al., 2018)(Mitchell et al., 2009)
5	Engagement	8	(Shaimerdenova et al., 2019)(Ward & King, 2017)(Busse et al., 2018)(Lysova et al., 2019)(Duffy et al., 2014)(Presbiteros, 2015)(Chen et al., 2017)(Jena et al., 2019)(Chawla & Guda, 2017)
6	Job embeddedness	1	(Dechawatanapaisal, 2020)

Job Satisfaction

Employees involved in meaningful work describe higher welfare and higher job satisfaction (Allan et al., 2018). Organizational commitment affects job satisfaction. If the organization can satisfy the needs of employees, concern about their interests, appreciate their contributions, employees will experience job satisfaction gives benefit to the organization and increase perceptions of organizational support.

Life Satisfaction

Meaningful work influences life satisfaction felt by employees because organizational support will stimulate positive reciprocal relationships (Scott, 2019). Support from the surrounding environment and safe workplace situation will provide opportunities for employees to support each other in achieving company goals and drive their life satisfaction.

Psychological well being

Meaningful work has a close relationship with individual psychological well-being to form sustainable relationships as a priority in life and make employees become a part of the community (Wallace, 2019) who share the same thoughts. The conformity of values and beliefs that have been formed in employee perceptions with the values adopted by the company having the same direction and strengthen employee engagement(Ward & King, 2017).

Commitment

Commitment to work is an important thing that will encourage employees to commit to their organization(Dash & Vohra, 2019). Employees feel that they have a strong bond by contributing a commitment to achieving organizational goals. A strong commitment will develop a professional commitment, which is a form of individual loyalty to the profession they live in.

Engagement

A work environment that is full of trust encourages employees to be motivated to contribute to the success and goals of the organization. Employees continue to understand the organization's vision, and over time, it will strengthen confidence, commitment and organizational support for employees to achieve good results(Chawla & Guda, 2017). Meaningful work in the long term describes a dedication to individual's career and the enthusiasm for making extra efforts(Chen et al., 2017).

Job Embeddedness

Research conducted by Dechawatanapaisal (2020) found an influence between meaningful work and job embeddedness. It shows that meaningful and significant job perceptions tend to be psychological between employees and their jobs. Job embeddedness is a picture of the employees' totality and psychologically influenced by the organization, affecting them staying or leaving their jobs.

Important Issue of Meaningful Work at Multiple Levels

A review of the literature review concludes that meaningful work has two levels of perspective, namely individual and organizational contributions to society that influence each other, which is depicted in the form of a spinner image (Figure 4).The three of them experience synergy by growing and developing together so that a balanced situation arises, which will bring prosperity to individuals, organizations and society.

The purpose of fostering community relationships is to promote a sense of contributing to a larger objective rather than only looking for a financial reward. As a result, individuals comprehend the key reason for humans to care about their surroundings and cooperate with one another.
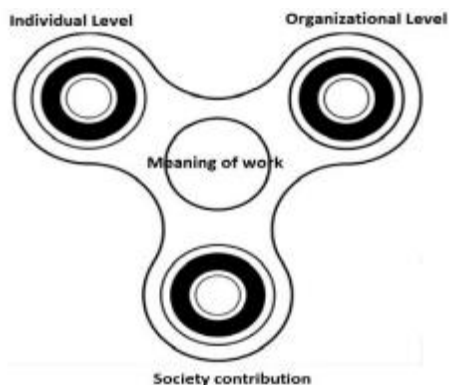

Figure 4. The relationship of meaningful work at multi-level and society contribution

CONCLUSIONS

This research produces several mapping themes consisting of four main clusters using bibliometrics: meaningful work, employee engagement, human resources management, and work engagement. Work creates harmonious relationships, structure and meaning in broad community relationships and social relationships with other people. It plays a role in providing meaning in social relationships and can provide unique and different meanings. This is illustrated by the spinners that will spin together for balance in interpreting meaningful work. Meaningful work, which refers to work that embraces the dreams, hopes, and sense of fulfilment and contribution of the individual, affirms the positive sense of self they deserve.

Research Implications

This research has theoretical implications and practical implications. The theoretical implications of this research provide insight into the development of the science of human resource management. Meanwhile, the practical implications of meaningful work occur at the individual level and the organizational level that contributes to society. Future research to help decide new antecedent variables or existing variables in meaningful work studies.

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Acknowledgements

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