



Investigating motivation and work performance in a non-profit organisation: The mediating role of meaningful work

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DECLARATION

I, Tania Adonis, declare that the research study titled “*Investigating motivation and work performance in a non-profit organisation: the mediating role of meaningful work*” is my unique creation. This work has been presented as part of the criteria for obtaining a Master of Business Administration (MBA) degree at the North-West University Business School.

I assert that this research has not been presented before by anyone else or me to earn a degree or certification from any university or educational establishment. All references to information sources utilised or cited in this work have been appropriately acknowledged through citations following the North-West University (NWU) Harvard style referencing guidelines.

I confirm that I have followed the guidelines of academic research by diligently protecting the privacy and confidentiality of all respondents in my study without any conflicts of interest during its execution under the guidance of my supervisor, Prof PA Botha.

Name: Tania Adonis

DEDICATION

This dissertation is lovingly dedicated to my family, who have been my anchor, my motivation and my greatest blessing throughout this MBA journey.

To my husband, William, thank you for your endless patience, encouragement and belief in me, even on the days when I did not believe in myself. Your quiet strength and consistent support carried me through times of doubt and fatigue.

To my amazing girls, Phoebé, Willow, Keian and Halo. My biggest inspiration is you. Your love and understanding gave me the strength to keep going and the joy that balanced the challenges. Your hugs, smiles and faith in me made every hard day and late night spent studying away from you, worthwhile.

This accomplishment belongs to you as much as it does to me. Thank you so much for your love and support.

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Above all, I thank God for granting me the strength and perseverance to complete this milestone.

ABSTRACT

Non-profit organisations (NPOs) depend on employee motivation and commitment to achieve their social mandates despite limited financial incentives. This study investigated the relationship between motivation and work performance, examining the mediating role of meaningful work in this relationship among employees in a selected NPO in South Africa. A quantitative, cross-sectional research design was employed, with data collected from 288 employees across six provinces using standardised questionnaires measuring motivation, meaningful work and performance. The descriptive analysis indicated that the employees were intrinsically motivated ($M = 3.80$) and experienced meaningful work ($M = 3.94$) as their primary drivers. The correlation analysis showed strong positive correlations among the variables. The motivations were significantly related to work performance ($r = .65, p < .001$) and meaningful work ($r = .69, p < .001$), and meaningful work showed a positive correlation with work performance ($r = .63, p < .001$).

The mediation analysis indicated that meaningful work partially mediates the relationship between motivation and performance (indirect effect = 0.255). This implies that employees who experience purpose at work are more likely to convert their motivation into effective performance outcomes. These findings illustrate that individuals who perceive work as meaningful tend to convert their motivations into improved work performance. The study's conclusions thus support the idea that meaningful work and employee motivation reinforce each other as bipartisan factors in employee effectiveness. Moreover, meaningful work serves as an inner psychological conduit, providing motivation and a channel for effective work performance. It highlights the importance of fostering purpose, autonomy and competence in NPOs to sustain motivation, enhance performance and promote long-term organisational effectiveness.

Key terms: motivation, meaningful work, performance, NPOs, South Africa.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

NPO	Non-Profit Organisation
SDT	Self-Determination Theory
JCM	Job Characteristics Model
SD	Standard Deviation
CI	Confidence Interval
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
UN	United Nations
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
NWU	North-West University

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Employees' performance and commitment are pivotal in organisational success (Ganta, 2014:221). This is especially true in the non-profit landscape, where the organisation's mission surpasses its financial margin or gains (NPO Act 71 of 1997). Therefore, understanding the complex relationship among motivation, work performance, and perceptions of meaningful work is essential to ensure the long-term success of these organisations. Motivation (both internal and external) has been noted by Ghaffari *et al.* (2017:92) and various other theorists as the driving force behind behaviour and performance. Since non-profit organisations (NPOs) have limited resources and offer different payment strategies (Brandl & Güttel, 2007:176), those in for-profit organisations and those with altruistic motives are believed to be at play. Determining what keeps employees motivated, engaged, and satisfied with their work is vital. Therefore, it is even more crucial to understand what motivates employees in this environment. This research examined how employee motivation affects performance in NPOs and whether meaningful work is a mediator in this relationship.

1.2 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

As defined by Section 1 of the NPO Act 71 of 1997, an NPO is a business or trust formed for a public purpose for which its earnings, profits and assets are not distributed to its members other than for reimbursement paid out for services provided. Another name for NPOs is Civil Society Organisations (CSOs). These organisations act as essential cornerstones of social change, addressing societal needs and promoting worthwhile causes. Unlike their counterparts in the corporate and for-profit sector, NPO employees are not necessarily motivated or driven by remuneration (Renard & Snelgar, 2016:2), but rather by intrinsic factors such as personal fulfilment.

A key factor influencing employees' feelings about working for NPOs is the idea of meaningful work. Both-Nwabuwe *et al.* (2017:1-7) examined various definitions of meaningful work to determine a comprehensive definition. They defined meaningful work

as the process of understanding one's work as a means of fulfilling or understanding one's purpose in life (Both-Nwabuwe *et al.*, 2017:7). Related to meaningful work are the unique characteristics of the specific job and the organisation's sources of meaning (Tommasi *et al.*, 2020:6). Moreover, employees are believed to put more effort into work that they find personally fulfilling (Fairlie, 2011:508). Motivated employees are further believed to show commitment and dedication. However, there is a knowledge gap in identifying and understanding how motivation affects work performance in the non-profit sector, especially regarding meaningful work.

Considering this, this study aimed to close the knowledge gap by investigating the impact of motivation on NPO employees' job performance, focusing on the mediating role of meaningful work. This research provided important insights that can guide organisational practices and improve NPOs' overall effectiveness in achieving their goals by analysing the complex relationships between motivation, meaningful work and performance outcomes.

1.3 RATIONALE

NPOs and CSOs are essential for addressing social challenges. NPOs' impact on society can be maximised by optimising their employees' performance. Therefore, the findings of this research study have a broader impact beyond identifying factors impacting employee motivation. Theories suggest that meaningful work may significantly impact employee outcomes (Fairlie, 2011:508). Despite this information, the mediating role of meaningful work, particularly in the NPO setting, has received little attention despite the considerable research on motivation and work performance across different sectors. This study contributes significantly to filling the gap in the literature and adding to the understanding of employee behaviour in the non-profit sector.

The study's results may impact the recruitment, management and retention of employees in the NPO setting. Based on the results, NPOs can create more focused strategies to foster overall effectiveness by improving work satisfaction and performance. NPOs and CSOs are essential for addressing social challenges. NPOs' impact on society can be maximised by optimising their employees' performance. Therefore, the findings of this research have a broader impact beyond identifying factors impacting employee motivation.

1.4 RESEARCH PROBLEM

The effectiveness of any organisation's workforce is crucial to its success (Ganta, 2014:221). Research has shown that motivation is one of the key factors in ensuring that employees perform well in their jobs (Kalogiannidis, 2021:985) and, in turn, organisational success. According to Ganta (2014:221-222), for employees to perform optimally and be satisfied at work, they need motivation. Thus, it is concluded that motivation levels directly affect employees' productivity. Various researchers have noted that increased motivation leads to improved performance and productivity. However, the opposite is true for employees with low work motivation.

As discussed by Contan and Serban (2015), unmotivated employees can hurt productivity and organisational success in numerous ways. When there is no drive to perform or excel, performance may suffer. Employees who lack motivation are likely to put in minimal effort at work, avoid the workplace as much as possible and therefore produce work of low quality (Ganta, 2014: 221). Moreover, employees with low motivation are generally not enthusiastic about their work, which impacts their performance. Unmotivated employees are also more eager to leave the organisation and, in addition to their poor performance, contribute to high staff turnover (Salleh *et al.*, 2016:139). Employees with low-motivation are often absent (Salleh *et al.*, 2016:139), further contributing to poor performance.

Low motivation can decrease performance (Contan & Serban, 2015). It is also associated with stress, frustration and difficulty focusing (Bialowolski, 2020:2), all of which affect efficiency and productivity. Salleh *et al.* (2016:139) noted that unmotivated employees are often absent. Bialowolski *et al.* (2020:1) directly linked absenteeism to decreased productivity and financial loss. Low motivation also leads to low staff morale (Contan & Serban, 2015). Moreover, low staff morale can influence employees' focus and engagement in tasks, leading to lower-quality work, longer task completion times and reduced overall outputs, thereby decreasing employees' chances of growth and advancement. Low motivation can thus affect individual employees and the company, as it significantly impacts job performance and, ultimately, the organisation's success (Contan & Serban, 2015). Not only does the lack of motivation affect an individual, but it can also negatively affect team dynamics. If one individual does not perform, the rest of the team must work harder to ensure that tasks are completed on time, which can cause

conflict and unhappiness amongst co-workers. Working in a toxic environment can lead to unnecessary stress and despair, burnout and anxiety (Rasool *et al.*, 2021:1), which all negatively impact work performance and general well-being. Stressors in the workplace affect psychological (Bui *et al.*, 2021) and physical well-being. Unwell employees tend to take sick or leave days, leading to increased absenteeism and low productivity (Bialowolski *et al.*, 2020:2).

Zolotareva (2020:51-62) conducted a pilot study on 275 employees in Russia to examine job apathy. Job apathy refers to an employee's lack of motivation towards their job. This decrease in motivation can be caused by various factors, such as not feeling valued and having no autonomy at work, as well as frustration and burnout. A decrease in motivation can lead to psychological distress in the employee, significantly impacting their attitude towards their job, resulting in reduced effort in task completion and a withdrawal of mental investment. The study concluded that the Job Apathy Scale (JAS), developed by Schmidt, is reliable and valid. Furthermore, additional research is needed to explore the direct effect of decreased motivation on workplace efficiency. Dalton (2007:5-6) further argues that a range of factors motivates individuals. Employees are no longer motivated solely by salaries; they are also motivated by benefits such as flexible work environments, professional, personal, and family services, facilities, and technology.

While the existing research literature is primarily focused on for-profit organisations, this study addressed a gap by examining the impact of motivation on employees' work performance in the NPO sector. By emphasising the mediating role of meaningful work, the study seeks to shed light on a crucial aspect often overlooked in the literature. It provided valuable insights to guide strategies that motivate NPO employees to improve their work performance, as well as a clear understanding of the relationship between motivation and meaningful work, paving the way for updating and enhancing targeted policies and interventions to increase productivity in the nonprofit sector.

Linking into the definition provided by the NPO Act 71 of 1997, Schepers *et al.* (2005:192) describe NPOs as entities that do not generate dividends to the shareholders or executives, but instead put those dividends back into the entity's primary aim or reason for existence. This also filters down to the employees, meaning no significant incentives or monetary bonuses are paid. This is in direct contrast with for-profit organisations. This

raises the question of why specific individuals choose to work for an NPO rather than a for-profit entity with a more generous remuneration structure. Not only do individuals decide to work in the non-profit sector, but some also excel in it. Unfortunately, this is not true for all employees employed in the sector. Some employees view employment as merely a job and require external motivators to stay motivated. People are unique and therefore motivated by different factors, both intrinsic and extrinsic. Motivating factors that are important to some might not be to others, and vice versa. As indicated by Osabiya (2015:63), motivation is action and the elements (internal and external) that influence the action an individual chooses.

In the non-profit industry, as in various sectors, employee input is critical for an organisation's success. Moreover, motivation is a crucial component in enhancing work performance. *This study investigated the problem of low employee motivation in a selected NPO, which could significantly reduce their work performance. While it is recognised that low motivation can negatively impact work performance, it is unclear how meaningful work, as a mediator, can mitigate or exacerbate this impact.* It was crucial to understand the dynamics of motivation to develop effective strategies to enhance work performance, retain experienced staff and ensure the overall success of these organisations. Therefore, this study examined the relationship between motivation and work performance, as well as the potential mediating role of meaningful work in this relationship.

1.5 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND QUESTIONS

The research objectives were:

- To examine the relationship between motivation and work performance among employees in NPOs.
- To investigate the mediating role of meaningful work in the relationship between motivation and work performance among NPO employees.

The study's research questions were as follows.

- To what extent is there a relationship between motivation and work performance among NPO employees?

- To what extent does meaningful work mediate the relationship between motivation and work performance among NPO employees?

1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The study's findings contribute to the existing body of knowledge by providing a deeper understanding of the relationship between motivation, meaningful work, and performance in the context of NPOs. Research findings helped to close the gap in the existing literature by offering new perspectives on the mediating role of meaningful work. Furthermore, the study's conclusions have practical significance for NPOs, improving employee performance and informing human resources on effective employee management. Based on the findings, NPOs can move forward to develop targeted strategies to improve employee motivation and performance. The study's results aid NPO policymakers in better explaining and understanding the motivating factors that foster meaningful work.

The study benefits NPOs by clarifying the factors contributing to job fulfilment and satisfaction. Increased staff performance will also directly impact the organisation's effectiveness and, in turn, have positive economic implications, such as greater financial stability and organisational sustainability. A better understanding of meaningful work and motivation in the NPO setting can achieve this. Moreover, this has a positive impact on employees, promoting greater overall psychological well-being and health. Furthermore, by fostering employee motivation and well-being, the study contributes to responsible management practices by taking a comprehensive approach to managing employee needs.

The research provides valuable insights for academics and fellow researchers interested in organisational behaviour, human resources, and non-profit management. The study also contributes to Sustainable Development Goal (SDG 3) – Good Health and Well-being. The study examined the impact of meaningful work and motivation on psychological well-being and job satisfaction. It acknowledges the detrimental effects of low motivation, such as stress, burnout and mental fatigue, which directly affect workers' well-being. By promoting work environments that foster intrinsic motivation and meaning, the study contributes to creating healthier, more sustainable workplaces.

1.7 PRELIMINARY LITERATURE REVIEW

The preliminary literature review focuses on individual motivation (independent variable), meaningful work (mediator variable) and individual work performance (dependent variable).

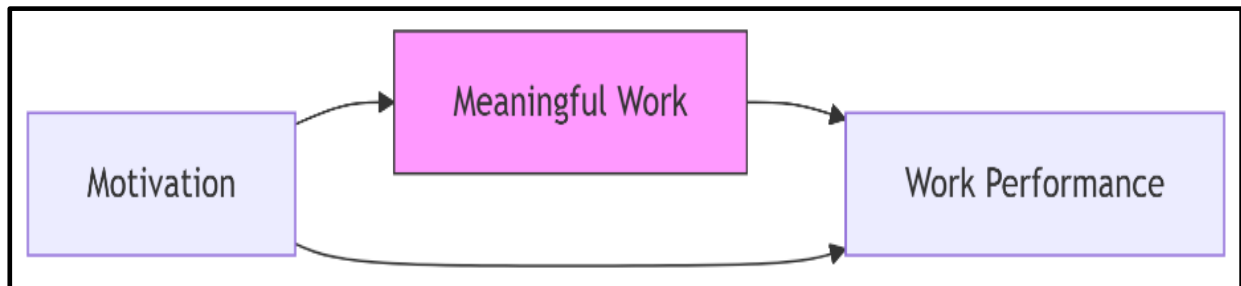


Figure 1.1: Conceptual Framework

1.7.1 Individual Motivation

Motivation plays a crucial role in organisations and is necessary to positively impact employees' performance (Ghaffari *et al.*, 2017:92). This study examines whether motivation influences the work performance of staff employed in the NPO sector. It aims to investigate whether meaningful work moderates the relationship between motivation and performance. Motivation is defined by Brown (2007:6) as having the will and enthusiasm to exhibit certain behaviours to meet needs or reach goals. These behaviours, in turn, stem from psychological and/or psychosocial needs. Theories of motivation explain why people behave in certain ways. There are various theories on motivation and what drives an individual. The earliest motivational theories date back to the 1940s, and the concept continues to evolve.

Motivated employees produce higher-quality work than less motivated employees (Kalogiannidis, 2021:985). However, because individuals are unique, motivating factors will vary. Therefore, employee management must be individualised where possible, especially in the work environment. This applies to both internal and external aspects of motivation. Osabiya (2015:63) describes motivation as the examination of what an individual does and the influences that prompt them to engage in such actions or choices. Therefore, motivation is an integral part of behavioural display.

Uka and Prendi (2021:273-274) noted that organisations use various motivation strategies to keep their employees engaged and encouraged. These include cash bonuses, paid leave, rewards and other stimuli to meet organisational goals. Recognising employee motivation factors can help adjust motivation strategies and further boost employee morale. Research has shown that an employee's level of motivation affects job satisfaction and performance (Uka & Prendi, 2021:274) and can therefore be the deciding factor in whether an organisation is successful. Research conducted by Mahmoud *et al.* (2020:393-395) suggested that individuals of different age groups require different motivational strategies.

A study conducted among service-sector employees in Canada used Gagne *et al.*'s (2015) Multidimensional Work Motivation Scale (MWMS) to evaluate various aspects of employee motivation. The study concluded that, of the six dimensions of the MWMS, at least one dimension of motivation differs between older and younger generations (Mahmoud *et al.*, 2020, 406). However, further research is needed to provide accurate recommendations for different age groups. A study performed in Armenia by Tovmasyan and Minasyan (2020:5) examined the impact of motivation on work efficacy for both employees and their employers. The study found that both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation factors are appreciated. It further noted that work efficiency is affected by the organisation's motivation policy, which also impacts its success (Tovmasyan & Minasyan, 2020:5). Therefore, understanding motivation and what motivates employees was essential to inspiring them to perform effectively.

Schepers *et al.* (2005:191) noted that very little research has been conducted on what motivates employees in the non-profit sector. They further note that the current literature mainly focuses on the for-profit sector. Because these sectors differ, their motivating factors will vary. The main differences between the sectors include the entities' hierarchical structures, the distribution of funds within the hierarchy and the entities themselves, and the types of individuals seeking employment in these sectors (Schepers *et al.*, 2005:193). Individuals seeking employment in the non-profit sector are believed to be more people-centred, while individuals in the for-profit sector are more business-oriented. In addition, employees in the non-profit sector in South Africa are reported to earn about 22%-40% less than their counterparts in other sectors (Renard & Snelgar, 2016:1).

Research conducted by Uka and Prendi on a small sample of employees from different sectors (n=110) in Albania found that remuneration motivates productivity and better performance; however, it is not the ultimate or most substantial motivating factor (2021:268). Data collected in this research study showed that motivating factors such as feeling valued at work, receiving acknowledgement for work done and the opportunity for growth and further development are highly motivating. A study conducted by Tovmasyan and Minasyan (2020:5) concluded that, amongst others, salary and rewards are the most popular material incentive motivators. Data were collected via an internet survey, and 100 responses were received (Tovmasyan & Minasyan, 2020:28).

Brandl and Güttel (2007:176) examine performance payment strategies in the non-profit sector. Because a non-profit entity is not for profit, it is not easy to justify large payouts to employees and stakeholders. Non-profit entities are typically comprised of both voluntary and paid workers, and funders must often justify their remuneration strategies. According to this research, there are three types of remuneration systems: namely, individual, function-based and performance-based. Each of these has its identifiable characteristics. Performance-based remuneration is more common in for-profit entities than in nonprofits, as it typically involves monetary incentives such as bonus payouts or raises.

Furthermore, Brandl and Güttel (2007:183) noted that measuring performance in non-profit entities tends to be qualitative, thus making it harder to set standards. This also makes it difficult to determine performance. The research concluded that non-profit entities could use payment or non-payment strategies to deal with performance. In a study conducted across three countries, including South Africa, researchers found that individuals employed in the non-profit sector are mainly motivated by internal factors (Renard & Snelgar, 2018:49). Based on a review of various measurement scales and previous findings, they developed the Intrinsic Work Motivation Scale (IWMS). The study's sample size was relatively small (n=486). The study concluded that the IWMS is a reliable measure of intrinsic motivation in the non-profit sector. It also found that individuals in this sector are more people-centred and emotion-focused, rather than motivated by external factors such as high salaries and monetary rewards.

Earlier research by Renard and Snelgar (2016:2) suggests that external factors, such as salaries, are not motivating for individuals employed in the non-profit sector. They are

instead motivated by the fulfilment they get from what they do. This links back to Herzberg's two-factor theory, indicating that motivating factors are intrinsic. Furthermore, Hackman and Oldham (1980) describe five fundamental work characteristics that must be fulfilled for individuals to be satisfied in their work environment. Once fulfilled, it leads to the experience of meaningfulness in the work they do; there is meaning in taking responsibility for work outcomes, as they know the results. This study by Renard and Snelgar (2016:2) collected data from 15 individuals employed in the non-profit sector in South Africa, utilising structured one-on-one interviews. Although the sample was small, the results were confirmed to be reliable and valid. A convenience sample study comprising 183 respondents showed that, among the top 4 motivating factors, remuneration is not the top motivating factor for employees in the service industry in Bangladesh (Rahaman *et al.*, 2020:517-518). The study found that the respondents rated job certainty and safety as the top motivating factor. A structured survey questionnaire was used to collect data.

1.7.2 Meaningful work

According to Martela and Pessi (2018) (cited by Blustein *et al.*, 2022:296), there are 36 documented definitions of the concept of meaningful work. These definitions span different fields of study, including organisational behaviour, humanities and ethics. Rosso *et al.* (2020, cited by Blustein *et al.*, 2022:297) defined meaningful work as employees experiencing their work as significant and having a beneficial impact. Furthermore, employees show greater devotion and organisational involvement when they see their work as a duty rather than merely a job (Dewi *et al.*, 2022:2383). Allan *et al.* (2019; cited by Rai *et al.* (2023:2) further noted that meaningful work might influence employee behaviours through intrinsic and extrinsic motivation.

Martela *et al.* (2021:11) noted autonomy and beneficence as the two leading indicators of meaningful work. The longitudinal study was performed on a large sample ($n=631$) of workers in Chile using surveys to collect data. The Meaning in Life Questionnaire (MLQ-P) was adapted to assess the experience of meaningful work. Autonomy and beneficence were measured using similar validated questionnaires that resonated with the subjects (Martela *et al.*, 2021:5). According to Rai *et al.* (2023:1), meaningful work is an essential driver of employee conduct that fosters a sense of responsibility and ownership towards

an organisation. Both these characteristics, in turn, encourage ethical behaviour. The study further found a positive correlation between meaningful work, duty orientation and moral ownership (Rai *et al.*, 2023:4-10). According to Hannah *et al.* (cited by Rai *et al.*, 2023:4), duty orientation is the psychological condition that symbolises the conscious urge to assist and support the team in achieving its goals.

In their systematic review of meaningful work, Tan *et al.* (2023) summarised the existing knowledge based on studies primarily conducted in the US, Europe, and Asia over the 10 years from 2000 to 2020. Their research aimed to provide insights into what constitutes meaningful work and the elements that affect employees' perceptions of it. The systematic review included 88 articles, where data were collected using various scales to measure meaningful work. The studies were conducted across multiple sectors, professions, and employee levels. The review identified six meaningful work elements, including self-realisation and non-self-serving behaviour. The research categorised the causes and effects of meaningful work. Additionally, it is worth noting that meaningful work can take many forms and be understood in various ways. Furthermore, the article stated that although there is significant information on the subject, very little research has been conducted in the non-profit sector.

1.7.3 Individual work performance

Individual work performance describes an employee's ability to contribute to the organisation's goals by carrying out their tasks effectively and efficiently and working well with the rest of the team (Campbell, 1990:704). Individual work performance is mainly driven by motivation; however, research, as noted by Wrzesniewski *et al.* (1997:24), indicates that meaningful work strengthens this link by encouraging higher levels of commitment and ownership. Koopmans *et al.* (2014:96) noted four standard dimensions to classify performance. These dimensions are as follows: task performance is the efficiency with which employees perform tasks that directly affect the organisation's operational and technological goals (Borman & Motowidlo, 1993:71-98). Koopmans *et al.* (2014:98) noted that this includes producing goods and services, performing specific duties, and effectively using the available resources. Furthermore, organisational success is highly dependent on high task performance as it ensures that essential duties are completed successfully to align with the organisation's strategic goals (Pierce & Aguinis,

2013:315). Task performance is influenced by various factors, including the individual employee's knowledge, abilities, skills and level of motivation. It is further influenced by external factors such as the work environment and work structure (Koopmans *et al.*, 2014:100).

Contextual performance refers to voluntary, discreet actions that are not part of an employee's formal job description that significantly improve an organisation's social and psychological climate. These actions enhance the workplace by helping coworkers, following organisational policies and being enthusiastic about new tasks (Borman & Motowidlo, 1997:100), fostering a supportive and collaborative work environment. Adaptive performance is crucial in the current, fast-paced, dynamic work environments, where organisational and technological changes are frequent. Adaptive performance, as the term suggests, describes a person's potential to adjust to organisational changes while remaining productive and effective (Pulakos *et al.*, 2000). Griffin and Hesketh (2003) noted that individuals who display adaptive behaviour are eager to learn new skills and are proactive in finding solutions. They also generally thrive in unclear circumstances. Park and Park (2019) indicate that adaptive performance fosters organisational and individual success. Counterproductive performance is the only negative dimension of performance, referring to personal behaviour that is destructive and detrimental to the company's success. Actions such as missing work and not contributing to teamwork often stem from conflict amongst employees or with management, as well as general frustration and unhappiness (Kato, 2024).

1.7.4 Relationship between individual motivation and individual work performance

Understanding how motivation influences performance is critical for developing workplace strategies that improve productivity and employee well-being. Individual work performance is primarily influenced by motivation. Various sources noted the relationship between personal motivation and work performance, indicating that higher motivation often leads to greater production and job satisfaction. Deci and Ryan (2020:314-325) stated that employees with higher levels of motivation are more engaged and generally more effective in their jobs. Research indicates that this is further driven by meaningful work, encouraging higher levels of engagement and participation (Allan *et al.*,

2018a:172). Motivation is generally classified into two categories: intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic motivation, driven by internal factors such as self-improvement, purpose, and independence, is associated with positive outcomes, including dedication (Gagne *et al.*, 2018). On the other hand, extrinsic motivation, as noted by Van den Broeck *et al.* (2021), is driven by external factors such as recognition and financial or other rewards. Lysova *et al.* (2019) have noted meaningful work as a crucial mediator of individual performance; thus, employees who perceive their work as meaningful and aligned with their values are more motivated and perform better. Bidee *et al.* (2017) noted that in the NPO setting, where financial incentives are limited, intrinsic motivation plays a significant role in influencing individual performance.

1.7.5 Mediator role of meaningful work

Research by Allan *et al.* (2018b) indicated that the relationship between work benefits and engagement is mediated by meaningful work. This demonstrates that employees are more likely to be motivated and perform optimally when their work is meaningful. Furthermore, Hackman and Oldham (1976:256) highlighted that employees who perceive their work as meaningful demonstrate higher levels of job satisfaction, which, in turn, leads to improved individual work performance. Therefore, it is concluded that meaningful work can mediate between work performance and motivation, thereby enhancing the impact of motivation on workplace efficacy. It is important to recognise that this mediation effect can further improve employee well-being and productivity. Allan *et al.* (2018b) further noted that employees who believe their work has purpose and meaning are likely to be more productive, innovative and satisfied with their jobs. This increases performance and positively contributes to the organisation's overall success. A 2019 study by Zeglat and Janbeik (2019) ($n = 7,746$) examined how meaningful work is linked to organisational outcomes. It found that organisational outcomes positively correlate with meaningful work and concluded that individual work performance partially mediates this relationship.

1.8 CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS

- **Motivation**

There are various definitions of motivation. However, all of these have one central message, which, for this research, is best defined by Brown (2007:6) as an individual's will and enthusiasm to display specific behaviours to reach goals. Motivation is also a critical and decisive element that fundamentally controls human behaviour and performance (Ramahan *et al.*, 2020:515).

- **Meaningful work**

Meaningful work is a multifaceted concept that encompasses both individual and societal perspectives. Meaningful work is the subjective experience of existential significance resulting from the fit between the individual and work (Both-Nwabuwe *et al.*, 2019).

- **Non-profit sector**

An NPO is defined as an organisation that is not profit-driven (Hanna, 2023). The South African Nonprofit Organisation Act 17 of 1997 further explains that the purpose of an NPO is to address societal needs, also known as CSO. Furthermore, Kenton (2023) notes that an NPO is exempt from tax by the South African Revenue Services (SARS) as it provides a public benefit and promotes a social cause. These organisations are also called NPOs, depending on the tax code section that permits their operation.

- **Individual Work Performance**

Individual work performance (IWP) is a multidimensional concept encompassing task performance, contextual performance, adaptive performance and counterproductive work behaviour (Koopmans *et al.*, 2011; Carpini *et al.*, 2017)

1.9 DEMARCATION AND DELAMINATION

The present study investigated the influence of motivation on employees' work performance in a selected NPO in South Africa, with meaningful work acting as a mediating factor in this relationship. To ensure a focused and methodologically sound approach, the study adheres to specific demarcations while acknowledging its inherent limitations and delamination. These factors shape the study's scope, methodology and generalizability, necessitating careful interpretation of the findings. This research is precisely demarcated to examine the relationship between motivation and work

performance in the NPO sector. Given the unique characteristics of NPOs, where intrinsic rather than extrinsic rewards often drive employee motivation, it is crucial to examine how motivation influences job performance and whether meaningful work serves as a mediating factor. The study is confined to employees working in a single NPO operating in selected provinces of South Africa.

It provides a detailed and contextually relevant analysis rather than a broad, sector-wide generalisation by focusing on a single organisation. From a methodological perspective, the study adopts a quantitative approach, utilising a structured questionnaire to collect data. This approach ensures statistical reliability and facilitates the measurement of the relationships between the independent variable (motivation), the mediating variable (meaningful work) and the dependent variable (individual work performance). Furthermore, the study design was cross-sectional, meaning that data were collected at a single point in time. This design was chosen for its efficiency and feasibility, considering the constraints of time and resources.

Despite the study's clear demarcation, certain areas have been deliberately excluded to maintain a manageable and focused research scope. Firstly, the study did not include organisations outside the non-profit sector. This means that the findings did not provide insights into how motivation and meaningful work influence performance in for-profit companies or other organisational settings. By narrowing the focus to a single NPO, the study excluded potential comparisons between the NPO sector and other industries, which could have provided additional depth to the findings.

Additionally, the research relied solely on quantitative methods, thereby missing qualitative insights, such as in-depth employee perspectives on motivation and meaningful work. Combining quantitative and qualitative data, a mixed-methods approach could have provided a more nuanced understanding of the underlying dynamics. However, due to time constraints and the need for objective, statistically measurable results, qualitative methods were excluded from this study. Another limitation of the study is its focus on three primary variables: motivation, meaningful work and individual work performance. Other factors that might influence job performance, such as organisational culture, leadership styles or work-life balance, were not examined in detail.

Although these factors are acknowledged in the literature review, they fall outside the primary scope of this research.

1.10 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research methodologies can be broadly categorised into qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-methods approaches. For this study, a quantitative research approach was chosen. This approach is efficient for describing and explaining problems and for enabling predictions through established theories or hypotheses (Cooper & Schindler, 2014). The comprehensive description of the research methodology used in this study will be provided in Chapter 3.

1.11 CHAPTER LAYOUT

This dissertation consists of five chapters. Each of these chapters contributes to the development and presentation of the research.

Chapter 1: Introduction

The introduction chapter provides an overview of the research, outlining the background and context of the research. It further goes on to introduce the research problem, objectives, and research questions, as well as the significance of the research. Furthermore, the chapter briefly describes the research methodology and presents the overall structure of the mini dissertation.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter reviews the relevant literature, both theoretical and empirical, related to the research topic. It explores key concepts, models, and prior research. This helps to establish the conceptual and theoretical foundation for the research as well as identifying gaps that the research aims to address.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

The research methodology chapter describes the research design and methodology used for the research. It further details the research approach, population and sampling

techniques, data collection methods, and data analysis procedures. Ethical considerations and limitations of the methodology are also discussed in this chapter.

Chapter 4: Results and Analysis

Chapter 4 presents and analyses the data collected in the research. The findings are reported in relation to the research questions and objectives, making use of the appropriate analytical techniques. Tables and figures are used to support the interpretation of results where applicable.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions and Recommendations

The last chapter discusses the findings in relation to the literature reviewed in chapter 2. Conclusions are drawn based on the research objectives, and recommendations are made for practice and future research. The chapter and research concludes with a summary of the contributions and limitations of the research.

1.12 SUMMARY

This chapter introduced the study, which investigated the relationship between motivation and work performance and examined the mediating role of meaningful work in this relationship among employees at a selected NPO in South Africa. The chapter presented the problem statement, the rationale for the study, and a preliminary literature review grounded in the study's key concepts. The following chapter will therefore be based on a comprehensive literature review to discuss the study's key concepts and the theoretical frameworks that underpin it.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The literature review for this study serves an essential purpose by providing a comprehensive overview of what is currently known about the research topic. This includes existing theories and methodologies, as well as gaps identified in the available research. A literature review further highlights the work that has already been done, thereby minimising the risk of duplication in aspects of the chosen research topic that have been previously explored. Moreover, the literature review also outlines how the research will add to the existing body of knowledge available on the subject.

Brown (2007:6) defines motivation as the will and drive to perform tasks to achieve goals. Ghaffari *et al.* (2017:92) add to this definition, noting that the driving force behind performance is motivation. According to Osabiya (2015:63), motivation can be both internal and/or external. In the NPO setting, motivation is believed to be internal, given the NPO's structure. According to Rosso *et al.* (2010:91-127), work becomes meaningful when an individual perceives their actions as significant, making a difference and having a positive impact. Employee behaviour is influenced by meaningful work as it promotes accountability and ownership (Rai *et al.*, 2023:1). The ability of an individual employee to contribute to organisational success is referred to as individual work performance (Campbell, 1990:704). According to Koopmans *et al.* (2014:100), this includes task performance, contextual performance and adaptive performance.

The chapter's structure focuses on the theoretical foundations of the three main variables. Furthermore, it will include conceptualisations, dimensions, antecedents and consequences of the noted variables (individual motivation, meaningful work and individual work performance). It will also address the relationship between motivation and individual work performance, as well as the mediating role of meaningful work. Moreover, it will ultimately examine the research study's conceptual framework and identify gaps in the existing literature.

2.2 THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF INDIVIDUAL MOTIVATION, MEANINGFUL WORK AND INDIVIDUAL WORK PERFORMANCE

This section expands on the theoretical foundations of each of the study's constructs.

2.2.1 Theoretical foundations of individual motivation

For this study, several integrated theories serve as the theoretical foundations of individual motivation, including the Self-Determination Theory, Organismic Integration Theory (OIT), Basic Psychological Needs Theory (BPNT) and Cognitive Evaluation Theory (CET). Szulawski *et al.* noted that Self-Determination theory is among the most frequently cited theories of human motivation (2021:1). Self-Determination theory provides a valuable framework for understanding how meaningful work affects employee motivation and performance.

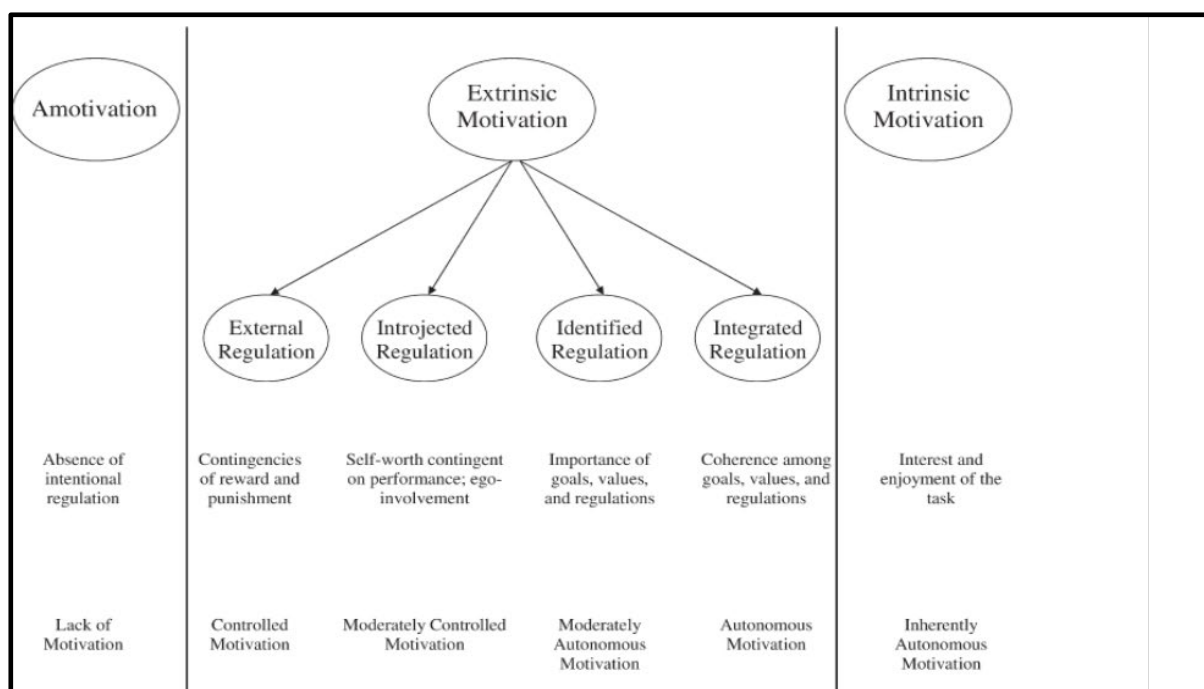


Figure 2.1: The self-determination continuum (Gagné & Deci, 2005:336).

The self-determination continuum is a graphical representation of the various types of motivation, ranging from amotivation (a lack of motivation) to complete self-motivation. As noted by Deci and Ryan (2000:227-228), basic psychological needs — such as competence, autonomy and relatedness — must be considered when trying to

understand what truly motivates individuals, as they are essential for growth, mental well-being and optimal functioning, thus suggesting that individuals have the potential to perform optimally once these psychological needs are fulfilled. Creating an environment that meets these needs can significantly enhance employee satisfaction and performance, ultimately making work more meaningful. Furthermore, meaningful work can help meet these needs. Self-determination theory describes the different types of motivation and how they influence individual performance, specifically in work settings. These include motivation versus amotivation, as well as the kind of motivation – autonomous versus controlled.

Gagné and Deci (2005:333-334) highlight the difference and define these concepts as follows: autonomous motivation refers to the ability to choose to do something that one finds personally enjoyable (intrinsic), while controlled motivation, in contrast, refers to doing something because one feels pressured or obligated (extrinsic). A proposal by Porter and Lawler (1968) to increase job satisfaction suggested that the work environment must be set up to both reward and recognise good performance, thereby meeting both intrinsic and extrinsic needs. Their approach assumes increased overall job satisfaction resulting from both needs being met. Amotivation, as described by Ryan and Deci (2000a:72), refers to a total lack of purpose or intention to act, which occurs when individuals perceive tasks as meaningless, thus placing amotivation at the opposite end of motivation.

A study performed by Allan *et al.* (2016:7) (n=36) found that the freedom to choose one's work and social class influences different kinds of motivation. Perceived freedom to choose one's work positively predicted motivation and negatively predicted amotivation. Additionally, social class was found to predict both external motivation and amotivation. The three motivation types highlighted by self-determination theory can be linked to the experience of meaningful work, with self-motivation (internal regulation) as the strongest predictor; thus, individuals are more likely to find their work meaningful and fulfilling when it aligns with their values. In contrast, external motivation and amotivation were found to be negatively associated with meaningful work (Allan *et al.*, 2016:1-7).

The results of two research studies (n=54 and n=119) confirmed that competences are the most powerful driver of better work outcomes (Szulawski *et al.*, 2021:1-13). Moreover,

it further found that even with external motivators in place, such as financial rewards, organisations should still explore ways to support interventions to meet psychological needs. Thus, it can be concluded that an environment that ensures the basic psychological needs of individuals are met leads to more internally motivated individuals, which in turn leads to better performance. NPOs can enhance staff motivation by applying self-determination theory alongside meaningful work. This can be achieved by creating work and structuring tasks to reflect the organisation's mission and social impact, helping individuals to see the value of their contribution.

The OIT posits that individuals differ in what motivates them and in the degree to which various things motivate them. Perceived motivating factors, such as recognition, might motivate some employees but mean nothing to others who are more motivated by physical rewards. Different types of motivation are identified by examining the reasons or goals behind actions, according to the Self-Determination Theory, formulated by Deci and Ryan (cited in Ryan & Deci, 2000b:55). The most common distinction is between intrinsic and extrinsic motivating factors.

Nested in the Self-Determination Theory as a sub-theory is the OIT (Ryan & Deci, 2000b:61). The OIT describes how extrinsic motivation might be changed to become more internally controlled (Wang *et al.*, 2017:2-3). According to Wang *et al.* (2017:3), the OIT further explains that individuals are motivated differently by various types of regulation. These can range from activities done for enjoyment (intrinsic motivation) to behaviours driven by external regulation, such as rewards, punishment or pressure. Moreover, individuals can regulate or modify behaviour when it aligns with personal identity or external expectations. Thus, it is evident that supportive external environments can foster greater internal motivation and commitment in individuals.

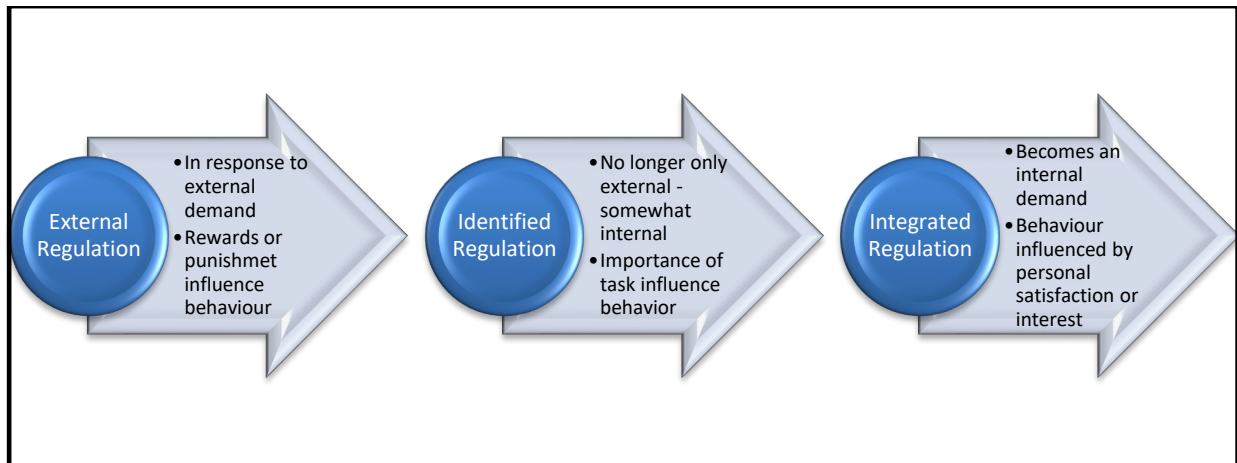


Figure 2.2: Organismic Integration Theory Process based on theories developed by Ryan and Deci (2000a:72-73)

The main element of the Self-Determination theory is the Basic Psychological Needs theory (BPNT), which holds that all people possess three basic psychological needs (Deci & Ryan, 2000:228-230). For individuals to function optimally, their basic psychological needs, namely, autonomy, competence and relatedness, must be fulfilled. Furthermore, these needs explain the content and motivation behind individual goals and are considered essential for overall psychological well-being (Deci & Ryan, 2000:228-230). On the contrary, low motivation, poor performance and reduced mental well-being may occur when these psychological needs are not met. Autonomy is defined by Deci and Ryan (2000:231) as the freedom to make one's own decisions and to behave according to one's values. Additionally, it is recognised as a crucial component of healthy development and overall well-being. Being competent involves feeling capable and confident in initiatives or assigned tasks. Relatedness as part of BPNT refers to the need to feel close to other people.

As developed by Ryan and Deci (2000b:58), as a sub-theory of Self-Determination Theory, the Cognitive Evaluation Theory (CET) states that competency increases intrinsic motivation, thus indicating that when individuals feel capable and supported in what they do, they are more likely to be more engaged and enjoy the action or task. Deci (1975) further argues that positive affirmation further boosts intrinsic motivation, while negative criticism has the opposite effect. Furthermore, unless it is coupled with autonomy, competence on its own will not increase motivation (De Charms, 2009). Moreover, when

individuals feel a sense of belonging and connected to others in addition to feeling competent and having autonomy, they tend to be more intrinsically motivated (Ryan & Deci, 2000a:71).

2.2.2 Theoretical foundations of meaningful work

Various theories form the theoretical foundations of meaningful work in this study. These include Meaning-in-Life Logotherapy, the Eudaimonic well-being approach, the Integrative Pathways to Meaningful Work model, Calling and Vocation (Work-as-Calling) and the Job Characteristics Model. Logotherapy, introduced by Viktor Frankl (1992:45), posits that the primary motivational force in individuals is the search for meaning in life. Meaning-in-Life theory is central to this theory. Logotherapy is a type of psychotherapy that places a strong emphasis on finding meaning in life even after suffering great atrocities, such as what Frankl experienced in Nazi concentration camps. Furthermore, logotherapy focuses on the future and responsibilities, specifically on the meaningful goals the individual is yet to achieve. Therefore, helping the individual focus on future goals and encouraging them to take action to reach them. This is in direct contrast to standard therapies, which typically focus on the individual's past.

Although Eudaimonic well-being definitions are complex, Ryan and Deci (2001:142-143) describe well-being as a state achieved when an individual is functioning optimally. There are two primary views of well-being: the hedonic and eudaimonic approaches. Early philosophers such as Hobbes and De Sade (Ryan & Deci, 2001:144) shared a common theme in describing the hedonic approach, which held that happiness and pleasure equate to well-being. Waterman (1993:91) describes eudaimonic well-being as occurring when individuals are fully engaged in activities that align with their principles, leading to a strong sense of authenticity and a feeling of being alive. Ryff (1989:1070-1071) noted six core dimensions of eudaimonic well-being in psychological terms. These dimensions include self-acceptance (having a positive outlook towards oneself), positive relationships (the ability to form trusting relationships and deep connections with others), autonomy (living by personal values), environmental mastery (the ability to engage actively and master one's environment), life purpose (having personal goals and a sense of direction) and personal growth (reaching goals and continuous self-development). Ryff (1989) further argues that an individual who has mastered these dimensions and is experiencing

eudaimonic well-being enjoys better mental health and has a greater ability to recover from setbacks (1989:1070-1071). Thus, it is evident that such individuals will fare better in the work environment, making them better equipped to face challenges and stay motivated and goal-oriented.

Regarding the Integrative Pathways to Meaningful Work model, Steger and Dik (2009:303-320) describe meaningful work as a personal feeling or sense that one's work matters. It further enhances and fosters individual development, while also positively influencing those around you. Martela and Riekkari (2018:1) note that meaningful work is an essential factor in employees' positive functioning. The integrative pathways to meaningful work model examines various perspectives to explain how and why individuals find their work meaningful. Rosso *et al.* (2010:91-172) further note that meaningful work plays a vital role in motivation, commitment and overall well-being. As most individuals spend much of their time at work, organisations must understand how to foster meaningful work. Based on research across multiple countries, Martela and Riekkari (2018:2-3) identified four key psychological needs that must be fulfilled for individuals to perceive their work as meaningful: autonomy, competence, relatedness, and beneficence. These psychological needs are described in self-determination theory (Deci and Ryan, 2000:227-228), indicating that optimal performance is possible when these needs are met.

Similar to self-determination theory is Hackman and Oldham's job characteristics theory, which identifies essential job characteristics (Hackman & Oldham, 1976:250-279) that increase employees' feelings of purpose. Furthermore, logotherapy, as developed by Frankl (Frankl, 1992:45) from a psychological perspective, adds depth by focusing on values and the desire for personal growth to achieve goals. Eudaimonic well-being, as well as logotherapy, further explores the notion that engaging in activities that reflect an individual's values leads to a strong sense of authenticity and vitality (Waterman, 1993:91). Moreover, organisational factors such as autonomy and fairness at work are also noted to play a role in the pathways to meaningful work (Dewi *et al.*, 2022:2389). An integrated pathway or framework is provided by combining these viewpoints to offer an understanding of how individuals find meaning in their work, how organisations can adapt

roles and working conditions to ensure that staff are motivated, foster engagement and well-being, and, by doing so, boost performance.

Regarding the Calling and Vocation (Work-as-Calling) theory, Dik and Duffy (2009:427) define the term “calling” as a strong inner drive to pursue a specific role in life that offers meaning and is usually motivated by a desire to assist others for the greater good, such as medical and teaching careers or rescue services. This drive is typically viewed as stemming from a higher purpose (e.g., God). People with a vocational mindset are believed to be inspired by values that benefit society. It is further described by Dik and Duffy (2009:428) as the method of carrying out a role in life, such as a job, that is motivated by a sense of purpose and serves the greater good. People with a vocational mindset and those with callings both relate what they do to a deeper understanding of meaning, with a people-centred, common goal of serving and helping others. These notions are further defined as a continuous evaluation process that examines the significance of activities (Dik & Duffy, 2009:429). Research suggests that individuals who view their job as a calling or vocation tend to be more motivated to go above and beyond to ensure that the job is done well. They also tend to be more satisfied and can mould their role into what they desire it to be. This theory is particularly crucial when examining motivation theories among individuals employed in the non-profit sector, as they often work for lower pay and, in some cases, volunteer.

As developed by Hackman and Oldham in 1976, the job characteristics theory focuses on five essential job characteristics. These characteristics — task identity, task significance, skills variety, autonomy and feedback — make work both challenging and rewarding. The theory notes that these characteristics tend to be more rewarding and inspiring than work that does not (Hulin & Judge, 2003:262), as they support three psychological states that are essential (Renard & Snelgar, 2016a:2).

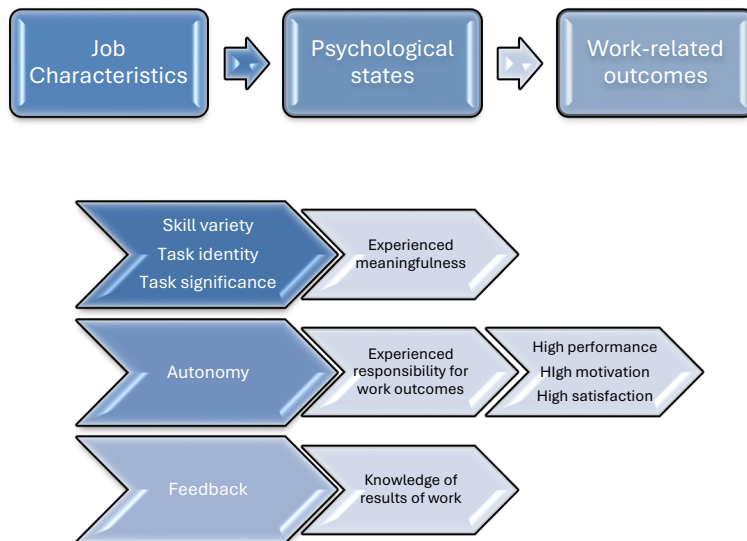


Figure 2.3: Job Characteristics Model (Janse, 2025)

There are both advantages and disadvantages associated with the Job Characteristics Model. The benefits of this model include promoting employee motivation, increasing productivity and job satisfaction, and, in turn, reducing the turnover rate in organisations. Additionally, it is adaptive to changing employment trends.

2.2.3 Theoretical foundations of individual work performance

The theoretical foundations of individual work performance include the Multidimensional Job Performance Theory, the Contextual Performance Model, the Organisational Citizenship Behaviour framework, the Counterproductive Work Behaviour stressor–emotion model, the Integrated Criterion Framework, and the Conceptual Model of Individual Work Performance. Job-performance is noted to be a multidimensional concept that can be defined as the total value an individual’s behaviour is expected to add to the organisation over a specific period (Motowidlo & Kell, 2012:3). Thus, it is linked to the definition which indicates performance to refer to actions able to influence the achievement of organisational goals (Motowidlo & Kell, 2012:7). Campbell *et al.* (1993:35-70) noted job-performance to consist of eight dimensions that are broad and comprehensive enough to cover the primary structure of performance in general thus summarising the main ways in which performance can be generally understood and observed. The eight dimensions of job-performance are noted as follows: job-specific task

proficiency (the ability to perform a specific job), non-job-specific task proficiency (the ability to perform tasks that are not specific to a job or role), written and oral communication (how an individual can write or communicate), effort (commitment and hard work), personal discipline (avoidance of negative behaviour and following the rules of the organisation), peer and team performance facilitating (supporting and development of fellow employees and teamwork), supervision (positive influence on subordinates and management/admin) (ability to perform task unsupervised) (Motowidlo & Kell, 2012:14-15; Viswesvaran & Ones, 2000:220). The job-performance theory has a significant impact on organisational processes and performance evaluation systems.

Regarding the Contextual-Performance Model, Borman and Motowidlo (1993) noted that contextual activities refer to behaviour that is not linked to a specific task, but rather to the voluntary outreach to assist fellow employees and support the organisation. These behaviours contribute to an organisation's overall success by fostering teamwork and creating a better work environment. It is essential to note that these behaviours are not a job requirement; they are performed by individuals who go above and beyond their job scope. Research examining predictors and contextual behaviour found that personality traits are strongly linked to contextual performance (Borman & Motowidlo, 1997:99).

Thus, personality traits are noted as antecedents of contextual performance. Borman and Motowidlo (1997) developed their contextual performance model based on these research findings, which affects organisations' assessment of employee performance. This has led to a more comprehensive evaluation approach that also considers interpersonal contributions, aiming to foster work environments that support individuals who go above and beyond what their job requires. According to Borman and Motowidlo (1997:102-103), contextual performance can be further classified into five key dimensions. These dimensions include 1) continuous passion and additional effort, 2) volunteering for extra tasks, 3) cooperating with others and assisting them, 4) keeping to the rules of the organisation and 5) promoting and upholding the goals of the organisation.

Organisational citizenship behaviour refers to selfless acts that go beyond official job responsibilities. These acts are not directly compensated, yet they are noted to directly improve the organisation's effectiveness (Organ, 1997:85-86). The framework focuses on altruistic behaviours, and according to Podsakoff *et al.* (2000:516), organisational

citizenship behaviour can be broken down into seven dimensions. These dimensions are helping behaviour, sportsmanship, organisational loyalty, organisational compliance, individual initiative, civic virtue and self-development. The identified dimensions capture the various ways that individual employees go above and beyond their prescribed roles to support a favourable organisational climate. Organisational citizenship behaviour is noted to be positively influenced by job satisfaction, among other factors (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2000:532).

The Counterproductive Work Behaviour, stressor-emotion model was developed by Spector and Fox (2005). Counterproductive work behaviour is described by Spector and Fox (2005:151-174) as a range of deliberate actions performed by employees intended to harm the organisation, stakeholders, and/or coworkers. These intentional actions may negatively impact employee relations, productivity and organisational goals. According to Robinson and Bennett (1995:555-572), counterproductive work behaviour can be categorised according to who or what it is directed towards. Counterproductive behaviour can be aimed at an individual, often resulting in bullying. In contrast, destructive behaviour is aimed at the organisation through sabotage and other forms of destructive behaviour, as described in the five dimensions of counterproductive work behaviour. Spector and Fox *et al.* (2005:448-450) further noted five dimensions of counterproductive work behaviour to include abuse against others (actions that may cause harm), sabotage (intentional destruction of organisational property or resources), production deviance (deliberate non-performance), theft (unauthorised removal or use of organisational resources or property) and withdrawal (lack of engagement).

The stressor-emotion model of counterproductive work behaviour provides a comprehensive framework for understanding why individuals display counterproductive work behaviour in stressful situations (Spector & Fox, 2005:151-174). Thus, it is concluded that counterproductive work behaviour is an emotional response to workplace stress and frustration. By incorporating moral disengagement, Fida *et al.* aim to expand the stressor-emotion model (2014:132). Moral disengagement, the social-cognitive process in which individuals justify or downplay the harm their actions cause, helps explain how negative emotions arising from stressful situations can lead to

counterproductive work behaviour, as it allows misbehaviour without guilt (Fida *et al.*, 2014, p. 132).

Proposed by Rotundo and Sackett (2002:66-78), the integrated criterion framework combines multiple performance components into a single structure to create a comprehensive model for evaluating individual work performance. Instead of relying on a single criterion for assessing job performance, this model aims to present a comprehensive view by considering various factors and their relationships. This model seeks to provide a comprehensive view by examining multiple factors. Task performance (duties specific to a job or role), contextual performance (behaviours above and beyond a job or role) and counterproductive work behaviour (actions intended to harm the organisation or its employees) are the three main dimensions identified for this framework. The framework of this model acknowledges that a comprehensive understanding of employee performance must include both positive (contextual and task performance) and negative behaviours (counterproductive behaviours). The integrated criterion framework is a balanced approach that can be adapted according to the organisation's goals and context (Rotundo & Sackett, 2002:66-78).

The Conceptual Model of Individual Work Performance was developed by Koopmans *et al.* (2013). According to Koopmans *et al.* (2013:230), individual work performance comprises several dimensions and is commonly described as acts or behaviours that help the organisation achieve its goals. This definition excludes actions limited by external factors and focuses on employee behaviours within their control, rather than on results or outcomes. The conceptual model of individual work performance identifies four key dimensions: task performance, contextual performance, adaptive performance, and counterproductive work behaviour (Koopmans *et al.*, 2013:230). Viswesvaran (2002:110-126) argues that specific indicators may vary across works; however, the dimensions may be universal and generalisable. Being the most common dimension of individual work performance, task performance refers to the ability to carry out a specific task (Beaton *et al.*, 2009:2100-2109). Various definitions are cited across the literature; however, the common theme is that this is a job-specific measure. The second dimension, contextual performance, is described by Borman and Motowidlo (1993:71-98) as behaviours or actions that go beyond formal duties and support the work environment. Examples of this

kind of behaviour include showing initiative or helping others with their allocated tasks. Adaptive performance, in turn, refers to an individual's ability to adapt to changes in the work environment (Griffin, 2007:327-347), such as implementing innovative strategies to address challenging tasks. The fourth dimension, the only harmful dimension, is characterised by counterproductive behaviour, as described by Rotundo and Sackett (2002:66-78) as actions by employees that may negatively impact the organisation's functioning and overall effectiveness. This includes actions such as absenteeism, failing to complete tasks on time, hindering or harassing fellow employees and producing substandard work. This multidimensional model provides a valuable framework for reviewing and improving individual employee behaviour as it acknowledges that performance is affected by both task-related and behavioural factors that should not be viewed in isolation.

2.3 MOTIVATION

The concept of motivation is discussed with specific reference to conceptualisations and definitions, dimensions, antecedents and consequences.

2.3.1 Conceptualisation and definitions

The concept of motivation has been researched in various fields over the past decades. Multiple definitions exist; however, they share a similar theme across different fields of study. Motivation is commonly defined as the force that drives performance and behaviour (Ghaffari *et al.*, 2017:92). In a similar definition, Deci and Ryan (2000:227-268) describe motivation as a drive that pushes individuals to accomplish goals linked to their jobs. This can be an internal or external drive. Mullin (2007) also defines motivation as the internal "force" that influences behaviour, direction and persistence. Reiss (2012:152-153) noted that, according to dualistic theories of motivation, intrinsic motivation is described as actions taken to meet an individual's own needs. Thus, whatever an individual does is done because they want to. External factors do not influence these, as they are things the individual "wants to do". Research conducted by Sansone and Harackiewicz (2000:2) suggests that external motivators, such as rewards or punishment, can hinder intrinsic behaviour. However, this should not be generalised as each person is unique and is therefore motivated differently.

Extrinsic motivation factors are behaviours or actions taken to meet external expectations or needs (Reiss, 2012:152). These are referred to as needs arising from the body. Extrinsic motivation is further divided into four subtypes: external regulation, introjection, identification and integration (Ryan & Deci, 2020:2). Extrinsic motivation, such as rewarding good behaviour and punishing mediocre actions, plays a significant role in shaping how individuals behave in general, as well as in the workplace. It can therefore be seen to influence behaviour in a manner considered desirable (Sansone & Harackiewicz, 2000:16). They further argue that external motivation can be either negative or positive. Positive in the sense that it can increase immediate performance, and negative in the sense that one can easily forget the human factor when pursuing tasks for rewards only.

2.3.2 Dimensions of motivation

Motivation can be understood through several key attributes. Each of these attributes represents a unique aspect of the factors that influence and drive behaviour. Motivation can either come from within (intrinsic) or be externally driven (extrinsic). Abdullah (2014:147-155) noted that a combination of innate and extrinsic motivators increases employee motivation. Gagne *et al.* (2018) stated that internal factors drive intrinsic motivation, whereas extrinsic motivation is driven by external factors (Van den Broeck *et al.*, 2021). Inherent motivation includes factors such as independence, autonomy and self-improvement. Extrinsic motivational factors include financial rewards and recognition. Another important dimension of motivation to note is amotivation. Amotivation is defined by Ryan and Deci (2000a:72) as a lack of purpose to act. This can result from a task being perceived as insignificant and not worth the effort. Amotivation is the opposite of motivation. In addition, Kanfer (1990:78) also noted direction (an individual's actions), intensity (the level of effort) and persistence (the duration of work) as dimensions of motivation.

Based on research studies, Reis (2012:154) identified 16 human needs that developed into the Reiss Motivation Profile (RMP). The scale encompasses basic needs, including the desire for food, physical activity and being part of a family. These are universal needs; however, individuals are not all motivated in the same way, so these needs are prioritised differently for each person. The human needs identified in the RMP are directly linked to

the three most basic human needs: autonomy, competence and relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2020:1). Kanfer (1990:76-79) further noted the importance of understanding the different dimensions of motivation as this will enable organisations to create work roles that match individual employee values and, by doing so, lead to more substantial effort, engagement and performance in the long term.

2.3.3 Antecedents of motivation

Antecedents of motivation refer to the combination of personal, work-related, and organisational factors that influence an individual's motivation (intrinsic and extrinsic) before they act (Bakay & Huang, 2010:1-8). Tenzer and Yang (2018:4) noted that an individual's values and beliefs, as well as personal traits such as confidence and abilities, constitute personal antecedents. According to Mink (2025), a large percentage of employees report that work is their sense of purpose or direction. Work-related factors that influence motivation, as per the Job Characteristics Theory developed by Hackman and Oldham (1976), include autonomy and feedback. Various studies have found that when these are present, individuals are more likely to perceive their work as meaningful. Furthermore, organisational factors are also identified as antecedents of motivation. These factors include specifics in the general work environment, such as the organisation's culture and opportunities for learning and development (Victor & Hoole, 2021). Luu (2011:54) noted the importance of managers acknowledging these factors when looking at ways to improve motivation.

2.3.4 Consequences of motivation on individuals and organisations

Motivation has a significant impact on both individuals and organisations, influencing performance and behaviour. Within the context of an organisation's formation, direction, process and development, motivation can be viewed as a crucial component of personnel administration (Muchtar, 2017:28). Muchtar defines motivation in the workplace as a positive attempt to organise, arrange and direct the power and potential of the workforce and human labour towards reaching the organisation's desired goals (2017:28) thereby creating the need to understand the importance of motivation for performance. Supporting both mental and physical well-being, motivated employees are more satisfied at work, actively engage in the office environment, and enjoy better well-being. They also tend to

deliver higher-quality work (Amabile, 1993). Sibonde and Dassah (2021:1-4) argue that motivated employees, who are satisfied with their working conditions, produce higher-quality work, which, in turn, ensures that clients are happy and results in organisational success. This is especially true in the public and service-oriented sectors.

2.4 MEANINGFUL WORK

The concept of meaningful work is discussed with specific reference to conceptualisations and definitions, dimensions, antecedents and consequences.

2.4.1 Conceptualisation and definitions

According to Dik *et al.* (2013:365), meaningful work comes from within. Pratt and Ashforth (2003:309) noted that meaningful work is produced when an individual's identity and the job they do align. Individuals often choose a career path based on their personal values and beliefs (Gandal *et al.*, 2004:1227-1252). This theory is further supported by Hackman and Oldham's work performance theory (Dik *et al.*, 2013:365), which indicates that intrinsic motivation is an essential factor in experiencing work as meaningful through positive emotions. Steger (2012:322-325) noted that meaningful work is a personal experience, where one perceives their work as essential and as promoting personal development.

2.4.2 Dimensions of meaningful work

Steger *et al.* (2012:322-324) developed the Work and Meaningful Inventory (WAMI), a reliable and valid instrument for assessing attitudes towards meaningful work. According to the WAMI, meaningful work has three components: greater good motivations, positive meaning and meaning-making through work (Spreitzer, 1995). The scale was developed through psychometric testing to evaluate the impact of meaningful work on outcomes. These outcomes include factors such as well-being, job satisfaction and engagement. The WAMI has been used extensively in research and practice. The WAMI has proven to be a valuable tool for understanding employee motivation, particularly in sectors where service is integral to the work itself (Steger *et al.*, 2012:325). In their collective works, Rosso *et al.* (2010) noted that concepts such as significance, belonging, purpose and self-realisation are dimensions of meaningful work.

2.4.3 Antecedents of meaningful work

The factors that influence how and why individuals perceive their work as meaningful are referred to as the antecedents of meaningful work. Dewi *et al.* (2022:2386) grouped these antecedents of meaningful work into three main categories: individual, job-related, and organisational. According to Rosso *et al.* (2010:95-100), factors such as an individual's values, beliefs and motivations play an important role at the individual antecedent's level. By influencing how an individual understands and relates to their role, these factors can impact the perceived meaningfulness of their work. An example is the role of a caregiver, which can be more fulfilling for someone who enjoys helping others.

Dewi *et al.* (2022:2386) noted that some individuals perceive their work as their calling, purpose or mission in life. Dik and Duffy (2009:427) define a calling as a strong sense of purpose driven by something beyond the individual, with a focus on helping others and doing meaningful work. Fried and Ferris (1987:287-322) indicated that work tends to be more meaningful when tasks are clear, and employees are offered more freedom, as well as the feeling that their work is essential. Rosso *et al.* (2010:103-104) further noted that organisational factors are antecedents of meaningful work, with organisations playing a vital role in an individual's interpretation of it. This happens mainly through their values and beliefs, which are also part of individual antecedents. The sense of purpose at work can be enhanced when an individual's values align with the organisation's mission and vision. Furthermore, Dewi *et al.* (2022:2389) also note autonomy and fairness at work as organisational factors for ensuring meaningful work.

2.4.4 Consequences of meaningful work on individuals and organisations

Meaningful work is known to impact various work and individual outcomes, which, in turn, influence one another. Dewi *et al.* (2022:2393-2396) noted the consequences of meaningful work, including greater engagement and commitment, satisfaction with both life and work, and better mental health. Thus, meaningful work is found to have a positive effect on individual well-being, which, in turn, can bring significant benefits to the organisation.

2.5 INDIVIDUAL WORK PERFORMANCE (IWP)

The concept of individual work performance is discussed with specific reference to conceptualisations and definitions, dimensions, antecedents and consequences.

2.5.1 Conceptualisation and definitions

Individual work performance is described as the behaviours and actions individuals display at work that help them achieve organisational goals (Campbell, 1990). According to Koopmans *et al.* (2011:856), work performance is a broad concept that is divided into and described by numerous dimensions, which, in turn, are further comprised of measurable indicators. The most used dimensions include task performance, adaptive performance, contextual performance and counterproductive work behaviour (Koopmans *et al.*, 2011:856).

2.5.2 Dimensions of individual work performance

As Kalogiannidis (2021:985) noted, various factors influence how an employee performs their job. According to HayGroup (2024), individuals are more motivated when they feel their work benefits others or contributes to something meaningful. Although motivation is not the only factor contributing to individual and organisational success, it remains a key factor influencing success and work performance. Furthermore, the success of an entity depends mainly on the work input of its employees, thereby making employees the most crucial asset in the work environment (Osabiya, 2015:64).

Various researchers identified different dimensions of work performance. Murphy identified four core dimensions (task behaviour, interpersonal behaviours, downtime behaviours, destructive/hazardous behaviours), while Campbell (1990) listed eight (job-specific task proficiency, non-job-specific task proficiency, written and oral communications, demonstrating effort, maintaining personal discipline, facilitating peer and team performance, supervision, management and administration). Viswesvaran (1993) noted 10 core dimensions of work performance (productivity, quality of work, job knowledge, communication competence, effort, leadership, administrative competence, interpersonal competence, compliance with/acceptance of authority). However, the most commonly used dimensions, as noted by Koopmans *et al.* (2011:856), are task

performance, adaptive performance, contextual performance, and counterproductive work behaviour. These dimensions are interrelated, and each one adds differently to the total. Although task and contextual performance are distinct, they are also highly positively linked (Hoffman *et al.*, 2007). As work demands can be fast-paced and changing, contextual behaviours are increasingly accepted as part of formal job expectations. Koopmans *et al.* (2011:863) argue that although there is a somewhat negative relationship between contextual and counterproductive behaviours, both can coexist to some extent depending on how behaviours are assessed and viewed. It is anticipated that adaptive performance will be positively related to task and contextual performance and negatively related to counterproductive behaviour; however, these relationships will require further investigation (Koopmans *et al.*, 2011:863).

2.5.3 Antecedents of individual work performance

Work performance is noted to be a multifaceted concept that encompasses both a behavioural and outcomes-based aspect (Sonnentag & Frese, 2002:3). Sonnentag and Frese (2002:4) argue that individual performance is essential for the individual, as well as the organisation, noting performance to be a need for future professional development and organisational success. Antecedents of individual work performance can be categorised into three basic categories: namely, individual factors, job-related factors and organisational factors. Various researchers have examined individual characteristics that have been proven to be antecedents of individual work performance. Campbell *et al.* (1993) describe three main determinants or predictors of work performance: declarative knowledge, procedural knowledge, skills, and motivation.

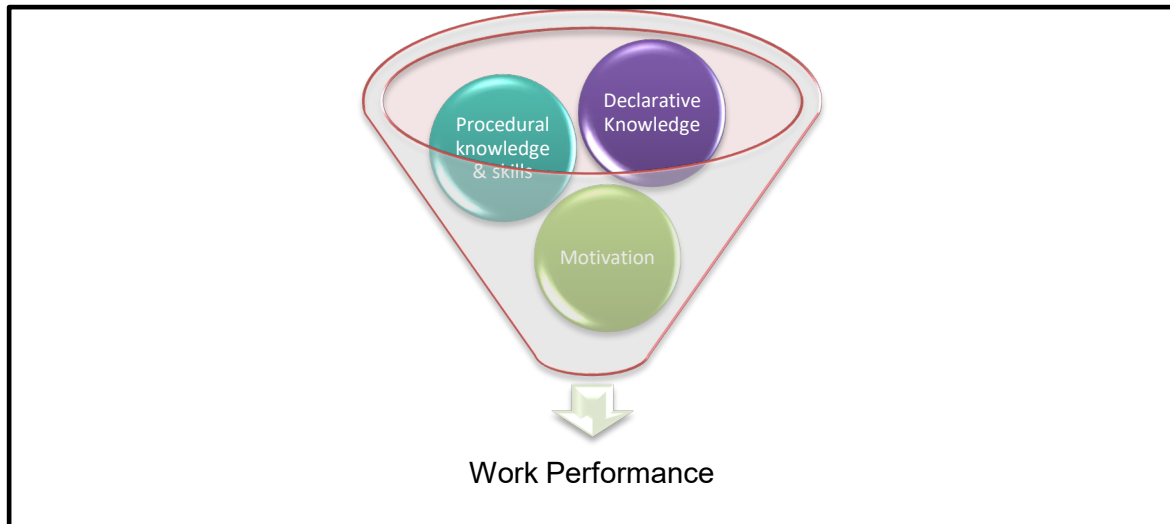


Figure 2.4 Predictors of Work Performance based on Campbell's Model, indicating the determination of work performance (Campbell, 1993)

According to this model, work performance is driven by what a person knows (declarative knowledge), how they apply it (procedural skills) and their willingness to act (motivation). The model further notes that individual or contextual characteristics, such as personality, leadership, training, and job design, are predictors that impact the three determinants (Campbell *et al.*, 1993). Hackman and Oldham (1976), in their description of the job characteristics theory, noted that job-related characteristics such as autonomy, regular feedback, role clarity and a variety of tasks are more likely to foster high performance. Organisational factors refer to the aspects of the larger work environment, such as available supportive leadership and a positive work culture, as noted by Podsakoff *et al.* (2000).

2.5.4 Consequences of individual work performance on individuals and organisations

Individual work performance is noted to have positive impacts on both individuals and organisations. To reach their goals and remain competitive, organisations rely on high-performing individuals. At the individual level, work performance is a key factor in career development. Individuals who perform well are noted to have better career prospects (Van Scotter *et al.*, 2000). Sonnentag and Frese (2002:4) noted that performing well can leave the individual feeling satisfied and result in joy and achievement, which, in turn,

have a positive effect on overall well-being. Furthermore, high performance is linked to individual financial rewards in specific industries (Yeshitila & Beyene, 2019). At an organisational level, individual work performance enhances the organisation's competitiveness and improves financial performance (Yeshitila & Beyene, 2019). In addition, van Zyl *et al.* (2019) noted that high-performing individuals contribute to creating a more effective, productive and creative workforce. Furthermore, Arisandi and Heryjanto (2024:1042-1043) argued that individual work performance also contributes to a more positive and supportive work environment. Moreover, it is noted to foster innovation and adaptability, as well as to impact the quality of service provided by the organisation (improved quality) (Arisandi & Heryjanto, 2024:1042-10430).

2.5.5 Relationship between individual motivation and individual work performance

Individual work performance and motivation are closely connected. Motivation significantly impacts how much effort people put into their tasks and their ability to complete them successfully. Organisations depend on motivated employees to meet their goals, making motivation critical to organisational success (Vo *et al.*, 2022). Robbins and Judge (2017) note that motivated employees perform better because they invest more effort, remain focused, and work effectively, resulting in higher-quality outcomes. Motivation also strongly correlates with workplace satisfaction (Nadeem, 2018).

Kanfer's (1990) research confirms that motivated individuals possess the drive to achieve personal and organisational goals. Bryan (1989) argues that motivated employees form a stable and productive workforce and are less likely to exhibit problematic behaviours, such as absenteeism. Additionally, motivated employees generally remain with their employers longer, reducing turnover rates and fostering organisational stability. These employees also show greater loyalty, dedication and commitment (Ify, 2024). Furthermore, motivated employees are more likely to contribute innovative ideas when engaged and satisfied with their roles (Nadeem, 2018).

Research consistently supports a positive relationship between motivation and individual performance across sectors. Higher motivation levels lead to improved task performance and contextual performance, and to reduced negative behaviours such as absenteeism

and poor work quality (Fiorini & Sammut, 2023; Rau *et al.*, 2025). Both autonomous and controlled motivation have a positive impact on performance outcomes (Fiorini & Sammut, 2023). Organisational factors, such as culture, management style, job demands and rewards, significantly influence this relationship (Taylor, 2015). Implementing effective motivation strategies greatly enhances both individual and organisational performance (Madzík *et al.*, 2025; Yusuf, 2014). The relationship between motivation and performance is also influenced by factors such as job satisfaction and organisational skills, which act as mediators (Madzík *et al.*, 2025). Additionally, adherence to sound management principles further improves organisational performance (Madzík *et al.*, 2025). Thus, promoting motivation is essential for maximising individual and organisational success (Octavianasari, 2017; Rau *et al.*, 2025).

2.5.6 Mediating role of meaningful work in the relationship between motivation and individual performance

Harlow *et al.* (1986) noted that having meaning as a basic psychological need, hence the continued search for meaning in life (Baumeister & Vohs, 2002). As each person is unique, they assign meaning to their work differently. Meaningful Work plays a critical role in the link between motivation and performance. Various definitions of meaningful work are available. All of these share a common theme of either 'off' or 'all': self-realisation, significance, and a broader purpose (Martela & Pessi, 2018:1-2). Meaningful work has been defined as work that an individual regards as essential and that has a positive meaning to them (Rosso *et al.*, 2010). Therefore, meaningful work is a highly valued job characteristic. According to Martela and Pessi (2018:1), meaningful work can be further divided into two subcategories: work that has value for the individual and a broader category in which work has meaning beyond the individual.

Martela and Pessi (2018:1-3) define self-realisation as a subcategory of meaningful work. In this sense, it refers to individuals who experience their work as a place where they can be true to themselves and bring their unique strengths and qualities to the work environment. This, in turn, leads individuals to perform at their peak and, by so doing, contribute to the organisation's success, which, in turn, leads to the second sub-category, which deals with the broader or wider purpose. This concept is described by Martela and Pessi (2018:1-3) as the work an individual does that benefits a broader audience or

contributes to the greater good. Both these contribute to the work being significant. The results of a study by Van Wingerden and Van der Stoep (2018:1-8), involving 459 respondents, support the notion that individuals perform better when they perceive their work as meaningful and aligned with their values and beliefs. The research further noted that individuals are more likely to utilise their strengths and personal skills to enhance performance when their work is meaningful.



Figure 2. 4 Meaningful work equation based on research by Van Wingerden and Van der Stoep (2018:1-4)

Similar research performed by Junça-Silva *et al.* (n=146) found a positive relationship between meaningful work and performance (2022:1-3). Although the study focused more on how individuals can be more productive by personalising their tasks, the bottom line still aligns with the notion of meaningful work, promoting increased performance, better staff retention, and a greater sense of making a difference. Research performed in South Africa by Geldenhuys *et al.* (2014:1-7) with a sample population of 415 respondents further supports the theory that meaningfulness is positively associated with organisational commitment and higher levels of work engagement. This, in turn, also fosters performance and organisational success. Across several studies, recurring themes emerge regarding what is required for work to be meaningful. Beneficence and autonomy are two of the primary characteristics identified in Martela *et al.*'s (2021:1) research.

2.5.7 Gaps in the literature

Critical gaps remain in the research on meaningful work in the NPO context. Lettieri *et al.* (2004:16-17) noted that proper management is required in the NPO sector to address limited resources and consistently enhance performance. Based on employment figures for staff in this sector, there is an increased need for research on how to ensure the NPO

sector remains successful and sustainable, continuing to serve society and address societal needs. Buonomo *et al.* (2020:1) noted that managing employees in the NPO sector is more complex than in the for-profit sector. According to Buonomo *et al.* (2020:2), NPOs are highly dependent on their staff (as part of “intellectual capital”) to achieve organisational goals, thereby linking back to various studies noting that employees are the most critical asset of any organisation. Research by Schepers *et al.* (2005:191-208) found that employees in the NPO sector are instead motivated by intrinsic rewards. Similarly, research conducted in 22 NPOs further supports the evidence that NPO employees do not rely on monetary incentives (Selden & Sowa, 2011:251-265). Despite the noted literature, very few studies examine meaningful work as a mediator, suggesting that further research is needed to understand this link fully.

2.6 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The conceptual framework for this study is grounded in contemporary theories and empirical findings that elucidate the connections between motivation, meaningful work and individual work performance — particularly in the non-profit sector. The framework is structured around the following proposition: motivation, encompassing both intrinsic and extrinsic elements, is the foundational driver of employee behaviour and performance. Within the non-profit context, inherent factors — such as personal fulfilment, alignment with organisational mission and the desire to make a social impact — are especially salient (Renard & Snelgar, 2016). External motivators, while present, tend to be less influential due to the sector’s limited financial incentives (Brandl & Güttel, 2007). The literature consistently affirms that motivated employees are more likely to demonstrate higher engagement, persistence and goal attainment (Ghaffari *et al.*, 2017; Deci & Ryan, 2000).

The experience of meaningful work operates as a mediating variable, shaping how motivation translates into performance. Meaningful work emerges when employees perceive their roles as significant and aligned with their values, resulting in increased psychological engagement and a stronger sense of responsibility (Rosso *et al.*, 2010; Allan *et al.*, 2018b). This mediating role is crucial in NPOs, where the sense of purpose often compensates for lower extrinsic rewards. Empirical evidence demonstrates that meaningful work enhances job satisfaction, commitment and overall well-being, thereby

amplifying the positive effects of motivation on work performance (Martela *et al.*, 2021; Hackman & Oldham, 1976).

Individual work performance represents the principal outcome of the framework, encompassing task performance, contextual performance, adaptive performance and counterproductive work behaviour (Koopmans *et al.*, 2011). Theories and studies suggest that performance is not solely a function of ability or resources, but is also significantly influenced by motivational states and the perception of meaningful work (Kalogiannidis, 2021; Wrzesniewski *et al.*, 1997). Employees who are both motivated and find their work meaningful are more likely to exhibit high levels of task proficiency, proactive behaviour, adaptability and organisational citizenship. The framework posits that meaningful work fully mediates the relationship between motivation and work performance. While motivation can directly enhance performance, its effects are intensified when employees also perceive their work as meaningful. Thus, meaningful work strengthens the impact of motivation by fostering engagement, responsibility and psychological investment in the organisation's goals (Lysova *et al.*, 2019; Allan *et al.*, 2018b).

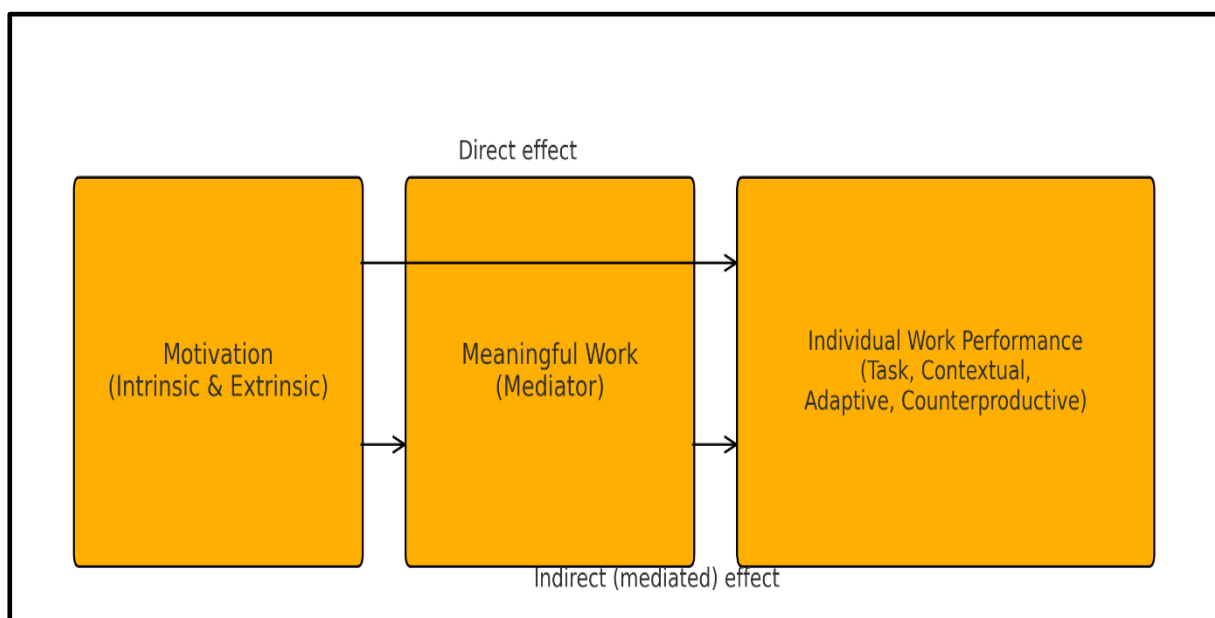


Figure 2.5 Conceptual Framework

2.7 SUMMARY

The main theoretical and empirical foundations related to individual work performance, with a focus on their relationship to motivation and meaningful work, are evaluated in the literature review. This is evaluated particularly in the context of NPOs. The review begins by defining and conceptualising motivation, drawing on the Self-Determination Theory (and its sub-theories), Organismic Integration Theory, Cognitive Evaluation Theory and the Basic Psychological Needs Theory. These theories explain intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, as well as the roles of autonomy, competence and relatedness in maintaining individual motivation. The review also examines the concept of meaningful work, defining and discussing its dimensions, antecedents, and consequences, while emphasising its importance for improving performance, retention, and employee well-being. Work as a calling is introduced as a source of work meaning derived from personal values and the need to serve and help others.

The review also addresses individual work performance, defining and evaluating its multidimensional nature, including task performance, contextual performance, adaptive performance and counterproductive work behaviour. This is supported by models such as the Multidimensional Job Performance Theory, Contextual Performance Model and the Integrated Criterion Framework. The key causes of work performance (individual, job-related, and organisational) and their effects on people and organisations are evaluated. The review concludes by evaluating integrated frameworks such as the Integrated Pathways to Meaningful Work, which links performance, work meaning and motivation to provide a clear understanding of how purpose-driven organisations foster and maintain employee effectiveness.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHOD AND DESIGN

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The research objectives of this study were to examine the relationship between motivation and work performance among employees in NPOs and to investigate the mediating role of meaningful work in this relationship. This chapter outlines the methodological choices for a study of motivation and individual work performance in a South African NPO, with meaningful work as the mediating variable (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Gagné & Deci, 2005). The objectives focus on the association between motivation and performance and on the indirect role of meaningful work. It adopts realist ontology and a positivist epistemology. A quantitative approach anchors the work in objective measurement and hypothesis testing linked to Self-Determination Theory and the Job Characteristics Model (Hackman & Oldham, 1976; Saunders *et al.*, 2016). Quantitative procedures provide numerical evidence for relationships among the focal variables and support transparent analysis (Cooper & Schindler, 2014; Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

A cross-sectional survey design captures a single time point. The design offers an efficient snapshot of prevalence and associations in human resource contexts, with clear limits for causal inference (Adams *et al.*, 2014; Cooper & Schindler, 2014; Cowell, 2020; Puspa Zuleika & Legiran, 2022). The setting is a multi-provincial non-profit healthcare organisation. The target population comprises approximately 200 employees in clinical research and head-office roles. The inclusion criteria specify full-time employment for more than one year, English fluency and reliable digital access. A census approach suits the small population and the need for comprehensive coverage (Paais & Sui, 2018; Murtiarso *et al.*, 2018).

Data collection used a self-administered online questionnaire. Three validated instruments capture the constructs of interest. The Multidimensional Work Motivation Scale reflects Self-Determination Theory. Recent evidence supports a refined four-factor structure and the removal of three problematic items (Trépanier *et al.*, 2023). The Work and Meaning Inventory measures meaningful work across positive meaning, meaning-making, and greater good motivations, with 10 items on a 5-point scale (Steger *et al.*,

2012). The Individual Work Performance Questionnaire assesses task performance, contextual performance, and counterproductive behaviour, with 18 items on a five-point frequency scale and a standard reference period (Koopmans *et al.*, 2014). Planned analyses include descriptive statistics, Pearson correlations and mediation testing with bootstrapped confidence intervals. Reliability analysis uses Cronbach's alpha (Efron & Tibshirani, 1993; Cooper & Schindler, 2014). The relevant North-West University committee granted ethical clearance. The procedures include informed consent, confidentiality safeguards under the Protection of Personal Information Act (POPIA) and restricted data access (Resnik, 2024; Saunders *et al.*, 2016).

The chapter proceeds in a precise sequence. It states the philosophy and approach. It details the design, respondents and sampling. It covers the instruments and data collection. It explains the analyses and ethics. It concludes with a discussion of study limitations and their implications. The limits include the non-causal nature of cross-sectional evidence, self-report bias, a single-organisation frame and language or size constraints for generalisability (Cowell, 2020; Kapiszewski & Karcher, 2021)

3.2 RESEARCH PHILOSOPHY

The study adopts realist ontology and a positivist epistemological stance, assuming that reality is objective and measurable (Saunders *et al.*, 2016). This philosophical alignment supports the use of structured instruments and statistical analysis to test hypotheses derived from established theories such as Self-Determination Theory and the Job Characteristics Model (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Hackman & Oldham, 1976). The researcher remains detached and objective throughout the process, ensuring that personal values do not influence the findings (Saunders *et al.*, 2016).

3.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Methodology is the process of discovery. It provides a clear logic from question to answer. It frames data collection, analysis, and interpretation, and sets out the strategies, techniques, and tools that hold a study together (Babbie, 2013; Goundar, 2012). Researchers must understand this logic because it shapes every decision and maintains systematic procedures. A firm grasp of methodology enables three outcomes. It supports the selection of an appropriate research approach, strengthens the quality of evidence

and results and allows complete reporting for replication (Cooper & Schindler, 2014). Methodology also justifies why specific methods fit the aims. That justification links design to objectives and keeps the project aligned with its purpose.

Quantitative research involves the systematic collection and analysis of numerical data to identify patterns, test hypotheses and make predictions (Cooper & Schindler, 2014). It suits questions about relationships between variables and studies that seek to generalise from a sample to a population when the design permits (Cooper & Schindler, 2014). Objective statistical procedures support validity and reliability, and numerical outputs aid transparent analysis (Cooper & Schindler, 2014).

A key limitation remains. Numbers compress meaning and can strip context from lived experience because responses are counted as given (Babbie, 2013). Recognising this trade-off is part of sound design and interpretation. Quantitative tools also scale well. Large samples are feasible at lower cost, especially with electronic distribution and minimal participant interaction. Surveys and questionnaires use structured items to gather data from defined samples. The results offer numerical descriptions of patterns, behaviours and viewpoints that can be generalised when supported by the sampling plan (Cooper & Schindler, 2014; Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In practice, methodology ties these elements together — aims to design, design to measure and measure to analyse — to produce credible and useful findings.

3.4 RESEARCH DESIGN

The study applied a cross-sectional survey design to examine links among motivation, meaningful work and individual work performance (Adams *et al.*, 2014). A cross-sectional design gathers data at a single time point, providing a snapshot of variables and their associations (Cooper & Schindler, 2014). This approach is common in human resource management and organisational behaviour. It supports descriptions of prevalence, profiles, key characteristics and identifies associated factors within a defined population (Puspa Zuleika & Legiran, 2022). It is also cost-effective and efficient for generating initial evidence that can guide more advanced designs (Puspa Zuleika & Legiran, 2022).

The limits are clear. Cross-sectional studies do not establish causality and do not capture change over time (Cowell, 2020). To strengthen inference, scholars recommend pairing

cross-sectional evidence with longitudinal designs and aligning analyses with appropriate theoretical frameworks and methodological best practices (Zacher & Rudolph, 2021; Fan *et al.*, 2020; Bonache & Festing, 2020). In this context, the design remains a practical choice for identifying correlations and testing mediation within a bounded time frame.

3.5 RESPONDENTS

This study was conducted in the NPO sector in South Africa, focusing on a specific healthcare organisation that operates across six provinces. The research targeted approximately 1,000 employees, primarily from the organisation's Clinical Research Division and Head Offices, with the majority based in the Gauteng and North West provinces. The study population consists of adult respondents (≥ 18 years), regardless of gender, ethnicity or socio-economic status. Respondents were offered the option to join without preference for any specific demographic characteristics, to ensure inclusivity and diversity in the sample. Furthermore, the study did not focus on any particular attributes such as medical conditions, educational background or behaviours.

The study's inclusion criteria required staff to be employed full-time for more than 1 year. They further needed to be fluent in English and have reliable access to the internet and email. Individuals outside the organisation (circumstances not aligned with the research aims), as well as employees based outside South Africa, might be subjected to additional research approval processes and were not considered for participation in the research study and therefore excluded.

The inclusion and exclusion criteria play an important role in maintaining the integrity, safety, and ethical standards of a research study, making them a crucial component. According to Patino and Ferreira (2018), clearly defining the study population ensures the validity and reliability of the research, making the findings applicable and meaningful. They further provide that respondents accurately represent the target population, reducing variability and potential data bias. Furthermore, the inclusion and exclusion criteria protect vulnerable populations from undue risk or exploitation and generally safeguard participant safety (Friedman *et al.*, 2015:75). Carefully defined inclusion and exclusion criteria are vital for conducting research that is safe and ethically responsible.

3.6 SAMPLING STRATEGY

Due to the small population, a census was conducted to determine the total number of residents. The census technique in human resource management and organisational behaviour research involves studying the entire population rather than a sample. It can be justified for smaller populations or when comprehensive data is required (Maartje Paaïs & Jeky Sui, 2018; Murtiarso *et al.*, 2018).

3.7 DATA COLLECTION METHODS

Data were collected using a self-administered online questionnaire distributed via email. The questionnaire included sections on demographics, motivation (MWMS), meaningful work (WAMI) and individual work performance (IWPQ). This method ensured cost-effectiveness, anonymity and broad geographic coverage (Gagné *et al.*, 2015; Steger *et al.*, 2012; Koopmans *et al.*, 2014). The Multidimensional Work Motivation Scale measures work motivation from the perspective of Self-Determination Theory. The scale comprises 19 items representing five regulatory types. These include intrinsic motivation (three items), identified regulation (three items), introjected regulation (four items), external regulation social (three items), external regulation material (three items) and amotivation (three items).

The respondents rate the reasons for investing effort on a seven-point scale from 1 (not at all for this reason) to 7 (precisely for this reason) (Trépanier *et al.*, 2023). Recent evidence supports a refined representation of these factors. It shows that intrinsic motivation and identified regulation function as one autonomous motivation factor. It also shows that the two external regulation subtypes are not distinguishable and that introjected regulation is best represented by avoidance content. This work recommends a structure with autonomous motivation, introjected regulation, external regulation and amotivation with three problematic items removed in the revised solution (Trépanier *et al.*, 2023).

The Work and Meaning Inventory assesses meaningful work as a multi-dimensional experience. The final scale includes 10 items across three factors. Positive meaning in work uses four items. Meaning-making through work uses three items. Greater good motivations use three items. Items are rated on a five-point scale from absolutely untrue

to absolutely true (Steger, Dik, & Duffy, 2012). The three factors map directly to the conceptual model that defines meaningful work as positive, significant and linked to a broader purpose (Steger *et al.*, 2012).

The Individual Work Performance Questionnaire provides a generic measure of individual work performance. The validated version includes 18 items across three subscales. Task performance has five items. Items are rated on a five-point frequency scale from seldom to always (Koopmans *et al.*, 2014). Contextual performance has eight items. Items use the same five-point frequency scale from seldom to always (Koopmans *et al.*, 2014). Counterproductive work behaviour has five items. Items are rated from 'never' to 'too often'. The instrument aggregates items over a three-month reference period and reports means on a 0-4 scale to facilitate interpretation (Koopmans *et al.*, 2014).

Together, these instruments offer clear factor models and concise response formats. The three scales align with the constructs of interest. Work motivation is captured through distinct forms of regulation on a seven-point reason scale. Meaningful work is captured through three facets on a five-point truth scale. Individual performance is captured across three behavioural domains on five-point frequency scales, with anchors tailored to each behaviour type. Using established scales with defined factors and fixed anchors supports reliable scoring and transparent reporting in studies that examine motivation, meaningful work and performance in the same survey design (Koopmans *et al.*, 2014; Steger *et al.*, 2012; Trépanier *et al.*, 2023). Below is a concise summary of the factor structures, item counts and response formats for each instrument used.

Table 3.1: Summary of the factor structures, item counts, and response formats for each instrument used

Instrument (version)	Factor / Subscale	Items (n)	Likert format	response
Multi-dimensional Work Motivation Scale (MWMS; revisited)	Autonomous motivation (Intrinsic + Identified pooled)	5	7-point, 1 = “not at all for this reason” to 7 = “exactly for this reason”	
	Introjected regulation (avoidance)	2	7-point, 1–7 as above	
	External regulation (material + social pooled)	6	7-point, 1–7 as above	
	Amotivation	3	7-point, 1–7 as above	
	Positive meaning	4	5-point, 1 = “absolutely untrue” to 5 = “absolutely true”	
Work and Meaning Inventory (WAMI)	Meaning-making through work	3	5-point, 1–5 as above	
	Greater good motivations	3	5-point, 1–5 as above	
	Task performance	5	5-point, “seldom” → “always”	
Individual Performance Questionnaire (IWPQ 1.0)	Contextual performance	8	5-point, “seldom” → “always”	
	Counterproductive work behaviour	5	5-point, “never” → “often”	

3.8 RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY OF THE MEASURING INSTRUMENTS

The reliability of a measuring tool refers to its consistency and stability. A reliable tool produces the same results under consistent conditions. This means that a reliable questionnaire will yield similar results when used repeatedly with the same population and in a similar context (DeVellis, 2017:49). Methods for measuring reliability include internal consistency, test-retest reliability, and inter-rater reliability. Internal consistency is noted by DeVellis (2017:51-52) as a means of assessing whether all the items in a test or scale measure the same concept or construct. Internal consistency can be calculated using Cronbach's alpha or a split-half reliability test. Cronbach's alpha is the most commonly used objective measure of reliability. Alpha values typically range from 0 to 1, with a higher value indicating greater consistency and reliability. However, an alpha value > 0.90 is not recommended, as it may indicate redundancy or duplication of

questions. The length of the measuring tool further influences alpha – a shorter tool may result in a low alpha value (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011:54). DeVellis (2017:63) noted several limitations of Cronbach's alpha, which include it being dependent on statistical assumptions that are not entirely accurate in real data, which can lead to an increased or lower value. Furthermore, alpha is reported as a single value estimate that does not show the possibility or extent of change if the test were repeated, which can provide a false sense of the level of consistency. Reliability can also be measured by using the test-retest reliability method. This method, described by Field (2018:58) as a simple way to evaluate reliability, is used. It involves administering the same test to the same group of respondents twice. If the tools are reliable, they will produce the same or similar results at both time points.

Whereas reliability examines consistency, validity concerns the accuracy of the measuring tool in measuring what it is intended to measure (Field, 2018:57). DeVellis (2017:86) noted three types of validity: content validity, criterion-related validity, and construct validity. Field (2018:57) explains these concepts as content validity, referring to the scope of measurement that a measuring tool covers, including all aspects of the idea being measured in the research. To ensure content validity, items must be carefully selected and reviewed by an expert. Furthermore, items must closely align with the construct's definition. Constructs that are too broad can pose a significant challenge, potentially leading to the inclusion of irrelevant items in a given context and compromising content validity.

To address the scope of constructs, it must be balanced with practical considerations, i.e., by including multiple scales rather than single broad ones (DeVellis, 2017:86-93). Expert reviews and literature comparisons measure content validity. Criterion-related validity examines the extent to which the measuring instrument's results relate to an external criterion. Because it is regarded as practical and focuses on predicting a process rather than understanding it, criterion-related validity is also called predictive validity. This kind of validity, which might be concurrent, predictive or postdictive, investigates the strength of the relationship between the measure and the criterion rather than implying causality. Accuracy is measured using correlation coefficients. This may not capture how well a measure classifies cases correctly, may not balance false positives and negatives, and may require scaling adjustments. Thus, criterion-related validity emphasised practical

prediction accuracy above theoretical explanations (DeVellis, 2017:93-95). Construct validity concerns how well a measuring instrument accurately reflects the theoretical construct. A positive correlation is shown between constructs, a negative correlation with opposing constructs and no correlation with unrelated constructs. The extent to which these predictable relationships are confirmed provides evidence of the scale's construct validity. It is thus measured by factor analysis and hypothesis testing. It is important to note that a measuring tool must be reliable to be valid. However, a reliable measuring tool is not always valid (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011:53, Lamm *et al.*, 2020:26).

Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, with values ranging from 0.70 to 0.96 across instruments, indicating strong internal consistency (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). Validity was supported by prior research demonstrating construct and content validity of the MWMS, WAMI and IWPQ. Trustworthiness was ensured through methodological consistency and ethical transparency (Cooper & Schindler, 2014). The Multi-dimensional Work Motivation Scale shows sound internal consistency across its subscales in multi-sample tests. Reported coefficients for intrinsic motivation, identified regulation, introjected regulation and external regulation subscales are acceptable to high across five independent samples, with amotivation also demonstrating acceptable internal consistency (Trépanier *et al.*, 2023).

The same program of research revisited the factor structure and supported a representation that separates autonomous motivation, introjected regulation, external regulation and amotivation. The study recommended removing three problematic items to improve the scale's psychometric clarity. They also reported that external regulation by material and social contingencies is not distinguishable and that introjected regulation is more strongly captured by avoidance content. These results support structural validity and a refined construct representation that aligns with theory, and they were cross-validated across five samples (Trépanier *et al.*, 2023). The study further established theoretically coherent relations with outcomes. Autonomous motivation is associated with vitality and satisfaction, while controlled forms are associated with poorer health and turnover intention, with introjected avoidance standing out as a stronger predictor. These patterns strengthen convergent and criterion-related validity for the revised structure (Trépanier *et al.*, 2023).

The Work and Meaning Inventory demonstrates strong internal consistency. The total score α is .93, with subscale α s of .89 for Positive Meaning, .82 for Meaning Making, and .83 for Greater Good, which support the reliability of both the global index and its facets (Steger *et al.*, 2012). Confirmatory factor analysis supported a three-factor model with good fit indices across samples, which establishes structural validity for the intended dimensionality (Steger *et al.*, 2012). The scale also showed convergence with job and life attitudes and well-being indicators in predicted directions. In addition, WAMI scores accounted for unique variance in job satisfaction, absenteeism and life satisfaction beyond common predictors. This provides convergent and incremental validity for the measure in organisational settings (Steger *et al.*, 2012).

The Individual Work Performance Questionnaire was developed from a three-dimensional framework that covers task performance, contextual performance and counterproductive work behaviour. Prior studies established the framework's face and structural validity, providing a foundation for reliability and validity assessments across occupational groups (Koopmans *et al.*, 2014). In a large Dutch worker sample, construct validity was tested through convergent and discriminative checks. IWPQ subscales correlated as expected with absolute and relative presenteeism from the World Health Organisation (WHO) HPQ and with work engagement. Correlations were weak to moderate, which the authors judged as consistent with related but distinct constructs, supporting convergent validity (Koopmans *et al.*, 2014).

The instrument also differentiated known groups. Workers with higher job satisfaction and better health showed higher task and contextual performance and lower counterproductive behaviour. The dose-response pattern across quartiles supports discriminative validity (Koopmans *et al.*, 2014). The authors concluded that the IWPQ yields acceptable overall construct validity and provides reliable and valid scores for use across sectors and health statuses. This conclusion relates to the instrument's generalisability and practical utility in organisational research (Koopmans *et al.*, 2014). Taken together, these instruments present defensible reliability and validity evidence for use in studies of motivation, meaningful work and performance. The MWMS offers refined structure-outcome links; the WAMI offers strong internal consistency and incremental validity; and the IWPQ offers construct validity, including known-group differences and correlations with established performance-related constructs. This portfolio supports

robust measurement across the focal domains (Trépanier *et al.*, 2023; Steger *et al.*, 2012; Koopmans *et al.*, 2014).

Table 3.2: Reliability and Validity Summary

Instrument	Reliability (Cronbach's α)	Validity
IWPQ (Individual Work Performance Questionnaire)	Task Performance: $\alpha = 0.66$ Contextual Performance: $\alpha = 0.77$ Counterproductive Work Behaviour: $\alpha = 0.67$	Construct Validity: Acceptable (66.6% of hypotheses confirmed) Convergent Validity: Moderate correlations with presenteeism and work engagement Discriminant Validity: Differentiates between groups based on job satisfaction and health
WAMI (Work and Meaning Inventory)	Positive Meaning: $\alpha = 0.89$ Meaning Making: $\alpha = 0.82$ Greater Good: $\alpha = 0.83$ Total Scale: $\alpha = 0.93$	Construct Validity: Strong intercorrelations among subscales. Convergent Validity: Significant correlations with calling, job satisfaction, and life satisfaction Incremental Validity: Adds unique variance in predicting job satisfaction, absenteeism and life satisfaction
MWMS (Multidimensional Work Motivation Scale)	Intrinsic Motivation: $\alpha = 0.88$ – 0.93 Identified Regulation: $\alpha = 0.62$ – 0.87 Introjected Regulation: $\alpha = 0.63$ – 0.75 External Regulation (Social): $\alpha = 0.75$ – 0.81 External Regulation (Material): $\alpha = 0.48$ – 0.67 Amotivation: $\alpha = 0.61$ – 0.79	Construct Validity: Revised 3-factor model validated across five samples. Criterion Validity: Autonomous motivation linked to positive outcomes; introjected and external regulation linked to emotional exhaustion and turnover intention Measurement Invariance: Confirmed across languages and samples

3.9 DATA ANALYSIS

To obtain the research objectives, the following statistical techniques were used.

Descriptive statistics were used to summarise and explain the characteristics of the data, including means, medians, modes, standard deviations and frequency distributions. It presents the facts about the collected data and is therefore used to determine what the data show (Saunders *et al.*, 2009:444). Overall impressions of data are summarised by measuring central tendency: the value that appears most often (mode), the middle value when ranked (median), and the average value (mean). The mean is calculated by dividing the sum of all values by the number of values. At the same time, the median is determined by ordering the values from lowest to highest and then identifying the middle value. This characterises the dataset's average value.

Furthermore, measures of dispersion, including the standard deviation, variance and range, explain the level of consistency or variability in responses (Saunders *et al.*, 2009:447-449). Dispersion calculations determine how consistent or widely spread responses are amongst respondents. Looking at these measures as a whole provides a more accurate understanding of the results, e.g., low dispersion indicating shared experiences. In contrast, greater dispersion among respondents could indicate diverse perspectives that warrant further research. Furthermore, descriptive statistics uses visual tools such as graphs and charts, as well as frequency distributions and percentages, to present the results.

Correlation analysis was used to examine relationships between variables such as motivation, meaningful work and job performance. Pearson correlation coefficients were calculated to determine the significance and course of the linear relationship between variables. This method was well-suited to this study's quantitative, positivist approach, as it aims to identify and investigate possible connections grounded in theory. The coefficient's value ranges from -1 to +1, with -1 indicating negative correlation and +1 indicating positive correlation. If the coefficient is calculated to 0, it means a little or no linear relationship between the variables being measured (Saunders *et al.*, 2009:459-462). The coefficient further indicates if the result is statistically significant by adding statistical significance tests or p-values. Identifying these relationships is vital to the study's analysis, as they form the basis for further investigation into causation.

Mediation analysis was conducted to test whether meaningful work (mediator) mediates the relationship between motivation (independent variable) and work performance

(dependent variable). Bootstrapping was used to estimate confidence intervals for mediation effects. The mediation model typically tests three main paths, which include 1) the effect of the independent variable on the mediator, 2) the effect of the mediator on the dependent variable and 3) the total effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable. If the indirect effect is significant, it means that the mediator helps explain how the independent variable influences the dependent variable (Preacher & Hayes, 2008:879-880). Furthermore, bootstrapping is preferred because it does not assume that the indirect effect follows a normal distribution, which is typically required by many statistical tests. Instead, it uses the data itself to provide a more accurate result by repeatedly resampling and calculating the indirect effect each time, generating more precise and reliable confidence intervals based on the actual data patterns.

Reliability analysis was performed using Cronbach's alpha to assess the internal consistency of the measurement instruments. Cronbach's alpha is a key measure of questionnaire reliability. An instrument is deemed reliable if it produces consistent and stable results across different items, occasions, or samples. In research, reliability analysis ensures that measurement tools are reliable before concluding the collected data. Cronbach's alpha (α) is typically used for the assessment of internal consistency reliability, which examines whether items in a scale measure the same concept or idea, rather than mixing unrelated topics (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011:53).

The value of alpha ranges from 0 to 1, with higher values indicating good internal consistency and the measurement of the same concept (0.7–≥0.9). However, alpha is also affected by test length: a short test can reduce alpha, while a longer test can increase it. Determining the level of consistency in research is vital as a measurement tool; low reliability ($\alpha < 0.7$) may yield inconsistent results, reducing confidence in conclusions drawn from the study. Therefore, calculating and reporting alpha increases a study's trustworthiness by ensuring that the data are correctly interpreted.

3.10 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical approval was obtained from the North-West University's Economic and Management Sciences Research Ethics Committee (NWU-00675-25-A4). Informed consent was obtained from all respondents, and confidentiality was maintained in accordance with POPIA 4 of 2013 (Resnik, 2024). The respondents were informed of

their rights and the voluntary nature of participation. Ethics are standards of behaviour or conventions that guide moral decisions regarding actions and interactions with other people (Cooper & Schindler, 2014:28). Research ethics, as defined by Saunders et al. (2016:228), refers to the appropriateness of a researcher's behaviour towards the rights of individuals affected by the researcher's work. The main aim of ethics in research is to ensure that respondents or volunteers are not harmed and that there are no adverse consequences suffered from research activities performed (Cooper & Schindler, 2014:28).

Unethical activities included breaching confidentiality, misleading volunteers, failing to be transparent about potential risks, coercing individuals into participating, and evading liability for potential injuries resulting from research activities. Volunteers need to be fully informed of all aspects of the research study, particularly information that could affect their decision to volunteer. This was done by obtaining informed consent. Ethics committees and other relevant regulatory bodies reviewed the proposal for research work in compliance with ethical standards. The proposal and the informed consent form were submitted to the Ethics Committee for ethical clearance. Research commenced only after obtaining ethical clearance.

Obtaining informed consent from a volunteer involved fully disclosing and explaining the method of the suggested research before seeking approval to continue with the study (Cooper & Schindler, 2014). The informed consent process could be either verbal or written. The Ethics Committee had to approve all written informed consent documents before they were used. No data could be collected without obtaining informed consent. The informed consent process was documented, and the consent document was signed by both the volunteer and the researcher or designee. The informed consent document included information on the study's purpose, risks and benefits to the volunteer, remuneration (if applicable), the volunteer's rights and responsibilities, the timing and manner of sharing or disclosing results to the volunteer, as well as the time and effort required from the volunteer. Volunteers had the right to consent in their preferred language. For this study, informed consent was obtained in English only. The informed consent document included the elements listed and discussed below.

The purpose of the study was explained to potential respondents. This study was conducted for academic purposes only. Therefore, respondents did not directly benefit from it. As part of the informed consent process, all volunteers were informed that their participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw their consent at any time without adverse consequences. The respondents could decline to take part in the study. Privacy and confidentiality were discussed as part of the informed consent process. Data were only used for the intended purpose. To ensure privacy and confidentiality, and to comply with the POPI Act, no personal or identifiable information was collected. Questionnaires were labelled only with a participant number. The time duration required to complete the informed consent process and the questionnaires was noted on the consent form. This helped respondents decide whether they had enough time to complete the questionnaires.

The researcher explained access to the data to the respondents. Data were not accessible to any parties outside of North-West University and remained anonymous. The results were made available to the research organisation, but were not shared individually with the respondents. When the study results were presented, respondents were given the option to receive an additional invitation from the researcher to attend the organisation's journal club presentation. Respondents could opt out of this if they did not wish to receive further information from the researcher. They were informed that their details would not be shared in any publications or other materials. They would also not be recognised individually for their contributions. The relevant contact details were shared with respondents as part of the informed consent process.

3.11 SUMMARY

The chapter presents a coherent quantitative plan for testing links among motivation, meaningful work and individual performance in an NPO workforce. The philosophical stance is positivist, with realist assumptions and theory-driven hypotheses. The design is cross-sectional and organisation-specific. The population is small, which supports a census strategy and strengthens coverage of key units of analysis. The measurement draws on three established instruments with clear structures and anchors. MWMS follows a revised four-factor solution aligned to Self-Determination Theory and recent psychometric guidance (Trépanier *et al.*, 2023). WAMI retains a three-factor model with

strong internal consistency and evidence for incremental validity in organisational contexts (Steger *et al.*, 2012). IWPQ offers acceptable construct validity with known-group differences and expected correlations with related outcomes (Koopmans *et al.*, 2014).

The analysis plans match the questions. Descriptives summarise the sample. Correlations test direct links. Mediation models estimate the indirect path through meaningful work with bootstrapped intervals for precision (Efron & Tibshirani, 1993). Reliability checks use standard thresholds for internal consistency. Ethical protocols address consent, privacy and data stewardship in line with POPIA and institutional requirements. Strengths include theoretical alignment, validated measures and transparent procedures. The limits include the time-bound snapshot, self-report inputs and a single-organisation scope. The design still offers credible evidence for the proposed mediation in this setting. The methodological choices provide a defensible base for the results reported in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION AND REPORTING OF THE RESULTS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter discussed the research methodology used to gather and analyse the data. This chapter presents, analyses and discusses the findings of a study examining the relationship between motivation and work performance and investigating the mediating role of meaningful work among employees at a selected NPO in South Africa. The study findings are discussed based on the Self-Determination Theory (SDT) (Deci & Ryan, 2000), Frankl's Logotherapy (Frankl, 1992), the Job Characteristics Model (Hackman & Oldham, 1976), the Integrative Pathways to Meaningful Work Model (Steger & Dik, 2009) and the Individual Work Performance Model (Koopmans *et al.*, 2013). The results are interpreted in the context of these frameworks and supported by the literature, providing a multidimensional understanding of how motivation, meaningful work, and performance interact in a selected NPO in South Africa.

4.2 DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE RESPONDENTS

A total of 288 respondents from the NPO sector operating in Gauteng, North West, Western Cape, Eastern Cape, Free State, and Limpopo provinces took part in the study. Demographic characteristics included age, gender, education level, years of service and job level. Table 4.1 summarises these characteristics.

Table 4.1: Demographic characteristics of respondents (N = 288)

Variable	Categories	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Age	18 - 25 years	35	12.2
	26 - 35 years	124	43.1
	36 - 45 years	82	28.5
	46 - 55 years	39	13.5
	Over 55 years	8	2.8
Gender	Male	118	41.0
	Female	170	59.0
Education level	High school	27	9.4
	Matric	51	17.7
	Diploma	94	32.6
	Bachelor's degree	83	28.8
	Postgraduate	33	11.5
Years of service	< 1 year	24	8.3
	1–5 years	86	29.9
	5–10 years	92	31.9
	> 10 years	86	29.9
Job level	Junior staff	94	32.6
	Senior staff	74	25.7
	Junior management	63	21.9
	Middle management	47	16.3
	Senior management	10	3.5

According to Table 4-1, most employees in the selected NPO were female (59%), and most respondents were aged 26-45 (71.6%), reflecting a relatively young, mid-career workforce. In terms of educational qualifications, the majority (72%) of these employees held at least a diploma or degree, indicating a high level of educational attainment. Table 4.1 also shows that the majority (60%) of respondents had been in service for more than 5 years, suggesting considerable organisational stability. These patterns are consistent with other South African NPO workforce studies that report high levels of education and significant female representation (UN Women, 2025). The demographic profile has interpretive significance: the strong presence of qualified, mid-career women may influence how meaning, motivation and performance are experienced and expressed in the selected NPO.

4.3 DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS AND RELIABILITY OF SCALES

Table 4.2 presents the descriptive statistics for the three variables: motivation, meaningful work, and work performance. Cronbach's alpha coefficients were calculated to assess the reliability of the scales that were used in this study.

Table 4.2: Descriptive statistics and reliability coefficients

Variable	N	Mean (M)	SD	Min	Max	Cronbach's α
Motivation	288	3.80	0.71	1.00	5.00	0.84
Meaningful work	288	3.94	0.67	1.00	5.00	0.80
Work performance	288	4.00	0.80	1.00	5.00	0.79

The results in Table 4.2 reflect the respondents' positive attitude. Motivation ($M = 3.80$) and meaningfulness ($M = 3.94$) were both above the midpoint of the scale, indicating that employees are highly motivated by internal factors and believe their jobs are essential. Additionally, the reliability analyses ($\alpha = 0.79$;84 and $\alpha = .80$) indicate that the scales are highly reliable, suggesting that the measurement was stable (Field, 2022).

4.4 CORRELATION ANALYSIS

Pearson correlation coefficients were calculated to determine the relationships among motivation, meaningful work, and work performance among employees in the selected NPO. Table 4.3 presents the zero-order Pearson correlation coefficients among the study variables. All correlations were statistically significant ($p < .001$), indicating strong positive associations. Motivation was significantly and positively correlated with work performance, $r(N) = .65$, $p < .001$, supporting the first research objective. Motivation also showed a strong positive correlation with meaningful work ($r(N) = .69$, $p < .001$). Similarly, meaningful work was positively correlated with work performance, $r(N) = .63$, $p < .001$. These results suggest that more motivated individuals are more likely to perceive their work as meaningful and to perform better.

Table 4.3: Zero-order correlations among study variables

Variable	1	2	3
1. Motivation	-	.69***	.65***
2. Meaningful work		-	.63***
3. Work performance			-

*** $p < .001$

4.5 MEDIATION ANALYSIS

The second research objective explored whether meaningful work mediates the relationship between motivation and performance. A mediation analysis was performed using ordinary least squares regression and 5,000 bootstrap resamples. A mediation analysis was conducted using the bootstrapping method with 5,000 resamples to examine whether meaningful work mediates the relationship between motivation and work performance. The study followed Hayes's (2018) guidelines for testing indirect effects and aimed to determine the underlying mechanism through which motivation influences employee performance outcomes.

The results revealed that motivation significantly predicted meaningful work, with a path coefficient of $a = 0.689$ ($SE = 0.041$) and a 95% confidence interval $[0.608, 0.770]$, $p < .001$. This suggests that higher levels of motivation are strongly associated with greater perceptions of work meaningfulness. Furthermore, meaningful work significantly predicted work performance, with a path coefficient of $b = 0.369$ ($SE = 0.052$), 95% CI $[0.266, 0.472]$, $p < .001$, indicating that employees who perceive their work as meaningful tend to perform better. The direct effect of motivation on work performance (c' path) remained significant even when controlling for the mediator $c' = 0.481$ ($SE = 0.059$), 95% CI $[0.364, 0.598]$ and $p < .001$. This indicates that motivation independently contributes to work performance above and beyond its influence through meaningful work.

Notably, the indirect effect of motivation on work performance through meaningful work was statistically significant, with an estimate of 0.255 and a 95% confidence interval $[0.128, 0.382]$. Since the confidence interval does not contain zero, this confirms a

significant mediation effect. The total impact of motivation on work performance was also substantial ($c = 0.735$, $p < .001$), suggesting a strong overall relationship between the predictor and the outcome variable. Taken together, these results provide evidence for partial mediation in which motivation influences work performance both directly and indirectly through meaningful work. This implies that more motivated employees tend to find their work more meaningful, which, in turn, enhances their performance. However, even in the absence of meaningful work, motivation still positively impacts performance, highlighting its independent role. The results produced are shown in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4: Mediation analysis (bootstrap, B = 5,000)

Path	Estimate	SE	95% CI	Significance
a: Motivation → Meaningful work	0.689	0.041	[0.608, 0.770]	$p < .001$
b: Meaningful Work → Work performance	0.369	0.052	[0.266, 0.472]	$p < .001$
c': Motivation → Work performance (direct)	0.481	0.059	[0.364, 0.598]	$p < .001$
a × b: Indirect Effect	0.255	-	[0.128, 0.382]	Significant
c: Total Effect (Motivation → Work performance)	0.735	-	-	$p < .001$

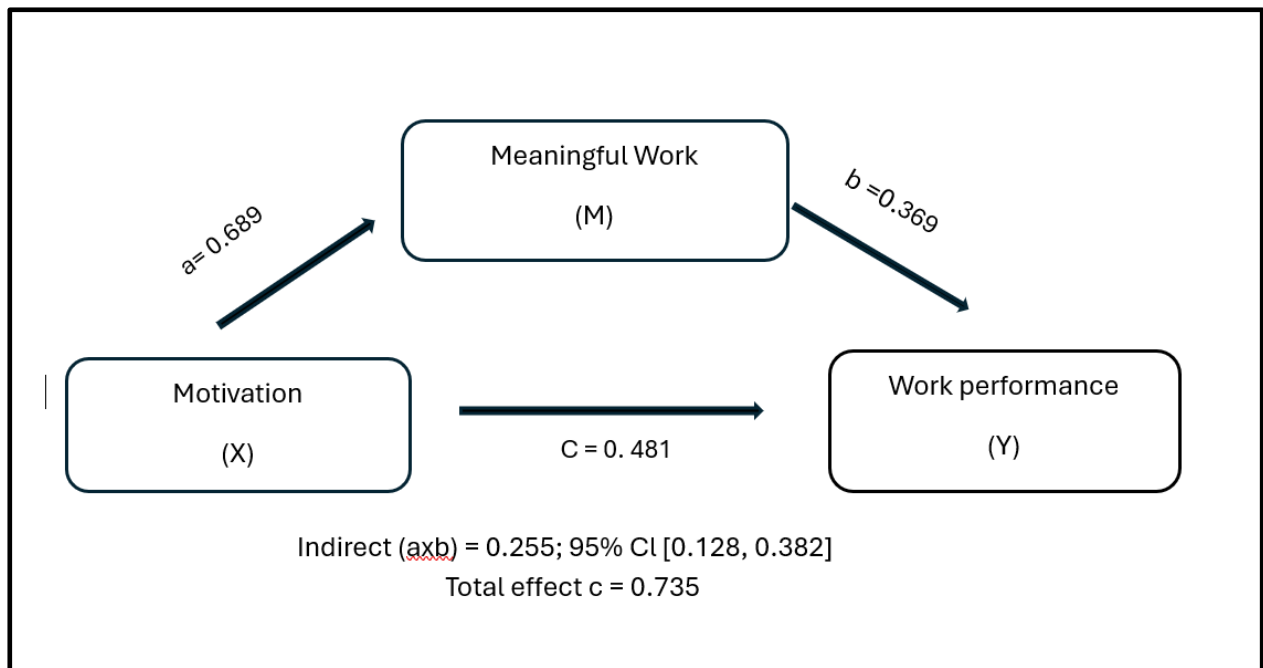


Figure 4.1: Mediation model with meaningful work as a mediator

4.6 SUMMARY

This chapter presented the findings of the quantitative analysis and their interpretation. Descriptive statistics revealed high levels of motivation, meaningful work and performance among the employees in the selected NPO. The correlation analysis revealed strong positive relationships among the study variables. The mediation analysis indicates that meaningful work serves as a mediator in the relationship between motivation and performance. The findings revealed that employees perform better when intrinsically motivated and when their work is experienced as meaningful. The next chapter will discuss these findings, draw conclusions and offer practical, theoretical and contextual recommendations. It will also provide directions for future research.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter presented the study's findings and their interpretation. This chapter will therefore provide a discussion of the findings, recommendations and conclusions.

5.2 DISCUSSION OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MOTIVATION AND WORK PERFORMANCE

This study found a strong positive link between employee motivation and work performance ($r = 0.65$, $p < 0.001$). This means that, within this selected NPO, employees exhibit higher levels of intrinsic motivation, perform better, are strongly engaged, and show greater persistence in their roles. This result is consistent with the SDT, which states that inherent motivation flourishes when autonomy, competence and relatedness are supported (Deci & Ryan, 2000). There are also other studies which are consistent with this finding. For example, Arnold *et al.* (2007) found that intrinsically motivated employees show higher levels of proactivity, job dedication and task mastery behaviours that directly enhance organisational performance. Geldenhuys *et al.* (2014) conducted a similar study in a South African NPO. They established that intrinsic motivation fosters stronger psychological attachment, engagement and in-role performance, especially in mission-driven settings. This aligns with the current study, which found that employees also showed above-average motivation ($M = 3.80$). This suggests that the employees' psychological needs in this NPO are being met.

The results of this study are similar to findings from Leclercq *et al.* (2019), who demonstrated that intrinsic motivation promotes deep task involvement and sustained effort, ultimately improving performance outcomes. Likewise, the Individual Work Performance Model (Koopmans *et al.*, 2013) also confirmed that motivational and cognitive processes directly influence task performance. The findings of this study may suggest that employees who felt more motivated likely perceived their role as aligned with their internal values, which encouraged consistent effort and high productivity.

Studies conducted in the NPO environment have shown that employees often join NPOs because they feel called to the work, identify with the organisation's social values, and seek personal purpose. This alignment with the mission directly strengthens their intrinsic motivation (Duffy *et al.*, 2018). The results of this study suggest that these motivational drivers may have translated into improved performance. This is also consistent with Grant (2008), who reported that employees motivated by altruistic and value-driven motives demonstrate stronger persistence, creativity and task accomplishment. The literature supports the present study's findings that motivated employees exhibit higher levels of individual work performance. Motivation serves not only as a psychological energiser, but also as a behavioural catalyst that shapes how individuals approach, interpret and execute work tasks.

5.3 DISCUSSION OF THE MEDIATOR ROLE OF MEANINGFUL WORK IN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MOTIVATION AND WORK PERFORMANCE

The mediation analysis revealed that meaningful work partially mediates the relationship between motivation and work performance. This finding is highly consistent with other studies reported in the literature. For example, Van Wingerden and Van der Stoep (2018) found that meaningful work enhances employees' willingness to contribute effortfully to organisational goals, leading to greater task performance and organisational citizenship behaviour. Similarly, Junça-Silva *et al.* (2022) confirmed that meaningful work fosters enthusiasm, dedication, and intrinsic satisfaction, thereby improving productivity and commitment — a relationship paralleled by that observed in the present study.

The partial mediation aligns with the Integrative Pathways to Meaningful Work Framework (Steger & Dik, 2009), which explains that work becomes meaningful when employees see their tasks as significant, coherent and purposeful. The results of this study suggest that motivated employees are more likely to have evaluated their work as meaningful, perhaps because their internal values aligned with the organisation's mission. This supports Martela and Pessi (2018), who argue that meaningful work comes from using one's strengths and contributing to others, both of which are typical features of NPO work.

Rosso *et al.* (2010) found that meaningful work encourages engagement and strengthens intrinsic motivation. This leads to better performance because meaningful work influences how employees understand and feel about their roles. When employees see their work

as meaningful, they feel a stronger sense of purpose and alignment with their values, which improves their performance. This study reflects the same pattern: higher levels of meaningful work made it easier for motivation to translate into stronger work performance. In the South African context, Geldenhuys *et al.* (2014) demonstrated that meaningful work enhances engagement and organisational commitment, both of which are antecedents of performance. The current study supports this evidence, indicating that meaningful work is a channel through which motivated employees express their commitment and translate intentions into high-quality performance outcomes.

While meaningful work was reported to strengthen the relationship between motivation and work performance, it did not remove the direct effect of motivation. This confirms partial mediation. As Martela *et al.* (2021) explain, meaning amplifies but does not replace the motivational forces that influence performance. The results of this study show that motivation and meaningful work operate as related, but distinct pathways, with each contributing independently to individual work performance.

5.4 MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study's findings demonstrate that intrinsic motivation remains a significant predictor of work performance, even when extrinsic rewards are present. This implies that meaningful work serves as both an antecedent of motivation and an underlying mediator that potentiates motivation's influence on work performance. Finally, based on these findings, NPO managers should provide work conditions that include autonomy support. Work should be carried out with awareness of the organisation's missions and objectives, including capacity utilisation and social impacts, as a basis for feedback on the work. These efforts address SDG 8 as outlined by the United Nations SDG 2030.

At the policy level, the findings have implications for how non-profit governance and donor frameworks evaluate organisational effectiveness. Policymakers and funding agencies should integrate indicators of employee well-being and meaningful work into performance assessment tools. This would shift the focus from purely output-based evaluation to a more holistic approach that values the human and motivational dimensions of productivity. In alignment with SDG 8, such policies would recognise decent, meaningful work as a cornerstone of sustainable growth and social impact.

5.4.1 Recommendations

The results of this study provide important recommendations for those in leadership, practice and policy from a practical and managerial perspective. Leaders need to deliberately ensure that their employees have autonomy and that the environment is supportive, enabling them to make independent decisions and exercise discretion in their roles. Giving employees this kind of autonomy fosters intrinsic motivation and gives them a sense of ownership. Leaders should also emphasise feedback mechanisms that reinforce competence. Constructive, developmental feedback encourages learning and professional growth while validating employees' contributions to the organisation's mission.

Furthermore, organisational culture should be intentionally designed to promote meaning. The leadership of this NPO can achieve this by clearly communicating the NPO's social purpose and linking employees' everyday work to broader societal outcomes. These employees need to know that their work is essential and that they are contributing to the collective well-being of others. This gives them a deeper fulfilment, and they will remain resilient despite operational challenges. To further instil professional confidence among employees, it is necessary to invest in employee development through mentoring, training and reflective learning sessions.

From a leadership perspective, both the Transformational and Servant leadership styles must become the focus. These models enable leadership to inspire others through vision and leading by example rather than through control or coercion. Empathy, empowerment and shared purpose are more effective in mobilising intrinsic motivation than traditional reward systems. Leaders should also facilitate collaborative spaces such as reflective dialogues or retreats where employees can collectively interpret their experiences and reaffirm their commitment to organisational goals. Such practices strengthen psychological relatedness; an essential need identified in SDT.

5.5 LIMITATIONS

This study used a cross-sectional design, which does not allow for establishing causality among variables. It only identified significant associations among the variables. Longitudinal data would have provided more substantial evidence of the temporal

relationships among motivation, meaning, and performance. There could be a social desirability bias because data collection relied on self-report measures. This means respondents may have responded in ways that reflect favourable organisational perceptions.

The findings could not be generalised to other NPOs in South Africa due to differences in culture, resource settings, and management practices in the non-profit sector; hence, it should be replicated. Finally, the absence of qualitative evidence limited the depth of understanding of the subject matter's synchronous employees' lived experience. Adding an interview component or a focus group analysis may yield richer details on the elaboration of meaning and motivation constructs across varied cultural settings.

5.6 FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Future studies should track motivation, meaningful work, and performance over time to demonstrate how these variables evolve. Research should include more NPOs to improve the general understanding. Qualitative studies can explore how employees experience meaning and motivation in their daily work. Future research should also examine other factors that may influence performance, such as leadership, organisational culture and job crafting. Future studies should use supervisor ratings or objective performance scores to confirm self-reported results.

5.7 STUDY'S CONTRIBUTIONS

The study makes both theoretical and practical contributions. From a theory development perspective, this study enhances the use of SDT and JCM in the South African non-profit sector by demonstrating that intrinsic motivation and feelings of meaningfulness play an essential role in influencing individual-level work performance in a value-based environment. The rewards tend to be more intrinsic.

5.8 REVISED CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The integration of the findings and theory allows refinement of the study's conceptual model. As shown in Figure 4.2, motivation exerts both direct and indirect effects on work performance through meaningful work. Autonomy, competence and relatedness (from

SDT) and job characteristics (from Hackman & Oldham, 1976) act as antecedents, while meaningful work functions as a psychological mediator.

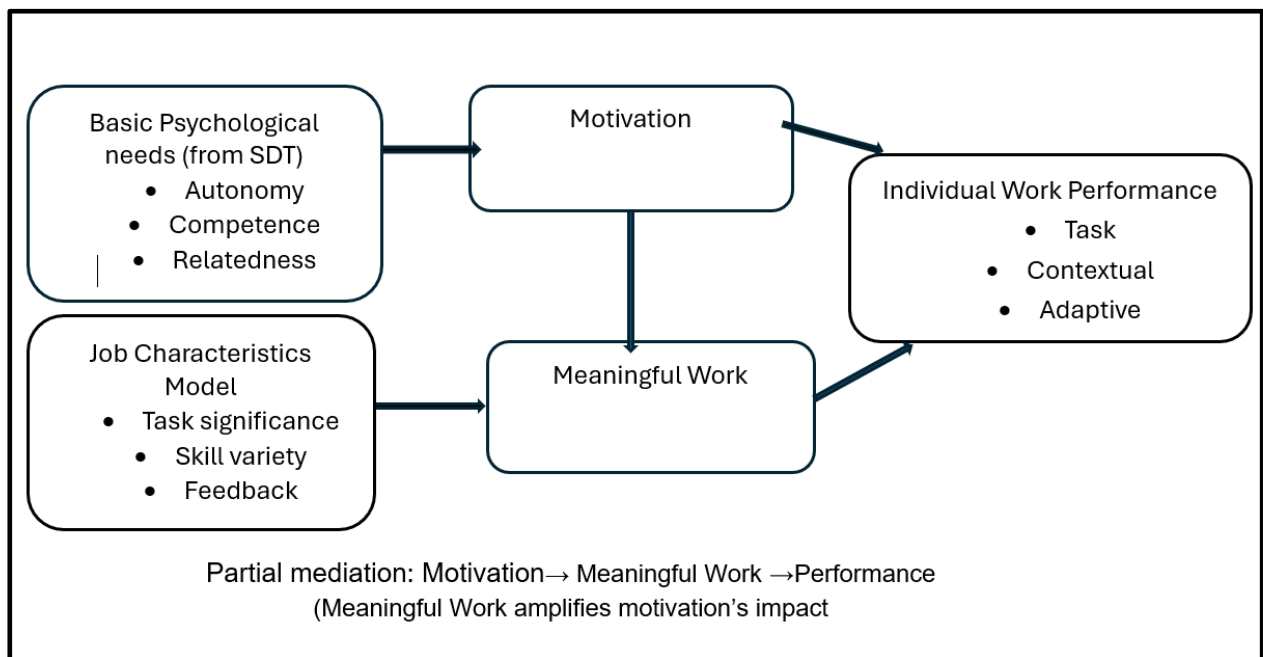


Figure 5.2: Revised conceptual model integrating motivation, meaningful work and performance

Theoretically, the study provides substantive evidence for the partial mediating role of meaningful work in the motivation-performance relationship. This mechanism remains underexplored in non-profit organisational research, and therefore, the present study advances scholarly understanding of how meaning functions as a conduit through which motivation influences behavioural outcomes. In practice, the study highlights the strategic importance of purpose-driven leadership, enriched job design and psychologically supportive work environments in improving employee performance, particularly in resource-constrained organisations. The results of this study suggest that enhancing intrinsic motivation and fostering meaningfulness can strengthen performance even when financial incentives are limited. Within the context of NPOs, this research contributes to the growing body of literature in Africa and on NPO-related issues by offering indigenous insights into meaning, motivation and performance. A significant gap in regional literature is addressed, providing insights that could shape policy and inform development in similar contexts.

5.9 CONCLUSION

The study concludes that motivation and meaningful work are interdependent drivers of employee performance in NPOs. Employees who demonstrate competence and a sense of purpose demonstrate enhanced productivity, engagement and organisational commitment. Meaningful work acts not only as a mediator between motivation and performance but also as a reinforcing force that sustains motivation over time. These findings reaffirm that psychological fulfilment is not peripheral, but central to organisational effectiveness.

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ANNEXURES A:

DATA COLLECTION TOOL

A. Demographics

The information in this section is collected for classification purposes only.

1. How old are you?
 - ☐ 18 – 25
 - ☐ 26 – 35
 - ☐ 36 – 45
 - ☐ 46 – 55
 - ☐ 56 and older

2. What is your gender?
 - ☐ Male
 - ☐ Female

3. What is your highest level of education completed?
 - ☐ High school (without senior certificate/matric)
 - ☐ Senior Certificate/Matric
 - ☐ Diploma
 - ☐ Bachelor's degree
 - ☐ Postgraduate (Master's, Doctorate, etc)

4. How many years' of experiences do you have in the Non-Profit sector?
 - ☐ Less than 1 year
 - ☐ 1 – 5 years
 - ☐ 5 – 10 years
 - ☐ 10 – 15 years
 - ☐ More than 15 years

5. What is your job level?
 - ☐ Junior staff
 - ☐ Senior staff

- ☐ Junior management
 - ☐ Middle management
 - ☐ Senior management and above
-

B. General Work Motivation

On a scale from 1 (“not at all”) to 5 (“completely”) indicate how motivated you are in your current job environment.

Statement	Not at all (1)	Somewhat (2)	Moderate (3)	Very (4)	Completely (5)
I feel motivated in my current work environment	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
My career goals motivate me	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I feel motivated to go to work each day	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I am motivated to do my job well	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
My passion for making a difference motivates me more than money	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I will stay in this sector even if offered a higher-paying job	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

C. Meaningful Work

On a scale from 1 (“not at all”) to 5 (“completely”) indicate how meaningful you find your current job.

Statement	Not at all (1)	Somewhat (2)	Moderate (3)	Very (4)	Completely (5)
My job contributes to a greater purpose	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

My work aligns with my personal values	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
My daily tasks give me a sense of purpose	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
My job leaves me feeling fulfilled	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I believe my job will benefit future generations	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
My workplace supports employees in finding meaning in their work	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I believe that my job is meaningful	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

D. Job satisfaction and Engagement

On a scale from 1 (“not at all”) to 5 (“completely”) indicate how satisfied you are in your current job environment.

Statement	Not at all (1)	Somewhat (2)	Moderate (3)	Very (4)	Completely (5)
I am excited to go to work	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
My daily tasks are satisfying	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I am satisfied with my job responsibilities	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I feel my job contributes to a greater purpose	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Overall, I am satisfied with my job	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

E. Compensation and Rewards

On a scale from 1 (“not at all”) to 5 (“completely”) indicate how satisfied you are in you with the compensation and reward system at your workplace.

Statement	Not at all (1)	Somewhat (2)	Moderate (3)	Very (4)	Completely (5)
I am satisfied with my pay	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I am motivated by non-monetary benefits (recognition, flexible working hours, etc)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I would stay in my current job even if offered a higher salary elsewhere	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Knowing my work makes a difference motivates me	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The incentives and rewards at my workplace keep me motivated	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

F. Motivation, meaningful work and performance

This section relates to the relationship between motivation, meaningful work and individual performance. On a scale from 1 (“not at all”) to 5 (“completely”) indicate your agreement with the statements.

Statement	Not at all (1)	Somewhat (2)	Moderate (3)	Very (4)	Completely (5)
My job motivation improves my performance	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I perform better when my work feels meaningful	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I am dedicated to do my job because it feels meaningful	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
More workplace rewards would improve my performance	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Higher pay would improve my performance	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Seeing the impact of my work would improve my performance	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

ANNEXURE B:

INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

Research Study Title: Investigating the influence of motivation on the work performance of NPO employees: mediating the role of meaningful work

Thank you for your interest in this study. Please read this page carefully and decide if you want to take part. Whether you decide to take part or not to take part, it will not have an influence on your employment status, or any other aspects related to your employment.

This study is for research purposes only and will have NO effect on your day-to-day work.

Taking Part in the Study

Participation in the study is entirely voluntary, and choosing not to participate will not harm you in any way. If you decide to take part, you will be required to complete a once off questionnaire.

Completing the questionnaire will take about 5 – 10 minutes.

Risks and Benefits

There are no risks in taking part in the study. There will be no compensation or other direct benefits for taking part in the study.

Confidentiality

Questionnaires will be completed anonymously. This will not be linked to any personal information in any way.

Your rights and responsibilities

You will have the responsibility to respond accurately and honestly to all items on the questionnaire.

It is your right to decline participation should you wish not to participate.

Feedback

Feedback will not be directly provided to respondents. Feedback will be provided to the organisation, which may choose to share it with you. Feedback will be general, and respondents will not be identified.

Ethical Approval

This study has been reviewed and approved by the North-West University Research Ethics Committee (EMS-REC). If you have any questions or complaints about the study, you can contact the research ethics committee chairperson Prof Diana Viljoen-Bezuidenhout on 018 299 1111/2222.

Your Permission and Signature

By clicking the below box, I agree to take part in the research study. I confirm that I have read and understand this consent form and understand what the study is about and what will happen if I decide to take part. I understand that taking part is voluntary and that I can withdraw my consent at any time.

I agree to take part in this research study ☐

I do not agree to take part in this research study ☐

ANNEXURE C: ETHICS APPROVAL LETTER



Private Bag X1290, Potchefstroom
South Africa 2520
Tel: 018 299-1111/2222
Fax: 018 299-4910
Web: <http://www.nwu.ac.za>
Senate Committee for Research Ethics
Tel: 018 299-484
Fezile.Mseleni@nwu.ac.za

ETHICS APPROVAL LETTER OF STUDY

Based on approval by the North-West University Economic and Management Sciences Research Ethics Committee (EMS-REC) on _____, the Economic and Management Sciences Research Ethics Committee hereby approves your study as indicated below. This implies that the North-West University Senate Committee for Research Ethics (NWU-REC) grants its permission that, provided the special conditions specified below are met and pending any other authorisation that may be necessary, the study may be initiated, using the ethics number below.

Study title:													
Study leader/Supervisor (Principal investigator/Researcher):						University no.:							
Student:						University no.:							
Ethics number:	N	W	U	-					-	2	5	-	4
Institution Study number Year Status Status: S = Submission; R = Re-submission; P = Provisional authorisation; A = Authorisation													
Application type:						Risk level:							
Commencement date:													
Expiry date:													
Approval of the study is initially provided for a year, after which continuation of the study is dependent on receipt and review of the annual (or as otherwise stipulated) monitoring report and the concomitant issuing of a letter of continuation.													

Special in process conditions of the research for approval (if applicable):

ANNEXURE D:

GOODWILL PERMISSION LETTER



Aurum House
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14 Mar 2025

Approval to Conduct Research at The Aurum Institute, Clinical Research Division

Dear Tania,

I am pleased to inform you that you have my approval and support to conduct research at The Aurum Institute's Clinical Research Division as part of your academic studies. We, as an organization, acknowledge the importance of academic research and support initiatives that contribute to both personal and professional development.

The approval is granted under the following conditions:

1. **Privacy and confidentiality:** All data collection and analysis should comply with confidentiality agreements and the Protection of Personal Information Act (POPIA).
2. **Ethics Clearance:** If required, ethics clearance from your academic institution must be obtained before initiating data collection.
3. **Feedback and Reporting:** Upon completion of your research, we would like a summary of your findings and insights that may be beneficial to the organization.

Please liaise with your immediate line manager should you require further arrangements or have any queries or require further assistance.

We wish you success in your research and look forward to any valuable insights that may arise.

Sincerely,

Mrs Tanya Nielson
CRD Managing Director
The Aurum Institute

Directors: Dr JM Gani (Chairperson), Prof DA Clark (Group CEO), Prof V Edward, A Dada (Ghana), Ma TM Fay,
A Hoxley, Prof P Kakeka (Uganda), XS Luthi, YO Pappas, Dr NA Salomaa (Mozambique), OR Tembely, Ace LB Zondo

ANNEXURE E: TURNITIN SUMMARY REPORT



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ANNEXURE F: EDITOR'S CERTIFICATE



Centre for Scholarly Publishing Services (PTY) Ltd

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26 November 2025

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

TANIA ADONIS

NWU Business School
North-West University
Private Bag X6001
Potchefstroom, 2531

This serves to confirm that an MBA mini-dissertation entitled *Investigating motivation and work performance in a non-profit organisation: the mediating role of meaningful work*, which was submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Master's degree in Business Administration at the North-West University Business School by Tania Adonis has undergone both a thorough copy-editing as well as proofreading processes.

Sincerely,

.....
Solani Ngobeni
Publishing Director
Centre for Scholarly Publishing Services (Pty) Ltd.
Cell: 061 506 6115 www.csps.co.za