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Understanding What Makes Teaching Meaningful: A Systematic Literature Review of Antecedents and Determinants of Meaningful Work in Education

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ABSTRACT

Objective: Meaningful work is an essential aspect of teachers that can be influential in improving the quality of education; therefore, this study aimed to identify antecedent factors and determinants of meaningful work in teachers. Method: This study used a systematic literature review to examine the variables that can be antecedents and determinants of meaningful work. Results: Based on the literature studies that have been conducted, it is known that variables such as calling orientation, work role fit, workplace attachment, coworker relations, job design, altruistic behavior, authentic leadership, job crafting, and perceptions of organizational identification can be antecedent factors of meaningful work of teachers. Meaningful work can determine variables such as work attitude, teacher-student relationships, work engagement, burnout, resilience, self-rated health, intention to leave, corrosion at the character level, and organizational commitment. Novelty: This study thoroughly examines the antecedents and determinants of teachers' meaningful work variables, which, other yet to behave, need to be more widely researched.

INTRODUCTION

Teaching is a scientific process involving communication, content, and student feedback. Teaching refers to conveying knowledge, skills, or values to students. It is an interactive process that involves student self-development (Hufnagel & Spraul, 2023). The final target of the teaching process is a positive transformation in students' knowledge, skills, and attitudes (Rajagopalan, 2019). Teachers have a significant role in education and directing, and teachers are also expected to be figures who can survive in various conditions (Mulyana et al., 2022). However, the teaching process is certainly dynamic. Various dynamics will be found during the teaching process, whether unexpected changes, challenges, or obstacles. Teachers' competence is essential in education; therefore, the role of meaningful work is necessary for each teacher.

Meaningful work can be defined as an individual's perception that their work has a purpose and significance and contributes to something greater than themselves. Meaningful work is a level that shows the extent to which an individual feels. That their work is generally meaningful, valuable, and beneficial to them (Hackman & Oldman, 1976). This implies that the meaning of each individual is subjective and varies from one individual to another. This is also in line with what was conveyed: each individual will give meaning to his work differently. Simply put, each individual has a different process of meaning. Furthermore, differences in the interpretation of the meaning of the work done by the individual will produce different outcomes between individuals.

Several factors can affect meaningful work in teachers, such as the harmony between work and the freedom to align it, and the desire from within the teacher to positively impact students (Majeed & Javaid, 2021). The existence of meaningful work in teachers will foster a higher commitment to their work and lead to good work quality (Suyatno et al., 2021). This is also in line with research conducted by Puspitarani and Masykur (2018), who stated that teachers who succeed in finding meaning in work will be enthusiastic about doing their work and tend not to find emptiness in their lives. Teachers who have significant work will be able to show better work behavior than teachers with less meaningful work. Another benefit felt by teachers with a high level of meaningful work is that they tend to develop better resilience when facing challenges and stressors.

Meaningful work is essential in supporting teachers' ability to perform optimally. In addition, teachers who find the meaning of work in themselves tend to commit, and the meaning of work in the teacher is considered able to retain more qualified teachers (Suyatno et al., 2021). Teachers who do not have meaning in their work tend to feel emotional or physical fatigue more efficiently, leading to decreased productivity (Majeed & Javaid, 2021; Suyatno et al., 2021). Several studies have examined meaningful work and its relationship with other variables. Unfortunately, no research has directly discussed Antecedent Factors and Determinants. In addition, other studies that discuss meaningfulness at work mainly examine employees, and very few examine it among teachers. Meaningful work is significant for teachers, so this research still needs further study. The researcher wanted to examine factors affecting teachers' meaningful work. This article is based on a comprehensive review of previous studies following the researcher's objectives. The researcher aims to identify factors that affect meaningful work by focusing on antecedent factors and determinants contained in meaningful work in an educational setting. By identifying these factors, the results of this research can be used as a new insight or perspective for schools and teachers to optimize teacher performance in teaching. Optimal teacher performance supports creating quality education (Kilag et al., 2023; Jiang et al., 2021; Sancar et al., 2021; Tamsah et al., 2023).

RESEARCH METHOD

Through a systematic literature review, this study incorporates components of meaningful work variables as antecedents and determinants of teachers' perception of their work. In this case, the purpose was to seek and obtain articles that aligned with the scope of the research so that the author's popularity sought the Scopus database by the citations 'meaningful work' or 'meaningful work' or 'meaningful of work' or 'meaningful of work' or 'meaningful of work' or 'meaningful of work' and 'teacher.' This study proposes variables that are antecedents and determinants of meaningful work in teachers. In order to achieve this objective, this study applied specific inclusion and exclusion criteria. The following are the inclusion criteria for article selection in this systematic literature review: 1) the article must have appeared in print between 2013-2024; 2) it

must be from a credible international journal; 3) it should have the publication format of scientific journal papers; 4) the subjects of the article are teachers; and 6) the article presents some empirical studies regarding the variables of study that entail the construct of meaningful work among teachers with its variates (Hiebl et al., 2023; Ramírez et al., 2022; Dinter et al., 2021; Manzano et al., 2021; Mohamed et al., 2021).

Meanwhile, the exclusion criteria for articles in this study were: 1) articles that did not follow the research topic, 2) articles that were not published in the 2013-2024 period, 3) articles that were not in the form of scientific articles (books, proceedings, reports, novels, etc.), 4) articles that did not use teachers as subjects (using the subjects of employees, students, etc.), and 5) articles that were not empirical research. A total of 186 articles were reviewed through this screening process. After reading the overall article abstracts, 52 articles met the research criteria. Furthermore, after reviewing the articles as a whole, 15 articles were reviewed because they were relevant to the research objectives.

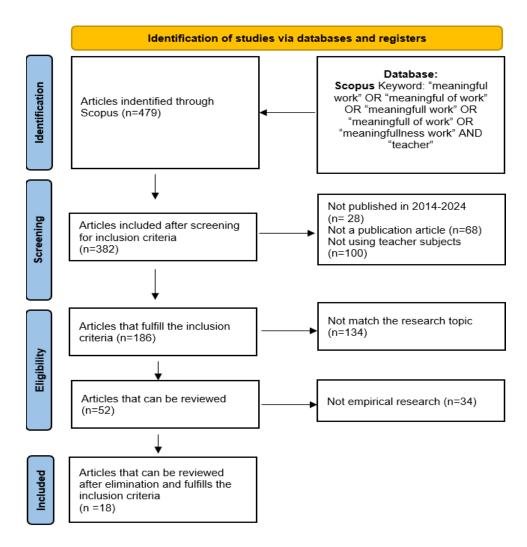


Figure 1. The flow of identification study via databases and registers.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

This study aimed to determine the antecedents and determinants of the meaning of work variables in teachers. Based on a series of literature review methods, seven relevant articles can be reviewed to discuss the antecedent factor of the meaningfulness of work variables. The antecedent factors that affect the meaningfulness of work are listed in Table 1.

Table 1. Antecedence variables.

Source	Variable	Subject	Results
Rioux,	Workplace	158	Teachers were more attached to places allowing
Pignault	attachment	teachers	informal communication and stress management,
(2018)			such as teacher rooms and photocopy corners.
			These places are also the places where teachers feel
			their work is most meaningful. The study shows
			that attachment in the workplace is influenced by
			social relationships and individuals' perceptions of
			the significance of their work.
Rothmann	Calling	75	Calling orientation and suitability of work roles
& I (2018).	orientation	primary	are essential factors in influencing teachers'
	Work role fit	school	psychologically meaningful experiences in the
		teachers,	workplace.
		75	
		secondar	
		y school	
		teachers	
Fouché, et	Calling	513	Job design, good colleague relationships, and job
al (2018).	orientation	teachers	call orientation are related to meaningful work for
	Coworker		teachers.
	relations		
	Job design		
Sagnak,	Altruistic	356	Authentic leaders produce teachers' altruistic
Kuruöz	behavior	teachers	behavior through meaningfulness. It is indicated
(2018)	Authentic		that authentic leadership increases altruism and
	leadership		leads to meaningfulness. Leaders must
			demonstrate altruistic behavior for school work to
			be meaningful. It has been found that altruistic
			behavior in schools produces meaning.
Suyatno et	Self-	100	Self-actualization and self-transcendence are
al. (2019)	actualization	teachers	crucial factors that impact the meaning of the life
	Self-		of teachers.
	transcendenc		
	e		

Source	Variable	Subject	Results
Jurčec, et	Calling	349	Calling orientation and job crafting can affect the
al. (2021)	orientation	primary	meaning of work for teachers
	Job crafting	school	
		teachers	
Yilmaz,	Perceptions	330	Teachers felt more connected to their workplace in
Kaya	of	teachers	areas where they could chat with colleagues and
(2022)	organization		relieve stress, such as the teacher's room. This
	al		connection to their workplace, primarily through
	identification		social interaction, can enhance the meaning that
			teachers find in their work.

This study aimed to determine the antecedent variable of meaningful work and the determinants of meaningfulness of work variables. Based on the literature review, eight relevant articles can be reviewed to discuss the determinants of meaningful work in teachers. The relevant articles are listed in Table 2.

Table 2. Determinant variables.

Authors	Variable		Results
		Subjek	
Janik &	Intention to	502	Teachers' meaning of work can affect their
Rothman	leave	secondary	intention to leave. This study also states that poor
(2018)		school	work-role fit and job enrichment affect teachers'
		teachers	intention to leave.
Lavy &	Teacher-	1.312	The results of the study show that the meaning of
Bocker	student	teacher	work in teachers can affect the relationship
(2018).	relationships		between teachers and students, which in turn can
			also affect teachers' job satisfaction
Wingerde	Resilience	174	Meaningfulness in work and strategically
& Poell		teachers	structuring tasks can help teachers become more
(2019)			resilient. When teachers proactively structure their
			assignments and find meaning in their work, they
			can bounce back from challenges better.
K. Paulík	Work	449	The study found that teachers were highly
(2020).	engagement	teachers	engaged in their work, exceeding the involvement
			in non-teaching professions. This engagement
			increases job satisfaction and a stronger sense of
			meaning in their work. However, a perceived
			higher workload can lower their engagement.
Fridayant	Work	145	This study shows that honorary teachers' work
i, et al	engagement	honorary	engagement is positively influenced by feeling
(2022)		Elementary	supported by their organization and finding their
		School	work meaningful.
		teachers	
-			

Authors	Variable	Subjek	Results
Akpolat	Corrosion of	2,729	This study concludes that the perception of
(2023)	Character	teachers	meaningful work serves as a predictor of character
	Level		corrosion; Higher perception of meaningful work
			among teachers leads to lower levels of character
			corrosion
Yin et al.	Organization	417	The study results show that the meaning of work
(2023)	al	teachers	in teachers can affect positive outcomes by
	commitment		generating organizational commitment in teachers.
Font et al.	Work	227	The meaning of work has a positive relationship
(2023).	engagement	teachers	with work engagement and a negative relationship
	Intention to		with quitting.
	quit		

Discussion

This study aimed to identify antecedent factors that can affect the meaning of work and the determinants of meaningful work in teachers. To facilitate the discussion, this study will first discuss the critical factor of the meaningfulness of work variables and then continue by discussing the determinants of the teacher's meaningful work.

Antecedent Variable

Based on a literature review, it was found that various antecedent factors affect meaningful work in teachers. These variables include calling orientation, work-role fit, workplace attachment, x coworker relations, job design, altruistic behavior, authentic leadership, job crafting, and perceptions of organizational identification (Jurčec et al., 2021; Rioux & Pignault, 2013; Yilmaz & Kaya, 2022). To facilitate the discussion of this study, these variables are grouped into two based on their sources, namely, individual and organizational factors.

Individual Factors.

Personal characteristics, beliefs, or behaviors can be viewed as individual characteristics and attributes impacting how they conceptualize and evaluate their work. Literature studies showed that variables intrinsic to the individual, such as calling orientations, work role fit, self-actualization, self-transcendence, and job crafting, may impact meaningful work among teachers (Jurčec et al., 2021). Observations on calling orientation emphasize that it is the belief that one's job is more than just a job; it is a calling, a greater goal. This can mean that teachers feel that teaching is their calling and not simply a means to earn money. It is observed that the teachers with a stronger calling orientation are more likely to have a more significant commitment to their profession and a positive attitude about the impact of their work. One way to enhance the lives of pedagogues is to offer the viewpoint that teaching is an inspiring calling rather than just a profession (Bearman & Ajjawi, 2023; Friesen & Su, 2023; Lindfors et al., 2021; Rodés et al., 2021; Hollweck et al., 2020). Teachers with a strong sense of domain come across as people focused on achieving their life goals. Such an attitude may motivate teachers to search for further indentures to enhance the positive effect of their endeavoring or work, which may lead to a more pronounced job crafting. Through job crafting, teachers may change and revise various aspects of their work to balance

their life calling, teaching functions, and overall development. Self-actualization and self-transcendence are both prevailing concepts of positive psychology, and these two concepts may have some relative importance toward teachers' sense of work (Suyatno et al., 2023). When teachers are at the point of self – the actualization stage, they will most likely feel contentment regarding the work they perform, meaning augmenting the level of work itself (Layek & Koodamara, 2024; Frei & Levin, 2023; Mgaiwa & Hamis, 2022; Li et al., 2021; Gopinath, 2020). The same sentiments are endorsed, emphasizing that in the case of teachers who reach a level of self-transcendence, it is this joy of seeing work not as just a job but as a calling that senselessly enhances the meaning of work.

The concept of work role fit is significant in explaining the relationship between calling orientation and work meaning. Work role fit can be defined as the degree of inter-correspondence between a person's attributes and the professional requirements of a work role. The impact of job tasks on workers' psychological meaning in their work can confirm scheduling principles. Such teachers, having a good work role fit can have lower work stress and, therefore, earn higher job satisfaction and hence in their minds, perceive work meaning positively (Anees et al., 2021; Ortan & Simut, 2021; Toropoya & Johansson, 2021; Burić & Moè, 2020; Wang et al., 2020). More effective job crafting or reorientation in work approaches and procedures, aiming at more successful business outcomes, is possible in the case of a good job role fit - teachers feel competent and confident in their roles. If these three factors of interactions are present in teachers, then such a positive cycle may exist, enabling them to find meaning in their work. If the guidelines are followed, the results will indicate that having a solid calling orientation will enable the teachers to do more job crafting, facilitating work role fit. This increase in work role fit will increase calling orientation, creating room for job satisfaction among teachers.

Organizational Factors.

The teachers' sense of work meaning is substantial since it can be affected by multiple organizational variables. Quite a few studies have pointed out the influence of job design, workplace attachment, relationships with other coworkers, prosocial behavior, authentic leadership, and organizational identification on the sense of work among teachers (Yilmaz & Kaya, 2022). Work design is one of the variables that may determine the sense of work of teachers. Words attributed to Hackman and Oldham (1976) indicate that well-designed work that incorporates a variety of skills, task identity, task significance, optimal levels of control, and feedback increases the intrinsic motivation and meaningfulness of the work done. In educational settings, most teachers appreciate and thus feel more comfortable in their duties when they are involved in developing the curriculum, new approaches to teaching, and controlling the classroom. Attachment to the workplace also has a substantial impact on the narrative of the work of the teachers. Emotional solid ties with the workplace may enhance feelings of presence and attachment to the organization and provide an opportunity to experience more profound meaningfulness in one's work. When educators feel a sense of belonging to their school, they are more likely to be dedicated to the profession and find value in their work. Interpersonal relationships or relationships of colleagues at work also contribute in one way or another to creating an environment that makes it easy for the teachers to carry out their work and appreciate its importance. Point out that, besides

providing meaning to a work task, relationships that people form in the workplace are crucial in incorporating feelings of positive significance. In an educational setting, teamwork and teachers' social and professional interactions can foster an increasing feeling of contribution and community and, therefore, enhance the meaning of the work over time (Akinyemi & Nkonki, 2020).

The meaning possessed by teachers can be informed positively (with altruism, for example). Altruism is an exciting component of the teaching profession, increasing the meaning of work (Zainuri & Huda, 2023). Work that creates a chance for a person to be beneficial to others is more fulfilling. Those teachers who engage in such acts of altruism as offering extra help to their low-achieving pupils or being active in schoolsponsored voluntary work seem to have more satisfaction and meaning attached to their work. It has also been found that authentic leadership has a tremendous positive meaning regarding teachers' work. An authentic leader is an individual who guides one in such ways that the workplace becomes transparent, moral, and encouraging, which subsequently increases the meaning of work for the employees. In the case of a school, when the principal's leadership is authentic, the teachers can focus on the meaning of their work and feel the calling for active work and professional growth toward building a positive school climate (Hammar et al., 2024). A related aspect is the perception of organizational identification, or perception of organizational identification, which also emerges as essential toward the understanding of teachers' work. Identification with the organization enhances a sense and feeling of ownership and congruence to its values, which positively adds to the work experience. Teachers who embrace the school's mission and values tend to derive more meaning from their work and, therefore, feel the need to contribute to the organization (Toikka & Tarnanen, 2024).

The interrelation of the seven factors defining the significance of teachers' work is complex. Effective job design can promote attachment because teachers' jobs are designed to fit their skills and interests, which is essential for attachment (Borasheva, 2024). This can strengthen the organizational identification perspective, as teachers see their values and goals as sufficient because of their configuration. Altruistic behavior may be fostered by positive relationships with coworkers and lead to a cooperative and harmonious work atmosphere. Authentic leaders will improve job design, facilitate employee attachment, and enhance organizational identity by providing vision and a positive culture. The interaction of these variables may have an in-built synergy such that they improve the significance of the teachers' work.

Determinant Variables

In addition to determining the antecedent variables of meaningful work, this study also aimed to examine the determinants of meaningful work in teachers. The results of this study indicate that meaningful work in teachers can be a determinant of the following variables: work attitude, teacher-student relationships, work engagement, burnout, resilience, self-rated health, intention to leave, corrosion at the character level, and organizational commitment (Akpolat, 2023; Minkkinen et al., 2020; Van Wingerden & Poell, 2019; Fridayanti et al., 2022; Paulík, 2020; Lavy & Bocker, 2018; Font et al., 2023; Yin et al., 2023). They are grouped into individual and organizational outcomes to facilitate discussion of the determinants of meaningful work in teachers. *Individual Outcomes*.

According to research, having a sense of meaningfulness in work helps teachers with their work attitude, work engagement, work-related stress or burnout, resilience, selfrated health status, leaving intentions, and overall character strengths (Van Wingerden & Poell, 2019). In that capacity, significant work for teachers is an essential determinant of many individual outcomes that can impact teachers' performance and well-being. Another critical thing associated with meaningful work is the teacher's attitude toward their work engagement in the classroom. As teachers sense the worth of their work, they become more inclined towards having a positive attitude towards such work, including a more significant commitment to the organization, a more favorable outlook on the job, and an increase in internal drive. Meaningful and purposeful work leads to great working relationships between teachers and students. Quite a few teachers experienced other negative symptoms, such as high burnout. The feeling of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization of the self, and loss of subjective sense of personal accomplishment have become a challenge to most educators. The doctor cites a strong correlation between high work meaning levels and low teacher burnout. This can be understood through the job demands-resources (JD-R) model, where meaningful work is a vital job resource that helps teachers meet high job demands. Work's meaning is never a detached aspect of a teacher's professionalism. In the sphere encompassing educational studies, those teachers who find work meaningful hold more excellent coping capabilities. When teachers regard their job/work as meaningful, they tend to possess a stronger and more consistent sense of coherence, enhancing their resilience regarding professional strain (Antonovsky, 1987).

Moreover, considerable evidence finds a positive relationship between meaningful work and self-reported/personal health. It has been shown that people who have a sense of meaning at work show significantly better self-reported physical and emotional health outcomes. However, this sense of work's meaning is also essential when considering turnover intentions or turnover from the teaching profession. Research shows that teachers who derive meaning from their work develop lower intentions to quit their occupations. The concept of job embeddedness shows that when individuals feel attached to their roles, both on and off the job, they will not leave the organization.". Finally, meaningful work also affects the level of character erosion in teachers or lacks depth and meaning in their work. Teachers who feel devoid of meaning and self-worth in their work often find themselves torn between their personal beliefs and the expectations from the education system, which causes damage to their character as teachers. On the contrary, the more meaningful teachers are less likely to suffer character erosion. When teachers are made to feel that their work is meaningful, they are more likely to believe that their values are consistent with their work identity and silo free, which helps in avoiding character erosion. Organizational Outcomes.

For teachers, meaningful work is an integral component that can contribute to work engagement, organizational commitment, and work performance. As an example of an essential organizational outcome, work engagement is a positive and fulfilling mental mood connected with work, shown by vigor, dedication, and concentration. Teachers who feel their work has particular significance are likelier to participate actively in teaching and learning activities. They were seen to possess higher energy, tremendous enthusiasm, and the capacity to concentrate better on their duties. This can be

accounted for through the proposed Conservation of Resources (COR) theory, whereby the meaning of work serves as a motivational psychological resource to the teacher and thus enhances his involvement in his duties. Besides work engagement, meaningful work affects the teachers' performance. The performance of the work about education entails several components, such as teacher performance, classroom management, student interaction, and overall contribution to the school (Campbell et al., 1993). Teachers who feel their work is meaningful will likely perform more favorably on these dimensions. Besides, the impact of meaningful work on the teachers' work engagement level and their work performance can be explained by the job demands (JD-R) model designed by Bakker and Demerouti (2007) in their research. In this model, meaningful work is a vital resource that enables teachers to deal with the various complexities of their work.

CONCLUSION

Fundamental Finding: Based on the literature study, it was found that the antecedent variables of meaningful work include vocation orientation, work role congruence, workplace attachment, relationships with colleagues, job design, altruistic behavior, authentic leadership, work craft, and perceived organizational identification. Meanwhile, the determinant variables of meaningful work in teachers include work attitudes, teacher-student relationships, work engagement, burnout, resilience, selfrated health, intention to leave, corrosion at the character level, and organizational commitment. Implication: By knowing the antecedent and determinant variables of meaningful work, this research has implications for schools and teachers. Based on the findings of this study, schools can design working conditions that can increase meaningful work in teachers and provide intervention programs by paying attention to things that affect meaningful work in teachers. In addition, teachers can conduct selfreflection to improve meaningful work and lead to quality work performance and quality education. Limitation: One of the limitations of this study is data limitations. The limitation of this research is the lack of empirical research that can be reviewed, and several articles cannot be accessed. Future Research: Based on this, future research can examine the relationship between meaningful work variables and other variables to obtain empirical research and interventions on meaningful work variables in teachers with their relationship with various variables. With this much empirical research, conducting another comprehensive review of the antecedent and determinant variables of meaningful work in teachers is necessary.

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