

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

In this final chapter the research questions will be answered and the major findings of the study discussed. Thereafter the limitations and contributions of the present study will be discussed and recommendations for future research made.

5.1. THE FIRST RESEARCH QUESTION

The first research question enquires about the relationships between a sense of meaning and biographical/demographic type variables.

The relationships of the following biographic/demographic variables with meaning were investigated: age, sex, marital status, cultural background, employment, qualifications, fields of study, fields of employment and levels of seniority. Of these variables, only seniority levels in organisations showed a statistically significant relationship with meaning.

In terms of age, this finding is in agreement with previous findings that showed meaning not to be related to age or life stages (Crumbaugh, Ebersole & Kobayakawa, 1989; Crumbaugh & Maholick, 1964; Debats, 1990; Debats et al., 1993; Debats, 1999; Meier & Edwards, 1974; Reker & Cousins, 1979). In other studies the opposite was found, namely that meaning did show statistically significant relationships with age (Baum & Stewart, 1990; Clark et al., 1996; Peacock and Reker, 1982; Reker, 1994; Reker et al., 1987).

In terms of sex, this finding is congruent with numerous findings in previous empirical research (Crumbaugh & Maholick, 1964; Crumbaugh, Ebersole & Kobayakawa, 1989; Debats, 1990; Debats, 1999; Debats et al., 1993; De Vogler-Ebersole & Ebersole, 1985b; Meier & Edwards, 1974; Reker & Cousins, 1979) and confirms that for this sample, sex did not play a significant role in relation to meaning. In some

other studies the opposite was found, namely that meaning did show significant relationships with sex (Harlow et al., 1986; Sargent, 1973).

The relationships between the other biographic/demographic variables and meaning have not been investigated previously as far as could be established.

With regard to level of seniority, this was the only biographical/demographic variable which showed a statistically significant relationship with meaning. It seems as if a positive relationship exists between hierarchical level of participants and their scores on meaning in life. The rank order was Level 3 (senior management), Level 2 (top management), Level 4 (middle management) and then Level 5/6 (junior management). These results suggest that senior management and top management have higher meaning scores than middle or junior management. This finding is congruent with the findings of Sargent (1973). The reason why senior management ranked higher than top management is not clear. In correspondence with the Human Resources managers of the various organisations, they suggested that the distinction between levels 2 and 3 is actually very small. Furthermore, they noted that the distinctions between level 3 and 4, and between levels 4 and 5/6 are much larger in comparison.

The findings in this study showed that biographical/demographic variables in general failed to show statistically significant relationships with meaning. The only exception was level of seniority in the employing organisations which showed significant variance with meaning. However, it was argued that seniority is more of an outcome and a result of other variables, than a true biographical/demographic type variable. Debats et al. (1993) concluded that the absence of significant associations with sex, age and educational level, suggests that the search for meaning is a general phenomenon and not linked with demographic variables. The results of this study seem to suggest that meaning is a basic human drive. It can therefore be concluded that the present study provided empirical support to Debats' (1999) conclusion that meaning in life is a universal phenomenon that is independent of specific demographics.

5.2. THE SECOND RESEARCH QUESTION

The second research question enquires into the relationship between a sense of meaning with a person's orientations towards work and life. The relationships of the lifestyle variables of which the relationship with meaning scores were investigated are shown in Tables 57, 58 and 59 with asterisks.

The relationships between these variables were significant in the case of the majority of the variables. Of all the lifestyle variables shown in Tables 57, 58 and 59, only working hours, days vacation taken, working over weekends or holidays, years with current employer, religious orientation, adherence to Protestantism versus Catholicism were not statistically significant.

These findings clearly showed that the majority of lifestyle variables studied are related statistically significantly to the scores on meaning.

These findings appear to be in agreement with Victor Frankl's comments to Sargent (Sargent, 1973) that not all people find their meaning in work. Frankl noted that many people find meaning in off-the-job work, in their play, or with family and friends. This implies that meaning is a pervasive factor in many, if not all, aspects of a human being's life.

Actual working hours showed a statistically weak relationship with meaning. With the common variance only being 2.1%, this correlation can be regarded as not conceptually significant. This finding was supported by the absence of a statistically significant relationship that was found between working over weekends or holidays with meaning. These results indicate that people who see meaning in their lives do not necessarily work longer hours than those without meaning. These findings appear to be in agreement with the weak relationships between meaning with work values, job involvement and work involvement. It should be remembered that some of these relationships, although statistically significant do not necessarily indicate important common variance as the value of r can be statistically significant but extremely low. An example is that $r = 0.099$ indicating that the relationship between job involvement is significant at the level of $p = 0.035$, whilst the common variance is

less than 1%. However, it was surprising to find that working hours also did not show statistically significant relationships with job involvement, work involvement, and especially with work values.

The days leave that respondents on average take per year for vacation showed a very small correlation with meaning. With the common variance only being 1.8%, this correlation can be regarded as not of practical significance. This result indicates that there is a weak tendency for people with meaning to take more vacation than those without meaning. This finding appears to be in agreement with the weak relationships between meaning and work values, job involvement, and work involvement.

In terms of career changes, substantial career changes during their working lives of respondents showed significant higher common variance with meaning. This interesting phenomenon has not been measured or investigated previously as far as could be established. One might speculate that a person might be more willing to make a substantial career change once he discovers meaning, especially to find congruence between his sense of meaning and his daily work. However, this is speculative as temporal causality is not known. Was the career change caused by discovering meaning or a new purpose in life, or was meaning or purpose discovered because of a substantial change in career? This relationship appears to be in agreement with the significant positive correlations that were found between meaning and career commitment and all three dimensions of career commitment.

In terms of career progress, the level of subjective satisfaction with career progress showed a significant relationship with meaning. The relationship indicated that higher scores on satisfaction were related to higher scores on meaning. Career progress and satisfaction were never explicitly defined in the survey questionnaire. Career progress and satisfaction with career progress were thus interpreted subjectively by each respondent according to his own and personal definitions, perceptions and expectations. This means that both a person on a lower hierarchical level, or one on a more senior level, could have responded that they are completely satisfied with their career progress. This could have implied that they both feel that they achieved what they believed was within the range of the potential of their skills, talents and

contributions. It also could have implied that both these persons were content with the direction that their careers are taking. The outcome of this measure appears to be congruent to the previous measure of substantial career changes and the statistically significant relationship between meaning and career commitment. One might speculate that people who found meaning in life, make substantial career changes to ensure that their careers are congruent with their sense of meaning and therefore are more satisfied with their career progress, whatever this concept might mean to the individual. It is evident from the results that a sense of meaning has a definite relationship to a person's career, how he views his career, how he approaches his career, and how he experiences his career.

Respondents indicating that they would continue working in the absence of financial necessity ranked higher on meaning than those who indicated that they would not continue working. This finding is revealing in the light of the absence of significant relationships between meaning and work values, job involvement and work involvement. It therefore appears that people that score high on meaning work for different reasons than those measuring low on meaning. This finding is in agreement with the findings of Morse and Weiss (1955) who found that white-collar workers (such as in the sample in the present study) attached meanings beyond that of economic utility to work, they see a larger purpose or cause in their work than blue-collar workers.

The previous finding is supplemented by the statistically significant relationship that was found between meaning and respondents' willingness to continue with their present jobs in the absence of financial necessity. Respondents measuring higher on meaning indicated that they were more inclined to continue with their present job in the absence of financial necessity than those who measured low on meaning. Interestingly, less than half of the respondents (42.79%) indicated that they would continue with their present job in the absence of financial necessity. These findings are especially revealing in the light of the statistically significant relationship that was found between meaning and respondents who indicated that they have made substantial career changes in their working lives. Furthermore, a statistically significant relationship was also found between meaning and satisfaction with career progress as mentioned above. These findings thus suggest that people with meaning

probably align their jobs better with their sense of meaning, or/and that people with meaning experience more job satisfaction. If the latter statement is true, it is somewhat in agreement with Pool's (1997) research that the most powerful predictor of job satisfaction was work motivation and not the other way around. This finding also supports Ingeborg's (2000) statement that it is unlikely that a satisfying job can compensate for a meaningless life. Job satisfaction and meaning appear to go together.

A statistically significant relationship was found between meaning and purposely making time to be alone. This result was supplemented by the significant relationship that was found between meaning and respondents that do not find it difficult to be alone, even if they are not engaged in activities. Respondents measuring higher on meaning indicated a stronger inclination to make time to be alone. These results suggest a different orientation towards the "self" in people with meaning in comparison with those that do not have meaning. It appears that people with meaning are content with themselves, they seem to understand the importance and necessity to make time for healthy introspection. These results are in agreement with Frankl's (1984a, 1984b) view that people compensate for a lack of meaning by indulging in (sometimes trivial) activities.

The responses of the respondents that purposely make time for leisure showed a statistically significant relationship with meaning. The results showed that those respondents that measured higher on meaning also make more time for leisure. This result is supplemented by the finding that participation in sports or hobbies showed a statistically significant relationship with meaning. Respondents that indicated that they actively participate in a sport or a hobby ranked higher in relation to meaning than those who do not. These results were complemented by the results around making time to spend with family (or friends) which also showed a statistically significant relationship with meaning. Those respondents that measured higher on meaning also showed a higher inclination to purposely make time for their families and friends.

Together, these results form a picture. It suggests that meaning is significantly related to a healthy and balanced lifestyle as represented by these variables. These

findings also support the many relationships that were found by various researchers between meaning with psychological and psychosocial well-being, as discussed in section 2.3.3. However, the causality of the relationship is not known and might be of interest; does meaning cause a balanced lifestyle, or is it the result of a more balanced lifestyle? This question may warrant further research.

Active involvement in community or welfare work showed a statistically significant relationship with meaning. Participants that indicated active involvement in community or welfare work ranked higher in relation to meaning than those who are not actively involved in community or welfare work. Similar to this finding, regular financial contribution to welfare or community work also showed a statistically significant relationship with meaning. Respondents who indicated regular financial contributions to welfare or community work ranked higher on meaning than those who do not regularly contribute financially to welfare or community work. These findings are in agreement with Frankl's (1967, 1969, 1970, 1984a) theory that meaning is self-transcendent, in other words, focusing outside oneself and attending to the plight of others. It appears that individuals with meaning might be more inclined to find meaning in causes or situations outside themselves and in causes or situations greater than themselves. In other words, meaning appears to have a self-transcending quality and an external orientation.

The religious orientations of the respondents failed to show a statistical significant relationship with meaning. Furthermore, in terms of Christians, the distinction between Protestants and Catholics also failed to show a statistically significant relationship with meaning. However, the strength of religious conviction showed a statistically significant relationship with meaning. Respondents who indicated very strong religious convictions ranked the highest in terms of meaning, followed by strong convictions, moderate convictions and lastly, weak religious convictions/not applicable. These findings clearly illustrate that the denomination of a person's religious orientation is not related to meaning. However, the strength of an individual's religious conviction is significantly related to meaning. With religious conviction clearly a spiritual issue, these findings are further significant in that it confirms Frankl's (1969, 1975, 1984a, 1984b) postulations that meaning belongs to the spiritual dimension of the human psyche. What is not clear about this finding is

whether strength of religious conviction caused the stronger sense of meaning, or whether stronger religious convictions were the result of having had a sense of meaning and purpose in life.

5.3. THE THIRD RESEARCH QUESTION

The third research question investigates the possible relationship between meaning and work involvement as measured through Kanungo's (1982) Work Involvement Questionnaire. The relationship between meaning and work involvement was investigated through the application of the statistical procedure of Spearman's Rho.

Work involvement showed a weak relationship with meaning. With the common variance being only 2.91%, this relationship is regarded as not statistically significant. This finding is in agreement with Victor Frankl's comments to Sargent (Sargent, 1973) that work is not necessarily central to every individual's life. Frankl noted that not all people find their meaning in work and that work involvement should therefore not necessarily be related to meaning. Sargent (1973) reports that Frankl noted in their correspondence that many people find meaning in off-the-job work, in their play, or with family and friends. This point of view was confirmed by Kanungo (R. Kanungo, personal communication, August 3, 2001) to be conceptually valid.

Another interesting aspect of this finding of the lack of a statistically significant relationship between meaning and work involvement, is the significant relationship that was shown to exist between meaning and the intention to continue working in the absence of financial necessity. It is revealing that people with higher scores on meaning indicated that they would continue working in the absence of financial necessity even though work centrality did not correlate with meaning. This statement suggests that other factors might be at play.

Interestingly, as was the case for work values, work involvement also did not show statistically significant relationships with working hours or days vacation. Work involvement also showed a statistically significant relationship with career resilience. The reasons for this finding are not clear and might warrant further research.

It was shown that work values and work involvement did not show statistically relationships with meaning. In the literature review of the present study it was highlighted that both work values and work involvement are generally regarded as resulting from socialisation processes and the social learning flowing from these processes. Furthermore, the present study found that the biographical/demographic type variables did not show significant relationships with meaning. Most of the biographical/demographic type variables are inherently part of the socialisation process (Kanungo, 1982; Paullay et al., 1994). These findings are therefore congruent with each other and with social learning theory. The conclusion from this combination of findings and theory suggests that meaning stems from other processes than from socialisation processes or from social learning.

5.4. THE FOURTH RESEARCH QUESTION

The fourth research question investigates the possibility of relationships between meaning and work commitment as measured through:

- Ho and Lloyd's (1984) Australian Work Ethic Scale
- Kanungo's (1982) Job Involvement Questionnaire
- Carson and Bedeian's (1994) Career Commitment Scale.

The various relationships between meaning and these facets of work involvement were investigated through the application of the statistical procedure of Spearman's Rho.

5.4.1. Meaning and work values

Ho and Lloyd's (1984) measure of work values showed a weak relationship with meaning. However, with the common variance of this relationship only being 3.3%, this relationship is regarded as not conceptually significant.

These findings suggest that people with a sense of meaning do not value work according to the PWE. In other words, according to Furnham (1990b), they would not experience an obligation to fill their lives with hard work, or value work for its own sake. Furthermore, according to Ho and Lloyd (1984), people with meaning would not see work in relation to asceticism, hard work, salvation. This finding is in agreement with the finding that meaning is not statistically significantly related to working hours. According to Furnham (1990b), people with strong PWE are expected to spend long hours at work, with little or no time for personal recreation and leisure. In the light of these comments, it was surprising to find that the relationship between work values and working hours was statistically significant but practically very weak. Furthermore a statistically significant relationship was absent between work values and days vacation.

Although Ho and Lloyd's (1984) Australian Work Ethic Scale is regarded as a measure of PWE (Furnham, 1990b), it might not measure the full context of PWE. Based on the results that failed to show statistically significant relationships between work values and work hours or days vacation, one might question the ability of Ho and Lloyd's (1984) Australian Work Ethic Scale to reflect the true definition of the PWE accurately. Specifically, the wording of the first item of Ho and Lloyd's (1984) AWE seems suspicious. Although two sources (Furnham, 1990b; Ho & Lloyd, 1984) gave the wording of the first item as "People who work deserve success", the author of the present study feels that it should rather have read: "People who work *hard* deserve success".

One can conclude that it appears from these findings that people with a sense of meaning do not tend to show an inclination towards work values as measured through Ho and Lloyd's (1984) Australian Work Ethic Scale as a measure of PWE.

5.4.2. Meaning and job involvement

Kanungo's (1982) job involvement showed a weak relationship with meaning. However, with the common variance of this relationship being less than 1%, this relationship is regarded as not conceptually significant.

This conclusion supports Frankl's postulation on the relationship between meaning and job involvement. Sargent (1973) reports that Frankl mentioned in direct correspondence with him, that a person who scores low on meaning might score high on job involvement as a compensation for a lack of meaning. Conversely, a person scoring high on meaning but low on job involvement may simply be finding his meaning in other areas of life (Sargent, 1973). Kanungo (R. Kanungo, personal communication, August 3, 2001) agreed that Frankl conceptually presented a valid argument. However, if Frankl's postulation had been, an inverse relationship between meaning and job involvement could be expected. It appears that there is just no relationship between these constructs. The lack of a statistically significant relationship between meaning and job involvement appears to be in agreement with the finding discussed in the previous section on the lack of a statistically significant relationship between meaning and work values. Work values and job involvement showed a statistically significant relationship.

These findings are also in agreement with the findings that working hours and days vacation did not show statistically significant relationships with meaning. One might have expected people with high job involvement to work relatively longer hours and to take relatively less vacations. This postulation was partly confirmed by the moderate, but statistically significant relationship between working hours with job involvement ($r = 0.23$, $p < 0.0001$). Days vacation showed a statistically significant relationship with job involvement. This relationship ($r = -0.16$, $p = 0.0006$) is however not strong. It is noteworthy that none of these variables showed significant relationships with meaning.

Work involvement, in turn, showed statistically significant relationships with work values and with job involvement. This finding on the relationships between these constructs is in agreement with the results of Randall and Cote (1991), Cohen's

(1999) analysis of Randall and Cote's (1991) model, and Cohen's (2000) analyses of both Randall and Cote's (1991) model and Morrow's (1993) postulation. One can thus conclude that the interrelationships of these constructs were confirmed.

It appears from these findings that people with a sense of meaning do not necessarily tend to identify psychologically with their present jobs as measured by Kanungo's (1982) Job Involvement Questionnaire.

5.4.3. Meaning and career commitment

Carson and Bedeian's (1994) career commitment and its dimensions showed statistically significant relationships with meaning as assessed through the Spearman's Rho procedure. Career commitment showed a statistically significant relationships with meaning ($r = 0.49$, $p < 0.0001$). Furthermore, the three factors of career commitment also individually showed statistically significant relationships with meaning. Career planning (Career2) showed the strongest relationship with meaning ($r = 0.46$, $p < 0.0001$), followed by career identity (Career1, $r = 0.31$, $p < 0.0001$) and career resilience (Career3, $r = 0.25$, $p < 0.0001$).

These findings of relative strong relationships between meaning and career commitment are interesting in the light that no statistically significant relationships were found between meaning and the other facets of work commitment. It appears that meaning is more associated with the longer-term orientated aspects of work commitment (career commitment), than with the aspects that deal with the present and immediate situation and job (work values and job involvement).

The findings of relative strong relationships between meaning and career commitment appear to be in agreement with the findings that meaning showed significant relationships with seniority, making substantial career changes, satisfaction with career progress and working in the absence of financial necessity as discussed in sections 5.1 and 5.2. This finding is also in agreement with the finding of Morse and Weiss (1955) that white-collar workers (such as in this sample) indicated significant higher levels of career commitment.

It appears that people with meaning attend differently to their careers. One might speculate that people with meaning align their careers with their sense of meaning. That is why they identify stronger with their careers and are more inclined towards career planning. This might also indicate a longer-term orientation in people with meaning as mentioned above. Furthermore, this postulated alignment of careers with meaning appears to influence people to be more willing to make substantial career changes and to be less resilient about their present careers. However, once a substantial career change is made, one would expect these people to show more career resilience because of the same reasons of career/meaning alignment. In addition, people with meaning associate psychologically with their careers rather than with their present jobs, which in turn might support their willingness to work in the absence of financial necessity. One might speculate further that the results of these combined activities and influences lead to more subjective satisfaction with career progress (as defined and perceived by the individual) and objective career progress (actual promotions in the workplace as measured by hierarchical seniority). These speculations may warrant further research.

It appears from these findings that people with a sense of meaning tend to have stronger commitment to their careers as measured by Carson and Bedeian's (1994) Career Commitment Scale.

5.5. THE FIFTH RESEARCH QUESTION

The fifth research question investigates the possibilities of relationships between meaning and work motivation as measured through:

- Warr, Cook and Wall's (1979) Intrinsic Motivation Measure
- Vandewalle's (1997) Goal Orientation Instrument

The various relationships between meaning and these facets of work motivation were investigated through the application of the statistical procedure of Spearman's Rho.

5.5.1. Meaning and intrinsic motivation

Warr, Cook and Wall's (1979) measure of intrinsic motivation showed a statistically significant relationship with meaning.

This finding has important implications for existing work motivation theories. Although intrinsic motivation had been widely discussed in the literature, meaning apparently had never been seen as a factor contributing to intrinsic motivation. For instance, intrinsic motivation was thought to be related to creativity, autonomy, relevance and effort (Lawler & Hall, 1970); self-expression and internalised values (Katz & Khan, 1978); pleasure and satisfaction derived from participation and needs of competence and self-determination (Deci, 1975; Deci & Ryan, 1985; Deci & Ryan, 1992); maximising feelings of competence and self-determination (Wiersma, 1992). Causality was not investigated in this study and one can therefore not conclude that intrinsic motivation is a result of having meaning. However, the results of this study suggest that intrinsic motivation might be related to a deeper psychological level than what had previously been recognised, i.e., the spiritual level or noëtic level.

It appears from these findings that people with a sense of meaning tend to have stronger intrinsic motivation as measured by Warr, Cook and Wall's (1979) Intrinsic Motivation Measure.

5.5.2. Meaning and goal orientation

Vandewalle's (1997) measure of goal orientation showed statistically significant relationships between meaning and the two factors of goal orientation, but not between meaning and the total construct of goal orientation. The Spearman's Rho procedure showed that the respondents' orientation towards learning goals (goals that support the willingness to learn new things) showed the strongest relationship of the two with meaning.

The respondents' responses to the avoidance of difficult goals showed a statistically significant relationship with meaning, albeit a negative relationship. This negative

relationship between avoidance of difficult goals (goals that strongly represent a potential of failure) and meaning implies that the higher the sense of meaning, the lower the fear to attempt goals that inherently have the potential of failure. In other words, the higher an individual's sense of meaning the higher the willingness to attempt goals with a high possibility of failure.

Meaning did not show a statistically significant correlation with the construct of goal orientation. However, meaning showed statistically significant relationships with both dimensions of goal orientation. It is therefore expected that the lack of a statistical significant correlation between meaning and goal orientation might be due to the combined positive and negative effects of the almost equal correlations of the two factors of goal orientation.

It is interesting to note that statistically significant relationships were found between goal orientation and career commitment. Goal1 (learning goal orientation) showed significant correlations with career planning ($r = 0.36$, $p < 0.0001$) and career resilience ($r = 0.24$, $p < 0.0001$). These relationships seem to confirm that the respondents who have goals to learn new things also apply this behaviour in terms of their careers.

The relationships between meaning and goal orientations found in the present study have significant implication for existing work motivation theories. Most of the previous literature and research on goal orientation focused on the cognitive, calculative and instrumental aspects of goal orientation and goal commitment. In other words, previous theories and research focused on goals as a means of obtaining something that is of worth to the individual. However, the present study found that goals and goal orientation is also related to non-calculative behaviour, behaviour that arises from the spiritual level rather than the cognitive level. Although causality has not been investigated in this study, and one can therefore not imply that meaning causes this goal orientation, one might speculate that it is indeed the case. It appears that meaning can give direction to goal orientation (goals to learn new things), and impetus and energy to goals (willingness to set and strive for difficult goals).

It appears from these findings that people with a sense of meaning tend to higher goal orientations as measured by Vandewalle's (1997) Goal Orientation Instrument.

The statistically significant relationships that were found between meaning and intrinsic motivation and goal orientation as measures of work motivation, suggest that there might be an existential source of work motivation as postulated in section 2.6.5.

5.6. THE SIXTH RESEARCH QUESTION

The sixth research question investigates whether work involvement acts as a moderator in the relationships between meaning and work commitment, and meaning and work motivation.

Results from both the Pearson Partial Correlation analysis and the Stepwise Multiple Regression analysis indicate that work involvement does not act significantly as a moderating variable between meaning and the dependent variables, namely the facets of work commitment and work motivation. The relationships of only one of the dependent variables (career commitment) with meaning changed more than 2% when the effect of work involvement was removed in the Pearson Partial Correlation analysis.

In the Stepwise Multiple Regression Analysis, the partial contribution of meaning to "predict" the dependent variables *increased* on all but one of the models when work involvement was not "forced" into the models. None of the increases appears to be substantial.

Sargent's (1973) postulation that work involvement moderates the manifestation of work motivation as an outcome of meaning therefore does not appear to be true. Even Frankl's verbal comment to Sargent (1973) that individuals compensate for a lack of meaning by indulging in their work, resulting in high job involvement and work motivation, therefore appears to be questionable as measured in the present study.

The Spearman's Rho analysis showed high correlations between work involvement and job involvement (0.62). This result appear to suggest either that these two constructs as measured by Kanungo's (1982) WIQ and Kanungo's (1982) JIQ might be closer than what was previously anticipated, or that the sample in the present study did not fully distinguish between the contents of the items in the instruments. Furthermore, the Principal Factor Analysis in section 3.3.3 showed that work involvement loaded on the same factor as job involvement and not as a separate factor. This observation is deemed not to be the result of mono-method variance (Rahim, 2001). These two constructs (both measured on 6-point scales) were separated in the questionnaire by the measurement of career commitment (measured on a 5-point scale) and intrinsic motivation (measured on a 7-point scale). All of these instruments also employed some reverse questions. According to Rahim (2001), the use of different scales within a questionnaire, and the use of some reverse scored questions within instruments should reduce the threat of mono-method variance.

This observation that some construct redundancy appears to exist between job involvement and work involvement, as for this sample, may warrant further research. The role of different sample compilations, or the influence of culture on the distinction between these constructs can also be investigated further.

As to the debate whether work involvement and work values are the same or separate constructs, the results from the present study appear to suggest that they might indeed be separate constructs. Analysis of the data indicates only a moderate Spearman's Rho correlation between work involvement and work values (0.37). Furthermore, the ability of work involvement to "predict" work values as measured through the Stepwise Multiple Regression analysis appears to be relatively low (13.4%).

The results from the present study therefore appear to suggest that there does not exist construct redundancy between work involvement and work values as measured by Kanungo's (1982) WIQ and Ho and Lloyd's (1984) Australian Work Ethic Scale.

5.7. THE SEVENTH RESEARCH QUESTION

The seventh research question investigates whether the postulated model of relationships amongst meaning, work involvement, work commitment, and work motivation is a statistically valid representation of the model of relationships.

The model of the research argument (Figure 1) could not be analysed in this study due to weak statistical correlations between the variables. Even the empirically derived model (Figure 54) did not present a statistically significant fit. The goodness-of-fit (GFI) indices from the Structural Equations Analysis indicate a poor fit of the postulated relationship model with the data. The highest goodness-of-fit index (Parsimonious GFI) was merely 0.33, whereas indices of higher than 0.9 are required to indicate good measures of fit. The postulated model of relationships amongst meaning, work involvement, work commitment and work motivation is therefore rejected. It is expected that the reason for this poor fit must essentially be sought in the difficulties of constructing a model of this nature – no study, as far as could be determined, has been done with all the variables which were included in the present study.

Although neither the postulated model, nor the empirically derived model showed a good fit with the data, much insight was gained into the role and effects of meaning in work and in the workplace. Based on this new insight one can construct a new empirically derived conceptual model as presented in Figure 55. It should be emphasised that this postulated model is speculative and should be further investigated by empirical research.

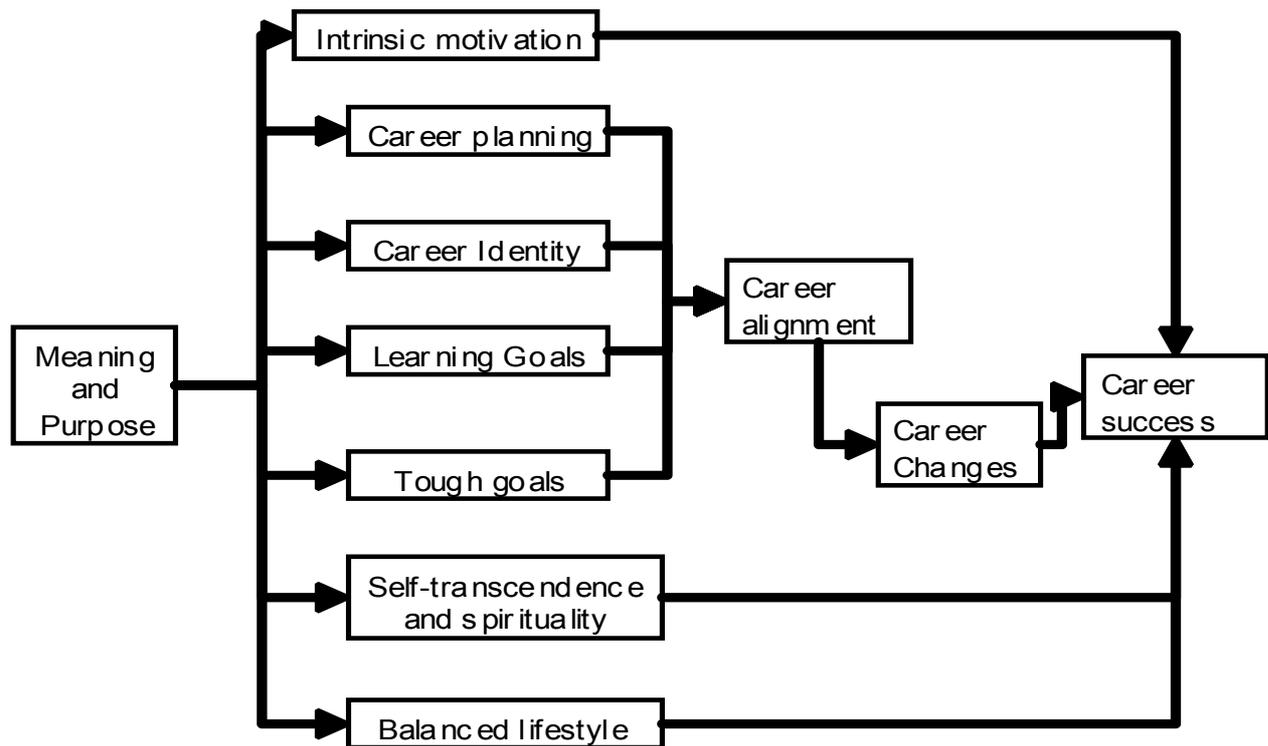


Figure 55. A new postulated model based on the results of this research, integrated with previous research and existing theories.

The reasoning for this model stems from the empirical results from the present explorative study combined with existing theories. All the hypothesised paths are based on the strong statistical correlations found in the present study.

The argument for the postulation of this model is as follows: having a sense of meaning or purpose in life results in a more balanced lifestyle as measured through aspects such as time to be alone, time for friends and family, time for leisure and participation in sports and hobbies. Meaning results in self-transcendence, focusing outside yourself on the plight of others. Meaning also is related to a higher spiritual involvement. Furthermore, this sense of meaning and purpose results in higher career commitment and higher work motivation (intrinsic motivation and goal orientation). However, meaning does not result in higher commitment that is “forced”, or unbalanced as for instance PWE, self-sacrificing for your work and work dominating your life. It appears that the orientations towards a balanced lifestyle,

self-transcendence and a spiritual involvement prevent such “over-commitment” towards work. The high correlations between meaning with a balanced lifestyle, self-transcendence and religious convictions support this postulation.

Meaning is further related with a higher willingness to make substantial career changes. It appears that the cause of this relationship might be the strong relationships of meaning with career commitment, intrinsic motivation and goal orientation. Together these factors might result in a higher desire and willingness to align you career with the direction and intensity of your purpose.

The combined result of all of these relationships suggest that a person with meaning and purpose is “more successful” as measured through satisfaction with career progress (as per the individual’s own personal definition) and more senior positions. These two types of career success can respectively be described as subjective and objective career success. This subjective and objective career success ensues without the person pursuing career success. Frankl repeatedly emphasised that success cannot be pursued, but that success is a result of the pursuit of a cause greater than oneself and outside oneself. If this speculation is true, it provides support to Frankl’s contention.

Apart from being very speculative, other shortcomings of such a model include that qualifications showed lack of a statistically significant relationship with meaning. However, the relationship between qualifications and both subjective and objective career success is not known and might influence the direction of this postulation. Furthermore, this model erroneously assumes equal potential, skills and abilities in all people. However, motivation and commitment does not equal performance, neither do they directly lead to performance. Performance is moderated by abilities, skills, competencies and traits (Porter & Lawler, 1968). The potential substantial influence of these aspects on this model has been neglected completely.

It was in terms of the theory of Structural Equations Analysis not deemed advisable to subject this model to Structural Equations Analysis. This reasoning was in terms of the principles of SEM, not to pursue derived models with the same set of data. Pursuing derived models with the same set of data could lead to quite heavy

capitalisation on chance associations with the data (Hair et al., 1995). It is therefore suggested that the fit of this model (or perhaps another related model) could be measured in a future study against a new set of data. However, it would be preferable that the underlying theory of the role of meaning in work, and in the workplace, should be strengthened before a new model could be built. As the conceptualisation of theory appears to be stronger than empirical evidence, strengthening of theory regarding meaning in work should rely heavily on empirical studies in the future.

5.8. CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE PRESENT STUDY

The role of meaning in work and in the workplace has long been absent and neglected in Organisational Behaviour research. This study was therefore an exploratory study to establish relationships and patterns that can be investigated further by other research studies. The present study brought new insight into the important role that meaning plays in work and in the workplace, it attests to the importance of meaning in work and to an individual's work life. The primary contribution of the study seems to be the determination of the relationships of meaning with career commitment as one of the facets of work commitment and with work motivation as measured through intrinsic motivation and goal orientation. A significant part of this contribution is the fact that the study has shown that relationships did not exist between meaning and work involvement; and between meaning and job involvement and work values as facets of work commitment.

In summary, the present study showed that

1. Meaning is not related to biographic/demographic variables.
2. Meaning is related to certain lifestyle variables such as having a balanced lifestyle, objective and subjective career progress and a strong religious conviction.
3. Meaning appears not to have a relationship with work involvement.
4. The following was found in terms of relationships between meaning and the facets of work commitment:
 - a. Work values – no relationship
 - b. Job involvement – no relationship
 - c. Career commitment – significant relationships.
5. The following was found in terms of relationships between meaning and work motivation variables:
 - a. Intrinsic motivation – a significant relationship
 - b. Goal orientation – significant relationships.
6. Work involvement does not appear to play a moderating role in the relationships between meaning, work commitment and work motivation.
7. Statistical evidence could not be found that the postulated model, or a derived model, of relationships amongst meaning, work commitment, and work motivation do exist.

These findings of the present study emphasise the important role that meaning plays in work and in the workplace. It shows that people with meaning approach work, their careers and goals with a purpose, within a balanced lifestyle, and with intrinsic motivation. It also shows that successful careers appear to develop through this approach. Successful careers in this sense are not only in terms of promotions and in terms of seniority (objective career success), but also in the way people experience and perceive their careers as successful (subjective career success). This is perhaps because career success might be seen as a by-product in a striving to a greater cause and not as an end in itself.

A second contribution of this study is the determination of the relationships of meaning with several orientations towards work and life in general. This study has shown successfully that meaning is significantly related to a healthy and balanced

life orientation and lifestyle, which eventually lead to success and progression in the workplace. In contrast, this study confirms that meaning is generally not related to biographic/demographic variables. It therefore suggests that meaning is a universal phenomenon.

A third contribution of this study is the confirmation of the role of spirituality in work and the workplace. For too long spirituality has been regarded to be not a work related issue, but an issue that only belongs to the domain of formalised religion. It was shown that meaning plays a significant role in work and in the work situation. However, Frankl emphasised that meaning acts in the spiritual dimension. Furthermore, the association of meaning with the strength of religious conviction, which is clearly a spiritual issue, has been confirmed in the present study. This confirms the important role of spirituality (not as religion) in the workplace.

A fourth contribution of this research is the insight gained that cultural borders do not necessarily determine the portability of an instrument to other cultures. The present study has shown that it is rather the type of sample and sampling method within the different cultures that might determine whether an instrument is portable over cultural borders. If the researcher selects his sample right, he might be able to use instruments that were developed in other cultures with minor adjustments. It is however still recommended to confirm the factor structure of the instrument in the new culture and to “clean” the instrument of non-contributing items before subjecting it to statistical analysis. With this insight, more research can be done across cultural borders with standardised instruments.

The present study brings a new perspective to the table towards an improved understanding of work motivation and work commitment. The present study shows that aspects of work commitment and work motivation lie on a deeper psychological and psychosocial level than what was previously anticipated. It shows that aspects and facets of work motivation and work commitment are also related to the spiritual level, for instance intrinsic motivation, career commitment and goal orientation. These insights open up new approaches and new research areas towards work motivation and work commitment. The present study does not attempt to provide or suggest a single source or model towards work motivation or work commitment such

as many other previous models attempted to do. However, it provides some insight into a more fundamental question: “Why are people motivated or committed at all?” This insight may go a long way towards the understanding of non-calculative and non-cognitive behaviour.

The lack of statistically significant relationships between meaning and work involvement, between meaning and job involvement, and meaning and work values is deemed to be a significant contribution of the present. These findings suggest that although meaning plays an important role in work, it acts in other areas than the centrality of work in an individual’s life, the individual’s psychological association with work, or the value of self-sacrificing hard work. The meaning appears to be associated more with longer-term oriented constructs such as career commitment and goal orientation independent of their work context, or with orientations towards life such as intrinsic motivation. One might speculate that hard work and positive work orientations are outcomes of the latter constructs; constructs which had been influenced by having meaning in life.

Hoeller (1990) defines extraordinary science as the revolutionary stage in a field of science which marks the transition from one paradigm to another. It is a philosophical period that offers competing paradigms to explain a significant anomaly that normal science can neither explain nor do away with. The introduction of the construct of meaning in life to Organisational Behaviour represents such a revolutionary period, initiating a completely new paradigm of understanding through the introduction of a new philosophy. This period of extraordinary science represents the new introduction of relationships that were not previously considered or investigated.

5.9. LIMITATIONS OF THE PRESENT STUDY

The major limitation of the present study seems to be its inability to provide insight on causality. This is because causality could not be investigated or determined through this research design. The design of this research was explorative in nature rather than confirmative. The research methodology and research design of this

study only allowed the determination of relationships, the direction of which was not confirmed. More insight could have been gained from the present study if not only new understanding of the relationships were found, but also their individual causes and temporal sequencing. Furthermore, some of the conclusions of the present study are speculative, albeit based on theories and previous postulation.

The present study was limited in the sense that work motivation could not be measured as a general construct. The two facets of work motivation that were measured are not representative of the whole construct of work motivation. Based on this study, one should therefore be careful in making conclusions about work motivation in general. In as far as these facets of work motivation are not representative of the total construct, the comprehensiveness and generalisability of the present study suffered.

Although Battista and Almond's (1973) LRI is described as a two-dimensional measure (meaning framework and meaning fulfilment) it did not behave as such in this study. The uni-dimensional behaviour of the LRI restricted some results and potential conclusions. It is expected that the differences between having a meaning framework, and experiencing meaning fulfilment in relation to the various variables measured could have lead to valuable insights and conclusions.

It appears that Ho and Lloyd's (1984) AWE as a measure of work values might not be a true measure of the PWE. Although the construct validity of this instrument as a measure of PWE has been confirmed by Furnham (1990b), the results of the present study put a question to the instrument's construct validity.

Although much effort was taken to obtain a representative and heterogeneous sample, the sample still appears to be rather homogeneous in terms of biographical/demographic variables. The sample can broadly be described as successful, well-educated, middle-aged, white Protestant Afrikaner males within permanent employment situations. Although this might be representative of the present South African managerial population, one should be careful about generalisations to other groups outside this population. Furthermore, with the emphasis on affirmative action in the South African situation, the profile of this

population is expected to change rapidly. In as far as biographical/demographic variables influence people's attitudes and orientations towards work and life, the richness of the results of the present study suffered. An additional limiting result of such a homogeneous sample is that the relationships found in the present study might be situational to this sample. However, the lack of statistically significant relationships between meaning and biographical/demographic variables does suggest that sampling error should not be much of a concern in this study.

5.10. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The present study has highlighted the importance of meaning in a person's work and work life. However, due to the lack of attention that this aspect received in previous research, the nature of the present study was explorative. More confirmative empirical studies are needed to confirm the relationships found in the present study to different work situations and different samples. This step is regarded as essential in order to build a more solid theory of the role of meaning in work and the workplace.

Building on improved theories of the role of meaning in work and the workplace as mentioned above, future studies should focus more on the causality of these relationships. The model postulated in Figure 55 is speculative and the model should be investigated empirically to refine or change the model. Such research will improve the understanding of the relationships between meaning and work substantially. This step is essential if an organisation wants to understand how to assist their employees' quest for meaning.

Ideally, future studies on meaning and purpose in life should be longitudinal. Only then will causality really be determined. In other words, does absence/lack of purpose/meaning in life cause psychopathologies in the workplace or vice-versa. Furthermore, it is only then that it can be determined whether meaning is a cause or a result of the work and life orientations that showed significant relationships with meaning. Another aspect that longitudinal research should be able to provide insight

into, is how do the variables measured in this research change, if at all, once people discover meaning?

An aspect that has not been covered in detail in the present study, apart from in the literature review, is *how* to find meaning. It is not good enough for organisations only to know that their employees should have meaning, but they do not understand how to go about in helping their employees to find meaning. Future research will make a valuable contribution if it can provide direction to organisations on how to assist their employees to find meaning in their lives and existence. This might include activities ranging from personal counselling, up to having a re-evaluation of the vision and mission of the organisation.

Going together with this research recommendation, it is suggested that future research investigates the role that organisations' visions and missions (as defined in their formal statements) and organisational formal values play in their employees' sense of meaning. Building on this research, researchers can also investigate how organisational culture and leadership style influence employees' sense of meaning and the consequences of such influences.

Furthermore, future research may explore the type of organisations in which individuals experience a higher sense of purpose or meaning. The relationships of meaning with organisations' vision statements, mission statements, or statements of values could for instance provide new insights into the role of these statements in organisations. It may further be of value to investigate whether employees' meaning is related to organisational lifecycles, and in which phase of an organisation's lifecycle do employees experience the most meaning.

The role of meaning on performance has not been addressed in this study and warrants future research. It is suggested that future research investigates the potential relationship between meaning and performance. Such research should integrate all aspects that influence performance such as organisational structures and systems, as well individual skills and competencies.

Future research can also exploit the existence of potential relationships between entrepreneurial behaviour and entrepreneurial traits and characteristics. If meaning is related with career commitment, one can investigate whether there are any significant differences in the sense of meaning between people that are employed by organisations versus people that are self-employed. Furthermore, one can investigate whether meaning is a trait that is generally found in people that display entrepreneurial behaviour.

Some authors suggest that more empirical research is not needed on the construct of work commitment (Mackenzie, 2001). However, the results of the present study suggest that the constructs of work involvement and job involvement might be more related to each other than what was previously anticipated, or that the sample in the present study could not distinguish between the items in the questionnaire. The observation that construct redundancy appears to exist between job involvement and work involvement, as for this sample, might warrant further research. The role of different sample compilations, or the influence of culture on the distinction between these constructs should also be investigated further.

Furthermore, although much research had been conducted on clarifying the dimensions and factorial structure of work commitment, more research is needed on the practical influence of the dimensions of work commitment in the workplace (R. Kanungo, personal communication, August 3, 2001). For instance, the role of work commitment dimensions such as career commitment on objective and subjective career success, or on performance warrants further research.

The role of meaning in a person's work and work life has been neglected in previous Organisational Behaviour research. The present study confirmed that meaning plays a significant role in terms of a healthy work life and that it plays a significant role in terms of general psychological well-being. It also confirmed that meaning is a construct with definite and substantial influence on work and in the workplace. However, little is still known on the exact role and outcomes of meaning on work and in the work place. One can thus conclude that the future research possibilities on meaning in work and the work situation are almost unlimited at this point in time.