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All or Worse Outcomes: Evaluating the Indirect Effects of Meaningful Work and Job Anxiety on Turnover Intentions

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ABSTRACT Job Anxiety affects employees viscerally when job-related stress exceeds coping resources. Considering these negative perceptions of work elements significantly impact employees' quitting intentions, understanding what can reduce these intentions would be of great benefit to both organizations and employees. Using the literature of meaningful work as a framework, we sampled 219 general workers in the United States to determine whether meaningful work components have the potential to reduce turnover intention. Using structural equation modeling, we assessed how the three components of meaningful work (positive work meaning, meaning-making, and greater good motivations) moderated the relationship between job anxiety and intention to quit among our participants. Positive work meaning moderated the relationship between job anxiety and turnover intentions. However, further analysis revealed job anxiety increases when positive work meaning is low or moderate. Our findings indicate a lack of high positive work meaning exacerbates job anxiety.

Keywords

Meaningful work, job stress, job anxiety, positive work meaning, turnover intention

Introduction

Over 4.4 million American workers quit their jobs in what has become known as "the Great Resignation of 2021" as a result of high levels of job stress brought on by a frequently fluctuating work environment (Richter, 2021). During the Covid-19 pandemic, one of the most frequently cited reasons for employees leaving their jobs was the anxiety associated with performing job duties (e.g., Chanana, 2021; Gupta & Sahoo, 2020; Jamal et al., 2021; Salari et al., 2020; Talaee et al., 2020). In response to the Pandemic, the often-marginalized individuals deemed 'essential workers' experienced an identity shift supported by the general public towards being perceived as 'heroes' (Booth et al., 2020) because they performed job duties that ensure the continuation of societal services despite genuine concern for their physical safety (Makhanova & Shepherd, 2020). Despite the need to avoid the emotional labor required to complete job tasks (Aplin-Houtz et al., 2021; Dean et al., 2022; Rinfret et al., 2022), essential workers during the early pandemic used both their self-perceptions of a hero status (Booth et al., 2020) and the meaningfulness of their work as sense-making to prevent turnover intentions (Aguinis et al., 2020). The pandemic cannot be solely blamed for employee turnover caused by workplace stress, as stress has always been a part of one's work-life (Agovino, 2020; Allan et al., 2016; Steger et al., 2012). There appears to be potential for informing and advancing theory beyond the Covid-19 pandemic regarding how meaningful work influences turnover intentions when job stress presents in the workplace. To advance the theory on how meaningful work affects the symptoms of job stress and intention to leave, we aim to answer the following research question: Can the perception of meaningful work moderate the association between physical symptoms of job stress and turnover intention?

To aid in answering our research question, we sampled general workers employed in a diverse set of industries via a two-time survey method to evaluate how the components of meaningful work moderated the environmental elements of job stress in connection with turnover intention. Using the literature associated with job stress, meaningful work, and turnover intention, we provide a framework to support our hypotheses and establish a theoretical model to be tested. We test our hypotheses and present our findings using partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM). Using our results from our sample, we then discuss our findings and present managerial implications and suggestions for implementing change in practice along with further directions for research.

Literature Review

Turnover Intention.

Turnover intention measures an employee's willingness to seek out other job prospects and often directly corresponds to actual employment turnover (Arshadi & Damiri, 2013; Ngamkroeckjoti et al., 2012). In nearly all employment circumstances, employee turnover intentions are a significant concern for businesses in all sectors, regions, and types (Long et al., 2012) because turnover critically affects productivity, product and service quality, and profitability of an organization (Kumar, 2011). Turnover has been shown to subsequently have further negative consequences, including increasing remaining employees' responsibilities, lowering their morale, increasing contagion effects, reducing team performance, and rising costs associated with recruiting and onboarding new employees (Oreg et al., 2018).

When considering the personal reasons people have turnover ideations, the literature teams with relationships of variables that impact why one would consider leaving their job. The antecedents for turnover intention include high levels of workplace stress (NIOSH, 1999; Noor

& Maad, 2008), workplace bullying (Coetzee & van Dyk, 2018; Lee et al., 2013), low levels of job satisfaction (Shaw, 1999; Spencer & Steers, 1981; Tschopp et al., 2014), managerial trust (Perry & Mankin, 2004; Shahnawaz & Goswami, 2011), low organizational justice perceptions (Brashear et al., 2005; DeConinck & Johnson, 2009; Tayfur et al., 2013;) and lack of organizational support (Dawley et al., 2010; DeConinck & Johnson, 2009).

Job Stress and Anxiety.

Stress at work is defined as prolonged stressors that exceed the employee's coping strategies (Kyriacou & Chien, 2004). In other words, job stress is the uncomfortable feeling individuals experience when they are forced to deviate from expected or desired modes of behavior due to workplace factors. The authors of Parker and DeCotiis's (1983) study divided job stress into stress regarding the perceived time available/required to perform job duties and stress regarding the act of performing one's job. Due to the lack of a direct relationship between time stress and the physical symptoms caused by a job environment in the literature, we do not believe that evaluating this construct will help us answer our research question. Therefore, we will determine job anxiety as the measure of job stress for this study.

During a state of job-related stress, a person frequently experiences high levels of anxiety manifested as tension in the chest, insomnia, headaches, and gastrointestinal disturbances (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993; Leiter & Durup, 1994; Parker & DeCotiis, 1983; Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998). Anxiety at work impacts individuals and key organizational outcomes, such as intention to leave the organization. Numerous studies demonstrate a correlation between stress and employee turnover in a variety of industries (Applebaum et al., 2010; Arshadi & Damiri, 2013; Chen et al., 2011; Cote & Morgan, 2002). For instance, Applebaum et al. (2010) found a direct correlation between stress and intention to leave among nurses. In particular, physical

effects of stress (i.e., physical symptoms) can cause nurses to quit their jobs. Based on the above-described well-established relationships between job stress and turnover intentions, we propose the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: Job stress will positively relate to turnover intentions.

Meaningful Work

An essential aspect of a person's employment experience is their ability to find meaning in the work they do beyond their job responsibilities. Steger et al. (2012) identified three core dimensions of the knowledge of meaningful work, including how the work carries personal significance (Positive Work Meaning), the sense that the work one does links to a broader understanding of meaning and growth in an individual's life beyond the workplace (Meaning Making), and the belief that the work being done has a positive impact on society or one's development (Greater Good Motivations). Steger et al. found that when people experience high levels of meaningful work in these aspects, they report greater well-being, job satisfaction, and a general sense of work unit cohesion. Furthermore, meaningful work correlates strongly with work engagement, job satisfaction, life satisfaction, and a lower likelihood of having turnover intentions because meaningful work buffers the relationship between stress and physical health risk behaviors and depressive symptoms, such that the less meaningful work an individual has, the stronger the relationship between stress and negative outcomes (Allan et al., 2016; Steger et al., 2012).

To understand how the nuances of meaningful work impact turnover intention and the antecedent variable of job anxiety, we will evaluate each of the aspects outlined by Steger et al. (2012) in the following sections via the literature to provide support for our hypotheses to answer our research question ultimately.

Positive Work Meaning (PWM). Even though the most contemporary definition of Positive Work Meaning is how people find personal meaning, significance, or purpose through their work

(Steger et al., 2012), the psychological meaningfulness of work is not a new construct in organizational science. Instead, the degree to which individuals perceive their work as a positive meaning has been part of the workplace psychology literature since creating the Job Characteristics Model (Hackman & Oldham, 1976). According to this well-supported theory, the job characteristics of skill variety, task identity, and task significance shape the psychological state of meaningfulness associated with the overall work experience (Hackman & Lawler, 1971; Hackman & Oldham, 1976). However, Humphrey et al. (2007) argued that these job characteristics have a stronger connection to personal outcomes than organizational outcomes. In other words, the significance of a task, the variety of skills required for the task, and the identity embodied by the task point to a personal perception of the meaningfulness of one's work.

During the pandemic, the trepidation relating to job insecurity caused job stress associated with changes in employment requirements and uncertainty about when or if one would be able to return to work (Blustein & Guarino, 2020). In an uncertain work environment, the positive meaning of work also becomes doubtful. Research shows that people are more likely to feel threats and rewards arising from uncertainty very intensely (i.e., joy, motivation to complete tasks, motivation, stress, physical illness, and withdrawal behaviors) because uncertainty perceptions are inherently ubiquitous, primitive, and activate essential hedonic regions of the brain via neurochemical responses (Javadizadeh et al., 2022; Rock, 2009; Tabibnia & Lieberman, 2007). Rock (2009) argued that when one is in a state of uncertainty, they will be so stressed by the experience that they will be unable to adequately see the good in their work or even complete basic job tasks unless the individual goes through substantial sense-making processes. We argue that using positive work meaning aids in this sense-making.

When considering that changes in the work environment often provoke feelings of uncertainty and cause employees to experience negative emotions with their reactions to the perceived change (Wisse & Sleebos, 2016) and the support of the above literature surrounding the positive relationship of positive meaning on turnover intentions, the positive sense of one's work has the potential for indirectly effecting and minimizing the relationships between job anxiety and turnover intention. Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis:

> *Hypothesis 2: Positive work meaning will moderate the relationship between job anxiety and turnover intention.*

Meaning Making (MM). Steger et al. (2012) conceptualized meaning-making as how people make sense of how their work relates to their broader understanding of how meaning and growth impact an individual's life beyond the workplace. Owing to Michaelson's (2005) finding that there is commonly an overlap between one's work and one's life work, Steger and Dik (2010) argued that the meaning-making aspect of meaningful work aids people in deepening their understanding of their view of self and their environment to garner as a sense of personal growth ultimately. Additionally, the lens of job crafting (Wrzesniewski et al., 1997) supports that an individual can cognitively alter their sense of meaning surrounding aspects of their job to facilitate an enhanced view of self through their perception of elements of their job to foster personal growth and enhanced performance. However, meaning-making is not exclusive to the organizational psychology literature because it appears much earlier and more frequently in the general psychology literature. In the 1940s, a psychiatrist named Viktor Frankl argued that meaning-making is one of the primary drivers of motivation in the human species when one faces adversity or conflict (Frankl, 1985). Based on Frankl's scholarship, many psychologists and mental health practitioners have attempted to use negative experiences in one's life (i.e.,

trauma, loss, and hardship) to establish a framework for personal growth to not only circumvent emotional damage from the experience but also derive meaning to inform decision making for future experiences (e.g., Beck, 1979; Ellis & Harper, 1975; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Lovibond & Lovibond, 1995). Throughout the psychology literature surrounding the topic of meaning-making, a consensus exists that meaning-making minimizes the stress from the experience to aid the individual in making a greater personal sense of the stressful experience (e.g., Beck, 2020; Eysenck, 2013; Gross, 1998). Therefore, we propose that meaning-making will indirectly minimize job anxiety and ultimately lower turnover intentions through the following hypothesis:

> *Hypothesis 3: Meaning-making will moderate the relationship between job anxiety and turnover intention.*

Greater Good Motivations (GGM). Through the scholarship presented by Grant (2007) surrounding how one's desire to make a positive impact for the greater good of society connected to the overall meaningfulness of one's work, Steger et al. (2012) expanded and defined Greater Good Motivations as how people envision the impact of their efforts and ultimately benefits society by making a positive contribution through their work. Some scholars describe this envisioning as an aspect of a spiritual connection to one's work that aids not only in sense-making but also in the framing why their job task and actions have meaning (e.g., Ahmad & Omar, 2016; Albuquerque et al., 2014; Ashmos & Duchon, 2000; Duchon & Plowman, 2005.) Through the theoretical lens established by Ashmos and Duchon (2000), the domain of workplace spirituality conceptualizes meaningfulness through the connection to one's personal view of the greater good. To further explain how this spiritual conceptualization connects one's work experience/perceptions to their greater community, Duchon and Plowman (2005) described "that employees have an inner life that nourishes and is nourished by meaningful work that takes

place in the context of community" (p. 809). Furthermore, Duchon and Plowman (2005) also described that the spirituality of meaningful work encompasses "cognitively meaningful tasks, but it is also about work that creates a sense of joy, which connects workers to a larger good and things viewed by the worker as important in life" (p. 814). Arguably, the meaningfulness of work is multidimensional because one extends their focus beyond a centralization on self-fulfillment, making a sense of meaningfulness when one's work contributes to the broader good.

In a meta-analysis of the meaningfulness of work literature by Bailey et al. (2019), the authors found that nearly all studies supported that meaningful work was positively associated with personal engagement (Fletcher et al., 2018; Geldenhuys et al., 2014; Gloria & Steinhardt, 2016; Johnson & Jiang, 2017), job satisfaction (Duffy et al., 2013), organizational commitment (Leiter & Harvie, 1997), behavioral involvement (Montani et al., 2020), and intrinsic motivation (Johns et al., 1992). Additionally, the perception of security in one's job, affective commitment to the organization, the overall enjoyment of one's job, feelings of accomplishment or growth, perceptions of morale, and lower turnover intentions directly link to one's perception of greater good motivation conceptualization of the meaningfulness of one's job (e.g., Britt et al., 2001; Chen & Li, 2013; Fairlie, 2011; Gupta et al., 2014; Hackman & Oldham, 1976).

When considering through the above literature that greater good motivations positively impact nearly all aspects of one's work and lower turnover intentions, we logically argue that the experience of negative emotions associated with job anxiety will be indirectly affected to lower turnover intentions. Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 4: Greater good motivation will moderate the relationship between job anxiety and turnover intention.

Hypothesized Model

To aid in answering the research question, "Can perceiving having meaningful work moderate the relationship between physical symptoms of job stress and turnover intentions?" we will explore the relationships through the model found in Figure 1.

(Insert Figure 1 about here)

Our model consists of the antecedent variable of job anxiety, the single consequence variable of turnover intention, and the three variables as components of meaningful work (positive work meaning, meaning-making, and greater good motivations) as potential moderators for the antecedent and consequence relationship. In other words, our model theoretically depicts how the components of meaningful work will moderate the relationship between perceived job anxiety and turnover intention.

Method

Participants and Procedures.

For our sample, we used the following inclusion criterion: (a) be employed in the United States, (b) be at least 18 years old, (c) have at least five years of work experience, and (d) have agreed to participate in a Qualtrics Panel. After receiving institutional review board (IRB) approval, we started collecting data. We chose to collect data via the third-party company Qualtrics because sampling using internet vendor-based sources typically yields more consistent composition, respondent integrity, data quality, data structure, and substantive results than sampling using non-internet vendor-based sources (Smith et al., 2016). From October 24 to November 24, 2021, we surveyed our participants twice (one-week interval minimum between each sampling), with each participant responding to each scale/questionnaire only once. In

addition to the variables required by our model, additional variables were collected. The average time of the first sampling was 22.57 minutes, while the second time was 31.65 minutes. The combined and averaged total time of participants' survey responses was 54.08 Minutes. Once participants completed the measures, they were debriefed and thanked for their participation.

Our raw sample consisted of 396 independent responses from people (231 male, 164 female, one non-binary) ages 30-87 (*M* =59.010, *SD* = 0.722) with varying education levels and between five and 70 years of work experience (*M* =35.600, *SD* =11.890) while currently being employed in the United States. After data screening detailed later in this paper, our sample for analysis consisted of 219 people (127 male, 92 female) aged 30-81 (*M* = 58.75, *SD* = 10.281) with varying education levels and between five and 66 years of work experience (*M* = 29.333, *SD* = 14.352) while currently being employed in the United States. The race/ ethnicity was highly skewed towards homogeneity, with 93.151% self-identified as white/Caucasian. Please see Table 1 for more details.

(Insert Table 1 about here)

Variables

Positive Work Meaning (PWM). Using PWM components in The Work and Meaning Inventory (WAMI; Steger et al., 2012), we evaluated the degree to which people find their work to hold personal meaning, significance, or purpose (four items on a 5- point Likert-type scale unified as a single variable.)

Meaning Making (MM). Using MM components in the WAMI (Steger et al., 2012), we evaluated our participants' perceptions of the degree to which their understanding of their view of self and their environment ultimately garnered a sense of personal growth (three items on a 5-point Likert-type scale unified as a single variable.

Greater Good Motivations (GGM). Using GGM components in the WAMI (Steger et al., 2012), we evaluated our participants' perceptions of the degree to which their effort at work makes a positive contribution and benefits others or society (three items on a 5- point Likert-type scale unified as a single variable.

For all constructs in the WAMI (PMW, MM, and GGM), validity and reliability for this measure were established by translations and used by multiple scholars, ultimately providing support that this measure is a representation of a participant's self-reported perception of how their work provides a positive contribution and benefits others or society (e.g., Akin et al., 2013; Duarte-Lores et al., 2021; Malhotra et al., 2016; Puchalska-Kamińska et al., 2021).

Job Anxiety (JA). Using JA components in Parker's Job Stress Scale (Parker & DeCotiis, 1983), we evaluated our participants' self-perception of anxiety caused by work (five items on a 5-point Likert-type scale unified as a single variable.) The literature supports the reliability and constructs validity of this measure's representation of participants' self-reported perception of anxiety associated with their work (e.g., Abbas & Raja, 2015; Jamal, 1990; Jandaghi et al., 2011; Wu & Shih, 2010).

Turnover Intention (TOI). Using the questions associated with the measure for the turnover intention in O'Driscoll and Beehr's (1994) for turnover intentions, we evaluated our participants' self-reported turnover intentions (three items on a 5- point Likert-type scale unified as a single variable.), As evidenced by multiple uses of the construct, scholars provide support for the validity and reliability of this measure as a representation of a participant's self-reported turnover intention (e.g., Beehr et al., 2001; Cooper-Thomas et al., 2014; Webster et al., 2011).

Control Variables. To eliminate alternative explanations for the hypothesized relationships in this study, we followed Bernerth and Aguinis (2016) and included control variables. Initially, we controlled for our participants' job satisfaction to account for the impact of varying levels of job satisfaction on turnover intention (Spector, 1997). Using Brayfield and Rothe's (1951) measure for job satisfaction (JSat), we evaluated our participants' self-reported job satisfaction (six items on a 5- point Likert-type scale unified as a single variable.) We next controlled for the change uncertainty of our participants were likely experiencing as an effect of living and working through the Covid-19 Pandemic. Using the questions associated with the factor for change uncertainty in Rafferty and Griffin's (2006) multi-item measure for job-based change perceptions, we evaluated our participants' self-reported perceptions of uncertainty surrounding aspects of their job (four items on a 5- point Likert-type scale unified as a single variable.) Additionally; we controlled for age, gender, and organizational tenure because these demographic elements are the most commonly used demographic control variables in the motivation and performance literature (Bernerth & Aguinis, 2016).

Data Screening

Missing Data. We only included survey responses for all questions to address missing data. Even though we sampled 396 participants, we excluded 177 cases from the analysis. The excluded cases comprised no responses associated with PPM, MM, GGM, and TI questions (skipped or omitted). Considering that the questions related to PPM, MM, GGM, and TI with missing data were part of the second sampling, we rationalized that including responses for only the variable of CU would likely cause issues with clarity in our analysis. This process left n =219 before the next step in data screening.

The participants did not answer some individual questions. We assigned the value of -1 to all missing responses. Using SPSS and SMARTPLS, we addressed these missing values by replacing the missing value with the mean value of the other participant's responses for the same question.

Data Screening. We screened the data using the CU, JA, PWM, MM, GGM, and TI for outliers and normality. Our initial sample size was n = 219. None of the variables exhibited a high skewness or kurtosis exceeding the cutoffs of -/+ 2.00 for skewness and -/+ 7.00 for kurtosis (Hair et al., 2010). The skewness values for these variables ranged from -0.950 to 1.230, and the kurtosis values ranged from -0.923 to 1.008. Univariate outliers were examined using z-scores, based on Raykov and Marcoulides's (2008) recommended -/+ 3.0 for extreme cases, and two were detected. Both outlier scores were -3.224 and associated with PWM. In addition, multivariate outliers were examined using Mahalanobis distances, with a cutoff of 22.46 based on 6 *df* at $p < .001$. Five cases exceeded this value, with scores between 22.934 and 33.635. Two of these cases also coincided with outlier z-scores associated with PWM. We reviewed each question in the outlier cases and determined that the answers were consistent and free of potential manipulation. Using all of the information above, we chose not to remove the cases. We rationalized that with an analysis tool that properly accounts for non-multivariate average data, we would be able to evaluate our model without excluding the participants' responses. Therefore, the resulting sample size remained at $n = 219$.

Analysis and Results

With the goal of examining the conceptual model, we purposely chose to assess the relationships between the constructs and their indicators with Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) using SmartPLS 3.0 (Ringle et al., 2015).We rationalize that

PLS-SEM was the best analysis measure because PLS-SEM requires fewer statistical specifications and data constraints than covariance-based SEM. Additionally, our small sample size required the multiple-regression processing in PLS-SEM because PLS-SEM allows for smaller samples as long as the model is five times greater than the number of items comprising one of the constructs (Cassel et al., 2000; Chin et al., 2003).

Measurement Model Analysis.

As part of the measurement model analysis, we evaluated the removal of items from the study because of low factor loadings (<0.6: Gefen & Straub, 2005). No measures were below .6, warranting removal. Accordingly, we retained all actions for analysis.

To test the reliability of the constructs, we used the minimum value of 0.7 for composite reliability (CR: Wasko & Faraj, 2005) and 0.6 for Cronbach's alpha scores for inclusion of the measures in analysis (Pallant, 2001). All actions met these criteria.

We determined that the acceptability of convergent validity was acceptable for all variables because the average variance extracted (AVE) was over 0.5 for all variables. We also assessed the acceptability of convergent validity using a minimum score of 0.5 for average variance extracted (AVE). All measures were above this threshold. For more details, see Table 2. This table also shows the factor loadings for the individual items loaded into the constructs. We tested discriminant validity with the Fornell–Larcker criterion to determine if the square root of AVE for each construct was more significant than the interconstruct correlation for the other constructs to be tested. Further, we confirmed discriminant validity with the heterotrait–monotrait ratio of correlations (Henseler et al., 2015). Considering that all values in question

were less than Henseler et al.'s threshold (0.9), we determined that discriminant validity was established (see Table 3 for more details).

(Inset Tables 2 and 3 about here)

Structural Model.

Using the structural model we hypothesized in our research framework, we assessed relationships based on R^2, Q^2, and the significance of paths. The goodness of fit for the model was determined by the strength of each structural path defined by the R^2 value for the dependent variable, where R^2 was expected to be equal to or greater than 0.1 (Falk & Miller, 1992). Our sole independent variable TOI had an R^2 value greater than 0.1. Hence, the predictive capability was established. Likewise, the Q^2 scores established the predictive relevance of our endogenous constructs, where a Q^2 value greater than 0.00 indicates that the model has predictive relevance (see Table 3). Furthermore, we assessed the model fit using the standardized root mean square residual (SRMR); the SRMR for our model was 0.062. Considering that this value was below the required threshold of 0.1, we determined that our model had an acceptable fit (Hair et al., 2010).

Direct Effects

Direct effect hypotheses were tested to ascertain the significance of each relationship. When evaluating JA as the antecedent in our modeling, H1 assessed whether JA positively impacted TI. The results revealed that JA significantly impacted TI (β =0.258, t = 3.660, p < 0.000), providing support for H1.

We tested direct effects of variables without hypotheses in our model to include controls and later evaluate indirect effects. For both direct effects of GGM, MM, and PWM as antecedents of TOI, we found a non-significant relationship (GGM-→TOI: β = -0.072, t = 0.935,

p = 0.350, MM-→TOI: β = 0.028, t = 0.35, p = 0.727, and PWM-→TOI: β = -0.020, t = 0.863, p = 0.863) . However, the direct effects of our controls yielded both significant and non-significant relationships. Both CU and JSat were significant: (CU-→TOI: β = 0.129, t = 2.165, p = 0.030 and JSat-→TOI: β = -0.333, t = 3.032, p = 0.002). Conversely, Gender, OrgTen, and age were non-significant: (Gender-→TOI: β = -0.014, t = 0.310, p = 0.757, OrgTen-→TOI: β = -0.064, t = 1.196, p = 0.232, Age-→TOI: β = -0.110, t = 1.823, p = 0.068).

Indirect Effects

Moderation analysis was performed using 5000 samples to assess the moderation roles of the hypothesized relationships (H2-4) in our theoretical model. The results revealed two nonsignificant (p > 0.05) moderating relationships: For hypothesis 3, MM's indirect effect on JA was nonsignificant (β = 0.143, t = 1.671, p = 0.095). In hypothesis 4, GGM's indirect effect on JA was also nonsignificant (β = 0.052, t = 0.609, p = 0.543).

The analysis of the role of PWM between JA and TOI revealed a significant moderation effect (β = -0.254, t = 2.848, p = 0.004). To understand the form of the interaction, we examined the simple slopes for the data. The plot showed a steeper and positive gradient for low and mean levels of PWM compared to high levels of the same variable. Additionally, the slope analysis revealed that at high levels of PWM, the relationship between JA and TOI was nearly unaffected by the inclusion of the moderator. This relationship indicates that positive work meaning moderates the relationship between job anxiety and turnover intention at both low and represent levels of positive work meaning, but not at high levels. In other words, low and mean levels of positive work meaning will indirectly affect how much job anxiety impacts turnover intention. The form of the interaction is shown in the plot in Figure 2.

[Insert Figure 2 about here]

Please see Table 4. for the path results of analysis and Figure 3. for a visual of the supported and unsupported hypotheses in our conceptual model.

(Inset Table 4. And Figure 3. about here)

Summary of Findings

Through our efforts to answer the research question, *Can perceiving having meaningful work moderate the relationship between physical symptoms of job stress and quitting ideations?* We found that meaningful work indirectly impacts job anxiety when considering turnover intentions. However, our findings suggest that meaningful work does not lower job anxiety but instead amplifies the anxiety surrounding perceptions of one's job when the individual considers leaving their employment at different levels of meaningful work. Specifically, our findings suggest that positive result meaning positively amplifies job anxiety at low and moderate levels. We did not find a significant relationship between indirect effects at any levels of meaning-making or greater good motivations. To understand the theoretical implications of our findings, we will now discuss how our findings can impact the literature.

Discussion

The image of workers experiencing tension headaches and a tightening feeling in their chest when even thinking about their job (Parker & DeCotiis, 1983) is ironically heartbreaking. It is no surprise that we found a positive relationship between one perceiving this type of job stress and a higher intention to leave a job where these perceptions occur. Additionally, it is not surprising that when an individual has personal meaning, significance, or purpose through their work (Steger et al., 2012), at low levels, an individual would experience an amplification of job

anxiety because the individual would be expressing that there was little to no positive meaning in their job. However, we were surprised that when at moderate levels (average), positive work meaning amplifies job anxiety because the current theory associated with positive work meaning paints the construct as an overtly positive element that, when present at even average levels, benefits one's perception of their work (Hackman & Lawler, 1971; Hackman & Oldham, 1976; Wisse & Sleebos, 2016). Even though our findings did show that at high levels of positive work meaning (though not significantly), there was a slight lowering of job anxiety and turnover intentions, we add to the current theory by providing empirical support that the positive work meaning component of meaningful work can be an opposing force when employees experience both job stress and turnover intention if there is anything less than high levels of perceived positive meaning.

Beyond identifying the above relationship where low and moderate levels of positive work amplify job anxiety and turnover intention, further connections to the literature can be drawn by viewing positive work meaning through a different lens. The most common link in the literature for positive meaning in one's work is to vocational 'calling' (e.g., Dik & Duffy, 2009; Steger & Dik, 2010; Wrzesniewski et al., 1997). Through the lens of the job crafting literature (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001), this aspect of meaningfulness comes from the cognitive adaptations that individuals make to their work tasks and relational boundaries of the job to transform work into a meaningful and positive experience ultimately. Our findings may, in part, indicate that when one does not feel 'called' to a job or vocation at high levels, the motivation to accomplish job tasks/actions may be amplified by the perception of job anxiety and increase their desire to leave the job. Moreover, our findings suggest that positive work meaning may be an all-or-nothing construct when job anxiety and turnover are considered.

As described above, the "dark side" of meaningful work also appears in recent literature with other interacting variables. Allan et al. (2020) studied the moderating effects of positive and negative affect, depression, general stress, underemployment, and life satisfaction on meaningful work. The authors found that participants high in meaningful work had positive relationships between underemployment and negative affect, depression, and general stress. Allan et al. also evaluated meaningful work with the WAMI. Still, they chose not to analyze the three separate components of meaningful work Steger et al. (2012) proposed in their three-factor model. In our present study, we believe that the nuance of evaluating the three-factor model allows for a more direct understanding of the interactions of variables. Additionally, unlike Allan et al.'s (2020) study of general stress, we explored the more focused construct of job anxiety (a component of job stress). We argue that Allan et al. opened the door of the "dark side" of meaningful work, and our current study shines a light into one of the darker corners of the room opened for future research.

Before claiming that our findings can be applied generally to all workers, we must consider the age of our sample. Our sample only contained people aged 30+ and had a mean age of 58.75 years old. We considered if we may be observing our findings solely to represent claims of significant and non-significant relationships in people already established in the workforce or those who are a part of Generation X or the Baby Boomer Generation (Dimlock, 2019). Considering that our study is the first to test the moderating relationships of meaningful work in positive work meaning, meaning-making, and greater good motivations on job anxiety, we must explore other studies that tested how age moderated meaningful work to determine if our findings can be applied to the general workforce or for only specific age groups. The literature is conflicted around how age moderates any relationship of a variable against meaningful work. For

example, Allan (2017) found that age did not moderate task significance in meaningful work. However, some scholars found significant differences between Baby Boomers and Generation X and Baby Boomers and Generation Y and no significant difference between Generation X and Generation Y in meaningful work (Fairlie, 2013; Hoole & Bonnema, 2015). Owing to our sample containing no people belonging to Generation Y and the literature pointing to the potential of Generation Y having age as a moderating effect on meaningful work, we argue that our findings can not be applied to the general population of workers. Instead, our findings only suggest that for people over the age of 30, positive work meaning moderates job anxiety and turnover intention.

Limitations and Future Research

We have limitations that bar universal additions to the literature, as with any study. Our first known limitation surrounds the sampling of general workers and not specific industries. Industry-specific components likely will impact greater good motivations when sampling a homogeneous population. We argue that those in the nonprofit field, medical services, and any other vocational area where calling is a core element of identity would likely have different results than a general sampling population. With the limitation of sampled age for our study discussed above, we strongly suggest future researchers explore our modeled relationships on people aged 18- 30 years old to determine how positive work meaning relates to this demographic.

Finally, we suggest that future research explore how locus of control impacts our modeled relationships on meaningful work for positive work meaning and greater good motivation. With locus of control measuring one's perception of how external forces (beyond their influence) have control over the outcome of events in their lives (Rotter & Mulry, 1965),

there is potential to develop a theory for the meaningful work literature on how meaningful work components moderate job anxiety. One could arguably deduce the perception of how much one believes external forces impact one's worldview also could play into how much stress one experiences. Owing to our significant and non-significant findings, significant or non-significant findings of locus of control as a mediator would advance understanding of how meaningful work helps employees with sense-making to circumnavigate job stress relating to turnover intentions.

Managerial Implications

Our findings suggest that only at high levels of positive work meaning will employees not have their job anxiety amplified when stressed on the job. Managers should consider that anything less than high amounts of perceived positive work meaning will cause increased job anxiety and turnover intentions when trying to motivate their employees. Managers have a responsibility as inspirational leaders and must consider their ability to influence their employees.

From a developmental standpoint, managers should consider how their employees are engaged with training and development. If employees have a moderate level of job satisfaction, there may be many factors driving this. They may feel that they are not getting the same level of work as their peers. They may want to move up in the organization and are not getting the required responsibility to move up the corporate ladder. Managers should consider ways to engage the developmental needs of their employees positively.

The passion that drives effective leadership management can positively affect their direct reports (Alzghoul et al., 2018). It goes without saying that effective leadership can drive individuals' ability to be more efficient and effective in their roles. Producing a compelling vision for their direct reports could empower employees who potentially could leave the

organization to feel wanted and needed in their roles. Research has also shown that ineffective leadership can lead to more stress and anxiety (Pyc et al., 2017). Crafting the right mindset for managers' employees can alleviate their fear and anxiety and create a more positive experience for them in the workplace.

Conclusion

Job Stress and the anxiety associated with job stress have been and will always be a part of the employment experience. When employees encounter physical symptoms related to the stress of their job, positive work meaning can only be relied on at high levels as a tool to minimize symptoms that lead to turnover intentions. Our study indicates that if at average or low levels of positive work, employees will likely feel a compounding effect of their job anxiety symptoms in situations where turnover is being considered.

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Figure 1. Conceptual Model

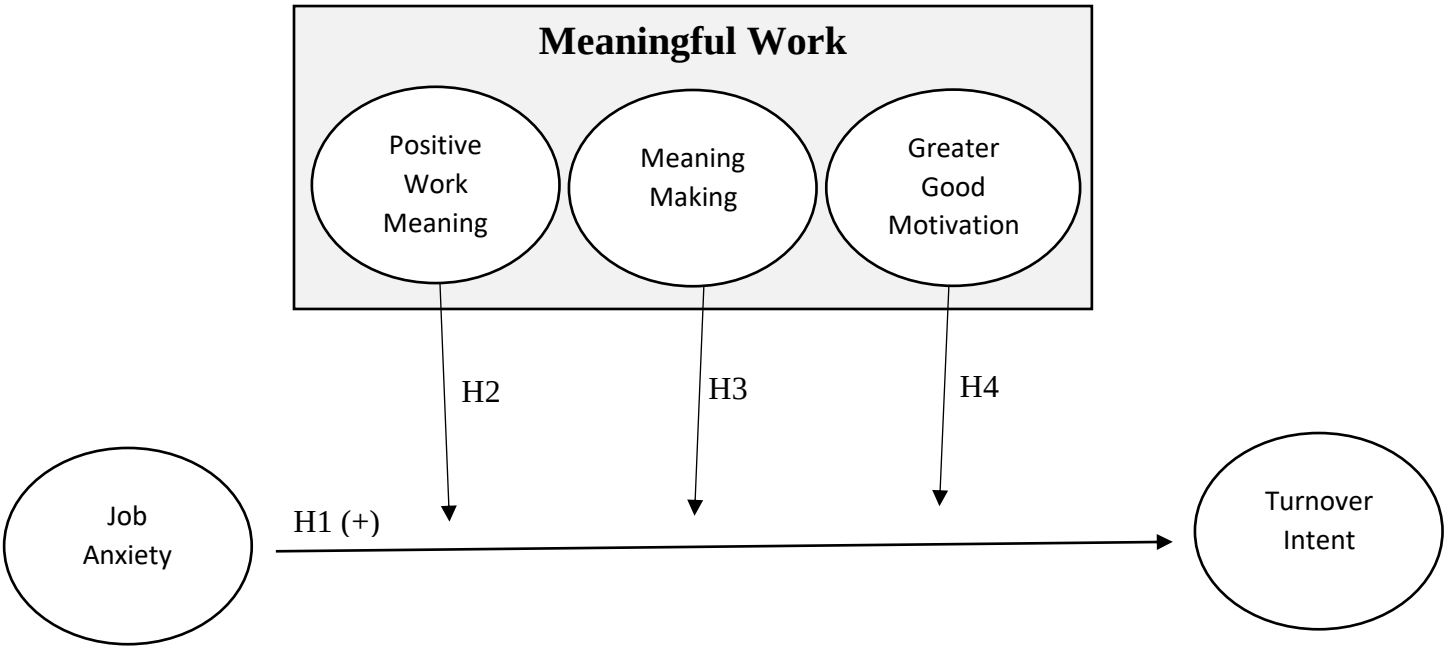

Figure 2. Conceptual Model with Significant and Nonsignificant Results

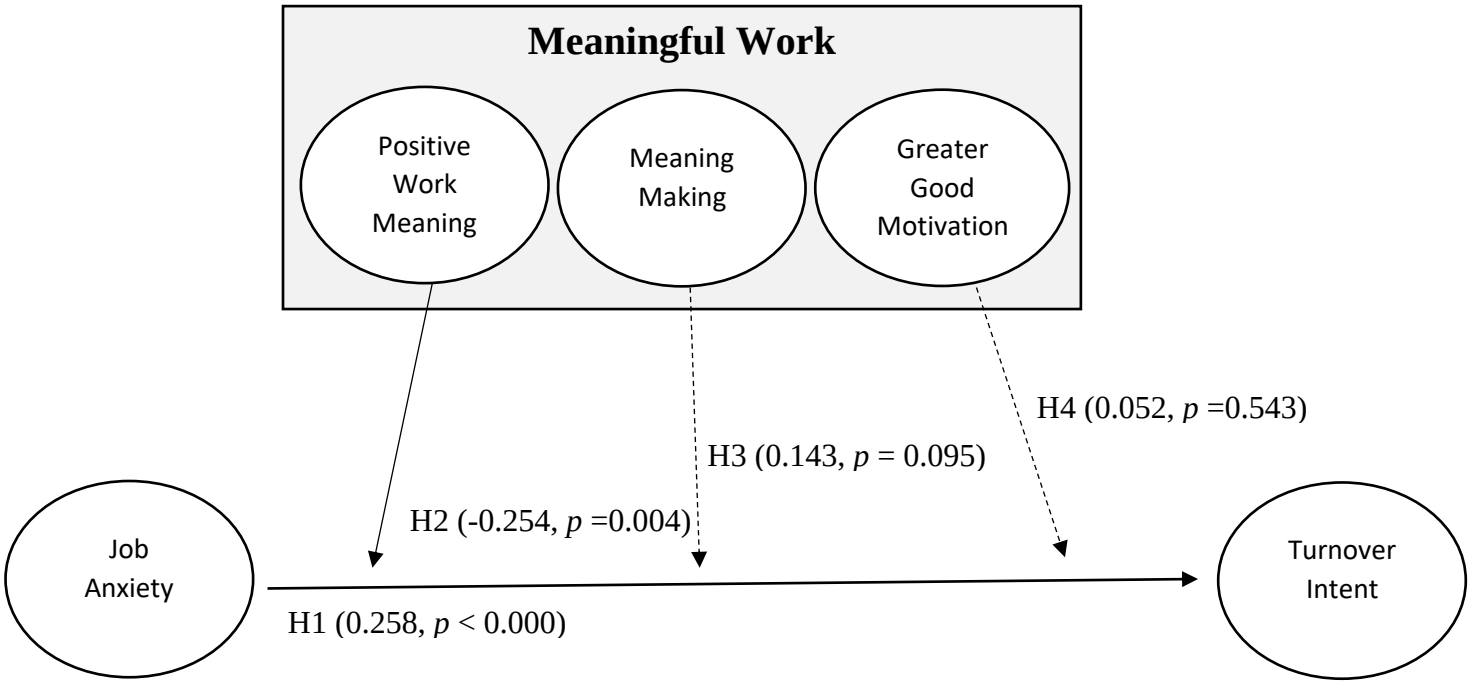

Figure 3. Simple Slope Analysis of Job Anxiety and Positive Work Meaning on Turnover Intentions

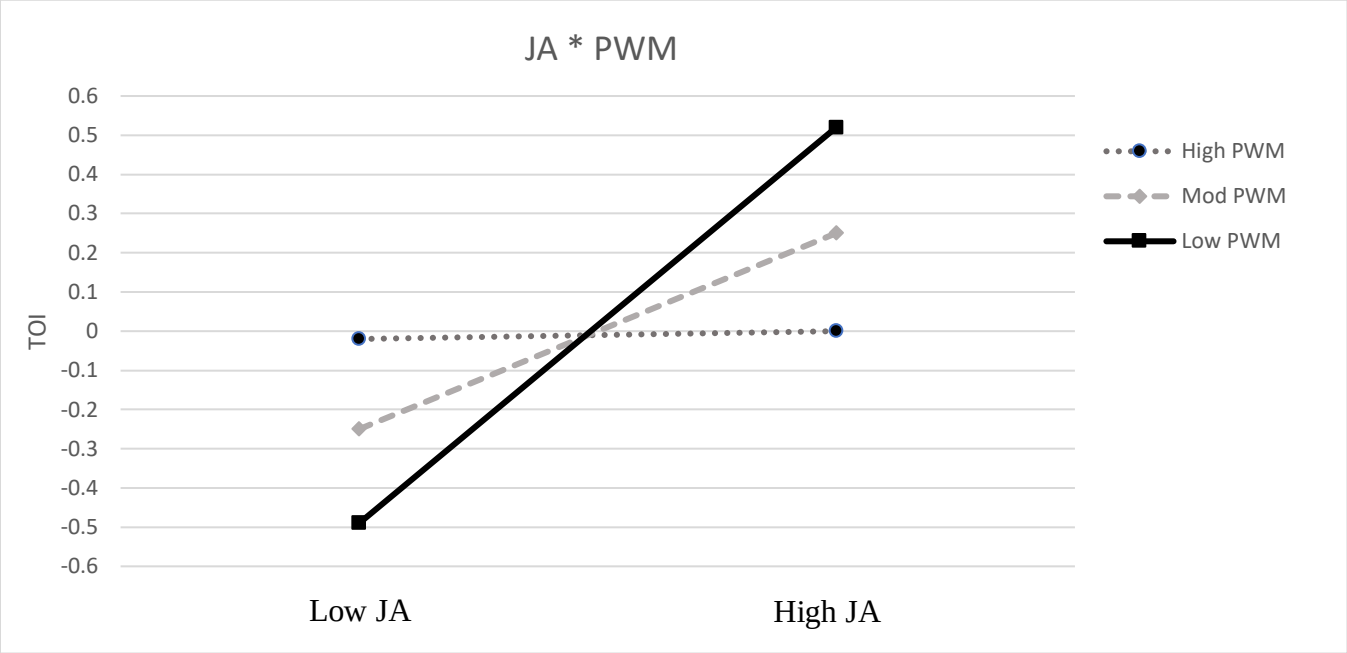

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of the Sample

Age	N	%
30-35	9	4.110
36-40	7	3.196
41-45	18	8.219
46-50	13	5.936
51-55	17	7.763
56-60	41	18.721
61-65	50	22.831
66-70	50	22.831
71-75	11	5.023
76-80	2	0.913
81	1	0.457

Education	N	%
High School	18	8.219
Vocational Training	6	2.740
Some College	26	11.872
Associates Degree	19	8.676
Bachelor's Degree	89	40.639
Master's Degree	43	19.635
Doctorate Degree	14	6.393
other	4	1.826

Race	N	%
Asian	4	1.826
Black or African American	3	1.370
Hispanic/Latino	2	0.913
White or Caucasian	204	93.150
Multiracial or other	4	1.826
Prefer not to answer	2	0.913

Table 2. Loading, Reliability, and Validity

Construct/Facet	Items	Loadings	AVE	Composite Reliability	Cronbach's Alpha	R Square
CU	CU1	0.752	0.925	0.891	0.757	NA
	CU2	0.864				
	CU3	0.935				
	CU4	0.919				
PWM	MW1	0.937	0.841	0.955	0.937	NA
	MW2	0.905				
	MW3	0.889				
	MW4	0.938				
MM	MW5	0.905	0.837	0.939	0.904	NA
	MW6	0.936				
	MW7	0.904				
GGM	MW8	0.716	0.713	0.88	0.791	NA
	MW9	0.917				
	MW10	0.886				
JA	JA1	0.760	0.690	0.917	0.888	NA
	JA3	0.892				
	JA5	0.880				
	JA7	0.848				
	JA9	0.763				
TOI	TI1	0.904	0.878	0.956	0.931	0.542
	TI2	0.948				
	TI3	0.957				
JSat	JSat1	0.909	0.750	0.947	0.932	NA
	JSat2	0.869				
	JSat3	0.790				
	JSat4	0.761				
	JSat5	0.925				
	JSat6	0.927				

Table 3. Fornell-Larcker criterion and Heterotrait–monotrait ratio of correlations

	CU	GGM	JA	JS	PWM	TOI
CU	0.870					
GGM	-0.236	0.844				
JA	0.527	-0.306	0.831			
JS	-0.380	0.572	-0.537	0.866		
PWM	-0.160	0.656	-0.228	0.649	0.915	
TOI	-0.261	0.680	-0.422	0.787	0.770	0.917

Note: Diagonal elements are the square root of the AVE for the construct in Fornell-Larcker criterion

Heterotrait–monotrait ratio of correlations

	CU	GGM	JA	JS	PWM	TOI
CU						
GGM	0.284					
JA	0.595	0.366				
JSat	0.416	0.662	0.571			
MM	0.171	0.770	0.236	0.703		
PWM	0.286	0.788	0.454	0.842	0.829	
TOI	0.459	0.459	0.624	0.653	0.400	0.532

Table 4. Path Analysi

Model Path	β	STDV	t-value	p-value	**CI 2.5%**	**CI 97.5%**
H1: JA ----> TOI	0.258	0.070	3.660	0.000	0.118	0.393
GGM -> TOI	-0.076	0.081	0.935	0.350	-0.231	0.083
MM -> TOI	0.028	0.081	0.350	0.727	-0.138	0.185
PWM -> TOI	-0.020	0.114	0.173	0.863	-0.235	0.211
Controls						
Age -> TOI	-0.110	0.061	1.823	0.068	-0.227	0.009
Gender -> TOI	-0.014	0.046	0.310	0.757	-0.106	0.078
JSat -> TOI	-0.333	0.110	3.032	0.002	-0.554	-0.125
OrgTen -> TOI	-0.064	0.053	1.196	0.232	-0.166	0.044
CU ---> TOI	0.129	0.059	2.165	0.030	0.014	0.245
Moderation						
H2: JA*PWM -> TOI	-0.254	0.089	2.848	0.004	-0.434	-0.088
H3: JA*MM -> TOI	0.143	0.086	1.671	0.095	-0.025	0.313
H4: JA*GGM -> TOI	0.052	0.085	0.609	0.543	-0.121	0.211

	R^2	Q^2	SRMR
TI	0.542	0.438	0.062