

Exploring The Role Of Existential Labour And Its Influence On Employee Well-Being

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Doctor of Philosophy

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Thesis Summary

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Meaningful work within organisations has developed and changed in terms of its conceptualisation and function. Organisations today are more focused on enabling purpose-based work with greater experiences of meaningfulness and advocate for improving the well-being of employees. However, this is difficult to implement without understanding how meaningfulness is perceived and managed by contemporary workers. That said, the studies presented in this thesis challenge several prevailing assumptions in the literature to suggest that ‘meaning management’ and possible misalignment between organisationally desired meaningfulness and the employee’s sense of meaningfulness is harmful to employees. We use a person-environment lens to explore the idea that misfit or experiences of meaningfulness dissonance will lead to stress-related outcomes such as burnout and alienation. Additionally, this research specifically tests propositions put forth by Bailey et al., (2018) on Existential Labour, to understand how individuals cope with meaningfulness dissonance. Three studies have been conducted as part of validating the newly developed measure of Existential labour and Meaningfulness Dissonance. A research model has been developed as a part of the validation process, that examines the strategies under existential labour and its relationship with negative well-being outcomes. For initial validation of the proposed construct of existential labour, 276 participants were analysed to explore the factor structure of existential labour. Another sample of 304 participants was tested to confirm the factor structure. EFA and CFA analysis identified 2 factors under existential labour, which were theoretically derived i.e. deep and surface existential acting. Construct and criterion validity confirmed 10 items under Existential Labour Measure (ExLM). The measure was then tested in a hypothesised model in two field studies along with meaningfulness dissonance (MD) and negative well-being indicators. A weekly lagged study with 270 working professionals from the UK using mediation analysis across three-time points showed that deep existential acting significantly mediated the relationship between MD and alienation. Finally, this research also contributes towards understanding within-person fluctuations of existential labour on well-being outcomes. Week-level data was collected from 273 working professionals in the UK using Prolific. Data was collected across 12 weeks. Multilevel mediation analysis showed that weekly deep and surface existential acting significantly mediates weekly perceptions of MD and negative well-being outcomes (i.e. cynicism, depersonalisation and alienation). Cross-level interactions with organisational psychological safety as the moderator showed interaction effects between weekly deep existential acting and depersonalisation. In other words, employees that perceived high organisational psychological safety, had lower experiences of weekly deep existential acting and depersonalisation at work. Taken together the studies conducted provide both internal and external validity to the theoretically derived research model of this thesis and also provides strong evidence towards the negative repercussions of engaging in existential acting strategies.

Keywords: Meaningful Work; Existential Labour; dissonance; alienation; burnout; scale validation; diary study; multilevel analysis; P-E fit theory.

Dedication

I dedicate this to my Family, especially my Mother, her strength and goodwill has always inspired me.

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Contents

Thesis Summary	2
Acknowledgements.....	5
Contents	7
Table of Tables	12
Table of Figures	13
Chapter 1. Introduction and Background.....	15
1.1 Introduction.....	15
1.1.1 Problem Statement and Research Objectives	21
1.2 Contributions to Theory and Practice	22
Chapter 2. Literature Review on Multiple of Perspectives of Meaningful work	27
2.1 Review of Different Perspectives of Meaningful Work	27
2.1.1 Defining Meaningful Work.....	27
2.1.2 Psychological Perspective.....	33
2.1.3 Sociological Perspective	36
2.1.4 Humanities Perspective: A critical management account.....	41
2.1.5 Management of Meaningful Work Perspective	46
2.2 Proposed Key Outcomes in Management of Meaningful Work Perspective	49
2.2.1 Work-related psychological states	50
2.2.2 Performance-related outcomes.....	52
2.2.3 Other outcomes	52
2.3 Summary and Current Direction	53
Chapter 3. Existential Labour and its Theoretical Underpinnings	57
3.1 Introduction to Existential Labour	57
3.1.1 Definition of existential labour	57
3.1.2 Existential Labour strategies.....	57
3.1.3 Lack of Meaningful work and Existential labour	61
3.1.4 The Role of Organisations and existential labour.....	63
3.1.5 Similarities between Existential Labour, Authenticity and Impression Management:.....	66
3.2 Differences between Existential Labour and other related concepts:	68
3.2.1 Emotional Labour Theory: An Origin for existential labour	68
3.2.2 Existential Labour Strategies and Meaningfulness At and In Work.....	75
3.3 Summary	78

Chapter 4.	Exploring Meaningfulness Dissonance as an Antecedent of Existential Labour Using P-E Perspective	79
4.1	The Role of Person-environment Fit (Misfit)	80
4.1.1	Person-Organisation Fit, Supplementary Fit as the focus.....	81
4.1.2	Approaches to the Study of P-E fit	82
4.1.3	P-E misfit, meaningful work and other related factors	84
4.1.4	P-E misfit: A Hedonistic perspective.....	86
4.2	Dissonance As an Antecedent of Existential Labour.....	89
4.2.1	Definition of Dissonance in the context of meaningful work.....	90
4.3	Proposed Outcomes of Meaningfulness Dissonance and Existential Labour.....	91
4.3.1	P-E fit stress theory	91
4.3.2	Authenticity and P-E fit theory	92
4.4	Addressing Current Issues in P-E Fit Theory and Existential Labour.....	95
4.5	Summary	98
Chapter 5.	Research Rationale, Philosophy and Methodology	99
5.1	Research Paradigm and Philosophy of Inquiry	99
5.1.1	Epistemological considerations	100
5.1.2	Axiology	103
5.2	Research Philosophies in Meaningful Work Research.....	105
5.2.1	Ontological considerations.....	105
5.3	Research Philosophy of the Thesis	106
5.4	Research Design.....	108
5.5	Data Collection	110
5.6	Ethical Considerations	111
5.6.1	Pilot Sample: Cognitive Interviews	112
5.6.2	Samples 1 and 2	113
5.6.3	Sample 3.....	115
Chapter 6.	Development and Validation of Existential Labour and Meaningfulness Dissonance	116
6.1	The Development of Existential Labour and Meaningfulness Dissonance	116
6.2	Methodological Rationale	118
6.3	Deductive Formulation of the Initial Item Pool.....	119
6.3.1	The use of existing items from Emotional Labour and Emotional Dissonance	119
6.3.2	Initial item pool for meaningfulness dissonance	120
6.3.3	Initial Item Pool for existential labour	121

6.4	Content validity for Development and Validation of Existential Labour and Meaningfulness Dissonance.....	124
6.4.1	Content validity assessment and expert reviews.....	124
6.4.2	Research design	125
6.4.3	Results.....	130
6.5	Study 2. EFA of Meaningfulness Dissonance and Existential Labour	133
6.5.1	Item list refinement and evaluation study	133
6.5.2	Research design	133
6.5.3	Data collection and sample	133
6.5.4	Data analysis: Exploratory factor analysis (EFA)	135
6.5.5	Preliminary EFA Results for Existential labour and Meaningfulness dissonance	137
6.5.6	Scale reliability	140
6.5.7	Item reduction process for the Existential Labour and Meaningfulness Dissonance	140
6.5.8	EFA results for the final version of the ExLM	142
6.6	Summary and Discussion:.....	145
Chapter 7.	Validating Newly Developed Existential Labour and Meaningfulness Dissonance	147
7.1	Introduction.....	147
7.2	Overview of studies in this chapter:.....	147
7.2.1	Study 3a. CFA for Existential Labour (ExLM) and Meaningfulness Dissonance (MD).....	148
7.2.2	Study 3b: Convergent and Discriminant Validity.....	148
7.2.3	Study 3c: Testing for Incremental Validity and Predictive Validity	151
7.2.4	Study 3d. Development of a Model to Test Meaningfulness Dissonance As a Predictor of Worker Alienation and Burnout outcomes Via Existential Labour Strategies.....	151
7.3	Procedure for all studies conducted using Sample 2	152
7.3.1	Data collection and sample	154
7.3.2	Data analysis:	155
7.4	Measures	159
7.5	Results for all studies	161
7.5.1	Results for CFA of Existential Labour	161
7.5.2	CFA results for meaningfulness dissonance measure.....	164
7.5.3	Scale reliability re-examination	165
7.5.4	Convergent Validity and Discriminant Validity: Hypothesis Tests	165

7.5.5	Predictive Validity: Hypothesis Tests.....	167
7.5.6	Results for SEM.....	171
7.6	Discussion.....	172
Chapter 8.	Adopting a Week-level Approach to Examine the Negative Consequences of Existential Labour	176
8.1	Overview.....	176
8.2	Theory and Hypothesis	176
8.3	Week-level Perspective to Understanding the Process of Existential Labour Strategies.....	176
8.3.1	Weekly MD and existential acting strategies and outcomes	178
8.3.2	Psychological Safety as a Cross-Level Moderator of Week-level relationship between MD and Wellbeing Outcomes.	180
8.4	Methods.....	182
8.4.1	Sample and data collection	182
8.4.2	Measures	184
8.5	Further Validation of the ExLM	188
8.5.1	Results of MCFA regarding the EXLM.....	189
8.6	Measurement Model	191
8.6.1	Results for multilevel analysis	192
8.6.2	Model Building using Mplus	194
8.6.3	Hypothesis tests	195
8.6.4	MCMAM Tests on the Indirect Effects	198
8.6.5	Cross-level moderation of organisational psychological safety	203
8.6.6	Additional Analysis: Examining the Interaction Effect of Deep Existential Acting and Organisational Psychological Safety on Depersonalisation.....	205
8.7	Discussion and Conclusion	208
Chapter 9.	General Discussion	211
9.1	The Research Problem	211
9.2	Summary of Study Findings	212
9.3	Theoretical Implications	214
9.3.1	Theoretical Contributions to Meaningful Work Literature.....	215
9.3.2	Theoretical Contributions to P-E (Misfit) Theory	216
9.3.3	Theoretical Contributions to New Avenues of Research – Existential labour	217
9.3.4.	Theoretical Contributions to Well-Being Literature.....	219
9.4	Practical Implications.....	222

9.5	Limitations and Future Considerations.....	225
9.5.1	Limitations with regard to Research of P-E fit and Meaningful work	225
9.5.2	Limitations and Recommendations in Existential labour Theory.....	227
9.5.3	Methodological limitations	231
9.6	Conclusion	234
Chapter 10.	References.....	237
Chapter 11.	Appendices.....	260
11.1	Appendix 1.....	260
	Summary of Meaningful work conceptualisations by different authors: its development over time.....	260
11.1.1.	Glossary of terms	262
11.2	Appendix 2 : Existential labour and MAW/MIW.....	264
	Appendix 2.2- Differentiating Emotions and Meaningfulness	264
11.3	Appendix 3: Hypotheses Overview	267
11.4	Appendix 4: Data Collection and Ethical Consideration	270
	11.4.1 Data Collection and Ethics Forms for Sample 1	270
11.5	Appendix 5: Sample 2 Data Collection and Supporting Documents.....	285
11.5.1	Information sheet for Participants.....	285
11.5.2	Survey Items	290
11.5.3	List Of Measures:.....	291
11.6	Appendix 6: Data Collection and Ethical Considerations fpr Sample 3.....	313
11.6.1	Survey Example: Using Soci-Survey Tool.....	317
11.7	Appendix 7.....	325
	Meaningfulness Dissonance Items: Pooling Phase.....	325
11.8	Appendix 8.....	325
	Existential Labour Items: Pooling Phase.....	325
11.9	Appendix 9.....	328
	Revision of Items after Peer-Reviewing and Expert Reviews.....	328
11.9.1	Items After 5 Revisions: This Set was Used for Cognitive Interviews	331
11.10	Appendix 10: Reports/Coding from Cognitive Interviews.....	334
11.11	Appendix 11: Example of Notes from Cognitive Interviews:	348
11.11.1	Notes From Interviews.....	348
11.12	Appendix 12: SEM Diagram showing all pathways- Study 3d presented in Chapter 7.....	350
11.13.	Appendix 13: Additional Analysis: Validation of Existential used on a different population (N=215) for another project outside the scope of this PhD thesis.....	352

11.14. Appendix 14: Modified Items for YSC’s LTD Motivation Assessment	352
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Table of Tables

Table 2-1. Summary of meaningful work perspectives	31
Table 5-1. Overview of key chapters and validation studies	110
Table 5-2. Data collection strategy	110
Table 6-1: Overview of studies in this Chapter 6:	118
Table 6-2. The initial set of items for meaningfulness dissonance.....	121
Table 6-3. Initial item pooling for deep existential acting.....	124
Table 6-4. Initial item pooling for surface existential acting.....	124
Table 6-5. Study design	125
Table 6-6. Adapted list of meaningfulness dissonance items	130
Table 6-7. Adapted list of Deep existential acting items	131
Table 6-8. Adapted list of Surface existential acting items	131
Table 6-9. Example of problem identification sheet.....	132
Table 6-10. Example of modification sheet.....	132
Table 6-11. EFA of both existential labour and meaningfulness dissonance	133
Table 6-12. Summary of EFA results for existential labour measure and meaningfulness dissonance using principal component analysis, oblique rotation (n=258). Total number of items: 28.....	138
Table 6-13. Summary of EFA results for existential labour measure using principal component analysis, oblique rotation (n=258). Total number of items: 21	141
Table 6-14. Summary of EFA results for ExLM using principal component analysis, oblique rotation (n=258). Total number of items: 16	143
Table 7-1. Construct and criterion validity study design.....	147
Table 7-2. Standardised factor loadings for the 11-item version of the EXLM	162
Table 7-3. Goodness-of-fit indicators of models for ExLM (n=304): using maximum likelihood robust	163
Table 7-4. Standardised factor loadings for the final 10-item version of the EXLM.....	164
Table 7-5. Goodness-of-fit indicators of models for MD measure (n=304) using maximum likelihood robust	165
Table 7-6. Standardised factor loadings for the 5-item final version of the MD measure	165
Table 7-7. Means and SD’s for Variables used for Convergent and Discriminant Validity .	166
Table 7-8. Chi-square tests and fit indices between existential labour and related constructs	167

Table 7-9. Means, standard deviations and correlations of variables used in time 1 and time 3	168
Table 7-10. Regression analysis and relative weight analysis for sample 2 (n=269) -.....	169
Table 7-11 Step wise Regression analysis with Work alienation.....	171
Table 8-1. Summary of multilevel CFA results for existential labour (n=274) at within level, (n=2578) number of observations at weekly level. Number of Items: 10.	189
Table 8-2. Summary of multilevel CFA results for existential labour (n=274) at between level. Number of Items: 10.	189
Table 8-3. ICC's (1) for all weekly level variables	191
Table 8-4. Means, standard deviations and correlations with confidence intervals	195
Table 8-5. Summarises the results of the multilevel analysis to test Hypothesis 1, which proposed weekly ExI (Level 1) to mediate weekly MD (Level 1) on weekly negative wellbeing outcomes (Level 1).....	196
Table 9-1. Summary of results.....	212

Table of Figures

Figure 4-1. Applying P-E fit to the relationship between meaningfulness dissonance and wellbeing.....	84
Figure 4-2 Conceptual model of Existential labour using P-E Fit theory.....	95
Figure 6-1: Scree Plot for all 28 items	138
Figure 8-1. Conceptual model of existential labour.....	177
Figure 8-2. Moderating effect psychological safety on the relationship between weekly deep existential acting and weekly depersonalisation	204
Figure 8-3. Depersonalisation as a function of deep existential acting and organisational psychological safety. Displays \hat{y} for each combination of x and moderator level and slopes are compared to zero; Z=Z-Standardised variable; *p<0.05; **p<0.01	207

Chapter 1. Introduction and Background

1.1 Introduction

This chapter introduces and provides a background to the research topic of existential labour and meaningfulness dissonance. It reviews current arguments around meaningful work experiences before examining the theoretical underpinnings of existential labour. It also reviews the study's underlying assumptions, contextualising the rationale and problem statement of the project and presents important contributions of the study.

The basic dilemmas of managerial and work-life revolve, in one way or another, around whether individuals are truly engaging in meaningful work (Jackall, 1988) and a variety of disciplines in the humanities have proposed that addressing the extent of meaningfulness at work has profound implications for mental and physical wellbeing (Chadi et al., 2017). Broadly speaking, when something is meaningful, it helps to answer the question, 'Why am I here?' (Pratt and Ashforth, 2003). As opposed to a feeling of enjoyment, an assessment of meaning involves the consideration of a higher level providing the 'why'; the reason or the goal of one's situation (Pratt and Ashforth, 2003; Schnell & Hoffmann, 2020). Experiencing meaningful work does not lie in an individual entirely. According to Bailey et al. (2018) to understand if an individual is truly engaging in meaningful work, one must consider social, institutional and societal contexts along with the emotional and cognitive constraints of the individual (Lips-Wiersma & Morris, 2009). This indicates the uncertainty that has prevailed around different conceptualisations of meaningfulness, which should be included and which are most salient (Bailey et al., 2018).

Although different definitions have emerged organisational scholars agree that meaningfulness is about experiencing intrinsic value in one's work; employees that experience this tend to perform their work conscientiously, responsibly and with quality (Allan, et al., 2018; Steger, 2016). Meaningfulness has been defined as 'the value of a work goal or purposes, judged to the individual's morals and values' (May et al., 2004). More recent work has suggested that meaningfulness may emerge from a fluid and contextual process; an individual must actively negotiate organisational, cultural and economic forces through everyday activities to arrive at an experience of meaningfulness (Mitra & Buzzanell, 2017). These forces can be both enabling and constraining, depending on their nature and how they are experienced (Schnell & Hoffmann, 2020). For example, in the healthcare sector, nurses go beyond their job roles and requirements to serve patients, especially when the employer supports their personal

development, autonomy and well-being (Bailey et al., 2016; Schadenhofer et al., 2018). Thus, when an employee experiences their work as meaningful, this is a subjective experience of the purpose of their work (May et al., 2004). Conversely, when an employee experiences their work as lacking in meaningfulness, this is a subjective experience of the existential significance of their work being diminished (Bailey & Madden, 2016; Chadi et al., 2017).

Allan et al. (2019) and Boeck et al. (2019) corroborate earlier research that posited a link between job design and perceptions of meaningfulness, finding that job design characteristics as such skill, variety, autonomy and job feedback are important to experience work meaningfulness (Bailey et al., 2018). Despite attempts to foster meaningful work in organisations either through job design or social support (Allan, 2017; Boeck et al., 2019; Lysova et al., 2018; Pekaar et al., 2018), recent arguments indicate that employees are still capable of experiencing a lack of meaningfulness because of inevitable tensions at work (Bailey et al., 2017; Lips-Wiersma et al., 2018). In order to manage meaningfulness at work or possible tensions, employees may be forced to adopt strategies to regulate their own versus organisational expectations to maintain meaningfulness (Lips-Wiersma & Wright, 2012; Tummers & Knies, 2014; Veltman, 2015). These strategies involve managing genuine experiences of meaningful work for the sake of adhering to organisational expectations and norms, also known as *existential labour strategies* (Bailey et al., 2017). This could benefit employees in the short-term to get through the day or week but can have severe negative affective outcomes on employee wellbeing over time, including exhaustion and feelings of alienation (Bailey et al., 2016; Hirschfeld et al., 2018; Trougakos et al., 2015). According to Bailey and colleagues (2018), existential labour is experienced when the employee is 'pretending' that their role is meaningful and adopts existential acting strategies, perhaps to cope with the monotony of the role when in reality they are only performing the role to further their self-interest in promotions, money or prestige (Bailey et al., 2017). Other influences such as organisational control can create opportunities for existential labour i.e., when employees do not have the autonomy to express themselves freely in a workplace or are managed by the organisation in terms of displaying organisationally desired behaviours (Hewlin, 2003; Walumbwa & Schaubroeck, 2009). These tensions are experienced on a daily basis (Vogel et al., 2019) and can lead to a lack of meaningfulness. Lack of meaningfulness here is a sense of reduced meaningfulness due to loss of agency, and momentary feelings of disempowerment over one's work (Bailey & Madden, 2016). Such experiences are harmful to employees and

employers as it would be harder to sustain motivation both at work and in life (Kim & Beehr, 2018; Park, 2010).

Given the contemporary focus on loving one's work and finding a calling, meaning and passion and the support of a plethora of positive outcomes, including financial gain and happiness, it is evident why employers and employees seek meaningfulness in organisations even when it may be absent or a lack of it (Berkelaar & Buzzanell, 2015; Vallerand et al., 2010). The 'need to engage in meaningful work' (Yeoman, 2014a, p. 237) from an employee's perspective could result from controlled internalisations of the job into one's identity. Such internalisations could occur from the affective disposition (Steger et al., 2013), interpersonal pressure (Carton, 2018), conformity to organisational policies (Hewlin, 2009) or because of the satisfaction that is derived from an activity that is meaningful versus an activity that is not meaningful (Martela et al., 2018). Thus, although individuals love to find their work meaningful they may find themselves in a position of experiencing an internal urge to manage their meaningfulness (Vogel et al., 2019), leading to a conflicted form of meaningful work (Bailey et al., 2018).

Such conflict or tensions with regard to meaningfulness at work could be experienced at the organisational or individual level (Lips-Wiersma & Wright, 2012). At the organisational level, there is an increased demand on the workforce to make rapid adjustments, show flexibility, accept risk and multitask due to an increase in responsibilities, hours and unpredictability at work (Coutinho et al., 2008). Recent findings from national surveys involving US workers have shown that those who remain employed during the Covid-19 pandemic might experience significant pay cuts, reduction in work hours and prolonged furlough while also facing increased work demand and difficult working conditions (Kramer & Kramer, 2020). In such situations, it becomes difficult to experience meaningfulness (Bailey, 2018; Schnell & Hoffmann, 2020). The authenticity of meaningful work experiences is undermined when the organisations themselves have lost sight of the purpose of their products or services. Moreover, neoliberal economic principles (Green, 2004) have moved so much into the foreground that criteria such as intrinsic job characteristics (i.e. meaningfulness, quality, sustainability and social responsibility) fall behind (Schnell & Hoffmann, 2020). It is similarly detrimental to meaningful work when organisations instrumentalise strategies to increase meaning in work for performative intent (Bailey, 2018). The meaning of work 'is reduced to a mere transaction between two parties, thereby neglecting the intrinsic meaning of work and employment relationships for people' (Bal & Dóci, 2018, p. 538).

Organisational initiatives such as training programmes, feedback on personal development and implementation of new incentives are useful to foster meaningfulness (Allan, 2017; Allan et al., 2019). However, these attempts by organisations would be effective only if employees perceive them to be consistent with their sense of meaningful work (Lips-Wiersma & Morris, 2009). Inconsistency or any dissonance perceived could lead to cynicism and distrust among employees (Hinojosa et al., 2017).

At the individual level, workers feel less secure about their jobs and the accessibility of desired employment due to stress in the workplace, frustration, despair and psychological disengagement from work tasks (Restubog et al., 2020; Spurk & Straub, 2020). Employees in the service sector often deal with growing problems of job quality which is a product of lack of decent access to work and dissatisfaction with short-term organisational imperatives (Zhang et al., 2020). Those people who started their careers with idealism and enthusiasm are affected. In line with this notion, Maslach (2001, p. 36) highlights that '[w]hat started as important, meaningful and challenging work becomes unpleasant, unfulfilling and meaningless. Energy turns into exhaustion, involvement turns into cynicism and efficacy turns into ineffectiveness' (Maslach, 2011).

Lack of meaningfulness thus poses a potential threat, can elicit feelings of dissociation and leads to apathy and detachment from one's work (May et al., 2004). A recent report from the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD, 2018) from their working lives survey in the UK showed that engaging employees in meaningful work is a priority for organisations to prevent poor wellbeing. This is particularly apposite during the pandemic (Findlay et al., 2021). Since the lockdown, the mass-change to homeworking, working longer hours and furloughed employment have raised additional concerns about how long people are spending with work; for example, whether employees have simply transferred their usual commute time to work longer hours and, as work/life boundaries have been eroded, whether they have developed 'always on' work climates (CIPD, 2018). The closure of many businesses, particularly in the travel and hospitality industries, has put added pressure on many employees who have needed to be furloughed, increasing job insecurity (Findlay et al., 2021). This suggests that contextual issues shifted meaningful work experiences in 2021, indicating more reasons to experience a lack of meaningfulness at work. As a result, human resource management (HRM) practitioners and scholars have diverted efforts into realising one's

purpose at work to prevent employee burnout and encourage employee productivity (Allan et al., 2019; Demirtas et al., 2017; Michaelson et al., 2014).

This has led to debate amongst critical management scholars who have questioned the adversity of organisations and other sources on an individual's authentic meaningful experience (Bailey et al., 2017; Lips-Wiersma & Morris, 2009). Their arguments suggest that attending to contextual issues like organisational level or job level factors is important to ensure meaningful work for employees (Lysova et al., 2018), but can be triggers for lack of meaningfulness (Lepisto & Pratt, 2017; Lips-Wiersma & Wright, 2012; Martela & Pessi, 2018). Michaelson et al. (2014) point to the ambiguous role of organisations in the meaning-making process and several scholars have suggested that meaningfulness is malleable by the employer through such activities as job design, HRM, values and culture and leadership (Lysova et al., 2018). This approach appreciates the involvement of others in experiencing meaningfulness, whilst considering its negative repercussions, providing power to the individual for controlling their sense of meaningfulness (Cartwright & Holmes, 2006; Lips-Wiersma & Morris, 2009). When an individual is deprived of their meaningfulness due to normative controls or the 'symbolic manipulation of meanings' (Bailey et al., 2017, p. 420) this can serve to coerce employees into conforming to poor or even harmful working conditions or engender a sense of alienation (Bailey et al., 2017). This viewpoint has been further conceptualized by Bailey et al., (2018) which indicates that existential labour is a form of meaningfulness management- drawing from pieces of literature on emotional labour and conformity. Individuals tend to adopt two main strategies i.e. deep and surface existential acting. According to Bailey et al., (2018) both these strategies are fundamentally negative for individuals in terms of their wellbeing. Similarly, research on facades of conformity posits that individuals are capable of indulging in pretentious behaviours to conform- therefore leading to unhealthy outcomes for employees (Hewlin, 2009).

Although propositions have been made about employees being exposed to meaningfulness management that could possibly cause harm to their well-being (Bailey et al., 2018; Vogel et al., 2019) more evidence is needed in terms of understanding *what* could lead to existential labour and operationalising the construct. Conceptually, existential labour could contain two different strategies, drawing from emotional labour theory as proposed by Bailey et al. (2018), to test this empirically and test its effects on well-being, a scale of existential labour needs to be developed and validated. These potential gaps have been put forth by Bailey et al. (2018) as well, indicating to further understand the consequences of existential labour, scholars need to

uncover whether any differences between the different strategies exist i.e. deep and surface existential acting strategies. Similarly, the type of acting strategies that individuals create may vary over time and have different effects on well-being outcomes such as alienation and burnout (Hewlin, 2009). Exploring these issues will strengthen current propositions around understanding the experience of individuals suppressing personal values and pretending to embrace organizational values (Hewlin, 2009). By recognizing the potential misalignment between the meaningfulness provided by work and what an employee desires or needs, the opportunity for a more nuanced understanding of the role of meaningfulness at work begins to develop (Vogel et al., 2019).

However, one could argue that not all individuals are said to engage in existential acting behaviours of these kinds nor that people who engage in these behaviours do so to a great extent. At the same time, organisational reports indicate that despite increased focus on meaningfulness at work, and creating purpose-driven organisations, employees are still experiencing high levels of burnout and disengagement (Vogel et al., 2019). This hints at a paradox (Bailey et al., 2018b; Vogel et al., 2019). This thesis calls attention to an underlying assumption that meaningfulness when prescribed can be harmful specifically when employees have to adopt strategies to manage meaningfulness at work. In an attempt to manage meaningfulness, when some of the employees do engage in existential labour, this study proposes that it is triggered by experienced meaningfulness dissonance and thus the importance of pursuing the study prevails. This thesis gives importance to recognising victims who subject themselves to pretending or suppressing their sense of meaningfulness and are known to suffer from stress-related issues leading to low productivity and a high turnover rate thus affecting the organization (Henle et al., 2005). To test these propositions there is an incentive to first develop and validate a scale of existential labour.

In sum, given the relevance of experiencing meaningfulness at work and the detrimental potential of existential labour this study addresses concerns of ‘managing meaningfulness’ due to perceived dissonance in meaningfulness between individuals and their organisations and the possible negative implications of meaningfulness management (Bailey et al., 2018). Two key areas are addressed: how employees respond to the dissonance felt in their sense of meaningfulness versus that of their organisations, and to what extent their response strategies harm their well-being over time.

1.1.1 Problem Statement and Research Objectives

The problem addressed in this thesis explores employees' tendencies to adopt strategies to manage their meaningfulness at work when faced with meaningfulness dissonance. It further investigates how such employees may be at risk of negative individual outcomes, such as alienation, cynicism and depersonalisation. Tendencies to alter or suppress expressions of meaningful work leading to negative repercussions fall under the term existential labour.

This leads to the following overarching research question: *to what extent do existential labour strategies explain the relationship between meaningfulness dissonance and negative well-being outcomes?*

The experience of meaningful work, when fostered authentically, has been linked to many positive outcomes in the workforce, such as increased engagement, motivation and satisfaction (Geldenhuys et al., 2014). The interest in meaningful work has significantly increased over the last two decades through theory development in transformational leadership organisational culture and, more recently, employee engagement (Allan et al., 2019; Bailey et al., 2018b; Both-Nwabuwe et al., 2020). Although some attention has been paid to the humanistic paradigms underpinning the notion of meaningfulness, much of the associated functionalist and managerial research has focused on researching ways to 'manage meaning'. In both the management and humanistic paradigms, there is a need to understand how meaningful work is processed when faced with meaningfulness dissonance at work. This enables a better understanding of how meaningfulness prescribed by organisations is perceived by employees at the individual level. So far, it is clear that having meaningfulness at work is a positive experience, however, deeper levels of meaningfulness need to be investigated to form a better picture of how individuals manage their sense of meaningfulness.

This study seeks to address these gaps by drawing attention to the management literature on meaningful work and bringing forth the propositions by Bailey and colleagues (2018). Most organisations strive to foster meaningful work experiences; however, the extent of their authenticity needs to be investigated further (Bailey et al., 2018). That said, this study proposes that meaningfulness dissonance is a precondition that enables meaningfulness management (suppression or alteration of meaningfulness) via existential labour. In order to test this, a comprehensive measure of existential labour needs to be developed and validated. This study explores the following components under the main research question:

- (1) What elements constitute existential labour and how do they relate to each other?

- (2) Does dissonance experienced at the individual level lead to adopting strategies of existential labour?
- (3) What is the relationship between existential labour and wellbeing-related outcomes such as burnout, engagement and alienation?
- (4) To what extent do existential labour's antecedents, components and outcomes vary over time?

Based on person-environment theory (P-E fit), I argue for a positive relationship between meaningfulness dissonance and employee burnout and alienation through existential labour strategies. I provide reviews of the meaningful work and emotional labour literature in Chapter 3, which were written to identify gaps in the literature and deduce the research question of this thesis. Chapter 4 provides an overview of P-E fit as the theoretical framework used to explain the model of existential labour. Chapter 5 provides an overview of methodological matters and complements the methods sections of each study reported as part of this thesis. Chapter 6 tests the newly developed scale using cognitive interviews and then establishes its factor structure to establish content validity. In Chapter 7, I test the newly developed scale of existential labour for its incremental validity. Chapters 6 and 7 develop a general measure of existential labour in a workplace (EXLM) for further field research. Finally, in Chapter 8, I replicate the research model presented in Chapter 7 and use the existential labour measure (EXLM) developed in Chapters 6 and 7 in a field setting to establish external validity. Finally, in Chapter 9, I discuss and integrate the findings of all studies conducted as part of this thesis, elaborate on strengths and weaknesses, suggest avenues for future research and offer a conclusion.

1.2 Contributions to Theory and Practice

The meaningfulness and HRM literature have been relatively silent on the question of how employees choose to respond to organisational initiatives geared towards raising their levels of experienced meaningfulness (Shantz et al., 2016; Soane et al., 2013). As the interest of the scholarly and business communities in the management of meaning has increased, this research contributes to this subset of the literature by questioning whether healthy outcomes for individuals and society are achieved when meaning becomes a form of normative control (Lips-Wiersma & Morris, 2012.; Michaelson et al., 2014). In so doing, it addresses concerns regarding the management of meaningfulness at work when organisations prescribe meaningful work instead of employees experiencing it.

This thesis seeks to answer these calls by proposing that employees respond to organisational expectations by engaging in existential labour. It recasts meaningfulness at work from a components lens to tracing how meaningful work experiences are perpetual and deeply tensional (Mercurio, 2020). This focus shows that employees' perceptions of meaningfulness shift as professional and organisational contexts change (Bailey & Madden, 2017). According to Mitra and Buzzanell (2017), it explains the dynamic nature of meaningful work experiences. Employees are constantly renegotiating what it is about the work that they find meaningful (Lips-Wiersma & Wright, 2012b; Michaelson et al., 2014; Mitra & Buzzanell, 2017). Far from being a static emotional, positive outcome, meaningfulness becomes an ongoing process grounded in cognition and identity affirmation, wherein organisational expectations and norms influence employees' perceptions of meaningful work in different temporal and spatial contexts. In order to strengthen these propositions, it is first important to operationalize the construct of existential labour- this would provide more evidence behind its possible components, the nature of existential labour and more importantly establishing the nomological network of existential labour. Through this investigation, a layer of richness has been added to meaningful work theory, i.e. by exploring factors that contribute to negative well-being outcomes and determining their relationship with both strategies of existential labour. The outcome of the research would be beneficial to understand more about the humanistic perspective of meaningful work, as it explores a critical perspective of how meaning can be perceived within organisations.

According to Rosso et al. (2010) framework of meaningful work, individuals evaluate their meaningful work experiences through their sense of belonging and fit with the organisation. This suggests the importance of fit between felt and desired sense of meaningfulness (Vogel et al., 2019). It also brings forth the diverse ways in which people cognitively create and construct meaning, for their work and working lives (Broadfoot et al., 2008). These aspects of meaningful work are extended in this thesis through existential labour theory to accommodate the investigation of individual dissonance and its outcomes, thereby providing a platform for understanding the importance of authenticity for future meaningful work research.

Organisation studies research has often sought to distinguish between meaningful work and meaning of work – so that 'meaningfulness' is derived from positive intrinsic factors of the work itself and 'meaning' indicates the extrinsic, multiple significances of work in general (Rosso et al., 2010). Focusing on authentic experiences of meaningful work would address its

tensional nature (Lips-Wiersma et al., 2012). Deriving meaningfulness from work necessitates engaging with the various meanings of what constitutes meaningful work, ascribing both positive and negative valences according to one's social and temporal context and these constantly shift across these tensional poles. Zorn and Townsley (2008) coined the term 'meaningful work' to describe this tensional process of deriving meaningfulness, which depends on both macro and micro-level factors at work.

This thesis will focus on evaluating micro-level factors of meaningful work experiences such as the level of dissonance faced by individuals due to meeting organisational demands or expectations and how employees choose to respond to those initiatives. When employees perceive initiatives to be consistent and thus there is a strong degree of alignment between their sense of meaningfulness and that demonstrated by their employer, then their responses may be positive and they are likely to experience their work as genuinely meaningful (Cartwright & Holmes, 2006; Lips-Wiersma & Morris, 2009). This study seeks to contribute to this literature, not only by questioning the legitimacy of meaning management but by demonstrating how employees respond to organisational initiatives when perceived with dissonance, drawing from P-E fit theory.

It is also the first attempt to investigate the role of existential labour as part of dissonance and negative outcomes and will advance the understanding of meaningful work and existential labour by adding meaningfulness dissonance to its nomological network. Although managing meaningfulness expressions is likely to occur in any organisation, the detrimental effects associated with it need to be investigated further. In doing so, I follow the suggestion of Bailey et al. (2017) to 'examine the effects of existential labour on work-related wellbeing' and apply one of the key tenets of the emotional labour literature to the study of different acting strategies, namely deep and surface existential acting. The theory of existential labour is also operationalised and tested to reaffirm its negative repercussions on employee wellbeing. It seeks to systematically operationalise the construct of existential labour to establish its psychometric properties by differentiating its characteristics from other acting behaviours such as emotional acting strategies. Testing existential labour strategies with well-being outcomes such as worker alienation, burnout and engagement is the conceptual model introduced by Bailey et al. (2017) will be one of the most important contributions of the thesis.

The project will aim to understand the nature of the construct, whether it is a state-like fluctuating construct akin to engagement or a phenomenon that develops over time to measure

it in studies. The extent of existential labour is explored as a response strategy; for instance, when employees discern efforts to manage meaningfulness as manipulation or feel powerless to do otherwise than fit in with managerial prerogatives. It is also proposed that employees' propensity to engage in existential labour may be fostered by meaningfulness dissonance at the individual level and a lack of psychosocial climate at the organisational level.

In terms of practical contributions, the project seeks to inform practitioners responsible for designing work experiences that affect workers' wellbeing and advance human resource development (HRD) and organisation development (OD) scholarship. Learning and development interventions can be important for meaningfulness at work (Fletcher & Schofield, 2019). When employees learn that their work is truly meaningful, they will gain a sense of accomplishment and feelings of self-actualisation (i.e. realising one's true potential) associated with higher levels of wellbeing (Cheney et al., 2008). Leadership development programmes could focus on helping leaders and managers enhance their motivation and engagement at work by inspecting levels of meaningfulness dissonance among their teams. Assessing meaningfulness dissonance along with engagement can provide developmental insights and pain points for management. More importantly, it could provide potential avenues to improve organisational procedures and practices. However, HRD practitioners should bear in mind the findings from a small number of studies that suggest that employees in some occupations may find it easier to access a sense of meaningfulness than others (Lips-Wiersma et al., 2016). For example, some occupations may offer more autonomy and psychologically safe environments. Thus, rather than attempting to create universal interventions, this study contributes to tailoring interventions to understanding the needs and values of individuals and how they respond to prescribed meaning within work.

Although our research supports the notion that management of meaning should be reduced and individuals should experience meaningfulness more authentically, it supports the idea that organisational conditions such as organisational psychological safety, and promoting employee voice could be useful strategies to curb existential acting strategies. Daily strains, such as exhaustion, can accumulate (Fuller et al., 2003) as a result of existential acting, therefore, providing positive environments for individuals to experience genuine meaningfulness more consistently is encouraged. Line managers could consider taking into account employees' momentary needs/desires for meaning, and proactively communicate particularly impactful work ahead of time (Vogel et al., 2019). By giving greater autonomy in determining when these

sorts of experiences will occur, managers can increase the likelihood of employees construing their work as consistent with their intrinsic needs and sense of purpose as opposed to external demands, thereby diminishing experiences of burnout and alienation (Hockey, 2013).

By drawing attention to ‘meaningfulness management’ at work, this research provides practitioners with an overview of the negative well-being outcomes related to existential labour, namely alienation and burnout. Newly developed measures featured in this thesis can be added to existing annual employee surveys and cultural assessments to monitor the effect of inauthentic meaningful work on a wider array of relevant well-being indicators other than firm performance (Vogel et al., 2019).

Chapter 2. Literature Review on Multiple Perspectives of Meaningful work

This section introduces and provides a background on meaningful work; whilst it gives a brief account of the most dominant perspectives around meaningful work, the chapter emphasises 'the management perspective'. More specifically, meaningful work within this chapter aims to explore meaningful work literature through different perspectives, whilst emphasizing debates and current research on the perceived lack of meaningfulness that can be experienced amongst employees at work. The final perspective presented in this chapter i.e. "the management perspective" challenges the current state of meaning management by introducing its possible negative repercussions, i.e. employees' inauthentic expressions of meaningful work and its negative outcomes. Therefore, situating the need for exploring concepts like meaningfulness dissonance and existential labour. This chapter aims to provide a deeper understanding of all the perspectives of meaningful work, providing a segue to understanding the origins of existential labour and meaningfulness dissonance which will be explored in Chapter 3.

2.1 Review of Different Perspectives of Meaningful Work

2.1.1 Defining Meaningful Work

The extant research based on meaningful work has recently been subject to critical scrutiny (Bailey et al., 2018; Both-Nwabuwe et al., 2017; Chalofsky, 2003; Lepisto and Pratt, 2017; Lysova et al., 2018; Rosso et al., 2010). What emerges from these varied reviews is that meaningfulness is a multifaceted construct (Allan, 2017; Lysova et al., 2019). It has garnered attention across many academic fields, including management studies, psychology, social psychology, human resource management/development, political theory and sociology but with limited consensus emerging over how meaningfulness is defined and operationalised.

Meaningful work is proposed to be a combination of cognitive, affective and social activities that contribute to an individual's sense of purpose and general flourishing at work (Michaelson et al., 2014a). Some argue that it is simply as a judgement of the work being significant (Martela & Pessi, 2018, p. 2), and some propose that it is a sense of a return of investments in oneself in terms of physical, emotional and cognitive energy (Kahn, 1990), while others see it as a justification for pursuing work and life for the greater good, with a broader purpose (Ward & King, 2017). In sum, conceptualisations of meaningful work initially focused on psychological underpinnings of work experience (Allan, Dexter, et al., 2018; May et al., 2004a, 2014) and then was conceived as a potential topic for positive psychologists that broadened the scope of meaningfulness within the context of an individual's life (Seligman, 2003; Steger et al., 2006)

(See Appendix 1 for Meaningfulness definitions from different authors). However, recently meaningful work has been conceptualised as a socially constructed phenomenon that operates in conjunction with the self, organisation, and wider society (Lips-Wiersma & Wright, 2012). Nevertheless, some still propose that meaningful work is a human endeavour, truly experienced via a sense of autonomy and self-realisation (Lepisto & Pratt, 2017). This suggests that conceptualisations of meaningful work have shifted from popular psychological models to wider management and humanitarian models over time (Bailey, 2018; Bailey & Madden, 2017; Lysova et al., 2018; Yeoman, 2014).

Apart from conceptualising meaningful work, researchers also argue about what is meant by the construct 'meaningful work' and its difference from meaning or meaningfulness (Lepisto & Pratt, 2017). Meanings, on a general level, are constructed by individuals to make sense of the world; these are acquired from generalisations based on past experiences but at the same time are highly influenced by society, culture and upbringing (Michaelson et al., 2014b; Veltman, 2015). While meanings are the outputs of having made sense of something, meaningfulness is about the amount of significance one attaches to work or any context. Organisational research has portrayed meaningfulness to be a positive experience. This specific attribute has been contested in recent findings by Bailey and Madden (2017). According to current arguments, 'meaningful work,' a term coined from meaningfulness, is about the amount of significance one attaches to work specifically and can be experienced as negative or positive (Lepisto & Pratt, 2017; Lips-Wiersma & Wright, 2012). Both meaningful work and meaningfulness essentially signify the evaluation of one's work rather than describing work (Rosso et al., 2010), the former being about the experience of purpose at and in work only, the latter being about the positive experience of purpose at work and life (Martela & Pessi, 2018; Martela & Steger, 2016).

To explain further, a recent review of meaningful work suggests that most definitions characterised it as an individual phenomenon that is associated with an individual's sense of purpose and worth at work; this is implied from the word 'meaningful' (Bailey, 2018). In line with the dominant themes that emerge in the literature, meaningful work is defined as the subjective experience of purposeful and significant work (Pratt and Ashforth, 2003; Rosso et al., 2010). Moreover, it is linked to a sense of identity affirmation and intrinsic motivation (e.g. Chalofsky, 2003), with a certain valence that is principally eudaimonia (growth- and purpose-oriented) rather than hedonic (pleasure-oriented) in nature (Steger et al., 2012). As a result, this allows individuals to evaluate meaningful work based on how their job and workplace relate

to their sense of self and personal growth (Batz & Tay, 2018; Martela & Pessi, 2018b; Schnell, 2011). Based on this, individuals could experience a lack of meaningful work, as it arises from challenging situations around work (i.e., it is dependent on the demands and the supplies at work) (Bailey & Madden, 2016), implying that meaningful work, unlike meaningfulness, is not a universally positive-affective concept (Chadi et al., 2017; Lips-Wiersma & Morris, 2009; Taylor & Taylor, 2011).

Addressing such distinctions is important as each conceptualisation has different workplace implications (Lepisto & Pratt, 2017). Most popular research have resorted to conceptualising work meaningfulness as a positive-affective concept (i.e., to enrich working conditions) (Fouché, Rothmann, et al., 2017; Lepisto & Pratt, 2017; May, Gilson, & Harter, 2004), empirical research within this domain has indicated that meaningfulness is a psychological state leading to personal engagement (Fletcher et al., 2018). Some argue that it is a key mechanism for creating and maintaining institutions (Both-Nwabuwe, Dijkstra, & Beersma, 2017; Lysova et al., 2018; Martela & Pessi, 2018), while others suggest that it is the backbone for identity construction amongst employees that leads to engagement (Geldenhuys et al., 2014; Steger et al., 2013), personal growth (Fouché, Sebastiaan, & van der Vyver, 2017) and empowerment (Boudrias et al., 2012). However, humanities scholars argue that if organisational efforts into creating meaningful work experiences are perceived as inauthentic and highly mandated, it could damage employee wellbeing and performance (Bailey et al., 2017). For this project, meaningful work will be evaluated as a state-like phenomenon often constructed according to an individual's experience at work that is organisationally desired (Bailey & Madden, 2019; Lips-Wiersma et al., 2016; Lips-Wiersma & Morris, 2008). The inevitable tensions that arise from balancing different sources (i.e., job, work tasks and organisation, of meaningful work will be explored and operationalised).

Before reviewing the details of the more dominant perspective of meaningful work, it would be worth discussing other perspectives that have contributed towards understanding meaningful work literature for the following reasons. Firstly, it is important to integrate existing perspectives, theories and corresponding definitions of meaningful work to establish an integrative definition (Lips-Wiersma et al., 2012). Secondly, while one perspective encourages meaning management, another perspective questions the legitimacy of control over meaningful work experiences; understanding these key distinctions highlights different facets of meaningful work experiences (Bailey et al., 2018). Finally, uncovering these perspectives of

meaningful work could perhaps shed insight into understanding certain tensions within the experience as put forth by Lips-Wiersma (2013), i.e. why some employees struggle to maintain meaningful work experiences in organisations, this is a dominant prescription for feelings of alienation at work (Bailey et al., 2018).

Therefore, this section examines distinct and unique features within each perspective by highlighting varied definitions, measurements and theoretical underpinnings of meaningful work (Batz & Tay, 2018). Agreeing on a perspective and definition that most suits the project's rationale will be justified after analysing different perspectives and their contribution (see appendices 1 and 2). It is readily acknowledged that there are nuances and sometimes major differences between authors in each of these perspectives and that this review is by no means exhaustive. The review below focuses on themes that distinguish meaningful work across different perspectives. The intention is to provide an overview of how different disciplines view meaningfulness at work, where they theoretically overlap, where they may differ, and how this thesis integrates these different perspectives to study inauthentic expressions of meaningful work. Table 2-1 and the rest of the sections explains the theoretical foundations and definitions, keywords, operationalisation, nature and function of each perspective within a meaningful work literature.

Table 2-1. Summary of meaningful work perspectives

	PSYCHOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE	MANAGEMENT PERSPECTIVE	HUMANITIES PERSPECTIVE	SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE
DEFINITION	May et al. (2004): the value of a work goal or purpose, judged in relation to an individual's own ideals or standard	Pratt and Ashforth (2004) Work and/or its context are perceived by its practitioners to be, at minimum, purposeful and significant. Grant (2008): Meaningfulness is a judgement of the general value and purpose of the job.	Frankl (1959) has to uncover meaning on their own and meaning cannot be prescribed by or defined by another, because if it is prescribed, it is no longer meaningful in the existential sense. Lips-Wiersma (2009) a subjective experience that is experienced as a whole, coherently. It involves satisfying the needs of the self, needs of others, the need of being as well the need of doing, the tensions in these dimensions is what established meaningfulness.	Lepisto and Pratt (2013) meaningful work is inherently embedded in discursive and social contexts which influence their underlying ontological assumptions, their self-understanding, their 'choices' of what they do and do not consider meaningful'. Bailey (2018) work is meaningful when individuals are exposed to dignified work and have access to decent work.
OPERATIONAL-ISATION	Spritzer's 3 item scale, May et al. (2004) six-item scale Quantitative studies, mainly cross-sectional	The Work as Meaning Inventory (WAMI). Consisting of 10 items, each representing different 3 different components such as positive meaning, meaning-making and greater good motivations. Quantitative Studies, multilevel analysis, diary studies, longitudinal and cross-sectional	Lips-Wiersma Comprehensive meaningful work scale (CMWS) is the most widely used, although not many studies have used it for quantitative research (Bailey et al, 2018). Qualitative studies	Qualitative studies
KEY WORDS	Hedonic, satisfaction, valuable, individual	Eudaimonia, work context, management of meaning	Authenticity, inherent, will, alienation, existential	Quality of work, greater purpose, worth, social norms
NATURE AND FUNCTION OF THE CONSTRUCT	Unidirectional, subjective, could be tested as a trait-like or a state-like construct	Multidimensional, subjective, strictly a state-like construct	Multidimensional, State-like construct,	Multidimensional, subjective and Objective

UNDERPINNING THEORIES	JCM, Kahn's Engagement, Psychological empowerment,	Self-realisation, worker centrality, Prath and Ashforth's fostering meaningfulness practices	Self-transcendence, workplace authenticity, existential labour theory	Justification perspective, social ordering of time, dignity
ANTECEDENTS	Job design, task identify, task variety, task significance and autonomy	HRM initiative, leadership, supervisory control organisational culture and job design	Organisational agenda, working conditions, worker orientation,	Social norms, perceived justice, code of conduct, societal trends, occupation types
OUTCOMES	Engagement, job satisfaction and commitment	Behaviourial: organisational citizenship behaviours and intention to leave. Attitudinal: Commitment Performance: Creativity and organisational performance	Personal growth, worker alienation, depersonalisation, emotional exhaustion	Dignified work, worker productivity, fairness, temporality and work intensification

2.1.2 Psychological Perspective

2.1.2.1 *Theoretical Foundation and Definition*

One of the early attempts to map meaningfulness was achieved via the job characteristic model(JCM) (Hackman & Oldham, 1976) in which meaningfulness was positioned as one of the psychological states responsible for personal/role engagement(May et al., 2004). Employee engagement within this context is defined as authentic, simultaneous expression of one's emotional, cognitive and physical dimensions of the self-while performing one's job role (Kahn, 1990). Meaningfulness was proposed to be a precondition for engagement (Kahn, 1990) and as a mediator between job design characteristics (skill variety, task significance and task identity) and engagement (Britt et al., 2001; Fletcher et al., 2018; Hobfoll et al., 2018; May et al., 2004). Therefore, most studies within this perspective define meaningful work as 'the degree to which an employee experiences the job as generally meaningful, valuable and worthwhile (May et al., 2004). As extension of this conceptualisation of meaningful work, Lepisto and Pratt (2017) proposed considering meaningful work from either of two perspectives: a realisation perspective or a justification perspective. From the realisation perspective, meaningful work is created by fulfilling needs, motivations, and desires associated with self-actualisation. In contrast, from the justification perspective, it is created through the subjective experience of the value or worth of one's work, that is, its higher purpose.

Similarly, the JCM proposes that five job dimensions (skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback) lead to critical psychological states (e.g., meaningful work), which then result in beneficial outcomes such as work and role engagement (Batz & Tay, 2018; Fletcher et al., 2018; Fouché, Rothmann, et al., 2017; May et al., 2004). This is supported by Kahn's conceptualisation of personal role engagement, which states that meaningfulness is an important precondition for engagement and other wellbeing outcomes (May et al., 2004) Additionally, Kahn(1990) argued that meaningfulness is beyond environmental job conditions(May et al, 2004). It is about deeper connections within one's self, including one's values and aspirations (Rosso et al, 2012). For example: when workers' job characteristics and tasks align with their own values and personal identities, they experience a high degree of meaningful work, which subsequently promotes greater engagement at work (Lips-Wiersma, 2002; Steger and Dik, 2010). Therefore, according to Kahn(1990), meaningfulness is a 'feeling that one is receiving a return on investments of oneself in the

currency of physical, cognitive and emotional states' (Kahn, 1990, p.720) is a development from Hackman and Oldham's JCM based definition. It focuses on an individual's need and craving to be recognised, embracing cognitive-affective components of self-actualisation and engagement (Kahn & Heaphy, 2013).

That said, empirical studies have only recently focused on Kahn's engagement, using broaden-and-build (B&B) theory to explain how psychological conditions such as meaningfulness lead to the experience of engagement (Fletcher et al., 2018; Soane et al., 2013; Rosso et al., 2010). According to this theory, individuals who find their work tasks meaningful experience a "broadened" perception of the potential behavioural expressions of engagement and, in consequence, will be able to "build" cognitive resources and energies needed for engagement (Fletcher et al., 2018; Soane et al., 2013). Therefore, suggesting that meaningfulness at work is a positive resource.

Studies have indicated that situations where one's tasks are perceived as personally meaningful and intrinsically motivating lead to improvements in organisational performance (Allan et al., 2019; Geldenhuys et al., 2014), retention of key employees, effective management of change, and greater organisational commitment and employee engagement (Bailey, 2018; Geldenhuys et al., 2014). Most other studies have focused on how meaningfulness leads to better work engagement¹ in terms of vigour and dedication (Bakker & Sanz-Vergel, 2013). For example, a study by Soane et al. (2013) showed that meaningful work increases engagement at work, and that engagement is associated with low levels of absenteeism. Furthermore, the study showed that engagement fully mediated the relationship between meaningfulness and absence, and that wellbeing strengthened the relationship between meaningfulness and engagement. The results

¹ Terms like Work engagement and Personal Role Engagement refer to slightly different conceptualisations of engagement – with work engagement being focused on vigour, dedication and absorption in work activities, personal role/job engagement focusses on being psychologically present when enacting role performance, and employee engagement being a broader positive attitude that enhances one's connection with one's job and the organisation (Bailey et al., 2015)

have implications for understanding the role of individual-level resources in the workplace, and how meaningfulness, wellbeing, and engagement influence absence.

2.1.2.2 Key Words

Taking each element of the definitions within the psychological perspective (worthwhile and work), meaningful work can be described as a positive phenomenon (Batz & Tay, 2018; May et al., 2004b; Michaelson et al., 2014a). Words like self and individual imply that it is based on an individual's perceptions and work (Lepisto & Pratt, 2017; Rosso et al., 2010). Early conceptualisations of meaningful work were unidimensional and captured the essence of enjoyment, happiness and satisfaction, which are hedonic characteristics (May et al., 2004).

2.1.2.3 Operationalisation

As the JCM perspective gained traction over time, some researchers have begun to rely on the job characteristics as a measure for meaningful work (Batz & Tay, 2018), rather than measuring the construct itself (e.g., Piccolo & Colquitt, 2006). Eventually, two dominant streams of research, psychological engagement and empowerment, improved how meaningfulness could be assessed (Bailey et al., 2018). The most prominent scale used to measure the meaningfulness in work rather than meaningful work was developed by Spreitzer (1995) and May et al. (2004). The American WAMI consists of 10 items that assess three dimensions of meaningful work—positive meaning, meaning-making through work, and motivations to benefit the greater good through one's work. The three subscales show positive relations with wellbeing, positive work attitudes and behaviours, and negative relations with withdrawal intentions and absenteeism.

The items focus specifically on the individual employee's perception of their job/work role. It needs to be personally meaningful such that the job and its associated work tasks are deemed worthwhile, valuable, and significant to the individual (Saks et al., 2011; Alfes et al., 2013). 4 items that focus on people's perception that there is a positive meaning to their work (like the American version; e.g. 'I have found a meaningful career'), with an additional three items that focus on whether there is a point or purpose to their work (i.e. 'My chosen career path provides me with a clear sense of purpose;' 'My work is purposeless;' 'My work is pointless'). Most scholars under this perspective define it as unidirectional that signifies the positivity behind work and how it should be worthwhile and important (Carton, 2017). To explain further, having meaningful work reflects a continuous psychological state which contributes to one's belief

system (Batz & Tay, 2018). Scholars from this perspective prefer using unidimensional models as they capture people's global judgement of whether their work is meaningful, perhaps summing some or all of the experiences, without focusing on specific contextual experiences (Batz & Tay, 2018; Cartwright & Holmes, 2006; Lysova et al., 2018; Veltman, 2015).

2.1.2.4 *Nature and Function of Meaningful Work*

Along with maintaining this unidimensional notion, a few scholars have started to focus on fluctuating subjective experiences of meaningful work, reflecting the temporal reality of organisational life (Fletcher et al., 2018; Weeks & Schaffert, 2018). Within this view, meaningfulness fluctuates over time according to changes in the work context. As it is focused on the job role (Allan, Duffy, & Collisson, 2018), the extent of meaningfulness will fluctuate throughout peoples' workdays according to the different tasks and degree of connection with the core elements of one's job role (Fletcher et al., 2018). However, there is a recognition for a fluctuating within-person perspective; this is a recent empirical development within the psychological perspective (Bailey, 2018; Bailey et al., 2018). Most studies have tended to utilise a static, between-persons' view of meaningfulness in the psychological literature (Chadi et al., 2017; Jiang & Johnson, 2018; May et al., 2004, 2014; Rosso et al., 2010).

In sum, recognition for meaningfulness and meaningful work within the HR practitioner and organisational research communities increased after considering the psychological benefits (engagement, satisfaction and intrinsic motivation) associated with it (Geldenhuys et al., 2014). As a result, the domain has witnessed a flux of empirical studies on meaningfulness (and meaningful work more generally) within organisational/industrial and management literature, with an agenda for benefiting managers, organisational leaders and culture (Michaelson et al., 2014; Schadenhofer et al., 2018). This leads to examining the next perspective, which is the sociological perspective, it stands in stark contrast to the psychological perspective in terms of how meaningful work is defined and conceptualised.

2.1.3 Sociological Perspective

2.1.3.1 *Theoretical Foundation and Definition*

Historically, sociological interests have been directed towards structural and institutional experiences of work, often associated with Marxist perspectives (Molloy & Foust, 2016; Shantz, Alfes, & Truss, 2014). This view has stressed the alienating effect of work relations,

where employees become detached due to capitalism and globalisation (Bailey et al., 2018a; Lepisto & Pratt, 2017). This is supported by Sennet's (1998) *Corrosion of character* philosophy, highlighting the negative influence of modernity on working life, individual's moral identity and meaning-making (Sennet, 1998). Furthermore, the Kantian perspective of meaningful work suggests that the debate over the moral meaning of work begins with an argument about whether work is degrading or enabling (Conway et al., 2018; Merton, 1936; Shantz et al., 2014a; Sulu et al., 2010). These sociological underpinnings are key to defining meaningful work within this perspective, leading to the importance of dignified work and employee wellbeing (Lawless, 2007).

Dignified work refers to more objective components of meaningful work, such as the right to decent, respectful treatment at work and the freedom to make choices (Yeoman, 2014). It is consistently found that dignity rests on the opportunity to exercise agency (Lawless, 2007; Lips-Wiersma & Wright, 2012). When individuals are deprived of doing so, work is alienating and lacks meaningfulness (Ayers et al., 2008). Earlier empirical research within this perspective conceptualised meaningful work as a broad construct (Harpaz, 1990) that emphasised the importance of worth and respect within individuals, downplaying the subjective and 'lived' experience of meaningfulness (Bailey & Madden, 2016, 2017). However, recent reviews have considered the importance of worth and meaning-making within this perspective whilst inclusive of subjective and contextual factors to a certain extent (Lysova et al., 2018). To explain further, including societal factors like decent access to work and quality work provides a way for individuals to meet needs for survival, social connection, and self-determination (Leisink & Steijn, 2009). Perhaps, looking at decent work and dignified work represents 'hard' indicators of job quality which is the main focus of this perspective (Ayers et al., 2008; Cockburn-Wooten, 2012; Lawless, 2007).

Job quality has been characterised by seven core dimensions, put forth by CIPD Good work index, 2021. These include pay and benefits, employment contracts, work-life balance, job design and the nature of work and relationships at work, employee voice and health and wellbeing. For example, it is argued that workers within the service sector (i.e. front-line workers) are more satisfied with opportunities for voice, therefore increasing intrinsic job quality and meaning at work. One of the crucial movements to change how work was being perceived was set by work intensification (Green, 2001). Earlier period of work intensification

was caused by changing technology and the growth of 'flexible' work organisation. Second reason may be the changing balance of power in the workplace, with the declining influence of the trade unions and finally the needs of employees to work hard to maintain their pay at sufficient levels (Green, 2004). These factors will have had varying force across different countries and occupations, but generally worked in the same direction; and indeed the workers in almost all European countries experienced work intensification at some stage between 1990 and 2005. However, according to Green (2001, pg. 620) there are limits to the amount of work intensification that can take place, especially given the human frame with a finite physical and mental capacity (Green, 2004). Recognising these limits gained attention, for example, these limits appear to have prevented any further intensification in the UK during the current decade (CIPD, 2018).

Especially, work intensification, since the 1990s has caused a decline in wellbeing, and since then organisations have made changes to work settings, enabling better pay incentives, training and development, making wellbeing a priority (Findlay et al., 2021). Drawing from this, Yeoman (2012), focuses on addressing these objective features of work, such as job quality and dignity, to encourage the standardisation of criteria required to attain meaningful work experiences (Yeoman, 2012). However, achieving dignity and quality of work in organisations can be challenging, as it is heavily dependent on an individual's occupational setting, moreover, if managers are seen as the providers of meaningful work experiences, they need to be trained to enable dignity (Ayers et al., 2008). Research within the service sector has recently raised concerns about the workplace conditions of employees and respecting the rights of people in the workplace (Noronha et al., 2020). Structural conditions need to be reassessed to allow dignity to be enacted around key issues of pay, equality and organisational communication across various occupations (Cockburn-Wooten, 2012; Noronha et al., 2020; Yeoman, 2014b). This raises concerns amongst more stigmatised occupations, increasing and enabling meaningful work roles even amongst those perceived as 'dirty' (Walters, 2005).

Sociological literature has responded to these calls by expanding its research into occupations considered dirty work, i.e. stonemasons, garbage collectors etc., to understand the varying significance of meaningful work in stigmatised versus recognised occupations (Bailey & Madden, 2017). The first researcher to use the term "dirty work" was Hughes (1962) (Hughes, 1962) who theorised that certain tasks and occupations are more likely than others to be

perceived by society at large as unclean, distasteful, and "physically, socially, or morally" tainted (Hughes, 1962, p. 63). The "taint," or the societal label of particular work as "dirty," is derived from a sociological phenomenon in which "dirtiness" is generally seen as "bad" and cleanliness is generally seen as "good" (Hughes, 1962). Therefore, researchers find that "dirty" work tends to become stigmatised, as do the occupations that do the dirty work, hence finding meaning or meaning making experiences are negatively affected within such roles (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999; Simpson et al., 2014).

Qualitative findings suggest that meaningful work experiences are continuously constructed over time and are often linked with a worker's self-actualisation and social interactions (Mercurio, 2020). For example, in a phenomenological study by Mercurio (2020) on stigmatised occupations, refuse collectors said, 'I'm doing something for the public and the environment (Mercurio, 2020, pg. 12). Thus, conversations amongst fellow refuse collectors emerged as an important theme in the meaningfulness discourse of refuse collectors. Even though they had more rigid time orders than other professions, they seem to take pride in completing tasks at the end of the day, thus experiencing a sense of meaningfulness. This confirms that work can have diverse meanings over time and space regardless of the nature or context of work itself (Bailey & Madden, 2017; Oelberger, 2018; Walters, 2005). This sheds insight on work experiences within occupations with rigid time orders versus more flexible time orders (Cohen, 2010). These experiences were shared, autonomous and temporally complex, and suggestively captured individual variability (Bailey & Madden, 2017).

Scholars within this tradition agree that individuals create meaningful work in their specific work environments. However, societies set the standard of employment that affects how employees function at work (Bailey et al., 2018). The influence of institutions is vital in implementing policies for meaningful work, therefore suggesting the role of power dynamics on meaningful work. For example, The International Labour Organisation (ILO, 2016; ILO, 2008) has been strident in proposing that decent and meaningful work is a fundamental human right, i.e. countries all over the world should be establishing policies at least at the organisational level to ensure these rights can be realised. In sum, work is considered worth doing and meaningful when it meets basic requirements and is conducted justifiably.

2.1.3.2 Key Words

Taking each element of the above definitions in turn (worth, decent, quality), themes of dignified living are highlighted. More emphasis is given to the quality of life and influence of social norms in these definitions. All conceptualisations are based on sources of meaningfulness, leading to the experience itself. Hence it is multidimensional.

2.1.3.3 Operationalisation

Essentially there are two main streams in this perspective – a) the quantitative macro-level sociologists who run analyses on job quality via big panel datasets, and b) qualitative micro-level sociologists who are more interested in what they call the subjectivities of peoples experiences. These include action research or interview-based studies to understand meaningfulness from the individual's perspective (e.g., Lips-Wiersma, 2002). The measures used to operationalise meaningful work have focused exclusively on capturing the subjective experience of meaningfulness and have not engaged with the job characteristics or work design literature concerning the objective features of work (Lips-Wiersma et al., 2016). In this sense, the empirical research conducted within the sociological tradition departs from much of the theorising that has taken place within other perspectives such as psychological. The broader concept of job quality is measured from a quantitative perspective but often includes a wider range of indicators related to employment and working conditions. Some of them include the Good Work Index by CIPD, determinants of work effort such as Training Time Index and Learning Time Index (Findlay et al., 2021; Green, 2001, 2004).

2.1.3.4 Nature and Function of Meaningful Work

Meaningful work here is a multidimensional construct entailing the role of the self, others, and society that individuals continuously construct daily (Bailey et al., 2018). Bailey & Madden's (2016) temporal study indicated that meaningful experiences varied from one occupational context to another. These were often episodic due to the task at hand, and most importantly, workers often reported feelings about how work became meaningless over some time (Lips-Wiersma & Wright, 2012a; Oelberger, 2018). This suggests that all jobs have the potential to turn meaningless or meaningful depending on the availability of support and resources (Bailey & Madden, 2016). Despite fair recognition of the fluctuating nature of meaningful work within this perspective, empirical attention examining within-person variability remains considerably unexplored (Bailey et al., 2018). However, demographics, i.e. age, gender, socio-economic

status, and its effect on meaningful work (Lips-Wiersma & Morris, 2009; Lips-Wiersma & Wright, 2012a), have recently drawn attention to explore its influence on meaningful work experiences using qualitative measures (Weeks & Schaffert, 2018).

In sum, meaningful experiences are an unfolding phenomenon, constructed continuously by individuals where meaningfulness fluctuates based on the interaction of different sources (Florian et al., 2017; Michaelson et al., 2014b; Mitra & Buzzanell, 2017). More importantly, such arguments demonstrate that individuals are not always passive receivers of meaningfulness management (Bailey et al., 2018). Toraldo et al.'s (2019) study show how volunteers shift between passivity, such as the times when work was framed as a chore and meaningless, and agential accounts of work where meaningfulness arose in varied ways (Bailey & Madden, 2019), via re-framing work willingly and undertaking meaningless unpaid work tasks in order gain favourable impressions from the employer (Bailey et al., 2018). To do so, individuals need to draw on both their cognitive abilities and emotional skills to adjust effectively and respond to career challenges and events (Restubog et al., 2020).

Sociological literature within meaningful work appreciates the role and power of society and organisations in implementing meaningful work in terms of dignified and quality work practices (Lawless, 2007). However, few scholars suggest that meaningful work experiences are truly innate, such that they inevitably lose some sense of authenticity once they are mandated by organisations and society (Bailey et al., 2018b, 2017; Bailey & Madden, 2016; Bailey et al., 2016). This is seen to be advocated by scholars within the humanistic paradigm, specifically by critical labour management theorists, which will be discussed further in the following segment.

2.1.4 Humanities Perspective: A critical management account

2.1.4.1 *Theoretical Background and Definition*

This perspective stands in sharp contradiction to the literature in organisational studies. This viewpoint assumes that an individual essentially exists to mean something and needs meaning (Lips-Wiersma & Morris, 2009). This relates to Frankl (1959), who refers to 'the will to meaning', which is the basic striving of man to find and fulfil meaning and purpose in life (Frankl, 1959, p. 18). The growing attention to the question of "work-life balance" attests to a broader humanistic view that guides much of the contemporary research on satisfaction at work

(Bailey & Madden, 2017; Lips-Wiersma & Morris, 2009; Rosso et al., 2010; Yeoman, 2014c). Studies within this domain cover the most controversial debates on meaningful work (Bailey et al., 2018). Within the humanities, it is usually agreed that the quest for meaning is a universal human motive, and loss of meaning is viewed as psychological deprivation or even a disorder (Lips-Wiersma & Morris, 2009). A crucial difference between research in the humanities and other approaches is that it is founded on the premise that organisations, its actors or job design features cannot supply meaningful work (Lips-Wiersma & Morris, 2009, pp. 503-504). This leads to an important definition: for meaning to be meaningful 'it has to be constructed, not received or found' has to uncover meaning on its own and meaning cannot be prescribed by or defined by another, because if it is prescribed, it is no longer meaningful in the existential sense (Lips-Wiersma & Morris, 2009, p. 492)

According to Rosso et al. (2012), authenticity is an important mechanism for experiencing meaningfulness. Authenticity can be defined as a sense of coherence or alignment between one's behaviour and innate psychological needs and perceptions of the "true" self (Caza et al., 2018a) or the degree to which people believe they are behaving consistently with their interests and values (Cha et al., 2019). This is the experience of self-concordance, which promotes feelings of deep and authentic connection to oneself (Bono & Judge, 2003). According to self-concordance theory, an employee who sees themselves as highly analytical will feel more authentic at work when their work tasks demand analytical skills, when their physical work environment and job title reflect their analytical abilities, or when interactions suggest others perceive them in the same way they see their self, this encourages meaningful work experiences (Martela & Pessi, 2018c; van den Bosch & Taris, 2018). However, organisations do not always provide such authentic opportunities (Peng et al., 2016). In such cases, employees find themselves spending inordinate amounts of time on activities that they do not value, raising the question: 'what for'? (Bailey et al., 2018b; Lepisto & Pratt, 2017; Lips-Wiersma & Wright, 2012b; Veltman, 2015).

Despite knowing that work can lack meaningfulness to individuals sometimes, why is one still inclined to continue working? Various factors should be considered whilst answering these questions. More recent research has addressed this question by bringing forth the importance of other meaningful work factors that explain why individuals work. Meaningfulness, in this case, is not associated only with work but with broader aspects such as having stability in life,

belonging to a community or perhaps serving others. These dimensions were put forth by Lips-Wiersma et al. (2012), which significantly influenced a comprehensive way of defining and measuring meaningful work. According to Lips-Wiersma (2009), meaningful work is a subjective experience that requires a balance between different sources, i.e. other and the self, the need of doing and the need of being. Attaining this balance ensures an individual's existence and purpose at a workplace, providing more opportunities for authentic, meaningful work experiences (Lips-Wiersma & Morris, 2009 p. 12). These propositions are different to earlier psychological conceptualisations of meaningful work. For example, although the justification and realisation of meaningful work proposed by Lepisto and Pratt (2017) help organise the literature on meaningful work, their proposed alternative perspectives appear to disregard various sources that affect meaningful work experiences (Lips-Wiersma et al., 2018). For example, Lips-Wiersma and Wright (2012) argue that meaningful work arises along two dimensions: 'being' (e.g., belonging) versus 'doing' (e.g., making a contribution) and 'self' (e.g., self-actualisation) versus 'other' (e.g., serving others' needs). Work is meaningful when the various dimensions are held in balance, yet, at the same time, this balancing leads to inevitable tensions that may be difficult to resolve (Bailey et al., 2018).

Another example is by Lee and Ashforth (1990, p. 2259) who defines meaningful work as follows: "Meaningful work is the discovery of existential meaning from work experience, work itself and work purpose/goals". Although this definition compiles most definitions around meaningfulness in the literature, it only comprises work context and omits three other sources of meaningful work (i.e., the self, others, and spiritual life). These were argued by Rosso et al. (2010) and Lips-Wiersma et al. (2012) to influence meaningful work experiences (Lee, 2015). Emphasising a single source of meaningful work provides a somewhat narrow view of how people construct meaningfulness in their work (Rosso et al., 2010). To understand more comprehensively how work becomes meaningful, it is important to consider the integrative nature of sources of meaningful work (Rosso et al., 2010).

In sum, as social beings, individuals cannot experience meaningfulness entirely within themselves but seek to understand their place in the wider world and their contribution to society in the context of the organisations and institutions to which they belong (Tablan, 2015). This finally leads to the following definition, Lips-Wiersma (2013) defines MW as a subjective experience that is coherently experienced as a whole. It involves satisfying the needs of the

self, the needs of others, the need of being, and the need to do. The tensions within these dimensions are what establish meaningfulness.

2.1.4.2 Key Words

Taking each element of the above definitions in turn with respect to subjective conceptualisation (inherent, necessity, existential), themes of authentic living rather than dignity are highlighted. More emphasis is given to the influence of actors and self in these definitions by using words like will to meaning, true purpose and unity with others. All conceptualisations are based on sources of meaningfulness; hence it is multidimensional.

2.1.4.3 Operationalisation

Scholars within the humanities have proposed that the greatest sense of meaningfulness arises from coherence across four domains: unity with others, expressing oneself, serving others, and developing and becoming oneself (e.g., Lips-Wiersma & Morris, 2009; Lips-Wiersma et al., 2016). More recently, Lips-Wiersma's meaningful work construct was utilised to understand autonomy and meaningful work experiences amongst nurses, suggesting that such a theoretical framework would guide health care organisations to direct resources specifically toward those types of autonomy that are most likely to cultivate the MW and its associated outcomes such as job satisfaction (Both-Nwabuwe et al., 2020). That said, studies within this paradigm have mostly adopted qualitative and inductive approaches such as action research or interview-based studies that generate an understanding of meaningfulness from the individual's perspective (Lips-Wiersma, 2002). However, some attempts have been made to quantitatively operationalise meaningful work as a self-report measure within this perspective. One of the scales that has received lesser attention is the Existential Meaning of Work Scale (Fairlie & Flett, 2004). This scale consisted of 27 items relating to work as inhibiting selfhood (e.g., "As a working person, I feel that my life 'belongs to someone else'") and enabling selfhood (e.g., "Life is most worth living when I am absorbed in work"). However, these dimensions from existential meaning of work scale have been used in the development of the comprehensive meaningful work scale (CMWS) by Lips-Wiersma (2012). The CMWS is a 28-item multidimensional measure of work meaningfulness that contains seven subscales that respectively assess the following dimensions of the construct: Unity with others (6 items, e.g., "I can talk openly about my values when we are making decisions"), serving others (4 items, e.g., "I feel I truly help our customers/clients"), expressing full potential (4 items, e.g., "I am excited about the available

opportunities for me"), developing and becoming self (3 items, e.g., "I don't like who I am becoming at work" [reverse scored]), reality (3 items, e.g., "We are tolerant of being human"), inspiration (4 items, e.g., "I feel inspired at work"), and balancing tensions (4 items, e.g., "I have a good balance between the needs of others and my own needs.")

2.1.4.4 Nature and Function Of Meaningful Work

Meaningful work here is a subjective construct. A key defining feature of this perspective that stands in distinction from the other perspectives is the contextual focus. At the organisational level, Bailey et al. (2017) propose that mandated practices of meaningful work, where employees are forced to comply with organisational policies, and act 'as if' work is meaningful could lead to feelings of alienation and exhaustion over time. At the individual level, a study by Oelberger et al (2018) showed that employees can associate too much meaningfulness to their jobs, which led to decline in personal wellbeing. Participants indicated that they spent too much time at work, and as a result, this affected their work-life balance. This suggests that meaningful work is a double edge sword (Bailey et al., 2018a). As a result, scholars within this tradition prefer examining meaningfulness via an interpretive lens i.e. influenced by subjective interpretations of the individual and is performed mainly through qualitative inquiries (Bailey et al., 2018b; Lips-Wiersma & Morris, 2009).

In sum, the humanities perspective responds to calls for evaluating 'true meaningful work', which is essentially lost due to meaningful work becoming an organisational imperative (Chadi et al., 2017; Lips-Wiersma & Morris, 2009). This perspective challenges the assumption of meaningful work within the management perspective by criticising management of meaning initiatives and focusing on self-oriented mechanisms as this demonstrates authenticity, which is crucial for meaningful work experiences (Bailey et al., 2018); however, the significance of addressing such issues will be highlighted in the next perspective, i.e. management perspective, it is important to note that the following perspective has been developed from the psychological perspective. Nevertheless, it has been found to conceptualise meaningful work in a slightly different way compared to psychological models. Since both perspectives still portray meaningful work experiences within the context of work and as subjective, there will be some overlap between both perspectives. The management of meaningful work perspective is given more importance in this chapter, as it as an attempt to highlight current arguments around meaningful work especially from critical management scholars, at the same time it gathers and

integrates different aspects of the perspectives presented above, this will be further evaluated in the next section.

2.1.5 Management of Meaningful Work Perspective

According to organisational scholars, meaningful work that strictly revolves around one's work context would be studied under the 'management perspective'. By far, the largest number of studies can be located within this perspective (Allan, 2017; Allan et al., 2014; Allan, Douglass, et al., 2016; Allan, Duffy, et al., 2018), where meaningfulness is broadly considered as an attitude or perception that is likely to be influenced by a range of organisational factors and, equally, is constructed according to factors within the workplace, such as workplace relationships, supervisory support, or job design features (Jiang & Johnson, 2018; Lysova et al., 2018; Tummers & Knies, 2014). As the interest of the scholarly and business communities in 'the management of meaning' increased, some organisational theorists started to question whether healthy outcomes for individuals and society are achieved when meaning becomes a form of normative control (Bailey et al., 2018a).

Scholars within this perspective point out that at present, organisations, through leadership and organisational culture practices, are not only seeking control of the emotional domain in prescribing that employees need to smile and be happy, but also the existential domain in prescribing that they experience their work to be meaningful (Ashforth and Vaidyanath, 2002). In sum, studies within this perspective posit that 'the management of meaning' may reduce the experience of meaningful work.

However, while both those interested in the management of meaning and those who are concerned about the 'management of meaning' implicitly assume that individuals need meaning (in that the former suggest ways to enhance a sense of meaningfulness for the worker and the latter suggest ways to protect the worker from lack of meaningfulness) neither has made a comprehensive attempt to understand meaningful work from the perspective of the contemporary worker (Michaelson et al., 2014a) More specifically, meaningful work within this perspective aims to explore meaningfulness through its dark side, i.e. how lack of meaningfulness can be experienced amongst employees both in and at work. The section below highlights the definition of meaningful work within the context of work rather than a positive psychological personal resource previously mentioned within the psychological perspective.

2.1.5.1 *Theoretical Foundation and Definition*

Meaningful work has been conceptualised as a construct that stems from one's experiences at work and in work (Michaelson et al., 2014), and this has been documented by Pratt & Ashforth (2003). According to them, experiencing meaningful work is dominantly a social activity (Pratt & Ashforth, 2003), organisations have the power to influence how and when meaningful work can be experienced amongst employees (Aguinis & Glavas, 2017); therefore, the focus is implementing practices that organisations can use to foster meaningfulness in and at work (Lepisto & Pratt, 2017; Michaelson et al., 2014a; Pratt et al., 2006; Rosso et al., 2010). The first dimension is creating meaningfulness in work (MIW), which involves organisations tapping into their employees' identities, making the tasks one performs at work purposeful (Lips-Wiersma & Wright, 2012b; Lysova et al., 2018). On the other hand, the second dimension, i.e. meaningfulness at work (MAW), involves changing the nature's of one's organisational membership, suggesting that individuals find work meaningful, not merely because of the work itself, but in the goals and values that the organisation espouses (Aguinis & Glavas, 2017; Bailey et al., 2017; Lysova et al., 2018; Nilsson & Nilsson, 2017). This leads to the following definition of meaningful work: Work and its context are perceived by its practitioners to be, at minimum, purposeful and significant (Pratt & Ashforth, 2003). This conceptualisation is important as it influenced further meaningful literature to examine meaningfulness whilst being dependent on work and its organisational factors (Lysova et al., 2018).

Pratt & Ashforth's (2003) conceptualisation of MIW and MAW is distinct but interrelated, as an employee's identity at work is related to both their job and the organisation, therefore fostering transcendence. This builds insights from social identity theory (Rosso et al., 2013) and person-organisational fit theory (Geldenhuis et al., 2014; Lips-Wiersma & Wright, 2012b; Michaelson et al., 2014b). For example, social identity theory suggests that individuals categorise themselves according to the workgroups they are affiliated with (Tajfel & Turner, 2004). Employees who identify closely with their organisation, perceive them as valuable and distinct are more likely to provide positive meaning for employees (Pratt et al., 2006). On the other hand, if employees perceive their organisation as unattractive or lacking in status, their work may lack purpose or meaningfulness (Rosso et al., 2013).

Brickson's (2005) work on organisational identity orientations offers another identity-based view of the potential person-organisation fit, suggesting that employees' perceived congruence

between their identities and the identity orientation of their organisation (i.e., individualistic, relational, or collectivistic) is positively associated with their meaningful work experience (Brickson, 2005). This explains the increased attention towards organisational initiatives like corporate social responsibility (CSR), which positively influences organisational membership (Iatridis et al., 2021). It expands the notion of work to go beyond organisational tasks and profit-based incentives (Aguinis & Glavas, 2017; Xue et al., 2018). From an organisational level, corporations must integrate CSR initiatives within their strategy and daily operations compared to implementing CSR as an initiative that is not a part of the firm's core activities. In sum, according to this perspective, an employee experiences meaningful work when it affirms their connection to the organisation and is authentically practiced within organisations

Studies within the management perspective aim to test and evaluate meaningful work tensions faced within an individual and their work (Lips-Wiersma & Morris, 2009b; Michaelson et al., 2014b).

2.1.5.2 Keywords

More emphasis is given to the context in these definitions by using work context, management of meaning, which imply that meaningfulness is based on organisational and collective factors (Batz & Tay, 2018). All conceptualisations are based on sources of meaningfulness, i.e. job, workplace, organisational policies etc., rather than the experience itself (Lysova et al., 2018). Furthermore, this perspective highlights the importance of one's goals and aspirations and social identity which are eudemonic characteristics, these are distinct from one's need for happiness and positive affect (Cheney et al, 2008).

2.1.5.3 Operationalisation

According to Bailey et al. (2018) there are 28 measures used so far, most utilised measure is by Steger, Dik, and Duffy (2012) and Steger, Littmann-Ovadia, Miller, Menger, & Rothmann (2013). They argued that meaningful work is a eudaimonic state comprising three facets: the subjective sense of positive meaning individuals derive from their work, the link between MIW and the individual's wider life, and the desire to make a positive impact or contribute to the greater good (Steger et al., 2012). Therefore, scholars within this tradition have typically used the 10-facet WAMI; Steger et al., 2012). The scale comprises ten items with subscales capturing three dimensions (positive meaning, Meaning-Making through Work, and Greater

Good Motivation). This scale is dominantly used for quantitative studies and was found to have strong psychometric properties (Rosso et al., 2013; Tims et al., 2016). Research within this tradition has drawn on theories of prosocial behaviour in explaining the greater good motivations associated with meaningful work. However, limited measures have operationalised the process of meaningless work. As an attempt to capture both meaningfulness and meaninglessness, a newly developed measure, called M-E Work Inventory adopted from Steger et al. (2012) and Lips-Wiersma (2011), covers various levels of experienced meaningful work. (Schnell & Hoffmann, 2020) Firstly it covers the subjective sense of MAW, the perceived meaningfulness of one's work and work contributing to meaning in life (coherence, significance, purpose and belonging). The items for meaningful work and meaningless work were taken from the already existing Meaningful Work Scale (Höge and Schnell, 2012; Schnell et al., 2013).

2.1.5.4 Nature and Function of Meaningful Work

Meaningful work under this perspective is seen as multidimensional and tensional in nature i.e. is both positive and negative, subjective, malleable to changes due to the exposure of organisational factors (Lysova et al., 2018; Parker & Bradley, 2000; Tummers & Knies, 2014).

2.2 Proposed Key Outcomes in Management of Meaningful Work Perspective

Having examined different conceptualisations of meaningful work within different perspectives a clearer picture emerges. The previous section aimed to review dominant perspectives of meaningful work and finally justify the use of the management perspective of meaningful work, which will be adopted for the purpose of the current thesis. That said, evidence for the negative impact of 'managed meaningfulness' on a variety of important work-related wellbeing outcomes is reviewed next. This points to the need for greater clarity in my research findings, as well as the need to operationalise and measure existential labour. Overall this section sets the scene for the remainder of this thesis by outlining the broader outcomes within which this research is embedded. For example, this segment introduces different outcomes of meaningful work across different perspectives whilst indicating proximal outcomes that would fall under the management of meaningful work perspective.

2.2.1 Work-related psychological states

Most often, researchers propose that work-related psychological states especially pertaining to personal engagement (Fletcher et al., 2018; Geldenhuys et al., 2014; Gloria & Steinhardt, 2016; Johnson & Jiang, 2017), job satisfaction (Duffy et al., 2013), organisational commitment (Leiter & Harvie, 1997), behavioural involvement (Montani et al., 2017), or intrinsic motivation (Johns et al., 1992) seem to be some of the strongest related outcomes to meaningful work experiences compared to other behaviour outcomes, i.e. organisational citizenship behaviours. Other outcomes at the individual level that have been scarcely explored with similarly positive results include affective commitment, job enjoyment, job security, intrinsic reward, feelings of accomplishment or growth, positive self-concept, organisational identification (Bailey, 2018; Batz & Tay, 2018). Only two studies found no significant link between meaningful work and positive attitudinal outcomes (Kim & Beehr, 2018b; Lips-Wiersma et al., 2016). However, in contrast to the positive associations found between meaningfulness and intrinsic motivation in other studies (Johns et al., 1992), Lips-Wiersma and Wright (2012) found no association between meaningful work and extrinsic motivation, suggesting that experiences of meaningfulness are heavily internalised are mainly intrinsically motivated (Bailey et al., 2017).

That said, meaningful work is strongly negatively correlated with alienation and intention to leave compared to other work attributes like job satisfaction and organisational commitment (Kim & Beehr, 2018a; Tims et al., 2015). The rationale is that meaningful experiences provide the employee with self-verifying information and make the job, organisation attractive to the individual (Cheney et al., 2008). Other job attributes do not necessarily involve self-verification and will have less impact on attraction, making it less likely that the employee will generate feelings of alienation (Scroggins, 2008a). This would be one of the main outcomes studied under the management of meaningful work perspective. So far, studies have conceptually suggested the importance of authentic meaningful work and feelings of alienation (Bailey et al., 2017b; Bailey & Madden, 2019; Vogel et al., 2019). Most of the propositions signify the importance of examining the influence of meaningful work on negative outcomes like alienation and burnout outcomes, i.e. depersonalisation (Bailey et al., 2017a; Scroggins, 2008). Alienation generally is conceived as a multidimensional construct composed of powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, social isolation, and self-estrangement (Shantz et al., 2014b;

Sulu et al., 2010). Empirical studies have used this conceptualisation of alienation to study its effects on affective organisational commitment (Walters, 2005), task performance and deviant behaviours (Sulu et al., 2010).

Furthermore, research indicates that alienation is an important mediating factor and not an end-state outcome between objective job characteristics and unfavourable outcomes, i.e. deviant behaviours (Shantz, Alfes & Bailey, 2015). Some argue that this mechanism can be explained through self-determination theory (SDT) (Both-Nwabuwe et al., 2017; van den Bosch & Taris, 2018) since alienation is a result of a disconnection between perceptions of an objective work situation and their self-concept (Mendoza & Lara, 2007). According to this perspective, worker alienation is caused due to lack of social belongingness (relatedness), limited decision making (autonomy) and minimal skill usage (competence) (Berger et al., 2008). This indeed suggests that worker alienation is harmful to organisational productivity (Hirschfeld et al., 2018). Even though organisational scholars have recognised this, research on its predictors and theoretical underpinning remain limited (Lips-Wiersma & Wright, 2012b; Sulu et al., 2010)

In exploring the factors leading to work alienation, Nair and Vohra (2010) have demonstrated that meaningfulness was found to be the strongest predictor, followed by self-expressiveness, and work relationships (Nair & Vohra, 2010). Based on this, one can summarise meaningful work allows for self-expression and appears to reduce experiences of alienation (Nair & Vohra, 2010). Since meaningfulness is related to eudaimonic characteristics, when organisations fail to converge with the individual's goals, values, and ambitions, this leads to alienation over time (Lepisto & Pratt, 2017). According to Lips-Wiersma et al (2012), meaningful work experiences lead to feelings of alienation, due to lack of self-transcendence, more importantly, due to a sense of separation from one's self and the task (Lips-Wiersma & Wright, 2012, p. 673). In this way worker alienation cognitively separates an employee from work and the workplace and manifests itself in the form of decreased job involvement and a lack of organisational identification (Armstrong-Stassen, 2006). Even though numerous studies have explored the construct of work alienation, minimal attention has been directed towards exploring its underlying mechanisms and interaction with meaningful work. Therefore, this gap in the existing literature justifies the attempt of the project to study the relationship between meaningful work experiences and negative psychological states like worker alienation over time.

Overall, studies have supported the relationship between meaningful work and certain negative outcomes, however, examining underlying within-person mechanisms between meaningful work experiences and its outcomes is scarce (Fletcher et al., 2018a). Lips-Wiersma et al.'s (2012) CMWS framework indicate that lack of meaningful work has been associated with negative outcomes such as mistrust and cynicism via day to day qualitative inquiries (Cartwright & Holmes, 2006; Lips-Wiersma & Morris, 2009). As a result, studies have recently drawn attention to affective/emotional mechanisms at work such as surface acting and facades of conformity, that lead to exhaustion, strain, burnout, depersonalisation and intent to quit over time (Hewlin, 2009). This has been attributed to the cognitive/emotional energy required to present a false front to the world, depleting people's ability to cope with their situation and stimulating negative psychological states at work (Mesmer-Magnus et al., 2012).

2.2.2 Performance-related outcomes

Other than psychological wellbeing, meaningful work has been linked with performance-related outcomes such as knowledge sharing (Chen et al., 2011), individual-level performance perceptions (Pavlish & Hunt, 2012), organisational citizenship behaviour (Chen & Li, 2013), and creativity (Cohen-Meitar et al., 2009). For example, outcomes such as creativity involve employee voice and individuals need to be encouraged to express themselves without any repercussions (i.e. meaningfulness along with psychologically safe environment can promote employee creativity) (Cohen-Meitar et al., 2009; Grandey et al., 2013). In a study using employee-supervisor dyads, Rafferty and Restubog (2011) found meaningful work to be linked to prosocial silence or the withholding of work-related ideas for the organisation's benefit, whilst some may argue this indicates organisational commitment, this strategy of prosocial silence could be argued to be harmful to employees wellbeing over time as they indulge in suppression of their truly-felt meaningfulness (Bailey et al., 2017). Overall, only a relatively small number of studies focused specifically on the performance outcomes of meaningful work such as organisational performance or productivity, however studies done so far indicate that meaningful work is an important factor for both employee and organisational productivity, especially in times of job insecurity and rapid changes, finding work meaningful is crucial.

2.2.3 Other outcomes

Research has examined the effects of meaningful work on life as a whole, including impacts upon personal identity formation. Positive associations were found between meaningful work

and outcomes, such as life meaning, life satisfaction, work as enabling the self, work as a calling, and work-life enrichment (Allan, Autin, & Duffy, 2016; Johnson & Jiang, 2017; Lips-Wiersma & Wright, 2012; Mather, 2005). In one qualitative study conducted in the health care sector, Pavlish and Hunt (2012), for instance, found meaningful work to be linked with feelings of accomplishment, growth, happiness, and blessings. Meanwhile, in a longitudinal study by Duffy et al. (2014), meaningful work was associated with living a calling. Even though a small number of studies have examined the link between meaningful work and outcomes at the work-life interface, the methodology adopted within these studies i.e. longitudinal or diary studies, have been beneficial in showing significant links between meaningful work and work-to-family enrichment (Tummers & Knies, 2013). For example, Britt et al. (2001) found meaningful work to be associated with post-deployment benefits by using a time-lagged survey of soldiers on active military deployment and 5 months after returning home.

Finally, researchers have found that meaningful work was positively linked to outcomes such as wellbeing (Brandstätter et al., 2016; Fletcher et al., 2018; Soane et al., 2013) or reduced levels of stress and depression (Daniels & Guppy, 1994). However, studies on wellbeing outcomes are comparatively inconsistent and sparse; since wellbeing indicators demonstrate the consequences of meaningful work on one's psychological welfare, this has probed wellbeing researchers to further inspect its implications at work (i.e. feelings of burnout, depression and anxiety) using a multilevel or longitudinal methodology (Bailey et al., 2017a; Fletcher et al., 2018; Martela et al., 2018; Tims et al., 2016).

2.3 Summary and Current Direction

So far, the empirical literature on meaningful work is experiencing a complex evolution, relying on concepts and theories drawn from psychology, sociology, and the humanities. These various strands have been mutually influential, leading to the development of a plethora of definitions and measures, some of which regard meaningful work as a positive, subjective, individual experience. For example, within the psychological perspective, meaningful work is defined as important and rewarding usually aligned with one's personal accomplishment and engagement. Whilst this is important to understand how and why meaningful work is fostered within organisations, it neglects the possible drawbacks of prescribing meaningfulness to individuals at work. The psychological perspective understates the importance of considering

how employees experience meaningful work when faced with tensions at work i.e. dissonance between one's sense of meaningful work versus the organisation's sense of meaningful work.

The sociological perspective provides more insight into how meaningful work is a need for individuals, therefore emphasising the importance of standardising meaningful work experiences for employees at work, by introducing the right to decent, respectful treatment at work and the freedom to make choices as standard protocol (Yeoman, 2014). This perspective highlights that dignity is crucial and rests on the opportunity to exercise agency (Lawless, 2007; Lips-Wiersma & Wright, 2012). When individuals are deprived of doing so, work is alienating and lacks meaningfulness (Ayers et al., 2008). Key arguments within perspective provide reasoning as to why lack of meaningfulness can be experienced as negative leading to poor well-being.

On the other hand, humanistic perspective addresses the argument that meaningful work is an innate experience, that needs to be experienced authentically without it being prescribed by organisations or applying it as a mandated protocol within organisations. These arguments of experiencing meaningful work authentically posit its own challenges, showing that meaningful work is essentially a contested concept (Bailey et al., 2018). Through this perspective, underlying tensions around experiencing meaningful work were more clearly addressed. The CMWS model by Lips Wiersma (2013) showed that meaningful work experiences are tensional in nature, i.e. there is conflict experienced by individuals when meeting organisational expectations and their own expectations. Whilst this is important to understand the current debates about how meaningful work in organisations can be experienced as inauthentic, it still lacks focus on the drivers and outcomes of "prescribed" meaningfulness.

The management perspective- focuses on the possible negative experiences of meaningful work when meaning-making is subjected to normative control or is perceived as inauthentic by individuals. Addressing this is not only important because of it being under-researched but it is an important avenue for meaningful work research that focuses on the congruence between an organisation's sense of meaningfulness and an individual's values (Bailey et al., 2017b). This brings forth the impact of tensions or dissonance faced by employees when experiencing meaningfulness at work. Thus, implies that meaningful work is subjective experiences that could be both negative and positive mainly if there is an imbalance or tension between sources of meaningfulness (eg. organisation vs individual). We gather that meaningful work is not

strictly positive, more important a lack of it at work can raise negative experiences for employees.

The current thesis appreciates the weight of evidence that suggests that employees are more likely to experience a lack of meaningfulness when they are expected to meet organisational demands and manage diverse sources of meaningfulness (Rosso et al., 2010; Schnell et al., 2013). Therefore supporting the propositions of Lips-Wiersma and Wright (2012) who described meaningful work as "dynamic processes of seeking wholeness through addressing the relationship between multiple sources of meaning" (p. 658). However, uncertainty remains over how individuals cope with lack of meaningfulness, particularly within the scope of organisations. Researchers have also yet to address the question of whether one dimension of meaningfulness may serve to offset a deficiency in another, and whether it is possible to experience a lack of meaningfulness due to meeting organisational expectations. For example, introduction of new policies and practices at work could lead to the erosion of meaningfulness when employees perceive them as inauthentic (Bailey et al., 2017). The concept of existential labour introduced by Bailey et al., (2018) serves as a possible avenue to explore as a response strategy when employees experience dissonance. According to existential labour theory, when one engages in strategies to manage meaningfulness rather than experience it authentically, either through deep existential acting or surface existential acting or both (Bailey et al., 2017, 2018), it leads to negative consequences for the individual over time.

Thory (2016) found that increased awareness of meaningfulness leads to tensions between people's sense of their ideal job and reality and between the need for short-term deliverables and the community at work, in addition to detrimental health outcomes for those overly focused on others (Thory, 2016). Findings such as these raise questions about the uniform desirability of meaningful work. They also point toward a potential "dark side" of meaningfulness akin to studies at the intersection between callings and meaningful work, which found individuals were prepared to endure significant hardships in pursuit of their calling (Bunderson & Thompson, 2009).

That said, there is no clear agreement about the best way to understand employees' lack of meaningfulness or the negative repercussions of existential labour strategies (Both-Nwabuwe et al., 2017). The proposition that existential labour strategies lead to negative well-being outcomes requires further investigation via the operationalisation of existential labour, testing

its relationship with related concepts such as meaningfulness dissonance and its consequences, leading to the main aim of this project i.e. *to what extent do existential labour strategies explain the relationship between meaningfulness dissonance and negative well-being outcomes?*

The next chapter focuses on reviewing the literature around existential labour and its strategies, which will then be extended in operationalising a comprehensive measure for existential labour that signifies the coping mechanisms adopted by individuals when there is a dissonance felt between their sense of meaningfulness.

Chapter 3. Existential Labour and its Theoretical Underpinnings

This chapter reviews the theories on existential labour and strategies relevant to the current investigation. The chapter opens with a definition of existential labour, definition of strategies and its underlying mechanisms, followed by an overview of relevant theoretical influences that formed the basis of the construct put forth by Bailey and colleagues (2017). Informed by the tenets of emotional labour theory (Hochschild, 1979) and compliance behaviours empirical evidence on emotional acting strategies and facades of conformity will be evaluated and compared to that of existential acting strategies (e.g. Deep and Surface existential acting). This chapter aims to provide a basis for understanding possible antecedents and outcomes of existential labour and demonstrating its conceptual model (Chapter 4), justification for validating the measure of existential labour (Chapter 6), testing the relationship between existential labour and its related antecedent (Chapter 7) and exploring the temporal nature of existential labour strategies by testing its significance in a diary study (Chapter 8).

3.1 Introduction to Existential Labour

3.1.1 Definition of existential labour

Bailey et al.'s (2017) conceptualisation of existential labour refers to the actions, behaviours and enacted attitudes overtly adopted by individuals in response to organisational espoused efforts to manage meaningful work. Two main forms of existential labour are proposed to be adopted by individuals i.e., deep existential acting and surface existential acting. As both these strategies emphasise the experience of *lack of meaningfulness*, existential labour strategies are conceptualised as mechanisms that promote negative work-related outcomes (Bailey et al., 2017b).

3.1.2 Existential Labour strategies

Deep existential acting involves making a deliberate effort to experience the required meaningfulness that in due course would lead to altering one's strongly held values and purpose (Diefendorff and Gosserand, 2003). Thus the motivation is predominantly external as it is controlled by organisations, but to the extent that the individuals wish to make this effort and express meaningfulness because they think it important to do so to experience their work as purposeful, therefore involving some autonomous control (Bailey et al., 2017b; Sisley & Smollan, 2012). Altering one's perceptions of the job to create a stronger alignment between

one's own sense of meaningfulness and the employer's sense of meaningfulness could be undertaken through deep existential acting, which is an effortful strategy. This is because complete alteration versus momentary suppression of one's true values is more effortful and cognitively demanding (Bailey et al., 2017a). Deep existential acting involves suppression of authentic expressions of meaningful work and amplification of such experiences to the extent that one completely alters one's sense of values and purpose. It is similar to the regulation of another related concept such as deep emotional acting within emotional labour theory as it entails intrinsic alignment of the true and desired senses of meaningful work. However, consequences of engaging in with deep existential acting, is proposed to be damaging to wellbeing (Bailey et al., 2018).

Surface existential acting occurs when the individual follows perceived organisational expectations via meaningfulness suppression or meaningfulness displays but without altering one's values or purpose. Even if individuals do not relate to or agree with organisational policies, cultural practices or the work itself, it is comparatively short-lived (Bailey et al., 2017a; 2018a). In this case, an employee does not identify with the task but finds work meaningful and behaves accordingly to belong and feel connected to the organisation. This is in sync with propositions made by Lips-Wiersma (2011), which focuses on 'unity with others' as one of the sources of meaningfulness. With surface existential acting, the regulation is external with more autonomous control in terms of maintaining one's true values (Allan et al., 2016; Sisley & Smollan, 2012). In sum, surface existential acting both involve suppression of authentic expressions of meaningful work and amplification of meaningful *displays* versus completely altering one's values (deep existential acting).

To further strengthen the conceptual arguments of existential labour and make evidence based inferences around its negative effects on employee well-being, these strategies need to be specifically tested or operationalised to explain their properties. According to conceptual evidence and its link with emotional labour theory, both deep and surface existential strategies may be distinct but related constructs (Bailey et al., 2017a, 2018b). Theoretically, both existential acting strategies involve managing the presence of meaningfulness and is primarily driven via extrinsic or controlled motivation (Allan et al., 2016). According to Bailey et al's (2018) propositions deep existential acting would lead to diminished wellbeing due to the cognitive effort involved as it entails more than the suppression of one's values and beliefs, but

a change in those values or beliefs. Surface existential acting would lead to diminished wellbeing, but the severity would be short-lived as one would not engage in personal alteration of values or beliefs (Bailey et al., 2017). In order to empirically test these propositions and consequences of deep and surface existential acting, the construct of existential labour needs to be developed and validated, to add value to the current existential labour literature.

This need to validate a new scale for existential labour has been influenced by the recent trends in meaningful work research via scholars who have adopted a more quantitative approach to understanding complex mechanisms of meaningful work (Bailey & Madden, 2017; Lips-Wiersma & Morris, 2013.; Mercurio, 2020.). Most follow both positivist and interpretivist epistemologies, and whilst a few have sought to understand the depth of the phenomenon, the majority have focused on providing generalisable results. Bailey et al. (2018) reported that 47% of the journals published between 2000 and 2017 used quantitative methods and 19% used qualitative. Among the quantitative studies, researchers adopted a progressively more complex multilevel methodology to investigate meaningfulness including longitudinal, time-lagged and diary studies (Martela et al., 2018). The complexity of meaningful work as a field of study is illustrated that there are 28 different measurements of meaningful work. This included a large number of single-item measures, suggesting that quantitative researchers have not yet fully grasped the potential complexity of how to define and operationalise meaningful work in empirical studies. Bailey et al. (2018) have raised concerns where current state of meaningful measures whilst useful, have neglected complexity in meaningful work experiences i.e. addressing the processes where meaningfulness is managed by individuals at work. More specifically, this thesis aims to address calls by Scroggins (2008), who posited that meaningful work should be operationalised by considering that meaningfulness arises when there is consistency between an individual's self-perception and their actual work role. In an attempt to address this methodological gap, the construct of existential labour has been investigated in this thesis to extend current research perspectives within meaningful work and secondly to expand the richness of meaningful work experiences that individuals face at work. Studies reported in Chapter 6 provide a detailed account of the new measure of existential labour and its various development stages.

3.1.2.1 *Existential Labour as a State Like Construct:*

In addition to understanding the properties of each acting strategy, it is equally important to understand the nature of how existential labour manifests within individuals. So far, existential labour can be classified as espoused attitudes, actions and behaviours overtly adopted by individuals in response to organizational efforts to manage work-related meaningfulness. These are internalised cognitive mechanisms that are adopted to manage meaningfulness at work. Moreover, individuals experiences with people or at work are not static, therefore it is important to measure meaningfulness while incorporating the temporal reality of organisational life. It would be important to conceptualise and test existential labour similarly, as it is dependent on constant alteration of meaningful work based on sources at work. Although no prior empirical studies have directly considered the link between existential labour and its temporal nature, themes within meaningful work suggest that meaning making is a subjective experience accumulated over time, interconnected through symbolic systems of relevances (eg. People), such that every lived experience relates both to past and to potential future experiences (Bailey & Madden, 2017). In sum, studies reported in Chapter 7 and 8 not only provide a more accurate test of Bailey et al.'s (2017) theorising but also advance it by examining in more depth the multilevel nature of existential labour.

Based on recent multi-level research perspectives on meaningful work (Vogel et al., 2019), studying existential labour as a fluctuating state relaxes the assumption that experiences of meaning management at work is stable (Heine et al., 2006) and, instead, treats it as an important variable that changes. Studying within-person fluctuations propose that meaningful work not corresponding to employees sense of purpose on a daily basis can promote fatigue and alienation (Brandstätter et al., 2016; Fletcher et al., 2018; Follmer et al., 2018; Vogel et al., 2019). Relatedly, the conceptual approach and corresponding study design can help to explain the experience of existential labour in a way not fully possible with a between-persons approach. Study 4 demonstrated in Chapter 8 aims to demonstrate that when aggregating within person data, patterns observed would be exactly what the literature would suggest: more existential labour is harmful for employee's well-being. However, when examined on a weekly basis, these data paint a different picture, one that enriches knowledge of meaningfulness dissonance and existential labour strategies in useful ways.

3.1.3 Lack of Meaningful work and Existential labour

Among recent debates, a growing body of research has begun to shed light on meaningful work being perceived as both positive and negative (Bailey et al., 2018a; Bailey & Madden, 2017; Lips-Wiersma et al., 2016; Spurk & Straub, 2020; Steger et al., 2013). Being in an environment, that is turbulent, and demanding, 'work' being a source of purpose has reduced for individuals, however has become significantly more important to employers for competitive advantage and enable their organisational agenda of promoting purpose led organisations (Gallop, 2017). Therefore understanding how employees maintain their sense of meaningfulness has become important. Empirical inquiry on responses that individuals adopt when meaningfulness is eroded, can help form a comprehensive account of this issue. That said, researchers have repeatedly expressed the willingness to explore if employees struggle against or deny the meaningfulness of work or if they seek out pathways to maintain and build their sense of meaningfulness (Bailey & Madden, 2019; Both-Nwabuwe et al., 2020). These intricate psychological tensions explain how meaningful work can be experienced negatively, leading to substantial damage to employee wellbeing and performance (Steger, 2016). Therefore, examining an individual's response to lack of meaningfulness via existential labour could provide better insights into how organisational efforts into creating meaningful work experiences can be misconstrued. Secondly, it reiterates that meaningful work is constantly constructed by individuals (Florian et al., 2019). It is a state-like phenomenon that changes according to an individual's experience at work; these include inevitable tensions that arise due to balancing different sources, i.e. job, work tasks and organisation, of meaningful work, which are indeed problematic (Bailey & Madden, 2017; Lips-Wiersma & Morris, 2009).

According to Bailey et al. (2017), certain organisational conditions are likely to create settings conducive to high levels of existential labour (Bailey et al., 2017b). For instance, when employees experience organisational efforts as inauthentic and/or misaligned with what they find meaningful, this fosters inauthentic expressions of meaningful work (Bailey et al., 2017). A lack of meaningfulness arises when prescribed meaning is not consistent with one's perception of who they are (Scroggins, 2008). Congruence between work experiences and the individual's perception of self may enhance self-esteem and intrinsic motivation, making work seem more meaningful (Boeck et al., 2019; Obodaru, 2012). Generally, evidence has indicated that lack of person-job fit and person-organisation fit are important factors to experiencing low

meaningfulness which has led to deliberate willingness to leave organisations (Moller et al., 2006; van den Bosch & Taris, 2018). Therefore, lack of meaningfulness is theoretically related but distinct to existential labour strategies, as the former focuses on the lack of congruence or dissonance experienced with regards to meaningful work, the latter focuses on the coping mechanisms adopted to manage such dissonance with regard to meaningful work.

In particular, since individuals have an innate need to build and maintain their sense of meaningfulness, the lack of it is likely to engender significant psychic distress and moral harm (May et al., 2014). To compensate for this and to 'maintain meaningfulness', employees may choose to adopt deep or surface existential acting strategies to alter their perceptions of their work role (Bailey et al., 2017). For example, employees may engage in 'meaningfulness displays' by pretending to agree with organisational changes or might extend the boundaries of the job into other areas perceived as more meaningful (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). However, the latter option may not be available to all employees. Employees within specific occupations such as those working within the public sector, with high bureaucratic control, would find it harder to engage in job crafting or experience any autonomy (Kjeldsen & Hansen, 2018; Tummers & Knies, 2014). Therefore, coping strategies such as altering or *faking* meaningfulness might be tempting to adopt as a means of addressing the fundamental need to experience work as meaningful (Yeoman, 2014a); feeding into the dark side of meaningfulness (Lepisto & Pratt, 2017). The terms "faking" and "dark side of meaningfulness" have been introduced by meaningful work scholars within the humanities and management perspective and emotional labour theorists to highlight the harms associated with it rather than experiencing genuine emotions or meaningfulness at work (Bailey et al., 2017). To maintain consistency with the arguments put forth by such scholars (Bailey et al., 2017), this terminology is introduced.

It is important organisations foster authentic ways of meaningfulness to ensure work does not erode meaningful work experiences (Bailey & Madden, 2016). The evidence by Lepisto and Pratt (2017) provides a detailed account of the positive attitudes and behaviours (e.g. greater persistence in work activities involves self-sacrifice and commitment or enables motivations and self-realisation) associated with meaningfulness at work. On the other hand, when employees are faced with a lack of meaningful work, this leads to negative attitudes i.e. cynicism, distrust and alienation (Bailey, 2018; Cartwright & Holmes, 2006; Hirschfeld et al.,

2018). This is reflected in the comprehensive measure of meaningful work introduced by Lips-Wiersma (2013), which suggests that there is a range of negative experiences involved (i.e. exhaustion, frustration, anger, and cynicism) when employees are faced with the imbalance between satisfying the needs of the self and the needs of the organisations (Lips-Wiersma et al., 2016), thus emphasising the importance of 'alignment' between organisational expectations as well as those of individuals (Bailey et al., 2017a). Misalignment creates both emotional and cognitive tensions amongst individuals in their quest for meaningful work; cognitive tensions, in this case, stretches beyond emotional discomfort and emphasises a loss of identity. In order to further strengthen the case for misalignment and lack of meaningfulness, the next chapter focuses on using P-E fit as a suitable theoretical framework to explain *why one might indulge in existential labour in the first place*.

Supporting the above proposition, a recent phenomenological study focused on the experiences of *meaningless work* in stigmatised occupations and its consequences on employee wellbeing, i.e. experiencing degradation, losing a sense of self and experiencing threats to their craft (Mercurio, 2020). Findings indicated that as a fear of facing negative consequences (e.g. losing one's identity), individuals often tended to 'maintain meaningfulness' (Bailey & Madden, 2013.). According to Mercurio (2020), *maintaining meaningfulness* characterises meaningful work as not static; the perception and feeling that work is meaningful are maintained through self-controlled constituents like *enacting a positive approach to work* or *having personal pride in work*. This is regularly sustained with ongoing interventions such as internal and external validation of oneself and work. Therefore affirming that meaningful work is primarily a tensional construct which is often controlled by the individual but is susceptible to the validation of 'others' for its realisation (Bailey et al., 2018a; Lips-Wiersma & Wright, 2012).

Moreover, Wrzesniewski (2003, p. 95) argues that the prior views of meaningful work have suffered from a "shallow understanding of the role of others at work". This is especially troublesome, given the centrality of organisational influence or the "relational architecture" of jobs, in enabling employees to experience their work as important and meaningful (Grant et al., 2015).

3.1.4 The Role of Organisations and existential labour

‘President Kennedy provided discursive resources for NASA employees to frame their work as meaningful. Only when employees related their mundane

tasks to the mission of 'putting a man on the moon, they experienced them as meaningful (Carton, 2018, p.328)

The above quote is from a qualitative study that used archival evidence to explore President Kennedy's actions when leading NASA in the 1960s. Findings from this research redirect attention to the role of 'others' and connections between employees' everyday meaningful work experiences (Carton, 2018). The key term here is 'others' that usually encompasses an organisation, society or any other source of external validation (Lips-Wiersma et al., 2016). For the purposes of this study, 'the role of organisations' is highlighted within which lack of meaningfulness is situated and reinforced. When organisations are perceived as an important source of meaning, they are perceived as meaning givers, almost ascribing them with some control over meaningful work experiences (Bailey et al., 2018b; Yeoman, 2014b). *Belonging* and *unity with others* have been identified as a core element of the previously mentioned CMWS framework (Lips-Wiersma and Morris, 2009; Rosso et al., 2010); this reaffirms the commoditisation of *belonging* in a way where meaningfulness is not authentically felt but is managed by the individual via the organisation (Bailey et al., 2018a; Michaelson et al., 2014). More specifically, when managers or organisations exploit their power by seeking to control or prescribe meaning, then the individual's meaning-making process may become subverted (Lips- Wiersma and Morris, 2009; Michaelson et al., 2014). For example, Referring to Kennedy's discursive resource, 'putting a man on the moon' may be useful to foster meaningfulness within employees; however, it does not account for an individual's meaning-making process. In such cases, employees may be pressured to engage in inauthentic displays of meaningful work (Chadi et al., 2017).

In support of the role of organisations and meaningful work, Bailey et al. (2019, p. 13) posit that '*meaningfulness is subjectively 'found' (Thompson and Janigian, 1988) and is not amenable to managerial control, yet it is also normatively regulated*'. The above paradox implies that although 'true' meaningfulness is experienced intrinsically, the pressures of organisational norms and expectations burden an individual to engage in meaningfulness displays. Meaningfulness displays have not been conceptually defined or empirically tested so far; however, it is viable to say this would entail momentary positive experiences, commitment and citizenship behaviours required by the firm (mainly driven externally). Bailey et al. (2017) briefly point out a few meaningfulness displays desired by organisations, such as alignment with organisational culture and values. For example, employees often show enthusiastic

support for culture change initiatives by pretending to buy into the organisation's culture change initiative, when in reality one does not believe in it, or it might entail deliberately acting in particular ways to demonstrate alignment of one's behaviour with the organisation's values to secure positive performance reviews at work, even when does not intrinsically share those values. This is akin to Legge's (2006) notion of "resigned behavioural compliance" or instrumental compliance (Bailey et al., 2017a). These are seen as characteristic of employment policies, and bureaucratic control systems said to generate reactive rather than proactive behaviours of working, typically disruptive to predicting genuine commitment of employees within an organisation (Hewlin, 2009; Ogbonna & Harris, 1998).

In support of the aforementioned proposition, Stein et al. (2019) demonstrate evidence on the negative consequences of a managerialist agenda, by focusing on how overly standardised datafication systems reduces meaningful work due to lack of autonomy and conflicting professional values (Bailey et al., 2018b). Stein et al. (2019) argue that less restrictive system designs combined with an organisational culture that focuses on aligning individual values with the institution may promote self-actualisation and development, as more space is created to reflect on the self. Thus, fostering meaningfulness within one's job. That said, a plethora of research has suggested that effective job design, autonomy and leadership, can promote conducive environments for experiencing MAW (Allan et al., 2018; Tims et al., 2015) Yet, even under such overtly non-threatening circumstances, the pressure of meeting organisational expectations remains, where individual workers are required to account for their daily progress and activities suggesting that organisational control is inevitable (Michaelson et al., 2014).

In sum, this reflects Heine et al.'s (2006) meaning maintenance model(MMM) that asserts people reaffirm alternative frameworks of meaning when faced with a threat in one domain (e.g. Work role and responsibilities). How one reacts to such threats (i.e. creating alternative forms of meaningfulness) (Heine et al., 2006) could perhaps shed some insight on how employees construct a connection between their work and the organisation's ultimate aspirations when their responsibilities are relatively fixed and subject to managerial dictates or other organisational constraints (Carton, 2018; Martela & Pessi, 2018b). That said, the impetus for this thesis arises from the need to address alternative forms of meaningfulness that people adopt when faced with discrepancies. Despite the level of interest in meaningful work that has emerged in recent years, there are still important gaps in how meaningfulness can be eroded,

or is challenged within the context of work (Bailey & Madden, 2019; Mitra & Buzzanell, 2017). Consequently, this thesis aims to define, operationalise and investigate the concept of existential labour as an alternative strategy that people adopt, perhaps demonstrating the intra-psychological processes involved with the lack of meaningful work (Bailey et al., 2017b; Bailey & Madden, 2019). As a part of validating existential labour, it is important to understand other related concepts that are theoretically similar, and may offer additional insights to uncovering aspects of existential labour.

3.1.5 Similarities between Existential Labour, Authenticity and Impression Management:

One of the theories that has informed existential labour is by Hewlin's (2003) facades of conformity it is described as a survival mechanism that some members choose when they believe that they must suppress their personal values and pretend to embrace organizational values. Facades of conformity is a general overarching theory that recognises active behaviour- publicly expressing values not held by the individual, each behaviour involves withholding one's values along with the pretence of agreeing with what one perceives to be the values of the organization. Similar to existential labour- it places importance in understanding the impact of members' perceptions of organizational values because those perceptions become evaluative standards members use to determine the most acceptable behaviors to display at work (Dose, 1997). However, it is derived from conformity literature (Hewlin, 2003, 2009; Levashina & Campion, 2007) offers a rich foundation for understanding when and why individuals conform. The impression management literature complements this literature to illustrate how individuals communicate conformity to others, an area that has received limited empirical attention in the conformity research domain. An important component that is missing in self-presentational research is empirical research on the psychological and emotional effects of impression management on behaviour during regular work interactions. Existing empirical research has mostly illustrated the effects of impression management behavior on career-related out-comes such as gaining approval from superiors (Frink & Ferris, 1998) and successful role adaptation (Ibarra, 1999). Therefore there is limited understanding of the experience of individuals suppressing personal values and pretending to embrace organisational values. Whereas there are measures of conformity (Kipnis, Schmidt, & Wilkinson, 1980), there are no established scales that measure individuals suppressing personal values and pretending to embrace organizational values. It is therefore important to develop a scale that would effectively

measure an integration of Hewlin's (2003) conceptualization of facades of conformity and Bailey et al's (2018) concept of existential labour. As put forth by Bailey et al. (2018) existential labour extends conformity research by understanding nuances involved with suppression and alteration of meaningfulness in two ways. First, although alteration and suppression can occur at the same time within an individual, each of these regulation strategies has been classified into separate acting strategies i.e. deep and surface respectively. Secondly, Bailey et al., (2018) conceptualise existential labour beyond the act of suppressing and alteration of *values, it also focuses on broader aspects of experienced meaningfulness.*

Authenticity at work is another theoretically related concept to existential labour strategies as it signifies the oppositional effect of acting strategies. As presented in Chapter 2- the humanistic perspective argues that meaningful work experiences are only beneficial when felt authentically (Bailey et al., 2017b, 2018b; Lips-Wiersma & Morris, 2009a). Authenticity can be defined as a sense of coherence or alignment between one's behaviour and innate psychological needs and perceptions of the "true" self (Caza et al., 2018a) or the degree to which people believe they are behaving consistently with their interests and values (Cha et al., 2019). This is the experience of self-concordance, which promotes feelings of deep and authentic connection to oneself (Bono & Judge, 2003).

Erickson (1994) argued that it is an individual's own perception that leads to the experience of authenticity, rather than others' perception of that individual. Consistent with the humanistic views of Rogers and Erickson (1994), authenticity at work is a subjectively experienced phenomenon that can be measured in terms of a bipolar continuum with on the one side being fully authentic and the other fully inauthentic (Erickson, 1995) . Existential labour strategies focus on inauthentic expressions of meaningfulness, therefore it is conceptualised when individuals are involved in existential labour it reduces their felt authenticity at work. This leads to following hypothesis that will be tested as a part of determining convergent validity of existential labour.

Hypothesis 1a: Authenticity will be highly negatively correlated with both existential acting strategies (i.e. deep and surface).

Linking authenticity and identity research, employees constructing ways to deal with management control by creating alternative versions of what they find meaningful and

alternative versions of the self. Research on the self-concept (Martela & Pessi, 2018a; Scroggins, 2008) and counterfactual thinking (Obodaru, 2012) provide the two conditions that are each necessary and jointly sufficient for defining an alternative self. This is a self-redefining counterfactual describing who the person would be in an alternative present. The alternative self is part of the person's self-concept and belongs to self-comparisons. Including the concept of alternative selves thus opens up a clearer explanation as to why deep existential acting would be more effortful or damaging than surface existential acting. Deep existential acting would entail redefining the self by changing one's strongly held values to meet organisational expectations. Appendix 2.1 shows the interaction of meaningfulness in and at work and forming alternative selves. The use of two overlapping circles indicates that meaningfulness in and at work can be experienced together. Those who then adopt deep existential acting would create alternative selves compared to those who adopt surface existential acting. It would be interesting to combine acting strategies with meaningful work orientations such as MIW and at work to assess if such distinctions apply to existential labour. However, according to Lips-Wiersma's CMWS, it is important that meaningfulness is felt across all sources consistently, in a holistic manner; otherwise, it leads to an inevitable imbalance (Lips-Wiersma & Morris, 2009). These propositions have so far lacked empirical attention and this thesis seems to rectify this by focusing on the role of deep and surface existential acting on both in work and at work. In so doing, it will determine whether it operates differently across levels or is perceived as an experience that holistically affects meaningfulness regardless of its orientation to one's organisation or work. (see Chapters 6 and 7).

3.2 Differences between Existential Labour and other related concepts:

3.2.1 Emotional Labour Theory: An Origin for existential labour

Emotional labour theory is reviewed as one of the contributing theories that help explain possible regulation of attitudes when experiencing existential labour. Ashforth and Humphrey (2000), who are considered to be influential within emotion work literature, studied the term 'emotional labour' instead of emotion work as "*the act of displaying appropriate emotion (i.e., conforming with a display rule)*". That said, Hochschild's (1983) conceptualises emotional labour, i.e. '*the management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display*'. Most studies have suggested that emotional labour is a psychological process necessary to regulate emotions at work and cope with emotional dissonance perceived at work (which is a

result of misalignment of emotional display rules and one's own true emotions) (Bhave & Glomb, 2016; Diestel & Schmidt, 2011; Zapf, 2000.)

Within the context of emotional labour, display rules govern the type and extent of emotional expression (Ekman, 1973). Display rules entail creating impressions of normatively appropriate emotions (Hochschild, 1979). In this respect, Morris and Feldman (1996, p. 987) defined display rules as the “effort, planning, and control needed to express organizationally desired emotions during interpersonal transactions”. These rules can be restrictive or expansive (Gosserand & Diefendorff, 2005; Holman et al., 2008). For instance, a restrictive display rule would entail 'don't feel sympathy for a client' while an expansive display rule would entail 'express a lot of enthusiasm towards a customer' (Holman et al., 2008). These examples give an indication of how display rules can be regulated within organisations. That said, across occupations and organisations, display rules tend to vary; expansive rules are mostly associated with enhancing positive emotions (e.g., display happiness, feel enthusiasm) while restrictive display rules are associated with inhibiting negative emotions (e.g. do not display frustration) (Mesmer-Magnus et al., 2012). With varying display rules, emotion regulation at work becomes inevitable and complex, involving expression/amplification, suppression, or faking of emotions (Diefendorff et al., 2005; Côté, 2005; Glomb and Tews, 2004).

For example, the required emotional expressions or displays of flight attendants (Hochschild, 1983); healthcare workers (Hülshager et al., 2010; Schadenhofer et al., 2018) smiling hotel service employees (Chen et al., 2011; Lam & Chen, 2012b) and friendly convenience store clerks or restaurant servers (Sutton and Rafaeli, 1988) are occupational examples of where amplification of emotional is required i.e. empathy, friendliness or other pleasant emotions (Glomb and Tews, 2004; Grandey, 2008). One of the most commonly studied occupation includes nurses or healthcare workers that need to amplify their emotions i.e. express themselves as empathetic in order to fit a persona and to comply with their duties, even when are they are personally exhausted (Lee & Allen, 2002; Preposi Cruz et al., 2018; Schmidt & Diestel, 2012).

These 'acts' of emotion displayed through suppression or amplification (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993) are necessarily regulated by intra-psychological processes. These have been studied as mechanisms or means to attain the goal of organizationally desired emotions (McCance et al., 2010). For example, most customer service representatives engage in some type of emotional

L.Chandrasekaran, PhD Thesis, Aston University 2022. 69

acting as they perform their jobs (Hochschild, 1983), and that emotional display accounts for the bulk of their workplace communication (Mann, 1999). That said, the initial literature on emotional labour constrained its mechanisms to specific occupational fields (e.g. service-oriented firms). The concurrent literature, particularly experience sampling studies, consider the phenomenon as more ubiquitous as it can occur during any work-related interaction (Chadi et al., 2017; Prem et al., 2016). As a result, research has indicated that employees' fake' emotions daily in several occupations (Glomb et al., 2004). This is useful from a business perspective, as service providers can detach themselves psychologically and emotionally from negative affective states, to maintain their objectivity and high-quality organisational performance (Hülshager et al., 2010).

In this regard, Thayer et al. (1994) suggest that emotional labour allows for the flexible adaptation of an individual to changing environmental demands, thus maintaining their emotional stability. Indeed, previous studies have found emotional regulation to be positively associated with wellbeing and task effectiveness (Ashforth and Humphrey, 1993). For example, Diefendorff, Richard, and Yang (2008) found that employed young adults utilise several emotion regulation strategies to manage their negative emotions, including a) seeking and reaching out to other employees; b) keeping oneself busy/working on other jobs and tasks (job crafting); c) engaging in enjoyable activities to improve one's mood; and d) attempting to be a part of problem-solving (Lam et al., 2017).

In sum, drawing from action theory (Zapf, 2002), actively taking control of one's emotions, such as attending to one's feelings and actively seeking ways to improve them, results in positive psychological outcomes (Holman et al., 2008; Zapf, 2002). However, engaging in emotional acting or constant modification strategies may require employees to experience feelings of emotional exhaustion (Halbesleben & Bowler, 2007; Lin et al., 2020). Studying mechanisms of emotional regulation and its influence on organisational productivity and employee wellbeing, is intriguing and encourages further inquiry into other acting strategies adopted by individuals at work (Troughakos et al., 2015a).

So far, emotional labour strategies have been one of the most cited, as the construct focuses on expressive behaviours that are perceived to be organisationally desired and relevant (Diefendorff et al., 2005; Sisley & Smollan, 2012; Zapf et al., 1999; Zapf & Holz, 2007). This thesis builds and expands on emotional labour theory and organisationally desired behaviours

by focusing on how individuals could fake their sense of meaningfulness when their actual sense of meaningfulness differs from desired meaningfulness; it is a construct that focuses on internalised behaviours adopted due to organisational pressures. Therefore the next section explains the differences between existential acting and emotional acting strategies. However, before that, emotions and meaning have been defined to indicate their core differences.

3.2.1.1 *Emotional labour strategies vs Existential labour strategies*

When emotional labour necessitates display rules that are incongruent with employees' felt emotions, it can lead to emotional discomfort and emotional dissonance (Bhave & Glomb, 2016; Mesmer-Magnus et al., 2012). Emotional dissonance is a negative affective state that is experienced when there are conflicting emotions, such as organisationally desired versus felt emotion, which is a stressor that must be managed mainly by surface emotional acting. Surface acting is limited to the management of observable expressions, deep acting involves the intentional management of internal feelings which leads to a modification of the visual expression (Brotheridge & Lee, 2002).

As display rules specify the type of behaviour needed to meet the higher-order goals of performance, employees are motivated to follow such rules (Diefendorv et al., 2005). When employees' felt emotions are in line with emotion rules, this becomes easier with a genuine display of emotion (Lam & Chen, 2012b). However, a discrepancy between felt emotion and emotional rules encourages 'emotional displays or faking emotions', namely surface acting (Fouquereau et al., 2019).

Deep acting can be achieved by cognitive reappraisal of the situation or by focusing on different aspects of work to induce the required emotion (Grandey, 2000). It is an antecedent-focused form of emotion regulation in that it operates at the onset of emotion and affects the perception and processing of emotional cues before one elicits a behavioural response (Diefendorv et al., 2005). It is an intrinsically motivated response that adheres to one's job requirements (Sisley & Smollan, 2012). The goal of deep acting lies in aligning required and true feelings. Taking healthcare workers as examples, many adopt deep acting strategies with their patients as they identify with the purpose of their role regardless of their personal issues (Lam & Chen, 2012b).

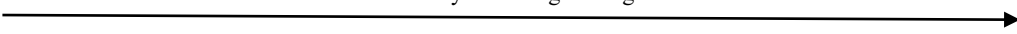
Surface acting is a form of response-focused emotion regulation. It occurs when the emotion is already formed, but the observable reaction or the public display of the reaction is altered

(Blau, Gary ; Fertig, Jason; Tatum, Donna Surges; Connaughton, Stacey; Park, Dong Soo; Marshall, 2010). Emotional experience and expression remain discordant when engaging in surface acting (Grandey, 2000; Gross, 1998; Totterdell & Holman, 2003). Several studies have tested the negative effects of surface acting and its trajectories, influencing organisational commitment, helping behaviours and organisational deviance (Mesmer-Magnus et al., 2012; Trougakos et al., 2015a). However, they have found that the negative consequences differ according to one's personal resources and self-control (Moller et al., 2006; Rivkin et al., 2018). For example, management research has demonstrated that it is not only the stressors (emotional dissonance) that are relevant for strain, but also resources such as self-control and social support that buffer the negative effects of acting strategies (Diestel & Schmidt, 2011a). Overall, theoretical models of emotional labour conceptualise surface acting as a source of stress that causes strain and emotional exhaustion (Hu & Lang, 2010). Deep acting is seen as a strategy that leads to employee engagement and that causally precedes enhanced service performance (Grandey, 2000).

3.2.1.2 *Emotional Regulation Theory and Emotional Labour*

The most notable contribution to understanding the mechanisms of deep and surface acting was provided by Grandey et al. (2002) using emotional regulation theory. They provided valuable insights into the basic processes underlying these acting strategies. Holman et al. (2008) found that emotion regulation has two main dimensions that reflect different motives. The first is concerned with the focus of regulation, i.e. surface or deep acting. The second is concerned with the direction of regulation, namely whether strategies seek to suppress or amplify emotion (see Table 3-1). Combining the two means that deep acting strategies can be used to suppress or amplify *felt* emotions but surface acting strategies can be used to suppress or amplify emotional *displays*.

Table 3-1 Typology of two main aspects of emotional and existential regulation (Grandey, 2000).

		Focus of Regulation			
		Deep Acting (antecedent-focused regulation)	Surface Acting (response-focused regulation)	Surface Existential Acting (response-focused regulation)	Deep Existential Acting (response-focused regulation)
Direction of Regulation	Suppression 	Inhibiting or withholding <i>emotional feeling</i> , where both emotion and behaviour is inhibited or suppressed.	Inhibiting, withholding <i>emotional display</i> , where emotion has not changed, but the behaviour is suppressed.	Inhibiting, withholding felt <i>meaningfulness</i> where values or beliefs have not changed, but are suppressed.	Inhibiting or withholding genuine meaningfulness, where values and beliefs are modified or altered.
	Amplification 	Enhancing or expressing <i>emotional feeling</i> , where both emotion and behaviour is expressed or amplified.	Enhancing or expressing <i>emotional display</i> : where emotion has not changed, but behaviour is expressed.	Expressing <i>meaningfulness display</i> , where true values/beliefs have not changed, but modification is expressed at work.	Expressing <i>meaningfulness display</i> , where both values and beliefs have changed or altered.
		Severity of Acting Strategies 			

Firstly, the direction of regulation implies whether the person would need to: i) suppress their emotion or meaningfulness; or ii) enhance their sense of emotion or meaningfulness to meet organisational display rules. The focus of regulation explains the type of coping strategy adopted by the individual. Although this has been conceptualised using emotional labour strategies (Fouquereau et al., 2019; Grandey et al., 2013), this thesis adopts such mechanisms to explain the regulation involved when one reacts to organisational pressures using existential labour. In this case, when one responds by choosing surface existential acting, one is involved in suppression or expressing values that are not authentic to the individual, but an individual adequately regulates it to avoid changing their values completely. In contrast, when one chooses to respond via deep existential acting, both suppression and alteration of values are involved, causing more severity to one’s wellbeing. The severity of acting strategies indicates that deep existential acting would be the most damaging.

More recent evidence has indicated that emotional suppression or amplification varies according to supervisory support organisational factors and occupational requirements in the workplace (Restubog et al., 2020; Trougakos et al., 2015a). For example, a multiple-wave longitudinal analysis using data from 424 hotel employees and their immediate supervisors reveals how supervisory support affects emotional labour strategies and intention to leave (Lam

& Chen, 2012b). The results show that supervisory support played an important role in mitigating the negative effects of surface acting on job satisfaction and intention to stay (Lam & Chen, 2012a). Bhave and Glomb (2016) showed that occupational emotional labour requirements which incorporate desirable workplace interactions could be considered a positive job attribute, even though surface acting is generally be considered undesirable for employees. This seeming paradox can be reconciled when considering a particular worker in an occupation (Bhave & Glomb, 2016). For instance, police officers face considerable occupational emotional labour requirements resulting in surface acting (Duran et al., 2018). Yet, results indicate that requirements could be satisfying, particularly when compared with other occupational requirements of police work that do not involve job interactions. These findings attest to Côté's (2005) contention that *'people work'* does not intrinsically possess negative assets and that many factors affect the relationship between emotion regulation and strain, most notably, the receiver's response to the sender's emotional regulation. In short, emotional labour requirements are not universally perceived as negative (Côté, 2005; Lilius, 2012). Contextual factors such as social interactions organisational identity or organisational climate alleviate the burden of surface acting (McCance et al., 2010). These arguments help explain the factors involved when regulating emotions at work and can be used to further investigate if they would apply to the regulation of experienced meaningfulness (See Appendix 2.2. for a differentiation between emotions and meaningfulness as supporting material).

So far, scholars have positioned existential labour as different to emotional labour based on its underlying mechanisms. The emotional labour literature typically argues that deep acting requires less effort than surface acting since deep acting results in incongruent emotions over time (Lam et al., 2017). However, existential labour theory argues otherwise, suggesting that both deep and surface existential acting require considerable effort. With unsupportive organisational practices and a lack of autonomy, this could lead to severe outcomes such as feelings of alienation (Lam et al., 2017). Since both deep and surface acting strategies facilitate meaning management strategies, they have complexities with meaningful experiences because challenging one's personal and deeply-held sense of what is meaningful will require more investment of personal energies, far more than managing one's emotions (Bailey et al., 2017). Since deep existential acting essentially alters or changes one's sense of meaningful work, this would be far more taxing than occasional suppression of meaningfulness (surface existential

acting) and hence lead to more severe negative wellbeing outcomes. This suggests that deep existential acting would have more severe consequences as an acting strategy compared to surface existential acting.

With that in mind, the following hypotheses will be tested in order to test for discriminant validity of existential labour:

Hypothesis 2a: Emotional labour (i.e., deep acting and surface acting) and Emotional dissonance is distinct from existential labour (deep existential acting and surface existential acting).

3.2.2 Existential Labour Strategies and Meaningfulness At and In Work

To conceptualise existential labour strategies, different propositions have been used to explain how faking meaningful work shares ground with other related concepts such as emotional labour strategies. It is also important to consider the orientation of one's existential labour strategies at work and in work. According to Prath and Ashforth (2003), meaningfulness is ascribed to these sources in different ways. Employees identify with jobs or tasks differently from their organisation. For example, employees who identify closely with their organisation could find their tasks repetitive and mundane but obtain their sense of purpose from being affiliated with the organisation. If employees perceive their organisation as unattractive or lacking in status but enjoy their work tasks, this becomes the main source of their purpose (Rosso et al., 2013). This duality stems from social identity theory and role theory which emphasise, respectively, one's identity as a member of an organisation and the influence of one's role at work (Caza et al., 2018a) and give rise to two interrelated yet distinct forms of meaningfulness (Fletcher, 2016).

Similarly, *faking* meaningful work can be derived from either one's job role or one's membership of an organisation, or both. For example, employees may not indulge in surface existential acting when it comes to fulfilling their tasks (in work) but adopt such strategies when their meaningfulness is oriented towards the wider organisation (at work). For example, a university employee does not find the need to fake their sense of meaningfulness on task requirements that focus on teaching and tutoring students, however, adopts surface existential acting during interactions with the wider business that focus on marketing the university. That said, organisational factors like job autonomy, psychological safety or employee voice are important to determine the severity of deep and surface existential acting on individuals'

wellbeing. Psychological Safety could be an important boundary condition as it signifies the importance of employees voicing out their opinion without the fear of negative repercussions (Frazier et al., 2017). This could apply to deep existential acting, for example, when an employer seeks to impose their own views on the employee without taking account of their voice and freedom to choose (Tablan, 2015; Lips-Wiersma & Morris, 2009). The employee may feel constrained to adopt a strategy of deep existential acting through self-preservation or the desire for advancement (Bailey et al., 2017b; Trougakos et al., 2015). The employee may feel they have no choice but to alter their personal meaningfulness to align with that of the employer. For example, an employee who is a non-smoker working for a tobacco company may need to adopt deep existential acting at work to resonate with the organisation's purpose and sense of meaningfulness. Under such circumstances, negative outcomes will probably arise over time, as the individual will experience a lack of MIW leading to alienation, dissatisfaction and the intention to quit. This would be an important factor to determine if employees need to adopt existential labour linked to the concept of person-organisation misfit (see Chapter 4).

That said, considering different occupational roles in an organisation, even managers with comparatively more autonomy may experience existential labour, despite the discourse on employee involvement, voice and partnership at work (Doherty, 2009). This is because organisations are increasingly concerned with securing the commitment of core employees as a means of improving work performance and productivity (Gallie et al., 2004), therefore fostering *MAW*. This may be best achieved through increasing task discretion and involving employees in the organisational decision making processes, often through various forms of group participation, focus groups and quality circles. Such initiatives may reduce the need to involve in existential acting *in work*. However, such initiatives can also be a mechanism for strengthening organisational control (Gallie et al., 2004). This posits that relative employee autonomy can exist side-by-side with an increased delegation of responsibility to employees to meet the employer's competitive and strategic objectives. This can lead to the emergence of 'organisation-dependent employees' where employee compliance and direct management control are more likely to feature (Doherty, 2009, pg. 86). Under such circumstances, management of *MAW* is highly likely, therefore promoting existential labour *at work*.

In sum, it would be interesting to combine acting strategies with meaningful work orientations such as MIW and at work to assess if such distinctions apply to existential labour. However,

according to Lips-Wiersma's CMWS, it is important that meaningfulness is felt across all sources consistently, in a holistic manner; otherwise, it leads to an inevitable imbalance (Lips-Wiersma & Morris, 2009). These propositions have so far lacked empirical attention and this thesis seems to rectify this by focusing on the role of deep and surface existential acting on both in work and at work. In so doing, it will determine whether it operates differently across levels or is perceived as an experience that holistically affects meaningfulness regardless of its orientation to one's organisation or work. (see Chapters 6 and 7).

3.3 Summary

This thesis seeks to develop and test the concept of existential labour described by Bailey et al. (2017). The model elaborates on two components: deep and surface existential acting strategies that influence employees' work attitudes and wellbeing. The model argues that meaningful work experiences are most beneficial when authentically felt. Such experiences cannot be managed or displayed as they alter one's sense of self and identity. Therefore, managing meaningful work experiences would be harmful to an employee's wellbeing regardless of whether it is deep or surface. These existential acting strategies are regulated through suppression or amplification based on meaningfulness display rules (Gosserand & Diefendorff, 2005). Drawing from emotional regulation literature (Holman et al., 2008), suppression strategies aim to inhibit and dampen felt meaningfulness, whereas amplification strategies aim to express or enhance meaningfulness displays. Table 3-1 shows that deep existential strategies can be used to suppress or amplify meaningful displays by altering values and beliefs. In contrast, surface strategies can be used to suppress or amplify meaningful displays without internalising said values and beliefs.

Bailey et al.'s (2017) model conceptualises deep and surface existential acting as distinct; however, it does not discuss its implications concerning two important sources at work – one's job versus one's organisation – and how one might create alternative versions of the self whilst indulging in such strategies (Obodaru, 2012). It would be useful to clarify such distinctions and so this study seeks to operationalise different orientations (in and at work) to test if it holds with the concept of existential labour. The available theoretical frameworks fail to offer a detailed and comprehensive explanation of existential labour strategies and their link to negative outcomes. Thus, to develop a research model for this thesis, it is necessary to develop and validate a scale for existential labour and then test the theory of existential labour with its related determinants and outcomes, which are closely reflected in the theoretical framework offered by P-E fit theory (Vogel et al., 2019).

Chapter 4. Exploring Meaningfulness Dissonance as an Antecedent of Existential Labour Using P-E Perspective

This chapter focuses on investigating factors related to existential labour, along with its relevant outcomes. In the previous chapter, relevant insights from emotional labour were used to explain the origins of existential labour. This chapter will focus on introducing determinants of such coping responses. The determinants introduced in this review have been influenced by theoretical justifications of person-environment fit (P-E fit) theory. That said, the scope of this chapter is restricted to reviewing the most relevant determinants of existential labour. Informed by P-E fit theory, meaningfulness dissonance will be evaluated as one of the key antecedents for existential labour. Furthermore, hypotheses concerning the conceptual model of existential labour will be introduced here.

Further, work-related wellbeing will be reviewed as outcomes as a consequence of stress associated with P-E fit (misfit). Outcomes such as alienation, emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation and cynicism (as indicators of work-related wellbeing) within the context of existential labour will be conceptualised. Finally, this chapter aims to address the aforementioned tensional nature of meaningful work (Chapter 2) by conceptualising a model of existential labour using P-E fit. More specifically, it acknowledges the influence of meaningfulness dissonance as an individual level factor on inauthentic expressions of meaningful work, further questioning the legitimacy of 'meaning management' on employee wellbeing.

In Chapter 3, hypotheses regarding developing and testing the concept of existential labour were presented. Based on the model presented by Bailey et al., (2018), two components of existential labour are proposed: deep and surface existential acting strategies that influence employees' work attitudes and wellbeing. Perspectives presented in Chapter 3 have focused on understanding the possible differences (using emotional regulation theory) between the acting strategies. These existential acting strategies are regulated through suppression or alteration of felt meaningfulness, which leads to negative well-being outcomes. However, more conceptual clarity is needed to understand why and how one adopts existential labour and its relationship with negative well-being outcomes. As mentioned in Chapter 3, meaningfulness dissonance is an important predictor of existential labour, this chapter uses P-E fit to support the process of why one adopts existential strategies and how it leads to negative outcomes.

4.1 The Role of Person-environment Fit (Misfit)

This section summarises theoretical frameworks used to examine interrelationships between meaningfulness dissonance and existential acting strategies.

Person-environment (P-E) fit in a general sense is defined as the congruence, match, or similarity between the person and their environment (Tong et al., 2015). This concept is central to research in organisational behaviour and psychology, and HRM (Caplan, 1987). Various positive outcomes, such as job satisfaction, organisational commitment, turnover, and job performance, have been linked to P-E fit (Kristof, 1996). Although numerous studies have examined the causes and outcomes of P-E fit, little is known about how people combine beliefs about themselves and their environment into perceptions of P-E fit (Edwards et al., 2006).

One may argue that the linkages relating perceptions of the person, the environment, and P-E fit might seem repetitious, given that P-E fit is defined as the match between the person and environment (Tong et al., 2015). However, these linkages might not be so straightforward within the individual. For instance, when people say their values fit those of the organisation, do they mean their values and those of the organisation are perceived as equal? And when people say their values do not match those of the organisation or the job? Do they mentally subtract or adjust their perceptions of values and desires? (Vogel et al., 2019) These questions strike at the very meaning of P-E fit and how an individual experiences it (Brandstätter et al., 2016; Tong et al., 2015; Vogel et al., 2019). In an attempt to deal with such issues, the degree of misfit has been highlighted to understand the complexities of P-E fit.

Focusing on the processes underlying perceived fit provides an avenue to study the other end of the continuum, i.e. perceived misfit. Misfit is generally conceived as the negative end of the fit continuum and is associated with cognitive discomfort (Brandstätter et al., 2016; Follmer et al., 2018; Tong et al., 2015). Scholars have recently advocated that greater attention be paid to the misfit condition to better understand how people experience and manage it (Shipp & Jansen, 2011; Yu, 2013). These scholars portray perceived misfit as partially malleable and subject to modification by employees' cognitions and actions.

According to Bailey et al (2017), P-O fit, a subset of P-E fit, identifies organisational value congruence as a principal source of meaningfulness and other positive experiences at work (i.e. likely to feel fulfilled and authentic), the more the work diverges from value congruence the

more the chances of experiencing negative outcomes. Just as perceived fit is assumed to be desirable, misfit is presumed to be an unpleasant and stressful experience (Edwards & Shipp, 2007). Schneider's (1987) Attraction-Selection Attrition (ASA) model predicts that, in general, employees with poor fit will voluntarily or involuntarily leave their work environments. Meta-analytic evidence largely supports this assertion (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005), this research will further highlight the consequences of experiencing misfit, not only by focusing on its negative outcomes but by exploring mechanisms that lead to employees experiencing negative work experiences. The next section focuses on differentiating P-O fit from P-E fit theory which is often used interchangeably, however for the purposes of this thesis, P-E fit theory will be used as the main overarching framework, whilst appreciating the components of P-O fit research.

4.1.1 Person-Organisation Fit, Supplementary Fit as the focus

Kristof (1996) defined P-O fit as "the compatibility between people and organisations that occurs when: (a) at least one entity provides what the other needs, or (b) they share similar fundamental characteristics, or (c) both" (Chen et al., 2016, p.947). Compatibility in this case has two forms, supplementary fit which is achieved when an individual's characteristics are congruent with the characteristics of the organisation and its members, or complementary fit, achieved when an individual's characteristics fill gaps that are not addressed by others (i.e., demands-abilities [D-A] fit) or an individual's psychological needs are fulfilled by characteristics of the work environment (i.e., needs-supplies [N-S] fit) (J. Edwards et al., 2006) That said this research focuses on the supplementary fit between the person's sense of meaningfulness and their environment. In other words, this compatibility is achieved when characteristics of meaningful work are congruent between both sources (i.e. P and E).

A second important distinction in the fit literature is between objective fit and perceived (or subjective) forms of fit. Objective fit involves gathering separate information about the person and the organisation, then assessing their congruence (Lam et al., 2017). In contrast, perceived fit involves asking people directly whether or not they believe they are a good fit with an organisation and its members (Verquer, 2003).

Along with its conceptual relevance, larger effect sizes are found for perceived fit rather than objective fit. Kristof-Brown et al. (2005) suggested that objective congruence between a person and an organisation must first be filtered through that person's perceptions. In turn, these

perceptions are likely to be more cognitively accessible (Judge & Cable, 1997) and therefore more proximally related to attitudes and decisions than objective P-O fit (Cable & Judge, 1997; Kristof, 1996). Therefore, meaningfulness dissonance, as the experience of misfit, is examined under the perceived P-O fit level. It focuses on a person's perception of their compatibility with an organisation's values. While congruence with an organisation's values system is often the focus of supplementary P-O fit research, culture researchers have argued that cultural values are held and influenced by organisational members (Chen et al., 2016). Therefore, arguing that to capture a more holistic approach of P-O fit, a person's congruence with an organisation's culture and members needs to be accounted for. Similarly, Cable and Edwards (2004) noted that employees are likely to be comfortable (and thus experience fit) in organisations where "the things that are most important to that employee are also important to other employees" (p. 823). Whilst this argument is useful, the construct of meaningfulness dissonance (MD) focuses on the deeply internalised cognitive tensions of the individual faced when the organisation does not supply authentic meaningfulness desired by employees. Therefore, the current investigation limits its scope to examine the individual's point of view concerning meaningfulness misfit (Vogel et al., 2019) and how this affects their wellbeing, without emphasising broader determinants, i.e. the role of organisational culture and co-workers perspectives. That said, it is proposed that P-O fit is negatively related to meaningfulness dissonance, this is further tested as a part of establishing convergent validity of meaningfulness dissonance (See Chapter 7).

Hypothesis 1b: P-O fit will be highly negatively correlated with meaningfulness dissonance.

4.1.2 Approaches to the Study of P-E fit

The relationships linking the perceived person and environment to perceived P-E fit can be understood by distinguishing three basic approaches to the study of P-E fit (Edwards et al., 2006). These approaches are widely used in P-E fit research and tap into different aspects of the psychological process linking the perceived person and environment to perceived P-E fit (Lam et al., 2017; Tong et al., 2015; Vogel et al., 2019). The atomistic approach is used by studies that measure the perceived person and environment separately and combine them in to represent the concept of P-E fit (Cable & Judge, 1997; Edwards et al., 2006; Edwards, 2001). The molecular approach is a more common method, refers to studies that directly assess the perceived discrepancy between the person and environment, such as evaluating if work rewards meets or falls short of person's needs and capabilities (Vogel et al., 2019). The molar approach

involves studies that directly measure the perceived fit, match, or similarity between the person and environment, as in studies that ask respondents to rate the fit between themselves and their organisation (Bretz & Judge, 1994; Edwards et al., 2006). The terms atomistic, molecular, and molar represent a progression from reductionist to gestalt approaches (Edwards et al., 2006) to the study of P-E fit. That said, atomistic studies assess the perceived person and environment separately, molecular studies assess subjective P-E discrepancies that combine the person and environment but preserve the direction of their difference, and molar studies assess perceptions of P-E fit that combine the person and environment and disregard the direction of their difference, treating positive and negative discrepancies as equivalent in terms of P-E misfit (Vogel et al., 2019).

To clarify the meaning and distinctions among the atomistic, molecular, and molar approaches, examples of each approach from P-E fit research is provided. A recent study that measures the difference of need vs supply of meaningfulness is a good example of a molecular approach to P-E fit (Vogel et al., 2019). It uses a person-environment fit lens to explore the idea that mismatches between meaningful work received (supply) and meaningful work needed (desired) on a given day may lead to lower engagement, both in situations of deficiency and excess of meaningful work (Vogel et al., 2019). Results indicated that meaningfulness positively influenced daily engagement through increased attentiveness, however, when there was a mismatch between supply and need of MAW, it led to work being fatiguing, reducing engagement levels. The employee was subjected to measuring need versus supply and the discrepancy between this indicated the level of engagement. Therefore, the discrepancy between the complementary fit of meaningfulness was assessed to predict work engagement.

Studies of supplementary fit have examined similarity on various dimensions, such as values, personality, and demographics. These studies can also be classified according to the atomistic, molecular, and molar approaches. For instance, atomistic studies of value congruence ask respondents to describe their values and the values of their organisation and combine these measures to gauge the fit between personal and organisational values (Bretz & Judge, 1994; Cable & Judge, 1996; Judge & Bretz, 1992). Molar studies of value congruence have used measures of the perceived fit, compatibility or similarity between the values of the person and organisation (Edwards et al., 2006; Scroggins, 2008). Figure 4-1 shows a representation of how P-E fit approach is applied to the concept of meaningfulness dissonance(MD).

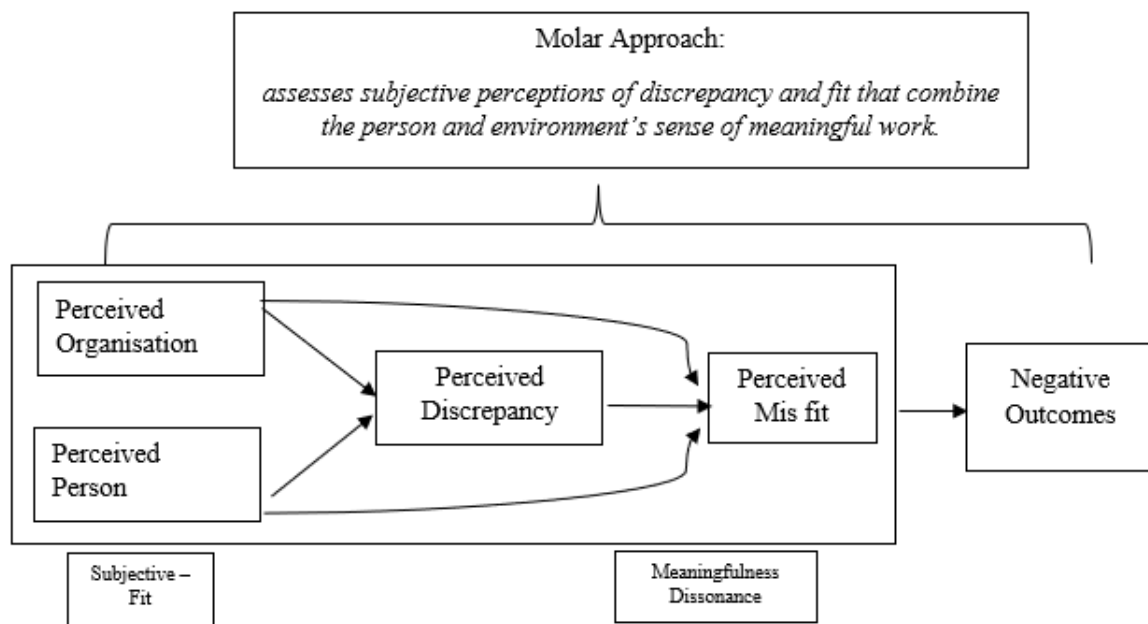


Figure 4-1. Applying P-E fit to the relationship between meaningfulness dissonance and wellbeing

The discrepancy between one's true sense of meaningfulness versus their felt sense of meaningfulness is termed as meaningfulness dissonance (MD). This falls in between molecular and molar approaches of P-E fit. It inspects the experience of discrepancy and perceived misfit by combining both sources and specifying the direction of the experience. That is a discrepancy arising between P and E would lead to a P-E misfit. For example, if John perceives a discrepancy between his sense of purpose at work and the organisation's purpose, this would lead to an experience of MD which is an indicator of P-E misfit (See Figure 4-1). On the other hand, the lower the discrepancy between P and E, the more the perceived fit. Although the different phenomenological approaches to studying P-E fit provide insight into where the current research is situated, this is not the main focus of the research. The different approaches are used to understand how meaningfulness is conceptualised within P-E fit theory. That said, the main focus of the thesis is to confirm that MD is indeed an indicator of a discrepancy, leading to perceived misfit, and how employees respond to this is further elaborated below.

4.1.3 P-E misfit, meaningful work and other related factors

Steger and Dik (2010) are among the few to connect P-E fit and its outcomes to meaningful work. They noted that their definition of the construct of comprehension, a primary component of the meaning of life, "resembles person-environment fit theories that predict work satisfaction

in terms of how well a worker's abilities, interests, and needs match the requirements and reinforcers of an organisation" (Steger & Dik, 2010, p. 133). By focusing on fit perspectives within meaningful work, it addresses 'when' work becomes meaningful (Both-Nwabuwe et al., 2017a). Meaningful work is the subjective experience of existential significance resulting from the fit between the individual and work (Carton, 2018). "The subjective experience of existential significance" refers to the process of personally perceiving work as contributing to, or making sense of, one's reason of existence in the world (Both-Nwabuwe et al., 2017a). "Resulting from the fit" refers to the fulfilment of certain dimensions – inherent in every human being – through or in work (Both-Nwabuwe et al., 2017b). This perspective suggests employee reactions to work are optimised when a job or the organisation provides a match to employee's sense of meaningfulness. When job supplies diverge from employees' desires detrimental outcomes are likely to occur (Brandstätter et al., 2016). These dimensions are further explored through the construct of meaningfulness dissonance.

Recent research has shown that this type of misalignment is likely to decrease engagement due to the experience of fatigue, a lack of personal desire for continuing the task at hand (Vogel et al., 2019). According to Hockey's (2013) theorising, work does not inevitably drain energy and cause stress. Instead, the key to predicting stress is to understand how work activities are perceived by the performer—whether those activities are viewed as externally imposed. For example, when tasks are viewed as consistent with intrinsically driven meaningfulness, energy is sustained. Accordingly, on days when job meaningfulness contradicts employee needs and values, more effort will be required to manage that stress. Within such circumstances, meaningful work will be construed as a duty rather than a desire (Hockey, 2013). Complementing Hockey's view, this research both acknowledges the negative consequences of misfit, and demonstrates coping strategies used by employees to manage misfit. Drawing from this it is proposed that meaningfulness dissonance as an indicator of misfit is a stressor, that eventually leads to adopting existential labour as a coping reaction.

The next section reflects on current issues within P-E misfit using the hedonistic perspective, supporting the need to investigate the role of meaningfulness dissonance as a determinant of existential labour strategies.

4.1.4 P-E misfit: A Hedonistic perspective

4.1.4.1 *What Do People Do in Response to Misfit?*

Reaffirming the strength of Schneider's (1987) ASA model, a qualitative study by Follmer et al. (2018) showed that leaving the organisation was one of the first options considered as a response to misfit; however, individuals usually did not follow through on it. Although many employees resolved their misfit by quickly leaving their positions, most dismissed leaving as an undesirable option and responded to perceived discrepancy in other ways (Follmer et al., 2018). Three general responses to misfit were identified in the study by Follmer et al. (2018) that could be useful to understand when and why individuals would adopt existential labour: *resolution* and *relief-seeking approaches* represent the more positive end of a response continuum, and *resignation* represents the more negative end (Follmer et al., 2018; Prepositi Cruz et al., 2018).

Resolution involved strategies including leaving and making adjustments to the self or environment. Relief-seeking involved using strategies such as surface-level behaviour change, buffering misfit with fit, and framing misfit as short-term (Follmer et al., 2018). Rather than resolving the underlying sources of misfit, the relief-seeking approach includes strategies to mitigate the pain associated with a perceived misfit. Individuals behaviourally or cognitively put in the effort to reduce the level of discomfort associated with a misfit (Follmer et al., 2018). That said, one of the most commonly mentioned responses to misfit was making minor changes in one's outward behaviour to convey the impression of fit to others. Unlike the personal changes (e.g., quitting the job) described previously, these are surface-level changes that do not address the underlying condition of misfit. The goal of these behaviours is to convince others that the individual fits within the organisation, therefore adopting behavioral compliance (Ogbonna & Harris, 1998).

Relief seeking strategies compliment and explains research on compliance and conformity at work (Hewlin, 2003). Where each behaviour may include implicit expressions of conformity such as one's physical attire or subtle expressions of agreement (e.g., a nod of head) while suppressing conflicting values (Hewlin, 2003), therefore creating facades at work. Another way of managing misfit, is via instrumental socialising where individuals could reach out to colleagues or the organisation in a purposeful way to build relationships, in this case, misfit is dealt with by improving interactions with others (Follmer et al., 2018). This often involved small changes to

conversation topics, such as one participant in the study by Follmer et al.(2018) forced himself to learn about sports to fit in better with co-workers. Additional examples included seeking out people and opportunities to interact in ways that did not come naturally (Eberly et al., 2011). That said, surface-level behaviour changes also included deliberate norm adaptation to the expectations of the job, organisation, or supervisor. Such relief-seeking strategies are used as ways to minimise the damage done by misfit, rather than remove it. Hence, individuals are defensively aimed at mitigating the negative feelings stemming from misfit, rather than removing the underlying sources of it. Relief-seeking strategies involve cognitive and behavioural approaches that shift attention away from misfit and have drawbacks, including inauthenticity, increased stress, and exhaustion (Follmer et al., 2018). Taken together, such strategies shed insight into how individuals react to misfit, the next segment highlights where this perspective is situated within P-E fit literature to better understand the direction of the current research.

4.1.4.2 Hedonistic Perspective of P-E fit

This perspective is based on the assumption that people are motivated to feel good about their situation (Larsen, 2000). This hedonistic motivation leads them to seek to change their current negative feelings to ones that are positive. Thus, there are two possible consequences when a person is experiencing a misfit (Yu, 2009). First, perceptions of the self (subjective P) or the environment (subjective E) can be adjusted so that they appear to fit with one another. For example, Pam tries to deal with her job dissatisfaction by cognitively adjusting her perceptions so as to think that her job provides her with the amount of job security that she perceives she needs. Second, one can respond to misfit by trying to achieve objective P-E fit either by adapting actual self attributes (objective P) to match environment demands (e.g., developing certain types of skills, interests, or goals) or by changing aspects of one's work environment (objective E) to fit with personal attributes (e.g., choosing jobs that coincide with one's need for autonomy). Commonalities within both these consequences are maintaining a sense of consistency (Larsen, 2000; Yu, 2009).

The fact that a positive hedonistic experience is important to people when it comes to their jobs further emphasises the idea that individuals are motivated to maintain affective consistency (Yu, 2009). Insights from control theory can be applied to understand how misfit is cognitively interpreted by individuals (Carver & Scheier, 1982). According to control theory an input

function(eg. having productive interactions during meetings) senses the present situation. If a discrepancy is detected between the present state of the environment (eg. unwanted discussions/gossip during meetings) and a person's reference criteria, the output function is tasked with attempting to reduce or eliminate the unpleasant discrepancy(eg. either through interrupting the meeting, or being complaint in meetings despite unproductivity). The main purpose of control theory, is to understand the feedback from the input, this helps maintain the perception of a specific desired condition when the situation or environment meets the individual's reference criteria (Carver & Scheier, 1982).

Such principles may be applied to understand how P-E fit changes in response to work-based stress. Edwards (1992) argued that the experience of stress (defined as the discrepancy between an individual's perceived state and desired state) harms psychological wellbeing, which may be experienced in the form of negative affect. This negative experience, in turn, leads to coping behaviours aimed at improving wellbeing. Coping refers to the thoughts and behaviours that people employ to manage the demands of situations that are appraised as stressful (Yu, 2009) It is a process that impacts P-E fit, because it involves a variety of cognitive and behavioural responses, as indicated using control theory, that people use to change elements of themselves and their environment in order to manage stressful situations (Bailey & Madden, 2019; Diestel & Schmidt, 2011a; Folkman & Moskowitz, 2004)

Coping can impact P-E fit in several ways (Edwards, 1992). First, coping individuals may seek to change their objective physical and social environments (e.g., by quitting a job). Similarly, people cope by altering social information (e.g., deemphasising negative information and seeking out new sources of information) and engaging in cognitive reconstruction (e.g., repressing, denying, or distorting negative aspects of the situation); these are essentially attempts to directly modify perceptions of the subjective work environment (Jon et al., 2022; Yu, 2009). Next, coping can influence P-E fit via the adjustment of *desires to conform* to perceptions of the situation (Merton, 1936).

This supports the predictions of Bailey et al' s (2017) concept of existential labour by proposing that employees' propensity to engage in existential labour may be fostered by the need to maintain and tackle misfit at the individual level. The magnitude of adopting existential labour strategies would be pre-determined by dissonance experienced by the individual. Drawing from P-E fit theory (hedonistic perspective) individuals who do not have some form of coping

L.Chandrasekaran, PhD Thesis, Aston University 2022. 88

mechanism to deal with misfit will experience a prolonged negative affective state of dissonance, which is proposed to be cognitively draining (Diestel & Schmidt, 2011; Harmon-Jones et al., 2007). As a result, acting strategies are used as coping mechanisms to deal with said dissonance (Diestel & Schmidt, 2011a; Dijk & Brown, 2006). Once it is apparent to the employee that there is a need to display unmet meaningfulness, the employee can then react by fulfilling their organisational obligation by either surface or deep existential acting, therefore meaningfulness dissonance is not a component of existential labour it is conceptualised as a precondition for existential acting strategies.

4.2 Dissonance As an Antecedent of Existential Labour

To understand why one adopts existential labour strategies, drawing from P-E fit, the role of meaningfulness dissonance as an antecedent will be explored in this section. Additionally, meaningfulness dissonance will be introduced as a relatively new construct, adopted from P-E misfit and the existing construct of cognitive dissonance (Cooper, 2019). The previous chapter focuses on establishing the concept of existential labour and answers questions regarding “what” strategies are adopted under existential labour (Bailey et al., 2018). More specifically, using insights drawn from previous chapter it is clear that Existential labor refers to a set of cognitive coping mechanisms that employees engage in to reconcile their personal values, beliefs, and identities with the demands of their work environment (Bailey et al., 2017). This type of labor can be particularly challenging when an employee's personal values conflict with the values and norms of the organization (Hewlin, 2003). Using P-E fit theory helps with strengthening the explanation as to *how and why* individuals react to perceived misfit. According to Vogel et al., (2019) fit perspectives within meaningful work, addresses ‘when’ work becomes meaningful. That said, meaningful work is the subjective experience of existential significance resulting from the fit between the individual and work. “The subjective experience of existential significance” refers to the process of personally perceiving work as contributing to, or making sense of, one’s reason of existence in the world. “Resulting from the fit” refers to the fulfilment of certain dimensions – inherent in every human being – through or in work. These dimensions are further explored through the construct of meaningfulness dissonance, which is essentially, the incongruence between one’s desired meaningfulness versus one’s organisations’ meaningfulness. This mismatched meaningfulness (supplied vs desired) is proposed to be fatiguing (Vogel et al., 2019).

4.2.1 Definition of Dissonance in the context of meaningful work

The discrepancy between one's true sense of meaningfulness versus their felt sense of meaningfulness is termed as meaningfulness dissonance (MD). Dissonance and its definition have sometimes been contrasted with cognitive inconsistency, which simply entails conflicting cognitions (Cooper, 2019). For example, when strong societal norms and organisational cultures clash with an individual's sense of meaningfulness, this would foster meaningfulness dissonance. However, since dissonance emphasises cognitive discomfort (Hinojosa et al., 2017), it is often conceptualised as one of the key preconditions to poor wellbeing (Vogel et al., 2019). Furthermore, individuals perceive dissonance as a threat and respond to it with an alternative strategy, leading to existential labour instead of authentically felt meaningfulness (Bailey et al., 2016). Additionally, it is important to consider other definitions of dissonance that stem from Festinger's (1957) Cognitive dissonance theory (CDT). Based on CDT dissonance creates an uncomfortable state of tension for those who experience it, it can be particularly damaging to their well-being. This suggests that both cognitive dissonance and meaningfulness dissonance are related concepts but have some important distinctions. While cognitive dissonance theory focuses on the tension between conflicting thoughts or beliefs (Hinojosa et al., 2017), meaningfulness dissonance focuses on the tension between actions and beliefs about the meaning and purpose at work or life. In other words, cognitive dissonance theory is concerned with the tension between what a person thinks and what they do (Cooper, 2019), while meaningfulness dissonance is concerned with the tension between what a person does and what they believe about their own sense of meaningfulness. Defining cognitive dissonance within the context of meaningful answers several calls made by management scholars (Cooper, 2019), i.e. it may be fruitful to integrate CDT with other motivational theories i.e. meaningful work to understand how individuals react to dissonance within particular contexts.

In fact, more recently scholars have emphasised the need to investigate more specific responses to dissonance, and how they vary across individuals and contexts (Hinojosa et al., 2017; Metin Camgoz & Metin, 2011). This could explain why cognitive dissonance sometimes yields positive outcomes (e.g. motivated to engage in acting) while at other times producing counterproductive outcomes (e.g. cognitive discomfort) as presented in Chapter 3. Whilst there is substantial evidence available on the effects of emotional dissonance and labour on employee

wellbeing (Diestel & Schmidt, 2011a; Zapf, 2002), there is lack of conceptual clarity on other dissonance strategies adopted by employees, which may be more internalised and specific to one's sense of purpose at work. For example, in contrast to emotional dissonance, dissonance within the meaningful work context would perhaps lead to more severe negative outcomes as it recognises the importance of one's 'authentic identity' compared to one's emotional experience. This explains the need to investigate the concept of meaningfulness dissonance and differentiate it from emotional dissonance, as it highlights how employees respond to mandated organisational protocol/activities, that specifically affects one's authentic sense of self (Martela & Pessi, 2018c; Obodaru, 2012) and expressions of meaningfulness at work (Bailey et al., 2017a). This hypothesis will be tested in Chapter 7- Study 3b as a part of discriminant validity for meaningfulness dissonance.

Hypothesis 2b: Emotional dissonance is distinct from meaningfulness dissonance.

4.3 Proposed Outcomes of Meaningfulness Dissonance and Existential Labour

Having examined meaningfulness dissonance as one of the key determinants of existential labour within meaningful work literature and a critical examination of P-E fit as a theoretical framework, a more precise picture emerges. Individuals can use existential labour as a potent means to the end of experiencing meaningfulness dissonance. Said attempts at existential labour are predominantly cognitively processed by individuals, contingent on perceived misfit of one's meaningfulness versus organisationally desired meaningfulness. The following segment highlights the outcomes of adopting coping strategies, focusing on one's wellbeing rather than performance-based outcomes.

4.3.1 P-E fit stress theory

Edwards et al. (1998) described a model of theoretical relationships between job stress and health that captures the work of various theorists. According to this theory, stress is experienced from the absence of fit or lack of congruence between the person and the environment. The criteria, then, in P-E fit stress theories are strains that, in turn, can lead to illness. A recent trend in occupational health psychology work is to look at positive outcomes or maintaining hedonistic feelings (e.g., meaningfulness, happiness) (Yu, 2009). Similar to the theory of work adjustment (Bretz & Judge, 1994), the predictors for P include abilities and needs and for E include demands (required skills) and supplies (reinforcers) (Jon et al., 2022). Stress, in these

models, is defined as the degree of subjective misfit between P and E. The lack of fit can have implications for psychological and behavioural outcomes. For example, individuals who do not fit with an environment may leave the setting (Yang et al., 2009). Recent literature has also shown misfit to be related to alienation (Bhatnagar & Aggarwal, 2020), anxiety (Allan, Dexter, et al., 2018), burnout (Caplan, 1987; Tong et al., 2015). Remaining consistent with previous research, this section will examine the negative consequences of unresolved dissonance as an indicator of misfit and its effect on wellbeing but within the context of meaningful work experiences.

4.3.2. Authenticity and P-E fit theory

From a P-E fit perspective, authenticity at work and P-E supplementary fit show some similarity, since they both focus on the congruence of the individual and the environment. P-E fit refers to the match between the environment and person (Tong et al., 2015). This match is expected to relate to authenticity: the better the P-E fit, the higher the feelings of experienced authenticity, and vice versa. Because both constructs capture the congruence between the person and their work environment, the question emerges to what extent authenticity at work and P-E fit differ (Grandey et al., 2013). While authenticity focuses on experienced feelings of being in touch with oneself at work, P-E fit focuses on the individual's cognitive assessment of whether there is a good match between this person and the organisation/job (Van Den Bosch et al., 2019).

Thus, the difference between authenticity and P-E fit hinges on the psychological domain; the former is primarily affective, whereas the latter is primarily cognitive. Authenticity at work and P-E fit are expected to be distinct but related. Regardless of whether one focuses on supplementary or complementary fit a high fit is associated with positive outcomes (Lam et al., 2017). Employees perceive fit as an experience originating from their perception that their unique skills and qualities add value to their organisation (Jon et al., 2022; Tong et al., 2015; Vogel et al., 2019). These workers are cognitively aware of the dissimilarity between themselves and their job or organisation. Conversely, employees experiencing supplementary fit perceive themselves and their environment as similar. The awareness of similarity is expected to relate to feelings of authenticity at work, with employees who feel similar to their environment will show higher levels of authenticity than others (Bosch et al., 2019b). As a

result of the lack of similarity, individuals wonder whether to stay or leave the organisation (Van Dick et al., 2004).

From a social-psychological perspective, feelings of authenticity have been conceptualised as emerging from a strong overlap of one's actual self (who they are in general), and one's ideal self (the self that embodies one's hopes, aspirations and wishes for oneself) (Cha et al., 2019; Shantz et al., 2014a; van den Bosch & Taris, 2018). Discrepancies between the actual self on the one hand and the ideal selves on the other are associated with adverse outcomes such as dissatisfaction, low self-esteem, self-criticism, agitation, and lack of authenticity (Caza et al., 2018b; Erickson, 1995). In a sense, this reasoning is a specification of Festinger's (1957) proposition that a person who holds two or more contradictory beliefs, values, or ideas will experience cognitive dissonance (Hinojosa et al., 2017b; Metin Camgoz & Metin, 2011), that is, psychological discomfort. In both approaches, lack of authenticity is an expression of a person's awareness that their actual self does not fit well with the way they feel or act at work (Bosch et al., 2019). Consistent with this reasoning, feelings of alienation and not staying close to oneself at work tend to be associated with lower wellbeing (Van den Bosch & Taris, 2014b). Conversely, feeling authentic at work is associated with high work engagement and satisfaction (Metin et al., 2016). Studies show that those who stay close to themselves at work and participate in activities that fit with their core self are more likely to experience favourable outcomes than others (Caza et al., 2018b).

Therefore, both authenticity and P-E fit stress theory, form a theoretical basis behind why meaningfulness dissonance followed by existential acting leads to negative well-related outcomes. In sync with this, it is expected that existential labour as a coping strategy that encourages inauthentic expressions of meaningful work will lead to negative wellbeing (See Chapter 3).

Importantly, burnout here is understood as a negative wellbeing indicator, proposed to be a combination of emotional exhaustion, cynicism towards one's work and feelings of detachment or depersonalisation (Hsu, 2013). It is related to negative behavioural (lack of engagement) and attitudinal outcomes (feelings of incompetence) (Kalimo et al., 2003; Lee & Ashforth, 1990). Decades of research has framed three components of burnout; exhaustion refers to feelings of being overextended and depleted of one's emotional and physical resources; cynicism reflects indifference or a distant attitude toward one's work in general; Depersonalisation or the display

of negative attitudes to customers or co-workers builds in employees when they perceive a lack of control over key aspects of their job, such as the demands of the job (Barthauer et al., 2019; Gil-Monte, 2005).

That said, this study distinguishes between two negative forms of wellbeing (burnout and alienation). More specifically, these outcomes, representative of one's cognitive wellbeing, have been chosen over other negative outcomes such as counterproductive behaviours (Bailey et al., 2015) or absenteeism (Schmidt & Diestel, 2012), due to the significance of one's loss of self and identity in outcomes such as depersonalisation, alienation, feelings of incompetence and cynicism. These are primarily negative attitudes developed at work, supporting the notion that inauthentic expressions of meaningful work lead to the degradation of one's sense of self and identity (Mercurio, 2020). Therefore, considering that employees are continuously faced with cognitive discrepancies at work at least every week, where they need to balance the needs of others and the self along with being grounded in 'reality' (Lips-Wiersma & Morris, 2009; Lips-Wiersma & Wright, 2012a), investigating the impact of such tensions on employee burnout and alienation could perhaps shed insight on to the negative repercussions of existential labour strategies. This insight would justify the humanistic notion of meaningful work as an inherent human need that organisations cannot supply or control (Lips-Wiersma & Wright, 2012). That said, in order to initially test for predictive validity of existential labour, the following hypothesis will be tested.

Hypothesis 3a: *Deep existential acting will be positively related to Burnout and Alienation*

Hypothesis 3b: *Surface existential acting will be positively related to Burnout and Alienation.*

Figure 4-2 Conceptual model of Existential labour using P-E Fit theory.

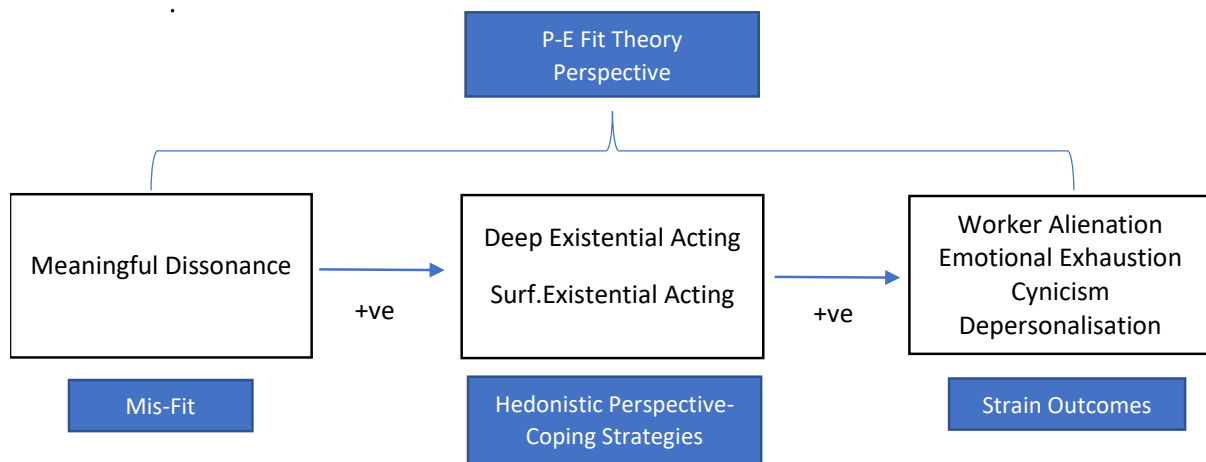


Figure 4-2 demonstrates an integration of the review sections presented in the current chapter and Chapter 3. A conceptual model of existential labour is presented in Figure 4-2, which will be further tested in Chapter 7 and 8. As explained in the earlier sections in the chapter, meaningfulness dissonance is an indicator of perceived mis-fit which subsequently leads to adopting deep and surface existential acting as coping mechanisms. This is then associated with strain, which is indicated by negative well-being outcomes such as alienation and burnout outcomes. Overall, the conceptual model demonstrates the experience of adopting coping mechanisms when misfit is experienced which then leads to strain outcomes. Based on this conceptual model, the following hypotheses along with the hypotheses presented earlier will be addressed and tested in the chapters ahead (See Appendix for Hypotheses Overview).

Hypothesis 4a: *Deep existential acting will mediate the relationship between meaningfulness dissonance and alienation.*

Hypothesis 4b: *Surface existential acting will mediate the relationship between meaningfulness dissonance and alienation.*

4.4 Addressing Current Issues in P-E Fit Theory and Existential Labour

One of the issues reported with P-E fit literature is the lack of understanding about the individual-level antecedents to P-E misfit (Vogel et al., 2019). Although some research has focused on how organisational level human resource policies, such as recruitment, selection, and socialisation, can predict fit among newcomers (Follmer et al., 2018; Jon et al., 2022; Yu, L.Chandrasekaran, PhD Thesis, Aston University 2022.

2009) little is known about how individual-level experience influences P-E fit (misfit). Due to this lack of knowledge, most studies treat P-E fit as an exogenous and static construct. Given that change is constant among individuals and their environments, the lack of research into the dynamic nature of P-E fit constitutes a significant gap in the current nomological network of the P-E fit construct (Jon et al., 2022).

The usefulness of P-E fit to organisations and individuals is thus compromised until we have a better idea of how individuals experience, manage, and influence P-E misfit. It would also be important to understand if misfit is a temporary experience or manifests over time. According to Jon et al. (2022) understanding the temporal nature of misfit is as important as understanding temporal nature of P-E fit. Studies have examined situational fit using within-person studies (Gabriel et al., 2014) that focus on how fit changes over much shorter, time-defined intervals (e.g., “at this moment”, “this day”, “this week”). More evidence is needed to understand if such transitional changes apply to misfit (Jon et al., 2022). Transitional changes in this case would be episodic changes in perceptions of misfit, every time an individual is faced with an event or discrepancy at work. As mentioned in Chapter 3, this study aims to test within person effects of meaningfulness dissonance on negative well-being outcomes via existential labour in an attempt to address the fluctuating nature of the constructs under study and add to current understanding of P-E fit (misfit) as a theoretical and psychological construct. Study 4 presented in Chapter 8 will test the initial conceptual model presented in Fig 4-2, using a weekly diary study design (see Chapter 8).

Hypothesis 1: *Weekly MD will be positively associated with weekly negative wellbeing outcomes (cynicism, emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation and alienation).*

Hypothesis 2a: *Weekly deep existential acting will be positively associated with negative wellbeing outcomes (cynicism, emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation and alienation).*

Hypothesis 2b: *Weekly surface existential acting will be positively associated with negative wellbeing outcomes (cynicism, emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation and alienation).*

Hypothesis 3a: *Weekly deep existential acting will mediate the relationship between MD and negative wellbeing outcomes (cynicism, emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation and alienation).*

***Hypothesis 3b:** Weekly surface existential acting will mediate the relationship between MD and negative wellbeing outcomes (cynicism, emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation and alienation).*

Another issue that needs attention is the effect of certain organisational conditions which are likely to create settings conducive to high levels of existential labour strategies (Bailey et al., 2018). According to Bailey et al's (2017) conceptual model of existential labour, another reason for individuals to adopt existential acting strategies is the fear of facing negative consequences. For example, when individuals are able to have the freedom to choose or feel psychologically safe, there is a higher chance for them to experience a lack of meaningfulness dissonance as a result of having the option to align with their organisational context. Environments that are fair, psychologically safe and allow for freedom of expression through learning, and questioning current status quo would reduce the need to adopt existential acting and hence reduce its effects on negative outcomes. This is particularly useful for organisations to cultivate as it would be beneficial in the presence of the often-cited pressure for organizations to continually change and innovate (Chen et al., 2018; Xu et al., 2017). These are conditions that can foster a healthy organizational environment in which employees with strong need of meaningfulness feel increasingly satisfied and successful at work (Newman et al., 2017). Moreover, in the inevitable circumstance of an imperfect organizational environment (i.e., to some extent psychologically unsafe and containing procedures and policies not completely fair or justly implemented), HR scholars and practitioners should pay attention to employees with low levels of meaningfulness or those experiencing meaningfulness misfit (Chen et al. , 2018). Psychological safety as a boundary condition within the context of experiencing P-E fit has helped employees report greater career success as individuals were able to excel at achieving their career goals in psychologically safe environments allowing self-expression and innovation without fear of punishment. These findings are consistent with current expectations of this thesis and with Duffy and Dik's (2013) argument that the benefits of calling at work and experiencing meaningful work are enhanced when supported by or at least congruent with the organization context. This allows for the current thesis to investigate the effect of psychological safety and its influence on meaningfulness dissonance, existential acting and negative outcomes (See Chapter 8-Study 4).

***Hypothesis 4a:** Organisational psychological safety will moderate the positive relationship between MD and existential acting strategies, such that it would weaken the relationship between MD and existential acting strategies.*

***Hypothesis 4b:** Organisational psychological safety will moderate the positive relationship between existential acting strategies and negative wellbeing outcomes (cynicism, emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation and alienation) such that it would weaken the positive relationship between existential acting and negative outcomes.*

4.5 Summary

P-E fit theory supports the predictions of Bailey et al.'s (2017) concept of existential labour by proposing that employees' propensity to engage in existential labour may be fostered by the need to maintain and cope with misfit at the individual level. The magnitude of adopting existential labour strategies would be pre-determined by dissonance experienced by the individual. Drawing from P-E fit theory (hedonistic perspective), individuals who do not have some form of coping mechanism to deal with misfit will experience a prolonged negative affective state of dissonance, which is proposed to be cognitively draining (Diestel & Schmidt, 2011; Harmon-Jones et al., 2007). As a result, acting strategies are used as alternative coping mechanisms to deal with said dissonance (Diestel & Schmidt, 2011a; Dijk & Brown, 2006). Once it is apparent to the employee that there is a need to display unmet meaningfulness, the employee can then choose to fulfil their organisational obligation by either surface or deep existential acting; therefore, meaningfulness dissonance is not a component of existential labour it is conceptualised as a precondition for existential acting strategies.

Chapter 5. Research Rationale, Philosophy and Methodology

This chapter provides an overview of the research rationale, narrowing down key assumptions of the thesis and the general methodology of the studies conducted as part of it. A post-positivist approach was adopted as a guiding research paradigm. The chapter opens with a review of the key assumptions of the study, revisiting the research aims and questions, followed by a comparison of the dominant philosophical paradigms in meaningful work research and a section on the research design and methodologies used. It concludes with a discussion of ethical considerations and data protection.

5.1 Research Paradigm and Philosophy of Inquiry

This study investigates how the phenomena of meaningfulness dissonance at work manifested through existential labour strategies lead to negative work-related wellbeing. A deductive, quantitative approach in the post-positivist paradigm was adopted (Cruickshank, 2012). Although the studies follow a positivist approach, they recognise other paradigms without indicating that one is better than another. For example, as demonstrated in Chapter 2, the meaningful work domain has many philosophical approaches and while some complement each other, others stand in contradiction. Guidelines for methodological fit have been adopted ‘[t]he key to good research lies not in choosing the right method, but rather in asking the right question and picking the most powerful method for answering that particular question’ (Edmondson & Mcmanus, 2007, pg, 1162).

The choice of a particular research method, be it conducting interviews or field studies, is informed by a philosophical paradigm that moulds the researcher’s understanding of reality (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Smythe et al., 2008). This phenomenological understanding of reality allows researchers to adopt appropriate measures to investigate different variables that influence human perception and behaviour from a social science perspective (Brown, 2014). Some argue that questions concerning the choice of research methods are secondary compared to those concerning a researcher’s philosophical stance, which ultimately informs social science endeavours (Shannon-Baker, 2016). Different philosophical perspectives will be compared, especially those that govern research in the domain of meaningful work.

In this section, different approaches to the nature of reality (ontology) and how it informs epistemological viewpoints will be discussed. This would justify what researchers can derive

through their study of meaningful work (axiology). For this thesis, realist and positivist assumptions about the nature of meaningful work and existential labour have been made whilst acknowledging the need for epistemological flexibility, that is the application and use of alternative paradigms that can provide a different insight into the phenomenon.

5.1.1 Epistemological considerations

Once the differences between the nature of reality have been evaluated, the next step involves understanding what researchers can know of and infer from reality, which is termed epistemology or the research paradigm (Modell, 2009). Three main distinctions can be made: between positivism and realism that follow from an objectivist ontological tradition and interpretivism that reflects the subjectivist ontological tradition (Ponterotto, 2005). Although these operate as opposing paradigms, some paradigms offer insights between positivism and realism almost forming a middle ground such as critical realism (Brown, 2014).

The positivist paradigm ensures that a result obtained through the chosen method can be tested and verified through empirical data (Modell, 2009). Rules are placed and tested through hypotheses, which are not facts, but subject to demarcation and when replacing a new hypothesis, the new one should be more testable than the old one (Cruickshank, 2012). To study something scientifically, it needs to be measured but research in this paradigm focuses on the language of variables, such as determining the causal relationship between meaningfulness dissonance and burnout. This requires an operational definition of meaningfulness dissonance and burnout and specifying ways of measuring them. These then become the variables in the analysis, with meaningfulness dissonance as the ‘independent’ or causal variable and burnout as the ‘dependent’ or caused variable. Of course, it is rarely the case that one independent variable will be everywhere and always produce the same effects on the dependent variable, but this merely means that more variables need to be added so that all variation is accounted for.

The researcher is viewed as an actor that is independent and external to the phenomenon under investigation (Cruickshank, 2012; Hussein, 2009). Thus the involvement of the primary researcher is limited in terms of their views and beliefs, the researcher’s personal opinion on existential labour neither affects the data collection nor the quality of the data collected (Bryman, 2012). Whilst this approach is essential for generalisability, it suggests that

knowledge is context-free. However, there is a growing recognition of a post-positivist position that differs in certain respects. To capture the significance of context, post-positivism has resorted to the idea of institutions as bearers of distinct patterns. These institutional factors may be expressed in the form of variables such as organisational culture or sector differences. Post-positivism differs in its more accommodating stance towards qualitative data, which are given short shrift in traditional positivist conceptions other than in a very limited role. It typically shares with positivism the view that there is a reality that is independent of and external to the researcher but recognises that reality can only be understood in a limited way because that understanding derives from the researcher's conceptual tools. As such, post-positivism accommodates many of the critiques of the positivist view of science by recognising that there cannot be theory-neutral observation (Wacquant, 2003).

Post-positivism recognises that phenomena are constantly changing, which also needs to be reflected in the research process, i.e., the methodology adopted. In this case, this would entail using diary studies or longitudinal research designs to inspect the nature of existential labour strategies (Cruickshank, 2012). Post-positivism recognises the difficulties in crafting social science research to produce accurate representations of the objective empirical reality (Modell, 2009). For example, a post-positivist would acknowledge the social context in which an employee adopts existential acting strategies, which may be because of a toxic organisational culture or lack of autonomy in one's job. Post positivists engage in context-specific research to highlight particular caveats to general theoretical assumptions or to disprove specific propositions. For example, this thesis focuses on examining existential labour, which is a particular caveat of meaningful work research in organisations and seeks to distinguish it from emotional labour theory.

In contrast, interpretivism advocates a perspective in which the role of people as social actors in the research process is considered to be pivotal (Cunliffe et al., 2004; Hussein, 2009). Interpretivism relies on the researcher's choices of what to study, the research methodology and participant interactions at a particular time and place to generate knowledge (Ponterotto, 2005). Overall, the social actors – both researchers and participants – construct meaning and give it structure in the research process. Concepts are orientative and can be improved during the research. The presentation of the data is usually in the form of thick narratives with excerpts from texts such as interviews, documents and ethnographic notes presented as illustrations

(Ivankova et al., 2006). Using meaningful work literature as an example, interpretivism might conduct an in-depth examination of workers and their meaningful work experiences in particular contexts such as those in stigmatised occupations. The knowledge acquired would focus on broader and richer descriptions of narratives provided by participants. In this case, interpretivists would immerse themselves in the situation to be studied, empathise with the population and see things from their perspective. Plummer (2001, p.395) states that focusing on narratives and the way people narrate their experience exposes something about how we 'connect the inner world to the outer world'. Although this context-dependent knowledge is considered to be rich, unique and denser, it is not generalisable (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

These two paradigms are often considered as opposing but some authors have argued that they overlap considerably (Bryman, 2001). This has resulted in researchers applying multi-strategy research, a pragmatic approach where both quantitative and qualitative research strategies are used to study the same phenomenon from different perspectives rather than viewing them as mutually exclusive (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Shannon-Baker, 2016).

The epistemological stance of this pragmatic view recognises the importance of subjective meanings and the theory-relatedness of empirical observations without giving up the possibility of producing reasonably stable theories of social phenomena (Hussein, 2009; Shannon-Baker, 2016). Traditionally, mixed methods research implies that different methods are combined to provide complementary insights into the same empirical phenomenon to enhance the validity of representations. In the context of meaningful work, pragmatists would employ a phenomenological study, to understand the social context in meaningful work experiences. Results from the prior phenomenological analysis would then guide quantitative inquiry of meaningful work experiences, providing more generalisable results.

However, such exploratory studies traditionally exclude instances where some methods are merely employed to provide general background information to findings derived from other methods, without any close integration between them (Modell, 2009). As a result, most mixed-method studies straddle the positivist and interpretive paradigms and so more ground rules are needed to assess the validity of mixed methods research (Bryman, 2006; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Modell, 2009). However, research paradigms should be evaluated on a spectrum and not as two opposing positions. Appreciating the dynamic nature of social science

research does not automatically privilege any theory or research method over any other and is genuinely pluralistic (Brown, 2014).

5.1.2 Axiology

The final philosophical segment concerns what researchers are trying to achieve through their studies, also known as axiology (Ponterotto, 2005). The aim of researchers subscribing to a positivist or realist stance is to understand the phenomena under investigation and explain and predict causal effects between phenomena across situations (Ponterotto, 2005). This is done by following the hypothetico-deductive method, one of the core methods of positivism (Butler, 2010; Cruickshank, 2012) which involves theory development and validation based on initial observations, followed by empirical studies to confirm or reject theoretical claims, and validating findings using multiple datasets or settings (Modell, 2009). This would mean that the concepts under investigation require comprehensive operationalisation and data drawn from large and representative samples from the population of interest using quantitative methods (Bryman, 2006).

However, interpretivists are less concerned with the generalisability of their findings and focus on an in-depth examination of the phenomena (Jemna, 2016). This involves investigating the research problem through qualitative methods such as focus groups, interviews, ethnographic or action research (Koerber & McMichael, 2008). The researcher concludes by making sense of the qualitative data both during and after collection. Such a methodology promotes holistic understandings of the phenomena without restricting its scope, using smaller samples compared to quantitative methodology (Ivankova et al., 2006).

Before discussing the different research paradigms, this thesis agrees with Greene and Hall's (2010) viewpoint on paradigms that the terms 'quantitative' and 'qualitative' should not be used as synonymous with paradigms. These qualifiers are more about approaches to data and methods rather than signalling a singular worldview (Hussein, 2009; Shannon-Baker, 2016).

5.1.2.1 *Using Methodological Fit Approach*

According to Edmondson and McManus (2007), in management research and theory development, determining methodological fit is crucial. Methodological fit is an explicit and systematic approach using exemplars from the organisational literature to illustrate how the state of current theory informs methodological decisions with three types of theories that help

understand the nature of the phenomena under study: mature, nascent and intermediate. Mature theory implies work that is broadly agreed on by scholars, and constructs and models have been established with increased precision. The nascent theory focuses on questions of how and why, suggesting new relationships among the phenomena under study. Finally, intermediate theory is often used in developing a new construct and proposing relationships between developed and established constructs (Edmondson & Mcmanus, 2007). In this case, existential labour is proposed to fall under intermediate theory which draws on previous work such as emotional labour and MAW as two separate bodies of literature, informing provisional theoretical relationships.

The resulting research seeks to present a new measure with consistent data with a provisional theory (see Chapter 4). Such studies that develop a new scale frequently integrate qualitative and quantitative data to help establish the external and construct validity of new measures through triangulation (Wright et al., 2017). These mixed methods or methods triangulation are most commonly adopted in scale validation studies where the researcher engages in an extensive literature review for the theoretical definition of the construct, followed by qualitative data collection and content analysis. This is backed by extensive quantitative data collection to determine psychometric properties of the phenomena along with its relationship to other related phenomena (Hinkin et al., 1997)

However, using triangulation is not a rigid rule and intermediate theory is intended to encourage leeway in research design. It may draw primarily on qualitative data with minimal quantitative input or rely extensively on quantitative data with supplementary qualitative data used to shed light on mechanisms. This thesis adopts the latter methodology. Intermediate theory describes a zone in which enough is known to suggest formal hypotheses, but not to do so with numbers alone or at a safe distance from the phenomenon (Edmondson, 1999). Intermediate theory studies propose provisional models that address both variance- and process-oriented research questions. Using both qualitative and quantitative data, these studies can identify key process variables, introduce new constructs, reconceptualise explanatory frameworks and identify new relationships among variables.

5.2 Research Philosophies in Meaningful Work Research

The relationships between meaningful work-related phenomena using quantitative methods have mostly been studied from the perspective of an objective ontology, thus assuming that an objective reality exists, and a positivist epistemology assuming that generalisable knowledge can be created to test and explain (Batz & Tay, 2018; Lysova et al., 2018; Rosso et al., 2010; Tummers & Knies, 2014). However, more recently scholars have adopted a more quantitative approach and an interpretivist epistemology, one which assumes that knowledge is socially constructed (Bailey & Madden, 2017; Lips-Wiersma & Morris, 2013.; Mercurio, 2020.). Most follow both positivist and interpretivist epistemologies, and whilst a few have sought to understand the depth of the phenomenon, the majority have focused on providing generalisable results. Bailey et al. (2018) reported that 47% of the journals published between 2000 and 2017 used quantitative methods and 19% used qualitative. Among the quantitative studies, researchers adopted a progressively more complex multilevel methodology to investigate meaningfulness including longitudinal, time-lagged and diary studies (Martela et al., 2018). The complexity of meaningful work as a field of study is illustrated in their finding that there are 28 different measurements of meaningful work. This included a large number of single-item measures, suggesting that quantitative researchers have not yet fully grasped the potential complexity of how to define and operationalise meaningful work in empirical studies.

Most interpretivists have addressed the issue of complexity in meaningful work experiences by addressing the processes by which work is rendered meaningful to the individual (Park, 2010). For example, there is an emerging interest in constructivist accounts which examine meaningful work using sense-making and interpretivist approaches (Carton, 2018). However, this literature is not yet sufficiently developed for conclusions to be drawn. By far the most significant body of empirical work on meaningfulness in recent years has adopted a positivistic, quantitative approach and falls broadly in the positive psychology literature (Ahmad & Omar, 2016; May et al., 2004; Tims et al., 2016). This suggests that alternative approaches and methodologies have not been sufficiently developed in the empirical literature, highlighting important gaps in the process and experience of work as meaningful.

5.2.1 Ontological considerations

Ontology represents different philosophical positions with diverging sets of beliefs about how to describe the nature of reality (Ponterotto, 2005). There are two sets of beliefs that exist on a

continuum: objectivism and subjectivism (Saunders et al., 2009). The objectivist position proposes that an objective reality exists external to the observer. Subjectivism views reality as ever-changing social construction through social actors (Guignon, 2012). For example, an objectivist would view factors as being observable and measurable, where there is an underlying assumption that you can raise or lower the level of meaningfulness experienced by manipulating the antecedent factors in relatively prescribed law-like ways; if I do x and y, then z happens. Subjectivists would view factors as intangible and subject to distortion and change. Therefore it would be difficult to make generalised predictions about what changes it without knowing much more about the particular context and social actors involved.

5.3 Research Philosophy of the Thesis

Drawing from an objective ontology, this thesis will be guided by a post-positivist rather than a positivist approach using a quantitative methodology to examine meaningful work-related phenomena. This is because it follows a value-laden approach to research where research involving the development of specific interests is useful. In contrast, strictly positivist approaches pertain to the value-free approach where studies are conducted independently of the researcher.

The thesis uses a quantitative methodology to examine the lack of meaningful work. In line with the predominant philosophical and methodological tradition in the meaningful work literature, it will focus on creating generalisable knowledge about the relationships between the variables identified in the studies summarised in the chapters ahead. More interpretivists' accounts of meaningful work would be beneficial as there is a lack of studies using qualitative inquiries. This thesis focuses on operationalising qualitative accounts of tensions of meaningful work to increase generalisability. For example, although meaningful work has been conceptualised and qualitatively studied (Bailey et al., 2017), phenomena underlying the tensions in it such as existential labour has not been operationalised or empirically tested in the post-positivist perspective.

The epistemological stance of this thesis is guided by examining methodological fit rather than the prevalence of research methodologies, where the state of current theory informs methodological decisions. Considering that existential labour falls under intermediate theory drawing from different kinds of literature such as emotional labour and meaningful work, it is

appropriate to rely extensively on quantitative data, with supplementary qualitative data to shed light on mechanisms. This involves constructing a new measure of existential labour and testing its psychometric properties, followed by using the measure and other established constructs to test a theoretical framework through a testable hypothesis.

Chapters 6, 7 and 8 of this thesis are empirical chapters that present different stages of validating existential labour and meaningfulness dissonance as new measures therefore exploring the main research question. Chapter 6 describes a scale construction and validation study in which the process of validation has been adapted from previous scale validation procedures (Hinkin, 1995). Generally, the purpose of a scale validation study is to develop and validate a new measure to study its causal links between variables of interest and establish the internal validity of the model (Wright et al., 2017). The steps involved are content validity, construct validation, exploratory factor analysis (EFA), confirmatory factors analysis (CFA), convergent and discriminant validity and model testing (Hinkin et al., 1997).

The first step is content validity, which can be established immediately after an item pool is developed. This requires tests such as expert validation and pilot testing using a qualitative methodology (Hinkin et al., 1997; Richardson, 2011). Part of establishing content validity involves the validation of the structure of the given construct; in this case, existential labour and meaningfulness dissonance. If a scale is designed to have several subscales, factor analysis is used to explore whether these components underlie the responses to the instrument in an expected way (Hinkin et al., 1997).

The second step is construct validity. This addresses the relationship between the new measure and the underlying attributes it is designed to assess (Wright, et al., 2012). Nomological validity is a form of construct validity that examines the extent to which the construct of interest behaves as it should in a network of related constructs (Hinkin et al., 1997). The formulation of a nomological network is an important phase in the development of a valid measure (Gil-Monte, 2005). This is done by proposing hypotheses that relate the focal construct to other theoretically related constructs, before using various methods to collect evidence (Richardson, 2011). Indeed, in the construction of a scale, it is important to establish that the construct under development is both appropriately related (convergent validity) yet sufficiently distinct (discriminant validity) from other theoretically relevant constructs (Wright, Campbell, Thatcher, et al., 2012).

Finally, criterion-related validity is concerned with associations between the construct at hand and theoretically relevant external outcomes. The nomological network guides this process, allowing the researcher to explore concurrent and predictive validity, both of which are segments of criterion-related validity (Bartram, 2005; Vander Elst et al., 2014). This is presented in Chapter 7.

Concurrent validity examines the relationship between the construct at hand and other relevant measures or criteria which were assessed simultaneously. Predictive validity is concerned with the extent to which a construct can predict future events. Both these validity measures are covered in Chapters 7 and 8, which investigate the newly developed scale in a multilevel design. The five validation studies in this thesis aim to address each of these core types of validity in the development of existential labour.

Common criticisms of scale validation studies are that new measures are often perceived as redundant and not generalisable to different populations and cultures. To counteract these weaknesses, scale validation procedures have been used on different samples mainly in the working population of the UK. For example, for the model testing aspect of scale validation, two field studies were carried out to ensure external validity. Using longitudinal and diary designs ensured that the methodology appropriately captured the in-person variability of the study variables whilst accounting for observer recall bias (Gabriel et al., 2019; Hom & Griffeth, 1991; Ohly et al., 2011.) which would not be possible to achieve with a cross-sectional design. The data was collected using measurement scales that have been validated either in previous studies or as part of this thesis.

5.4 Research Design

This thesis aimed to develop a valid, parsimonious, yet relatively short measure of existential labour that could easily be incorporated into a wider questionnaire to help organisational researchers determine to what extent individuals manage their sense of meaningfulness, therefore exhibiting employee wellbeing. It was important that the final measure: (a) captured the full domain of the construct definition outlined in Chapter 3 and 4; (b) was concise enough to be easily incorporated into wider wellbeing initiatives to understand meaningfulness in organisations without taxing the time and energy of respondents; (c) was clear and understandable to working adults; and (d) had to be constructed for a diary design, therefore,

words like ‘week’ would have to be included. Following recommendations by Hinkin (1995) and DeVellis (2003), a multistage development process was used to optimise the integrity of the new instrument (see Table 5-1). The stages in this process included item generation, scale development and scale evaluation. The primary aim of studies 1 and 2 (Chapter 6) was to examine the content and structural validity of existential labour and its complementary phenomenon, meaningfulness dissonance. The resulting short version of both the scales was then examined based on its convergent, concurrent, discriminant and predictive validity in Study 3, along with testing the measure with relevant outcomes in a lagged study and diary design across 12 weeks. The results from studies 1 and 2 are reported in Chapter 6, studies 3a-d are reported in Chapter 7 and the final study 4 is reported in Chapter 8. Table 5-1. provides an overview of the validation studies, indicating the type of validity established and the sample used for each study.

Table 5-1. Overview of key chapters and validation studies

	Analysis	Validity Established	Sample Used
Chapter 4	Literature Review: Using P-O fit theory Presentation of Conceptual Model of Existential labour Research questions		
Chapter 6	Study 1: Construct Development Expert reviews Cognitive interviews	Content validity & Face validity	Pilot sample=17+3 (expert reviewers)
	Study 2: EFA and reliability estimations. Item reduction to 10-item for Existential Labour and 5-item for Meaningfulness Dissonance	Content validity (structural)	Sample 1=258
Chapter 7	Study 3a: Confirmatory factor analysis (Chapter 6) 10 item Measure for Ext. Labour 5 item Measure for meaningfulness dissonance	Confirmatory factor analysis	Sample 2=304
	Study 3b: Correlational analysis using self-validation items, Study 3c: Hierarchical regressions to show incremental and predictive validity Model fit comparisons Study 3d: Lagged study, structural equation modelling, mediation analysis.	Convergent validity, discriminant validity, predictive validity and incremental Validity	Sample 2=270 across 3 points. Each point had a two-week gap
Chapter 8	Study 4: Within-person variations of existential labour, diary study across 12 weeks, multilevel mediation analysis and cross-level interactions	Predictive Validity External Validity	Sample 3=2578 observations nested in 273 individuals

5.5 Data Collection

The studies in this thesis used multiple datasets at different points of the research process by using online convenience samples. Study 1 used qualitative data to administer cognitive interviews. Study 2 used a separate sample for exploratory and Study 3a used a separate sample for confirmatory factor analysis. Finally, Study 4 in Chapter 8 used an additional sample, for a 12-week diary design to test the hypothesised model. Through convenience sampling, the data used was appropriate and was not subject to over generalisability due to repeated testing of the newly measured scale across different data sets.

Table 5-2 provides an overview of the different samples used across various steps in the thesis.

Table 5-2. Data collection strategy

Sample	Cognitive interviews expert review	EFA	CFA (times 1 and 3)	Lagged design study (times 1,2,3)	Weekly diary design (n=12 weeks)	Personal data collection	Prolific sample
Pilot sample (n=17)	✓					✓	

Sample 1 (n=268)		✓					✓
Sample 2 (n=304)			✓	✓			✓
Sample 3 (n=273)					✓	✓	✓

5.6 Ethical Considerations

All studies reported in this thesis followed APA ethical principals for data collection procedures. Moreover, all research reported in the thesis has received ethical approval from Aston Business School Research Ethics Committee before every stage of data collection. That said, participation in all studies was voluntary and all were informed about dropping out at any point of the study. Additionally, since participants were recruited using Prolific for the factor analysis and field studies, all participants were ensured to be paid for their involvement. Bonus payments were made particularly for those participants involved in the weekly diary study(Chapter 8). For example, participants that answered more than an average of 10 weekly diary studies were paid a bonus of £2 pounds in addition to the standard payment of £6 pounds(See Chapter 8 for more details on Participants involvement).

Before participation, each participant was thoroughly informed about the study and its background. Moreover, at each step, contact details of the primary researcher was shared for more information. Due to the impact of Covid-19, specific organisations could not be approached for data collection, as a result, most participants were recruited using Prolific. For the cognitive interviews mentioned in Chapter 6, participants were contacted through personal networks. All participants were informed about being recorded and had the option to decline to be recorded. Generally, participants were repeatedly assured of their anonymity and confidentiality. Additionally, they were instructed to sign an informed consent sheet prior to participation. Specifically, no names, date of births were collected or stored in any of the studies. All data collection procedures ensured that no individual respondent could be tracked back based on his or her response. With regards to data storage, all studies adhered to the code of conduct published by Research Councils UK (2009), which prescribes storing data from studies for up to ten years, after which it will be destroyed.

All studies reported in this thesis followed APA ethical principles for data collection. All the research reported in the thesis received ethical approval from Aston Business School Research

Ethics Committee before each stage of data collection (Appendix 4 - 6). Ethical considerations per study and sample have been described below in the following sub-sections.

5.6.1 Pilot Sample: Cognitive Interviews

This study aims to understand how the existential labour scale could be measured using cognitive interviewing. Several criteria were established while developing the construct of existential labour items. Each item was constructed simply, with universally understood wording. Each item had one idea or one attribution and each was free of age and gender biases and free of double or implicit negatives.

All items used were adapted from earlier studies published in respected peer-reviewed journals (Blau, 2001; Brotheridge & Lee, 2003; Diefendorv et al., 2005; Kruml & Geddes, 2000; Mesmer-Magnus et al., 2012; Zapf, 2002). This provided assurance of compliance with ethical standards and the reliability and validity of the scale. In terms of ethical issues, before, during and after the research, anonymity and the confidentiality of the participants was assured and maintained. The findings from the study were then used for future publication and other research purposes, but only after obtaining consent from the participants.

5.6.1.1 Research protocol

Cognitive interviewing in this study required participants that have a considerable amount of experience in an organisation, be between the ages of 25 and 50, be fluent in English and be willing to dedicate time to understand and improve the measure of existential labour. Participants were recruited through opportunity sampling using the invitation and participant information sheet in Appendix 2. Each interview took 45 to 60 minutes. Participants in UK and India were approached through email or phone depending on availability. Each participant was formally briefed on the study and given an opportunity to sign a consent sheet. If the participant opted to take part, they were contacted by email to schedule an appointment for an interview. Each interview took up to 30 mins and the participant chose phone or video call. Only three interviews were recorded, as only 3 participants consented to be recorded.

During the interview, participants were instructed to read and understand the items in the questionnaire (see Appendix 4). Following this, a set of questions was administered to understand the extent to which the statements relate to the participant (see Appendix 10-11). The cognitive interviewing was undertaken to explore the cognitive processes that employees

use to answer survey questions and to identify items that are not well understood by them. During the cognitive interviews, only the interviewer and interviewee were present. The findings were then used for further analysis. Analytic memos were created based on the notes and digital recordings from the cognitive interviews (Koskey, 2016). These memos were documented onto a coded sheet that contained a summary of each employee's response to specific items and the investigator's impression of the quality of the survey question based on those responses. Coding included the following categories: a) no problem noted on the item; b) minor misunderstanding or problem; or c) significant problems (Peterson et al., 2017). The assignment of these codes was supervised independently by a second or third reviewer to assure inter-rater reliability without compromising any personal information about the participants.

5.6.1.2 Data protection

The researcher consulted the Aston Research Ethics Application Guidelines and followed its recommendations throughout the research process. According to the British Psychological Society (2009) code of conduct and ethical principles guidelines, the data were completely anonymous to ensure strict confidentiality. Any resulting reports discussed only overall themes from the group of participants and in no way identified the participants. Individual information was kept confidential and only the results were used for further research or publication purposes. If the participant was interested in accessing the research results in the future, they were advised to contact the researcher for access options. The signed consent forms were stored separately from the interview coding sheets. When approaching participants, they were assigned a number which was maintained during the research. The company name, position of the employer and family background of the employee were not recorded in any form. Cognitive interview coding was carried out in a private space. All personal identification information was removed or changed during coding. When the cognitive interviews results were completed, they were handled with caution and stored in a secure and separate hard drive when not in use. The coded results from the interviews are presented in Appendix 10-11.

5.6.2 Samples 1 and 2

The purpose of collecting two separate samples (Sample 1 & Sample 2) was to validate and develop a new measure of existential labour. Following the scale validation, the construct of existential labour was empirically tested in a lagged study using Sample 2 with a time lag of 1 month and three measurement points. Existential labour was tested along with its possible

antecedents and outcomes, establishing its nomological network. This rationale of this study answers calls made in Bailey et al.'s (2017) conceptual paper on existential labour. Systematically validating a measure of existential labour and testing whether factors at the individual or organisational level serve to moderate the association between meaningfulness strategies, existential labour states and its longitudinal outcomes were useful in addressing methodological and theoretical inconsistencies in the literature on meaningfulness. All items used in the research were adapted from studies published in respected peer-reviewed journals (Diestel & Schmidt, 2012; Hinojosa et al., 2017; Zapf, 2002) thus assuring compliance with ethical standards and the reliability and validity of the scale development. The findings were used for further analysis, something mentioned on the consent forms.

5.6.2.1 *Research protocol*

The scale validation study (Study 1) and the longitudinal study (Study 2) required participants who had a considerable amount of experience in an organisation, were fluent in English and willing to dedicate time to evaluate their MAW. Participants were mainly full-time employees in the UK. Study 1 entailed a cross-sectional online survey involving participants obtained from Prolific, a General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) compliant online data collection platform. A maximum of 580 participants were recruited using Prolific of whom 304 were recruited to participate in Study 2, which adopted a time-lagged design.

If the participant opted to take part, each was paid £6 provided the whole process was completed. The participants completed three surveys. Each took around 15 minutes. The first was primarily used for scale validation and included 15 measures collected at the start of the month. The second included seven measures collected two weeks after the first. The final survey was collected two weeks after the second and included seven measures (see Appendix 5.). Once the participant completed all three surveys over one month, a payment of 6 pounds was made. Throughout the data collection period, participants were assured anonymity and confidentiality.

The data was used further for validating the measure of existential labour using CFA. There are no known significant risks associated with this study. Participants were only asked to answer a series of questions regarding work attitudes and their sense of MAW. The participants gave informed consent, had a guarantee of anonymity and the right to withdraw from the study

at any time. This was all explained to them on an information sheet. They were given the direct contact information of the researcher and their supervisors. To ensure participant confidentiality, all data collected was retained and password-protected for one year to allow for data analysis.

5.6.2.2 Data protection

The research was designed following the recommendations of the BPS code of conduct (2009) and Bryman's (2015) social research methods. Data collection was anonymous. The researcher used a mediating platform, Prolific, to solicit research participants. At no point did the researcher require the respondent to provide identifying information beyond the listed demographics (age and gender). The GDPR (2017) framework on consent, storage and protection was followed. Although participants were solicited through a mediating agent, informed consent was obtained allowing participants to understand their right to withdraw and share information (see Appendix 5). Last, the research followed the guidelines set forward by Bryman (2015) on transparency, anonymity and privacy.

5.6.3 Sample 3

The primary purpose of this research was to supplement the psychometric properties of the existential labour scale, which was previously tested and evaluated using emotional labour theory. The next step involved validating the scale and testing its temporal properties in a weekly diary study to evaluate effects over 12 weeks (see Appendix 6). For the weekly diary design, 300 participants were recruited using Prolific. All were paid for their involvement and bonus payments were made to participants involved in the weekly diary study.

5.6.3.1 Research protocol

The participants were working professionals in the UK, fluent in English and willing to dedicate time to evaluate their MAW and recruited via Prolific. A maximum number of 300 participants were recruited using Prolific. They were paid up to £8 provided they completed all 12 weeks. The design of the study is covered in Chapter 8. Issues of anonymity, confidentiality, ethics and data protection were as described above for samples 1 and 2.

5.6.3.2 Data protection

The research followed the same data protection guidelines presented in the previous sample

Chapter 6. Development and Validation of Existential Labour and Meaningfulness Dissonance

This chapter explores the need to develop a measure of existential labour. It is in three parts. First, the need for the research into existential labour in the organisational context is outlined and the theoretical grounding explained. Secondly, validation studies are described. It details the initial generation of the items for existential labour and meaningfulness dissonance, evaluation of existing scales of emotional labour, emotional dissonance and cognitive testing on an initial item pool, followed by exploratory and confirmatory analysis. The recommendations laid down by Hinkin (1995, 1998) were followed for generating items for the new scale.

6.1 The Development of Existential Labour and Meaningfulness Dissonance

Despite its theoretical relevance, research on theorising and operationalising existential labour has not yet been attempted (See Chapter 3 and 4). There is limited understanding of the evidence base underlying existential labour strategies and their effect on employee wellbeing. It is also likely that many individuals will adopt existential labour strategies only over time, linked with experiences in the individual's social context (Bailey et al., 2017a). Along with understanding the rationale behind existential labour strategies, it would be useful to know whether existential acting is linked with short-term fluctuations depending on work conditions, akin to engagement (Fletcher et al., 2018a) and emotional exhaustion (Rivkin et al., 2018) or whether it is a relatively stable, subjective state, more akin to an attitude like job satisfaction or turnover intent (Baltes, 2007).

The scale development and validation study seek to understand the differences between existential and emotional labour theories contributing to two key areas of literature: meaningful work and emotional labour. Understanding how each strategy relates to negative or positive outcomes would be a notable contribution to this novel area. Finally, focusing on altering and suppression of MAW i.e. existential acting opens up a new avenue to current research, it is debated to be a cognitive mechanism that is heavily internalised compared to emotional acting at work (Bailey et al., 2017a). A systematically developed scale of existential labour to establish its psychometric properties and test its temporal nature with wellbeing outcomes is the main contribution of the thesis. Testing whether factors at the individual or organisational level serve to moderate the association between meaningfulness dissonance, existential labour

states and its outcomes longitudinally would be useful in addressing both methodological and theoretical inconsistencies in the literature on meaningful work.

To develop a scale to measure inauthentic expressions of meaningful work, it is important to carefully select the two distinct but related strategies (deep and surface existential acting) that are used to induce existential labour (Bailey et al., 2017). This is because different existential labour strategies may affect employees' work-related wellbeing differently. For example, employees who adopt deep existential acting may be involved in altering deeply-held values and beliefs to comply with organisational cultural changes, whereas employees involved in surface existential acting or displays of meaningfulness during a meeting or interactions with colleagues would not be changing core beliefs. The former strategy is thought to cause more cognitive exhaustion and distress (Bailey et al., 2017). In a similar vein, the negative effect of existential labour on wellbeing may change depending on which acting strategies are chosen to manage MAW.

This chapter describes the development of a scale to measure existential labour via deep and surface existential acting. It is reasonable to assume that existential labour adopted by employees in the face of meaningfulness misfit combines displays and alteration of meaningfulness, which inevitably harm wellbeing.

Previous research on meaningful work shows that the orientation of meaningfulness in an organisation is important to consider when constructing a scale (Steger et al., 2012). Although the CMWS model of meaningful work posits that several sources in one's work and beyond work overlap to foster meaningfulness, in practice it matters how one's associates with one's job versus one's organisation (Lips-Wiersma & Wright, 2012b). For example, some employees may fake meaningfulness in their work tasks, but may not feel the need to do so in the broader organisation such as a positive impression towards the organisation. The proposed existential labour scale will consist of two subscales in each existential acting strategy oriented towards one's job (in work) and one's organisation (at work). Similarly, meaningfulness dissonance will be explored under two subscales: meaningfulness dissonance towards one job (in work) and one's organisation (at work). Table 6-1 presents an overview of studies tested in this Chapter.

Table 6-1: Overview of studies in this Chapter 6:

	Analysis	Validity Established	Sample Used
Chapter 6	Study 1: Content Validity Study Expert Reviews Cognitive Interviews	Content Validity+Face Validity	Pilot Sample (UK)=12+3 (Expert Reviewers)
	Study 2: Exploratory Factor Analysis Reliability estimations Item reduction to 10-item for Existential labour and 5 item for Meaningfulness Dissonance	Content Validity(Structural)	Sample 1(UK)=258

6.2 Methodological Rationale

The proposed existential labour scale was constructed following methodological recommendations for scale development and validation outlined by Wright et al. (2017) and Hinkin (1998). Based on the theoretical definition of existential labour provided by Bailey et al. (2017) and available emotional labour scales (Diefendorff et al., 2005), an initial item pool was deductively formulated. That said, there are four different approaches to developing a scale. The first is the translation approach involving the direct translation of a western scale to create a different version in another language to be used in another region . The adaptation approach involves the translation of an existing scale but some modifications would be made to add more meaning to the target version (Narayanan, 2018). The decontextualisation approach involves formulating a scale from scratch in a specific context with the assumption that the construct is universal (Narayanan, 2018). The contextualisation approach involves developing a scale from scratch with the assumption that the construct is specific to the context it was developed in (Narayanan, 2018). This study follows the adaptation approach, as the developed scale is modified from previously used emotional labour scales for deep and surface acting.

Adapting a scale to fit a target would involve wording the items differently, dropping items that are deemed to be inappropriate and adding new items to the scale. It also requires uniformity in its definition of the target. Adopting the emic orientation, a scale is adapted. Researchers assume that the content domain is specific to a cultural context, in this case, a

population in the UK has been targeted, hence the scale would be specific to that cultural domain and this would dictate data collection for different validation steps.

According to Hinkin (1995), there are two basic approaches to item generation: the deductive and inductive approaches. A deductive approach was chosen for this study and a thorough review of the literature was conducted to come up with a comprehensive definition of the construct, thus firmly grounding it in theory. This definition would then act as a conceptual and theoretical guide in scale development. The items for deep and surface existential acting were developed using the theoretical definition provided by Bailey et al. (2017) and available measures of emotional acting strategies (Gosserand & Diefendorff, 2005).

To determine the content adequacy of the proposed items, a content validity assessment was undertaken and expert reviews were requested (Koskey, 2016). Based on the results of both content validity assessment and expert reviews, a preliminary version of existential labour was developed. Subsequently, a study was conducted to test the structure and psychometric properties of the new scale (Hinkin, 1995).

6.3 Deductive Formulation of the Initial Item Pool

Before items for a newly proposed scale can be generated, researchers need to review the conceptual evidence. There is a strong theoretical foundation, so a measurement scale can be developed deductively building on existing theory and research. If the conceptual basis for a scale does not result in easily identifiable construct dimensions, an inductive approach would be more appropriate.

6.3.1 The use of existing items from Emotional Labour and Emotional Dissonance

With regards to initial measure development, emotional labour scales which focus on emotional regulation at work were used to identify any subscales that could be matched with the sub-dimensions of existential labour scales and meaningfulness dissonance. The firstly adopted the definition of emotional dissonance frequently measured as a subscale of the Frankfurt Emotion Work Scale (FEWS) for the construction of meaningfulness dissonance (Zapf, 2002; Zapf et al., 1999) (see Appendix 7 & 8.). It used the definition of existential labour by Bailey et al. (2018) in which existential labour refers to inauthentic expressions of meaningfulness overtly adopted by individuals in response to organisational efforts to manage meaningfulness. This entails individuals responding via either deep or surface existential acting. Existing items

measuring fake emotional displays (both deep and surface) were evaluated to map possible dimensions of managing meaningfulness (Diefendorv et al., 2005).

6.3.2 Initial item pool for meaningfulness dissonance

To formulate an opening sentence and an initial item pool, recommendations from Hilton (2017) and DeVellis (2012) were adopted as meaningfulness dissonance was proposed to be one of the key predictors of existential acting. Items from emotional dissonance were modified to develop items for meaningfulness dissonance. Following the recommendations from DeVellis (2012), the initial pool of items was informed by the construct definition of emotional dissonance that it refers to the display of unmet emotions and the suppression of felt but organisationally undesired emotions (Zapf, 2002). The purpose of meaningfulness dissonance is to allow employees to rate the frequency of their perceived dissonance between their meaningfulness and organisationally desired meaningfulness. The item pool also considered the time frame and general response format of the scale (DeVellis, 2012). Regarding the response format, a seven-point Likert scale was chosen with a neutral midpoint, as is common practice (DeVellis, 2012).

An opening sentence and an initial set of scale items were developed. For example, '[w]hile working, how often have you had to align yourself with tasks requirements that you do not find to be personally meaningful?' indicates an item referring to a single encounter of dissonance with one's job and organisational goals. Another example is '[i]n your organisation, how often have you had to align yourself with organisational mandated goals that you do not find to be personally meaningful?' This indicates an item referring to a single encounter of dissonance in one's broader organisation and its goals. Both these items target two different orientations in a workplace; one's job versus one's organisation. The item development for meaningfulness dissonance was based on the available items of emotional dissonance which are frequently used as a subscale of the FEWS. The preliminary meaningfulness dissonance items have then been generated by modifying the phrases 'positive emotions' and 'felt emotions' to 'felt meaningfulness' and 'personally meaningful' (see Appendix 7).

Replacing emotions with meaningfulness symbolises the shift between emotional to meaningfulness dissonance to capture meaningfulness inconsistency between one's job and the organisation. Additionally, adding sentences such as 'in your job', 'in your organisation' and

‘while working’ focuses on the different orientations that meaningfulness dissonance could operate. Accordingly, two subscales were developed measuring meaningfulness dissonance in one’s job and one’s organisation. Each subscale consists of 3 items each, amounting to an overall 6 scale to measure meaningfulness dissonance. The scale items are displayed in Table 6-1.

Table 6-2. The initial set of items for meaningfulness dissonance

	Organisation Oriented Items	Task-Oriented Items
1	To what extent do your organisational goals and values match what is personally meaningful to you?	To what extent do your job requirements match what is personally meaningful to you?
2	In your organisation, how often are you obliged to act according to your organisation’s requirements compared to acting according to what is meaningful to you?	In your job, how often are you obliged to act according to your job requirements compared to acting according to what is meaningful to you?
3	In your organisation, how important is it to suppress what is meaningful to you?	In your job, how important is it to suppress what is meaningful to you?

6.3.3 Initial Item Pool for existential labour

To formulate an opening sentence and an initial item pool, recommendations from Hilton (2017) and DeVillis (2012) were adopted. A range of scales was gathered that measured emotional acting for the construction of existential acting items. This included emotional labour scales by Brotheridge and Lee (2003), Diefendorv, Croyle and Gosserand (2005) and Blau (2010) (see Appendix 8.). Following recommendations by DeVillis (2012), the initial pool of items were informed by the construct definition of existential labour and previous emotional labour scales. The emotional labour scale chosen for this study was compiled by Diefendorv, Croyle and Gosserand (2005). For deep existential acting, four items were adapted from Grandey’s (2003) deep acting scale and Kruml and Geddes’ (2000) emotive effort scale was used as a foundation for item pooling. Emotive effort is that effort involved in displaying appropriate emotions and was described by Kruml and Geddes (2000) as being similar to deep acting. The purpose of the deep existential acting subscale is to allow employees to rate the extent to which they agree to the proposed alternation of meaningfulness in their workplace.

For surface existential acting, five items from Grandey’s (2003) surface acting scale and two from Kruml and Geddes’ (2000) emotive dissonance scale were used for the initial item pool. Although this scale proposed that emotive dissonance is conceptually similar to surface acting, for surface existential acting the items were significantly modified to capture attitudes to surface existential acting. The purpose of the surface existential acting subscale is to allow

employees to rate the extent to which they agree to the proposed suppression or display of meaningfulness in their workplace. The item pool also considered the time frame and general response format of the scale (DeVellis, 2012). For both existential acting measures, the time frame in which employees reported their existential labour was the extent to which they perceived deep and surface existential acting on average. A seven-point Likert scale was chosen with a neutral midpoint, which is common practice (DeVellis, 2012).

An opening sentence and an initial set of scale items were developed for existential labour. For example, 'I often convince myself that the tasks I do at work match my inner values and beliefs' indicates an item referring to a single encounter of deep existential acting. Another example is 'I often resist my true feelings of meaningfulness to deal with tasks demands in an appropriate way'. This indicates an item referring to a single encounter of surface existential acting. Both items are directed towards one's tasks and job requirements. However, with the emphasis on including both organisation and job, another set of items was pooled which specifically referred to the broader organisation. For example: 'I often have to alter my inner values and beliefs to meet the expectations of my organisation'.

Although the item development for existential labour was based on the available items of surface and deep acting compiled by Diefendorff, Croyle and Gosserand (2005) which is frequently used as a measure of emotional labour (Diestel & Schmidt, 2011; Holman et al., 2008), all items were modified based on the conceptual definition of existential labour. The preliminary existential labour items were then been generated by modifying the phrases such as 'experience the emotions' and 'display the emotions' with 'purposeful', 'experience meaningfulness' and 'values and beliefs'. Replacing emotions with meaningfulness symbolises the shift from emotional to existential acting to capture a more internalised process of inauthentic expressions.

The CMWS (Lips et al., 2012) was used to understand tensions in meaningful work experiences and capture tensions experienced by an individual in the face of existential labour. Adding key phrases such as 'convince' for deep existential acting and 'fake a sense of meaningfulness' for surface existential acting focuses on the conceptual distinctions of both acting strategies. Like meaningfulness dissonance, each acting strategy has items that focus on two main orientations: job versus organisation. Accordingly, two subscales were developed measuring deep and surface existential acting in both job and organisation. Under deep existential acting, each

subscale consisted of 5 items. For surface existential acting, each subscale consisted of 6 items, amounting to an overall of 12 items. The scale items are displayed in Tables 6-2 and 6-3.

Table 6-3. Initial item pooling for deep existential acting

#	Organisation Oriented Items	Task-Oriented Items.
1	I often have to convince myself that this organisation's purpose has value and significance to me.	I often have to convince myself that my tasks at work have value and are significant to me.
2	I often have to convince myself that working in this organisation is for my best.	I often have to convince myself that my work tasks are assigned to me in my best interests.
3	Due to the importance of meeting this organisation's goals and values, I often have to alter my own values and behave accordingly.	Due to the importance of meeting this job's requirements effectively, I often have to alter my own values and behave accordingly.
4	I often have to work hard to believe that being a part of this organisation is purposeful and significant.	I often have to work hard to believe that the tasks I do at work are purposeful and significant.
5	I often have to convince myself that the purpose and objectives of my organisation match what is personally meaningful to me.	I often have to convince myself that my work tasks match what is personally meaningful to me.

Definition: When an individual both internalises and displays the meaningfulness they perceive to be mandated by the employer (Bailey et al., 2017a).

Keywords: Convince, work hard, alter, believe

Table 6-4. Initial item pooling for surface existential acting

#	Organisation Oriented Items.	Task-Oriented Items.
1	Even though my inner values and beliefs are not always consistent with my organisation's, I still act according to what my organisation expects me to uphold.	Even though my inner values and beliefs are not always consistent with the contents of my work tasks, I still act according to what my tasks require me to uphold.
2	To conform to organisational expectations, I often suppress what is meaningful to me.	To deal with task requirements in an appropriate way, I often suppress what is meaningful to me.
3	Even though the organisation's purpose is not always meaningful to me, I often pretend as if it is meaningful when interacting with everyone.	Even though my tasks are not meaningful to me, I often pretend as if my tasks are significant when interacting with colleagues.
4	Even though I do not always agree with the values and purpose of my organisation, I pretend as if I do.	Even though I do not always agree with the purpose of my work tasks, I pretend as if I did.
5	I often present myself as someone who finds what my organisation does to be meaningful, even when I don't always believe it is.	I often present myself as someone who finds their tasks to be meaningful when interacting with colleagues, even when I don't always believe that it is.
6	I often fake that my organisation is personally meaningful to me, to fit in.	I often fake that my work role and tasks are personally meaningful to me, to fulfil the requirements of my job.

Definition: When an individual 'acts' in accordance with perceived organisational expectations and displays meaningfulness, even though it is not consistent with what is personally meaningful to them (Bailey et al., 2017b).

Key Words: Act, resist, fake, present

6.4 Content validity for Development and Validation of Existential Labour and Meaningfulness Dissonance

6.4.1 Content validity assessment and expert reviews

Content validity concerns the extent to which scale items reflect a specific domain of interest such as emotional labour or meaningful work (Hinkin, 1995). Following recommendations for assessing content validity (Hinkin, 1998), six doctoral researchers from the Work and

Organisational Psychology Group at Aston Business School were asked to judge the content validity of each item and classify it under one of two existential labour subscales. This was then followed by expert validation from four experts in existential and emotional labour. DeVellis (2012) advocates seeking feedback from subject matter experts regarding the clarity and conciseness of a proposed set of items. Based on their feedback, the wording of both the opening sentence and the item list was adapted (see Appendix 9-11). These changes were incorporated before the next stage of content validity, the cognitive interviews.

6.4.2 Research design

Table 6-5. Study design

Study	Analysis	Validity Established	Data/Sample
Study 1	Qualitative, Interviews Expert Reviews Cognitive Interviews	Content Validity (Face Validity)	N=12 mainly from UK

6.4.2.1 Cognitive Interviews as a Pretesting Technique

Cognitive interviewing (CI) is a method to identify sources of confusion in assessment items and to assess the validity of the evidence based on the content and response processes (Peterson et al., 2017). It was used to validate our new measure of existential labour for several reasons. First, questionnaire design involves developing wording that is unambiguous and permits respondents to answer the question that is asked. Second, CI, which is an amalgamation of cognitive psychology and survey methodology, has been developed to identify problematic questions that may elicit response errors. The aim is to use CI to understand how respondents perceive and interpret questions and to identify potential problems that may arise in prospective surveys measuring existential labour. This involves interviewers asking respondents to think out loud as they go through a survey questionnaire and tell them everything they are thinking. This allows understanding of the questionnaire from the respondent's perspective rather than that of the researcher. Cognitive interviews have been used in several areas in healthcare research to pre-test and validate questionnaires and to ensure high response rates (Peterson et al., 2017).

Cognitive interviews are thus a positive addition to current methods of pretesting questionnaires before distribution. Concerning existential labour, the experience is heavily internalised and complex (Bailey et al., 2017b). Items around existential labour strategies could

be sensitive and intrusive and for specific groups for whom recollecting and answering statements may pose difficulties, hence the benefit in identifying such problems in advance.

6.4.2.2 *Sample and Procedure*

6.4.2.2.1 *Sampling method*

Non-probability sampling is the most frequently used qualitative method in organisational studies (Koerber & Mcmichael, 2008), particularly convenience sampling that is based on the relative ease of access to respondents. Although this definition emphasises availability, some convenience samples are more readily accessible than others, so even if a sample is convenient, some amount of effort will likely be involved in reaching and recruiting participants (Koerber & Mcmichael, 2008). A closely related technique is snowball sampling in which the researcher starts with a small sample of people who are readily available and easy to contact and then expands the sample by asking each participant to recommend other potential participants (Koerber & Mcmichael, 2008). This thesis used convenience sampling for conducting cognitive interviews as a pretesting technique for the scale construction study. This was followed by data samples using convenience sampling for quantitative factor analysis, therefore providing more generalisability and external validity.

Although convenience sampling is not appropriate in every situation, it can provide an acceptable sample. The most significant pitfall is that, because the subject matter or population being studied is likely to be quite familiar, the researcher might be tempted to generalise beyond the selected population. Therefore, a researcher using a convenience sample should be especially careful not to overgeneralise. Measures were taken to prevent this, by involving two or three expert reviews after each interview and coding. The cognitive interviews were based on verbatim notes mentioned or indicated by interviewees. It is important to note that cognitive interviews include the possibility of open ended questions depending on the cognitive experience of the items for each individual, hence the responses can vary and makes it difficult to generalise (example notes from cognitive interviews are presented in Appendix 10).

6.4.2.3 *Pilot Sample*

Concerning the samples used in the scale validation study (Chapter 6), participants were working professionals in the UK with more than a year's experience in the organisation. Seventeen participants were used for the initial pretesting study using cognitive interviews. A

questionnaire was developed to validate the new measure with the pilot sample. As the item list was modified from existing measures to develop the measure systematically, the items had to be subjected to expert reviews and cognitive testing.

17 interviews were conducted in the UK.² However, only 12 were used for analysis as some interviews could not be recorded. Participants were recruited as an opportunity for the pretesting and this cohort was exclusive to the pretesting phase. Typically, five to 10 people are recruited for pretesting (Willis, 2005). Recruitment continued until data saturation was reached whereby concepts around existential labour were frequently mentioned by different people or when the same ideas arose repeatedly (Willis, 2005). All participants were provided with a detailed participant information sheet (Appendix 2) and gave written consent to their participation. They ranged in age from 23 to 40 years, all were in full-time employment and were recruited from different sectors and occupational roles including interns, assistants, managers and business owners. They were recruited from a variety of industries and sectors: medical, banking, manufacturing, education, construction, IT, both private and public. The reason for diversification was to expand into different occupations and see if there were major differences in how participants perceived the statements. The study controlled for two factors: participants had to be fluent in English and had to be a full-time employee.

6.4.2.4 *Peer Debriefing*

The next phase involved using feedback from research team to evaluate the items during the cognitive interviews. This was subject to a process of iterative peer debriefing (Spall & Stephen, 1998) which continued into the later phases of cognitive pretesting. In each case, pretesting was facilitated by a primary researcher who was guided by experienced researchers in qualitative interviewing and methods that helped to facilitate rapport, collaboration and engagement during the interviews. All items and accompanying response options were subject to cognitive pretesting protocols based on recommendations by Willis (2005). The method used both think-aloud and probing question techniques to assess how well the questions were

² An earlier notion to collect data in India and potentially develop a scale which could be used in both countries was not pursued.

meeting their objectives (Beatty & Willis, 2007). The responses were developed as a 5-point Likert scale.

Usually, interviews are conducted with a maximum of 12 people (Willis, 2005). However, a greater total number of participants was included in this study because the questionnaire was administered in two ways. The first 8 were interviews with think-aloud and question probes. Based on the responses of those 8 interviews, the second set was interview-administered with minor word-changes, think-aloud and question probes (n=6). Data saturation was reached at the same level (n=6) in each condition. Testing in each of these conditions created a valuable opportunity to assess if the method of administration of the existential labour would affect the respondents' understanding and interpretation of questions and subsequently inform recommendations for the administration of the final scale.

6.4.2.5 Testing Protocol

An initial testing protocol was developed before pretesting (Willis, 2005) and each of the 28 items that were subjected to pretesting were allocated probe questions that reflected areas of clarification. For questions where it was necessary to check the understanding of a particular element of the item wording, the probes were quite specific. For example, to determine if the terms 'purposeful' and 'significance' in the same question would confuse, participants were asked:

The question uses the words purposeful and significance in the same question.
Does that sound OK to you or would you use something different?

Other probes were more general and included questions such as 'how did you arrive at that answer?', 'was that easy or hard to answer?', 'I noticed that you hesitated, tell me what you were thinking'. Similarly, words like 'convince myself' had to be explained or probed further based on the level of the employees at work. Participants were encouraged to generate the majority of the conversation, while the researcher introduced both the pre-formulated and any additional probes at key points throughout the interview in a similar manner to that of a qualitative semi-structured interview (Braun & Clarke, 2014). Each interview would last around 45 to 60 mins.

As pretesting progressed and greater clarity was achieved, the initial probe protocol was amended slightly. The question 'In your organisation, how often have you had to align yourself

with organisational goals that are not personally meaningful?’ had probes: ‘what does the term meaningful mean to you?’ and ‘[i]n what way does this differ to the word values and beliefs, if at all?’ These probes were included in the initial protocol. An additional probe was introduced into a second version of the probe protocol:

What sorts of things come to mind when you think of incorporating meaningfulness into your daily lifestyle?

This allowed for an exploration of the terms meaningfulness and meaningful work in addition to prompting for views regarding its meaning for different participants.

For face validity considerations, participants were encouraged to comment on the complete test measure including formatting, presentation and relevance of its intended use at the end of the interview. This is especially important because the person who designed the questionnaire can very often have a differing perspective to the people for whom it is intended (Greco & Walop, 1987). To enhance familiarity with the data, the interviews were listened to on a minimum of two occasions and the notes frequently revisited before coding for additional information. Four interviews were held via video and audio calls and were less beneficial than face-to-face interviews. As a result, most interviews were conducted in-person. After the interview, participants were assured of their confidentiality and were debriefed on the purpose of the study and overall research.

6.4.2.6 *Data Analysis Technique*

Participants (n=12) were coded individually. The interviews were analysed collectively and coded on a response sheet with its associated problems (see Appendix 10) The CI outcome reports were generated by carefully reviewing the coded data and the accompanying notes made by the researcher with three other subject matter experts for each interview. For each question, the reports documented whether any problems were experienced by participants in responding and, if so, the nature of the difficulty. These summaries revealed both the frequency and nature of item difficulties across all items and were used to generate an overview of item performance. The results (Tables 6-8 and 6-9) and individual summary reports were reviewed by the primary researcher and were further reviewed by 2 other researchers and consideration was given to each item that had been identified as problematic and whether it should be amended or removed from the test-item pool (see Appendix 10 for example coding). Furthermore, the adapted list of items are presented in Table 6-6, 6-7 and 6-8.

6.4.3 Results

Pretesting revealed that respondents interpreted the term ‘meaningful’ as referring to purposeful and valuable. These interpretations of ‘meaningful work’ reflected the interpretation that was intended. Overall, meaningfulness was associated with job-related factors such as work role, task clarity, CSR, autonomy and interpersonal factors such as social support, respect and dignity. Even though these findings did not directly affect the phrasing of the items, it was useful to extract such information to understand meaningful work and factors that lead to faking meaningful work. Pretesting indicated that the word ‘suppress’ included in the item ‘[t]o conform to organisational expectations, I often suppress what is meaningful to me’ was problematic. During an iterative phase of peer debriefing (Peterson et al., 2017) researchers experienced in methods of scale development proposed alternative words and phrases such as modify or change. It was decided that the question focus was to understand if there were any suppressed attitudes at work, a situation where an employee has to modify or change something personally meaningful to match organisational goals. As a result, the word ‘suppress’ was changed to ‘modify’. The word suppress was found to be ‘very strong’ and excessive for a few participants. The results also indicated that having both task- and organisationally-oriented items were useful as they relate to different contexts in a workplace although participants occasionally complained that the items were similar and redundant and that there was often overlap between organisational and task items. For example, after reading it twice and emphasising words like ‘organisational goals’ and ‘objectives’, it became much clearer. These qualitative observations were important for further item construction and validation and to understand the cognitive load of the newly developed items. Finally, participants felt that the examples helped them complete the questions. When participants were asked if removing the examples altogether would make the question clearer, none agreed. Overall, all 22 items were retained for existential labour, only 2 items were modified for ease of comprehension (see Table 6-7,6-8).

Table 6-6. Adapted list of meaningfulness dissonance items

- 1 In your organisation, how often have you had to adjust organisational goals that are not meaningful to you?
 - 2 In your organisation, how often are you obliged to act according to your organisation’s requirements compared to acting according to what is meaningful to you?
 - 3 In your organisation, how often do you have to modify your own values to follow organisational protocol?
 - 4 While working, how often have you had to adjust to tasks requirements that are not meaningful to you?
 - 5 While working, how often are you obliged to act according to your job requirements compared to acting according to what is meaningful to you?
-

Table 6-7. Adapted list of Deep existential acting items

DE1_Org	I often have to convince myself that what my organisation does is purposeful and significant to me.
DE2_Org	I often have to convince myself that working in this organisation is personally beneficial to me.
DE3_Org	Due to the importance of meeting this organisation's goals and values, I often have to alter my own values and behave accordingly.
DE4_Org	I often have to put in effort to believe that being a part of this organisation is meaningful to me.
DE5_Org	I often have to convince myself that the objectives of my organisation match what is personally meaningful to me.
DE1_Task	I often have to convince myself that my tasks at work have value and are significant to me.
DE2_Task	I often have to convince myself that my work tasks are personally beneficial to me.
DE3_Task	Due to the importance of meeting this job's requirements effectively, I often have to alter my own values and behave accordingly.
DE4_Task	I often have to put in effort to believe that the tasks I do at work are purposeful and significant.
DE5_Task	I often have to convince myself that my work tasks match what is personally meaningful to me.

Table 6-8. Adapted list of Surface existential acting items

SE1_Org	I often act according to organisational expectations, even if my inner values are not always consistent with my organisation's.
SE2_Org	To meet organisational expectations, I often modify what is meaningful to me.
SE3_Org	I often pretend as if my organisation's purpose is meaningful when interacting with other people at work, even when it isn't.
SE4_Org	I often act like my organisation is personally meaningful to me, to fit in.
SE5_Org	I often put up a front as someone who finds what my organisation does to be meaningful, even when I don't always believe it is.
SE6_Org	To deal with organisational expectations in an appropriate way, I often modify what is meaningful to me.
SE1_Task	I often act according to my task requirements even if my inner values are not always consistent with my work tasks.
SE2_Task	To deal with task requirements in an appropriate way, I often modify what is meaningful to me.
SE3_Task	Even though my tasks are not meaningful to me, I often pretend as if my tasks are significant when interacting with colleagues.
SE4_Task	I often pretend as if I agree with the purpose of my tasks even when I don't believe it.
SE5_Task	I often act like someone who finds their tasks to be meaningful when interacting with other people at work, even when I don't always believe it.
SE6_Task	I often act like my work role is personally meaningful to me, to fulfil the requirements of my job.

Table 6-9. Example of problem identification sheet

Question Number	Item	C1	C2	C3	C4	Other Problems	Comments
DE05_Org	I often have to convince myself that objectives of my organisation match what is personally meaningful to me.	Yes	No	No	No	Change of words, make it easier to understand	Change into ‘ I often have to convince myself that what is meaningful to my organisation matches what is meaningful to me

Table 6-10. Example of modification sheet

Question Number	Problem Type	Old Item	Modification made	New Item
5. DE05_Org	Comprehension problem (C1)	I often have to convince myself that objectives of my organisation match what is personally meaningful to me.	Re-structuring	I often have to convince myself that what is meaningful to my organisation matches what is meaningful to me.
2. SE02_Org	Recall Problem (C2)	To conform to organisational expectations, I often suppress what is meaningful to me.	Changing suppress to modify, remove conform	To meet organisational expectations, I often modify what is meaningful to me.

6.5 Study 2. EFA of Meaningfulness Dissonance and Existential Labour

6.5.1 Item list refinement and evaluation study

The goal of item refinement is to arrive at a final set of items that satisfies the standards for the scale psychometric properties of reliability and validity (Wright et al., 2017). The study focused on the development of scales for meaningfulness dissonance and existential labour, and initial face and content validity were established. This section describes the method to validate the meaningfulness dissonance and existential labour scale.

Study 2 focuses on the structural validity and reliability of the developed scale. Validity concerns whether the underlying latent variable measured by a set of items is the intended variable (Wright et al., 2012). Reliability indicates whether a set of items measures the true score of an underlying latent variable consistently and predictably (Bliese, 1998). Different types of reliability and validity exist and there is no consensus in the literature as to which are most important for scale evaluation (Hinkin, 1995). The American Psychological Association (1985) outlined the following criteria for psychometrically sound measures: internal consistency, content validity, criterion-related validity, convergent and discriminant validity. To assess whether the existential labour meets these criteria, the recommendations by Hinkin (1995) were followed. Study 2 was conducted to examine the unidimensionality of meaningfulness dissonance and sub-dimensions of existential labour and refine items if needed. Its main objectives were to evaluate the psychometric properties of existential labour measure and meaningfulness dissonance and provide evidence for internal consistency, convergent and discriminant validity.

6.5.2 Research design

Table 6-11. EFA of both existential labour and meaningfulness dissonance

Study	Analysis	Validity Established	Data/Sample
Study 2	EFA	Content Validity (Structural and Face Validity)	N=258 mainly from UK (Sample 1)

6.5.3 Data collection and sample

6.5.3.1 Sampling Technique

Most quantitative studies use non-probability convenience sampling because of ready accessibility. However, even with convenience sampling, recruitment and negotiating with organisational gatekeepers is one of the biggest challenges in the research process.

Convenience sampling was difficult during times such as the outbreak of Covid-19. However, advances in internet technology have made it easier to reach large and diverse samples of research participants at low cost by using crowdsourcing platforms like Prolific (Chandler & Shapiro, 2016). This allows researchers with limited access to community or clinical populations to conduct research (Chandler & Shapiro, 2016; Palan & Schitter, 2018). Even well-funded researchers have benefited from these tools by using data from online convenience samples to make data-driven decisions about which ideas to prioritise and enables researchers to engage in more complex datasets such as longitudinal or diary studies, and this is becoming more common (Palan & Schitter, 2018). However, there are potential disadvantages associated with online recruiting such as verifying the identities of participants and environment control.

Prolific is a large step towards a dedicated online participant pool for sound scientific research, with good prospects of further expanding its functionality. This is evident with the number of studies published in the last 5 years (Palan & Schitter, 2018). It grew significantly from 2014 to 2017 which is likely to result in shorter waiting times by now. Prolific's growth is also reflected in its increase in the number of researchers conducting at least one study, which was greater than 1,500 in 2017. The use of online sourcing platforms significantly increased during the onset of Covid-19.

6.5.3.2 *Sample 1*

Participants were pre-screened for only full-time employees that had more than a year's experience in the organisation. Participants had to be fluent in English. Only those participants that had a participation and completion rate of over 80% in Prolific studies were included. This is a useful pre-screener as it includes those participants that are active and have a reputation for completing studies. The majority of participants were recruited from the UK, but to keep the potential pool of respondents as large as possible, no more restrictions were added. This resulted in a potential pool of 1,010 respondents registered with Prolific. An online link to the study was posted on the platform for accessibility for the participants. All participants were paid £1.25 for 10 mins and provided informed consent before completing the online survey. Although the aim was to collect at least 600 participants, data collection naturally halted as the number of participant submissions reached 580. This sample size already met the recommendations to successfully perform the statistical procedures necessary to establish reliability and validity (Hinkin, 1998). Initial face validity during item generation was

established; items were then subject to content analysis using cognitive interviews and expert validation. For effective EFA analyses, a rule of thumb of at least 10 cases per item is recommended (Conway & Huffcutt, 2016) and concerning CFA, a minimum of at least 200 cases is required (Hinkin et al., 1997; Li, 2016). Since the purpose of Study 2 was to determine the factor structure of the developed measure, the sample was split randomly into two halves to conduct EFA (Sample 1) and CFA (Sample 2). Hinkin (1995) suggests splitting the data to enable testing of models on different cases and fitting it to a data it was created from. Some 258 participants (Sample 1) were recruited using Prolific and participants were paid for their participation. All participants were working professionals, with tenure of over 1 year and aged from 21 to 60 (see Chapter 6). In this section EFA using Sample 1 has been presented, CFA using Sample 2 is presented in Chapter 7.

For EFA, 258 participants were recruited (Sample 1). All were working professionals, with more than 50% working in the UK. Of the 258, 140 lived in the UK, 47 in the US, 26 in Poland and 12 in Hungary. All participants were fluent in English; 127 participants were British nationals; 48.9% were female 49.3% male and 1.1% non-binary; 71.3% had permanent contracts with their organisations; 38.2% belonged to the public sector, 55.8% to the private sector and 6% belonged to either non-profit organisations or other businesses; 47.8% had leadership responsibilities of which 22% were team leaders, 14% were line managers, 8% were senior managers and 4% were CEOs or directors. The age of participants ranged from 20 to 73 ($M=36.3$; $SD=11.7$). Job tenure ranged from 1 to 45 years ($M=6.9$; $SD=6.5$) and on average the participants had a bachelor's degree ($SD=1.1$).

6.5.4 Data analysis: Exploratory factor analysis (EFA)

Initially, the item pool after content validation (cognitive and expert interviews) consisted of 28 items, 10 deep existential acting items and 12 Surface existential acting items and 6 items under meaningfulness dissonance. The first step in item refinement usually involves performing an EFA to investigate whether the structure of a proposed set of items conforms to theoretical predictions; in this case, whether the 28 items map on to the three distinct constructs (Djurdjevic et al., 2017). This study also sought to explore if there were subfactors under the higher-order factor of deep, surface existential acting and meaningfulness dissonance that orient towards job versus organisation,

Two broad classes of data analytic techniques exist to extract factors in EFA: principal components analysis (PCA) and principal factors analysis (PFA; Field, 2009). The difference is that PCA reduces the data to a set of composite variables that reflect how individual items have been responded to in a given sample (Carpenter, 2017; Conway & Huffcutt, 2016; Haig, 2005). Thus, components in PCA represent a reorganisation of the information concerning the actual items. PFA creates factors that represent idealised, hypothetical variables excluding potential error variance not shared amongst items (Haig, 2005). Factors in PFA are not solely a reflection of how respondents answered a set of items. Rather, the aim is to create hypothetical, idealised variables that determine how a set of items is responded to (DeVellis, 2012). There is no unanimous agreement over which factor analytical technique to choose (Hinkin, 1997). The emergence of factors in PFA is sometimes unclear and more difficult to interpret than in PCA especially with constructs with 2 or more factors (Humphreys & Montanelli, 1975; Mundfrom et al., 2005) Thus, PCA was used as the exploratory factor analytical method for the scale development process for existential labour and meaningfulness dissonance in this study. The analysis was conducted using SPSS.

There are two available types of rotation for PCA: orthogonal and oblique rotation (Field, 2009). The main difference between these rotational methods is that orthogonal rotation assumes that all resulting factors are independent (they do not correlate with each other), whereas oblique rotation does not share this assumption and allows factors to be correlated (Field, 2009). Which rotation method to choose should depend on substantial theoretical assumptions towards the independence or correlation of potentially extracted factors (DeVellis, 2012). Because the two proposed subscales for existential labour represent two distinct but similar underlying mechanisms with the sole difference being the intensity of meaningfulness display (suppression vs. alteration), it is reasonable to assume that the two proposed subscales are highly correlated. Meaningfulness dissonance has been conceptualised to have two subfactors that represent underlying dissonance but differ in orientation, that is task versus organisation. Therefore, for this study oblique rotation was used on all 22 items of existential labour and 6 of meaningfulness dissonance.

Two further statistics were requested in SPSS that provide relevant information for exploratory factor analytical purposes: the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value and Bartlett's test of sphericity. The KMO is a statistic that tests sampling adequacy (Field, 2009). Bartlett's test of

sphericity examines the null hypothesis that the factors under investigation are uncorrelated in the population (Field, 2009). If the factors are uncorrelated, it would be difficult to establish composite factors based on commonalities, which is why one generally looks for a significant Bartlett's test statistic (similar procedure reported in Levashina and Campion (2007) and van den Bosch and Taris (2014)). For this study, Bartlett's test of sphericity for existential labour items was significant ($\chi^2=5486.711$, $df=231$, $p<.001$) and therefore EFA is likely to yield composite factors. Similarly, Bartlett's test of sphericity for meaningfulness dissonance items was significant ($\chi^2=876.349$, $df=15$, $p<.001$). Kaiser Meyer Sampling adequacy test for existential labour (0.963) and meaningfulness dissonance (0.885) showed significant results to proceed with EFA.

Before proceeding with the analysis results, although the factor structure of existential labour and meaningfulness dissonance was pre-determined using theory and expert reviews, the EFA was run without forcing the number of factors to minimise bias. EFA results for existential labour strategies and meaningfulness dissonance are reported in the following sections. First, a preliminary EFA was conducted. Subsequently, several items were dropped based on guidelines regarding factor loadings, improvement of internal item consistency and item communalities (DeVellis, 2012). After this, further revisions of the item structure were reported with the final set of items that comprise existential labour and meaningfulness dissonance scales.

6.5.5 Preliminary EFA Results for Existential labour and Meaningfulness dissonance

Initial EFA results using principal components analysis via MPLUS using oblique rotation showed a possibility of 3 factors for all 28 items. Eigen values showed 3 factors that had a value above 1. The first factor had an eigen value of 16.443, second factor had a value of 1.662 and third factor had a value of 1.425. Parallel analysis was conducted to reconfirm this, which extracted 2 factors. This was conducted with R, using the Psych Package. Using parallel analysis yields a slightly more robust and conservative factor selection method rather than completely relying on eigenvalues for the number of factors (Schreiber et al., 2006). Parallel analysis (Humphreys & Montanelli, 1975) has received considerable attention recently as it was found to be more robust as a method for factor selection than most commonly used rules (Reise et al., 2000). This confirmed the 2 factors extracted from 28 items. However, EFA was tested using two factors and three factors, model fit indices were used to determine which one

yielded better results. In Table 6-15: all EFA factor models have been reported, using Mplus the chi square differences were calculated to understand best model fit. The model with 3 factors showed the best fit indices. Scree plot presented in Figure 6-1 clearly indicates a 3 factor structure and Table 6-12 shows the factor loadings of all 28 items.

Figure 6-1: Scree Plot for all 28 items

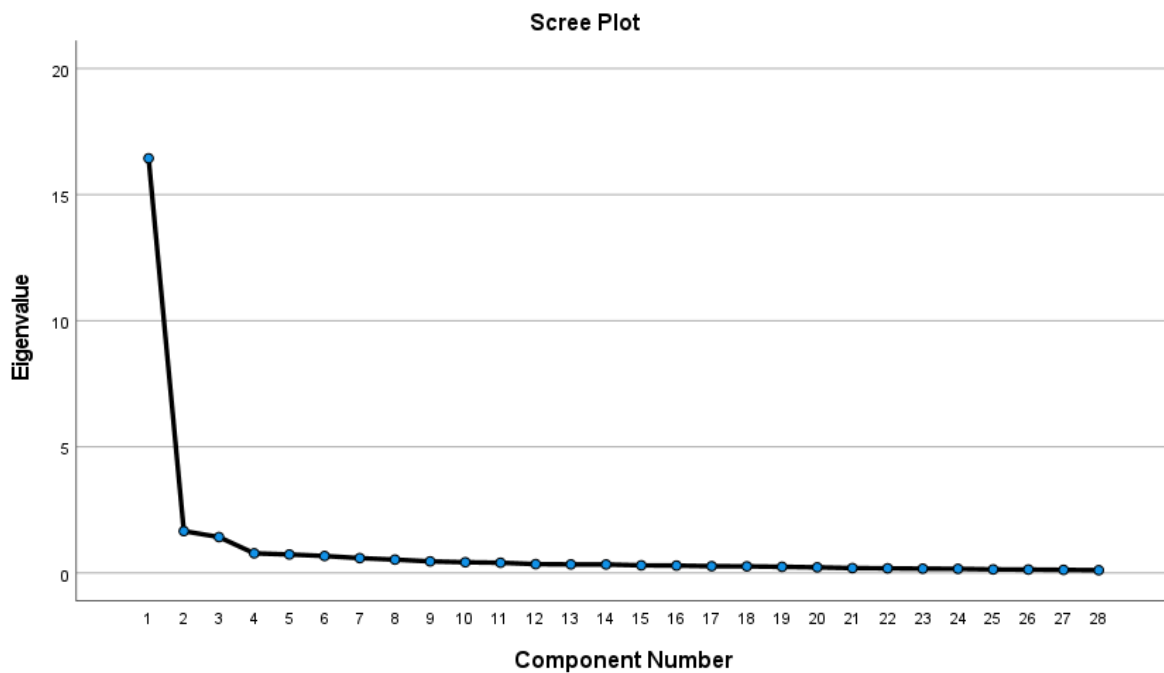


Table 6-12. Summary of EFA results for existential labour measure and meaningfulness dissonance using principal component analysis, oblique rotation (n=258). Total number of items: 28

Item Number	Item	Factor loadings			Communalities
		Deep Existential Acting ($\alpha=.96$)	Surface Existential Acting ($\alpha=.95$)	Meaningfulness Dissonance ($\alpha=.90$)	
MD01_ORG	To what extent do your organisational goals and values match what is personally meaningful to you?	-0.085	0.093	0.746*	0.707
MD02_ORG	In your organisation, how often are you obliged to act according to your organisation's requirements compared to acting according to what is meaningful to you?	0.074	0.093	0.586*	0.594
MD03_ORG	In your organisation, how important is it to suppress what is meaningful to you?	0.003	0.187	0.664*	0.689
MD01_TAS	While working, how often have you had to adjust to tasks requirements that are not meaningful to you?	0.119	0.109	0.573*	0.607

MD02_TAS	In your job, how often are you obliged to act according to your job requirements compared to acting according to what is meaningful to you?	0.272*	-0.029	0.667*	0.727
MD03_TAS	In your job, how important is it to suppress what is meaningful to you?	0.083	-0.005	0.763*	0.703
DE_01_OR	I often have to convince myself that what my organisation does is purposeful and significant to me.	0.693*	0.145	0.009	0.7
DE_02_OR	I often have to convince myself that working in this organisation is personally beneficial to me.	0.907*	-0.04	-0.027	0.773
DE_03_OR	Due to the importance of meeting this organisation's goals and values, I often have to alter my own values and behave accordingly.	0.483*	0.107	0.269*	0.63
DE_04_OR	I often have to put in effort to believe that being a part of this organisation is meaningful to me.	0.814*	-0.005	0.067	0.755
DE_05_OR	I often have to convince myself that the objectives of my organisation match what is personally meaningful to me.	0.717*	0.149*	0.053	0.784
DE_01_TA	I often have to convince myself that my tasks at work have value and are significant to me.	0.752*	0.076	-0.029	0.847
DE_02_TA	I often have to convince myself that my work tasks are personally beneficial to me.	0.843*	0.05	-0.047	0.766
DE_03_TA	Due to the importance of meeting this job's requirements effectively, I often have to alter my own values and behave accordingly.	0.439*	0.192*	0.233*	0.629
DE_04_TA	I often have to put in effort to believe that the tasks I do at work are purposeful.	0.829*	0.009	0.055	0.78
DE_05_TA	I often have to convince myself that my work tasks match what is personally meaningful to me.	0.921*	-0.039	-0.001	0.812
SE_01_OR	Even though my inner values and beliefs are not always consistent with my organisation's, I still act according to what my organisation expects me to uphold.	-0.131	0.651*	0.207*	0.559
SE_02_OR	To conform to organisational expectations, I often suppress what is meaningful to me.	0.265*	0.410*	0.146	0.549
SE_03_OR	Even though the organisation's purpose is not always meaningful to me, I often pretend as if it is meaningful when interacting with everyone.	0	0.872*	-0.114	0.691
SE_04_OR	Even though I do not always agree with the values and purpose of my organisation, I pretend as if I do.	0.038	0.880*	-0.156*	0.712
SE_05_OR	I often present myself as someone who finds what my organisation does to be meaningful, even when I don't always believe it is.	-0.059	0.967*	-0.12	0.758
SE_06_OR	To deal with organisational expectations in an appropriate way, I often modify what is meaningful to me.	0.173*	0.684*	0.03	0.738

SE_01_TA	I often act according to my task requirements even if my inner values are not always consistent with my work tasks.	0.153	0.451*	0.240*	0.605
SE_02_TA	To deal with task requirements in an appropriate way, I often modify what is meaningful to me.	0.158	0.530*	0.198*	0.664
SE_03_TA	Even though my tasks are not meaningful to me, I often pretend as if my tasks are significant when interacting with colleagues.	0.182	0.678*	-0.091	0.641
SE_04_TA	I often pretend as if I agree with the purpose of my tasks even when I don't believe it.	-0.027	0.813*	0.028	0.698
SE_05_TA	I often act like someone who finds their tasks to be meaningful when interacting with other people at work, even when I don't always believe it.	0.08	0.730*	0.029	0.697
SE_06_TA	I often act like my work role is personally meaningful to me, to fulfil the requirements of my tasks.	0.082	0.754*	-0.001	0.709
	Eigenvalues	16.440	1.425	1.662	
	% of variance	58.716	5.089	5.935	

6.5.6 Scale reliability

A common method for establishing scale reliability is to compute Cronbach's alpha as a measure of internal item consistency (Hinkin, 1997). Since the subscales of existential labour measure the same underlying construct (existential acting), high correlations were expected in and between the extracted factors. A commonly accepted cut-off value for Cronbach's alpha is .70 (Hinkin, 1997). Meaningfulness dissonance yielded an alpha of .90. The deep and surface existential subscales yielded an alpha of .96 and .95 respectively. If the scale reliabilities of some scales are considerably above .90 one should consider dropping items to shorten the scale and consequently place less of a burden on respondents. Because both theoretically proposed subscales yielded an alpha of .95, this serves as an indicator to shorten the scale length.

6.5.7 Item reduction process for the Existential Labour and Meaningfulness Dissonance

If factor loadings are over .60, items clearly and substantially tap into one overarching construct (DeVellis, 2012). Items below this cut-off were removed. This included DE03_Task and DE03_Org. Those items that had significant cross-loadings above 0.20 were also removed. This included MD02_Task, SE02_Org, SE01_Task and SE02_Task. The communality of an item is an indicator of how much variance it shares with other items (Reise et al., 2000). Items with the highest communalities should be retained (Hinkin et al., 1997). The items with the

highest communalities (substantially above .60) were retained, otherwise removed. This resulted in the removal of 7 items.

EFA was performed again on the new set of items (n=21) after reduction using SPSS. EFA results from Table 6-13 indicate that few items still had cross-loadings which usually suggests that there is an overlap between an item and its intended underlying construct. Those items that had *significant* cross-loadings over .10 were removed, mainly to establish a clear factor structure. This included 5 items i.e. DE01_Org, DE05_Org, SE05_Org, SE06_Org and SE03_Task. The final number of items that resulted without any cross-loadings and with communalities above .60 was 16. There were 5 items under meaningfulness dissonance, 6 items under factor ‘deep existential acting’ and 5 items under factor ‘surface existential acting’. This led to the final EFA procedure for the 16 items.

Table 6-13. Summary of EFA results for existential labour measure using principal component analysis, oblique rotation (n=258). Total number of items: 21

Item Number	Item	Factor Loadings			Communalities
		Deep Existential Acting ($\alpha=.96$)	Surface Existential Acting ($\alpha=.95$)	Meaningfulness Dissonance ($\alpha=.90$)	
MD01_ORG	To what extent do your organisational goals and values match what is personally meaningful to you?	-0.15	0.004	0.916*	0.77
MD02_ORG	In your organisation, how often are you obliged to act according to your organisation’s requirements compared to acting according to what is meaningful to you?	0.061	0.013	0.682*	0.641
MD03_ORG	In your organisation, how important is it to suppress what is meaningful to you?	-0.009	0.145	0.703*	0.698
MD01_TAS	While working, how often have you had to adjust to tasks requirements that are not meaningful to you?	0.113	0.074	0.587*	0.598
MD03_TAS	In your job, how important is it to suppress what is meaningful to you?	0.093	-0.052	0.767*	0.701
DE_01_OR	I often have to convince myself that this organisation’s purpose has value and significance to me.	0.690*	0.139	0.02	0.706
DE_02_OR	I often have to convince myself that working in this organisation is for my best.	0.914*	-0.056	-0.006	0.797
DE_04_OR	I often have to work hard to believe that being a part of this organisation is purposeful and significant.	0.839*	-0.019	0.047	0.768
DE_05_OR	I often have to convince myself that the purpose and objectives of my organisation match what is personally meaningful to me.	0.710*	0.145*	0.062	0.782

DE_01_TA	I often have to convince myself that my tasks at work have value and are significant to me.	0.766*	0.06	-0.025	0.86
DE_02_TA	I often have to convince myself that my work tasks are assigned to me in my best interests.	0.842*	0.061	-0.055	0.773
DE_04_TA	I often have to work hard to believe that the tasks I do at work are purposeful and significant.	0.829*	0.018	0.038	0.777
DE_05_TA	I often have to convince myself that my work tasks match what is personally meaningful to me.	0.934*	-0.027	-0.034	0.815
SE_03_OR	Even though the organisation's purpose is not always meaningful to me, I often pretend as if it is meaningful when interacting with everyone.	-0.01	0.802*	0.008	0.694
SE_04_OR	Even though I do not always agree with the values and purpose of my organisation, I pretend as if I do.	-0.004	0.893*	-0.09	0.737
SE_05_OR	I often present myself as someone who finds what my organisation does to be meaningful, even when I don't always believe it is.	-0.104*	0.957*	-0.021	0.782
SE_06_OR	To deal with organisational expectations in an appropriate way, I often modify what is meaningful to me.	0.177*	0.663*	0.047	0.728
SE_03_TA	Even though my tasks are not meaningful to me, I often pretend as if my tasks are significant when interacting with colleagues.	0.198*	0.641*	-0.051	0.65
SE_04_TA	I often pretend as if I agree with the purpose of my tasks even when I don't believe it.	0.006	0.725*	0.099	0.705
SE_05_TA	I often act like someone who finds their tasks to be meaningful when interacting with other people at work, even when I don't always believe it.	0.103	0.675*	0.07	0.708
SE_06_TA	I often act like my work role is personally meaningful to me, to fulfil the requirements of my tasks.	0.114	0.699*	0.028	0.712
Eigenvalues		12.561	1.306	1.533	
% of variance		59.813	6.22	7.300	

6.5.8 EFA results for the final version of the ExLM

EFA results showed that the 16 items of MD and ExLM load on three factors that each have an eigenvalue >1 with each item loading exceeding .85. Thus, the 11-item version of existential labour cleanly mapped onto the theoretically derived two subdimension deep and surface existential acting. Furthermore, 5 items clearly loaded on Meaningfulness dissonance. However, there were no additional factors extracted under either of the sub-dimensions as

theorised in the previous chapters. This indicates that the items developed into a holistic perception of deep and surface existential acting. The extracted factors explained 73 % of the total item variance, which was 5 % more than the three extracted factors of the previous EFA. Factor loadings are displayed in Table 6-14. Both extracted factors had overall scale reliability and yielded a Cronbach's alpha of .88 or above, which is considered adequate (Reise et al., 2000). Through the model fit indices across different factor models (Table 6-15), it became apparent that Meaningfulness dissonance is separate from existential labour strategies, the only reason all three measures were tested together was because they were developed together at the same time following best practice (Reise et al, 2000). Table 6-16 shows high correlations between existential labour strategies and theoretical evidence on existential labour indicate that existential labour may be a high order factor. The next chapter provides more evidence on confirming the factor structure of existential labour.

Table 6-14. Summary of EFA results for ExLM using principal component analysis, oblique rotation (n=258). Total number of items: 16

Item Number	Item	Factor Loadings			Communalities
		Deep Existential Acting ($\alpha=.96$)	Surface Existential Acting ($\alpha=.95$)	Meaningfulness Dissonance ($\alpha=.90$)	
MD01_ORG	To what extent do your organisational goals and values match what is personally meaningful to you?	-0.152	-0.005	0.951*	0.769
MD02_ORG	In your organisation, how often are you obliged to act according to your organisation's requirements compared to acting according to what is meaningful to you?	0.054	0.07	0.786*	0.647
MD03_ORG	In your organisation, how important is it to suppress what is meaningful to you?	0.027	-0.097	0.758*	0.698
MD01_TAS	To what extent do your job requirements match what is personally meaningful to you?	0.126	0.037	0.655*	0.596
MD03_TAS	In your job, how important is it to suppress what is meaningful to you?	0.113	0.061	0.796*	0.701
DE 02_Org	I often have to convince myself that working in this organisation is personally beneficial to me.	0.907*	-0.041	0.016	0.787
DE 04_Org	I often have to put in effort to believe that being a part of this organisation is meaningful to me.	0.839*	0.012	0.054	0.777
DE 01_Task	I often have to convince myself that my tasks at work have value and are significant to me.	0.915*	0	0.028	0.869
DE 02_Task	I often have to convince myself that my work tasks are personally beneficial to me.	0.893*	0.025	-0.031	0.797

DE 04_Task	I often have to put in effort to believe that the tasks I do at work are purposeful.	0.826*	0.051	0.042	0.792
DE 05_Task	I often have to convince myself that my work tasks match what is personally meaningful to me.	0.879*	0.052	-0.019	0.820
SE 03_Org	I often pretend as if my organisation's purpose is meaningful when interacting with other people at work, even when it isn't.	0.022	0.816*	-0.005	0.681
SE 04_Org	I often pretend as if I agree with the purpose of my tasks even when I don't believe it.	-0.065	0.809*	0.07	0.677
SE 04_Task	I often pretend as if I agree with the purpose of my tasks even when I don't believe it.	0.053	0.924*	-0.097	0.788
SE 05_Task	I often act like someone who finds their tasks to be meaningful when interacting with other people at work, even when I don't always believe it.	0.035	0.819*	0.037	0.753
SE 06_Task	I often act like my work role is personally meaningful to me, to fulfil the requirements of my tasks.	-0.014	0.839*	0.061	0.768
Eigenvalues		9.403	1.071	1.448	
% of variance		58.766	6.691	9.052	
Composite Reliability		0.92	0.94	0.95	
AVE		0.66	0.75	0.79	

Table 6-15 : Goodness-of-fit indicators of models for ExLM (n=258): using maximum likelihood robust

Fit Indices	Model 1 Factor (16 item)	Model 2 Two-Factor (16 item)	Model 3 Three-Factor (16 item)
TLI	0.776	0.855	0.966
CFI	0.806	0.893	0.945
RMSEA (90% CI)	0.152 (0.142,0.163)	0.122 (0.11,0.13)	0.075(0.06,0.08)
SRMR	0.088	0.056	0.027
χ^2	724.764***	431.638***	184.143***
df	104	89	75
χ^2 Diff		293.126***	247.495***

p<0.05*, p<0.01**, p<0.001***

Table 6-16: Component Correlation Matrix

Component	1	2	3
Deep Existential acting	1.000	.725	.604
Surface Existential Acting	.725	1.000	.600
Meaningfulness Dissonance	.604	.600	1.000

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Oblimin with Kaiser Normalization.

6.6 Summary and Discussion:

This section sets out to briefly discuss the findings from cognitive interviews and the EFA. Findings from Study 1, i.e. cognitive interviews show that words such as ‘fake’ and ‘suppress’ were difficult for participants to comprehend within the existential labour items, hence these were removed to reflect preferred cognitions of participants and this avoids the possibility of using heavy jargon that might distract the participants from responding to existential items more honestly, as no one would want to accept that they indulge in ‘faking’ at work. However, more qualitative interviews are needed to strengthen nuances involved within existential acting. Future research should focus on testing a larger sample to provide stronger justifications for experiencing existential acting within particular work roles (i.e. leaders, managers or blue collar workers). That said, the cognitive interviews used in this study were a preliminary aspect of the validation process, item development was also supported by a systematic peer- review process by including subject matter experts (Peterson et al., 2017). Using authors from the main conceptual paper of Existential labour as subject matter experts to review items provided a strong basis with regards to the development of items (See Appendix 9). The combination both these approaches provided a good foundation to proceed with the next stage of EFA. Findings from EFA provided strong evidence towards the initial factor structure of existential labour and meaningfulness dissonance. The final set of 16 items demonstrated strong factor loadings i.e. above 0.70 and commonalities of all items were above 0.70, therefore meeting the gold standard of initial scale development and validation put forth by Hinkin (2001).

The EFA showed that only three main factors were extracted, therefore the proposition of two subfactors that represented organisation versus task focus was not explored further. The items did not capture the distinction between task and organisation oriented existential acting. Thus, items under the first and second factors indicate the type of acting strategy adopted – deep or surface existential acting – compared to indicating its relevance to the task or organisation. Similarly, for meaningfulness dissonance, initial EFA results suggest that items did not significantly capture orientation towards tasks and organisation, therefore loading onto a single factor. A more elaborate discussion of the aforementioned points is presented in Chapter 9, i.e. both contributions and limitations have been explored further. The next chapter uses a separate sample to test CFA of existential labour strategies and meaningfulness dissonance.

Chapter 7. Validating Newly Developed Existential Labour and Meaningfulness Dissonance

This chapter seeks to further confirm the factor structure newly developed scales and explore the nomological network of existential labour. Following the exploratory factor analysis of the scales in the previous chapter, confirmatory factor analysis(CFA), convergent, discriminant validity and criterion-related validity will be the focus of this chapter. Although both scales (existential labour and meaningfulness dissonance) were explored in terms of their factor structure in the previous chapter, more emphasis will be given to establishing the nomological network of existential acting strategies in this chapter .

7.1 Introduction

Validity is one of the most important aspects of developing a measure (Tay & Drasgow, 2012). The measurement validity of a scale determines the extent to which it accurately measures the construct it was developed for. Therefore, researchers need to establish content, construct and criterion validity during scale development (Hinkin et al., 1997; Reise et al., 2000; T. A. Wright et al., 2017). Construct validity addresses the relationship between the newly developed scale and other attributes it was designed to assess (Clark & Watson, 1995). For example, nomological validity addresses this by examining the new construct in a network of related constructs; thus existential labour would be examined along with authenticity at work (van den Bosch & Taris, 2018) and meaningfulness dissonance. Nomological validity determines the extent to which existential labour behaves with other related constructs (Hinkin, 1995; 1998). This is one of the most important stages in developing a valid scale (Blau, 2001). Thus, convergent, discriminant and predictive validity were tested for the newly developed scale for existential labour.

7.2 Overview of studies in this chapter:

Table 7-1. Construct and criterion validity study design

Study	Analysis	Validity Established	Data/Sample
Study 3a	CFA of ExLM and Meaningfulness Dissonance	Construct validity	N=304 in UK (Sample)
Study 3b	Correlational and chi square difference tests using self-reported-validation items on a UK sample.	Convergent and Discriminant Validity	N=304 in UK (Sample 2)

Study 3c	Hierarchical Regression on lagged data.	Predictive/Incremental Validity	N=279 (Sample 2) measured on 3 points across a month in UK (Sample 2)
Study 3d	Structural Equation Modelling, using mediation analysis across points with a time lag of 2 weeks.	Hypothesised model of existential labour	N=279 (Sample 2)

7.2.1 Study 3a. CFA for Existential Labour (ExLM) and Meaningfulness Dissonance (MD)

After initial evidence regarding the structure of existential labour and its reliability, a CFA is a next step towards providing evidence of construct validity (Li, 2016; Schreiber et al., 2006; Wright et al., 2017). CFA allows researchers to conclude the quality of a proposed factor structure by assessing the degree of model fit with a sample (Hinkin, 1998). For example, the EFA results reported in the previous section suggested that the 11 items of the ExLM load on the two theoretically derived factors and 6 items load on meaningfulness dissonance. The purpose of the CFA was to test whether this structure can be confirmed (Hinkin, 1998). To test the construct validity of existential labour and meaningfulness dissonance measure, a second sample of 304 participants was used using the structural equation modelling facilities of Mplus version 7.

7.2.2 Study 3b: Convergent and Discriminant Validity

Several hypotheses were proposed to relate the main construct to other theoretically related constructs (See Chapter 3) before incorporating other methods to gain evidence (Narayanan, 2018). It is important to establish that the construct being developed is related (convergent validity) yet distinct (discriminant validity) with other constructs that are deemed to be theoretically relevant. A measure depicts convergent validity when it has a high correlation with other theoretically related constructs whereas discriminant validity is present when there is low or no correlation between the new construct and theoretically unrelated or distinct constructs (Wright, et al., 2012).

To explore the convergent validity of existential labour the construct of authenticity at work is included. Authenticity at work is a similar concept to existential labour strategies as it signifies an oppositional concept of ‘faking’ behaviours. This is indicated in the review Chapters 2 and 3, that argues that meaningful work experiences are only beneficial when felt authentically (Bailey et al., 2017b, 2018b; Lips-Wiersma & Morris, 2009a). According to Rogers (1965) felt

(subjectively experienced) authenticity is a good indicator of the degree to which a person is 'fully functioning', Rogers' term for a person fulfilling their full potential (Rogers, 1965). Erickson (1994) argued that it is an individual's own perception that leads to the experience of authenticity, rather than others' perception of that individual. Consistent with the humanistic views of Rogers and Erickson (1994), authenticity at work is a subjectively experienced phenomenon that can be measured in terms of a bipolar continuum with on the one side being fully authentic and the other fully inauthentic (Erickson, 1995). Existential labour strategies focus on inauthentic expressions of meaningfulness, therefore it is hypothesised that existential labour will be highly negatively correlated with authenticity at work. The measure of authenticity at work was validated based on Wood et al.'s (2008) results. Workers who experience lower levels of authenticity are not or to a lesser extent in touch with themselves and might therefore participate in work activities that will cost more energy. Therefore it is proposed that authenticity will be negatively correlated with both existential acting strategies i.e. deep and surface existential acting.

In establishing the convergent validity of meaningfulness dissonance, the construct of person-organisation fit (P-O fit) will be examined. P-O fit indicates how employees develop a sense of communality of purpose with their employing organisation. This ultimately leads to clarity for the individual regarding the purpose of their job and increases the intensity of their focus on their work assignments. Meaningfulness dissonance is a negative cognitive state, experienced as an indication of a misfit between the perceptions of the employee's and organisation's values. Therefore, it is hypothesised that P-O fit and meaningfulness dissonance are conceptually similar as they both tap into the congruence between the characteristics of individuals (goals, skills and values) and the characteristics of organisations (goals, values, resources and culture). However, meaningfulness dissonance would be negatively correlated with P-O fit as it signifies the experience of dissonance as a result of misfit with organisations.

Other concepts such as meaningfulness in and at work, were not included in assessing convergent validity as both those measures indicate a sense of purpose at work (in the organisation) and in work (in the job). According to Prath and Ashforth (2003), meaningfulness is ascribed to these sources in different ways and employees identify with jobs and tasks differently to their organisation. For example, employees who identify closely with their organisation could find their tasks repetitive and mundane but obtain a sense of purpose from

being affiliated with the organisation. Even though such distinctions were useful whilst developing items for existential labour, factor analysis (see Chapter 6) indicated that such distinctions may not apply to the experience of existential labour as there may be a significant overlap between both the sources (job and organisation). This supports predictions made by Lips-Wiersma (2012) that reiterate the importance of considering the tensions in meaningful work experiences.

According to this perspective, meaningfulness is not associated only with work, but with broader aspects such as having stability in life, belonging to a community or serving others. These dimensions were suggested by Lips-Wiersma et al. (2012) and significantly influence a comprehensive way of defining and measuring meaningful work. Meaningful work is a subjective experience that requires a balance between different sources including other and the self, need of doing and need of being. Attaining this balance ensures an individual's existence and purpose at a workplace whilst addressing the tensions in providing more opportunities for authentic meaningful work experiences (Lips-Wiersma & Morris, 2009). Since MIW does not adequately tap into authentic expressions of meaningful work, it will be not assessed for convergent validity of existential labour strategies.

To assess the discriminant validity of existential labour, theoretically dissimilar measures were chosen. More specifically, the relationship between existential labour and emotional labour was examined. It is hypothesised that two emotional labour strategies namely surface acting and deep acting will be distinct from deep and surface existential acting (See Chapter 4). Emotional acting strategies are limited to the management of observable expressions and involve the intentional management of internal feelings which in turn leads to a modification of the observable expression (Brotheridge & Lee, 2002). While an individual adopting existential acting strategies reduces their sense of meaningfulness by faking or altering their values and beliefs, emotional labour is expected to be distinct from this, as adopting existential labour does not involve altering expressible behaviours or emotions. Similar reasoning was adopted for testing meaningfulness dissonance against emotional dissonance as both are conceptually different from each other. It is proposed that emotional labour (i.e., deep acting and surface acting) is distinct from existential labour (deep existential acting and surface existential acting). As mentioned in Chapter 3 emotional acting is proposed to distinct from

existential acting and as presented in Chapter 4 it is proposed that emotional dissonance is distinct from meaningfulness dissonance

7.2.3 Study 3c: Testing for Incremental Validity and Predictive Validity

Predictive validity is a subset of criteria-related validity where the new scale predicts future events (Hair et al., 2006). Based on the literature on meaningful work, the constructs of alienation and burnout expected to be predicted by the newly developed scale, existential labour. These constructs were chosen because the main aim of the construct was to determine the behaviour of the individual towards negative wellbeing outcomes. Burnout outcomes such as emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation and cynicism and work engagement are factors in meaningful work that have been researched previously (see Chapter 4) and meaningful work is negatively associated with burnout. With regards to incremental validity Tables 7-5, and 7-6 depict the hierarchical regression analysis used to examine the relationship of existential and emotional labour with related outcomes in a sample of 269 participants (Sample 2). This part of the analysis was done using SPSS version 25. The first step included emotional labour to ascertain the variance explained by emotional labour alone. The second was a regression that built from the first step and included existential labour to determine whether existential labour has incremental validity. Additionally, univariate relative weights analysis (RWA) (Tonidandel and LeBreton 2011) were performed on the Step 2 regression model using the online RWA-Web programme. In sum, this study aims to show that existential labour is associated with negative well-being outcomes beyond that of emotional labour.

7.2.4 Study 3d. Development of a Model to Test Meaningfulness Dissonance As a Predictor of Worker Alienation and Burnout outcomes Via Existential Labour Strategies.

This study aims to examine the potential mediating role that existential labour has between meaningfulness dissonance and worker alienation and to investigate if existential labour strategies explain how meaningfulness dissonance leads to negative states, particularly alienation. Alienation and burnout as outcomes were tested in the previous study and has been further explored by examining its relationship with both meaningfulness dissonance via existential acting strategies. Using person-environment (P-E) fit as a theoretical lens, the conceptual model focuses on the consequences of misfit on employee wellbeing.

P-E fit has typically been defined as the congruence, match or similarity between the person and the environment (Caplan, 1987). Past research has established the existence of several types of fit. These include fit between the demands of the environment and abilities of the person (Tims et al., 2015), between individual needs and environmental supplies and between organisational values and those of the individual (Lam et al., 2017).

Researchers have contended that employees' wellbeing and success hinge on their fit with multiple components of the work environment, particularly with the job and organisation. Fit with one's values and the values of the organisation likely serve as cues in the development of job and wellbeing-related attitudes and as input for authentic meaningful work. Misfit between strongly held values may have deleterious consequences for individuals, particularly their perceptions of the organisation and personal wellbeing.

The construct of meaningfulness dissonance will be tested as an indication of P-O misfit, leading to worker alienation and burnout. In this case, individuals will adopt existential acting strategies to cope with experienced meaningfulness dissonance. The conceptual model presented in Chapter 4 seeks to examine specific experiences of misfitting as meaningfulness dissonance and how such experiences are dealt with. Hewlin et al. (2017, p.178) noted that employees frequently react to their value incongruence by 'pretending to fit in'. Such behaviours are described as facades of conformity – deceitful images, depictions or demonstrations displayed by employees to create a false impression that they endorse the values of the organisation or members in it. According to Bailey et al. (2017), such strategies of existential labour lead to separation of oneself from work–worker alienation.

7.3 Procedure for all studies conducted using Sample 2

For the CFA, 304 participants were asked to fill in three online surveys across a month using repeated measures taken to ensure that participants from Sample 1 were not included in Sample 2. Sample 1 participants were added to the 'blacklist' option available in Prolific. Other screening measures such as participation and completion rates were added. All participants were informed about being tested repeatedly and would be paid £1.50 per study. To validate the newly developed scale, the second sample of 304 participants was used. Participants were contacted at 3 points across a month. Longitudinal designs or repeated samples designs are

better for criterion validity (Hinkin, 1998). Nine measures were used to determine the nomological network validity of existential labour: emotional labour scales (deep and surface acting); emotional dissonance; P-O fit; authenticity at work; worker alienation; burnout; work engagement; turnover intentions; and organisational citizenship behaviours. All data were collected through online surveys distributed through the online sourcing platform, Prolific. The same dataset collected for CFA (Sample 2) in the previous study was used for construct validity. The only distinction in this study was that the respondents in Sample 2 were contacted across 3 points with a gap of 2 weeks. Each participant was paid £1.25 for each survey and a bonus of £1 was paid to those participants who completed all three surveys.

Using such time gaps in research design is a recent innovation and is known as shortitudinal design as the time gaps are short compared to more traditional longitudinal designs (Bechtoldt et al., 2011; Dormann & Griffin, 2015). Adopting such designs reduces the limitations of cross-sectional designs such as common method bias. From a procedural standpoint, the surveys were anonymous, the respondents were assured that there were no right or wrong answers and that they should answer as honestly as possible. The scale items in the measure were also randomly ordered to avoid response sets. This reduces respondents' evaluation hesitation and makes them less likely to edit their responses. From an empirical standpoint, confirmatory factor analyses were conducted to test for the discriminant validity.

Of the 304 participants, 270 participants completed all three surveys (88% response rate). All participants were working professionals with more than one year's experience in their organisation and resident in the UK. Some 61.1% were female, 38.1% of the participants were male and 0.7% non-binary; 84.1% had permanent contracts; 35.9% belonged to the public sector, 57.4% to the private sector and 6.7% belonged to either non-profit organisations or other businesses; 47.4% of the participants had leadership responsibilities of which 15% were team leaders, 24.4% were line managers, 9% were senior managers and 3.3% were CEOs or directors. The age of participants ranged from 21 to 68 ($M=41$; $SD=10.7$). Job tenure ranged from 1 to 45 years ($M=8.32$; $SD=7.1$) and on average participants had at least a bachelor's degree ($SD=1.1$).

To further examine the stability of the ExLM, the items were re-analysed and measured at three points across one month. Each point had a gap of two weeks. All results were consistent, further illustrating inter-rater reliability of the existential labour scale at least over short periods (Table

6-18). The objective of this sample was to test the confirm the factor structure test for convergent, discriminant and predictive validity of the developed measure by testing it with a theoretically related and unrelated concept. A survey design was used to collect data through online questionnaires. Researchers have argued that new scales need to be tested with optimal time lags, to avoid typical limitations of cross-sectional data, such as common method variance. This was addressed through both procedure and empirical assessments. From a procedural standpoint, the surveys were anonymous, and confidentiality was assured to all participants. Participants were encouraged to leave the survey process at any time. The scale items within the measure were also randomly ordered to avoid response sets, this was maintained across all 3 timepoints. The aim of conducting this study with rather short time lags was to test the temporal nature of existential labour, to establish an initial model for existential labour. This approach is also called a “shortitudinal study” because, scholars using this methodology want to stress that using shorter lags could reveal some important information about about the unfolding of psychological processes over time, and about the optimal time lag for the process under study. Another reason to split the effects of existential labour on said outcomes is to reduce same source bias, this has been adopted from scholars that were examining similar relationships i.e. antecedent at one time point, mediator at a second timepoint and outcome at a third timepoint (add references).

7.3.1 Data collection and sample

304 participants were recruited for this study (Sample 2). All were working professionals, with more than 80% working in the UK(299 participants were working in the UK). 283 participants were British Nationals, 5 were Irish Nationals, 3 were German Nationals, 3 were Polish Nationals. All participants were fluent with the English Language, out of which 283 had English as their first language. Some 40% were female, 60% of the participants were male.83.6% of the employees had permanent contracts with their organisations. 36.5% of the participants belonged to the public sector and 56.7 belonged to the private sector, remaining 6.6% belonged to either non-profit organisations or other businesses. 51.1%% of the participants had leadership responsibilities, out of which, 23% were team leaders, 16% were line managers, 9% were senior managers and 3.0% were CEOs or directors. The age of participants ranged from 19 to 68 ($M=40.02$; $SD=11.06$). Participants’ job tenure ranged from

1 to 43 years ($M=7.75$; $SD=7.44$). Finally, on average participants had a bachelor's degree ($SD=1.1$).

7.3.2 Data analysis:

7.3.2.1 CFA

Various fit indices were used to test the model fit to provide evidence of the final factor structure that can be used in further analysis. For a good model fit the Chi-square ratio (χ^2/df) below 3.0 and as high as 5.0 were suggested as acceptable (Marsh & Hocevar, 1985). Various goodness-of-fit indices were also used to determine model fit, as the hypothesised model was compared with the baseline model. Popular indices are Comparative Fit Index (CFI; Bentler, 1990) a modified index of the Normed Fit Index (NFI; Bentler & Bonnett, 1980) which tends to provide inadequate fit in smaller samples. The Incremental Fit Index (IFI) and the Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) also referred to as the Non-Normed Fit Index (NNFI) was used to address issues related to sample size in the NFI. The fit indices of CFI, IFI and TLI vary from 0 to 1 and the acceptable level of fit is above 0.9 (Marsh et al., 1988) although values above 0.95 are preferred. The root mean square of error approximation (RMSEA) was used to determine the overall fit of the model (Steiger, 1990, 2009). A good fit has an RMSEA value of 0.05 or less although a value between 0.05-0.10 is considered an acceptable fit and anything larger than 0.10 should not be accepted (Schreiber et al., 2006). Finally, the Akaike's Information Criterion (AIC) can be used to test various models that are not nested. When the models that are compared are not nested and it is a simple model, the value of AIC should be small (Usami et al., 2016).

Using Mplus version 7.11 (Muthén & Muthén, 2017), CFA was conducted to determine the fit of the measurement model to the data. Theoretically, existential acting strategies measured by existential labour can be considered a second-order construct with two underlying factors: deep existential and surface existential acting. This would entail an investigation of item loadings on each of the proposed factors and inspecting how the two proposed first-order factors load onto the second-order construct, existential labour. However, because in Mplus a second-order factor needs at least three first-order factors to be identified, a second-order CFA with two first-order factors was not possible. Instead, the correlation between the two proposed first-order factors was examined as an indication of a potential second-order factor; a high correlation would be indicative of considerable amounts of shared variance (Kline, 2011).

Most common practices in CFA were adopted by testing plausible competing models (Byrne, 2010). For example, in comparison to the proposed two-factor first-order model a competing one-factor model was tested. The study compared the fit of three models: (a1) a one-factor model identified in Study 2 with 16 items; (a2) a two-factor model with 16 items; (b1) a one-factor model with 11 items that had no cross-factor loadings; (b2) a two-factor model with 11 items; (c) a one-factor model with 10 items after further reduction using modification indices and Chi-square diff test; and (c2) a two-factor model with 10 items. In all the two-factor models, items for surface and deep existential acting were allowed to load only onto their respective factors and all latent variables were allowed to covary with each other. In the one-factor model, all items were loaded onto one factor and were used to evaluate fit. The χ^2 , goodness-of-fit, adjusted goodness-of-fit, RMSEA and TLI provided information on the overall fit of the data to each model (see Table 6.16). Similarly, for meaningfulness dissonance, two models were compared: (1) a one-factor model with 6 items; and (2) a one-factor model with 5 items after further reduction using modification indices.

The analysis entailed using structural equation modelling (SEM) to test the research hypotheses. SEM is a robust estimation technique that is less sensitive to regression assumptions of normality and collinearity, as it considers both the underlying variance in the measurement of the constructs and the shared variances between the constructs of interest in each model (Preacher et al., 2010). The analysis was conducted using Mplus version 7. To analyse the main effects, direct paths were specified from both emotional dissonance and meaningfulness dissonance to alienation and burnout variables. Indirect paths were specified from meaningfulness dissonance to all outcomes via both deep and surface existential acting. The measurement models were assessed for reliability, validity and fit to the data. Demographic variables and Emotional dissonance was included as a control variable in all structural models. Moreover, the previous study indicated high correlations between emotional dissonance and worker alienation giving a stronger reason to control for it. Measurement model fit was evaluated based on investigating incremental and absolute fit indexes against standard accepted values (Hu & Bentler, 1999; McDonald & Ho, 2002). The RMS error of the approximation and standardised root mean squared residual (SRMR) values less than 0.08 and CFI and TLI values greater than 0.90 are considered to be indicators of acceptable fit (Hu & Bentler, 2009).

7.3.2.2 *Convergent Validity and Discriminant Validity*

Correlations, regressions and structural equation modelling (CFA) was used to demonstrate validity. More specifically, convergent validity was assessed by examining the significance and size of zero-order correlations following criteria by Cohen (1988). Accordingly, correlations less than .29 are small, those greater than .30 but less than .49 are medium and correlations that exceed .50 are large (Cohen, 1988). In line with this, correlations closer to 1.0 are indicative of stronger convergent validity (Beasley et al., 2011). On the other hand, CFA was used to test for discriminant validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981) to determine whether the new construct was empirically distinct from other related measures (Carlson & Herdman, 2010).

First, a one-factor model was used where all the constructs to be tested are loaded onto a single factor, followed by the two-, three-, four- and six-factor correlated models. Chi-square difference tests were conducted between existential labour scale and each related construct (emotional labour scales, emotional dissonance scales and meaningfulness dissonance) and each was separately modelled into one-, two-, three-, four- and six-factors (Hinkin et al., 1997).

The model fit indices were used to provide evidence discriminant validity of the scale with other constructs. If they are distinct, then the six-factor model would have a good fit otherwise not. Mplus version 7 was used to conduct multiple CFAs to test the distinctness of existential labour and meaningfulness dissonance. The models were estimated using MLR (Li, 2016) and identified by fixing the variance of the two constructs to 1. Finally, drawing on the results of the confirmatory factor analyses, Fornell and Larcker's (1981) test was used to see if the two constructs (emotional labour and existential labour) were separate. This test states that two constructs are considered separate when the average squared factor loading of each indicator on its respective latent construct is higher than is the shared variance (squared correlation) between the two latent constructs. It is also important to consider the factor loading of each observed variable, the first-order factors. Therefore, an average variance extracted (AVE) analysis was conducted where the AVE from two dimensions of the new scale was calculated.

7.3.2.3 *Predictive Validity*

The limitations of cross-sectional data were taken into consideration, and hence a time-lagged analysis was performed for predictive validity. Hierarchical regression analysis using SPSS

was conducted to examine the relationship of existential and emotional labour with related outcomes in a sample of 269 participants (Sample 2). These participants were tested at 3 points across a month. Each point had a two-week gap. For predictive validity, analysis was done using Time 1 and Time 3. The first step included emotional labour to ascertain the variance explained by emotional labour alone. The second was a regression that built from the first step and included existential labour to determine whether existential labour has incremental validity.

Univariate relative weights analyses were performed on the Step 2 regression model using the online RWA-Web programme (Tonidandel and LeBreton 2011; 2015). Relative importance analysis supports traditional regression analyses by helping to understand which predictors are contributing most to the prediction of the dependent variable; in this case, burnout variables, work alienation and engagement were tested. The RWA-Web programme estimates the relative weight indices (rw) for each predictor along with bootstrapped confidence intervals (10,000 replications using an alpha of 0.05), where the range should not include zero to be deemed significant.

7.3.2.4 Testing initial Hypothesised Model of Existential Labour as a Mediator.

The design of the study was longitudinal, including three measurement points across 4 weeks. At Time 1, participants' meaningfulness and emotional dissonance were measured. Two weeks later, existential labour strategies were measured, both deep and surface existential acting. Two after that, participants received another questionnaire assessing their alienation and burnout at work (Time 3). The analysis entailed using structural equation modelling (SEM) to test the research hypotheses. SEM is a robust estimation technique that is less sensitive to regression assumptions of normality and collinearity, as it considers both the underlying variance in the measurement of the constructs and the shared variances between the constructs of interest in each model (Preacher et al., 2010). The analysis was conducted using Mplus version 7. To analyse the main effects, direct paths were specified from both emotional dissonance and meaningfulness dissonance to alienation and burnout. Indirect paths were specified from meaningfulness dissonance to alienation and burnout (outcomes) via both deep and surface existential acting. The measurement models were assessed for reliability, validity and fit to the data. Emotional dissonance was included as a control variable in all structural models as the previous study indicated high correlations between emotional dissonance and worker

alienation. Measurement model fit was evaluated based on investigating incremental and absolute fit indexes against standard accepted values (Hu & Bentler, 1999; McDonald & Ho, 2002). The RMS error of the approximation and standardised root mean squared residual (SRMR) values less than 0.08 and CFI and TLI values greater than 0.90 are considered to be indicators of acceptable fit (Hu & Bentler, 2009).

7.4 Measures

The measures were taken at different times to reduce the possible effects of common method variance on the relationships among the variables (Podsakoff, MacKenzie & Podsakoff, 2012) and measure the variables in a sequence to establish the nomological network of existential labour. The predictor – meaningfulness dissonance – was measured at T1, the two mediators – deep and surface existential acting – were measured at T2 and the outcomes of psychological wellbeing were measured at T3.

7.4.1.1 *Emotional Dissonance as Control (T1)*

General emotional dissonance was measured for the five items that reflected the frequency of experienced discrepancies between genuinely felt emotions and those required by participants' job role; for example, "At work, how often do you have to show feelings at work that you did not really feel?" The items were adapted from the FEWS (Zapf et al., 1999). The response format of this scale ranged from 1 (never) to 7 (very often). Cronbach's alpha was .94.

7.4.1.2 *Meaningfulness Dissonance (T1)*

Perceptions of meaningfulness dissonance were measured using the previously validated measure of meaningfulness dissonance in Chapter 6. Employees were asked to rate how often they had to adjust to organisational goals and requirements during the week with respect to 5 items. Sample items included: "During this week, how often have you had to adjust to organisational goals that are not meaningful to you?". Ratings were made on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (not at all) to 7 (very often). Cronbach's alpha was .95.

7.4.1.3 *Deep Existential Acting (T1, T2, T3)*

Perceptions of deep existential acting were measured using the measure of existential labour described in Chapter 6. Employees were asked to rate statements that best represented their state of altering meaningful experiences, for 5 items. Sample items included "I often have to convince myself that working in this organisation is personally beneficial to me". Ratings were

made on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Cronbach's alpha was .95.

7.4.1.4 *Surface Existential Acting (T1, T2, T3)*

Perceptions of surface existential acting were measured using the measure of existential labour (EXLM) in Chapter 6. Employees were asked to rate statements that best represented their state of suppressing meaningful experiences for 5 items. Sample items included "I often pretend as if my organisation's purpose is meaningful when interacting with other people at work, even when it isn't". Ratings were made on a 7-point scale ranging from 1=Strongly disagree to 7=Strongly agree. The average Cronbach's alpha was .94.

7.4.1.5 *Emotional Labour Scale*

Deep Acting (T1,T2)

This was measured using the emotional labour scale developed by Diefendorv, Croyle and Gosserand (2005). The scale includes four items adapted from Grandey's (2003) deep acting scale and Kruml and Geddes' (2000) emotive effort scale. Emotive effort is the effort involved in displaying appropriate emotions and was described by Kruml and Geddes as being similar to deep acting. An example item is: "I try to actually experience the emotions that I must show to customers". Participants rated each item using a 7-point Likert scale from 7 (strongly agree) to 1 (strongly disagree). Cronbach's alpha was .93 across both points.

Surface Acting (T1,T2)

This scale includes 5 items from Grandey's (2003) Surface Acting scale and two items were adapted from Kruml and Geddes' (2000) emotive dissonance scale. An example is "I fake a good mood when interacting with customers". Participants rated each item using a 7-point Likert scale from 7 (strongly agree) to 1 (strongly disagree). Cronbach's alpha was .94 (across both points).

7.4.1.6 *Authenticity At Work (T1)*

Authenticity was measured with the Individual Authenticity Measure at Work (Bosch & Taris, 2018) using 12 items. This measure taps the three authenticity dimensions i.e. self-alienation, authentic living and accepting external influence. Participants were asked to focus on their work experiences and were then asked to indicate the degree to which each statement applied to them. An example is "I am true to myself at work in most situations". Participants rated each

item using a 7-point Likert scale from 7 (strongly agree) to 1 (strongly disagree). Cronbach's alpha was .90.

7.4.1.7 Person-Organisation Fit (T1)

Perceived P-O fit was measured with a 4-item scale derived by combining items from Cable and Judge (1996) and Saks and Ashforth (1997) that addressed supplementary P-O fit. An example item is, "My values match those of current employees in this organisation". Participants rated each item using a 7-point Likert scale from 7 (strongly agree) to 1 (strongly disagree). Cronbach's alpha was .94.

7.4.1.8 Worker Alienation (T3)

Perceived alienation was measured using an 8-item measure developed and validated by Nair and Vohra (2009). Employees were asked to rate the statements that best represented their state of disconnection from one themselves and their work. A sample item is, "I felt disconnected from the events in my workplace". Participants rated each item using a 7-point Likert scale from 7 (strongly agree) to 1 (strongly disagree). Cronbach's alpha was .96.

7.4.1.9 Burnout (T3)

Perceptions of burnout were assessed by the MBI-GS (Maslach et al., 1996) which consists of 16 items. The emotional exhaustion subscale consisted of 5 items including: "I feel emotionally drained by my work". The cynicism subscale consisted of 5 items including "I am less interested in my work compared to when I started" The depersonalisation subscale consisted of 6 items such as: "I felt I looked after certain clients impersonally, as if they were objects" Participants rated each item using a 7-point Likert scale from 7 (strongly agree) to 1 (strongly disagree). Cronbach's alpha was .93, .89 and .83 for all three subscales respectively.

7.5 Results for all studies

7.5.1 Results for CFA of Existential Labour

Table 7-2 shows CFA results for the proposed two-factor first-order model with 11 items, showed that all item loadings were significant and loaded higher than .70 on their intended factors, which is considered adequate (DeVellis, 2012). The correlation between both first-order factors of $r=.72$ was high, which points towards the existence of a second-order factor in line with the theoretical construct of existential labour (Kline, 2011).

Table 7-2. Standardised factor loadings for the 11-item version of the EXLM

Items	Deep Exl	Surface Exl
DE01_Task	0.89	
DE02_Org	0.80	
DE02_Task	0.87	
DE05_Task	0.91	
DE04_Org	0.87	
DE04_Task	0.90	
SE04_Task		0.89
SE06_Task		0.86
SE05_Task		0.90
SE03_Org		0.79
SE04_Org		0.80

All item loadings were statistically significant at $p < 0.001$. DE- Deep Existential Acting, SE-Surface Existential acting.

Table 7-3. Goodness-of-fit indicators of models for ExLM (n=304): using maximum likelihood robust

Fit Indices	Model 1a One Factor (11- item)	Model 1b Two-Factor (11 item)	Model 2a One Factor (10 item)	Model 2b Two-Factor (10 Item)
TLI	0.80	0.93	0.85	0.95
CFI	0.84	0.94	0.81	0.96
RMSEA (90% CI)	0.150 (0.13,0.16)	0.087 (0.07,0.10)	0.150 (0.13,0.16)	0.076 (0.05, 0.09)
SRMR	0.059	0.036	0.056	0.033
χ^2	344.38*	142.23*	274.27*	93.26*
df	44	42	35	34
χ^2 Diff		202.15***		181.01***

p<0.05*, *p*<0.01**, *p*<0.001***

To determine the best model fit- comparison of different models by loading items into one factor and two factors were tested. Model 1b with 11 items and two factors yielded a significant χ^2 statistic (142.23, *df*=42, *p*<.0001), suggesting a sub-optimal model fit. However, the χ^2 /*df* ratio of 3.28 indicated moderate fit (Hinkin, 1998). With regards to the other fit indices, the CFI was .92, the TLI .93 and the SRMR .036 suggesting an excellent fit (Hu & Bentler, 2009). With regards to RMSEA, It should be no higher than 0.06 (Hu & Bentler, 1999). The 2b factor model with 11 items showed a poor fit with regards to RMSEA and this led to testing for modification indices of the 11-item measure. In comparison, the competing one-factor model exhibited a considerably worse fit to the data.

To ensure a better fit, modification indices were extracted for the 11-item measure (2-factor) to exclude any misspecifications (Whittaker, 2012). Previous studies have suggested refraining from using modification indices without a methodological or theoretical reason, otherwise, model modification simply becomes an exploratory journey and increases the likelihood of a type 1 error (Steiger, 1990; Whittaker, 2012). To reduce the possibility of type 1 errors, the MI and the standardised EPC (SEPC) are used independently and in conjunction with one another (Worthington & Whittaker, 2006). The SEPC suggested cut-off value of .20 is also used when identifying model misspecification (Wright et al., 2017). Whittaker (2012) recommends that

the modification test used (Chi-square) is reported, why that test was used and whether the modification makes theoretical sense for the model.

Modification indices revealed that item DE02_Task was highly redundant in that the standardised expected parameter change for intercorrelations between DE02_Task and DE04_Task was 0.36, which is higher than the suggested cut-off value of .20 and the modification index was 0.46. Hence it was removed. CFA was conducted again on the new set of items (n=10). The χ^2 , goodness-of-fit, RMSEA and TLI provided information on the overall fit of the data and the two-factor model with 10 items showed the best fit compared to previous models (see Table 7-3). In many situations, the success of a model modification can be verified by the χ^2 difference test (χ^2 diff). This test can be used when the original and respecified models are nested. A nested model contains a subset of the free parameters of another model (the parent model). Chi-square diff tests between the two-factor 10 items and two-factor 11 item parent model, and indicated a significant difference, $\Delta \chi^2 (1, n=304)=49.97, p<.05$ and a significant decrease in the overall Chi-square value.

Table 7-4. Standardised factor loadings for the final 10-item version of the EXLM

Items	Deep Exl ($\alpha=.96$)	Surface Exl ($\alpha=.95$)
DE01_Task	0.87	
DE02_Org	0.79	
DE05_Task	0.91	
DE04_Org	0.88	
DE04_Task	0.91	
SE04_Task		0.89
SE06_Task		0.86
SE05_Task		0.90
SE03_Org		0.79
SE04_Org		0.80

All item loadings were statistically significant at $p<0.001$ α = alphas presented for Deep existential acting and Surface existential acting.

7.5.2 CFA results for meaningfulness dissonance measure

CFA results for the proposed one-factor model with 5 items showed all significant item loadings higher than 0.70 (Table 7-6). To test for goodness of fit indicators of the MD measure, the previously removed item from EFA analysis was added to test for goodness of fit.

Table 7-5. Goodness-of-fit indicators of models for MD measure (n=304) using maximum likelihood robust

Model	χ^2	df	TLI	CFI	RMSEA (90% CI)	SRMR
1.Single Factor (6 item)	57.29*	9	0.87	0.92	0.133 (0.07,0.10)	0.039
2.Single Factor (5 item)	15.85*	5	0.95	0.97	0.085 (0.04,0.13)	0.026
χ^2 Diff	41.44***					

p<0.05*, *p*<0.01**, *p*<0.001***

The 6-item model yielded a significant χ^2 statistic (57.29, *df*=9, *p*<.0001), suggesting a sub-optimal model fit. The χ^2 /*df* ratio of 6.33 indicated a poor fit (Hinkin, 1998). With regards to the other fit indices, the CFI was .92, the TLI .87 and the SRMR .039 suggesting a moderate fit. RMSEA should be no greater than 0.06 (Hu & Bentler, 1999). The one-factor model with 6 items shows a poor fit with regards to RMSEA. The model with 5 items showed the best fit compared to the previous model (see Table 7-5). Chi-square diff tests between the one-factor 6 item and one-factor 5 item indicated a significant difference, $\Delta \chi^2$ (1, *n*=304)=41.44, *p*<.05 showed a significant decrease in the overall Chi-square value.

Table 7-6. Standardised factor loadings for the 5-item final version of the MD measure

Items	MD (α =.90)
MD01	0.80
MD02	0.83
MD03	0.79
MD04	0.79
MD06	0.77

All item loadings were statistically significant at p<0.001.

7.5.3 Scale reliability re-examination

The internal consistency of a scale in the second subsample was re-examined when splitting the overall sample for scale development purposes (Hinkin et al., 1997; Schreiber et al., 2006) This yielded important information regarding scale stability and ruled out unstable chance factors that can affect scale reliability (DeVellis, 2012). Cronbach's alpha values for both scales were above 0.80. Thus, the results for the internal consistency of both subscales and the overall scale of meaningfulness dissonance provided further evidence regarding the reliability and stability of the measure.

7.5.4 Convergent Validity and Discriminant Validity: Hypothesis Tests

To test the convergent validity hypotheses, the ExLM was correlated with perceived authenticity at work and perceived meaningfulness dissonance. Meaningfulness dissonance was correlated with perceived P-O fit. All correlations were analysed using the R programme.

Based on the criteria by Cohen (1988), correlations of less than .29 are small, those greater than .30 but less than .49 are medium and correlations that exceed .50 are large (Cohen,1988).

Table 7-7 shows that deep existential acting ($r=-.57$, $p<0.001$) and surface existential acting ($r=-.60$, $p<0.001$) are highly negatively correlated with authenticity at work. Results for convergent validity of meaningfulness dissonance show that it has moderate negative correlations with P-O fit ($r=-.482$, $p<0.001$). Thus, the results indicate that hypotheses 1a to 1b were supported for convergent validity.

Table 7-7. Means and SD's for Variables used for Convergent and Discriminant Validity

Scales	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
UK Sample (n=304)										
1. Deep Existential Acting (T1)	3.42	1.52	1							
2. Surface Existential Acting (T1)	3.53	1.51	.791**	1						
3. Meaningfulness Dissonance (T1)	4.03	1.27	.693**	.713**	1					
4. Authenticity at Work (T1)	5.07	1.17	-.571**	-.600**	-.510**	1				
5. P-O fit (T1)	5.10	1.14	-.464**	-.468**	-.482**	.673**	1			
6. Deep Emotional Acting (T1)	4.08	1.50	.225**	.231**	.199**	-.024	.151*	1		
7. Surface Emotional Acting (T1)	3.78	1.50	.568**	.568**	.632**	.575**	-.634**	-.428**	1	
8. Emotional Dissonance (T1)	3.87	1.38	.437**	.468**	.602**	-.409**	-.316**	.187**	.649**	1

*For convergent validity, all measures were analysed using Time 1 (T1). * $p<0.05$, ** $p<0.01$, *** $p<0.001$.*

To provide evidence of discriminant validity of existential labour and meaningfulness dissonance measures, CFA analysis was conducted. Table 7-8. shows fit indices and Chi-square tests for each model. Competing models were analysed using Mplus version 7. The measures used to determine discriminant validity were emotional labour scales (deep and surface acting), emotional dissonance, ExLM (deep and surface existential acting) and meaningfulness dissonance following recommendations by Wright et al. (2012).

Table 7-8. Chi-square tests and fit indices between existential labour and related constructs

Model	χ^2	Df	χ^2/df	TLI	CFI	RMSEA (90% CI)	SRMR
1 Factor	2998.47	405	7.42	0.56	0.59	0.14 (0.14,0.15)	0.11
2 Factor	2746.47*	404	6.76	0.60	0.64	0.13 (0.13, 0.14)	0.11
3 Factor	1922.51*	402	4.78	0.74	0.76	0.11 (0.10,0.11)	0.09
4 Factor	1607.26*	399	4.12	0.79	0.80	0.10 (0.09, 0.10)	0.08
6 Factor	662.52*	390	1.69	0.95	0.96	0.04 (0.04,0.05)	0.04

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$. All measures loaded onto 1-factor (deep acting, surface acting, deep ext acting, surface ext acting, meaningfulness dissonance and emotional dissonance). 2 factor (all existential acting strategies and meaningfulness dissonance into one factor and all emotional acting strategies and emotional dissonance into one factor) 3 factor included all existential acting scales into one factor, all emotional acting scales into one factor and dissonance scales into the third factor. 4 factor scale included existential acting strategies and emotional acting into one factor, and dissonance scales into two different factors. 6 factor model included all scales separately loading onto 6 factors.

As expected, the results indicated the best fit for the six-factor model (see Table 7.8). The model fit and indices specified in this chapter will provide evidence as to the discriminant validity of the scale with other constructs (Wright et al., 2012). The six-factor model showed the best fit compared to other models. This suggests that deep acting, surface acting, deep ext acting, surface ext acting, meaningfulness dissonance and emotional dissonance are distinct constructs. Therefore hypotheses 2a and 2b is supported.

7.5.5 Predictive Validity: Hypothesis Tests

Outcomes tested included burnout outcomes (emotional exhaustion, cynicism and depersonalisation) along with other outcomes such as work alienation. Control variables such as age, gender, and emotional dissonance were added. For example, there has recently been increased interest in the effects of demographic dissimilarity, or the extent to which an individual differs in their experience of meaningfulness on the basis of demographic variables, such as age and gender (Joshi, 2006; Liao, Joshi, & Chuang, 2004, Bailey et al., 2017). Emotional dissonance was added as a control to investigate if independent variables mainly emotional acting and existential acting have an effect on negative well-being outcomes over and beyond the effect of any emotional dissonance. Along with testing its predictive validity, emotional labour was included to explain the incremental validity of existential labour and its

associated outcomes. Control variables, existential and emotional labour strategies were tested using Time 1. Table 7.9 presents the means, standard deviation and correlations between MD at Time 1 and its associated outcomes measured at Time 3.

Tables 7-10, and 7-13 depict the hierarchical regression analysis used to examine the relationship of existential and emotional labour with related outcomes in a sample of 269 participants (Sample 2). This part of the analysis was done using SPSS version 25. The first step included emotional labour to ascertain the variance explained by emotional labour alone. The second was a regression that built from the first step and included existential labour to determine whether existential labour has incremental validity. Additionally, univariate relative weights analysis (RWA) (Tonidandel and LeBreton 2011) were performed on the Step 2 regression model using the online RWA-Web programme.

Table 7-9. Means, standard deviations and correlations of variables used in time 1 and time 3

	Scales	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	UK Sample (n=270)												
1	Age	40.91	10.5	.03	1	-.03	-.15	-.12*	-.05	-.01	-.03	-.05	-.17**
2	Gender	1.38	0.48	.03	1	-.11	.06	.09	.06	0.04	-.58	.02	.08
3	Emotional Dissonance (T1)	3.87	1.36	-.03	-.01	1	.60**	.43**	.46**	.29**	.43*	.26**	.36**
4	Meaningfulness Dissonance (T1)	4.05	1.28	.06	-.11	.60**	1	.67**	.70**	.50**	.45*	.42**	.47**
5	Deep Ext Acting (T2)	3.36	1.52	.09	-	.43**	.67**	1	.79**	.62**	.44*	.52**	.48**
6	Surface Ext Acting (T2)	3.45	1.48	.06	-.10	.46**	.70**	.79**	1	.60**	.43*	.49**	.51**
7	Alienation (T3)	3.26	1.53	.04	-.01	.29**	.50**	.62**	.60**	1	.65*	.83**	.55**
8	Emotional Ex. (T3)	3.93	1.62	-.05	-.04	.43**	.45**	.44**	.43**	.65**	1	.55**	.43**
9	Cynicism (T3)	3.69	1.48	.02	-.06	.26**	.42**	.52**	.49**	.84**	.56*	1	.49**
10	Depersonalisation (T3)	2.85	1.29	.08	-	.36**	.47**	.48**	.51**	.55**	.44*	.49**	1

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$. T1- Variables used in Time 1, T2- Variables used in Time 2, T3-Variables used in Time 3, Each time point had a gap of 2 weeks.

7.5.5.1 Burnout Outcomes

From Table 7.10, all control variables were added in Step 1, Emotional acting strategies were added in Step 2. Regression analysis for Step 2 across burnout outcomes show that deep acting (a subconstruct of emotional labour) at Time 1 was negatively associated with cynicism ($\beta = -0.17$, $p < 0.01$) and Depersonalisation ($\beta = -0.12$, $p < 0.05$) at Time 3. On the other hand, Surface

Acting (a subconstruct of emotional acting) at Time 1 was positively associated with all three burnout outcomes i.e. Emotional Exhaustion ($\beta=0.40$, $p<0.001$), cynicism ($\beta=0.50$, $p<0.001$) and Depersonalisation ($\beta=0.34$, $p>0.05$).

However, after adding existential labour strategies in Step 3, the relationship between surface acting and burnout variables were still significant but reduced. Regression analysis for Step 3 across burnout outcomes showed that deep existential acting at Time 1 was positively associated with emotional exhaustion ($\beta=0.24$, $p<0.01$) and cynicism $\beta=0.36$, $p<0.001$) at Time 3. Surface existential acting at Time 1 was positively associated only with depersonalisation at Time 3 ($\beta=0.19$, $p<0.05$). Therefore, Hypothesis 3a was only partially supported.

The models in Step 2 explained significant additional variance compared to Step 1. For example, an additional 8% was explained with emotional exhaustion, 15% with cynicism and 9% with depersonalisation. Step 3 explained significant additional variance compared to Step 2. For example, an additional 4% was explained with emotional exhaustion, 12% with cynicism and 7% with depersonalisation. Therefore, existential labour strategies demonstrated incremental validity above that of emotional labour in the prediction of all three burnout outcomes. RWA further demonstrated that surface acting (emotional labour) contributed significantly more to predicting emotional exhaustion than other variables and deep existential acting (existential labour) contributed more to cynicism than other variables. Finally, surface existential acting (existential labour) contributed significantly more to depersonalisation.

Table 7-10. Regression analysis and relative weight analysis for sample 2 (n=269) -

Emotional Exhaustion				Relative Weight (rw) (UC-LC)
Variable	Step 1 (B)	Step 2 (B)	Step 3(B)	
(Constant)	2.124 (0.51)*	2.071 (0.55)	1.910(0.54)	
Gender	-0.025(0.18)	-0.113(0.17)	-0.217(0.17)	
Age	-0.004(0.00)	-0.002(0.00)	0.001(0.00)	
Emo Dissonance	0.513(0.06)***	0.233(0.08)**	0.191(0.08)**	
Deep Emo Acting		-0.093(0.06)	-0.117(0.06)	0.00
Surface Emo Acting		0.408(0.07)***	0.278(0.08)***	
Deep Ext. Acting			0.24(0.09)**	0.13 (0.08-0.19)*
Surface Ext. Acting			0.044(0.09)	0.08 (0.04-0.13)*
				0.06 (0.03-0.10)*
r2	0.190	0.273	0.314	
r2 change		0.082**	0.042**	

* $p<0.05$, ** $p<0.01$, *** $p<0.001$ (B)=unstandardised beta co-efficient, (UC-LC)=upper confidence level- lower confidence level,

Cynicism at Time 3				
Variable	Step 1 (B)	Step 2 (B)	Step 3(B)	Relative Weight (rw) (UC-LC)
(Constant)	2.586 (0.51)***	2.776(0.53)***	2.513(0.48)***	
Gender	0.151(0.18)	0.034(0.16)	-0.124(0.15)	
Age	-0.004(0.00)	-0.003(0.16)	0	
Emo Dissonance	0.29(0.06)***	-0.044(0.07)	-0.113(0.07)	
Deep Emo Acting		-0.174(0.05)*	-0.213(0.05)***	0.02*
Surface Emo Acting		0.507(0.07)**	0.284(0.07)***	0.09 (0.05-0.14)*
Deep Ext. Acting			0.362(0.08)***	0.13 (0.08-0.19)*
Surface Ext. Acting			0.109(0.08)	0.09 (0.05-0.14)
r2	0.075	0.231	0.358	
r2 change		0.156***	0.127***	

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$ (B)=unstandardised beta co-efficient, (UC-LC)=upper confidence level- lower confidence level,

Depersonalisation at Time 3				
Variable	Step 1 (B)	Step 2 (B)	Step 3(B)	Relative Weight (rw) (UC-LC)
(Constant)	1.814(0.41)***	1.98(0.44)***	1.796(0.42)***	
Gender	0.311(0.15)*	0.228(0.14)	0.134(0.13)	
Age	-0.014(0.00)	-0.013(0.07)	-0.012(0.00)	
Emo Dissonance	0.349(0.05)***	0.12(0.06)	0.076(0.06)	
Deep Emo Acting		-0.128(0.04)**	-0.154(0.04)**	0.01
Surface Emo Acting		0.349(0.06)***	0.186(0.06)*	0.10 (0.05-0.16)*
Deep Ext. Acting			0.138(0.07)	0.09 (0.05-0.15)*
Surface Ext. Acting			0.19(0.07)*	0.11 (0.06-0.16)**
r2	0.185	0.284	0.357	
r2 change		0.099***	0.073***	

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$ (B)=unstandardised beta co-efficient, (UC-LC)=upper confidence level- lower confidence level,

7.5.5.2 Worker Alienation

Table 7-11 shows the regression analysis for Worker alienation as the outcome. Emotional dissonance was found to be significant, however, this effect was no longer significant in Step 2 and Step 3.

Step 2 across work alienation and deep acting (a subconstruct of emotional labour) at Time 1 was negatively associated with alienation at Time 3 ($\beta=-0.14$, $p<0.01$). Surface acting at Time 1 was positively associated with alienation at Time 3 ($\beta=0.58$, $p<0.001$) but after adding existential labour strategies in Step 3, the relationship between surface acting and work alienation was still significant, but reduced ($\beta=0.28$, $p<0.01$). With deep acting, after adding existential labour strategies, the relationship was significant, albeit marginally decreased ($\beta=-0.19$, $p<0.01$). Regression analysis for Step 3 shows that deep existential acting at Time 1 was positively associated with alienation ($\beta=0.42$, $p<0.05$) at Time 3. Surface existential acting at Time 1 was positively associated with alienation at Time 3 ($\beta=0.19$, $p<0.05$). Therefore these results fully supported the proposition that existential acting strategies would be positively related to alienation (Hypothesis 3b).

Table 7-11 Step-wise Regression analysis with Work alienation

Work Alienation at Time 3				
Variable	Step 1 (B)	Step 2 (B)	Step 3(B)	Relative Weight (rw) (UC-LC)
(Constant)	1.559(0.52)**	1.531(0.52)**	1.189(0.45)**	
Gender	0.244(0.18)	0.115(0.16)	-0.083(0.14)	
Age	0.002(0.00)	0.005(0.00)	0.008(0.00)	
Emo Dissonance	0.345(0.06)***	-0.053(0.07)	-0.14(0.06)*	
Deep Emo Acting		-0.143(0.05)*	-0.194(0.05)***	0.01
Surface Emo Acting		0.587(0.07)***	0.295(0.07)***	0.11 (0.07-0.17)*
Deep Ext. Acting			0.421(0.07)***	0.19 (0.13-0.25)*
Surface Ext. Acting			0.19(0.07)*	0.14 (0.10-0.19)*
r2	0.097	0.284	0.476	
r2 change		0.187***	0.192***	

* $p<0.05$, ** $p<0.01$, *** $p<0.001$ (B)=unstandardised beta co-efficient, (UC-LC)=upper confidence level- lower confidence level,

The models in Step 3 explained significant additional variance compared to Step 2. For example, an additional variance of 19% was explained by worker alienation. Therefore, existential labour strategies demonstrated incremental validity above that of emotional labour across alienation. RWA further demonstrated that deep existential acting ($rw=0.19$) contributed significantly more to predicting alienation compared to other acting strategies.

7.5.6 Results for SEM

The initial analysis of the SEM achieved a good model fit ($\chi^2=1779.679$, $df=749$, $CFI=.90$, $TLI=.88$, $RMSEA=.07$, $SRMR=0.05$). Control variables emotional dissonance, age and gender

were added for robustness. The hypothesised structural path between meaningfulness dissonance (Time 1) and burnout variables (Time 3) (emotional exhaustion ($\beta=0.25$, $p<0.00$), cynicism ($\beta=0.23$, $p<0.00$), and depersonalisation ($\beta=0.33$, $p<0.00$)) and alienation (Time 3) was statistically significant ($\beta=0.21$, $p<0.05$). Similarly, meaningful dissonance at Time 1 had significant positive associations with both existential acting strategies, deep existential acting ($\beta=0.53$, $p<0.001$) and surface existential acting ($\beta=0.51$, $p<0.001$) at Time 2. Deep existential acting (Time 2) had significant positive associations with work alienation at Time 3 ($\beta=0.51$, $p<0.001$), emotional exhaustion ($\beta=0.31$, $p<0.05$), cynicism ($\beta=0.50$, $p=0.00$), depersonalisation ($\beta=-0.335$, $p<0.01$). However, no significant associations were found between surface existential acting at Time 2 and the outcomes at Time 3, even after controlling for emotional dissonance at Time 1.

Results from indirect effects with bootstrapping (500 iterations) using Mplus version 7 showed that **deep existential acting** ($\beta=0.356$, $p<0.01$) mediated the relationship between meaningfulness dissonance and work alienation. Similar indirect effects were shown for meaningfulness dissonance and emotional exhaustion ($\beta=-0.203$, $p<0.05$), cynicism ($\beta=-0.363$, $p<0.05$) and depersonalisation ($\beta=-0.123$, $p<0.05$). Therefore, Hypothesis 4a was supported. However, surface existential acting showed no mediating effect. Hypothesis 4b was thus not supported.

Before running the hypothesised model, an initial model without the mediators was run to compare the model fit between the hypothesised and the initial models. Fit indices for the initial model without mediator variables (existential labour) indicated slightly better fit compared to the hypothesised model ($\chi^2=1601.028^*$, $df=741$, $CFI=.89$, $TLI=.88$, $RMSEA=.06$, $SRMR=0.05$). See appendix 11.13 for the full hypothesised model diagram generated by Mplus Diagram.

7.6 Discussion

Studies presented in this chapter sought to test the hypothesis presented in Chapter 3 i.e. further validate the newly developed scale for existential labour by focusing on its construct and criterion validity. Both the EFA and CFA results reported above provide evidence of the construct validity of existential labour and meaningfulness dissonance. Not only did the proposed two-factor first-order model for existential labour exhibit adequate model fit, it also

performed substantially better when compared to a competing one-factor model. The high correlation coefficient between the two first-order factors of existential labour ($r=0.83$) suggests the existence of a second-order factor that would explain the overlap in terms of covariance (Kline, 2011).

Convergent validity findings indicated that existential strategies are associated with feelings of inauthenticity that have been conceptualised as emerging from a strong mismatch of one's actual self (who they are in general) and one's ideal self (the self that embodies one's hopes, aspirations and wishes for oneself) (Cha et al., 2019; Shantz et al., 2014; van den Bosch & Taris, 2018). This is an important finding to establish conceptually similar constructs to existential labour. Secondly, this is in sync with Bailey's et al's (2018) proposition of existential being closely related to experiencing inauthenticity. With regards to Meaningfulness dissonance, its conceptual similarity with P-O fit, confirms the notion that it fundamentally represents misfit, more specifically it threatens one's sense of meaningfulness at work. Results from discriminant validity showed that existential labour strategies were significantly different from emotional acting strategies as the model fit indices showed the best fit when each factor was separated, supporting Hypotheses 2a and b.

Discriminant validity can also be seen via the weak correlations, especially between deep acting and deep existential acting ($r=.235$) and surface existential acting ($r=.255$) and in the hierarchical regressions performed for establishing predictive validity. As predicted, existential labour strategies demonstrated incremental validity above those of emotional labour across all outcomes. However, work alienation showed higher additional variance explained by existential labour compared to other outcomes. This builds support for the hypothesis that existential labour would lead to more negative attitudes at work that encourage separation of the self from one's work over time. Deep existential acting measured at Time 1 was found to have had stronger effects on all tested outcomes except depersonalisation. However, surface existential acting was found to have a significant association with only two outcomes namely depersonalisation and alienation. This indicates subtle differences between deep and surface existential acting, which will be explored further in the studies presented in this thesis.

The results indicate that surface existential acting is associated with negative outcomes (depersonalisation and alienation) for individuals mainly due to the feeling of disconnection from their true selves (Bailey et al., 2018b). Deep existential acting is associated with outcomes

that are both emotionally demanding (burnout) and counterproductive work attitudes and behaviours such as alienation and turnover intentions. This supports the predictions of deep existential acting by Bailey et al. (2017). It is a congruent existential state, distinct from deep emotional acting. For example, what is meaningful to an individual is subjective, profoundly felt and most likely leads to degradation of positive work outcomes (Lips-Wiersma & Morris, 2009; Schnell, 2011). Because of this, seeking to alter what is meaningful requires considerable effort that far exceeds the effort required to alter our emotions. For example, work alienation was positively associated with deep existential acting and negatively associated with deep emotional acting, suggesting that manipulation of emotions is possible, to create strong alignment between felt and displayed emotions, which could be personally rewarding. However, manipulation of meaningfulness seems to be difficult, thus creating more discrepancy between one's authentic self (Bailey et al., 2017a).

Drawing from P-E fit theory, this preliminary study contributes to the literature on meaningful work by modelling a specific antecedent and a focal outcome of existential labour amongst working professionals in the UK. The objective was to identify empirically whether MD (an indicator of misfitting) has a significant effect on existential labour strategies which in turn influence negative attitudes such as worker alienation. The study chose to examine key outcomes that are theoretically derived in Chapter 3 and 4, burnout and worker alienation. Worker alienation yielded one of the strongest outcomes from the previous study testing predictive validity. Additionally, mediation analysis showed that deep existential acting at Time 2 was found to mediate the relationship between MD at Time 1 and both outcomes alienation and burnout at Time 3.

However, with regard to surface existential acting- the finding was inconsistent. Study 3c showed significant associations with surface existential acting at Time 1 and worker alienation at Time 3. However, in Study 3d no significant relationships were found between surface existential acting at Time 2 and worker alienation and burnout at Time 3. These relationships indicate that optimal time gaps between coping strategies might vary between the acting strategies. For example, in Study 3c when surface existential acting was tested at Time 1 across alienation at Time 3, there were significant associations. However, with surface existential acting tested at Time 2, the effects did not seem to manifest in the same way. This indicates that perceived surface existential acting might take longer for individuals to experience alienation

when adopting surface existential acting compared to deep existential acting. These results speak to the possible differences between deep and surface existential acting (Bailey et al., 2018). Findings indicate that surface existential acting that involves suppression of meaningfulness versus alteration has weaker associations with negative well-being outcomes within this particular timeframe (across 4 weeks) and perhaps indicates that the strategy of meaningfulness suppression is less severe compared to alteration (deep existential acting) where an individual is still able to maintain their values. From a P-E theory perspective, these findings support that coping strategies that are adopted to maintain and manage mis fit with a focus on individuals changing their own self-concept identity face more severe outcomes (Tong et al., 2015).

Temporal changes in both acting strategies should be explored further to understand its impact on outcomes better. Even though results from this study give a preliminary view of how existential labour strategies manifest across 4 weeks, fluctuations over longer periods might be more suitable for deeply internalised processes like deep and surface existential acting. To test these relationships in more detail, the next Chapter- Study 4 (Chapter 8) replicated the previous hypothesised model over a span of 12 weeks.

Chapter 8. Adopting a Week-level Approach to Examine the Negative Consequences of Existential Labour

8.1 Overview

This chapter summarises a weekly diary study analysis between Meaningfulness Dissonance(MD), existential labour and wellbeing-related outcomes. The aim of this study is twofold. First, a new study sample was used to further assess the validity of the ExLM reported in Chapter 7. Second, the weekly diary study was conducted to provide external validity to the research model of the thesis. This chapter will focus on the adaptation of existential labour and its related constructs at the within-person level in contrast to the previous time-lagged study reported in Chapter 7, thereby giving more insight into the fluctuating nature of existential labour strategies. The methods section of the chapter includes detailed descriptions regarding the context of the study sample, the measurement scales used and a section on the further validation of the existential labour scale, including results of multilevel confirmatory factor analyses (MCFA). The subsequent results section describes the analytical strategy and general study findings. Finally, the chapter features a discussion on the theoretical and practical implications of the weekly diary study, complementing the findings of the previous studies in Chapters 6 and 7.

8.2 Theory and Hypothesis

The conceptual model of this study further explores the model presented in Chapter 7 by adopting a weekly diary design and investigates the moderating role of contextual factors, particularly the role of organisational psychological safety (Ohly et al., 2010). Week-level hypotheses were developed that reflected the multilevel nature of the field study. As with the other studies reported in this thesis, it draws from P-E fit theory. It had two objectives. First, the study seeks to test the hypotheses developed as part of the research model informed by relevant theory. Second, its results should provide further evidence of the external validity of the overall research model of this thesis and further validate the measure of existential labour (in terms of its criterion-related validity).

8.3 Week-level Perspective on Understanding the Process of Existential Labour Strategies

This study examines the within-person relationships between MD and existential labour strategies. Adopting a within-person lens in examining the effects of MD on existential labour

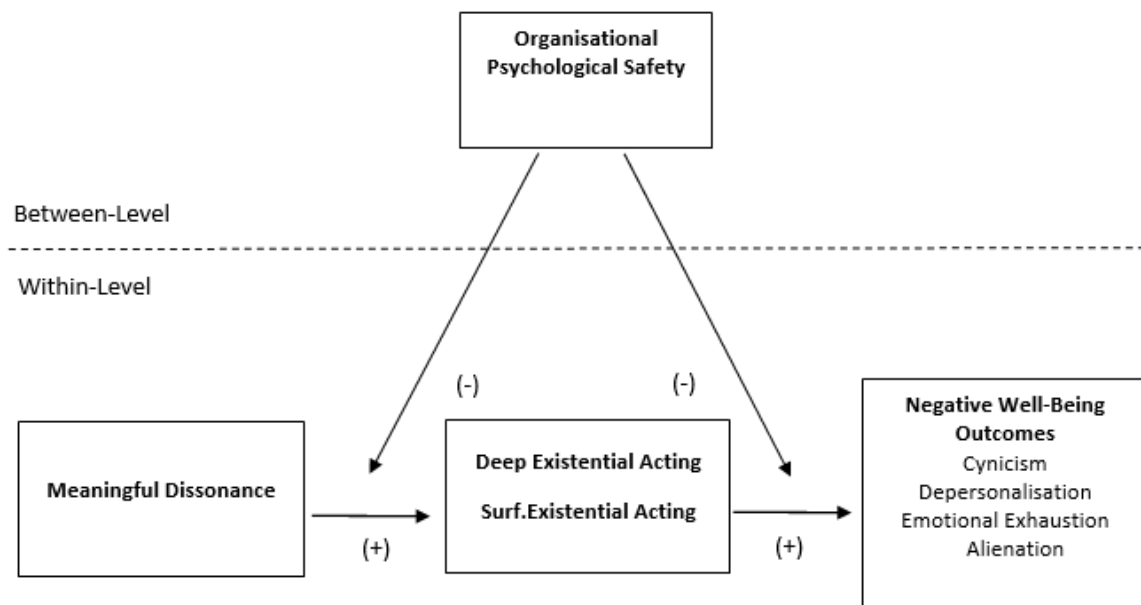


Figure 8-1. Conceptual model of existential labour

and its outcomes allows researchers to account for fluctuations with regard to both constructs over time and is particularly useful when investigating the processes underlying those relationships.

Within-person analysis directly responds to recent calls for investigating counterproductive experiences of meaningfulness, which may be similarly transient and exhibit short-term fluctuations over time (Bailey & Madden, 2019; Jon et al., 2022; Vogel et al., 2019), be linked with longer-term fluctuations such as engagement (Kahn, 1990) or may represent a relatively stable, subjective state (Bailey et al., 2017). Secondly, and more closely related to the current methodology, within-person research reduces recall bias as diary studies assess variables closer to one's recent experience of events at work (Ohly et al., 2010). This is particularly important if the variables under research are complex experiences such as MD and associated existential labour strategies, thus reducing the accuracy of ratings and the validity of the measures used (Ohly et al., 2010).

The utility of an within-person approach is clear for this study but the time frame used also needs to be carefully selected. Whilst more recent studies have encouraged adopting an in-day or even an event-level approach to assess fluctuations of meaningful work, it is important to evaluate if such time frames apply to existential acting strategies and MD. Past research on

meaningful work and well-being outcomes have shown the existence of daily fluctuations in meaningful work experiences (Bailey & Madden, 2017; Fletcher et al., 2018; Kim & Beehr, 2018; Martela et al., 2018; Vogel et al., 2019) and with burnout outcomes such as emotional exhaustion and depersonalisation (Wladislaw Rivkin et al., 2018; Sonnentag & Niessen, 2008; Trougakos et al., 2015). Despite this, the variety of behaviours that need to be manifested to reach a state of alienation or burnout (MD, choosing to adopt deep existential acting or surface existential acting and incorporating psychological safety of the organisation in this case) are likely to be separated by several days or weeks. In the previous time-lagged study of 3 points across a month, the results revealed fluctuations in the constructs, particularly for deep existential acting. This study explores weekly fluctuations more systematically across 12 weeks, therefore demonstrating different time frames of how MD and existential acting strategies can be manifested in an individual. The duration of 12 weeks was chosen to be in line with the recommendations of Gabriel et al. (2014).

Instead of examining only existential labour, the focus of this study is how MD influences the experience of existential acting on a weekly level. This study contributes to the existing literature on meaningful work in at least three ways. First, by conducting a weekly diary study, the study seeks to shed light on the actual use of existential acting during individuals' weekly working life. This will help to understand what the enactment of existential labour looks like and what direct consequences it has on employees' workweeks. Second, disentangling how employees deal with their own versus others' sense of meaningfulness provides insight into the tensional aspects of meaningful work and its enactments of deep and surface existential acting. This may help to unravel the behavioural mechanisms and consequences that are associated with the perceived dissonance between one's own and the organisation's MAW. Third, by examining how organisational psychological safety interacts with existential acting strategies, it may be possible to predict whether organisational conditions such as organisational psychological safety has an effect on the experience of existential acting strategies, more specifically does it reduce the potential negative effect of existential labour strategies.

8.3.1 Weekly MD and existential acting strategies and outcomes

Weekly MD is defined as weekly changes in an individual's perception of dissonance concerning felt and desired sense of meaningful work. Compared to the definition provided in the previous chapters, terms such as fluctuation and change have been added to emphasise the

variability of the constructs over time. Weekly existential acting strategies have been defined as weekly changes in altering or suppressing one's true sense of meaningful work. Bailey et al. (2017) and Vogel et al. (2019) have emphasised the need for more complex quantitative methods to understand the tensions experienced in meaningfulness, examining how such constructs unfold over time. Weekly changes in work-related wellbeing, particularly alienation and burnout will be investigated, as these are relevant negative wellbeing indicators that have been shown to exhibit substantial within-person fluctuations (Both-Nwabuwe et al., 2017a).

The study broadly draws from P-E fit theory to explore the individual effects of weekly MD on weekly burnout (emotional exhaustion, cynicism and depersonalisation) and alienation via coping mechanisms such as existential labour. Investigating individual-level antecedents such as MD and coping mechanisms such as existential acting strategies extends the P-E fit literature by exploring the consequences of misfit. Given that change and discrepancies in a workplace are constant amongst individuals and their environments, studying a construct of dissonance justifies the dynamic nature of P-E fit theory, therefore adding to the usefulness of subset of P-E fit i.e. P-O fit. Evidence from previous chapters in the thesis has indicated that has shown experiencing meaningfulness dissonance is associated with negative well-being outcomes. One reason for the negative impact of meaningfulness dissonance on well-being is that it can lead to a sense of purposelessness. When an individual's values and goals are not aligned with their current work situation, they experience feelings of alienation. Similarly, meaningfulness dissonance can create mental discomfort and can be emotionally taxing.

Burnout and alienation have been chosen for this study as they best represent possible negative repercussions of engaging in meaningfulness dissonance and existential labour. The studies in Chapters 6 and 7 consistently show that both these outcomes were strongly associated with existential acting strategies mainly deep existential acting. Previous studies in wellbeing literature have repeatedly confirmed its fluctuating and state-like nature, making it an appropriate choice for conducting diary studies (Bosch & Taris, 2018; Gil-Monte, 2005). Alienation and burnout at work experienced over time disrupt organisational climate and wellbeing and impair intra-organisational performance (Bailey et al., 2015).

If such negative outcomes are consequences of misaligned meaningfulness, workers can collectively choose the path of organisational silence or suppression of authentic expressions at work (Bailey et al., 2018a). This study conceptualises alienation as a fluctuating process

outcome of existential acting strategies. Although previous studies have investigated alienation as a mediating factor to outcomes such as deviance and burnout (Shantz et al., 2012) this study focuses on exploring it as a key outcome of existential acting. Drawing from qualitative inquiries of meaningless work, studies have consistently shown that negative outcomes such as alienation and cynicism are constantly experienced by employees (Cartwright & Holmes, 2006). Other studies have drawn attention to the negative outcomes associated with various forms of ‘acting’ at work, such as surface acting and facades of conformity, including reduced job satisfaction, exhaustion, strain, Burnout, depersonalisation and intent to quit (Bailey et al., 2017). Such outcomes extend P-E fit theory to understand how toxicity could be cultivated in a workplace (Diestel & Schmidt, 2011; Tong et al., 2015).

Little is known about what happens when meaningfulness management strategies go wrong and are perceived as inauthentic by employees. Investigating such outcomes on a weekly level was proposed by Bailey et al. (2017) who suggested inspecting the most prominent outcomes that result from different variants of existential labour. The studies reported in Chapter 7 show that existential labour is significantly associated with negative outcomes for employees, and that deep existential acting was a prominent mediating mechanism strongly associated with alienation and burnout. This study seeks to replicate the previous study to further confirm the consequences of MD on theoretically derived negative and positive wellbeing outcomes via both existential labour strategies on a weekly basis. In order to follow best practice for conducting multi-level mediation analysis (Preacher et al., 2010), reiterate that meaningfulness dissonance leads to negative well-being outcomes via existential acting the following hypotheses will be tested.

8.3.2 Psychological Safety as a Cross-Level Moderator of Week-level relationship between MD and Wellbeing Outcomes.

Along with confirming the mediating role of existential acting strategies, this study explores perceived organisational psychological safety as a condition on which the effect of existential acting strategies could differ. It seeks to investigate whether factors at the individual level moderate the association between MD, existential labour states and outcomes, as indicated in Figure 8. Psychological safety is examined as individual perceptions capturing interpersonal risk-taking and a ‘sense of confidence that the organisation will not embarrass, reject or punish someone for speaking up’ (Edmondson, 1999, p.354). Broad ideas, new suggestions and

divergent perspectives are not only permitted in this climate but are encouraged. Psychological safety taps into the overall climate in an organisation where interactions play a key role there by providing insight into the P-E fit theory, where organisational psychological safety is an indicator of the kind of environment an employee is placed in (Carmeli & Gittell, 2009; Cheng et al., 2013; Newman et al., 2017b). This points towards the proposition put forth by Bailey and colleagues (2017) about creating a conducive environment for individuals, in doing so this could significantly reduce the negative effects of existential acting strategies. More specifically, Bailey et al. (2017)'s conceptual propositions on deep existential acting state that work conditions that allow individuals to reflect and voice out their values and opinions by reducing chances of misalignment with the meaningfulness that arises from their employer, may reduce the negative effects of deep existential acting. This way employees may make the have the choice to freely voice out or contest new mandated culture initiatives without the fear of punishment or negative repercussions.

Kahn's theory on engagement proposes psychological safety as one of the most important factors for creating an environment of meaningfulness which in turn lead to having positive experiences at work (Kahn, 1990). Individuals feel 'safe' when they perceive that they will not suffer for expressing their true selves at work. In a safe environment, individuals understand the boundaries surrounding acceptable behaviour. However, unsafe conditions exist when situations are ambiguous, unpredictable and threatening.

To this end, organisational psychological safety is better measured at the between level as an organisational climate factor, compared to assessing it as a fluctuating psychological mechanism. According to Frazier et al. (2017), is a cognitive state that is fairly stable refers to perceptions of the broader social and work environment, and *how people perceive that others in the workplace will respond to risk-taking behaviors* (Carmeli & Gittell, 2009). Thus, it represents perceptions one holds of the environment in which they work rather than about their specific jobs or tasks.

Studies exploring P-E fit and the interaction with psychological safety as a more stable cognitive state have shown positive outcomes for employee performance and voice (Xu et al., 2019). The results indicate that when subordinates perceive high levels of psychological safety, their voice behaviour is enhanced and this leads to greater value congruence (Huyghebaert et al., 2018). These associations provide deeper insights by strengthening the role of

psychological safety in this model (See Chapter 4). For example, employees working in this type of environment feel a sense of openness and avoid taking task disagreements personally. When psychological safety is in place, employees should be able to contribute more ideas and voice honest opinions (Carmeli & Gittell, 2009; Dollard & Bakker, 2010; Newman et al., 2017b). Discussions regarding organisational processes should be richer and employees should have more time to exercise tasks that are meaningful to them instead of spending time on regulating their sense of MAW.

This is in sync with propositions made by Bailey et al. (2017) that in situations where the employer seeks to impose their views on the employee without taking account of the employee's autonomy and freedom to choose, then the employee may feel constrained to adopt a strategy of deep existential acting through self-preservation or the desire for advancement (Tablan, 2015; Lips-Wiersma & Morris, 2009). The employee may feel they have no choice other than to alter their personal meaningfulness to align with that of the employer. Under such circumstances, negative outcomes such as alienation, dissatisfaction and intent to quit may result. Even though this addresses the moderation concerning deep existential acting, no propositions were made for surface existential acting. Given that surface existential acting involves momentary displays and suppression of desired meaningfulness, having a safe environment to express authentic meaningfulness might alleviate the need to manage meaningfulness (Bailey et al. 2017).

That said, employees who experience organisational psychological safety will differ in their weekly existential acting and experience of weekly burnout and alienation because of the different psychological safety perceived by individuals. For example, this study hypothesises that more positive perceptions of psychological safety would reduce the need to adopt existential strategies and subsequently reduce alienation and burnout at work.

8.4 Methods

8.4.1 Sample and data collection

Data collection involved the administration of a general survey to measure the between-person moderator and control variables (organisational psychological safety, negative affect, age, gender, tenure and remote working during the pandemic) and a series of diary surveys to measure within-person variables (weekly MD, existential labour strategies, burnout and

alienation). Employees were asked to provide their informed consent to participate in the study and to fill out a questionnaire (Appendix 6).

This was followed by the diary period which involved those employees who agreed to participate each completing a short questionnaire of 5 minutes on the last day of a working week for 12 consecutive weeks. As part of a pre-survey information package, employees were advised to complete the weekly survey as soon as they received them as this controlled for time gaps between each week. However, the survey links were valid for 3 days once launched. The weekly surveys began approximately one week after the general survey had been completed.

All participants were employees in the UK working in various industries. A total of 328 participants were contacted for the weekly diary study; 288 participants were recruited from Prolific and 40 participants through the personal connections of the author. A total of 273 participants took part in the study (16% attrition rate) and completed 9 weekly surveys on average. The number of observations from a weekly basis were 2578.

Welsh t-tests were carried out to test whether any of the sample characteristics were statistically different to the samples used in Chapters 6 and 7 and the differences were significant (For example, with respect to age ($t=-3.26$, $df=529$, $p<0.01$)). All employees were working professionals; 62.1% were female, 37.2% male and 0.8% non-binary; 81% had permanent contracts; 34% belonged to the public sector, 59% to the private sector and 6% to either non-profit organizations or other businesses; 38% had leadership responsibilities of which 15.8% were team leaders, 16% line managers, 5% senior managers and 3% CEOs or directors. The age of participants ranged from 20 to 61 ($M=33.3$; $SD=9.27$). Organisational Tenure ranged from 1 to 27 years ($M=6.9$; $SD=6.5$) and 98% had a bachelor's degree or better. Finally, 55.3% were working from home, 33.9% were commuting to work and the rest were furloughed.

8.4.1.1 Data Analysis Strategy

CFA is a tool for assessing how well a hypothesised model structure fits the data collected (Byrne, 2010). This is particularly important when new measurement scales are developed as CFA can provide evidence of construct validity (DeVellis, 2012). To counter problems associated with past approaches such as using CFA only on between-person covariances, Muthén (1994) developed the multilevel CFA procedure (MCFA) which uses the in- and between-person covariances matrices of a sample simultaneously to accurately examine the

quality of a construct's multilevel factor structure. Results of the EFA reported in Chapter 6 suggest that 10 items of the EXLM loaded only on two factors: surface and deep existential acting. Thus, to confirm the EXLM proposed factor structure using a sample of 273 participants, MCFA was conducted (Hinkin et al, 1997; see Table 8-1,8-2).

To perform the MCFA, Mplus version 7 and restricted ML estimation were used (Lu, 2016). The factor loadings of individual items were assessed along with the overall model fit for two competing models (DeVellis, 2012). Two first-order models were compared: a first-order one-factor model including one EXLM factor on both the between-person and the within-person levels; and a first-order two-factor model (e.g. including two EXLM factors on both between and within-person level). With regards to the latter model, the correlation between the two proposed factors (surface and deep existential acting) was examined as an indication of a potential second-order factor (Johnson et al., 2011).

The same fit indices as in Chapter 7 were used to assess the quality of the multilevel factors structure of the EXLM. Chi-square was used, which indicates the quality of model fit by comparing an estimated covariance matrix based on the hypothesised model with the actual covariance matrix of the data collected (cf. recommendations of Hinkin, 1998). Since the Chi-square statistic is heavily influenced by sample size (Saris et al., 2009) more robust fit indices were examined for a conclusive model fit assessment. The CFI, RMSEA, SRMR and the TLI were examined. CFI and TLI values between .90 and .95 can be considered a good fit, whereas values over .95 reflect an excellent fit (Byrne, 2010; Hu & Bentler, 1999). SRMR values of up to .10 are considered acceptable and values of less than .08 constitute a good fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999). An RMSEA of less than .08 is considered acceptable, whereas values below .05 are considered to be better (Steiger, 2009; Xia & Yang, 2018). Finally, to compare the fit of different models, the Bayesian Information Criterion (BIC) was used, where lower values indicate a better fit (Usami et al., 2016)

8.4.2 Measures

The sample of the questionnaire used for both the general and the weekly surveys is attached in Appendix 6.

8.4.2.1 General Survey Measures

The general survey was used to measure the trait level or stable characteristics of the employees and between-level factors.

8.4.2.2 Negative Affect (NA) as a Control

To ensure that the effects reported in this study were not due to an affective predisposition on the side of the employee, NA was used to control for dispositional negative affectivity. NA was added as a control in this study, following recommendations by scholars who have conducted similar weekly diary studies. According to Diestal et al. 2015, in weekly diary studies it is important to account for this factor as NA predicts emotional mood and thus, may explain individual differences in existential labour and well-being during the course of a week. Furthermore, based on the findings from Chapter 7 it became more apparent that existential labour leads to negative well-being outcomes, therefore it was important to control for this at the start of the survey. Negative emotions and feelings tend to have a larger impact on individual's negative experiences, therefore controlling for NA would increase robustness of the findings. The PANAS negative affectivity scale was used and employees were asked to provide ratings on how they felt in general with respect to 5 negative adjectives (Diestal et al., 2015). NA predicts emotional mood and thus may explain individual differences in dissonance and wellbeing during the course of a week (Rivkin et al., 2015)The response format of this scale ranged from 1 (never) to 7 (very often). Cronbach's alpha for this measure was 0.89.

8.4.2.3 Demographic variables:

Age, Gender were also used as control variables at the between level.

8.4.2.4 Organisational Psychological Safety Climate

This was assessed using the 4-item shortened version of the 7-item scale developed by Edmondson (1999). Example items included 'If members make a mistake on this organisation, it is often held against them' (reverse scored) and 'No one on this organisation would deliberately act in a way that would undermine anyone else's work.' Several studies have examined individually-held perceptions of psychological safety in organisations using adapted versions of Edmondson's (1999) measure, replacing the referent 'team' with 'organisation' This study seeks to measure individual perceptions of organisational psychological safety. Cronbach's alpha for this measure was 0.71.

8.4.2.5 Weekly Diary Measures

Employee week-level measures were recorded. In line with previous research, the time frame of all scale items used has been adapted so that they referred to the week and could be used to measure study variables on a weekly level (Pekaar et al., 2018). Internal consistencies for week-level variables were averaged across all measurement occasions.

8.4.2.6 MD

Weekly perceptions of MD were measured using the previously validated measure of MD (Chapters 6 and 7). Employees were asked to rate how often they had to adjust to organisational goals and requirements during the respective week for 5 items. Sample items included:

During this week, how often have you had to adjust to organisational goals that are not meaningful to you?

During this week, how often were you obliged to act according to your job requirements compared to acting according to what is meaningful to you?

Ratings were made on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (not at all) to 7 (very often). The average Cronbach's alpha across all weeks was .95, ranging from .95 to .96.

8.4.2.7 Deep Existential Acting

Weekly perceptions of deep existential acting were measured using the previously validated measure of existential labour in (Chapters 6 and 7). Employees were asked to rate statements that best represented their state of altering meaningful experiences, during the respective week for 5 items. Sample items included:

I often have to convince myself that working in this organisation is personally beneficial to me.

Ratings were made on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (not at all) to 7 (very often). The average Cronbach's alpha across all weeks was .95 ranging from .95 to .96.

8.4.2.8 Surface Existential Acting

Weekly perceptions of surface existential acting were measured using the previously validated measure of existential labour in (Chapters 6 and 7). Employees were asked to rate statements that best represented their state of suppressing meaningful experiences, during the respective week for 5 items. Sample items included

I often pretend as if my organisation's purpose is meaningful when interacting with other people at work, even when it isn't.

Ratings were made on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (not at all) to 7 (very often). The average Cronbach's alpha across all weeks was .94 (ranging from .93 to .96).

8.4.2.9 Worker Alienation

Weekly perceptions of alienation were measured using an 8-item measure developed and validated by Nair and Vohra (2009). Employees were asked to rate the statements that best represented their state of disconnection from one themselves and their work during the workweek:

This week, I felt disconnected from the events in my workplace.

The average Cronbach's alpha across all weeks was .96 ranging from .95 to .96. Ratings were made on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

8.4.2.10 Burnout

Weekly perceptions of burnout were assessed by the MBI-GS (Maslach et al., 1996). The MBI-GS consists of 16 items (Gil-Monte, 2005; Richardsen & Martinussen, 2005). The emotional exhaustion subscale consists of 5 items such as 'I feel emotionally drained by my work this week', the cynicism subscale consists of 5 items such as 'I was less interested in my work this week, compared to when I started' and the depersonalisation subscale consists of 6 items such as '[t]his week, I felt I looked after certain clients impersonally, as if they were objects'. Ratings were made on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The average Cronbach's alphas across all weeks were .95, .93, .91 respectively, ranging from .90 to .96.

8.4.2.11 ED as Control

Similar to using NA, general ED was used as a control for the emotional component of dissonance using five items that reflected the frequency of experienced discrepancies between genuinely felt emotions and those required by the participant's job role:

In the last few hours, how often did you have to show feelings at work that you did not really feel?

The items were adapted from the FEWS. The response format of this scale ranged from 1 (never) to 7 (very often). The average Cronbach's alpha across all weeks was .94 ranging from .94 to .96.

8.5 Further Validation of the ExLM

After having reported results from both an exploratory EFA and a CFA in Chapter 6 that provided initial evidence regarding the structure of existential labour strategies, this section provides further evidence regarding the scale's construct validity. Further validation of EXLM was warranted for several reasons. First, the CFA merely provided evidence of construct validity for the conceptualisation on the between-person level of analysis. However, the EXLM was developed to assess weekly changes in existential acting which raised the question of whether the factor structure of the EXLM replicates when it is adapted to the weekly level. Second, to prevent misalignment between theory and measurement, a known methodological issue in meaningful work literature (Allan et al., 2020; Bailey, 2018; Vogel et al., 2019), the factor structure of EXLM was examined on both the between-person (individual level) and the within-person level (week-level). Overall, by using MCFA to re-confirm the factor structure of a new measure, this section aims to provide a better understanding of the underlying structure of existential labour, it also allows for the identification of any inconsistencies or variations in the factor structure, which can be important for interpreting the results and making appropriate adjustments to the measure.

Concerning theoretical and conceptual considerations regarding the measurement of EXLM, it is not assumed that general and weekly EXLM are conceptually different. However, weekly measurements are likely to be more accurate in reflecting the true effect of existential acting on employee work-related outcomes. This is because weekly measurements more readily capture employee reactions to work events and thus to displayed behaviour (Ohly et al., 2010). Weekly measurements also reduce concerns regarding recall bias which can negatively influence the accuracy of existential acting ratings. Concerns regarding recall bias may be particularly heightened for existential acting strategies similar to other complex constructs (eg. emotional labour) involving complex cognitive functions such as inconsistent behaviours which are more difficult to recall. This study does not assume conceptual differences between the between-person factor structure and the within-person factor structure, therefore the analysis reported below will be confirmatory in nature.

The measures used for the MCFA were the general and weekly versions of the EXLM. The main difference between the two is the adaptation of the time frame (Op den Kamp et al., 2020; Pekaar et al., 2018). The results of a multilevel CFA (Muthén,1994) are reported to establish construct validity across levels of analysis. More importantly, MCFA was reported to check and determine the factor structure at the between level- using a different Sample compared to the previous studies. Table 8-1 and 8-2 shows the factor loadings of all 10 items across deep existential and surface existential acting on both within and between levels, along with its reliabilities. All loadings were above 0.60.

8.5.1 Results of MCFA regarding the EXLM

Table 8-1. Summary of multilevel CFA results for existential labour (n=274) at within level, (n=2578) number of observations at weekly level. Number of Items: 10.

Within-level		Factor Loadings	
Item Number	Item	Deep Existential Acting ($\alpha=.96$)	Surface Existential Acting ($\alpha=.95$)
DE04	I often have to convince myself that my tasks at work have value and are significant to me.	.819	
DE02	I often have to convince myself that working in this organisation is personally beneficial to me.	.820	
DE07	I often have to convince myself that my work tasks match what is personally meaningful to me.	.732	
DE03	I often have to put in effort to believe that being a part of this organisation is meaningful to me.	.834	
DE06	I often have to put in effort to believe that the tasks I do at work are purposeful.	.786	
SE05	I often pretend as if I agree with the purpose of my tasks even when I don't believe it.		.731
SE07	I often act like my work role is personally meaningful to me, to fulfil the requirements of my tasks.		.699
SE06	I often act like someone who finds their tasks to be meaningful when interacting with other people at work, even when I don't always believe it.		.772
SE02	I often pretend as if my organisation's purpose is meaningful when interacting with other people at work, even when it isn't.		.808
SE03	I often act like my organisation is personally meaningful to me, to fit in.		.813

All item loadings were statistically significant at $p < 0.001$

Table 8-2. Summary of multilevel CFA results for existential labour (n=274) at between level. Number of Items: 10.

Between Level		Factor Loadings	
Item	Item	Deep Existential Acting ($\alpha=.96$)	Surface Existential Acting ($\alpha=.95$)
DE04	I often have to convince myself that my tasks at work have value and are significant to me.	.998	
DE02	I often have to convince myself that working in this organisation is personally beneficial to me.	.951	

DE07	I often have to convince myself that my work tasks match what is personally meaningful to me.	.985
DE03	I often have to put in effort to believe that being a part of this organisation is meaningful to me.	.961
DE06	I often have to put in effort to believe that the tasks I do at work are purposeful.	.995
SE05	I often pretend as if I agree with the purpose of my tasks even when I don't believe it.	.969
SE07	I often act like my work role is personally meaningful to me, to fulfil the requirements of my tasks.	.925
SE06	I often act like someone who finds their tasks to be meaningful when interacting with other people at work, even when I don't always believe it.	.966
SE02	I often pretend as if my organisation's purpose is meaningful when interacting with other people at work, even when it isn't.	.981
SE03	I often act like my organisation is personally meaningful to me, to fit in.	.973

All item loadings were statistically significant at $p < 0.001$

8.5.1.1 MCFAs Results

Before testing the hypothesised relationships between the observed variables, the measurement model was assessed to confirm that the observed measures were conceptually distinct and valid measures of the underlying construct. To determine the adequacy of the hypothesised model, further MCFAs were conducted. The procedure tests if the hypothesised model is mis specified; in this case, a well-fitting model cannot be tested (Muthén, 1994). The same indicators as previously described were used to assess model fit: the intraclass correlation coefficient (ICC (1)) values for all weekly variables was measured to see whether a multilevel analytic approach was warranted (Snijders & Bosker, 2012) (see Table 8-2) and then the Chi-square, CFI, TLI, RMSEA, SRMR (between and in) and BIC indices were examined to assess the adequacy of fit.

8.5.1.2 ICCs

The ICC (1) was computed to determine whether the use of multilevel analyses is justified (see Table 8.3). The ICC (1) represents the amount of between-person variability compared to the amount of total variability (Snijders & Bosker, 2012). Calculating the ICC (1) based on the null model (the intercept-only model) demonstrated that 66% of the total variance in perceived surface existential acting was due to differences in individuals, whilst the remaining 44% was due to differences between people and that 71% of the total variance in perceived deep existential acting was attributed to 'in' differences and the remaining 29% to 'between'

differences. The results show that within-person constructs exhibited considerable variance at the weekly level, ranging from 22% to 49%, thereby justifying the multilevel approach.

This finding indicates that both acting strategies varied both in and between people, thus justifying the multilevel approach (Snijders & Bosker, 2012).

8.5.1.3 *Fit Indices*

MCFA results for the proposed first-order one-factor model showed poor model fit ($\chi^2(70)=3945.221$, $p<.001$, $TLI=.50$, $CFI=.61$, $SRMR_{in}=.19$, $SRMR_{between}=.05$, $RMSEA=.14$). The first-order two-factor model showed a much better fit to the data ($\chi^2(68)=852.337$, $p<.001$, $TLI=.896$, $CFI=.921$, $SRMR_{in}=.03$, $SRMR_{between}=.01$, $RMSEA=.06$). The BIC for the two-factor model (68041.726) was lower than the one-factor model (BIC=73112.734) indicating that the two-factor model fits the data slightly better. In the two-factor model, a substantial correlation was observed between the first-order factors deep existential acting and surface existential acting on both the between-person ($r=0.89$) and the within-person level ($r=0.40$). A correlation of this magnitude is indicative of a second-order factor in line with the theoretical argumentation of ExLM (Wright et al., 2012).

Table 8-3. ICC's (1) for all weekly level variables

Construct	ICC's (1)	In Individual Variance (%)
Deep Existential Acting	0.715	28.5%
Surface Existential Acting	0.666	36%
Cynicism	0.543	49%
Emotional Exhaustion	0.721	31%
Depersonalisation	0.769	26%
Work Alienation	0.801	22%

8.6 Measurement Model

From a methodological standpoint, several models may fit the same dataset and competing models should be tested to ensure that the hypothesised model yields the best fit. Following recommendations by Thompson (2004), the hypothesised first-order 10-factor model including the within-person factors (meaningful dissonance, ED, deep and surface existential acting, worker alienation, depersonalisation, emotional exhaustion and cynicism) and between-level factors (NA and organisational psychological safety) was compared with a first-order 8-factor model of within-person factors including dissonance (emotional and MD), existential acting

(deep and surface existential acting), worker alienation, depersonalisation and emotional exhaustion and cynicism and the between factors of NA and psychological safety. In comparison to the 10-factor model, the 8-factor version combined emotional and MD into one dissonance factor as they are theoretically similar, with high correlations ($r=.63$). Similarly, deep and surface existential acting was combined into a single factor of existential acting as these constructs have high correlations ($r=0.79$).

The MCFA results showed that the theoretically derived model with 10 factors had the best fit. All items significantly loaded on their intended factor with the lowest factor loading being 0.55, which satisfies the common cut-off criteria of .50 (Wright, 2012). With regard to the model fit, MCFA results showed excellent fit for the first-order 11-factor model ($\chi^2(2679)=9588.308$, $p<.001$, TLI=.90, CFI=.90, SRMR in=.03, SRMR between=.05, RMSEA=.03, BIC=355825.922). However, MCFA results for the competing 8-factor model showed a poor fit. Not all items in the dissonance factor loaded correctly and all ED items had a loading below 0.26. For the existential acting factor, surface existential items had poor factor loadings ranging from 0.34 to 0.40. The model fit indices did not meet the common cut-off criteria ($\chi^2(2713)=17116.681$, $p<.001$, TLI=.79, CFI=.80, SRMR in=.07, SRMR between=.06, RMSEA=.04, BIC=364407.035). The BIC of the theoretical model was lower than the competing model, which provides further evidence of the superiority in a fit of the theoretically derived model (Heck & Thomas, 2015). Thus the MCFA results support the view that the theoretically derived first-order 10-factor model fits the data best and can thus be used to examine hypothesised relationships between observed study variables.

8.6.1 Results for multilevel analysis

This section outlines the analytical approach with regards to hypothesis testing and study findings.

Because of the nested data structure (weeks at Level 1 were nested within persons at Level 2), hypotheses were tested using multilevel modelling following the unconflated multilevel model (UMM) approach (Preacher, Zyphur & Zhang, 2010). The UMM approach yields more accurate parameter estimates compared to the traditional multilevel modelling (MLM) because it acknowledges that the effect of a Level 1 (within-person) predictor on a Level 1 outcome that can be separated into two parts: the within-person effect and the between-person effect

(Preacher et al., 2010). This circumstance is particularly important for this diary study as the reliability of results obtained by diary designs relies heavily on the accuracy of estimation of effects on the within-person level of analysis (Bolger et al., 2003; Ohly et al., 2010). Traditional MLM combines both the within-person and between-person effect into a single slope, which results in a conflated effect that will have an upward or downward bias in most cases except for the very unlikely situation that the within- and between-person effects are the same (Preacher et al., 2010b).

The UMM approach mitigates the drawbacks associated with conflation by separating the in- and between-person effects of a given Level 1 variable and uses the within-person portion of the variable on Level 1 and its person mean on Level 2 (Preacher et al., 2010; Zhang, Zyphur & Preacher, 2009). The UMM approach has been used to examine within-person effects for this very reason (Bakker & Sanz-Vergel, 2013b; Op den Kamp et al., 2020; Pekaar et al., 2018; Rivkin et al., 2018; Stollberger & Debus, 2019). With regards to centring decisions, UMM requires group-mean centring of Level 1 variables and grand mean centring of Level 2 variables to separate in- and between-person variance (Preacher et al., 2010). Apart from being a requirement for adopting the UMM approach, centring recommendations are also in line with best practice regarding the conduct of diary studies and for testing cross-level interaction effects (Luo et al., 2021). Thus, all Level 1 predictors and the control variable (ED) were centred around their person mean and all Level 2 predictors and the control variable (NA) was centred around the grand mean.

Hypothesis 1-3b implies a 1-1-1 mediation model by proposing that employee weekly existential acting strategies mediate the relationship between weekly MD and negative wellbeing outcomes. This study follows the most recommended approach to test mediation hypotheses of a step-by-step approach involving two models to separately test interaction effects on the mediator (the a-path) and the outcome variable (the b-path), whilst controlling for the effect of the independent variable (Baron & Kenny, 1986).

Table 8-5 shows three models with emotional exhaustion, cynicism, depersonalisation and alienation as the dependent variables. Model 1 specifically tested Hypothesis 1 which included all outcome variables and control variables to test the first condition of mediation. Model 2 extended this by including existential labour variables as outcomes to test the second condition and Hypotheses 2a-2b. To test the third condition, Model 3 examined the effects of MD and

existential labour variables together. The Monte Carlo method for assessing mediation (MCMAM; Selig & Preacher, 2008) was used to verify mediation effects testing Hypotheses 3a to 3b and the standardised indirect effect size was calculated (Preacher & Kelley, 2011).

For multilevel models, the Monte Carlo method arrives at more accurate estimates of mediation effects by creating a sampling distribution of the a- and b-paths (Preacher & Selig, 2012). Similarly, for Hypothesis 2a-b Mplus version 7 and its multilevel path modelling capabilities were used. This allowed the UMM approach advocated by Preacher et al. (2010) to be followed and took into account potential covariance between the a- and b-paths of the proposed multilevel moderated mediation model (Bauer, Preacher & Gil, 2006). Multilevel path modelling allowed the testing of a complete moderated mediation, which is in line with the theoretical predictions made for Hypothesis 4.

Lastly, to test for cross-level moderations and Hypothesis 4a and 4b, a sequence of multilevel models was followed (Aguinis, Gottfredson & Culpepper, 2013): Model 1 – inclusion of in-person predictors; Model 2 – allowing variation in slopes of the in-person (interaction) predictors; Model 3 – adding between-person predictors; and Model 4 – adding cross-level interactions (Fletcher et al., 2018,p.140). The significance of the simple slopes was tested for significant interactions at low (-1SD) and high (+1SD) levels of the moderator using R version 4.0.3 and the effect size focusing on the cross-level interaction's explanatory power was calculated (Aguinis et al., 2013).

8.6.2 Model Building using Mplus

The models were built based following the recommendations of Baron and Kenny (1986) fitting a multilevel path model in which weekly existential acting (deep and surface) mediates the effect of weekly MD on weekly alienation and burnout whilst accounting for control variables on Levels 1 (ED) and 2 (NA) (Preacher et al., 2010). Following the recommendations by Bauer et al. (2006), random slope effects for paths a and b and a covariance term to account for potential covariance between said random slopes were added. To test the significance of my multilevel mediation effect (Hypotheses 3a and 3b), confidence intervals were constructed around the mediation effect using the Monte Carlo method with 20,000 replications using a computational tool by Selig and Preacher (2008).

Cross-level interactions were tested between pathways a and b by adding organisational psychological safety as a predictor of the random slope for the relationship between weekly MD and weekly existential acting strategies (the a-path) and the relationship between existential acting strategies and their associated outcomes. A tool by Jeremy Dawson was used to plot interaction effects. Finally, to test the significance of my multilevel mediation effect (Hypotheses 3a and 3b), confidence intervals were constructed around the mediation effect using the Monte Carlo method with 20,000 replications using a computational tool by Selig and Preacher (2008).

8.6.3 Hypothesis tests

Table 8-4 shows the means, standard deviations and intercorrelations of the study variables. Correlations amongst Level 1 variables represent group-mean centred relationships between the weekly variables at the individual level of analysis. Level 1 variables were averaged across the 12 weeks to provide estimates of between individual relationships with Level 2 variables (Op den Kamp et al., 2020). High intercorrelations were observed between deep and surface existential acting as mentioned in the previous studies, and high correlations were observed during MD and ED. A discussion on the precautions taken to avoid an adverse effect of multicollinearity on the parameter estimates is provided below. However, the centring strategy (group-mean centring Level 1 variables and grand mean centring Level 2 variables) was employed to study the variables. This reduced concerns regarding multicollinearity (Hofmann & Gavin, 1998).

Table 8-4. Means, standard deviations and correlations with confidence intervals

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Level 1 Predictors												
1 Meaningful Dissonance	3.53	1.57	(.96)	.52**	.45**	.40**	.39**	.31**	.38**	.56**	-	-
2 Deep Ext.	3.64	1.69	.74**	(.95)	.51**	.46**	.45**	.35**	.47**	.54**	-	-
3 Surface Ext	3.64	1.57	.65**	.80**	(.94)	.36**	.37**	.31**	.41**	.55**	-	-
4 Emo. Exhaustion	4.23	1.78	.40**	.48**	.37**	(.90)	.48**	.30**	.52**	.49**	-	-
5 Cynicism	3.62	1.75	.53**	.71**	.56**	.63**	(.95)	.29**	.49**	.39**	-	-
6 Depersonalisation	2.97	1.61	.38**	.42**	.47**	.34**	.49**	(.93)	.51**	.56**	-	-
7 Work Alienation	3.70	1.76	.52**	.72**	.58**	.61**	.83**	.60**	(.94)	.47**	-	-
8 ED	4.15	1.50	.81**	.78**	.42**	.81**	.73**	.69**	.74**	(.80)	-	-
Level 2 Predictors												

9	Org.Psych.Safety	4.42	1.25	.27**	.35**	.24**	.25**	.48**	.26**	.46**	.28**	(.72)
10	NA	3.54	1.25	.38**	.48**	.36**	.50**	.35**	.31**	.50**	.46**	-.49** (.91)

Notes. Cronbach's α reliabilities averaged across the three weeks are in parentheses on the diagonal. Correlations at the week-level are displayed above the diagonal (n=2578), whereas correlations at the person level averaged across the three weeks are displayed below the diagonal (n=273). ICC=intraclass coefficient. p<0.001*Columns 10 and 11 show no correlations as Level 2 predictors do not have within-person correlations.

Table 8-5. Summarises the results of the multilevel analysis to test Hypothesis 1, which proposed weekly ExI (Level 1) to mediate weekly MD (Level 1) on weekly negative wellbeing outcomes (Level 1)

Independent Variables	Model 1 Est (SE)				Model 2 Est (SE)					
	Cynicism	Emo. Exh	Depersonalisation	Alienation	Deep Ext.	Surf. Ext	Emo.Exh	Cynicism	Depersonalisation	Alienation
Level 1										
Emo. Dissonance (Control)	0.216 (0.03)**	0.275 (0.02)***	0.138 (0.02)***	0.228 (0.03)***	0.401 (0.03)**	0.407 (0.03)**	0.201 (0.031)*	0.095 (0.03)**	0.082 (0.02)**	0.134 (0.27)**
Meaningful Dissonance (X)	0.297 (0.04)**	0.179 (0.03)***	0.127 (0.02)***	0.139 (0.02)***			0.095 (0.02)**	0.171 (0.04)**	0.071 (0.02)**	0.055 (0.02)*
Deep Existential Acting (M1)							0.235 (0.03)**	0.319 (0.03)**	0.128 (0.02)**	0.207 (0.03)**
Surface Existential Acting (M2)							0.052 (0.02)	0.123 (0.03)**	0.091 (0.02)**	0.111 (0.02)**
Level 2										
NA (Control)	0.316 (0.04)**	0.403 (0.06)***	0.261 (0.06)***	0.413 (0.06)***	0.414 (0.05)**	0.267 (0.04)**	0.364 (0.07)**	0.196 (0.05)**	0.175 (0.05)*	0.260 (0.06)**
Age	-0.00 (0.00)	0.01 (0.01)	-0.00 (0.01)	0.00 (0.01)	-0.00 (0.01)	0.00 (0.01)	-0.00 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)	-0.00 (0.01)	0.00 (0.01)
Gender	0.01 (0.11)	-0.17 (0.13)	0.37 (0.14)	0.15 (0.13)	0.250 (0.11)*	0.227 (0.10)*	-0.169 (0.10)	0.00	0.27 (0.12)*	0.13 (0.11)
Person Level, τ_{00}^2	0.531 (0.07)**	1.038 (0.10)***	1.058 (0.13)***	1.104 (0.11)***	0.874 (0.08)**	0.704 (0.08)**	0.918 (0.10)**	0.339 (0.08)**	0.620 (0.13)**	0.724 (0.11)**
Observation Level, τ_{11}^2	1.253 (0.06)**	0.807 (0.05)***	0.551 (0.04)***	0.567 (0.04)***	0.759 (0.06)**	0.766 (0.05)**	0.756 (0.04)**	1.155 (0.06)**	0.494 (0.03)**	0.498 (0.03)**
-2*loglikelihood	35188.41				49204.82					
Δ -2*loglikelihood	33073.94**				-14016.4*					

Table 8-5. Continued

Independent Variables	Model 3 Est (SE)						
	Deep Ext.	Surf. Ext	Emo.Exh	Cynicism	Depersonalisation	Alienation	
Level 1							

Emo.Dissonance (Control)	.257 (0.03)***	.305 (0.03)***	.203 (0.03)***	0.100 (0.03)**	0.08 (0.02)**	0.131 (0.02)***
Meaningful Dissonance (X)	.308 (0.03)***	.205 (0.02)***	0.168 (0.03)***	0.094 (0.03)***	0.072 (0.02)***	0.04 (0.02)*
Deep Existential Acting (M1)			0.234 (0.03)***	0.323 (0.03)***	0.130 (0.02)***	0.201 (0.02)***
Surface Existential Acting (M2)			0.052 (0.02)	0.125 (0.03)***	0.093 (0.02)**	0.111 (0.02)***
Level 2						
NA (Control)	0.257 (0.04)***	0.100 (0.05)*	0.376 (0.08)***	0.175 (0.05)***	0.122 (0.06)	0.166 (0.07)*
Age	-0.00 (0.0)	0.00 (0.0)	-0.00 (0.0)	0.001 (0.00)	0.005 (0.00)	0.013 (0.00)*
Gender	0.082 (0.09)	0.071 (0.09)	-0.191 (0.13)	0.009 (0.09)	0.307 (0.13)**	0.211 (0.11)
Person Level, τ_{00}^2	0.335 (0.06)***	0.381 (0.06)***	0.913 (0.10)***	0.331 (0.09)***	0.607 (0.13)***	0.614 (0.11)***
Observation Level, τ_{11}^2	0.657 (0.05)***	0.721 (0.04)***	0.757 (0.04)***	1.162 (0.06)***	0.494 (0.03)***	0.497 (0.03)***
-2*loglikelihood	48401.45					
Δ -2*loglikelihood	803.364**					

Note: Level 1- n=2579, Level -2, n=274, Using the null model based off n=2579, Model 1 was compared with a null model with the intercept as the only predictor ($\gamma=4.724$; SE=0.206; $t=22.88$; Level 1 variance=1.873; SE=0.191; Level 2 variance=2.091; SE=0.469). * $p<.05$. ** $p<.01$. *** $p<.001$

8.6.3.1 The Mediating Effect of Existential Labour Strategies

Before testing the mediating hypothesis, the direct effects of MD were tested with the outcome variables (burnout and alienation). From Model 1 in Table 8-5, it is evident that all outcomes showed significant predicted associations. These relationships were tested without adding the mediators (deep and surface existential), therefore confirming Hypothesis 1.

Hypothesis 2a proposed that, within individuals, week specific deep existential acting would be positively associated with negative wellbeing outcomes. In support of Hypothesis 2a, the results indicate that deep existential acting is positively related to the burnout variables emotional exhaustion (within-level: $\gamma=0.235$ $p<.01$), cynicism (within-level: $\gamma=0.319$, $p<.01$) and depersonalisation (within-level: $\gamma=0.128$, $p<.01$) and related to worker alienation (within-level: $\gamma=0.207$, $p<.01$).

Hypothesis 2b proposed that, within individuals, week specific surface existential acting would be positively related to negative wellbeing outcomes. In support of Hypothesis 2b, the results indicate that surface existential acting is positively related to worker alienation (within-level: $\gamma=0.111$ $p<.05$) but not to one of the burnout variables (emotional exhaustion) (within-level: $\gamma=0.051$, $p=0.123$). It was found to be positively associated with cynicism (within-level:

$\gamma=0.123$, $p<.01$) and depersonalisation (within-level: $\gamma=0.091$, $p<.01$). These values indicate higher regression coefficients for deep compared to surface existential acting, further confirming results from the studies in Chapter 7, confirming Hypothesis 2a and partially confirming Hypothesis 2b as emotional exhaustion as an outcome had no significant effect. Model 3 extends Model 2 by investigating both MD and existential labour together to test the final condition of mediation. Additional mediation tests were done to confirm mediating effects of deep and surface existential acting.

8.6.4 MCMAM Tests on the Indirect Effects

For analysing the indirect mediating effect of existential acting strategies proposed by Hypothesis 3a-3b, the Monte Carlo resampling method was used to estimate the confidence intervals for the indirect effect, because bootstrapping cannot be applied to multilevel analyses in Mplus. We computed bias-corrected 95% CIs for the indirect effect based on 20,000 resamples using the software provided by Selig and Preacher (2008). In support of Hypothesis 3a, the CI for the indirect effect of deep existential acting in relation to MD and emotional exhaustion ($ab=0.074$, $p<0.01$, 95% CI Low=0.007; CI High=0.163), cynicism ($ab=0.102$, $p<0.01$, 95% CI Low=0.036; CI High=0.166), depersonalisation ($ab=0.033$, $p<0.01$, 95% CI Low=0.022; CI High=0.060) and alienation ($ab=0.066$, $p<0.01$, 95% CI Low=0.040; CI High=0.084) excluded zero for the within-person part of the model.

In support for Hypothesis 3b, the indirect effect of surface existential acting with relation to MD and cynicism ($ab=0.023$, $p<0.05$, 95% CI Low=0.007; CI High=0.163), depersonalisation ($ab=0.025$, $p<0.05$, 95% CI Low=0.007; CI High=0.163) and alienation ($ab=0.023$, $p<0.05$, 95% CI Low=0.007; CI High=0.163) did not include zero. However, Hypothesis 3b was not fully supported as the indirect effect of surface existential acting with emotional exhaustion included zero, hence no mediation occurred ($ab=0.009$, $p=0.170$, 95% CI Low=-0.026 ; CI High=0.052).

Table 8-6. Showing cross-level moderation of Level 2 predictor- org psychological safety on the indirect relationship between MD and negative wellbeing outcomes.

	Model 1 Est (SE) Fixed Slope						Model 2 Est (SE) Random Slope Random Intercept					
	Deep Ext.	Surf. Ext	Emo.Exh	Cynicis m	Depersonalisatio n	Alienatio n	Deep Ext.	Surf. Ext	Emo.Exh	Cynicis m	Depersonalisatio n	Alienatio n
Level 1												
Emo. Dissonance (Control)	0.22 (0.36)***	0.254 (0.03)	0.181 (0.03)** *	0.115 (0.04)**	0.042 (0.02)	0.113 (0.02)***	0.217 (0.03)***	0.249 (0.03)** *	0.045 (0.02)** *	0.120 (0.40)** *	0.045 (0.025)	0.107 (0.02)***
Meaningful Dissonance (X)	0.306 (0.03)***	0.204 (0.02)** *	0.09 (0.03)**	0.170 (0.04)** *	0.072 (0.02)**	0.047 (0.02)	0.310 (0.03)***	0.205 (0.02)** *	0.169 (0.04)** *	0.096 (0.02)**	0.072 (0.02)**	0.049 (0.02)*
Deep Ext. Acting (M1)			0.240 (0.03)** *	0.322 (0.02)** *	0.133 (0.03)***	0.214 (0.03)***			0.233 (0.03)** *	0.322 (0.03)** *	0.129 (0.02)***	0.201 (0.03)***
Surface Existential Acting (M2)			0.050 (0.02)	0.127 (0.03)**	0.084 (0.02)**	0.110 (0.02)***			0.049 (0.02)	0.124 (0.03)**	0.090 (0.02)**	0.108 (0.02)***
Variance Components												
Person Level, τ_{00}^2	0.466 (0.05) ***	0.401 (0.05) ***	1.094 (0.11)** *	0.491 (0.06)** *	0.988 (0.11)***	0.751 (0.09)***	0.372 (0.06)***	0.336 (0.05)** *	0.963 (0.10)** *	0.355 (0.09)** *	0.516 (0.10)***	0.649 (0.10)***
Observation Level, τ_{11}^2	0.679 (0.05)***	0.727 (0.04)** *	0.779 (0.04)** *	1.176 (0.05)** *	0.549 (0.03)***	0.525 (0.03)***	0.658 (0.05)***	0.719 (0.04)** *	0.754 (0.04)** *	1.152 (0.06)** *	0.498 (0.03)***	0.498 (0.03)***
R_1^2 (approx.)	17.5%	11.8%	14%	16.3%	7.8%	15.5%	3%	1%	3.2%	2%	9.2%	5%
-2*loglikelihood	55752.946						55103.75					
Δ -2*loglikelihood	12509.412** *						649.196* *					
AIC	55898.95						55287.75					
BIC	56326.37						55826.42 5					

	Model 3 Est (SE) With Level 2 Predictor						Model 4 Est (SE) With Cross-Level Interaction					
	Deep Ext.	Surf. Ext	Emo.Exh	Cynicism	Depersonali sation	Alienation	Deep Ext.	Surf. Ext	Emo.Exh	Cynicism	Depersonali sation	Alienation
Level 1												
Emo. Dissonance (Control)	0.256 (0.03)***	0.305 (0.03)***	0.204 (0.03)***	0.100 (0.03)**	0.081 (0.02)***	0.131 (0.02)***	0.255 (0.032)***	0.306 (0.03)***	0.202 (0.03)***	0.102 (0.03)**	0.081 (0.02)**	0.130 (0.02)***
Meaningful Dissonance (X)	0.308 (0.03)***	0.205 (0.02)***	0.167 (0.04)***	0.093 (0.02)**	0.071 (0.02)**	0.049 (0.02)*	0.308 (0.03)***	0.205 (0.02)***	0.166 (0.04)***	0.094 (0.02)**	0.072 (0.02)***	0.049 (0.02)*
Deep Ext. Acting (M1)			0.234 (0.03)***	0.323 (0.03)***	0.130 (0.02)***	0.200 (0.03)***			0.233 (0.03)***	0.326 (0.03)***	0.123 (0.02)***	0.199 (0.02)**
Surface Existential Acting (M2)			0.053 (0.02)*	0.125 (0.03)**	0.092 (0.02)**	0.110 (0.02)***			0.057 (0.02)***	0.119 (0.03)**	0.098 (0.03)***	0.115 (0.02)***
Level 2												
NA (Control)	0.214 (0.04)***	0.100 (0.04)*	0.370 (0.08)***	0.158 (0.05)**	0.138 (0.06)*	0.141 (0.07)*	0.214 (0.04)***	0.098 (0.05)	0.371 (0.08)***	0.160 (0.05)**	0.139 (0.06)*	0.142 (0.06)*
Age	-0.00 (0.00)	0.002 (0.00)	-0.006 (0.00)	0.005 (0.00)	0.005 (0.00)	0.013 (0.00)*	-0.00 (0.00)	0.002 (0.00)	-0.006 (0.00)	-0.001 (0.00)	0.005 (0.00)	0.012 (0.00)
Gender	0.092 (0.09)	0.071 (0.09)	-0.191 (0.13)	0.009 (0.00)	0.307 (0.13)*	0.211 (0.11)	0.080 (0.09)	0.070 (0.09)	-0.193 (0.135)	0.013 (0.09)	0.307 (0.129)**	0.211 (0.115)
Org.Psy Safety (W)	-0.108 (0.04)*	-0.033 (0.05)	0.048 (0.06)	-0.053 (0.046)	-0.095 (0.06)	-0.230 (0.07)**	-0.147 (0.07)	-0.024 (0.09)	0.003 (0.12)	-0.047 (0.087)	-0.049 (0.10)	-0.217 (0.13)
Cross-level Interactions												
X*W							0.017 (0.08)	0.001 (0.02)				
M1*W									-0.005 (0.01)	0.025 (0.02)	-0.055 (0.02)**	-0.012 (0.02)
M2*W									0.020 (0.02)	-0.026 (0.02)	0.029 (0.014)	0.014 (0.01)

Variance Components													
Person Level, τ_{00}^2	0.335 (0.06)***	0.381 (0.06)***	0.913 (0.10)***	0.331 (0.08)***	0.607 (0.13)***	0.614 (0.11)***	0.337 (0.68)	0.384 (0.58)	0.914 (0.08)***	0.333 (0.08)***	0.616 (0.13)***	0.619 (0.09)***	
Observation Level, τ_{11}^2	0.657 (0.05)***	0.721 (0.04)***	0.757 (0.04)***	1.155 (0.06)***	0.494 (0.03)***	0.499 (0.03)***	0.657 (0.05)***	0.721 (0.04)***	0.756 (0.04)***	1.155 (0.06)***	0.492 (0.03)***	0.496 (0.03)***	
R_1^2 (approx.)	0.1%	0.2%	0.1%	0.2%	1%	0	0	0.2%	0.2%	0	0.6%	0.2%	
-2*loglikelihood	48330.58						48305.938						
Δ -2*loglikelihood	6769.39**						24.642**						
AIC	48570.58						48565.937						
BIC	49273.152						49327.057						

Note: This table, consists of 4 models following best practice recommendations of multilevel models in line with Aguinis, Gottfredson and Culpepper (2013), also reported by Fletcher et al., (2019). X*W depicts pathways across existential acting as outcomes. M1*W, M2*W depicts pathway b across emotional exhaustion, cynicism, depersonalisation and alienation as outcomes. Level 1- n=2579, Level -2, n=274, Using the null model based off n=2579. *Model 1 was compared with a null model with the intercept as the only predictor ($\gamma=4.724$; $SE=0.206$; $t=22.88$; Level 1 variance=1.873; $SE=0.191$; Level 2 variance=2.091; $SE=0.469$). $*p<.05$. $**p<.01$. $***p<.001$. Using the formula recommended by LaHuis, Hartman, Hakoyama and Clark (2014) and illustrated by Gabriel et al., (2021) ($(\sigma^2_{null} - \sigma^2_{predicted})/\sigma^2_{null}$), the R_1^2 was calculated. Lastly, this table, consists of 4 models following best practice recommendations of multilevel models in line with Aguinis, Gottfredson and Culpepper (2013), also reported by Fletcher et al., (2019). X*W depicts pathways across existential acting as outcomes. M1*W, M2*W depicts pathway b across emotional exhaustion, cynicism, depersonalisation and alienation as outcomes.*

8.6.5 Cross-level moderation of organisational psychological safety

Table 8-6 shows the AIC, BIC and deviance statistic (-2LL) as indicators of Model 2 fit. Model 2 was a better fit than Model 1 and showed that the relationships between existential acting strategies and negative wellbeing outcomes varied across individuals, thus supporting the progression in later models to cross-level moderation. Model 3 was a better fit than Model 2, between-level psychological safety was only significantly negatively associated with deep existential acting ($\gamma=-0.108$, $p<0.05$) and work alienation ($\gamma=-0.221$, $p<0.05$).

We also considered the possibility that weekly existential acting could affect other general between-level and negative wellbeing-related outcomes. As a robustness check, we estimated another model in which we controlled for age and gender on negative wellbeing outcomes modelled with fixed effects. The results indicated no support for these factors on outcomes. The results from the rest of our model remained unchanged with the addition of these factors. We also considered the possibility of testing outcomes on the other end of the spectrum of emotional exhaustion – enthusiasm and vigour – as subscales of engagement to check if deep and surface existential acting show similar effects with a positive outcome of wellbeing that focuses on effort and energy at work. As a robustness check, another model was estimated in which subscales of engagement (vigour, enthusiasm and dedication) were added with random slopes. Results indicated no support for these outcomes in weekly surface existential acting, but they were positively associated with weekly deep existential acting. The results from the rest of our model remained unchanged likely because of the relationship between emotional exhaustion and surface existential acting. Adding these outcomes significantly reduced model fit compared to Model 4 shown in Table 8-6.

Those who perceive high organisational psychological safety display lower levels of deep existential acting and weekly worker alienation and organisational psychological safety explains between-person variance in a person's weekly deep existential acting and alienation at work. Lastly, Model 4, which included the cross-level interaction terms, was a better fit than Model 3.

To test and confirm Hypothesis 4a-b, psychological safety was added to test the cross-level interaction between: a) meaningfulness and existential acting strategies; and b) existential acting strategies and negative wellbeing outcomes. The interaction term proved to be

statistically insignificant between MD and acting strategies (pathway a). However, cross-level interactions proved to be statistically significant between deep existential acting and depersonalisation ($\gamma=-0.055$, $p<0.05$) and marginally significant between surface existential acting and depersonalisation ($\gamma=0.029$, $p=0.049$), that is in certain b pathways. However, Hypothesis 4b was only partially supported as the cross-level effect of psychological safety was not significant across cynicism, emotional exhaustion and alienation.

In line with hypothesis 4b and its initial prediction, it is evident that general perceptions of organisational psychological safety weaken the relationship between deep existential acting and depersonalisation. On the other hand, organisational psychological safety strengthens the negative relationship between surface existential acting and depersonalisation indicating an inverse effect. However, the interaction was marginally significant. Accordingly, hypothesis 4b was partially rejected.

Pseudo R^2 for within-level was tested, as recommended by La Huis (2014) when within-level analysis is the focus of the study (Gabriel et al., 2021). The results indicate that the final model compared with the null model explains 19% of the variance in deep existential acting, 12% in surface existential acting, 24% in cynicism, 16% in emotional exhaustion, 17% in

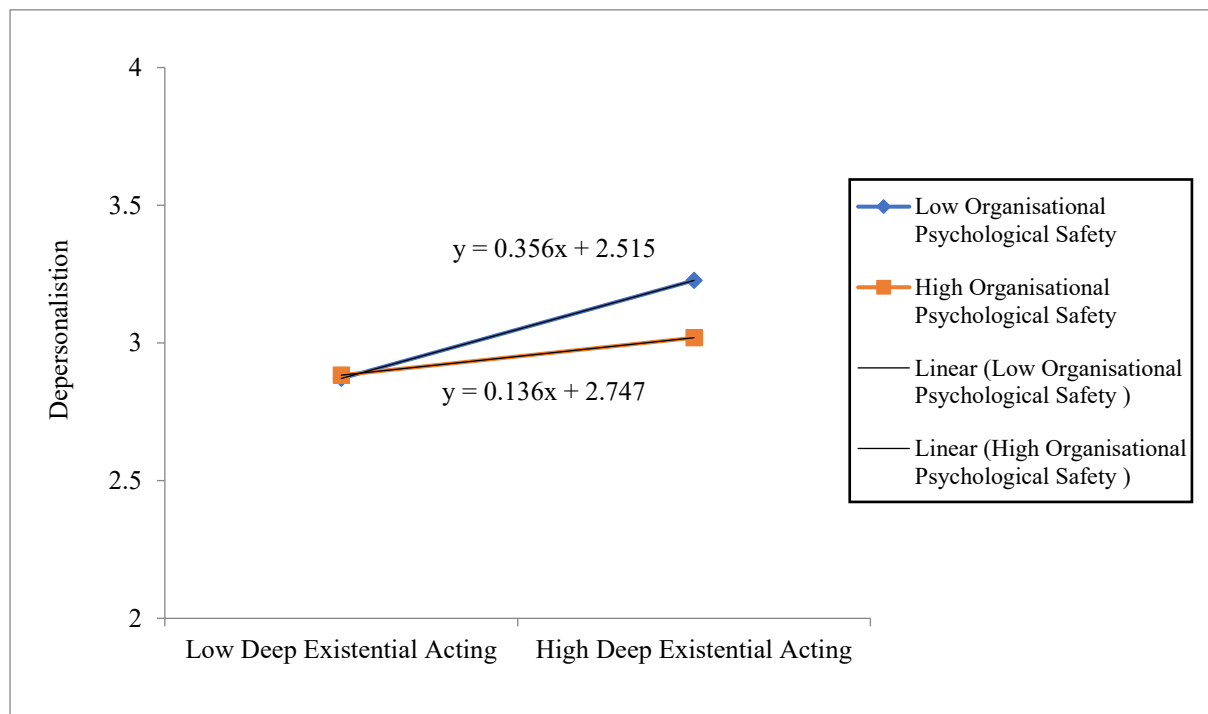


Figure 8-2. Moderating effect psychological safety on the relationship between weekly deep existential acting and weekly depersonalisation

depersonalisation and 20% in work alienation. However, the inclusion of the cross-level interaction effect explained an additional 0.6% incremental within-person variance in depersonalisation.

8.6.6 Additional Analysis: Examining the Interaction Effect of Deep Existential Acting and Organisational Psychological Safety on Depersonalisation

Multilevel Modelling (MLM) was used to investigate whether the interaction of deep existential acting and organisational psychological safety predicted levels of depersonalisation. The level of organisational psychological safety was Z-standardised across individuals. Deep existential acting was Z-standardised across observations and the scores varied in an individual across time. Simple slopes analyses were performed in R version 4.0.3 and multilevel models were estimated using the lmer4 package (Bates et al., 2015). MLM was used rather than traditional regression techniques because the multiple deep existential acting observations were clustered in individuals and if this nesting was not accounted for, the probability of committing a Type I error would increase and less efficient coefficients would be estimated. Models were estimated using restricted ML.

Adding the random slope for levels of deep existential acting across observations improved model fit for all models. Table 8-7 shows the models examining main effects, identical models were estimated that included the two-way interaction between levels of deep or surface existential acting and levels of organisational psychological safety. Each of the models controlled for gender, age, emotional dissonance, and negative affect. Following the models examining main effects, identical models were estimated that included the two-way interaction between levels of deep or surface existential acting and levels of organizational psychological safety. When probing the effects of any significant interactions, levels of deep or surface existential acting were considered the focal predictors and levels of organizational psychological safety was considered the moderator. Models with significant interactions were probed at the mean and +/- 1 standard deviations from the mean of the moderator. To assess conditional effects, simple slopes were compared to zero.

8.6.6.1 Results

The independent main effects of deep existential acting and organisational psychological safety on levels of depersonalisation were explored. As seen in Table 8.7, Model 1, participants with higher levels of deep existential acting had elevated levels of depersonalisation. Those with

higher levels of organisational psychological safety had lower levels of depersonalisation. The two-way interaction between deep existential acting and organisational psychological safety significantly predicted levels of depersonalisation when holding all else constant in Model 2 ($B=-0.080$, $SE=0.040$, $p=0.047$). To understand the conditional effects of the interaction, the simple slopes of deep existential acting on depersonalization were estimated at low (1 SD below the mean), moderate (at the mean), and high (1 SD above the mean) levels of organizational psychological safety (Figure 1). Participants with low ($B=0.414$, $SE=0.057$, $p<0.001$), moderate ($B=0.330$, $SE=0.043$, $p<0.001$), and high ($B=0.245$, $SE=0.060$, $p<0.001$) levels of organizational psychological safety who experience higher levels of deep existential acting had higher levels of depersonalization.

The cross-level interactions in Model 4 showed marginally significant effects. The independent main effects of surface existential acting and organisational psychological safety on levels of depersonalisation were explored. As seen in Model 3, participants with higher levels of surface existential acting had elevated levels of depersonalisation. Those with high organisational psychological safety had lower levels of depersonalisation. The two-way interaction between surface existential acting and organisational psychological safety did not significantly predict levels of depersonalisation when holding all else constant ($B=0.042$, $SE=0.033$, $p=0.210$; as seen in Table 8-7, Model 4).

Table 8 7. Interaction of deep and surface existential acting and organisational psychological safety predicts depersonalisation

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>			
	Depersonalization			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Deep Existential Acting (Z)	0.34*** (0.04)	0.33*** (0.04)		
Surface Existential Acting (Z)			0.28*** (0.04)	0.28*** (0.04)
Organizational Psychological Safety (Z)	-0.17* (0.08)	-0.20* (0.08)	-0.24** (0.08)	-0.22** (0.08)
Gender (Ref. Female vs Male)	-0.44** (0.15)	-0.45** (0.15)	-0.43** (0.14)	-0.43** (0.14)
Age	0.01 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)
Emotional Dissonance (Within level)	0.12*** (0.02)	0.12*** (0.02)	0.13*** (0.02)	0.13*** (0.02)
Negative Affect (Between level)	0.18**	0.17**	0.25***	0.25***

	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.06)	(0.06)
Deep Existential Acting (Z) X Organizational Psychological Safety (Z)		-0.08*		
		(0.04)		
Surface Existential Acting (Z) X Organizational Psychological Safety (Z)				0.02
				(0.03)
R^2 (Marginal)	0.212	0.220	0.239	0.236
<i>Random Effects</i>		<i>Variance Components</i>		
Person Level, τ_{00}^2	1.13*	1.14*	1.14*	1.13*
Observation Level, τ_{11}^2	0.19***	0.18***	0.12***	0.12***

Note: Unstandardized coefficients are presented with standard errors in parentheses from multilevel model regressions. The numbers (1) through (4) at the top of the table refers to statistical models 1 – 4. Z = Z-Standardized variable; *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001 (according to profile confidence interval for τ_{00}^2 and according to deviance test for τ_{11}^2)

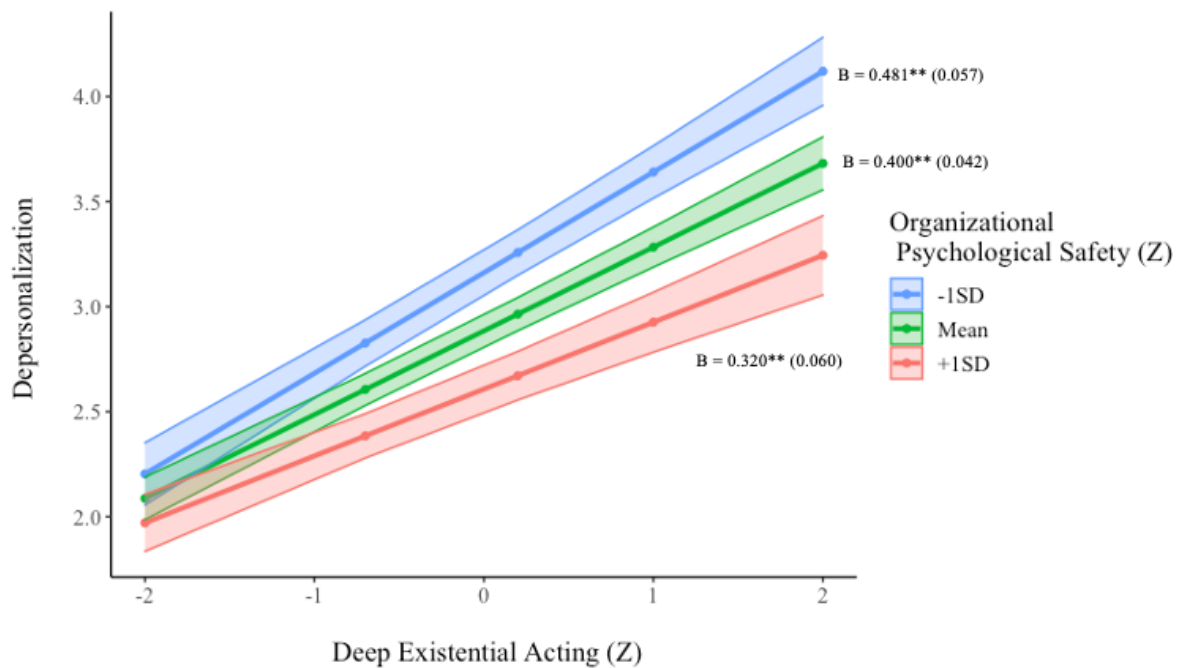


Figure 8-3. Depersonalisation as a function of deep existential acting and organisational psychological safety. Displays \hat{y} for each combination of x and moderator level and slopes are compared to zero; Z=Z-Standardised variable; *p<0.05; **p<0.01

8.7 Discussion and Conclusion

This study seeks to contribute to the construct validity of existential labour strategies. It contributes to the construct validity of MD and establishes external validity for the model of existential labour. Drawing from a weekly diary sample, MCFAs were conducted to confirm the multilevel factor structure of EXLM. Compared to the previous time-lagged design (Chapter 7), this design measured weekly versions of the EXLM. Through MCFAs, this yielded an excellent fit to the data. Best practice and recommendations were followed throughout the scale validation process and an independent sample was used for this study with previously measured outcomes to confirm construct and criterion validities, multilevel factor structure and the temporal nature of existential acting strategies.

Concerning criterion validity and external validity, the findings indicate that weekly existential labour strategies, both deep and surface, mediate the relationship between weekly MD and particular wellbeing outcomes. Deep existential acting had significant indirect effects on all proposed outcomes: emotional exhaustion, cynicism, depersonalisation and alienation. Controlling for factors such as weekly ED showed that the effects of MD on existential labour strategies existed beyond the significant effects of ED. Taken together, this suggests that the relationship between MD and wellbeing outcomes of cynicism, depersonalisation and alienation is mediated by two facets of existential labour. This is an important finding, as it helps to clarify how MD is related to alienation and indicators of burnout in meaningful work.

By investigating the moderating role of organisational psychological safety, the study sought to understand boundary conditions in an organisation that might reduce the negative effect of existential labour strategies. It proposed that the existence of organisational psychological safety – the perceived acceptance and safety for expressing felt opinions – varies between individuals. This construct was modelled on the psychological safety climate construct (Edmondson, 1999) as a perception that the organisation encourages interpersonal risks without social consequences. The findings indicate poor support for the role of organisational psychological safety as a moderator or a resource that could alleviate meaningfulness misfit. This was true for all relationships except for that between deep existential acting and depersonalisation (the burnout subscale). The fact that organisational psychological safety did not moderate the relationship between weekly MD and weekly acting strategies shows that MD is associated with deep and surface existential acting regardless of the psychological safety

perceived in the organisation; but if employees are engaging in deep existential acting, having a psychologically safe environment may help reduce depersonalisation.

Depersonalisation is manifested in uncaring responses and a callous attitude toward co-workers and others and it makes sense that having a psychologically safe environment would reduce feelings of depersonalisation (Fernet et al., 2013). The cross-level moderation of organisational psychological safety in this study supports the prediction that individuals who perceive psychological safety in their organisation experience weaker effects of deep existential acting on depersonalisation. However, this was not true for surface existential acting and depersonalisation. Such variations of psychological safety need to be further examined by integrating aspects of authenticity and dispositional traits of individuals (agreeableness) to truly measure the positive effect of organisational psychological safety.

The study demonstrates that weekly MD influence's the tendency to adopt weekly deep and surface existential acting which in turn leads to negative wellbeing outcomes, particularly alienation, cynicism and depersonalisation. The study identifies certain outcomes that are more significantly related to weekly deep existential acting than to surface existential acting. For example, it shows that outcomes such as emotional exhaustion are positively associated with MD only via deep existential acting and not surface existential acting. The influence of weekly deep existential acting on weekly negative outcomes was hypothesised to vary to the level of general organisational psychological safety; however, it is only valid for depersonalisation as psychological safety weakens the positive relationship between weekly deep existential acting and weekly depersonalisation. Not only do such findings provide external validity to the research, but they provide further evidence of the temporal nature and conceptual differences of both acting strategies. Finally, the study highlights the negative repercussions of MD. Organisations need to be aware that employees are not passive receivers of meaningfulness misfit in organisations as such discrepancies may have severe consequences on wellbeing over time.

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Chapter 9. General Discussion

The final chapter discusses and integrates the findings of the three studies. It begins with revisiting the research problem, a general summary of all the studies and their results, followed by a discussion of their theoretical and practical implications. The strengths and limitations of each study are discussed and potential avenues for future research are suggested. Finally, a conclusions segment is offered to summarise the overall aims and objectives of the thesis to a broader audience.

9.1 The Research Problem

Researchers have consistently found that meaningful work experience is associated with various positive benefits at multiple levels of work (May et al., 2004; Rosso et al., 2010; Steger et al., 2012). Some theorists have gone so far as to posit that the experience of meaningfulness is a fundamental human need, which makes studying the concept more compelling than ever, especially in an organisational setting (Bailey & Madden, 2017; Frankl, 1962). As demonstrated in the review of the literature, research on both the antecedents and consequences of meaningful work is maturing, but the understanding of how individuals experience meaningfulness in the context of organisationally mandated protocol remains limited (Bailey & Madden, 2017; Lips-Wiersma et al., 2015; Rosso et al., 2010). Misfit with meaningful work experiences need to be examined to understand how employees might cultivate counterproductive attitudes at work, such as cynicism and alienation due to organisationally mandated meaningfulness (Cartwright & Holmes, 2006).

The erosion of meaningful work is defined as the perceived lack of purpose or value at work (Bailey & Madden, 2019; Schnell & Hoffmann, 2020). In addition to representing one of the most significant segments of the modern workforce, research finds that those who do such work may be at an increased risk for adverse outcomes at work, including disengagement, lower commitment, and lower satisfaction, than workers who experience work as meaningful (Bailey & Madden, 2019; Steger et al., 2013). In addition, such adverse individual outcomes can negatively affect work-related wellbeing (Allan et al., 2019; Duran et al., 2018; Martela & Pessi, 2018). This thesis proposes that when individuals face incongruities (e.g. dissonance at work), work is likely to be perceived as less meaningful (Lips-Wiersma & Morris, 2009a). To compensate for the lack of meaningfulness and to ‘maintain meaningfulness’, employees may adopt deep or surface existential acting to alter or fake their perceptions of felt-meaningfulness at work respectively (Bailey et al., 2017a). Altering one's perceptions of the job to create a

stronger alignment between one’s sense of meaningfulness and the employer’s sense of meaningfulness could be undertaken through deep existential acting, specifically, an effortful strategy (Bailey et al., 2017a). This is simply because complete alteration versus momentary suppression of one’s true values is more effortful and cognitively demanding. As mentioned before, it encourages the loss of one’s self-concept over time (Bailey et al, 2018; Pugh et al, 2011).

Thus, the problem that necessitated this study may be summarised as follows: employees are often in situations where they experience organisational efforts as inauthentic and misaligned with what they find meaningful. As a result, they adopt existential strategies. Individuals who adopt such strategies may be more at risk for negative outcomes at work, such as burnout, and alienation, which can go on to negatively affect organisational outcomes. Despite its negative consequences, the understanding of how existential labour is experienced is limited and has not been operationalised. Table 9-1 illustrates the sequence of studies conducted throughout the thesis, along with its sample and results, which indicated hypotheses that have been supported or rejected.

9.2 Summary of Study Findings

Table 9-1. Summary of results

	List of Hypothesis as per Study	Study No.	Sample Used	Results
Stage 1	Step 1: Item Development for existential labour and MD Expert Validation (Chapter 6) Cognitive Interviews (Chapter 6)	Study 1	Pilot Sample (UK)=17+3 (Expert Reviewers)	Qualitative findings supported items developed.
Stage 2	Step 1: Exploratory Factor Analysis (Chapter 6)	Study 2	Sample 1 (UK)=258	Findings indicated 2-factor structure for existential labour and 1-Factor structure for MD. Resulted in a 10 item version of existential labour and 5-item version of MD.
	Step 2: Confirmatory Factor Analysis (Chapter 7) 10-item Measure for Ext. Labour 5 item Measure for MD	Study 3a	Sample 2 (UK)=304	Results indicated a good fit for both measures.
	Step 3: Convergent Validity (Chapter 7) H1a: P-O fit is highly negatively correlated with MD. H1b: Authenticity will be highly negatively correlated with both existential acting strategies i.e. deep and surface existential acting. Step 4: Discriminant Validity (Chapter 7) H2: (i)that emotional labour is distinct from existential labour, (ii) ED is distinct from MD.	Study 3b	Sample 2 (UK)=304	All hypotheses were supported for convergent and discriminant validity.

	<p>Step 5: Predictive Validity and Incremental Validity (Chapter 7) H3a deep existential acting at Time 1 which represents an alteration of meaningful work will be positively related to burnout and alienation at Time 3*</p> <p>H3b. Surface existential acting at Time 1 which represents the suppression of meaningful work will be positively related to burnout and alienation at Time 3*.</p> <p><i>*Time 3 variables were tested after a 4-week gap.</i></p>	Study 3c	<p>Sample 2 = 270 All participants were repeatedly tested across 4 weeks at three-time points, with a gap of 2 weeks.</p>	H3a was supported, and H3b was only partially supported as surface existential acting was only positively related to alienation and depersonalisation.
Stage 3	<p>Step 3: Testing the Scale in a Hypothesised Model (Chapter 7) SEM was conducted: MD in Time 1 Existential Labour Strategies in Time 2 Alienation in Time 3. H4a: Deep existential acting will mediate the relationship between MD and alienation and burnout. H4b: Surface existential acting will mediate the relationship between MD and alienation and burnout.</p>	Study 3d	<p>Sample 2 =270 across 3-time points. Each time point had a two-week gap.</p>	H4a was supported. H4b was rejected.
Stage 4	Weekly Diary Study (Chapter 8)	Study 4	<p>Sample 3= 2578 observations nested in 273 individuals.</p>	<p>H1a -H3a was supported. H3b was not supported only for the relationship between MD and emotional exhaustion as an outcome. H4a was rejected. H4b was supported only for the relationship between deep existential acting and depersonalisation.</p>

Guided by a review of the literature on meaningful work and emotional labour, this thesis aimed to investigate how and under which conditions MD leads to employee alienation, burnout and engagement. A research model was developed based on P-E fit theory linking MD (an indicator of a misfit) to negative well-being outcomes via existential labour strategies. The results support key premises offered by Bailey et al. (2007), thereby providing an initial base for future empirical and theoretical work on adopting existential labour strategies.

The findings from this thesis generally illustrate that a perceived lack of meaningful work has a multitude of negative effects through the concept of existential labour. Considering that fostering meaningful work in organisations has become an organisational imperative, employers need to prevent misconstrued notions of meaningful work which could be harmful. In other words, adopting strategies such as existential labour at work in order to ‘maintain meaningfulness’ is associated with negative attitudes such as cynicism, alienation and

depersonalisation. To inspect this further, a reliable and valid measure to assess existential labour in the workplace was created to assist researchers seeking to examine this important and under-researched area. Studies included three separate samples and demonstrated multi-wave data. The results presented herein support the psychometric properties of Existential Labour Measure (EXLM), as demonstrated by its good factor structure and internal consistency and by the minimal impact of method effects on responses to the EXLM. The results are consistent with the view that existential acting may have important implications for both organisations and employees. Based on the evidence presented in Chapters 6, 7 and 8, it is proposed that experience of existential labour is a fluctuating state-like construct that involves two related but distinct strategies: deep and surface existential acting. The finding that deep existential acting was found to be more strongly associated with negative wellbeing outcomes such as alienation, emotional exhaustion, cynicism and depersonalisation than surface existential acting suggests that alteration of one's sense of MAW is cognitively taxing and harmful to one's well-being. These findings have significant implications for theory and practice in terms of why and how employees experience a lack of meaningfulness and confirm MD as a stressor, prompting individuals to adopt existential labour as a coping mechanism.

9.3 Theoretical Implications

Meaningfulness dissonance and existential labour are two newly introduced constructs in this thesis. Reflecting on the findings of the thesis concerning the theoretical framework, several general modifications to the theories emerged, along with implications for future meaningful work theory. The next sub-sections will focus on the theoretical implications of meaningfulness dissonance and existential labour on meaningful work literature. Secondly, theoretical implications of investigating meaningfulness dissonance and P-E fit theory will be discussed, mainly to understand the potential negative repercussions of indulging in meaningfulness dissonance, as it signifies a misfit between one's individual sense of meaningfulness and prescribed sense of meaningfulness. Thirdly, the importance of studying existential labour as a new avenue for research will be explained and justified. In doing so, the multi-level nature of meaningful is highlighted, it also encourages studying meaningful work by taking a person-centered approach, as it is a highly individualised process. Finally, the theoretical implications of existential labour on well-being will be discussed. It also underscores the need for organizations to create healthy environments that support genuine experiences of meaningfulness at work.

9.3.1 Theoretical Contributions to Meaningful Work Literature

Firstly, this research supports the humanistic perspective of meaningful work by addressing the issue of management of meaning (Bailey & Madden, 2016; Bailey et al., 2018a). As the interest of the scholarly and business communities in the management of meaning has increased, this research contributes by questioning whether healthy outcomes for individuals and society are achieved when meaning becomes a form of normative control (Bailey & Madden, 2016; Schnell & Hoffmann, 2020). In so doing, it addresses concerns regarding the management of meaningfulness, such as when organisations prescribe meaningful work instead of employees authentically experiencing it. Such organisations not only control the emotional domains of employees by prescribing emotional displays at work but have control over the existential domain of employees by prescribing meaningfulness displays at work (Ashforth and Vaidyanath, 2002). By grasping the consequences of prescribed meaningfulness, this research confirms that ‘the management of meaning’ may reduce positive experiences at work (Lips-Wiersma & Morris, 2009).

This thesis also extends the classic psychological perspective of meaningful work by studying the erosion of meaningful work (Bailey & Madden, 2016; Bailey et al., 2018a) connecting important sources such as the organisation as a provider of meaningfulness. Previous studies have shown that meaningfulness is an important individual and organisational concern, but have not focused on the variants of meaningful work and the tensions associated with perceived meaningfulness (Kim & Beehr, 2018; May et al., 2004). Lack of meaningfulness is experienced as a result of multiple negative consequences; this thesis looks at the result of workers losing their sense of coherence in terms of desired meaningfulness. Findings confirm Sennet’s (1998) argument on modernism and lack of meaningfulness, i.e. loss of coherence leads to loss of one’s identity, breakdown in energy, loss of a sense of personal purpose and fulfilment (Bailey & Madden, 2019; Chadi et al., 2017).

Meaningfulness dissonance challenges the assumption that meaningful work can be standardised in organisations but instead, it is highly subjective and can vary among individuals based on their personal values, beliefs, and experiences. This highlights the importance of taking a person-centered approach to meaningful work, which recognizes the individuality of workers and the *need* to align their work with their personal sense of meaning. Secondly, meaningfulness dissonance demonstrates a critical perspective on meaningful work that

examines how organisational efforts can be misconstrued at work if there is perceived misfit. This is particularly relevant to employees who experience misfit due to dominant cultural narratives and organisational values that do not align with their own sense of personal meaning.

Along with establishing existential labour as a coping mechanism that is primarily negative, it sheds light on how such mechanisms are cognitively and psychologically harmful. This concept has significant theoretical implications for the literature on meaningful work in several ways: Firstly, it reframes the meaningfulness of work: Existential labour shifts the focus from external factors such as job characteristics to internal processes such as how individuals actively manage meaningful work. This reframing can help researchers better understand how individuals deal with tensions as suggested by Lips Wiersma et al., (2013). Secondly, Existential labour emphasizes the agency of individuals in creating meaning and purpose in their work. This highlights the importance of individual differences in the experience of meaningful work and suggests that interventions aimed at enhancing meaningfulness should take into account the unique characteristics and goals of each employee. Next, the concept of existential labour draws heavily from existential philosophy, which emphasizes the importance of personal choice and responsibility in creating meaning at work. By integrating this philosophical perspective, meaningful work literature can provide a more holistic understanding of the role of work in individuals' lives. More importantly, by addressing outcomes such as alienation and burnout from a within-level perspective, studies in this thesis contribute to understanding the importance of authentic expressions of meaningfulness (Bailey et al., 2017). Findings from Study 4 support and extend Vogel et al's (2019) proposition that the adverse effects of experiencing dissonance at work may be more important than the effects of perceiving fit.

9.3.2 Theoretical Contributions to P-E (Misfit) Theory

Predictions are made on one comprehensive theoretical framework, P-E fit theory, which combines both cognitive and affective approaches to explain topics surrounding stress between needs-supplies fit (Tong et al., 2015; Vogel et al., 2019). This research extends P-E misfit and stress theory in explaining coping reactions to MD to investigate existential labour strategies further. Whilst past research focuses on the negative consequences of misfit (Tong et al., 2015; Vogel et al., 2019), This research complements and extends previous P-E fit literature by showing the potential negative effects of employee MD as an indicator of misfit on employee wellbeing. The potential contribution of existential labour strategies as coping mechanisms to MD are highlighted in this studies 3 and 4. An opportunity for a more nuanced understanding

of the role of work meaningfulness is developed and demonstrated. (Scroggins, 2008; Vogel et al., 2019).

More specifically, P-E misfit, through the experience of MD and existential labour, was examined as a predictor of burnout and alienation. Despite the lack of evidence for any linkage (Grandey, 2000; Zapf et al., 2001), this thesis developed and empirically tested a model based on the ideas of P-E misfit and stress (Yang et al., 2009). By exploring the process of how meaningfulness manifested for people when perceived with dissonance, an understudied construct, this study explored the complex, multilevel, nuanced and tension-laden nature of meaningful work (Bailey et al., 2019). Consistent associations between MD and existential acting strategies complements previous propositions of using coping strategies to deal with P-E misfit, which posit that individuals react to dissonance by seeking to minimise discrepancies or misfit between personal and environmental characteristics (Edwards et al., 2006). Coping and defence, which are responses to stress to improve objective and subjective fit, are viewed as key outcomes of P-E misfit (Tong et al., 2015; Vogel et al., 2019; Yang et al., 2009). This research confirms the prior suggestion of existential labour as a likely response to deal with stress (Bailey et al., 2017). It is the first to conceptualise MD as an indication of misfit between one's sense of meaningfulness and the organisation. In doing so, it investigates an important antecedent of existential labour at the individual level. It also confirms the importance of considering supplementary fit between organisations and individuals with respect to meaningfulness, and how perceived lack of fit can lead to severe outcomes (Vogel et al., 2019).

9.3.3 Theoretical Contributions to New Avenues of Research – Existential labour

This leads to the third contribution of the study, the theoretical account by Bailey et al (2017) is advanced to explain the effects of deep and surface existential acting on employee wellbeing.

Using P-E theory, existential labour is identified as a cognitive-behavioural mechanism that links MD to employee wellbeing. It is portrayed as a cognitive-behavioural mechanism as some parts are also about subtle changes to outward behaviour to appear a certain way in the eyes of others (Hewlin, 2009). Throughout the studies in this thesis, of the two existential labour strategies, deep existential acting was consistently shown to be an underlying mechanism that explains the effects of MD on negative wellbeing. With surface existential acting, although most of the hypotheses were supported, the findings revealed a few inconsistencies. For example, Study 4 conducted across 12 weeks using a weekly diary design found significant

mediation effects of surface existential acting between MD and most well-being outcomes. However, it had no mediation effects between weekly MD and weekly emotional exhaustion. This suggests that surface existential acting does not adequately explain the relationship between MD and effort-related outcomes such as emotional exhaustion (Fernet et al., 2013).

Individuals who indulge in surface existential acting may not experience exhaustion at work in the same way as those who adopt deep existential acting. The weekly strain of deep existential acting accumulates in a way that reduces employee energy and engagement. This confirms earlier predictions by Bailey et al. (2017) who proposed that deep existential acting require considerable effort and energy compared to surface existential acting, leading to exhaustion and lack of enthusiasm at work.

That said, findings from Chapter 7- Study 3 differentiate existential acting from other acting strategies such as emotional acting. For example, although previous studies have posited deep acting as a positive strategy for emotional regulation (Holman et al., 2008; Mesmer-Magnus et al., 2012), this research elaborates on the negative consequences of deep and surface existential acting techniques (Hewlin, 2009). This is one of the most important contributions of this thesis, as it introduces and empirically tests acting strategies that are conceptually distinct from emotional labour. In Chapter 7, both existential acting strategies demonstrated incremental validity above that of emotional labour across all outcomes. These findings also support existing predictions of deep existential acting by Bailey et al. (2017), It is a congruent existential state, distinct from deep emotional acting. For example, what is meaningful to an individual is subjective, and profoundly felt and most likely leads to negative work attitudes (Lips-Wiersma & Morris, 2009; Schnell, 2011). Because of this, seeking to alter what is meaningful requires considerable effort that far exceeds the effort required to alter emotions.

From a methodological viewpoint, this research is the first to test and operationalise previous conceptual arguments about how existential labour strategies affect work-related well-being (Bailey et al., 2017a), by incorporating theory related to MD. By doing so, the research also highlights that both acting strategies need to be considered to fully capture the construct of existential labour. It also confirms that both MD and existential acting strategies can fluctuate over time, which extends research findings on the transient and fluctuating nature of meaningful work (Bailey & Madden, 2017; Bailey et al., 2018b; Fletcher et al., 2018). For example, a mismatch between organisational values and one's own sense of meaningfulness

fluctuates and has different influences on work outcomes depending on the coping strategy adopted. Overall, the theoretical model advanced by this thesis complements P-E fit theory, advances meaningful work theory and proposes that for employees experiencing MD, deep existential acting between the two existential acting strategies will lead to more severe negative outcomes.

9.3.4. Theoretical Contributions to Well-Being Literature

The four outcomes studied – alienation, cynicism, emotional exhaustion and depersonalisation – represent only a sampling of possible outcomes to which MD and existential acting should theoretically relate and the specific measures representing each category represent only a subset of possible measures of, for example, wellbeing. However, the purpose of this thesis was not to list all the outcomes with which existential labour should be related, but rather to use a subset of categories and measures to provide support for the criterion-related validity of existential labour. For example, MD was developed and validated to establish a theoretical antecedent of existential labour. Similarly, outcomes such as alienation and burnout factors were tested to elaborate on the negative repercussions of existential acting on employee wellbeing. More importantly, this thesis highlights worker alienation as one of the core outcomes of adopting existential labour. Findings from this thesis not only complement previous findings on alienation as a detriment to one's well-being but demonstrates how one might reach the stage of alienation at work within the context of lack of meaningful work. For example, findings from this thesis complement findings by Shantz et al. (2014) who proposed that employees with low levels of voice behaviours, person-job fit and meaningful work experienced alienation which, in turn, led to emotional exhaustion and depleted levels of well-being. Similarly, findings from this study confirm Nair and Vohra (2010) findings on lack of meaningfulness and alienation. More importantly, this thesis accentuates the issue of individuals not being able to express themselves authentically at work, that when individuals are unable to express oneself authentically at work, which is previously described as one of the strongest predictors of alienation at work (Nair & Vohra, 2010). Findings from the thesis also showcase a model of mechanisms that were previously derived through qualitative inquiries (Bailey, 2018; Bailey & Madden, 2019; Bailey et al., 2017a), the process of altering and modifying meaning is a deeply internalised process, quantifying these mechanisms such as existential labour systematically has helped explain the negative repercussions of managing meaningful work, leading to poor outcomes for well-being.

However, the thesis encourages researchers to examine other outcomes relevant to existential labour. For example, though OCB was measured for predictive validity in Study 3, studies that measure specific facets of helping behaviours (e.g. helping behaviours towards individuals (OCB-I), helping behaviours towards or leaders (OCB-O) would reveal how existential labour influences behaviours towards others at work (Bhatnagar & Aggarwal, 2020a). Not only are OCB highly relevant to organisations, but they also represent a different process. The enactment of OCB is an energising and activating process, in which employees enact discretionary efforts that promote the effectiveness of the organisation, it would be useful to understand if existential acting strategies would dampen such behaviours (Bhatnagar & Aggarwal, 2020a).

Finally, the research briefly demonstrates ‘under what conditions’ such coping mechanisms (i.e. deep and surface existential acting) are prone to negative outcomes. For example, a recent study found that individuals with higher positive evaluations of psychological safety were more likely to find their work meaningful (Frazier et al., 2017a; Loh et al., 2018), perhaps because the organisation provides the opportunity to express oneself without the fear of being rejected (Cheng et al., 2013; Luthans et al., 2008). Individuals who experience more conducive working environments may experience a better fit with the organisation’s values and culture. In contrast, those who experience negative evaluations and feel unsafe in the organisation perceive a lower fit and sense of meaningfulness and hence refrain from engaging in authentic expressions of meaningfulness (Bailey & Madden, 2019; Bailey et al., 2017a; Chadi et al., 2017; Mitra & Buzzanell, 2017).

To the author’s knowledge, this is the first study to identify organisational psychological safety as a moderator of the newly established relationship between deep existential acting and a subset of burnout. It indicates that general organisational psychological safety buffers the negative impact of weekly deep existential acting on depersonalisation. Previous work has shown that positive psychological climates such as management practices that support health or reward services moderate the strain of interpersonal behaviours with employees (Bakker & Sanz-Vergel, 2013; Grandey et al., 2013; Moideenkutty et al., 2001). However, the results from the thesis also show that organisational psychological safety buffers the strain of deep existential acting, not the strain from surface existential acting. This finding is inconsistent with previous psychological safety literature and emotional regulation models (Frazier et al., 2017)

which indicate a climate of authenticity (in this case, organisational psychological safety) decreases the need to adopt emotional faking strategies, as there is more perceived fit (Cheng et al., 2013).

That organisational psychological safety does not moderate most of the proposed relationships between existential acting strategies and wellbeing outcomes suggests that it is unique from emotional acting strategies, which have shown such buffering effects (Diefendorff et al., 2005; McCance et al., 2010). Misalignment and coping strategies adopted to maintain meaningfulness are associated with alienation, cynicism and emotional exhaustion regardless of the climate of psychological safety among workers. These findings have interesting implications for psychological safety and meaningful work literature as it accentuates the importance of embedded conformity or behavioural compliance in organisations.

Employees who perceive their organisations as psychologically safe and where their opinions are respected do not guarantee authentic meaningful work expressions. They may still adopt surface existential acting as they are expected to act as though they find interactions meaningful to fit in (Bailey et al., 2017a; Florian et al., 2019; Mitra & Buzzanell, 2017). This is because organisations have policies and practices that encourage employee voice and respect. However, this may not promote authentic expressions, as employees are expected to display organisationally desired behaviours and attitudes. This is in synchrony with the initial study of cognitive interviews presented in Chapter 6, where participants agreed that surface existential acting tendencies are a form of professionalism that they have to adapt to fit in, indicating that is an inevitable form of acting that would not necessarily have immediate adverse effects on wellbeing.

This could explain why psychological safety did not significantly moderate most of the hypothesised relationships between existential acting and well-being outcomes. For example, if employees are already adopting existential acting, general psychological safety perceived by individuals might increase the need to adopt surface existential acting to fit in with the organisation's safety culture even though this is not authentically felt. Institutionalised sharing such as meetings where people are encouraged by management to share negative emotions, express opinions and share feedback (McCance et al., 2010) may not have recovery effects (see Chapter 8), as these could promote new forms of meaningfulness regulation. This may be done by behavioural cues such as approving head nods, staying silent during new culture change

initiatives, or smiling through conversations instead of creating conflict or disagreement, also known as behavioural compliance (Ogbonna & Harris, 1998). With time this could lead to more callous and impersonal attitudes towards the organisation and co-workers (depersonalisation) (Bailey et al., 2018a).

More empirical research is needed to explore this argument and studies replicating the current model of existential labour with psychological safety climate along with other dispositional moderators, such as trait agreeableness would be useful. For example, although an psychologically safe environments promote employee voice where they are personally invested in the job, this does not necessarily imply that employees do not adopt existential acting or experience meaningfulness dissonance, other contextual factors in the work environment need to be investigated that could better explain how one could reduce engaging in existential acting. Moreover, traits like agreeableness and self-control are likely to influence the extent to which psychologically safe employees choose to enact existential acting (Bailey et al., 2017b).

9.4 Practical Implications

People continue to seek meaningful work and P-E fit theories provide a valuable tool for vocational psychologists, career counsellors and human resource specialists. They are often engaged with clients and employees in the process of discovering individual strengths and job requirement matches that increase the probability that a person will find meaningful work (Brandstätter et al., 2016; Vogel et al., 2019; Williamson et al., 2021). Consistent with the notion that existential acting threatens fundamental positive experiences of meaningfulness, which are said to be necessary conditions for employee wellbeing and performance, existential labour was related to lowered feelings of engagement at work, decreased wellbeing and more negative work attitudes (Bailey et al., 2018b). Results from Study 4 indicate that existential acting, particularly deep existential acting, has severe negative implications for individuals and organisations. For example, previous findings have indicated that burnout and feelings of alienation in the workplace are related to increased costs for the organisation in sick days and insurance costs (Fouché et al., 2017; Hobfoll et al., 2018; Lease et al., 2019).

Taken together, these results speak to the practical importance of studying existential labour, both for organisations and for individuals (Bailey et al., 2018b). Several implications for managerial and HRM practice arise from this investigation. First, HR professionals should consider if their organisations prescribe meaningfulness to their employees (Bailey et al.,

2017a). Cultural assessments within organisations can be conducted to assess if employees perceive a discrepancy between rhetoric and reality or view their managers as unreliable or untrustworthy, in such cases negative personal and organisational outcomes are inevitable (Bosch et al., 2018; Tong et al., 2015). Therefore, organisations keen to foster high levels of meaningfulness amongst their workforce should consider issues of authenticity and trust and how employees perceive attempts made by organisations to manage meaningful work. HR managers should consider how they can create a strong alignment between the aspirations of individual workers, their mundane experiences and organisational goals and ambitions. For example, leaders should focus on gathering insights via bi-weekly one-to-one meetings about their team's values and beliefs before creating any organisational mandate, to avoid experiences of meaningfulness dissonance.

Intervention measures in the organisation could be beneficial as proposed by Fletcher & Schofield (2019), meaningfulness interventions within organisations are beneficial in fostering meaningfulness without encouraging the risk of 'managing meaningfulness'. The use of focus groups or digital focus groups in these interventions provides a platform for employees to share their views and exchange experiences with fewer inhibitions, leading to positive outcomes such as sustained motivation (Fletcher & Schofield, 2019). Finally, it is important to consider the role of line managers and socio-political events when implementing meaningfulness interventions. HRM interventions can go a step further by considering the impact of flexible working due to COVID and its effects on experiencing meaningfulness. More specifically, organisations need to re-align their work design policies by considering what is truly meaningful to employees and encourages psychologically safe environments. For example, working from home may allow employees to feel more autonomous and perhaps discourages the need to indulge in existential labour.

Practitioners interested in increasing the well-being of their workforce can add modules on training such as authentic leadership to their development programmes and could launch user-friendly online well-being assessments (Tummers & Knies, 2014). This would enable managers to gauge and understand MD in the team and overall organisation to match their respective employees' preferences. For employees with increased MD, it would be helpful to know how they cope to prevent them from indulging in deep existential acting. In such cases, HR professionals may wish to consider putting in place support systems such as employee

assistance programmes to help with any apparent high levels of stress among the workforce and consider longer-term strategies to address the underlying causes. In particular, the role of the line manager is likely to be crucial in individuals' experience of meaningful work; ensuring that line managers are appropriately trained and developed to help employees find their work genuinely meaningful should be the cornerstone of a meaningfulness management strategy.

MD and EXLM developed and validated for this thesis can be used as a measurement and assessment tool to indicate inauthentic expressions of meaningful work amongst employees. The newly developed measure could be utilised in existing employee engagement surveys and pulse surveys etc. Shorter scales of existential labour may be useful in practice, more effort could be applied to further refine and consolidate the most significant items that could be used more easily by practitioners – e.g. work engagement has a 3-item scale for more applied use. Using the concepts of meaningfulness dissonance within employee engagement surveys to assess employee well-being is a priority for most organisations today, situating misfit and lack of meaningfulness as a reason for increased employee burnout is a powerful argument and can be leveraged to be measured more systematically within major consulting organisations such as Korn Ferry, Mckinsey, Mercer etc.

However, HR practitioners should note that even though meaningfulness is experienced by individuals in their work contexts, imposing notions of meaningfulness may be counterproductive and lead to negative well-being outcomes. HR professionals should consider the factors that are likely to give rise to forms of organisational acting such as reward systems that emphasise 'fitting in' and mechanistic structures and systems that allow little room for individual choice, voice and discretion and explore the extent to which these are true of their organisations. Top-down unit supervisors can influence meaningfulness among co-workers and could encourage voicing out opinions rather than focusing on impression management (Caza et al., 2018b; Hewlin, 2009). This could be implemented by educating and conducting leadership development initiatives and cognitive behavioural interviews amongst line managers to check their consistency in behaviours and encourage relational transparency with their employees or team.

Apart from a more designed fit between HR managers and employees, a change in organisational culture and climate that focuses on building a healthy workforce could also be communicated externally through public relations channels (Stollberger et al., 2020). If a

particular culture or work climate is shared externally, potential applicants could make informed decisions on whether to join such organisations in the sense of person-environment fit (Caplan, 1987; Yang et al., 2009). This way, public relations channels could be used as a means of expectation management by organisations targeting potential future applicants to confirm that meaningfulness would be fostered through different domains mainly ensuring that authenticity at work is key. Culture and diversity initiatives within organisations can expand their organisational culture surveys, by including meaningfulness dissonance as an indication of misfit between employees and the organisation. Gathering feedback from individuals and the management separately could help assess meaningfulness dissonance within organisations more objectively.

9.5 Limitations and Future Considerations

9.5.1 Limitations with regard to Research of P-E fit and Meaningful work

Despite the contribution of the findings reported in the thesis, some limitations should be acknowledged. Firstly, whilst the theory constitutes an extension of the P-E fit theory, the reported studies do not completely test all of the theoretical mechanisms that P-E fit theory proposes. This thesis focuses on the supplementary P-E fit components that focus on the importance of value congruence (Scroggins, 2008). More specifically, the literature on person-organisation (P-O) misfit, concerned with the incongruence between employee values and their organisation (Kristof-Brown & Guay, 2011), is particularly relevant to understanding the possibility of existential labour (Bailey et al., 2017b). This perspective suggests employee reactions to work are optimised when an organisation provides a match to employee values, desires and needs (needs-supplies fit, Edwards & Shipp, 2007), in this case, their sense of meaningfulness (Vogel et al., 2019).

As an organisation diverges from the employees' true sense of meaningfulness, detrimental outcomes are likely (Williamson et al., 2021). The more MD experienced by an individual, the less likely they are to experience positive effects at work. This thesis builds on this misalignment by exploring the role of psychological and cognitive mechanisms such as existential labour to explain how MD leads to reduced wellbeing. In focusing on subjective fit, other ways of assessing subjective P-E fit have not been explored as the aim of the thesis was to understand the most critical predictor of existential labour concerning perceived misfit with the organisation. However, future research should focus on incorporating fit perceptions of

peers such as line managers or leaders. Lips-Wiersma and Wright (2012) have theorized that social contexts and actors contribute to how individuals attribute meaning to their work. Through interacting with others and/or observing their behaviours, an individual obtains social cues that inform the purpose and value of his or her work (Peng et al., 2016). Thus, including leaders or line manager's perceptions of MD along with employee's perceptions of MD can be used to understand further interaction effects, i.e. if individuals perceive mis-fit due to social cues of mis-fit presented by their line manager or leaders.

Much of the extant literature favours the notion that meaning-making and the experience of meaningfulness is primarily a subjective and individual phenomenon and has thus emphasised the individual perspective of meaningful work (Bailey et al., 2019; Rosso et al., 2010). Given this study's findings regarding the impact of tensions experienced within one's workplace and their experience of meaningfulness, more theory is needed, including other-based, societal and community influences on the experience of meaningful work. Echoing Bailey and Madden's (2017) findings, a more sociologically-oriented theory may help fill this void in understanding the social nature of meaningful work by, for example, exploring the role of existential labour in different occupations, and considering the physical characteristics of the workplace. Both these aspects have may have different implications for understanding existential labour. Focusing on different occupations including stigmatised roles, could shed insight into the impact of existential labour on individuals cognitive load and well-being that do jobs that are perceived as stigmatised within society, perhaps existential labour is more frequently adopted in such contexts.

Since the onset of Covid-19, the physical characteristics of the workplace are taking different meanings and working from home is more common. Understanding if this would enable existential labour strategies would be an interesting avenue for research. Research findings reported in CIPD (2021) indicate that job location, including working time arrangements such as duration, scheduling and flexibility, as well as work intensity are important predictors of maintaining job quality (Findlay et al., 2021). All of these have different implications for intrinsic characteristics at work including meaningfulness, powerfulness, social support and fulfilment especially during COVID-19. Whilst some evidence indicates that working from home has been beneficial in maintaining autonomy, and flexibility in working hours, some indicate that it lacks aspects of social support and meaningfulness (Restubog et al., 2020b;

Zhang et al., 2020). Therefore, understanding how meaningfulness is managed within employees that have been remotely working or furloughed during such turbulent and insecure times would be useful to organisations and HRM practitioners that are focusing on employee well-being and development.

9.5.2 Limitations and Recommendations in Existential Labour Theory

Despite its relevance in today's organisations, empirical research on existential labour is surprisingly scarce and there is therefore considerable scope for further studies exploring how and under which circumstances the management of meaningfulness can lead to healthy or unhealthy outcomes for individuals and organisations. This section will outline limitations with respect to existential labour and explore recommendations for future studies.

Firstly, like most models, the research model is underspecified as the study does not exhaust all possible predictors of existential labour. The main goal was to provide an initial test of the relative effects of MD and existential acting on burnout and alienation. Future research should build on these findings by including additional stressors that affect meaning-making processes at work such as interpersonal conflict with supervisors and co-workers (Grandey et al., 2007; Lee et al., 2010). For example, having positive workplace relationships and contact with the beneficiaries of one's work may be particularly salient moderators (Grant, 2007). Research that unravels the potentially complex construct of existential labour along with interpersonal aspects of meaning-making at work is needed (Park, 2010).

Secondly, this study argues that the construct is significantly different from emotional acting in two ways: (i) by reiterating it as a negative state; and (ii) by focusing on the deeply internalised cognitive mechanisms that lead to alteration of meaning, values and purpose of an individual. For example, work alienation was positively associated with deep existential acting and negatively associated with deep emotional acting, suggesting that manipulation of emotions can create strong alignment between felt and displayed emotions, which could be personally rewarding. However, manipulation of meaningfulness is difficult and creates more discrepancies with one's authentic self (Bailey et al., 2017). However, more clarity is required in understanding meaningfulness display rules at work this could contribute to understanding which display rule leads to adopting a particular strategy. For example, if organisations expect employees to partake in and follow organisational culture change initiatives as a way to promote business objectives, which existential strategy would employees adopt as a response

to this change? Such distinctions could be explored through qualitative inquiries or event-based interventions before testing them quantitatively. The advantage of exploring this further directly answers calls as to the different meaningfulness display rules within organisations and how individuals perceive change-based initiatives within organisations. Therefore, further modifications to the measure of existential labour that are more specific to one's job (i.e. events at work) and that can be mapped onto meaningfulness display rules are encouraged.

Another limitation of existential labour as a construct is concerning its label and semantics- more research is needed to understand how individuals associate with the concept of existential labour, from the cognitive interviews it was evident that participants found it to be new and underexplored, however, they could immediately relate to the mechanism itself. Terms such as 'convince' and 'pretend' captured varying cognitive mechanisms of each existential acting strategy. For example, 'I have to convince myself that working in this organisation is personally meaningful to me' demonstrated deep existential acting and 'I often act like my work role is personally meaningful to me, to fulfil the requirements of my job' demonstrated surface existential acting. These findings indicated initial face validity for the newly developed scale. Although the construct of existential labour is a coping mechanism that individuals adopt when faced with meaningfulness dissonance, there might be some confusion as to what existentialism entails at a surface level. That said, according to Bailey et al. (2018) existential labour relates to some form of existentialism- the existence of the person as a free and responsible agent determining their development through acts of the will, and when individuals are not able to act according to their own will- this leads to existential labour, this explains the reason behind the label. This thesis follows the label of existential labour as it agrees with the propositions put forth by Bailey et colleagues (2018).

Concerning the development of the measure of existential labour, the initial scale validation was designed to differentiate between different existential labour sources but did not find any differences. Initially, two sub-dimensions were developed under each acting strategy: task-oriented or organisational existential labour. However, factor analysis indicated only two factors with each representing one main acting strategy and hence the possibility of two sub-dimensions of task and organisational-oriented items was rejected. The overlap of the task- and organisation-oriented items was expected as existential acting is a value-focused construct, in that such experiences transcend specific situations and refer to desirable end states or goals.

Experiencing meaningfulness is a constant process of searching and balancing the human need for meaning (Lips-Wiersma & Wright, 2012a; Vanhooren et al., 2016). Therefore, meaningful work is not always experienced through separate dimensions in one's job or organisation, but rather it is the relationship between these sources that leads to experiencing a sense of coherence and fulfilment (Allan et al., 2016; Bailey & Madden, 2017). Therefore, the two-factor structure of existential acting without sub-dimensions was retained and tested further for validity. CFA using a separate sample (Sample 2) further confirmed the two-factor structure (deep and surface existential acting). This finding contradicts Pratt and Ashforth (2008) but supports predictions by Lips-Wiersma (2013) that meaningful work is experienced as a combination of sources and any tension experienced in one source could affect one's sense of meaningful work negatively. Based on these theoretical and empirical considerations, a general ExLM at work was developed. It may be beneficial in future to differentiate the foci of the existential labour – peers, supervisors and subordinates. For example, one can examine the trickle-down effects of supervisor existential labour on subordinate existential labour and its effect on organisational performance. There is increasing evidence on focal rather than collective domains of meaningful work (Bailey et al., 2015; Lee & Ashforth, 1990; Lips-Wiersma & Wright, 2012b; Rosso et al., 2010). This indicates the value of investigating more specific sources of existential labour (Grandey et al., 2013).

Future research might extend this study by examining the different domains of existential labour at work: task, organisational, work units and co-workers (Lysova et al., 2018). It could determine, for example, what happens when the job and organisation decrease the need to alter or modify meaningful work, but interactions with the supervisor serve to increase them. Future studies need to focus on unravelling antecedents of deep and surface existential acting, perhaps antecedents that indicate when and how one would engage in deep versus surface existential acting. Given that deep existential acting is more harmful than surface existential acting, it would be useful to know if the enactment of deep existential acting may be encouraged or discouraged by different meaningfulness display rules or interactions with coworkers.

With regard to existential acting and its outcomes, there were quite a few unsupported hypotheses that may raise questions about its conceptual clarity. For example, whilst testing for predictive validity in Chapter 7, deep existential acting measured in Time 1 was found to have stronger effects on all tested outcomes (e.g. cynicism, emotional exhaustion, alienation

and engagement) in Time 3 except depersonalisation. Again, this finding reiterates the impact of deep existential acting on negative outcomes that focus on the loss of self and induced cognitive effort (i.e. emotional exhaustion). On the other hand, surface existential acting was found to have significant associations with depersonalisation and alienation. These results indicate that surface existential acting is associated with negative outcomes (depersonalisation and alienation) for individuals mainly due to the feeling of disconnection from their true selves (Bailey et al., 2018b), however, has non-significant associations with outcomes that focus on cognitive or emotional effort (i.e. emotional exhaustion and vigour (subdimension of work engagement)).

Another area that could establish clarity with existential labour strategies is studying the influence of contextual factors that could determine ‘under what conditions’ existential is more prominent. Although this study attempted to understand if having a psychologically safe environment would serve to moderate the negative impact of existential acting strategies, results showed poor support. This suggested that organisational psychological safety did not sufficiently explain the variation within existential acting and its outcomes. More research is needed to understand possible moderators of existential acting. Another moderator that could explain under what conditions existential labour is more conducive is exploring potential cross-domain buffering of support from supervisors on the effects of co-worker existential labour, or vice versa (Duffy et al., 2002).

Finally, although earlier research has to some degree been able to shed light on the link between existential labour and negative wellbeing (Kahn, 1990; Bailey et al., 2016), this research extends previous propositions of existential labour and studies the attitudinal antecedents, correlates and outcomes of the construct. There has been some research into the effects of meaningfulness management on overt and covert resistance (Bailey et al., 2018a; C. Bailey & Madden, 2019; Lips-Wiersma & Morris, 2009) but the potential significance of existential labour for both employers and employees has received less attention. This research diverts attention to the importance of this construct for employee wellbeing. The results demonstrate significant risks for both individuals and organisations raised by the inauthenticity inherent in existential labour and capture the risks associated with existential labour for individuals. However, more research is needed to understand particular organisational risks, focusing on

outcomes such as turnover and organisational costs and deviant behaviours (Fouché et al., 2017).

9.5.3 Methodological limitations

Along with certain theoretical limitations, some methodological limitations need to be addressed. The variables of interest are measured by self-perceptions consistent with the theoretical model. However, this approach increases the likelihood of common method variance as an explanation for the identified relationships. This limitation can be addressed in several ways. First, respondents' confidentiality was assured and their responses were sent directly to the researcher to reduce social desirability response biases. Second, the study in Chapter 8 controlled for within- and between-level factors that might spuriously increase relationships among the variables and conducted confirmatory factor analyses to provide evidence against the argument that the construct associations exist merely due to response biases. Third, while common method variance may increase the direct within-level associations (Hypotheses 1a-1c), it is less likely to explain the cross-level moderated relationship (Hypotheses 2b). Therefore, the cross-level interaction effect in the weekly field study further alleviates concerns regarding common method variance (CMV) since the existence of CMV tends to suppress the detection of cross-level interactions rather than promote it (Aguinis et al., 2013; Lahuis & Ferguson, 2009). Lastly, to reduce CMV, future studies could employ peer ratings of psychological safety in an attempt to replicate these findings.

Another limitation is concerning the unidimensionality of existential labour items. Unidimensional items need to cover all areas of the construct being measured, in this case, it is deep existential acting and surface existential acting. Items within these dimensions need to be clear, less ambiguous, without any double-barrelled sentences, or have any sense of error in terms of how it's phrased (Brown & Olivares, 2011). Measurement design should also consider how to reduce the opportunity for people to be socially desirable or consciously try to alter their scores.

However, since most items were conceptually derived from previously existing scales, there were certain restrictions as to how they were created. For example, *I often have to convince myself that my tasks at work have value and are significant to me*- as a deep existential item has some limitations as it has both "value" and "significant" in the same sentence. Both these terms have different meanings and associations, so when one might experience work having

value it might not be significant to the individual. However, it is important to note all items within the existential labour measure went through a systematic peer review process, and results from the review process were used to finalize items. For example, insights from subject matter experts were gathered before making decisions on items in the pooling phase. For example, having value and having significance could be perceived as the same experience. As a reference point- that particular item was derived from “*My work is meaningful and is significant to me*”(Prath & Ashforth, 2006). That said, future work should focus on creating clearer items without any double-barrelled phrases, this will help with the reliability of the responses and would avoid possible distortions.

Another recommendation for future research to overcome distortions due to self-report surveys and social desirability is utilising ipsative data instead of normative data. Forced response formats are more popular today, whereby respondents have to distribute a fixed number of points (specifically, 7) between three items according to the extent the items describe their preference for existential acting. This format is comparative in nature, here they can quantify their preferences by assigning more or less points to particular statements. This type of ipsative data can be analyzed and scored with the Thurstonian IRT model for graded comparisons, which enables proper scaling of psychological attributes to allow inter-individual comparisons (Brown & Maydeu-Olivares, 2011).

Secondly, the possibility of the variables having reversed or reciprocal causal patterns cannot be ruled out. The directionality of the proposed model and results are informed by established P-E fit and emotional labour theory and recent longitudinal data have supported this causal flow such that dissonance predicts subsequent strain and acting strategies and not the reverse (Hülshager, Langa, & Maier, 2010). Thus, while reciprocal effects are possible, the proposed model is consistent with current theories and evidence. The next step is to ensure the direction of the effects is replicated using the proposed model with longitudinal and within-person data. Although this proposition is theoretically useful, the results from this study suggest that moderators such as psychological safety need to be studied with more caution as the results did not demonstrate consistent effects with surface existential acting. It would be advisable to test organisational psychology safety through peer ratings or via different levels. Having such objective psychological safety measures would add to the understanding of conditions under which existential labour could vary.

Thirdly, the investigation was restricted to professionals in the UK without being industry-specific. This may be considered a strength in that it demonstrates existential labour strategies across a wide range of occupations. Using a UK-based sample was deemed appropriate from a scale validation perspective as the newly developed scale was tested and validated to support the generalisability in the UK. Future research should consider testing the measure using the translation approach, encouraging validation in different cultures in other countries and other industries (Wright et al., 2017). It would be interesting to understand the role of existential labour in the healthcare industry or any service sector as employees could experience 'double acting'. Double acting in this case would mean exploring individual's tendencies to adopt both existential and emotional labour at the same time as coping mechanisms of stress or dissonance. Whilst 'double acting' is possible across all work sectors and any interaction during work, it would be helpful to know whether specific occupations indulge in double faking more frequently than others.

Another methodological limitation concerns the cross-sectional nature of the data. Whilst Chapters 7 and 8 were able to investigate the effect of weekly changes of the study variables of interest in the respective week, the study design employed in Chapters 7 and 8 was cross-sectional in nature. Future studies could undertake a more fine-grained examination of whether the proposed interrelationships between weekly study variables also hold when using three or more measurement occasions in a week. Concerning Chapter 6, the triangulation method was used with different samples from the UK to determine the various relationships in the research to validate MD as an antecedent of existential labour but the data was obtained at a single time. The model would benefit from examining these relationships in a longitudinal study from employees who have just started their career and after six months or one year to capture changes more accurately.

The next methodological concern is the use of Prolific for finding participants for the studies. Although it has advantages considering the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic and restriction of access to organisations, it cannot solve potential problems of online surveys, particularly the issue of verifying identities and environment control. Future studies should replicate this research design in more controlled environments. Experimental studies by Allan et al.(2017) and Chadi et al.(2017) on meaningfulness has shown promising results in terms of internal validity and responses of participants were specifically monitored, making conclusions more

specific than a field study. For example, Allan et al.(2018) tested if prosocial interventions at work promoted meaningful work across three experimental studies with different samples. Study 3 involved a community based intervention examining if people use different ways of helping others, their behaviours were reported and recorded, this was then compared to behaviours reported in the control condition. It was found that individuals who helped others many times in a single day experienced greater gains in work meaningfulness over time (Allan et al., 2018). Such designs could be replicated to further understand if existential labour would be alleviated amongst those that perceived their work to be helping others.

Finally, in the field study reported in Chapter 8 closer examination of the correlation table shows elevated correlation coefficients ($r > .70$;) were registered between Level 1 variables which raises the question of whether multicollinearity exists. Despite recent research showing that multicollinearity does not bias fixed- and random-parameter estimates in MLM analyses several precautions were taken to eliminate the possibility of multicollinearity. Drawing from the only evidence of existential labour reported by Bailey et al. (2017), it is expected that high correlations would exist between the acting strategies, which indicates that existential labour could be tested as a higher-order construct. Similarly, there is a theoretical basis to expect a correlation between MD and existential acting, an association tested and observed in all the reported studies. The existence of a theoretical rationale for the magnitude and directionality of the observed correlations should therefore lower the possibility that multicollinearity represents an issue in the dataset reported in Chapter 8 (Xia & Yang, 2018). Second, all study variables were centred, which facilitates the interpretation of results and alleviates concerns regarding multicollinearity (Bell & Jones, 2015).

9.6 Conclusion

The findings of this research can be summed up in a single phrase ‘Strategies adopted to cope with meaningfulness dissonance are harmful to employees. Significantly, the data shows that engaging in existential acting strategies negatively impacts employees' well-being and sense of self at work. Given the nature of workforces and organisations today, one may argue that these findings are not surprising. The more the changes and insecurity around one’s job occur the more it is becoming difficult for employees to authentically experience meaningful work. Thus, organisations need to be aware that employees are no longer experiencing meaningfulness as passive receivers (Bailey & Madden, 2017), but are actively ‘managing’ their sense of

meaningfulness when required at work. According to current arguments around meaningful work literature, the alteration and suppression of meaningful work are problematic and need to be addressed (Bailey et al., 2017a; Thory, 2016; Vogel et al., 2019), as this disrupts the very essence of experiencing work as meaningful. The results of this thesis offer pressing evidence that the experience of meaningful work is susceptible to modification and alteration through ongoing external and self-validation of the work's worth and significance.

Building on Bailey et al.'s (2017) conceptualisation of existential labour, this study showed that the experience of meaningful work could be eroded when dissonance is experienced. From the scale validation studies, two related but distinct forms of existential labour were extracted: deep and surface existential acting. The supporting field studies illustrated that deep existential acting was associated with worse negative outcomes than surface existential acting, thus promoting the understanding of how complete alternation of values and purpose at work is harmful as it represents alternation of oneself at work, leading to burnout and alienation. This reiterates the importance of fostering and experiencing authentic MAW, as altering and modifying one's core values and beliefs is emotionally draining.

Furthermore, the field studies in the thesis supported Lips-Wiersma's (2013) proposition that meaningful work is essentially tensional and a fluid-like phenomenon. Experiences of meaningfulness and the lack of it can be intertwined within individuals, and meaningfulness is constantly constructed by individuals at work. Furthermore, the nature of existential labour strategies has been addressed in this thesis by testing it in a multilevel design, indicating that it fluctuates on a weekly basis and is a state-like construct akin to meaningfulness and emotional labour strategies. To test if certain contextual factors would buffer the negative effects of deep existential acting, general perceptions of organisational psychological safety were tested. Results indicated that positive organisational contexts such as having a psychologically safe environment, dampened the impact of deep existential acting on depersonalisation. Considering that depersonalisation represents toxic and callous attitudes at work (Fernet et al., 2013), this finding sheds insight into how organisations can promote employee voice and safe environments to mitigate the negative effects of deep existential acting.

Overall, organisations need to be careful when fostering MAW and this is best implemented when individuals do not experience MD. This thesis advances a theory-derived research model that has been replicated in three two field studies and shows that 'displaying' meaningfulness

compared to authentic expressions of meaningfulness is triggered by dissonance. Therefore existential labour represents an influential measure for organisations to use to prevent individuals from being alienated and burned out from work.

Chapter 10. References

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Chapter 11. Appendices

11.1 Appendix 1

Summary of Meaningful work conceptualisations by different authors: its development over time.

#	Definitions/conceptualisations	Measure validation: No of Items	Form/Nature of Meaningful work	Underlying Theory
1	Pratt and Ashforth(2003) further distinguish between meaningfulness in work, which arises from what one does (i.e., one's work role), and at work, which arises from being a part of something bigger (i.e., one's membership in a community or culture).	No measure developed for MAW and MIW. However, findings have used May et al.'s(2004) measure for MIW. For example: In work and At work (MIW, MAW) was measured using May et al.'s (2004) 3 item measure of MIW e.g., 'Over the past month, I work I did on my job was very important to me'. Other 3 items were developed drawing on Pratt & Ashforth's (2003) and Saks's (2011) construct of MAW e.g. My work is deemed valuable by the organisation, My work contributes to the success of the organisation, etc. (Fletcher, 2016).	This model has advanced other conceptual models of MW, by focusing on workplace relations, relational job design, so as to create prosocial impact. The focus of contextual influences in terms of job design, co-worker relations, person-organisation fit is high, suggesting the variant nature of MW.	Largely stems from Hackman & Oldham's JCM model. Turner and Tajfel's Social identity theory, Grant's prosocial impact.
2	Wrseizniuski(2003) defines meaning of work- as a dynamic experience, which is usually originates from a rich basis i.e. different situations at work, where	No measure developed. However, supported the CMWS by Lips-Wiersma.	Offers a tripartiate model to understanding people's orientations towards their work. MW is seen as flexible and prone to constant change. MW is not only shaped by one's individual attribution, or organisational factors, but by one's attempt to shape their	Job Crafting, Work seen as materialistic, calling or a career/life opportunity. Heavily influenced by Callings research.

	different meanings are created everyday.		jobs, so as to find it meaningful.	
3	May et al(2004). defines meaningfulness as "the value of a work goal or purpose, judged to the individual's own ideals or standards.	Six item measure was developed from Spreitzer(1995) and May(2003), the degree of meaning associated with work-related activities has been assessed.	Meaningfulness depicted as a psychological state, that enables work enrichment, personal growth and motivation, stable in nature, quantitative analysis has been carried out, to analyse the mediating influence of meaningfulness on important work outcomes.	Kahn's proposed antecedents of engagement: one of the strongest psychological condition. Hackman's and Oldham's JCM.
4	Rosso et al (2010) defines MW as dependant on one's direction of action(towards self or others) and one's underlying motive(agency or communion). It is a subjective experience, that generates some personal significance, almost suggesting that it has a self-serving purpose.	Theoretical-integrative model was developed. No key measurement technique developed, WAMI is based of these theoretical assumptions.	The integration of two perspectives are offered by Rosso i.e. individualistic and collective. Focuses on 4 main sources of MW and underlying mechanisms of MW. Sources included are the self, others, values, beliefs, worker centrality, the nature of these sources are malleable in nature. Similarly, the mechanisms involved also vary according to the individual's dispositional and situational factors.	The sources is a combination of all possible antecedents that have been reported in studies so far, where as mechanisms entailing authenticity, self efficacy, self-esteem, follow self-concordance. Identify affirmation, and self-transcendence.
5	Steger et al(2012) Emphasises on experiencing work as meaningful and serving a greater good found in research on calling (e.g., Dik, Eldridge).	The Work as Meaning Inventory(WAMI). Consisting of 10 items, each representing different 3 different components such as positive meaning, meaning making and greater good motivations.	The authors propose a multidimensional model of work as a subjectively meaningful experience consisting of experiencing positive meaning in work, sensing that work is a key avenue for making meaning,	Focuses of psychological empowerment, workplace spirituality and meaning in life, a more holistic approach.

<p>Being engaged in MW implies that work matters for its own sake an important, generative contribution to one's life.</p>		<p>and perceiving one's work to benefit some</p> <p>greater good. Even though there are multiple sources used to determine meaningful work, the nature of the research is primarily cross sectional, suggesting that meaningful work is relatively stable. The influence of context has been neglected within this definition.</p>
<p>6 Lips Wiersma(2013) defines MW as a subjective experience that is experienced as a whole, in a coherent manner. It involves satisfying the needs of the self, needs of others, the need of being as well the need of doing, the tensions within these dimensions is what established meaningfulness.</p>	<p>The comprehensive Involves 6 factors comprising of 28 items.</p> <p>This scale provides a multidimensional, process-oriented measure of meaningful work that captures the complexity of the construct. It measures the dimensions of "developing the inner self"; "unity with others"; "serving others" and "express- ing full potential" and the dynamic tensions between these through items on "being versus doing" and "self versus others." The scale also measures inspiration and it's relationship to the existential need to be real and grounded.</p>	<p>Multidimensional , Follows an extenstial perspective, where the individual is responsible for creating any meaning, focusing on self-determination theory and meaningful life in general. Theories of burnout and exhaustion are also given emphasis leading to burnout.</p> <p>qualitative, transient in nature. Prone to change according to different contexts. Lack of balance between the factors leads to loss of MW, adhering to the different needs leads to MW overtime. Targets the temporal nature of MW. More importantly offers the alternative perspective.</p>

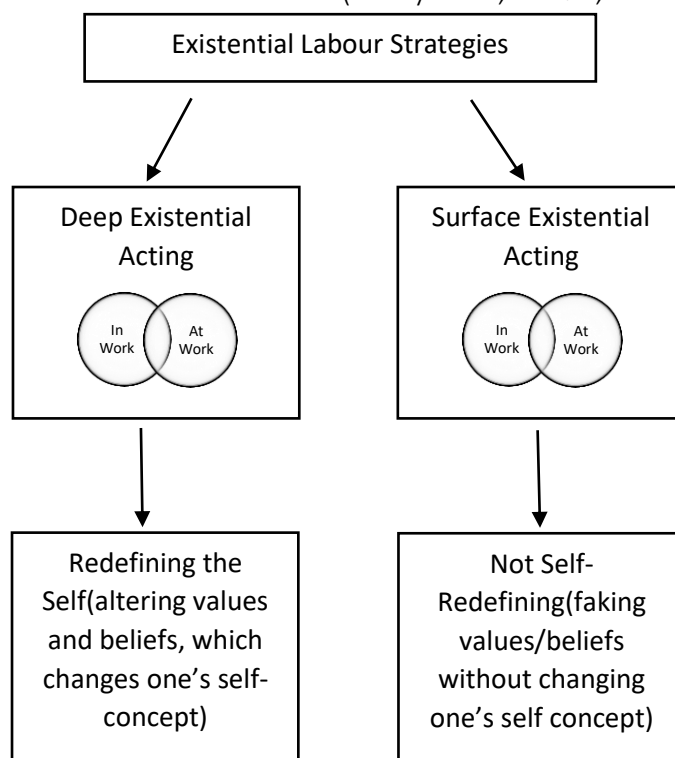
11.1.1. Glossary of terms

<p><i>Meaningful work</i></p>	<p>is work that its practitioners, through a particular work context, subjectively experience and determine to be positive, purposeful, and</p>
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	significant (e.g. Hackman & Oldham, 1975; Pratt & Ashforth, 2003).
<i>Meaningless work</i>	is work that its practitioners, through a particular work context, subjectively experience and determine to be negative, purposeless, and/or insignificant (e.g. May et al., 2004).
<i>Lack of Meaningfulness</i>	a sense of reduced meaningfulness which is connected with a feeling of disempowerment or disenfranchisement over their work and how work is done (Bailey & Madden, 2016)
<i>Meaningfulness Dissonance</i>	is the perceived discrepancy between one's own sense of meaningfulness versus organisationally desired sense of meaningfulness, this a product of lack of meaningfulness and misfit (Vogel et al., 2019) .
<i>Existential labour strategies</i>	when an individual adopts to their organisational demands by 'managing meaningfulness' via deep or surface existential acting strategies, in order to maintain their sense of purpose (Bailey et al, 2017).

11.2 Appendix 2 : Existential labour and MAW/MIW

Fig 3: Conceptual Model of Existential Labour(Bailey et al., 2017b; Obodaru, 2012)



Appendix 2.2- Differentiating Emotions and Meaningfulness

Emotions at work have been studied for decades, mainly to understand how employees manage them, it has been conceptualised as a dynamic and multifaceted construct, including feelings, expressive behaviour, and neurological/physiological changes (Bono et al., 2007) Research shows that using self-reported experienced feelings (e.g., felt compassion and sadness), behavioural indicators (e.g., observed aggression), and physiological indicators of emotion (e.g., heart rate) can work independently (Zapf & Holz, 2006). Typically in organisational behavioural research, self-reported (feelings) or observational (expressions) methods are used to measure emotion. As a result, emotions are mostly a response or a reaction to a stimulus or affective event (Gross & Levenson, 1997; Zapf & Holz, 2006).When considering emotions at work, there are organisationally desired emotions that need to be maintained; therefore, individuals must manage emotions based on display rules regardless of the stimuli or event, this often results in hiding emotions (Gross & Levenson, 1997)For example, at work, extreme emotional displays, i.e. anger or hysterical laughter, are considered undesirable (Zvobgo et al.,

2021). In this case, employees are expected to maintain and regulate their authentically felt emotions for the sake of adhering to display rules. As a result, both emotional labour and its regulation has received attention especially given evidence that inhibiting emotions is associated with acute negative affects, cardiovascular system activation (Gross & Levenson, 1997), stress, emotional exhaustion and physical symptoms such as headaches (Holman et al., 2008; Zapf et al., 1999).

Meaningfulness, on the other hand, focuses on one's sense of purpose in life and the amount of significance attached to it. According to Prath & Ashforth's (2003) theory, meaningfulness is ascribed to two sources (i.e. in work and at work) and employees identify and ascribe meanings with job/tasks differently compared to their organisation. Given that the amount of perceived or felt significance of something can vary greatly, a single work experience may be experienced as extremely meaningful by one individual and not very meaningful by another.

In this case, experiencing meaningfulness are not restricted to bodily or facial expressions, but these are internalised cognitive mechanisms that focus on one's sense of self, values, calling and belief (Rosso et al., 2010). Therefore, the lack of meaningfulness is associated with different outcomes such as worker alienation, loss of self-concept, lack of engagement, and lack of commitment. Typically in organisational behaviour, self-reported (subjective work experiences and attitudes) and other qualitative observational methods are used to measure meaningfulness. Similar to emotions, meaningfulness is also managed at work. However, unlike emotions, controlling one's sense of meaningfulness would require more resources as core beliefs and values require more cognitive resources to be managed and altered (Bailey et al., 2018a). Therefore, suggesting that it would be easier to fake emotions than to fake one's sense of meaningfulness (Bailey et al., 2017a).

Studies have shown that emotions and meaningfulness are two important and separate psychological mechanisms that are significant to managing one's wellbeing (Chadi et al., 2016). More specifically, experimental evidence on the disappearance of meaning at work has been shown to lead to more negative emotions such as disappointment, frustration and anger (Cartwright & Holmes, 2006; Chadi et al., 2016). In both cases, whether it be the management of emotions or meaningfulness, they are frequently regulated to cope with display rules at work, also known as emotional labour and existential labour, respectively. The commonalities between existential and emotional labour are that both are intra-psychological processes and

Chapter 3: Existential Labour and its theoretical underpinnings.

are induced due to organisational pressures and mandated protocols (Bailey et al., 2018b; Bailey & Madden, 2017). That said, existential labour goes beyond the scope of individuals' faking emotions'. It introduces a set of acting strategies that is more internalised, which are of paramount significance to one's deteriorating sense of purpose and self at work (Bailey et al., 2017b). To better understand the possible differences and similarities within existential and emotional labour, it would be worth to review the different acting strategies under each construct. The next segment will review the operationalisation of emotional and existential labour and its two main strategies (i.e. surface and deep acting).

11.3 Appendix 3: Hypotheses Overview

#		Sample	Chapter/Study	Rationale
1a	Authenticity at work will be highly negatively related to existential labour strategies	Sample 2	Tested in Chapter 7, Study 3b	To establish convergent validity for existential labour strategies, the hypothesis is presented in Chapter 3.
1b	P-O fit will be highly negatively related to meaningfulness dissonance	Sample 2	Tested in Chapter 7, Study 3b	To establish convergent validity for meaningfulness dissonance, hypothesis presented in Chapter 4.
2a	Emotional labour (i.e., deep acting and surface acting) and Emotional dissonance is distinct from existential labour (deep existential acting and surface existential acting).	Sample 2	Tested in Chapter 7, Study 3b	To establish discriminant validity for existential labour, hypothesis presented in Chapter 3.
2b	Emotional dissonance is distinct from meaningfulness dissonance	Sample 2	Tested in Chapter 7, Study 3b.	To establish discriminant validity for meaningfulness dissonance, hypothesis presented in Chapter 4.
3a	Deep existential acting will be positively related to Burnout and Alienation.	Sample 2	Tested in Chapter in 7, Study 3c.	To establish predictive validity of existential labour and alienaton/ burnout variables, hypotheses presented in Chapter 4
3b	Surface existential acting will be positively related to Burnout and Alienation.	Sample 2	Tested in Chapter in 7, Study 3c.	
4a	Deep existential acting will mediate the relationship between meaningfulness dissonance and alienation.	Sample 2	Tested in Chapter 7, Study 3d.	To test deep existential labour as a mediating mechanism as a part of the main conceptual model, presented in Chapter 4.
4b	Surface existential acting will mediate the relationship between meaningfulness dissonance and alienation.	Sample 2	Tested in Chapter 7, Study 3d.	To test surface existential acting as a mediating mechanism as a part of the main conceptual model, presented in Chapter 4.
1	Weekly MD will be positively associated with weekly negative wellbeing outcomes (cynicism, emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation and alienation).	Sample 3	Tested in Chapter 8, Study 4	To test within person effects of meaningfulness dissonance on negative well-being outcomes via existential labour strategies across the span of 12 weeks
2a	Weekly deep existential acting will be positively associated with negative wellbeing outcomes			

	(cynicism, emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation and alienation).			
2b	Weekly surface existential acting will be positively associated with negative wellbeing outcomes (cynicism, emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation and alienation).			
3a	Weekly deep existential acting will mediate the relationship between MD and negative wellbeing outcomes (cynicism, emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation and alienation).			
3b	Weekly surface existential acting will mediate the relationship between MD and negative wellbeing outcomes (cynicism, emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation and alienation).			
4a	Organisational psychological safety will moderate the positive relationship between MD and existential acting strategies, such that it would weaken the relationship between MD and existential acting strategies.	Sample 3	Tested in Chapter 8, Study 4	To test the moderating effect of a between-level variable- on the mediation of existential labour between meaningfulness dissonance and negative well-being outcomes. Cross-level moderation effects of org psychological safety is regressed on both pathways i.e. between MD and existential acting strategies and between existential acting strategies and negative well-being outcomes, hypotheses presented in Chapter 4.
4b	Organisational psychological safety will moderate the positive relationship between existential acting strategies and negative wellbeing outcomes (cynicism, emotional exhaustion,	Sample 3	Tested in Chapter 8, Study 4	

	depersonalisation and alienation) such that it would weaken the positive relationship between existential acting and negative outcomes.			
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11.4 Appendix 4: Data Collection and Ethical Consideration

11.4.1 Data Collection and Ethics Forms for Sample 1

Section 1 - Project details	
Project title:	Exploring the relationship between meaningful work experiences and employee negative outcomes: The role of existential labour and P-E fit.
SREC number (Office use only):	
Section 2 - Applicant details	
Name of researcher (applicant):	Lakshmi Chandrasekaran
Status (UG student / PG student / Staff):	PhD Student
Email address:	chandral@aston.ac.uk
Contact address:	[REDACTED] ge Street, Birmingham, B12JR
Contact telephone:	[REDACTED]
Section 3a – For Students only	
Student ID Number:	[REDACTED]
Course:	PhD in Work and Organisational Psychology
Module name and Number:	
Supervisor / Module Leader name(s):	Dr. Luke Fletcher, Dr. Wladislaw Rivkin, Dr. Mathew Carter
Section 3b – For Supervisors only	
Please agree with the following statements by placing an X in the appropriate boxes (if completing electronically, double click on the box and select 'checked').	
The student has read the Research Ethics guidelines and the University's Research Governance document	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
The topic merits further research	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
The student has the skills to carry out the research	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
The participant information sheet or leaflet is appropriate	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
The procedures for recruitment and obtaining informed consent are appropriate	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Comments from Supervisor:	I support this ethics application and have discussed the ethical implications with the student alongside our co-supervisors. We are satisfied that the student has fulfilled the necessary ethical consideration requirements to undertake this initial stage in their PhD data collection.
Section 4 - Summary of research (no more than 300 words)	

Chapter 5: Research Rationale, Philosophy and Methodology

The primary purpose of this research is to assess the psychometric properties of existential labour scale, which will be modified from previously established emotional labour scales. For further validation, the items within the scale will be analysed using cognitive interviewing. This is being carried out to examine the scale's predictive validity in a multi-level analysis study at a later stage. This research is being conducted because there is limited research on measuring existential labour amongst working professionals. In terms of understanding existential labour, it is a mechanism that is often experienced at work when organizational values and policies do not match with an employee's own sense of values or meaningfulness. As a result, employees adopt strategies and 'act as if' work is meaningful, or change their own sense of meaningfulness, values or beliefs to fit in. This leads to engaging in existential labor at work.

The aim of this study is to understand and improve how Existential Labor scale could be measured. We aim to do this via Cognitive interviewing, this technique would address questions like, what aspects of the items within the scale relate to psychological aspects of your work, do the items represent what you experience at work, are the items easy to comprehend? The following criteria is needed to be established while developing the construct of existential labour items: (i) simple, universally understood wording, (ii) one attribution (id per item),(iii) brief, (iv) free of age, gender and cultural biases,(v) free of double or implicit negatives, and (vi) avoidance of items likely to be endorsed by everyone or no one.

To achieve this a scale validation study will be carried out(Phase 1). The first step would involve cognitive interviewing which will be used to determine how well employees understand survey items, as well as to test new and modified survey items and different response options. The next step would involve confirmatory factor analysis and reliability analysis(this ethics application is strictly for the qualitative phase(cognitive interviewing)).

It is important to note, that all items used in this research have been adapted from reference scholars, and were published in the most renowned peer-reviewed journals (see below). Thus, providing assurance regarding compliance to ethical standards as well as the reliability and validity of the scale development.

In terms of ethical issues, before / during/ and after the research anonymity and confidentiality of the participants will be assured and maintained. Findings from the study will be used in the future for publication and other research purposes, but only after obtaining consent from the participants.

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Section 5 – Research protocols (no more than 300 words)

Chapter 5: Research Rationale, Philosophy and Methodology

Cognitive interviewing within this study requires participants that have a considerable amount of experience in an organization and is fluent with English language and are willing to dedicate time to understand and improve the measure of existential labour.

Participants recruited for cognitive interviewing would be mainly full-time working employees in UK and India. Participants would be recruited to address the items pooled for existential labour and answer certain questions about each item. Each interview would take 45 minutes. Participants in UK and India will be either approached through email/phone depending on availability. Each participant will be formally briefed on the study, and will be given an opportunity to sign a consent sheet.

If the participant opts to partake, each one will be contacted via email, to schedule an appointment for an interview. Each interview will last up to 30 mins, the participant could choose to interact via phone or video call. Interviews will be recorded for reference purposes, but only after the consent of the participant. Participants will be recruited through opportunity sampling please see attached invitation letter/participant information sheet (Appendix 1,2) this would include recruiting 20-30 participants per country i.e. India and UK. Participants will be aged between 25-50.

In the interview, participants will be instructed to read and understand the items presented in the questionnaire. Please find attached item list (Appendix 3). Following this, a set of probing questions will be administered based on the items, to understand the extent to how statements relate to the participant. Please find attached interview questions list (Appendix 4). The cognitive interviewing will be undertaken to explore the cognitive processes that employees use to answer survey questions and to identify items that are not well understood by them.

During the cognitive interviews, only the interviewer will be present. The interviews will be recorded. Findings from the cognitive interviews will be used to finalise items within the scale for further analysis. Analytic memos will be created based on the notes and digital record from the cognitive interviews. These memos will contain a summary of each employee's response to specific items and the investigator's impression of the quality of the survey question based on those responses. These memos would be coded into the following categories: a) no problem noted on the item, b) minor misunderstanding or problem, c) significant problems. The assignment of these codes will be supervised independently by a second or third reviewer to assure inter-rater reliability, without compromising any personal information about the participants.

Section 6 – Data protection (no more than 200 words)

The researcher has carefully consulted The Aston Research Ethics Application Guidelines and will thoroughly follow the set recommendations throughout the research process. According to the British Psychological Society (2009) code of conduct and ethical principle guidelines, all data will be completely anonymous to ensure strict confidentiality.



Any resulting reports will discuss only overall themes from the group of participants and in no way identify the participants themselves. Individual information will be kept confidential and only the results will be used for further research or publication purposes. If the participant is interested in accessing the research results in the future, they will be advised to contact the researcher for access options.

The information you provide will be kept anonymous and your name or identifying information will not be part of the results / data sheet. Consent forms signed by participants will be stored separately to the interview transcripts. For example, while approaching participants, their identity will be noted in form of a number and this identification number will be maintained during the course of the research. The company name, position of the employer, family background of the employee will not be addressed in the interviews.

Audio data will be removed from the audio device as soon as it is possible, encrypted, password protected and stored securely. Transcription will be carried out in a private space. All personal identification information will be removed or changed during transcription. When transcriptions are completed they will be handled with caution, stored in the secure location (separate hard disk) when not in use and the transcripts will only be accessible to the primary researcher. Digital copies of the files will be encrypted, password protected and stored securely.

References:

British Psychological Society. (2009). Code of Ethics and Conduct. Leicester, UK: British Psychological Society. ISBN: 978-1- 85433-495-4.
Bryman, A. (2015). *Social research methods*. Oxford University Press.

Section 12 – Signatories		
To be completed by the Principal Investigator / Lead Researcher / Supervisor / Module Leader / Research Group Convenor / Research Ethics Committee Chair as applicable		
Principal Investigator or Lead Researcher (where appropriate):	 Lakshmi Chandrasekaran	Date: 08/05/2019
Supervisor or Module Leader (where appropriate):	Dr. Luke Fletcher 	Date: 08/05/2019
Research Group Convenor (or nominee):		Date:
ABS Research Ethics Committee (Chair or nominee):		Date:

Participant Invitation



Asking the right questions: Can you help us?

As researchers within Aston Business School, we carry out social studies amongst various organisations to improve employee performance and well-being.

As a result, we need to make sure:

We ask the right questions and address current concerns of working individuals. Therefore, we require your help in improving the survey items. This will be done, via semi-structured interviews. No special knowledge is needed; however, your time and effort will be sincerely appreciated.

If you are interested in finding out more, please contact:

Lakshmi Chandrasekaran



Information sheet for Participants

Study title

Understanding Meaningful work and Existential labour: its effect on employee performance and well-being.

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide whether or not to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully.

What is the purpose of the study?

L.Chandrasekaran, PhD Thesis, Aston University 2022.

Chapter 5: Research Rationale, Philosophy and Methodology

The research focusses on Existential labor, which is a mechanism that is often experienced at work when organizational values and policies do not match with an employee's own sense of values or meaningfulness. The aim of this study is to understand and improve how Existential Labor scale could be measured. For example, what aspects of the items within the scale relate to psychological aspects of your work, do the items represent what you experience at work, are the items easy to comprehend would be addressed in the study.

Why have I been invited to participate?

This study requires participants that have a considerable amount of experience in an organization and are willing to dedicate time to the above-mentioned purpose. Please consider whether you meet these criteria before consenting to participate in the study.

Criteria includes being a full-time employee in an organization, employed for at least a year. **Do I have to take part?**

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

What will happen to me if I take part?

If you do opt to participate you will be contacted via email, to schedule an appointment for a semi-structured interview. Each interview will take up to 30-60 mins, you could choose to interact via phone or video call. Interviews will be recorded for reference purposes, but only after the consent of the participant.

If you decide to rather not participate in the study at any point, you will not be further contacted. Even though most of the communication is through mails, your names and personal information will not be recorded during interviews. Your responses to the questions will only be used for the purpose of this project.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

The study is an initial phase needed for further analysis, these semi structured interviews would possibly help in validating a new measure for existential labour, hence this would be a novel construct and research area that you would be contributing to. Improving the measurement and validity of existential

Chapter 5: Research Rationale, Philosophy and Methodology

labour can have a positive impact on intervention strategies and, consequently, is of vital importance for researchers and society.

What if I want to withdraw from the study later?

You are entitled to withdraw your data at any point following your participation in the study.

Confidentiality and Data Protection

The University takes its obligations under data and privacy law seriously and complies with its Data Protection Policies and Procedures, its Record Management Policy and Procedures and the University's Information Security Policy. Moreover, all data generated by the research study will be retained in accordance with the University's policy on Academic Integrity. The University will also ensure that the data that is collected as part of the research study will be kept confidential and will only be used for the purposes of the research study.

[If data is anonymised – for the purposes of the research study, the data that will be obtained will be anonymised. This means that you will not be able to be identified from the information that is produced from the study. Explanation required of where the data will be stored e.g. the Economic and Social Data Services or the UK Data Archive]

[If data is pseudonymised – for the purposes of the research study, the data that will be obtained will be pseudonymised. This means that the personal data you provide will be replaced with a pseudonym i.e. a value of a code which does not allow your data to be directly identified. The University, in accordance with data and privacy law, will ensure that the personal data provided is stored separately to the pseudonymised data and, in accordance with its Information Security Policy, will ensure that appropriate measures are adopted to ensure data is stored securely. Explanation required of where the data will be stored e.g. the Economic and Social Data Services or the UK Data Archive]

[If personal data is used – the University will comply with its obligations under data and privacy laws and ensure that relevant consents are obtained and that it stores personal data in accordance with its policies and procedures. Explanation required of where the data will be stored e.g. the Economic and Social Data Services or the UK Data Archive]

Chapter 5: Research Rationale, Philosophy and Methodology

What should I do if I want to take part?

Please indicate via mail, that you would like to participate and kindly sign in attached consent form.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

Individual information will be kept confidential and will be used for further research or publication purposes. This is an initial phase that will be used to support further analysis. If you are interested in accessing the results in the future, it is advised to contact the primary researcher- Lakshmi Chandrasekaran, chandral@aston.ac.uk for access options.

The information you provide will be kept anonymous and your name or identifying information will not be part of the results / data sheet. The consent forms signed by you will be stored separately to the interview transcripts.

Who is organising and funding the research?

This research is led by a team within the Work and Organisational Psychology department of Aston Business School, Aston University. The primary researcher will be managing the research and will have access to the data.

Who has reviewed the study?

The research has been approved by the University Research Ethics Committee, Aston University.

Contact for Further Information

If you have any other questions do not hesitate to contact the primary researcher- Lakshmi Chandrasekaran- chandral@aston.ac.uk.

If you have any issues in the way in which the study has been conducted, kindly contact the Secretary of the Aston Business School Research Ethics Committee on: s.ahmed108@aston.ac.uk or abs_aarm@aston.ac.uk.

Sincerely thank you for reading the information above.

Date: 13/05/2019

Aston University takes its obligations under data and privacy law seriously and complies with the General Data Protection Regulation ("GDPR") and the Data Protection Act 2018 ("DPA"). Aston University is the sponsor for this study based in the United Kingdom. We will be using information from

Chapter 5: Research Rationale, Philosophy and Methodology

you in order to undertake this study. Aston University will process your personal data in order to register you as a participant and to manage your participation in the study. It will process your personal data on the grounds that it is necessary for the performance of a task carried out in the public interest (GDPR Article 6(1)(e)). Aston University may process special categories of data about you which includes details about your health. Aston University will process this data on the grounds that it is necessary for statistical or research purposes (GDPR Article 9(2)(j)). . Aston University will keep identifiable information about you for 6 years after the study has finished.

Your rights to access, change or move your information are limited, as we need to manage your information in specific ways in order for the research to be reliable and accurate. If you withdraw from the study, we will keep the information about you that we have already obtained. To safeguard your rights, we will use the minimum personally identifiable information possible. Individual studies may provide you with a time period after taking part in the study where you are able to withdraw data that has not been anonymised. This time period will be specified in the participant information sheet for the study.

You can find out more about how we use your information at

www.aston.ac.uk/dataprotection or by contacting our Data Protection Officer at dp_officer@aston.ac.uk.

If you wish to raise a complaint on how we have handled your personal data, you can contact our Data Protection Officer who will investigate the matter. If you are not satisfied with our response or believe we are processing your personal data in a way that is not lawful you can complain to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO).



Consent form

Chapter 5: Research Rationale, Philosophy and Methodology

Informed Consent:

Project Title: Exploring Meaningful work and Existential Labour: its effect on employee performance and well-being.

Lead by:

Lakshmi Chandrasekaran

PhD Researcher

Work and Organisational Psychology Aston Business School chandral@aston.ac.uk

I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving reason.

Chapter 5: Research Rationale, Philosophy and Methodology

I agree to take part in the above study.

Please tick box

Yes

No

I agree to the interview consultation being audio recorded

I agree to the use of anonymised quotes in publications

I agree that my data gathered in this study may be stored (after it has been anonymised) in a specialist data centre and may be used by other researchers than the current research team for future research.

Chapter 5: Research Rationale, Philosophy and Methodology

Name of Participant

Date

Signature

Items List

Kindly have a look at the following statements the and indicate if the statements are relatable to situations at your workplace:

1. In order to meet the needs of my organisation, I try to actually experience my work as meaningful.
2. In order to meet the expectations of my organisation, I make an effort to actually feel a sense of meaningfulness in my work.
3. I work hard to experience meaningfulness in the organisation I work at.
4. In order to meet the demands of the organisation, I work at developing a sense of meaningfulness inside of me.
5. I put on an 'act' that my work is meaningful to deal with organisational demands in an appropriate way.
6. I fake a sense that my work is meaningful when interacting with employees and customers.
7. I put on a 'show' that my work is meaningful when interacting with employees and customers.
8. I just pretend to experience a level of meaningfulness that I need to display for my job.
9. I put on a 'mask' in order to display the meaningful work experiences I need for my job.
10. I experience my work as meaningful in order to fit in, but this is different from what I personally believe is meaningful.
11. I fake that my experiences of work are meaningful
12. The meaningfulness that I experience in my organisation is genuine.
13. The experiences of work that I express as being meaningful are felt naturally
14. The experiences of meaningful work that I express as being meaningful match what I spontaneously believe to be meaningful to me.

Interview Questions

Interview Questions(For Interviewer Use only) :

Interview Script

Chapter 5: Research Rationale, Philosophy and Methodology

My name is Lakshmi and I'm a researcher from Aston University

Before we start, I just want to explain what we are doing here today. As we said in the letter, is preparing for a new survey, but before we start, we are testing out some of the statements.

INTERVIEW: THINK-ALOUD and SELF COMPLETION

When I read out the statement, I want you to say, out loud, the thoughts that come into your mind. Also, please fill in to what extent you agree or disagree with the statement. when you hear the statement – just say out loud whatever you are thinking.

(do a demonstration, or get them to practice thinking aloud).

Start Voice recorder- After Consent from Participant.

Adapted from Willis, G. B., & Artino Jr, A. R. (2013). What do our respondents think we're asking? Using cognitive interviewing to improve medical education surveys. *Journal of graduate medical education*, 5(3), 353-356.

Comprehension probes

- What does meaningfulness mean to you?
- In your words, what is meaningful work?

Recall / Judgment probes

- How would you rate this particular statement?
- Did you have a particular time period in mind?
- How did you calculate your answer?

Response probes

- How did you feel about answering this question?
- Did you find this question embarrassing to answer? *
- Do you think some people might find this question too personal?
- Did you have any difficulty selecting the appropriate answer category?

Confidence judgment probes

L.Chandrasekaran, PhD Thesis, Aston University 2022.

Chapter 5: Research Rationale, Philosophy and Methodology

- How well do you remember this? *
- How sure of your answer are you? *

De-Briefing Letter

Dearest Participant,

I would like to sincerely thank you for participating in the interview held recently, I understand that it is difficult to answer these types of questions, and your generosity and willingness to participate in this study are greatly appreciated. Your input will help contribute to the advancement of the field of meaningful work.

We would ask you to maintain confidentiality about the purpose of the research since any pre-knowledge of the purpose will bias the data for that person and thus cannot be used.

This study has been granted clearance according to the recommended principles of ABS ethics research committee. If you have any complaints, concerns, or questions about this research, please feel free to contact, Lakshmi Chandrasekaran at chandral@aston.ac.uk. Any ethical concerns about the study may be directed to the Aston Business School

Research Ethics Committee on s.ahmed108@aston.ac.uk or abs_aarm@aston.ac.uk.

If you are interested in this area of research, you may wish to read the following reference:

Bailey, C., Madden, A., Alfes, K., Shantz, A., & Soane, E. (2017). The mismanaged soul:

Existential labor and the erosion of meaningful work. *Human Resource Management*

Review, 27(3), 416–430. <https://doi.org/10.1016/J.HRMR.2016.11.001>

Thank you very much for participating!

Best,

Lakshmi Chandrasekaran

11.5 Appendix 5: Sample 2 Data Collection and Supporting Documents

11.5.1 Information sheet for Participants

Study title

Understanding Meaningful work and Existential labour: its effect on employee performance and well-being.

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide whether or not to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully.

What is the purpose of the study?

The research focusses on Existential labor, which is a mechanism that is often experienced at work when organizational values and policies do not match with an employee's own sense of values or meaningfulness. The aim of this study is to understand the effect of meaningful work on well-being outcomes.

Why have I been invited to participate?

This study requires participants that have a considerable amount of experience in an organization and are willing to dedicate time to the above-mentioned purpose. Please consider whether you meet these criteria before consenting to participate in the study.

Do I have to take part?

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

What will happen to me if I take part?

If you decide to partake, a link will be sent to you via Prolific which will then lead you to the surveys. Prolific is an online sourcing platform that allows participants to respond to surveys, where the participant will be paid after completion. Each survey will take upto 15 mins, and each participant will have to complete three surveys within a span of month. The participant will be reminded as and when necessary. After completion of the three surveys the participants will be paid an amount of 6 pounds.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

The study is aiming to operationalise a new measure, hence this would be a novel construct and research area that you would be contributing to. Improving the measurement and validity of existential labour can have a positive impact on intervention strategies and, consequently, is of vital importance for researchers and society.

What if I want to withdraw from the study later?

You are entitled to withdraw your data at any point following your participation in the study.

Confidentiality and Data Protection

The University takes its obligations under data and privacy law seriously and complies with its Data Protection Policies and Procedures, its Record Management Policy and Procedures and the University's Information Security Policy. Moreover, all data generated by the research study will be retained in accordance with the University's policy on Academic Integrity. The University will also ensure that the data that is collected as part of the research study will be kept confidential and will only be used for the purposes of the research study.

[If data is anonymised – for the purposes of the research study, the data that will be obtained will be anonymised. This means that you will not be able to be identified from the information that is produced from the study. Explanation required of where the data will be stored e.g. the Economic and Social Data Services or the UK Data Archive]

[If data is pseudonymised – for the purposes of the research study, the data that will be obtained will be pseudonymised. This means that the personal data you provide will be replaced with a pseudonym i.e. a value of a code which does not allow your data to be directly identified. The University, in accordance with data and privacy law, will ensure that the personal data provided is stored separately to the pseudonymised data and, In accordance with its Information Security Policy, will ensure that appropriate measures are adopted to ensure data is stored securely. Explanation required of where the data will be stored e.g. the Economic and Social Data Services or the UK Data Archive]

[If personal data is used – the University will comply with its obligations under data and privacy laws and ensure that relevant consents are obtained and that it stores personal data in accordance with its policies and procedures. Explanation required of where the data will be stored e.g. the Economic and Social Data Services or the UK Data Archive]

What should I do if I want to take part?

Please indicate your participation by accepting the conditions in the consent form.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

Individual information will be kept confidential and will be used for further research or publication purposes. This is an initial phase that will be used to support further analysis. If you are interested in accessing the results in the future, it is advised to contact the primary researcher- Lakshmi Chandrasekaran, chandral@aston.ac.uk for access options.

The information you provide will be kept anonymous and your name or identifying information will not be part of the results / data sheet. The consent forms signed by you will be stored separately to the interview transcripts.

Who is organising and funding the research?

Chapter 5: Research Rationale, Philosophy and Methodology

This research is led by a team within the Work and Organisational Psychology department of Aston Business School, Aston University. The primary researcher will be managing the research and will have access to the data.

Who has reviewed the study?

The research has been approved by the University Research Ethics Committee, Aston University.

Contact for Further Information

If you have any other questions do not hesitate to contact the primary researcher- Lakshmi Chandrasekaran- chandral@aston.ac.uk.

If you have any issues in the way in which the study has been conducted, kindly contact the Secretary of the Aston Business School Research Ethics Committee on: s.ahmed108@aston.ac.uk or abs_aarm@aston.ac.uk.

Sincerely thank you for reading the information above.

Date: 28/10/2019

Aston University takes its obligations under data and privacy law seriously and complies with the General Data Protection Regulation (“GDPR”) and the Data Protection Act 2018 (“DPA”). Aston University is the sponsor for this study based in the United Kingdom. We will be using information from you in order to undertake this study. Aston University will process your personal data in order to register you as a participant and to manage your participation in the study. It will process your personal data on the grounds that it is necessary for the performance of a task carried out in the public interest (GDPR Article 6(1)(e)). Aston University may process special categories of data about you which includes details about your health. Aston University will process this data on the grounds that it is necessary for statistical or research purposes (GDPR Article 9(2)(j)). . Aston University will keep identifiable information about you for 6 years after the study has finished.

Your rights to access, change or move your information are limited, as we need to manage your information in specific ways in order for the research to be reliable and accurate. If you

Chapter 5: Research Rationale, Philosophy and Methodology

withdraw from the study, we will keep the information about you that we have already obtained. To safeguard your rights, we will use the minimum personally identifiable information possible. Individual studies may provide you with a time period after taking part in the study where you are able to withdraw data that has not been anonymised. This time period will be specified in the participant information sheet for the study.

You can find out more about how we use your information at www.aston.ac.uk/dataprotection or by contacting our Data Protection Officer at dp_officer@aston.ac.uk.

If you wish to raise a complaint on how we have handled your personal data, you can contact our Data Protection Officer who will investigate the matter. If you are not satisfied with our response or believe we are processing your personal data in a way that is not lawful you can complain to the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO).

Chapter 5: Research Rationale, Philosophy and Methodology

Consent form

Informed Consent:



Project Title: Exploring Meaningful work and Existential Labour: its effect on employee performance and well-being.

Lead by:

Lakshmi Chandrasekaran

PhD Researcher

Work and Organisational Psychology

Aston Business School

chandra@aston.ac.uk

Please initial b

I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving reason.

I agree to take part in the above study.

11.5.2 Survey Items

Hello Participants!

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this research project about Meaningful Work in Organizations conducted by researchers in Aston Business School.

Chapter 5: Research Rationale, Philosophy and Methodology

Please note, there are no right or wrong answers, and instead we encourage you to complete the survey honestly. The survey should take approximately 20 minutes to complete. Your participation, is completely anonymous and confidential.

If you have any queries regarding this research, please get in touch with a member of the research team:

Lakshmi Chandrasekaran:

11.5.3 List Of Measures:

1. Meaningfulness In Work and Meaningfulness at Work(May et al's(2004) and (Pratt and Ashforth's(2003) and Saks's(2011)(6-items). 8
2. Person Organisation Fit(Saks and Ashforth, 1997; Cable and Judge, 1996)(5-items) 8
3. Person-Job Fit (D-A/ N-S)(Cable and Judge, 1996) 9
 - 3.1. Demands and Abilities Fit(4-items) 9
 - 3.2. Needs-Supplies Fit (4-items) 10
4. Emotional Dissonance(Frankfurt Emotion work Scale)(6-items) 10
5. Emotional Labour Scales (Diefendorv, Croyle, & Gosserand(2005)) 11
 - 5.1. Deep Acting(4-items) 11
 - 5.2. Surface Acting(4-items) 11
6. Burnout Items(MBI Inventory) 12
 - 6.1. Burnout and Anxiety(7-items) 12
 - 6.2. Depersonalisation(7-items) 13
 - 6.3. Personal Achievement (8-items) 14
7. Work Alienation(8 items)- Nair and Vohra(2000) 15
8. Kahn's Engagement 16
9. The Big Five Inventory (BFI) 17

1. Meaningfulness In Work and Meaningfulness at Work(May et al's(2004) and (Pratt and Ashforth's(2003) and Saks's(2011)(6-items).

Chapter 5: Research Rationale, Philosophy and Methodology

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Slightly disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
My job activities are personally meaningful to me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My work is deemed valuable by my organization	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My work makes a positive difference to customers/clients and service users.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The work I do is very important to me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My work significantly contributes to the success of my organization.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The work I do is meaningful to me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

2. Person Organisation Fit(Saks and Ashforth, 1997; Cable and Judge, 1996)(5-items)

Chapter 5: Research Rationale, Philosophy and Methodology

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Slightly disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I feel my values “match” or fit this organization and the current employees in this organization	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I think the values and personality of this organization reflect my own values and personality	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The values of this organization are similar to my own values	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My values match those of current employees in this organization	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel my personality matches the “personality” or image of this organization	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

3. Person-Job Fit (D-A/ N-S)(Cable and Judge, 1996)

Chapter 5: Research Rationale, Philosophy and Methodology

3.1. Demands and Abilities Fit(4-items)

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Slightly disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I believe my skills and abilities match those required by the job	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My job performance is hurt by a lack of expertise on the job	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My knowledge, skills and abilities match the requirements of the job	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I possess the skills and abilities to perform this job	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

3.2. Needs-Supplies Fit (4-items)

Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Slightly disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
-------------------	-------	-------------------	----------------------------------	----------------------	----------	----------------------

Chapter 5: Research Rationale, Philosophy and Methodology

I feel that this job enables me to do the kind of work I want to do

This job measures up to the kind of opportunity I was seeking

This job is a good match for me

This job fulfils my needs

4. Emotional Dissonance(Frankfurt Emotion work Scale)(6-items)

Strongly Agree Agree Slightly agree Neither agree nor disagree Slightly disagree Disagree Strongly disagree

At work, it is a requirement to suppress feelings

At work it is important to suppress feelings

At work, I display emotions which do not correspond to my inner feelings

Chapter 5: Research Rationale, Philosophy and Methodology

At work, I display positive emotions while feeling indifferent

At work, I Force myself to show certain feelings

At work it is a requirement to be sensitive to the feelings of customers

5. Emotional Labour Scales (Diefendorv, Croyle, & Gosserand(2005))

5.1. Deep Acting(4-items)

Strongly Agree Agree Slightly agree Neither agree nor disagree Slightly disagree Disagree Strongly disagree

I try to actually experience the emotions that I must show to customers

I make an effort to actually feel the emotions that I need to display toward customers.

Chapter 5: Research Rationale, Philosophy and Methodology

I work hard to feel the emotions that I need to show to customers.

I work at developing the feelings inside of me that I need to show to customers

5.2. Surface Acting(4-items)

Strongly Agree Agree Slightly agree Neither agree nor disagree Slightly disagree Disagree Strongly disagree

I put on an act to deal with customers in an appropriate way.

I fake a good mood when interacting with customers.

I put on a “show” or “performance” when interacting with customers.

I just pretend to have the emotions I need to display for my job.

I put on a “mask” in order to display the

Chapter 5: Research Rationale, Philosophy and Methodology

emotions I need for the
job.

I show feelings to
customers that are
different from what I
feel inside.

I fake the emotions I
show when dealing
with customers.

6. Burnout Items(MBI Inventory)

6.1. Burnout and Anxiety(7-items)

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Slightly disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I feel emotionally drained by my work	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Working with people all day long requires a great deal of effort	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel like my work is breaking me down.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel frustrated by my work.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Chapter 5: Research Rationale, Philosophy and Methodology

I feel I work too
hard at my job

It stresses me too
much to work in
direct contact with
people.

I feel like I am at the
end of my rope.

6.2. Depersonalisation(7-items)

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Slightly disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
--	-------------------	-------	-------------------	----------------------------------	----------------------	----------	----------------------

I feel I look after
certain
patients/clients
impersonally, as if
they are objects.

I feel tired when I
get up in the
morning and have
to face another day
at work.

I have the
impression that my
patients/clients
make me
responsible for

Chapter 5: Research Rationale, Philosophy and Methodology

some of their
problems.

I am at the end of
my patience at the
end of my work
day.

I really don't care
about what happens
to some of my
patients/clients.

I have become more
insensitive to
people since I've
been working.

I'm afraid that this
job is making me
uncaring

6.3. Personal Achievement (8-items)

Strongly Agree Agree Slightly agree Neither agree nor disagree Slightly disagree Disagree Strongly disagree

I accomplish many
worthwhile things
in this job.

I feel full of energy.

Chapter 5: Research Rationale, Philosophy and Methodology

I am easily able to understand what my clients feel.

I look after my patients'/clients' problems very effectively.

In my work, I handle emotional problems very calmly.

Through my work, I feel that I have a positive influence on people.

I am easily able to create a relaxed atmosphere with my patients/clients.

I feel refreshed when I have been close to my patients/clients at work

7. Work Alienation(8 items)- Nair and Vohra(2000)

Strongly Agree Agree Slightly agree Neither agree nor disagree Slightly disagree Disagree Strongly disagree

Chapter 5: Research Rationale, Philosophy and Methodology

I don't enjoy work; I just put in my time to get paid.

Facing my daily tasks is a painful and boring experience.

Work to me is more like a chore or a burden.

I feel estranged/disconnected from myself.

I often wish I were doing something else.

Over the years I have become disillusioned about my work.

I do not feel like putting my best effort at work.

I do not feel connected to the events in my workplace

8. Kahn's Engagement

At work, my mind was

Chapter 5: Research Rationale, Philosophy and Methodology

focused on
the job.

I exerted my
full effort to
my job.

I felt proud
of my job.

I devoted a
lot attention
to my job.

I felt excited
about my
job.

I strived as
hard as I
could to
complete
my job.

At work, I
concentrated
in my job,

I felt
positive
about my
job.

I tried my
hardest to
perform
well in my
job.

1. Meaningful Work- Dissonance

1.1. The following questions are meant to understand the frequency of how you as an employee adjust to organisational goals and requirements. The word Meaningful in this context relates to how significant or purposeful you find these organisational goals.

For example: Tom as a sales employee often aligns himself with the organisational goal of gaining maximum profit, even though this is not significant to him and does not match his own values.

	Always	Usually	Quite Frequently	Sometimes	Occasionally	Rarely	Never
In your organisation, how often have you had to adjust organisational goals that are not meaningful to you?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

In your organisation, how often are you obliged to act according to your organisation's requirements compared to acting according to what is meaningful to you?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
---	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------

Chapter 5: Research Rationale, Philosophy and Methodology

In your organisation, how often do you have to modify your own values to follow organisational protocol?

1.2. The following questions are meant to understand the frequency of how you as an employee adjust to your task requirements. The word Meaningful in this context relates to how significant or purposeful you find your task or work role.

For example: Sara as a HR manager often aligns herself with the task requirements of completing certain administrative duties, even though she believes that these tasks are not always purposeful or personally beneficial.

Always Usually Quite Frequently Sometimes Occasionally Rarely Never

While working, how often have you had to adjust to tasks requirements that are not meaningful to you?

While working, how often are you obliged to act according to your job

Chapter 5: Research Rationale, Philosophy and Methodology

requirements
compared to
acting according
to what is
meaningful to
you?

While working,

how often do
you modify your
own values to
fulfil task
requirements?

2. Deep Existential Acting:

2.1. The following statements aim to understand the effect of organisation's objectives on an employee's perception of meaningfulness at work. The word convince in the following statements relates to the amount of cognitive effort you put in to go to work or stay in an organisation.

For example: Rose as an employee in an oil company, often has to convince herself that her organisation serves a greater cause, even though she knows that the organisation's purpose is not always meaningful.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Slightly disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
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I often have to

convince myself
that what my
organisation does

Chapter 5: Research Rationale, Philosophy and Methodology

is purposeful and significant to me.

I often have to
convince myself that working in this organisation is personally beneficial to me.

Due to the
importance of meeting this organisation's goals and values, I often have to alter my own values and behave accordingly.

I often have to put
in effort to believe that being a part of this organisation is meaningful to me.

I often have to
convince myself that the objectives of my organisation match what is personally meaningful to me.

2.2. The following statements aim to understand the influence of task requirements on an employee's perception of meaningfulness in work. The word convince in the following statements relates to the amount of cognitive effort you put in to do your tasks.

For example: John as an employee in a call centre, often must convince himself that answering calls and serving customers is purposeful, even though he does not always find his work role to be meaningful.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Slightly disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I often have to convince myself that my tasks at work have value and are significant to me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I often have to convince myself that my work tasks are personally beneficial to me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Due to the importance of meeting this job's requirements effectively, I often have to alter my own values and behave accordingly.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I often have to put in effort to believe that the tasks I do at work are	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

purposeful and significant.

I often have to

convince myself that my work tasks match what is personally meaningful to me.

3. Surface Existential Acting:

3.1. The following statements aim to understand attitudes adopted by employees to manage organisational expectations. Please rate the following from strongly disagree to strongly Agree.

For example: Victor as an employee in a pharmaceutical company often has to justify their animal testing policies as a way to ensure the safety of their customers and provide a positive image of his company, even though he does not believe in harming animals.

Strongly Agree Agree Slightly agree Neither agree nor disagree Slightly disagree Disagree Strongly disagree

I often act

according to organisational expectations, even if my inner values are not always consistent with my organisation's.

To meet

organisational expectations, I often modify what

Chapter 5: Research Rationale, Philosophy and Methodology

is meaningful to me.

I often pretend as if
my organisation's purpose is meaningful when interacting with other people at work, even when it isn't.

I often act like my
organisation is personally meaningful to me, in order to fit in.

I often put up a
front as someone who finds what my organisation does to be meaningful, even when I don't always believe it is.

To deal with
organisational expectations in an appropriate way, I often modify what is meaningful to me.

Chapter 5: Research Rationale, Philosophy and Methodology

3.2. The following statements aim to understand attitudes adopted by employees to manage job expectations and meet task requirements. Please rate the following from strongly disagree to strongly Agree.

For example: Linda as a nurse, often has to act as if she finds her work purposeful in front of her managers/superiors during inspections, even though she finds her work to be stressful and demanding.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Slightly disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I often act according to my task requirements even if my inner values are not always consistent with my work tasks.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
To deal with task requirements in an appropriate way, I often modify what is meaningful to me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Even though my tasks are not meaningful to me, I often pretend as if my tasks are significant when interacting with colleagues.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Chapter 5: Research Rationale, Philosophy and Methodology

I often pretend as if

I agree with the purpose of my tasks even when I don't believe it.

I often act like

someone who finds their tasks to be meaningful when interacting with other people at work, even when I don't always believe it.

I often act like my

work role is personally meaningful to me, in order to fulfil the requirements of my job.

11.6 Appendix 6: Data Collection and Ethical Considerations for Sample 3

Section 1 - Project details	
Project title:	Exploring the impact of Existential labour strategies on work-related well-being.
SREC number (Office use only):	
Section 2 - Applicant details	
Name of researcher (applicant):	Lakshmi Chandrasekaran
Status (UG student / PG student / Staff):	PG student
Email address:	chandral@aston.ac.uk
Contact address:	
Contact telephone:	
Section 3a – For Students only	
Student ID Number:	
Course:	PhD Work & Organisational Psychology
Module name and Number:	Doctor of Philosophy
Supervisor / Module Leader name(s):	Dr. Luke Fletcher Dr.Wladislaw Rivkin, Dr.Mathew Carter
Section 3b – For Supervisors only	
Please agree with the following statements by placing an X in the appropriate boxes (if completing electronically, double click on the box and select 'checked').	
The student has read the Research Ethics guidelines and the University's Research Governance document	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
The topic merits further research	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
The student has the skills to carry out the research	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
The participant information sheet or leaflet is appropriate	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
The procedures for recruitment and obtaining informed consent are appropriate	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Comments from Supervisor:	The supervisory team has met and discussed this next stage in Lakshmi's research and have agreed the survey process/questions, data collection procedure, informed consent, and data analysis.
Section 4 - Summary of research (no more than 300 words)	

Chapter 5: Research Rationale, Philosophy and Methodology

The primary purpose of this research is to supplement psychometric properties of existential labour scale which was previously tested and evaluated using emotional labour theory. The next step involves validating the scale and testing its temporal properties in a weekly-diary study. This research is being conducted because there is limited research on measuring existential labour amongst working professionals, whilst understanding its fluctuations. In terms of understanding existential labour, it is a mechanism that is often experienced at work when organizational values and policies do not match with an employee's own sense of values or meaningfulness. As a result, employees adopt strategies and 'act as if' work is meaningful, or change their own sense of meaningfulness, values or beliefs to fit in. This leads to engaging in existential labour at work. The aim of this study is mainly to test the newly developed scale of existential labour in a weekly diary study, across 12 weeks. Existential labor will be tested along with meaningfulness dissonance and burnout outcomes. The rationale of this study answers calls made by Bailey et al's (2017) conceptual paper on existential labour. Testing whether factors at the individual or organizational level serve to moderate the association between existential labour states and its outcomes across 12 weeks will be useful in addressing both methodological and theoretical inconsistencies within meaningful work literature.

The following are the hypothesis that will be tested in this study:

1. Weekly Meaningfulness dissonance is positively associated with weekly deep and surface existential acting.
2. Weekly deep and surface existential acting is positively associated with burnout outcomes such as weekly depersonalisation and cynicism.
3. Weekly deep and surface existential acting mediates the relationship between weekly meaningfulness dissonance and burnout outcomes.
4. Perceived autonomy moderates the mediated effect of weekly existential labour on weekly burnout outcomes, i.e. it weakens the positive relationship between existential acting strategies and burnout outcomes.

It is important to note, that all items used in this research have been adapted from scholars, and were published in the most renowned peer-reviewed journals (see below). Thus, providing assurance regarding compliance to ethical standards as well as the reliability and validity of the scale development. Findings from the study will be used in the future for publication and other research purposes, but only after obtaining consent from the participants.

References:

- Blau, G., Fertig, J., Surges Tatum, D., Connaughton, S., Soo Park, D., & Marshall, C. (2010). Further scale refinement for emotional labor: Exploring distinctions between types of surface versus deep acting using a difficult client referent. *Career Development International*, 15(2), 188-216.
- Brotheridge, C. M., & Lee, R. T. (2003). *Development and validation of the Emotional Labour Scale*. *Journal of Occupational Organizational Psychology* (Vol. 76). Retrieved from www.bps.org.uk
- Diefendorv, J. M., Croyle, M. H., & Gosserand, R. H. (2005). The dimensionality and antecedents of emotional labor strategies. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 66, 339–357. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2004.02.001>
- Kruml, S. M., & Geddes, D. (2000). Exploring the dimensions of emotional labor: The heart of Hochschild's work. *Management Communication Quarterly*, 14, 8–49
- Mesmer-Magnus, J. R., Dechurch, L. A., & Wax, A. (2012). Moving emotional labor beyond surface and deep acting: A discordance-congruence perspective. *Organizational Psychology Review*. *Organizational Psychology Review*, 2(1), 6–53. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2041386611417746>

Section 5 – Research protocols (no more than 300 words)

This research will be conducted using quantitative methodology. The main study will require participants who are experienced working professionals in the UK. They must be fluent with the English language and should be willing to dedicate time to evaluate their meaningfulness at work. More specifically, this study i.e. weekly diary study, will be conducted via an online survey that will be distributed via Prolific (GDPR compliant, online data collection platform). A maximum number of 250 participants will be recruited using Prolific.

If the participant opts to partake, each one will be paid an amount of £0.50 per survey and will be paid £8 totally, provided they complete all 12 weeks. The participants will have to complete 12 surveys in this project. Each survey should not take more than 5 minutes to complete. Each survey will be sent every week. Once the participant completes all 12 surveys over a span of three months, a payment of 8 pounds will be made.

Throughout the data collection period, participants will be assured anonymity and confidentiality. The data collected will be used further for validating the measure via multi-level analysis. There are no known significant risks associated with this study as participants will only be asked to answer a series of questions regarding work attitudes and their sense of meaningfulness at work. Despite having no known significant risks, there are however a few ethical issues worth considering that involve participants' informed consent, guarantee of anonymity and their rights to withdraw from the study at any point in time. These ethical issues will be addressed before the commencement of the study via an information sheet for participants that details the nature of the study and their rights to confidentiality and withdrawal from the survey. Participants will also be given direct contact information of the primary researcher and all his associated supervisors. Furthermore, to ensure participant confidentiality, all data collected shall be retained and password-protected for 1 year to account for the completion of data analysis and writing of thesis. Once the thesis is complete, all data shall be destroyed.

Section 6 – Data protection (no more than 200 words)

Chapter 5: Research Rationale, Philosophy and Methodology

The research is designed with recommendation from the following guidelines a) the BPS code of conduct (2009) and with reference to b) Bryman (2015) social research methods. First, the data collection is entirely anonymous. The researcher will use a mediating platform, Prolific, to solicit research participants and at no any point the researcher will required the respondent to provide identifying information beyond the listed demographics (i.e., age, gender...). Second, the researcher has referenced the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR, 2017) framework on consent, storage and protection. Although participants are solicited through a mediating agent, strict consent will be administered which allowed responding participants to understand they're rights to withdraw and the sharing of information (see attached conse...). Last, the research will exercised the guideline set forward by Bryman(2015) which includes transparency, anonymity and privacy.

As mentioned previously, Prolific will be used as a mediating platform, and participants will not share any personal details, therefore they cannot be disturbed in case they do not complete the survey. The role of the mediating platform is only to distribute the links to suitable participants with an instruction that specifies timely payment once all the surveys have been completed.

References:

British Psychological Society. (2009). Code of Ethics and Conduct. Leicester, UK: British Psychological Society. ISBN: 978-1-85433-495-4.

Bryman, A. (2015). *Social research methods*. Oxford University Press.

Section 7 – Secondary data analysis or Primary data collection

1. Will you be analysing secondary data?
(for further information regarding secondary data please refer to the ABS Ethics Guidelines) Yes No

2. Will you be collecting data from new participants? Yes No

If you have answered 'yes' to question 1, then please go to section 8. If you have answered 'yes' to question 2, then please go to section 9.

Section 8 – Secondary data analysis

1. Name of dataset(s)	
2. Owner of dataset(s)	
3. Is the data in the public domain?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
	If no, do you have the owner's permission/license? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
4. Is the data anonymised?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
	If no do you plan to anonymise the data? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	If no do you plan to use individual level data? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
5. Is the data 'sensitive'?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
6. Was the data originally collected for Research Purposes?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

Section 10 – Risk Assessment

Please answer the following questions by placing an X in the appropriate boxes (if completing electronically, double click on the box and select 'checked').

36. What do you consider to be the main ethical issues which may arise from the proposed research and give full details of any hazards, pain, discomfort, distress, inconvenience or use of deception which could affect the health, safety or well-being of any participant, or any other person who might be affected by the research

Ethical issues within this quantitative studies are minimal. Ethical issues that could, arise would be that the surveys could be time consuming, and effortful for participants to engage in. Acquiring measures at 12 different time points within a span of 3 months could be effortful for participants. However in this case participants are rewarded for their effort via a payment. We do not anticipate any major issues/risks/hazards as the items operationalised in the research are not invasive. The sample will compose of working adults that are not considered to be part of any risk group.

37. What levels of risk are associated with these hazards?

Low

38. How do you propose to control the risks associated with these hazards?

To avoid strain for participants, the length of the survey has been carefully monitored during the pre-testing phase. Each survey does not exceed 5-8 mins. Furthermore, participants have been offered an incentive after completion of the survey, which acts as a motivator and does not induce strain. Additionally, all participants will be provided with an information sheet in the first page of the survey, which details the nature of the study and right to confidentiality and withdrawal. This will be followed by obtaining consent from each participant. Here, the participants will receive a statement about the commitment and compliance with GDPR.

With regards to guarantee of anonymity, participants will not be and cannot be identified as they are not required to leave any personal details (e.g. names, contacts) about themselves. Furthermore, the data that is collected from Prolific, a GDPR compliant online data collection platform, anonymises participant data at the point of collection, thus maintaining their anonymity. To address their rights to withdraw, there will be a button at the bottom of each webpage throughout the whole online survey which clearly says "leave and delete my data" should they wish to withdraw from the study at any point.

39. What criteria have you used to determine whether the risks are acceptable?

The criteria is based on the 'Code of Human Research Ethics' as put forward by the British Psychological Society (BPS), which believes that all research should aim to maximise benefits and minimise harm. As demonstrated by the current research, its benefit is to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the mechanisms behind employee reactions to meaningful work experiences while simultaneously ensuring that no harm is done onto participants during the investigation of its hypotheses.

40. Is there any precedent for this research? If so, please give details with references if possible.

Yes, the development of the scale is based and inspired by Bailey et al(2017), their work explores the influence of meaningful work and existential labour strategies on different work behaviours. Furthermore, the items developed in the study is adapted from emotional labour theory(Diefendorff & Gosserand, 2003). While there is extensive research on emotional labour scale, research on existential labour is yet to develop.

Bailey, C., Madden, A., Alfes, K., Shantz, A., & Soane, E. (2017). The mismanaged soul: Existential labor and the erosion of meaningful work. *Human Resource Management Review*, 27(3), 416–430. <https://doi.org/10.1016/J.HRMR.2016.11.001>

Diefendorff, J. M., & Gosserand, R. H. (2003). Understanding The emotional Labor Process: A control theory perspective. *Journal of Organisational Behavior*, 24(08). Retrieved from https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/4093748.pdf?casa_token=FmSLUDOCyUcAAAAA:TLga7Kp_Yobjut9mhjA_-1eoBQHeyiLTMkGXLY_-elpZUksRFRldq1ipdTsbzqHgGw14z1fJk8X5iN0Shu4q4llq4ShWNQpSAQUP6PUar6XO1_HdM

Yes No

Chapter 5: Research Rationale, Philosophy and Methodology

52. Will the study involve recruitment of patients or staff through the NHS or the use of NHS data premises and/or equipment?		Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Insurance		
53. What arrangements have been made to provide indemnity and/or compensation in the event of a claim by, or on behalf of, participants for negligent and/or for non-negligent harm? Please note that you should not undertake to provide any form of indemnity or insurance cover without first referring the matter to the Deputy Director of Finance for her/his consideration.		
N/A		
Section 11 – Declaration by Applicant		
<p>The information contained above is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, accurate. I have read the University's Code of Practice for Ethical Standards for Research, and accept responsibility for the conduct of the procedures set out in this application in accordance with the guidelines, and any other condition laid down by the University's Research Ethics Committee. I have attempted to identify all risks related to the research that may arise in conducting this research and acknowledge my obligations and the rights of the participants.</p> <p>I and my co-investigators or supporting staff have the appropriate qualifications, experience and facilities to conduct the research set out in the attached application and to deal with any emergencies and contingencies related to the research that may arise.</p>		
Signed:	<i>Lakshmi</i>	Date: 04/09/2020
Section 12 – Signatories		
To be completed by the Principal Investigator / Lead Researcher / Supervisor / Module Leader / Research Group Convenor / Research Ethics Committee Chair as applicable		
Principal Investigator or Lead Researcher (where appropriate):	<i>Lakshmi</i>	Date: 04/09/2020
Supervisor or Module Leader (where appropriate):	Luke Fletcher	Date: 08/09/2020
Research Group Convenor (or nominee):	<i>W. Riv...</i>	Date: 09/09/2020
ABS Research Ethics Committee (Chair or nominee):		Date:

11.6.1 Survey Example: Using Soci-Survey Tool

Base Questionnaire: Week 1



Exploring the impact of meaningfulness on workrelated well-being.

We would like you to take part in the research we are conducting here at Aston Business School on Meaningful work and employee well-being. The purpose of this study is to examine how meaningfulness at work affects one's attitude in the organisation, job and overall well-being.

We would kindly ask you to finish the questionnaire as soon as you receive them. That ensures the quality of the data. In total there are 12 surveys to be completed. The first survey needs to be completed as soon as it is received, the next survey will be sent 1 week later. This will be repeated till 12 weekly surveys are completed.

Please make sure to keep an eye on your junk folder in case the e-mails from us are misdirected. It may even be worthwhile adding us to your contacts/ safe senders list.

We really appreciate your interest in the study. Just to reiterate, participation is completely voluntary, anonymous, and confidential. Should you have any questions or concerns regarding the research project, please do not hesitate to contact [Lakshmi Chandrasekaran](#).

Hello Participants!

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this research project about Meaningful Work in Organizations conducted by researchers in Aston Business School.

Before the study begins, we would kindly ask you, to express your interest and provide some demographic data. We ask you to do so, to make sure, that you match the requirements of our target sample.

Please indicate your Gender.

- Male
- Female
- Non-Binary
- Transgender
- Other
- Prefer not to say

How old are you? (in years)

 Years

What is your highest level of education?

- High-school qualifications or equivalent Bachelor's or equivalent Master's or equivalent PhD or equivalent Other

Page 04

How long have you been working in this job-role?(in years)

 Years

How long have you been working in this Organisation?(in years)

 Years

Please indicate the most suitable option for your contracted hours at work.

Chapter 5: Research Rationale, Philosophy and Methodology

What are your contracted hours per week?

Hours per week Do you

Do you have any caring responsibilities?

Yes

No

Please indicate the size of your organisation?

Micro(1-10 employees)

Small(10-50 employees)

Medium(50-250 employees)

Large(more than 250)

What type of organisation do you work for?

[Please choose]

What are the dominant activities of your every day work?

(You can select multiple activities)

- Computer work
- Interactions with others (i.e., customers, suppliers)
- Physical labour
- Artistic and creative activities
- Other

Do you have leadership responsibility?

Yes

No

Please indicate the most suitable option that describes your position in the organization.

[Please choose]

Kindly indicate the most suitable option that describes your remote working situation before/during/ after the COVID 19- Pandemic?

[Please choose] 

Please indicate the most suitable option that describes your current employment status.

[Please choose] 

Please indicate the most suitable Occupational Category that you belong to?

- Managers
- Professional
- Technicians and associate professionals
- Clerical support workers
- Service and sales workers
- Skilled agricultural, forestry and fishery workers
- Craft and related trades workers
- Plant and machine operators, and assemblers
- Elementary occupations
- Armed forces occupations

Now, kindly reflect on your organization's policies and practices at work and how they relate to your well-being. Please choose the most appropriate answer.

Senior management show support for stress prevention through involvement and commitment.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Strongly Disagree						Strongly Agree

In practice, the prevention of stress involves all layers of the organization.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Next, kindly indicate the amount of influence you have over your work tasks, the pace at work, or progress in your work.

In your current job, how much influence do you have over your job tasks?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
None						A lot

In your current job, how much control do you have over your work pace?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
None						A lot

In your current job, how much control do you have over your work manner?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
None						A lot

In your current job, how much control do you have over your task order?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
None						A lot

In your current job, how much control do you have over your work hours?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
None						A lot

Chapter 5: Research Rationale, Philosophy and Methodology

During this week, how often have you had to adjust to organizational goals that are not meaningful to you?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Never						Always

During this week, how often were you obliged to act according to your organization's requirements compared to acting according to what is meaningful to you?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Never						Always

During this week, how often did you have to modify your own values to follow organizational protocol?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Never						Always

During this week, how often have you had to adjust to task requirements that are not meaningful to you?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Never						Always

During this week, how often were you obliged to act according to your job requirements compared to acting according to what is meaningful to you?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Never						Always

Chapter 5: Research Rationale, Philosophy and Methodology

Kindly reflect on your emotions at work, while interacting with clients/customers or your team this week, and choose the most appropriate answer ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

I fake a good mood when interacting with customers.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Strongly Disagree						Strongly Agree

I put on a “show” or “performance” when interacting with customers/clients.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Strongly Disagree						Strongly Agree

I fake the emotions I show when dealing with customers.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Strongly Disagree						Strongly Agree

I put on an act to deal with customers/clients in an appropriate way.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Strongly Disagree						Strongly Agree

I show feelings to customers that are different from what I feel inside.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

11.7 Appendix 7

Meaningfulness Dissonance Items: Pooling Phase

Emotional dissonance refers to the display of unmet emotions and to the suppression of felt but organizationally undesired emotions (example item: How often does it occur in your job that one must display positive emotions that do not correspond to what is felt in this situation?). For most of the FEWS scales there was a five-point response scale for most items ranging from (1) ‘‘very rarely/never’’ to (5) Very Often (Zapf, Vogt, Seifert, Mertini, & Isic, 1999).

Using the above conceptual definition of emotional dissonance, the following items have been modified to measure meaningful work dissonance. The higher the dissonance, the higher the possibility of surface existential labour acting and passive deep existential acting (Zapf, 2002).

Meaningful Work-Dissonance

- 1) In your job, how often do you have to suppress what is meaningful for you, to appear neutral?
- 2) In your job, how often do you have to display meaningfulness which do not correspond to your inner sense of meaningfulness?
- 3) In your job, how often are you forced to believe that the organisation’s values are meaningful to you?
- 4) In your job, how often are you forced to act on what is meaningful to the organisation compared to acting on what is meaningful to you?
- 5) In your job, how important is it to suppress your sense of meaningfulness?

Responses for each of the scales will be rated from 1 = very rarely/never to 5 = very often (several times an hour).

Zapf, D. (2002). Emotion work and psychological well-being: A review of the literature and some conceptual considerations. *Human resource management review*, 12(2), 237-268.

Zapf, D., Vogt, C., Seifert, C., Mertini, H., & Isic, A. (1999). Emotion Work as a Source of Stress: The Concept and Development of an Instrument. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 8(3), 371–400. <https://doi.org/10.1080/135943299398230>

11.8 Appendix 8

Existential Labour Items: Pooling Phase

Note: Existential labour is drawn from emotional labour theory, where as its strategies i.e. deep and surface existential acting is associated with modifying and changing how one experiences meaningful work in order to abide with the pressures of organisational policies and expectations (Bailey, Madden, Alfes, Shantz, & Soane, 2017).

Surface existential Acting: occurs when the individual acts in accordance with perceived organizational expectations around meaningfulness displays even if their true values and beliefs are inconsistent.

Deep Existential Acting: is a congruent existential state whereby the individual both displays and internalizes the meaningfulness they perceive to be mandated by their employer (Bailey et al., 2017).

Existential labour strategies are heavily internalised and is different to how emotional labour is experienced. Contradictory to Emotional Regulation scale by Grandey (2005), existential labour acting

Chapter 6: Development and Validation of Existential Labour and Meaningfulness Dissonance

strategies focus on changing and modifying internal feelings, values and beliefs and not behaviour. Secondly, the items focus on organisational expectations and interactions with co-workers and not customers/clients.

1. Modified from Emotional Labour Scale (Brotheridge & Lee, 2003)

Surface Existential Acting:

1. Resist expressing my true experiences of meaningful work within my organisation.
2. Pretend to have meaningful work experiences within my organisation that are not consistent with my views of meaningful work
3. Hide my true experiences of meaningful work during certain situations

Deep Existential Acting:

1. Make an effort to actually experience meaningful work within my organisation
2. Try to actually experience meaningful work so as to meet the needs of the organisation
3. Really try to alter my experience of meaningful work so that it aligns with the organisation's values.

2. These items are modified from Diefendorv, Croyle, & Gosserand(2005)

Deep Existential Acting

1. I try to actually experience meaningful work to meet the needs of my organisation.
2. I make an effort to actually feel meaningful work that I need to display towards my organisation.
3. I work hard to experience meaningfulness in the organisation I work at.
4. I work at developing meaningful work inside of me so that I can meet the demands of the organisation.

Surface Existential Acting

1. I put on a 'meaningful' act to deal with employees and organisational demands in an appropriate way.
2. I fake experiences of meaningful work when interacting with employees and customers.
3. I put on a 'show' of meaningful work experiences when interacting with employees.
4. I just pretend to experience meaningful work that I need to display for my job.
5. I put on a 'mask' in order to display the meaningful work experiences I need for my job.
6. I experience meaningful work in order to fit in, but they are different from what I personally believe is meaningful.
7. I fake my experiences of meaningful work

Chapter 6: Development and Validation of Existential Labour and Meaningfulness Dissonance

Experience of naturally felt-meaningful work

1. The meaningfulness that I experience in my organisation are genuine.
2. The experiences of meaningful work are felt naturally
3. The experiences of meaningful work match what I spontaneously believe to be meaningful to me.

3.Modified from Blau et al(2012)

Surface Existential Acting

1. I often pretend to have the meaningful work experiences I need to satisfy my organisation.
2. I often put on an act of 'meaningfulness' in order to deal with my organisation's values and aims.
3. I often find myself faking experiences of meaningful work to my colleagues
4. If organisational demands are not meaningful to me, I usually resist expressing my true feelings of meaningful work
5. Even if I do not personally find my work to be meaningful, I usually leave a good impression with my organisation.

Deep existential acting:

1. I try to actually experience meaningful work in the organisation, to meet the demands of the organisation.
2. I work hard to really experience meaningful work within my organisation
3. I take to heart the experiences of meaningful work needed to perform in my organisation
4. I can control my actual experience of meaningful work to really put myself in my employer's shoes to relate to their concerns
5. In order to be what my organisation expects, I can modify my true experiences of meaningful work
6. I adapt to see and experience things from my organisation's point of view.
7. I can manage my experiences of meaningful work to help me understand my organisation's perspective.
8. When dealing with a difficult situation at work, I can step back and modify my meaningfulness so that I don't take the difficulty personally.
9. I can separate what I believe is meaningful to deal positively with my organisation during contradictory situations.

References:

Bailey, C., Madden, A., Alfes, K., Shantz, A., & Soane, E. (2017). The mismanaged soul: Existential labor and the erosion of meaningful work. *Human Resource Management Review*, 27(3), 416–430. <https://doi.org/10.1016/J.HRMR.2016.11.001>

Brotheridge, C. M., & Lee, R. T. (2003). Development and validation of the Emotional Labour Scale. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology* (Vol. 76). Retrieved from www.bps.org.uk

Diefendorv, J. M., Croyle, M. H., & Gosserand, R. H. (2005). The dimensionality and antecedents of emotional labor strategies. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 66, 339–357. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2004.02.001>

11.9 Appendix 9

Revision of Items after Peer-Reviewing and Expert Reviews

The table below indicates potential issues with phrases from 3 separate expert reviews.

Summary of notes from Expert Reviews:

1. “requirements” vague term as people might not know what it means
2. Clarify the usage of task vs job in the items as this is not the same for people.
3. Remove anything related to goal congruence as these items are not helpful for existential labour.
4. “I often have to convince myself that working in this organisation is for my best and is purposeful to me” these are two separate items- remove purposeful to me.
5. Not sure if using terms such as suppress and oblige is easy to comprehend.
6. To deal with task requirements in an appropriate way, I often suppress what is meaningful to me- this is a double barrelled sentence.

1. Meaningful Dissonance Scale:

Note: Emotional dissonance refers to the display of unfeared emotions and to the suppression of felt but organizationally undesired emotions (example item: How often does it occur in your job that one must display positive emotions that do not correspond to what is felt in this situation?). For most of the FEWS scales there was a five-point response scale for most items ranging from (1)“very rarely/never” to (5) Very Often(Zapf, Vogt, Seifert, Mertini, & Isic, 1999).

Using the above conceptual definition of emotional dissonance, the following items have been modified to measure meaningful work dissonance. The higher the dissonance, the higher the possibility of surface existential labour acting and passive deep existential acting (Zapf, 2002).

Responses for each of the scales will be rated from 1 = very rarely/never to 5= very often (several times a week).

#	Organisation Oriented Items	Task Oriented Items
1	In your organisation, how often have you had to align yourself with organisational mandated goals that you do not find to be personally meaningful?	While working, how often have you had to align yourself with tasks requirements that you do not find to be personally meaningful?
2	In your organisation, how often are you obliged to act according to your organisation’s requirements compared to acting according to what is meaningful to you?	While working, how often are you obliged to act according to your job requirements compared to acting according to what is meaningful to you?
3	In your organisation, how often do you suppress your inner values and beliefs to follow organisational protocol?	While working, how often do you suppress your inner values and beliefs to abide with task requirements?

Existential Labour Items:

Note: Existential labour is drawn from emotional labour theory(Diefendorff, Croyle, & Gosserand, 2005), where as its strategies i.e. deep and surface existential acting is associated with modifying and changing how one experiences meaningful work in order to abide with the pressures of organisational policies and expectations(Bailey, Madden, Alfes, Shantz, & Soane, 2017b).

Existential labour strategies are heavily internalised and is different to how emotional labour is experienced. Contradictory to Emotional Regulation scale by Grandey(2005), existential labour acting strategies focus on changing and modifying internal feelings, values and beliefs and not emotions.

1. Deep Existential Acting Items

Definition: When an individual both internalises and displays the meaningfulness they perceive to be mandated by the employer(Bailey, Madden, Alfes, Shantz, & Soane, 2017a).

Responses for each of the scales will be rated from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5= Strongly agree (several times a week).

#	Organisation Oriented Items	Task Oriented Items
1	I often have to convince myself that this organisation’s purpose has value and significance to me.	I often have to convince myself that my tasks at work have value and are significant to me.
2	I often have to convince myself that working in this organisation is for my best and is purposeful to me.	I often have to convince myself that my work tasks are assigned to me in my best interests and are purposeful to me.
3	Due to the importance of meeting this organisation’s goals and values, I often have to alter my inner values and beliefs.	Due to the importance of meeting this job’s requirements effectively, I often have to alter my inner values and beliefs.
4	I often have to work hard to believe that being a part of this organisation is purposeful and significant.	I often have to work hard to believe that the tasks I do at work are purposeful and significant.
5	I often have to convince myself that the purpose and objectives of my organisation matches what is personally meaningful to me.	I often have to convince myself that my work tasks match what is personally meaningful to me.

Key words: Convince, work hard, alter, believe

11.9.1 Items After 5 Revisions: This Set was Used for Cognitive Interviews

11.9.1.1 *Meaningful Dissonance Scale:*

Note: Emotional dissonance refers to the display of unfelt emotions and to the suppression of felt but organizationally undesired emotions (example item: How often does it occur in your job that one must display positive emotions that do not correspond to what is felt in this situation?). For most of the FEWS scales there was a five-point response scale for most items ranging from (1)“very rarely/never” to (5) Very Often(Zapf, Vogt, Seifert, Mertini, & Isic, 1999).

Using the above conceptual definition of emotional dissonance, the following items have been modified to measure meaningful work dissonance. The higher the dissonance, the higher the possibility of surface existential labour acting and passive deep existential acting (Zapf, 2002).

Responses for each of the scales will be rated from 1 = very rarely/never to 5= very often (several times a week).

#	Organisation Oriented Items	Task Oriented Items
1	In your organisation, how often have you had to align yourself with organisational mandated goals that you do not find to be personally meaningful?	While working, how often have you had to align yourself with tasks requirements that you do not find to be personally meaningful?
2	In your organisation, how often are you obliged to act according to your organisation’s requirements compared to acting according to what is meaningful to you?	While working, how often are you obliged to act according to your job requirements compared to acting according to what is meaningful to you?
3	In your organisation, how often do you suppress your inner values and beliefs to follow organisational protocol?	While working, how often do you suppress your inner values and beliefs to fulfil task requirements?

11.9.1.2 Existential Labour Items:

Note: Existential labour is drawn from emotional labour theory(Diefendorff, Croyle, & Gosserand, 2005), where as its strategies i.e. deep and surface existential acting is associated with modifying and changing how one experiences meaningful work in order to abide with the pressures of organisational policies and expectations(Bailey et al., 2017b).

Existential labour strategies are heavily internalised and is different to how emotional labour is experienced. Contradictory to Emotional Regulation scale by Grandey(2005), existential labour acting strategies focus on changing and modifying internal feelings, values and beliefs and not emotions.

1. Deep Existential Acting Items

Definition: When an individual both internalises and displays the meaningfulness they perceive to be mandated by the employer(Bailey et al., 2017a).

Responses for each of the scales will be rated from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5= Strongly agree (several times a week).

#	Organisation Oriented Items	Task Oriented Items
1	I often have to convince myself that this organisation’s purpose has value and significance to me.	I often have to convince myself that my tasks at work have value and are significant to me.
2	I often have to convince myself that working in this organisation is for my best.	I often have to convince myself that my work tasks are assigned to me in my best interests.
3	Due to the importance of meeting this organisation’s goals and values, I often have to alter my own values and behave accordingly.	Due to the importance of meeting this job’s requirements effectively, I often have to alter my own values and behave accordingly.
4	I often have to work hard to believe that being a part of this organisation is purposeful and significant.	I often have to work hard to believe that the tasks I do at work are purposeful and significant.
5	I often have to convince myself that the purpose and objectives of my organisation matches what is personally meaningful to me.	I often have to convince myself that my work tasks match what is personally meaningful to me.

Key words: Convince, work hard, alter, believe

11.9.1.3 Surface Existential Acting Items

Definition: When an individual ‘acts’ in accordance with perceived organisational expectations and displays meaningfulness, even though it is not consistent with what is personally meaningful to them(C. Bailey et al., 2017b).

#	Organisation Oriented Items	Task Oriented Items
1	Even though my inner values and beliefs are not always consistent with my	Even though my inner values and beliefs are not always consistent with the contents of my

Chapter 6: Development and Validation of Existential Labour and Meaningfulness Dissonance

	organisation's, I still act according to what my organisation expects me to uphold.	work tasks, I still act according to what my tasks requires me to uphold.
2	To conform to organisational expectations, I often suppress what is meaningful to me.	To deal with task requirements in an appropriate way, I often suppress what is meaningful to me.
3	Even though the organisation's purpose is not always meaningful to me, I often pretend as if it is meaningful when interacting with everyone.	Even though my tasks are not meaningful to me, I often pretend as if my tasks are significant when interacting with colleagues. .
4	Even though I do not always agree with the values and purpose of my organisation, I pretend as if I do	Even though I do not always agree with the purpose of my work tasks, I pretend as if I do d
5	I often present myself as someone who finds what my organisation does to be meaningful, even when I don't always believe it is.	I often present myself as someone who finds their tasks to be meaningful when interacting with colleagues, even when I don't always believe that it is.
6	I often fake that my organisation is personally meaningful to me, in order to fit in.	I often fake that my work role and tasks are personally meaningful to me, in order to fulfil the requirements of my job.

Responses for each of the scales will be rated from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5= Strongly agree (several times a week).

Key Words: Act, resist, fake, present

11.10 Appendix 10: Reports/Coding from Cognitive Interviews

Table 1: INTERVIEWER RATING FORM

Use the following code for each potential problem:

C1: Does the interviewee have any difficulty understanding the question or the meaning of particular words or phrases?

C2: Does the interviewee have any difficulty recalling a situation with regard to the question?

C3: Does the interviewee have difficulty in understanding what the question refers to?

C4: Does the interviewee have any difficulty in responding to the question?

Number of Interviewees: 10

All participants were based in UK, interviewed via telephone(N=4) or face to face. Each interview took upto 45 mins approximately. Participants were all full-time working individuals, with different backgrounds, age and tenure.

Exercise Number	No.		C1	C2	C3	C4	Other Problems	Comments
Part 1	1	In your organisation, how often have you had to align yourself with organisational mandated goals that you do not find to be personally meaningful?	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Shorten the sentence structure, and change organisational mandated goals	Overall question was answered easily after reading it twice, personally meaningful was related to different sources for different participants. Organisation mandated goals was easily understood, however general suggestion was to reduce the length of the question.
	2	In your organisation, how often are you obliged to act according to your organisation's requirements compared to acting according to what is meaningful to you?	No	No	No	No	The word Obligated was questioned and had to be clarified.	Organisational requirements were associated with code of conduct compared to strategy of the organisation. Obligated should be changed into something simpler like 'forced'.
	3	In your organisation, how often do you suppress your inner values and beliefs to follow organisational protocol?	No	Yes	No	Yes	Most participants struggled to recall events that related to the question, most of the individuals did not go through this feeling in	Supress was a key word that created a reaction amongst participants. Inner values and Beliefs are different to what is meaningful at work. Most participants separate inner values and beliefs from their work. Therefore, separate would be a key term to be used instead.

Chapter :6: Development and Validation of Existential Labour and Meaningfulness Dissonance

							their organisations . Hesitation to be honest to this question was noticed.	
Part 1.1	4	While working, how often have you had to align yourself with tasks requirements that you do not find to be personally meaningful?/ importance?	No	No	No	No		Participants found tasks related items to be easier to relate to compared to organisation based items. Personally meaningful was always associated to the task being important or not. Overall, participants acknowledged that tasks were not always meaningful, but they still had to complete it due to the requirements. Task requirements were associated with task demands and quality of task.
	5	While working, how often are you obliged to act according to your job requirements compared to acting according to what is meaningful to you?	No	No	No	No	Redundant and repetitive, according to participants	Acting according to job requirements is seen as a act of professionalism, and would be done by participants regardless of it being meaningful or not. Participants do not see this as problematic.
	6	While working, how often do you suppress your inner values and beliefs to fulfil task requirements?	No	Yes	No	Yes	There are only few contexts that this item is applicable to. Further questioning was needed to generate a appropriate response.	Overall, would not change the item, as it is context-dependant. However, would change the item, if targeting particular population such as health care professionals or the education sector.
Part 2	7	I often have to convince myself that this organisation's purpose has value and significance to me.	Yes	No	Yes	No	Participants had to read the statement twice before answering. At first most participants misunderstood the statement. Organisation's purpose was questioned to	The key word convince was missed out by most participants at first, but after reading it twice, the participants were able to understand the statement and changed their response rating. The statement could use 'what my organisation does' instead of organisational purpose

Chapter :6: Development and Validation of Existential Labour and Meaningfulness Dissonance

							clarify what it meant.	
	8	I often have to convince myself that working in this organisation is for my best.	Yes	No	No	No	Participants had to be probed with an example to provide an appropriate response. The phrase 'is for my best' was questioned.	Participants found this to be applicable at work, however is for my best was questioned as it could mean two things, my best could mean for a better career or personal well-being. Therefore, needs to be more specific.
	9	Due to the importance of meeting this organisation's goals and values, I often have to alter my own values and behave accordingly	No	No	No	No	None	Easy to understand, no change required.
	10	I often have to work hard to believe that being a part of this organisation is purposeful and significant.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Redundant statement	The word 'work hard' needs to be changed. This was problematic as the participants were not able to understand the statement. Therefore changing it to make more effort instead of work hard. What kind of effort? In this case it would be cognitive effort.
	11	I often have to convince myself that the purpose and objectives of my organisation matches what is personally meaningful to me.	No	No	No	No	Repetitive	
Part 3.1.	12	I often have to convince myself that my tasks at work have value and are significant to me.	No	No	No	No	None	Easy to understand, and easy to recall situations with regard to this item.
	13	I often have to convince myself that my work tasks are assigned to me in my best interests.	Yes	Yes	No	No	Best interests and 'assigned' were questioned. This statement had to be explained or	Simplifying the statement would be the best solution, as the statement seems to capture internalisation of what a participant goes through during dissonance at work. For example changing it to, 'I have to remind myself that the work tasks I do are important

Chapter :6: Development and Validation of Existential Labour and Meaningfulness Dissonance

							probed for it to be answered appropriately	and are meaningful to the organisation'
	14	Due to the importance of meeting this job's requirements effectively, I often have to alter my own values and behave accordingly.	No	No	No	No	none	This statement was easily answered, suggesting most statements should be framed in a similar manner.
	15	I often have to work hard to believe that the tasks I do at work are purposeful and significant.	Yes	No	No	No	'Work hard' as it was explained in the previous item, it was easier to comprehend. However, the statement seemed to be redundant.	
	16	I often have to convince myself that my work tasks match what is personally meaningful to me.	No	No	No	No	None	No change required.
Part 4	17	Even though my inner values and beliefs are not always consistent with my organisation's, I still act according to what my organisation expects me to uphold.	No	No	No	Yes	The length of the item was too long, needed to be read twice.	Surface acting items were more an indication of professionalism compared to acting against one's values and goals. This item needs to be simplified.
	18	To conform to organisational expectations, I often suppress what is meaningful to me.	No	No	No	No	None	Easy to comprehend, no change.
	19	Even though the organisation's purpose is not always meaningful to me, I often pretend as if it is	No	No	Yes	No	The word everyone needs to be clarified.	'Everyone' could be changed to family and friends. Or include a separate statement that has friends and family. Social identify/ affirmation

Chapter :6: Development and Validation of Existential Labour and Meaningfulness Dissonance

		meaningful when interacting with everyone.						involved rather than an internalisation process.
	20	Even though I do not always agree with the values and purpose of my organisation, I pretend as if I do	No	No	No	No	Statement almost controversial , participants might have hesitated to give out honest answers.	No change required, as participants will not be monitored during the next step, while responding.
	21	I often present myself as someone who finds what my organisation does to be meaningful, even when I don't always believe it is.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Question was difficult to answer, participants needed to probed for appropriate responses. The key problem was present myself, this was conceived as a physical attribute rather than a cognitive process.	This item indicated professionalism an showing the organisation in a good light. Therefore no change required.
	22	I often fake that my organisation is personally meaningful to me, in order to fit in.	No	No	No	No	The word fake was too strong for participants, even though they rated strongly agree for previous items, most would rate strongly disagree for this particular item. Participants do not like to admit being fake at work.	Remove item
Part 4.1.	23	Even though my inner values and beliefs are not always consistent with the contents of my work tasks,	No	No	No	No	Sentence too long, needed to be read twice by participants.	Remove beliefs, and contents of my work tasks.

Chapter :6: Development and Validation of Existential Labour and Meaningfulness Dissonance

		I still act according to what my tasks requires me to uphold.						
	24	To deal with task requirements in an appropriate way, I often suppress what is meaningful to me.	No	No	No	No		The phrase was comprehended easily. The word appropriate way was key as it provided some context.
	25	Even though my tasks are not always meaningful to me, I often pretend as if my tasks are significant when interacting with colleagues. .	No	No	No	No		This item was easily comprehended, no change required.
	26	Even though I do not always agree with the purpose of my work tasks, I pretend as if I do	No	Yes	No	No	Participants took time to recall events that were applicable to this item, but eventually answered the question.	Purpose of my work tasks, was key as the participants thought about the meaning behind tasks that they did at work. No change required.
	27	I often present myself as someone who finds their tasks to be meaningful when interacting with colleagues, even when I don't always believe that it is.	No	No	No	No	Adding clients or friends and family will change the response to this item.	Add a separate item that focuses on client/ customer/ family or friends.
	28	I often fake that my work role and tasks are personally meaningful to me, in order to fulfil the requirements of my job.	No	No	No	No	Redundant	Either remove item or change the word 'fake'

Results:

Item Modification

Chapter :6: Development and Validation of Existential Labour and Meaningfulness Dissonance

Question Number	Problem Type	Old Item	Modification made	New Item
1	Comprehension problem(C1)	In your organisation, how often have you had to align yourself with organisational mandated goals that you do not find to be personally meaningful?	Re-structuring	In your organisation, how often have you had to align yourself with organisational goals that are not personally meaningful?
2	Reference Problem(C3)	In your organisation, how often are you obliged to act according to your organisation's requirements compared to acting according to what is meaningful to you?	Changing organisation's requirements to expectations.	In your organisation, how often are you obliged to act according to your organisation's expectations compared to acting according to what is meaningful to you?
3	Recall Problem(C2)	In your organisation, how often do you suppress your inner values and beliefs to follow organisational protocol?	Remove beliefs, change suppress to modify	In your organisation, how often do you modify your inner values to follow organisational protocol?
6	Recall Problem(C2)	While working, how often do you suppress your inner values and beliefs to fulfil task requirements?	Remove Beliefs, change suppress to modify.	While working, how often do you modify your inner values to fulfil task requirements?
7	Comprehension Problem(C1)	I often have to convince myself that this organisation's purpose has value and significance to me.	Change organisation's purpose to what my organisation does. Remove have to	I often have to convince myself that what my organisation does is purposeful and significant to me.
8	Reference Problem(C3)	I often have to convince myself that working in this organisation is for my best.	Change 'is for my best' to is personally beneficial to me.	I often have to convince myself that working in this organisation is personally beneficial to me.
10	CI, C2. C3. C4	I often have to work hard to believe that being a part of this organisation is	Remove work hard and effort	I often have to put in effort to believe that being a part of this organisation is meaningful to me.

Chapter :6: Development and Validation of Existential Labour and Meaningfulness Dissonance

		purposeful and significant.		
13	Comprehension(C1) and Recall(C2) problem	I often have to convince myself that my work tasks are assigned to me in my best interests.	Remove assigned to me and change best interests	I often have to convince myself that my work tasks are personally beneficial to me.
15	Comprehension Problem(C1)	I often have to work hard to believe that the tasks I do at work are purposeful and significant.	Remove work hard and add effort	I often have to put in some effort to believe that my work tasks are meaningful to me.
17	Comprehension problem(C1)	Even though my inner values and beliefs are not always consistent with my organisation's, I still act according to what my organisation expects me to uphold.	Shorten sentence	I often act according to organisational expectations, even if my inner values are not always consistent with my organisation's.
19	Reference Problem(C3)	Even though the organisation's purpose is not always meaningful to me, I often pretend as if it is meaningful when interacting with everyone.	Change everyone and add family/friends, colleagues	I often pretend as if my organisation's purpose is meaningful when interacting with other people at work, even when it isn't.
23	Comprehension Problem(C1)	Even though my inner values and beliefs are not always consistent with the contents of my work tasks, I still act according to what my tasks requires me to uphold.	Shorten Sentence	I often act according to my task requirements even if my inner values are not always consistent with my work tasks.
27	Reference Problem(C3)	I often present myself as someone who finds their tasks to be meaningful when interacting with	Add family/friends and clients	I often present myself as someone who finds their tasks to be meaningful when interacting with

		colleagues, even when I don't always believe that it is.		other people at work, even when I don't always believe it.

Interview Coding Part 2

Table 1: INTERVIEWER RATING FORM

Use the following code for each potential problem:

C1: Does the interviewee have any difficulty understanding the question or the meaning of particular words or phrases?

C2: Does the interviewee have any difficulty recalling a situation with regard to the question?

C3: Does the interviewee have difficulty in understanding what the question refers to?

C4: Does the interviewee have any difficulty in responding to the question?

Number of Interviewees: 5

All participants were based in UK, interviewed online(video/voice call). Each interview took upto 45 mins approximately. Participants were all full-time working individuals, with different backgrounds, age and tenure.

	No		C1	C2	C3	C4	Other Problems	Comments
Part 1	1	In your organisation, how often have you had to align yourself with organisational goals that are not personally meaningful?	No	No	No	No	None	Personally meaningful as a construct was questioned. However overall no issues noticed with the question.
	2	In your organisation, how often are you obliged to act according to your organisation's requirements compared to acting according to what is meaningful to you?	No	No	No	No	None	Key note: some recognised organisational goals different to organisational requirements. Therefore responses to both the questions were different.
	3	In your organisation,	No	No	No	No	Most participants disagreed with this	While some agreed that they modified their

Chapter :6: Development and Validation of Existential Labour and Meaningfulness Dissonance

		how often do you modify your inner values and beliefs to follow organisational protocol?					question as inner values were seen as being constant and not susceptible to change.	values, they did not agree to supressing. Hence the word change created significant differences.
Part 1.1	4	While working, how often have you had to align yourself with tasks requirements that you do not find to be important?	No	No	No	No	None	Task requirements were associated with task demands and quality of task.
	5	While working, how often are you obliged to act according to your task requirements compared to acting according to what is meaningful to you?	No	No	No	No	Redundant and repetitive, according to participants	
	6	While working, how often do you modify your inner values and beliefs to fulfil task requirements?	No	No	No	No	.	
Part 3	7	I often have to convince myself that what my organisation does is purposeful to me.	Yes	No	No	No	Participants had to read the statement twice before answering. At first most participants misunderstood the statement. The word convince was misread.	The key word convince was missed out by most participants at first, but after reading it twice, the participants were able to understand the statement and changed their response rating.
	8	I often have to convince myself that working in this organisation is personally beneficial.	Yes	No	No	No		Participants questioned what personally beneficial meant and how it is different from the previous statement. Personally beneficial in this context meant

Chapter :6: Development and Validation of Existential Labour and Meaningfulness Dissonance

								money and materialistic benefits.
	9	Due to the importance of meeting this organisation's goals and values, I often have to alter my own values and behave accordingly.	No	No	No	No	None	
	10	I often have to put in effort to believe that being a part of this organisation is purposeful and significant.	No	No	No	No	None	
	11	I often have to convince myself that objectives of my organisation matches what is personally meaningful to me.	Yes	No	No	No	Change of words, make it easier to understand	Change into ' I often have to convince myself that what is meaningful to my organisation matches what is meaningful to me.
Part 3.1.	12	I often have to convince myself that my tasks at work have value and are significant to me.	No	No	No	No	None	Easy to understand, and easy to recall situations with regard to this item.
	13	I often have to convince myself that my work tasks are personally beneficial to me.	Yes	Yes	No	No	Best interests and 'assigned' were questioned. This statement had to be explained or probed for it to be answered appropriately.	
	14	Due to the importance of meeting this job's requirements effectively, I often have to alter my own	No	No	No	No	none	This statement was easily answered, suggesting most statements should be framed in a similar manner.

Chapter :6: Development and Validation of Existential Labour and Meaningfulness Dissonance

		values and behave accordingly.						
	15	I often have to put in effort to believe that the tasks I do at work are purposeful.	No	No	No	No	None	
	16	I often have to convince myself that my work tasks match what is meaningful to me.	No	No	No	No	None	No change required.
Part 4	17	I often act according to organisational expectations, even if my inner values are not always consistent with my organisation's.	No	No	No	No		Not seen as a negative statement, but as an act of professionalism. Some people agreed they have no choice but to act in this way.
	18	To conform to organisational expectations, I often suppress/modify what is meaningful to me.	No	No	No	Yes	Change Suppress to Modify, suppress is seen as too strong and difficult for participants to accept.	
	19	I often pretend as if my organisation's purpose is meaningful when interacting with other people at work, even when it isn't.	No	No	No	No		
	20	I often fake/act like that my organisation is personally meaningful to me, in order to fit in.	No	No	No	No	Statement almost controversial, participants might have hesitated to give out honest answers. Changed Fake to 'act like'	No change required, as participants will not be monitored during the next step, while responding.

Chapter :6: Development and Validation of Existential Labour and Meaningfulness Dissonance

	21	I often present myself as someone who finds what my organisation does to be meaningful, even when I don't always believe it is.	No	No	No	No	Change present myself	Present myself- when changed into act like someone...was easier to understand.
	22	To deal with organisational expectations in an appropriate way, I often suppress/modify what is meaningful to me.	No	No	No	No		
Part 4.1.	23	I often act according to my task requirements even if my inner values are not always consistent with my work tasks.	No	No	No	No		Most participants agreed to this statement as a sign of professionalism.
	24	To deal with task requirements in an appropriate way, I often suppress/modify what is meaningful to me.	No	No	No	No		The phrase was comprehended easily. The word appropriate way was key as it provided some context.
	25	I often fake that my work role and tasks are personally meaningful to me, in order to fulfil the requirements of my job.	Yes	No	No	No	Work role/work tasks are confusing words, meaning two different things. Remove work role. Change fake to act like or pretend	
	26	I often pretend as if my tasks are significant when interacting with colleagues, even though my tasks are	No	No	No	No		

Chapter :6: Development and Validation of Existential Labour and Meaningfulness Dissonance

		not meaningful to me.						
	27	I often pretend as if I agree with the purpose of my tasks even when I don't believe it.	No	No	No	No		
	28	I often present myself as someone who finds their tasks to be meaningful when interacting with other people at work, even when I don't always believe it.	No	No	No	No	Redundant	Either remove item, or change present myself to acts like someone

N=10

Results:

Item Modification

Question Number	Problem Type	Old Item	Modification made	New Item
11	Comprehension problem(C1)	I often have to convince myself that objectives of my organisation matches what is personally meaningful to me.	Re-structuring	I often have to convince myself that what is meaningful to my organisation matches what is meaningful to me.
18	Recall Problem(C2)	To conform to organisational expectations, I often suppress what is meaningful to me.	Changing suppress to modify	To conform to organisational expectations, I often modify what is meaningful to me.
20	Recall Problem(C2)	I often fake that my organisation is personally meaningful to me, in order to fit in.	Remove Fake and change to act like	I often act like my organisation is personally meaningful to me, in order to fit in.
21	Recall Problem(C2)	I often present myself as someone who finds what my organisation does to be meaningful, even	Change Present myself	I often put up a front as someone who finds this organisation to be meaningful, even

		when I don't always believe it is.		when I don't always believe it.
22	Recall Problem(C2)	To deal with organisational expectations in an appropriate way, I often suppress/modify what is meaningful to me.	Change suppress	To deal with organisational expectations in an appropriate way, I often modify what is meaningful to me.
25	Reference Problem(C3), Recall Problem(C2)	I often fake that my work role and tasks are personally meaningful to me, in order to fulfil the requirements of my job.	Change Fake, remove work role	I often act like my work tasks are meaningful to me, in order to fulfil the my job requirements.
28	Comprehension problem(C1)	I often present myself as someone who finds their tasks to be meaningful when interacting with other people at work, even when I don't always believe it.	Remove present myself	I often put up a front as someone who finds their tasks to be meaningful, even when I don't always believe it.

11.11 Appendix 11: Example of Notes from Cognitive Interviews:

Coding Scheme

C1: Does the interviewee have any difficulty understanding the question or the meaning of particular words or phrases?

C2: Does the interviewee have any difficulty relating to the question?

C3: Does the interviewee have difficulty in understanding what the question refers to?

C4: Does the interviewee have any difficulty in responding to the question?

11.11.1. Notes From Interviews

Interviewee 1: AZ9051991

Personally meaningful- not a clear term. Different definitions. Meaningfulness would be important, and self-serving.

Inner values and beliefs- do not matter in the work context as its being professional. Inner values and beliefs are different to what is personally meaningful.

Obliged: *This term could be simplified.*

Chapter :6: Development and Validation of Existential Labour and Meaningfulness Dissonance

Organisational requirements could be personal requirements vs their own goals and strategies. Such as personal conduct/personal appearance vs organisational mission and vision statements.

Everyone as a word: *This is vague, maybe include family and friends vs. colleagues.*

Overall, clear distinction between organisational and task related items.

Surface acting items were more an indication of professionalism compared to acting against one's values and goals.

Time and Context were key in understanding the items. Need to include that in the measurement.

Work hard- remove term and put in effort as one of the key terms. Item 4 in Part 3 was difficult to answer.

Interviewee 2: AK1090792

Personally Meaningful: means pay and personal accomplishment, career progression.

Inner values and beliefs: stems from a religious view point. Different to what is meaningful for the individual. This interviewee is able to separate the two and work regardless.

Including time seems to be important, as there seems to be instances where work is meaningful and where it isn't.

Organisational Goals and Values: Cost effectiveness(Not clear)

Differences in the rating between deep existential items i.e. organisation vs tasks.

Organisation was more like a brand-related commitment, however tasks seem to be mandated and disengaging.

Surface existential acting: No differences in ratings i.e. organisation vs tasks. These items were seen as an act of professionalism.

Addition of friends/family and pretending could be a good addition.

Interviewee 3: MS 23101984

Meaningful work: means to serve others.

Most answers were neutral as the experiences fluctuated.

No sign of suppression of inner values and beliefs.

Suppress(seems to be a more severe form)

However, values and beliefs seem to be related.

Organisational goals: Maybe make a distinction between what the organisation has in place and what they actually follow through. Compared to Organisation vs you congruence.

Convince myself: seems to be difficult to process at first.

Work hard: change the term to effort.

Items related to Organisation: often related to department instead of the whole organisation. Maybe include team/department in the items.

Chapter :6: Development and Validation of Existential Labour and Meaningfulness Dissonance

With regard to this particular profession, interviewee found it difficult to relate to the items as there was no experience with existential acting. However, more acting noticed with organisational items compared to task related items. There are certain instances in particular situations where existential labour takes place but not significant enough to lead to surface or deep acting.

Interviewee 4: SB120883

Most of the items did not apply to participant, as she did not find the purpose of the organisation to be meaningful. More importantly, most of the items were rated 5, with regard to meaningfulness dissonance.

With regard to deep existential acting, the participant did not relate with any of the items as she did not want to find any meaning at work. She had other sources outside of work to give her that meaning.

With regard to surface existential acting, items with regard to values and beliefs were rated strongly agree and those with pretentious behaviour were rated strongly disagree.

Part 4.1:

1. Even though my inner values and beliefs are not always consistent with the contents of my work tasks, *I still act according to what my tasks requires me to uphold.* 5
2. To deal with task requirements in an appropriate way, I often suppress what is meaningful to me. 5 *THERE IS NOTHING AT WORK MEANINGFUL TO ME.*
3. Even though my tasks are not meaningful to me, I often pretend as if my tasks are significant when interacting with colleagues. 1
4. Even though I do not always agree with the purpose of my work tasks, I pretend as if I do. 1 *I AGREE WITH THE PURPOSE.*
5. I often present myself as someone who finds their tasks to be meaningful when interacting with colleagues, even when I don't always believe that it is. 1
6. I often fake that my work role and tasks are personally meaningful to me, in order to fulfil the requirements of my job. 1

Meaningful to me- personally

Values and beliefs not applicable to me

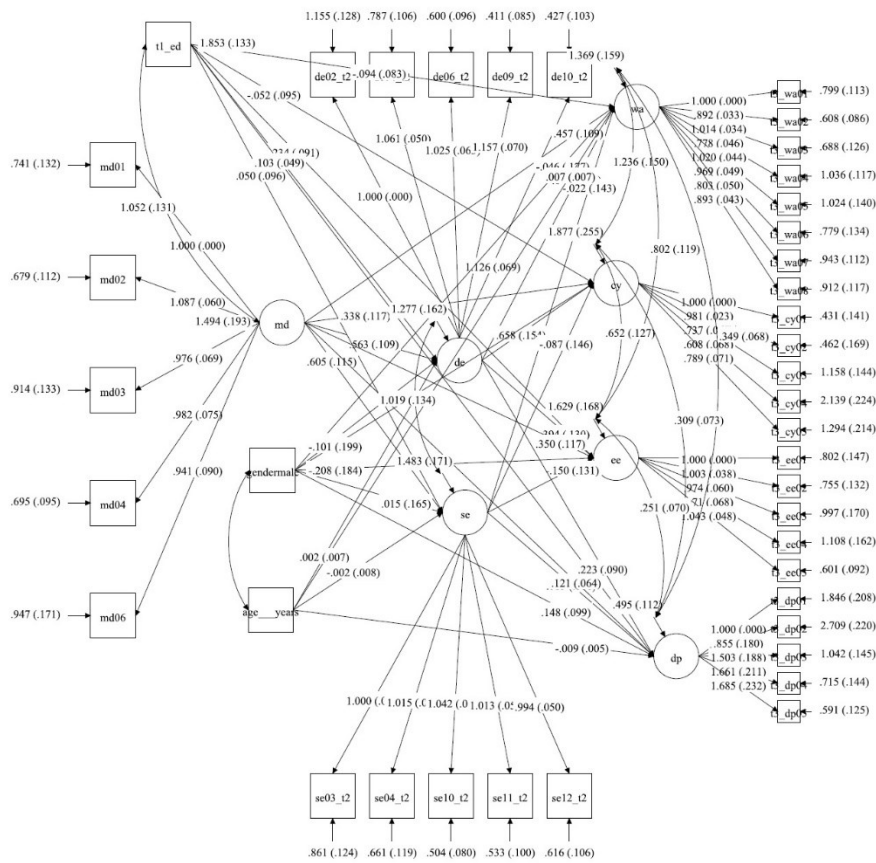
Do you agree with the process at work/ improve processes at work? Processes- Directors make them. Managers evaluate them.

11.12 Appendix 12: SEM Diagram showing all pathways- Study 3d presented in Chapter 7

Figure 7.2 Full SEM showing latent factor loadings and parameter estimates

Chapter :7: Validating Newly Developed Existential Labour and Meaningfulness Dissonance

md- meaningfulness dissonance
 ed_T1-emotional dissonance
 de-deep existential acting
 se-surface existential acting
 wa-worker alienation
 cy-cynicism
 ee-emotional exhaustion
 dp-depersonalisation



11.13. Appendix 13: Additional Analysis: Validation of Existential used on a different population (N=215) for another project outside the scope of this PhD thesis

Sample: 215 working individuals, working in the UK. Age ranging from 18 to 61. Participants had 95 females and 120 males.

Table 12-1. Standardised factor loadings for the 11-item version of the EXLM

Items	Deep Exl	Surface Exl
DE01_Task	0.81	
DE02_Org	0.88	
DE02_Task	0.87	
DE05_Task	0.78	
DE04_Org	0.86	
DE04_Task	0.84	
SE04_Task		0.73
SE06_Task		0.74
SE05_Task		0.79
SE03_Org		0.81
SE04_Org		0.81

All item loadings were statistically significant at $p < 0.001$.

This additional dataset was used to test existential labour and its effect on personal accomplishment, this was completed as a part of investigating the role of COVID-19 factors as well i.e., working from home, furloughed employees etc.

11.14. Appendix 14: Modified Items for YSC's LTD Motivation Assessment

These items were modified under after further inspection following the recommendations of Brown & Olivares (2011)³.

A good item was considered to be unambiguous, interesting to complete, relevant to those with leadership responsibilities and was aimed at a reading level appropriate for executives from across multiple cultures. A number of different item formats were written to explore the relative strengths and weaknesses of several different item types commonly utilized in this type of questionnaire. These were: Likert rating (normative) and graded preferences formats. Additional writing guidelines included:

- No negation terms and qualifiers are used

³ Brown, A., & Maydeu-Olivares, A. (2011). Item response modeling of forced-choice questionnaires. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, 460-502.

- No double-barreled or conditional phrases used
- Lengthy statements were avoided.

The existential labour items were included as a part of the broader Motivation model, out of 72 items 10 items – developed and validated for existential labour has been tested and are currently being validated on a sample of 200 leaders based in the UK. The results of this study cannot be shared as it is owned by YSC ltd.

ExisLab_1_Deep	I often have to convince myself that my tasks at work have value and are significant to me.	I have to convince myself that my tasks at work are significant to me.
ExisLab_2_Deep	I often have to convince myself that working in this organisation is personally beneficial to me.	I have to convince myself that working in this organisation is personally beneficial to me.
ExisLab_3_Deep	I often have to convince myself that my work tasks match what is personally meaningful to me.	I have to alter what I believe to fit in at work
ExisLab_4_Deep	I often have to put in effort to believe that being a part of this organisation is meaningful to me.	I have to put in effort to believe that being a part of this organisation is meaningful to me.
ExisLab_5_Deep	I often have to put in effort to believe that the tasks I do at work are purposeful.	I have to put in effort to believe that the tasks I do at work are purposeful.
ExisLab_6_Surface	I often pretend as if I agree with the purpose of my tasks even when I don't believe it.	I pretend as if I agree with the purpose of my tasks
ExisLab_7_Surface	I often act like my work role is personally meaningful to me, to fulfil the requirements of my tasks.	I act like my work role is personally meaningful to me, to fulfil the requirements of my tasks.
ExisLab_8_Surface	I often act like someone who finds their tasks to be meaningful when interacting with other people at work, even when I don't always believe it.	I act like someone who finds their tasks to be meaningful when interacting with other people at work
ExisLab_9_Surface	I often pretend as if my organisation's purpose is meaningful when interacting with other people at work, even when it isn't.	I pretend as if my organisation's purpose is meaningful
ExisLab_10_Surface	I often act like my organisation is personally meaningful to me, to fit in.	I act like I find my organisation's values meaningful.