



# Meaningful work of thai workers in urban society: A grounded theory

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## Abstract

Massive workplace challenges precipitated by the digital age have given rise to questions about work and its meaning to life. This has become significant interest, involving multidisciplinary studies. The present study extends the literature on meaningful work (MFW) theory by examining the MFW process of urban workers in Thailand. In-person semi-structured interviews were conducted serially, to the point of theoretical saturation, with 15 participants working in the metropolitan area. The data were collected, transcribed verbatim, and then analyzed using the constructivist grounded theory approach. The findings suggest four main themes: (1) the intrapersonal process; (2) environments that foster MFW; (3) MFW outcomes; and (4) workplace challenges. The process essentially begins with an intrapersonal process, and then continues to interact dynamically with the other three themes, each of which fosters the process. The implications of the findings and future directions are discussed.

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## Introduction

Recently, the chronic stress and burnout epidemic has become more prevalent. Hardworking, and long working hours have become common practices worldwide. These challenges remain unmanaged as an occupation phenomenon, confirmed by the World Health Organization (Prior, 2019). This extreme working needs to be seen as a red flag, indicating that many workers have an unhealthy working lifestyle, especially urban workers, where evidence showed that they had lower scores on the mental health scale than rural residents (Li et al., 2009). A similar finding was revealed in work by Cui et al. (2012), in

which rural-migrant workers manifested a high prevalence of both life stress and work stress.

According to recent studies in Thailand, workers living in the metropolitan areas had a stress rate two times higher than those living in rural areas (Department of Mental Health, 2018). And, in the past consecutive 10 years, the official statistics report that Thai adults of working ages have had the highest rate of suicide (Department of Mental Health, n.d.). By working hard and having little room for other aspects of life, the resulting life-threatening conditions create dissatisfaction and ongoing concerns for the individuals involved. At some point, existential questions such as, “Why am I doing this job?” arise challenging the individual’s sense of being. In seeking a solution to alleviate such situations, meaningful work (MFW) has become a topic of interest among many workers, scholars, and practitioners in

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recent years (Bailey et al., 2019) in the hope of making the working day more positive and purposeful.

These emerging trends can be attributed to a theory that Viktor Frankl proposed in his famous book, “Man’s Search for Meaning,” which states that finding meaning in work is intimately related to finding meaning in life (Frankl, 1959). Aligned with Frankl, Yeoman (2014) emphasizes the significance of MFW, saying that it is not just desirable, but it is also fundamental to human needs. Searching for meaning appears to be one of the most basic human needs, as is attested by accumulating research demonstrating that many people want their work to matter in a deeply existential sense (Lips-Wiersma & Wright, 2012). The endeavor to understand more about MFW is not just a nascent focus on which scholars have recently put the limelight; it has been studied for decades, i.e. Frankl (1959), Terkel (1975 as cited in Bailey et al., 2019).

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## Literature Review

According to previous studies, “MFW is typically defined as work that is: (1) personally meaningful; (2) aids personal growth; and (3) contributes to the common good” (as cited in Allan et al., 2016, p. 2; Steger et al., 2012). Most research has focused on the MFW sources (Rosso et al., 2010), on theoretical frameworks (Chalofsky, 2003; Lysova et al., 2019), on conceptual measurement (Lips-Wiersma & Wright, 2012; Steger et al., 2012), and on the outcomes (Bailey et al., 2019; Pavlish & Hunt, 2012), which have left its process with a fairly loose description.

According to their literature review, Rosso et al.’s work (2010) posited a theoretical integration and review of MFW that indicated its definition, sources, and processes, which provided independent explanations for how MFW occurs at diverse levels. These scholars identified seven mechanisms, some of which have been proposed theoretically but not yet empirically tested (p. 108). With this regard, there is a need for further investigation into how the MFW process develops to provide more hands-on applications for practitioners and individuals.

As work is influenced by cultural norms, it is appropriate to consider how national values shape perceptions and interpretations around work-related topics. Schwartz (1999; 2006) used the theory of cultural value orientation to explain how people in different countries rationalize and react to various matters in unique ways. In the light of cultural diversity, the MFW

phenomenon needs to be studied in the locals so that contextualized findings can be incorporated into theoretical insights from leading scholars so that best practices can be identified.

In the past decade, a fair number of MFW studies were conducted in North America and Europe. In the Asian territories, most research efforts were put into investigating correlations between MFW and other work-related variables (e.g., employee engagement, turnover rate, job satisfaction). These studies were aligned with MFW trends in Western countries, for example, job performance (Ling, 2014), where the studies stated that MFW was positively correlated with these two variables. In Thailand, MFW studies were investigated in similar manners with other countries, which means that the MFW process in Thailand was fundamentally under-researched (Mekhum & Jermittiparsert, 2019; Supanti & Butcher, 2019). For this reason, a fine-tuned understanding of what sparks and then maintains MFW needs to be explored further. From the available literature, there are very few studies from outside of North America and Europe that can provide a broader view of the MFW process.

The contribution of this study, therefore, is to explain how MFW is constructed in Thai urban workers whose high-stress levels potentially lead to existential questions about work and its meaning to life more than those in rural areas. With the hope of extending the Western-based conceptual framework, the findings should provide practitioners (e.g., human resources persons, organizational leaders, consultants, career counselors) and individuals with ideas about where they should begin when they want to foster MFW, what the next steps are to continue and enhance the experience, and what the potential obstacles are along the way. Not only will such findings visualize what the MFW process looks like in such a context, but they also can be utilized to elevate the mentality of workers in the metropolitan areas in Thailand to a healthier stage. The understanding of the MFW process will benefit career counselors who work with individuals dealing with stress or burnout in their job, or human resources persons and organizational leaders who explore initiatives to enhance meaningfulness in their employees’ work for higher and richer organizational outcomes.

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## Methodology

The purpose of this qualitative study was to examine the MFW process of Thai urban workers. A grounded theory with a constructivist approach developed by

Charmaz (2006) was selected. As Madsen et al. (2016) point out, constructivist grounded theorists give priority to the study “phenomenon” or “process” rather than to a description of what the study focuses on.

The research was guided by this question, “How does the process of MFW occur among urban workers in Thailand?”, influenced by Super’s developmental self-concept theory (Super, 1953)—explaining that a choice of career has been made through development phases of one’s identity across the life span, and the career construction theory (Savickas, 2002)—viewing careers from a constructionist perspective, which aligns to this research methodology.

### *Participants and Sampling Strategy*

Participants were recruited through personal networks and official social media sites. A theoretical sampling approach was used to identify participants from metropolitan areas in Thailand. The participants were selected based on inclusion criteria matching a MFW definition as derived from the literature review. MFW is defined as work that: (1) is personally positive meaningful; (2) has perceived value to self and others; (3) aids personal growth; (4) is congruent with self-identity (personal values, life goals, etc.); (5) has positive impact on one’s self and involved persons (direct/indirect); (6) enables autonomy in work; and (7) does physical and mental harm to no one. Participants had to be Thai citizens, having worked in a metropolitan area for at least one year in their current job, and be willing to participate in the entire process. The exclusion criteria were: (1) lacking any of the properties listed in the inclusion criteria; and (2) being not able to participate until the final phase of the study.

From the pool of possible participants, 24 persons responded and were processed in a screening process as described in the inclusion criteria. Table 1 outlines the demographic and occupational information of all 15 participants finally included in this study. Study recruitment occurred between October 2019 and February 2020. The research was approved by the Institutional Review Board at the university of the researchers.

### *Data Collection*

Once the qualified respondents were confirmed as willing participants, they were asked to sign an informed consent agreement and notified regarding research procedures and their rights as research participants. Aliases were provided and used for all documents and publications to keep their identity confidential. The interview questions were developed to comprehend the phenomenon initially and were further developed upon participants’ data to dive deeper in the next rounds.

All interviews were digitally recorded by a voice recorder and transcribed verbatim for analysis. The researchers decided to stop the data collection process when data reached theoretical saturation—the point at which gathering more data about the topic of interest revealed no new properties nor yielded any further theoretical insights into the emerging grounded theory.

### *Data Analysis*

All data analyzed using the constructivist grounded theory approach began immediately upon completion of each interview. The first step is coding—the process of defining what the data is about. Throughout the process,

**Table 1** Study participants

Name	Gender Identity	Age	Highest Level of Education	Occupation	Years in Current Job
Tom	Male	28	Master’s Degree	Data Analyst	2
Mary	Female	29	Master’s Degree	Teacher	4.5
Bart	Male	28	Bachelor’s Degree	Web Designer	2.5
Claire	Female	33	Doctorate	HROD Consultant	5.5
Paisley	Non-binary	31	Bachelor’s Degree	Government Officer	8.5
Patricia	Female	31	Master’s Degree	Teacher	6.5
Pearl	Female	31	Bachelor’s Degree	HR Officer	4
Nash	Male	30	Bachelor’s Degree	Engineer	8
Maxwell	Male	36	Bachelor’s Degree	Business Owner	12.5
Mason	Female	33	Master’s Degree	Speech Therapist	9.5
Kathy	Female	25	Bachelor’s Degree	Teacher	2.5
Jasper	male	30	Master’s Degree	Teacher	12
Myra	Female	25	Bachelor’s Degree	Call Center Agent	3.5
Peter	Male	34	Doctorate	Postdoctoral researcher	3.5
Frank	Male	38	Bachelor’s Degree	Learning Center Manager	12

researchers compared data with data, and data with codes in which the emerging categories appeared. The second phase of coding is a focused, selective phase that uses the most significant or frequent initial codes to sort, synthesize, integrate, and organize large amounts of data (Charmaz, 2006, p. 46). From this phase, concise categories emerge. The third technique used to construct a theory is theoretical coding where abstract ideas identified in the collected data are demonstrated. After the third round of interviews, the authors determined that the collected data had arrived at theoretical saturation.

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## Results

The aim of this study was to examine the MFW process of urban workers in Thailand. The findings suggest that MFW requires the integration of multi-level factors to foster and maintain it. The experiences and reflections of all participants outlined the dynamic process of MFW in four major themes: (1) the intrapersonal process; (2) environments that foster MFW; (3) MFW outcomes; and (4) workplace challenges.

### *The Intrapersonal Process*

The process is initiated at a very personal level. It begins with a person's self-observations and the: (1) self-awareness that comes to differentiate MFW from other ordinary jobs. Once individuals have identified the job they perceive as meaningful and aligned with their; (2) personal values, they will find ways to; (3) access such work. After working for a period of time, they will consider if the decision is right by pondering over their direct experiences. If the answer is yes, the individuals will continue working. While working; (4) passion in work and effort in accomplishing tasks; (5) altruism to stakeholders; and (6) development in knowledge and capabilities in doing the job will follow.

After being awarded a graduate degree, Mary had lived experience that helped her figure out her best choice. It became clear, after a couple of months, that her job was not what she wanted to do. As Mary shared, "It was more of a sales job, rather than the education consultant that I had first imagined. I knew I could do it, but I wouldn't be happy though." This realization prompted Mary to find another job that was much closer to her dream—the job she is currently doing.

For the participants who felt right in their job, meaningfulness in work continued and flourished as three elements: passion and effort, altruism, and development

in knowledge and capabilities. As Mason expressed, "I see myself as part of those children's development. [Children] could live more comfortably because of my therapy to improve their functioning".

As individuals continue working in a job they perceive as meaningful, the lived experience provides vivid guidance for them to either continue or else change their career path.

### *Environments That Foster MFW*

From this study, family, work itself, organization and stakeholders, and society are the factors that foster the MFW phenomenon. The characteristics of environments that foster MFW are as follows: families that are supportive, and, at the same time, give economic meaning to the individual; work that fulfills basic needs and life purpose and enables a full expression of the self; an organization and stakeholders that provide support, trust, opportunities for individuals to learn and grow in alignment with their true selves; and a society in which relevant problems exist and activate the individual to be part of their improvement.

#### *Family*

From all 15 participants, no matter which job they chose, similar data emerged about receiving family support. Patricia had received support from her family even though her parents were very worried when she started her career as a music teacher:

At first, they were so worried about [me] because [I] had to drive long ways to [my] student's places and many times, it was during night time. However, [I] could take care of [myself]. [I] never had a car accident and could save money, so they trust [me] more for pursuing this career.

#### *Work itself*

Work characteristics also shape how meaningful individuals experience their work to be. The findings revealed five key characteristics that enhanced meaningfulness in work: (1) it met basic needs; (2) it enabled self-development; (3) commuting was convenient; (4) they had autonomy in work; and (5) it was challenging and nonroutine.

#### *Organization and stakeholders*

There is no doubt that the workplace itself can orient how people feel when working. Supervisors, colleagues and co-workers, trust from clients, the work system and the workplace atmosphere are all components that can

foster meaningfulness in work. The shared characteristic of these fostering environments is the “supportiveness” provided to the work performers.

### *Society*

Having a larger scale of influence on the phenomenon of MFW is society. The findings showed that national and local societies impacted how workers idealized, interpreted, and pursued work that they perceived as meaningful. Another essential reason arose from inefficiency or problems in some aspects of the society. These came to determine meaningfulness in work in one of two ways: on the one hand, they activated people to improve or to develop the status quo in a particular area, on the other hand, they realized the importance of a particular job to society.

### *MFW Outcomes*

MFW outcomes are the outputs, outcomes, consequences, or impacts on stakeholders derived from the MFW that individuals perform. Not only does MFW result in positive outcomes for the individual, but it also contributes to stakeholders at multiple levels: family, clients, colleagues and co-workers, and organizations.

#### *Individual outcomes*

According to the participants’ experiences, MFW brought benefits to them in two major arenas: the personal and the professional. For the personal outcomes, from the participants’ narratives, they found that having MFW increased their “self-esteem” and influenced them to develop themselves as persons. As Bart shared, “Actually, [I] could do both [front-end and back-end] functions, but front-end [web developers] are found less than back-end ones. It made [me] feel good that [I] can do front-end tasks also.” Another interesting positive outcome that the urban workers received from MFW was “self-development” in areas that related either to their personal or professional realms. Mason narrated her change over the years due to her passion for work:

After [I] received feedback from clients and colleagues, [I] became more patient and have tried to understand other people. There might be some reason why [parents’ patients] were like that. ... [I] realized that this job made [me] see things more holistically.

Narrations from the participants envisioned that they gained more self-abundance in terms of esteem and development as a person after performing in MFW. For the professional outcomes, the participants were pleased by several outcomes from doing MFW in the work

context: pleasure in assisting clients, in increased self-efficacy, and from recognition. As Kathy shared:

I noticed myself becoming more confident and assertive after working here for months. Basically, I dared not to speak up or present my ideas in meetings. But then I realized that if I were a teacher and stayed reserved like that, I wouldn’t be a good role model for my students. So, this thought came to push me forward in leading new changes in the school.

#### *Family*

Even though a family is not a direct stakeholder in relation to work, the participants shared that their family also received positive outcomes from their MFW. One common reason was when the MFW gave them adequate pay by which their basic needs were met. As Myra said, “When [I] started working here, [my] family seemed relieved that [I] at least was employed. [I] could take care of [my] own life.”]. This evidence posits that MFW also positively impacts indirect people, as the MFW definition portrays, one of whom is their family members.

#### *Clients*

Whether internal or external clients, in a general sense, the positive outcomes the clients obtained were to improve their lives in a certain way. Mary, a language teacher, illustrated how her adult students gained benefits from their language lessons:

Their language skill improved just as much as I put in my effort. From zero to the point where they began to talk with a taxi driver by themselves ...that was really fulfilling and motivated me to keep teaching them.

#### *Colleagues and co-workers*

In most cases, MFW yielded by-products to colleagues and co-workers because of good performance in jobs the participants loved to do. For example, Frank could see how his co-workers benefited from his early completion of his required tasks, which allowed him to run around and help his team. In a similar way, Myra perceived that her work was helpful for other staff: “[We] help each other to find solutions for [our] customers. They helped [me], [I] helped them when they couldn’t figure out what to do”.

#### *Organizations*

As work is directly associated with an organization, outcomes from MFW would potentially have positive impacts on one aspect or another: quality, process, performance, workplace relationships, atmosphere, effectiveness, productivity, the bottom line and so on.

These impacts could be direct or indirect depending on the relationships between the parties. Myra's contribution was part of the reward that her company was granted in the previous year. Her company received a good reputation from the award, which was the consequence of her team's effort as she shared, "My team's performance contributed to the company's increased profits, and the reward reception made a good brand image".

### Workplace Challenges

This study was distinct from others covering the MFW topic in that its findings included "workplace challenges" as a new aspect of the phenomenon. Having MFW does not mean that the individuals will walk an easy road. Yet, because of the meaningfulness in work, they stay on and overcome the challenges that come to test their resolve. The categories under this theme are fear at an early phase, adaptation at an early phase, and persistence against workplace challenges.

#### Fear at an early phase

Although it was the work the participants had set their hearts on, fear, anxiety, or feelings of being overwhelmed frequently arose in the early days before they had settled into the new environment, regardless of their previous work experience. Claire, a freelance consultant, described a time when she was feeling uncertain about the situation that she was going to face:

At the very first moment, [I] was nervous and unsure what [I] should do for the company. [I] was worried about what resistance employees might have against [my] team when deploying new change. However, [I] could sense a feeling of confidence within [me], that [I] could do something beneficial for them. [I] took it as a stepping stone to go forward.

#### Adaptation at an early phase

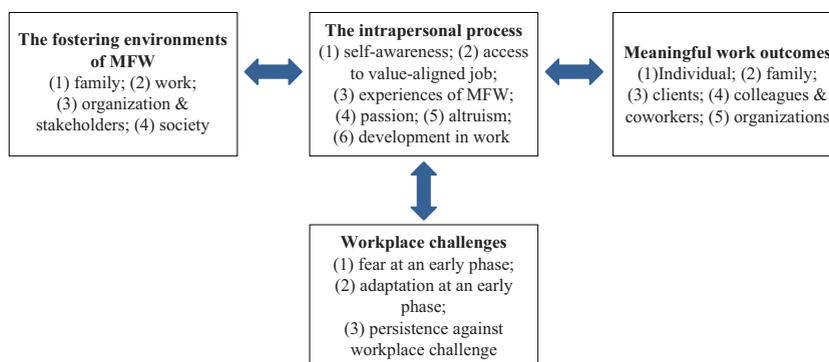
To survive and be able to perform well in a new setting, the participants needed to adapt to the unfamiliar workplace to ensure their outputs qualified and the work processes ran smoothly. Adaptation takes place in both the physical and psychological realms. As Tom remembered his first days in his data analysis job, he said, "At first, it was quite confusing because [I'd] never worked in this [data analysis] field before. [I] was quite fascinated to learn that there are many types of data that [I'd] never heard of. There were so many things indeed".

#### Persistence against workplace challenges

Although the participants encountered challenges in their work, those barriers did not reduce their passion and determination to continue in their careers. On the contrary, they had strong self-affirmation about choosing this career path. When Tom faced challenges in his new career due to the higher expectations following his probation, he admitted that it was not easy to do what he loved:

When I entered the fourth month, tasks became much more difficult since the company had higher expectations than ever. During my probation, it was time for me to learn and develop in this new territory, but when real work came up front, I was asked challenging questions by higher levels or executives. I needed to optimize all data to deliver the solutions they wanted.

In addition to the four major themes found in this study, the researchers also saw the interactions between them dynamically. Each theme serves as a component for the rest of the MFW process to carry on. Referring to the data from the participants, the MFW process has the intrapersonal process as the core of the entire phenomenon illustrated in Figure 1. According to the data analysis,



**Figure 1** The process of meaningful work by urban workers in Thailand with sub-themes

the findings outlined the four major themes that illustrated how MFW occurs and continues, in which its interactions in-between maintain meaningful experiences in work. The first theme—“the intrapersonal process”—was presented as at the core of the overall interactions. It bidirectionally interacted with the other three major themes. This information implied that MFW would not occur if the elements at the individual level were absent. Although a multi-level conceptual model emerged in this study, other components seemed dependent on the workers who were the primary agents of this phenomenon. The findings also suggest some unique Eastern-based elements compared with existing Western studies.

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## Discussion

This novel study focused on the MFW process of urban workers who perceived their work as meaningful in Thailand. The findings were parallel with existing literature on the antecedents, mechanisms, and outcomes of MFW, yet they also discovered some distinctions indicating that cultural values can be a causal influence, as discussed below.

### *The Intrapersonal Process*

Each participant’s experience showed that the MFW process is initiated within the individual. At this stage, self-observation and self-reflection play key roles as starting points for raising awareness about which job might be suitable. In most cases, work experience and work knowledge also contribute to decision making as to whether a particular job is aligned with personal values and self-concepts. The continuous pursuit of the phenomenon will eventually help the individual to find their own MFW. The more profoundly individuals know themselves, the better and faster they can actualize their MFW. Referring to the proposal by Rosso et al. (2010) regarding the mechanisms of MFW, it appears that this study identified two out of the seven mechanisms or processes they described: “authenticity” and “self-efficacy.” It differed from the work of Rosso et al. (2010) in that these elements were found during the early stages of the entire process in this grounded research, as contributing to self-awareness and access to a value-aligned job, while in Rosso et al. (2010)’s study, they were proposed independently with no process being portrayed.

Once individuals had made up their minds about the choice of a suitable occupation, they entered a lived experience by applying for a job that would test their career assumptions based on personal values. It is essential to note that the career choices of all participants were made voluntarily, similar to what Lysova et al. (2019) and Rosso et al. (2010) suggest, that “intrinsic motivation” is one of the essential MFW antecedents. An extended understanding of “power distance” in Hofstede’s (Hofstede, 1980) model helps to explain why Thai workers value some jobs over others. For instance, several participants were working as teachers. Thai societal norms focus on the intellectual component of teaching and regard teachers as educated people who hold power in their society.

### *Environments That Foster MFW*

This study revealed that the multi-leveled environments contribute to the fostering of MFW to varying degrees. What distinguishes this finding from the existing literature is that few studies have directly considered the influence of family on the meaning of work (Rosso et al., 2010). Nor has this aspect been found in the integrative reviews of Lysova et al. (2010) and Bailey et al. (2019). The family shaped the meaningfulness of work in reciprocal associations in both supporting and experiencing economic meaning from the MFW. According to Hofstede’s national cultures model (Hofstede, 1980), most Eastern societies are collectivist, which is why families were found to be a source of MFW in this study. Overall, the other fostering environments that interplayed with the MFW intrapersonal process aligned with most of the previous research in this area, with the exception of “convenient commuting” reported as a desired job characteristic for Thai urban workers. A reasonable explanation could be that the traffic in the Bangkok metropolitan area is always jammed. It is understandable that Thai urban workers will consider this factor part of a decent job because they do not want to waste time and energy commuting for hours. In this regard, this study illustrates that local contexts should not be omitted in interpreting research findings and their application.

### *MFW Outcomes*

In general, MFW contributes a vast array of positive outcomes to multiple stakeholders, including family, colleagues, co-workers, and organizations. Some of them are aligned with previous studies about MFW outcomes,

for instance, intrinsic motivation in Johns et al.'s work (1992) entitled in this study as passion (cited in Bailey et al., 2019). These discoveries also comply with one of the MFW definition's elements, that is, MFW aids personal growth in individuals. The findings from this grounded theory research did not report any negative consequences arising from MFW, as were found in some studies (e.g., Allan et al., 2020; Pattnaik & Jena, 2020). Therefore, MFW appears to be a promising component in building a healthy ecosystem for modern employees and organizations that are currently struggling with many challenges and pressures from the outside. As capitalism continues to influence many people to work hard, at least MFW could be a nurturing way of working within which individuals will voluntarily spend their time.

### *Workplace Challenges*

No job is without problems. However, what made the difficult moments endurable for the workers was having strong commitment, passion and persistence in the face of workplace challenges. An intriguing point was that workers who perceived their work as meaningful attempted to cope with problems "by themselves" first. What had them seeing themselves as a primary source of solutions was their perception of self-efficacy in performing the job and having a supportive system from stakeholders. The researchers found no place in the existing literature where a study addressed workplace challenges among the elements of MFW. Although some studies found positive correlations between MFW and hardiness (Britt & Adler, 2001) and found MFW as a mediator between vocational identity and work engagement (Loebel, 2020), such discoveries were attested based on personal traits perspectives, rather than the MFW process itself, which is phenomenological in this study.

Looking at the discovery through a lens of career development, the findings were aligned with Super's developmental self-concept theory (1953) that portrayed a process of discovering a career that manifests when a self-concept becomes more stable across a life span through various stages. Another contemporary career theory that supports the findings is the career construction theory by Savickas (2002). Its conceptual framework postulates that individuals build careers through social constructionism. As showcased in the findings, individuals explore MFW within themselves and reciprocally interact with environments throughout the process.

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## **Conclusion and Recommendation**

As high workplace demands are common nowadays, MFW can be an encouraging approach that enables workers to fill their hearts and souls, rather than just their stomachs. The findings from this study could be advantageous for practitioners, researchers, and employees.

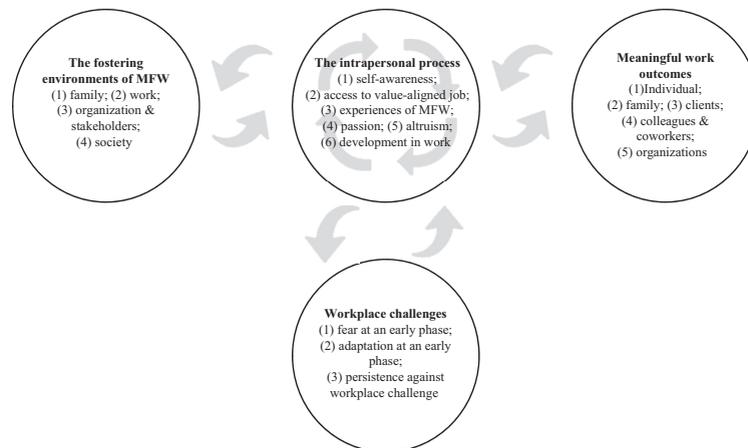
Practitioners such as counselors and consultants can utilize the findings to assist clients in reflecting on personal values and how their current or future job can be aligned with what they see as important. It is crucial to help clients explore themselves in-depth to raise self-awareness in the work-related arena. At an organizational level, a human resources department, supervisors, and leaders can identify what areas should be restructured, or redefined jobs to deliver a work experience that maintains workforces who perceive their work as meaningful while optimizing performance.

Not only at an organizational level, as an individual, by understanding what constitutes MFW, individuals may spend time reflecting on themselves from several perspectives, as elaborated in this study, which affect how they perceive meaningfulness in work and how that perception influences their career choice.

### *Limitations and Research Directions*

One limitation of this study was the participants' educational background, merely from undergraduate and above levels. There was no data constructed from lower-education workers. Due to this limitation, blue-collar participants can be the target group for future research. To expand comprehension of the MFW process in an Eastern context, researchers from Asian countries can replicate the research design to investigate if the findings emerge in a parallel fashion in other Asian countries. Another future research direction that can advance the body of MFW knowledge is developing the MFW scale in Thailand since no localized measurement has been built upon so far.

This study investigated the MFW process of urban workers in Thailand as an initial attempt to advance understanding of the MFW phenomenon in an Eastern country as this is under-investigated in the existing literature. The MFW process consists of the intrapersonal process, environments that foster MFW, MFW outcomes, and workplace challenges, as illustrated in [Figure 2](#). The findings indicate that the intrapersonal process is central to how MFW occurs, and that this interacts with the other three themes in a dynamic fashion. Individuals need to initiate the acquisition of MFW by themselves, and the other components in the process then follow interactively.



**Figure 2** The process of MFW with interactions by urban workers in Thailand

### Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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