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Beyond the Task: How Meaningful Work and Work Engagement Relate to Employee Engagement among Bank Employees in Jambi, Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

Employee engagement is a strategic concern in Indonesian banking, where sales targets, regulatory demands, and service expectations intensify work pressure. This study examined how meaningful work and work engagement relate to employee engagement, defined as engagement directed at the employing organization. In a cross-sectional correlational survey, 83 employees of banks in Jambi City responded, and 74 complete cases were analyzed. Three Likert-type scales were administered, and the data were analyzed with Spearman and partial rank correlations and moderated multiple regression. Meaningful work correlated positively with work engagement (ρ = .36) and employee engagement (ρ = .34), whereas work engagement correlated weakly with employee engagement (ρ = .24). Together, the predictors and their interaction explained 16.7% of the variance in employee engagement, $F(3, 70) = 4.69$, $p = .005$, although no individual predictor coefficient was significant and the interaction was negligible (p = .519). With each predictor adjusted for the other, only meaningful work retained a unique association with employee engagement (partial ρ = .28, p = .016). No gender differences emerged. Meaningful work appears to be a more robust correlate of engagement with the organization, whereas mediating and causal claims require longitudinal evidence.

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Introduction

Employee engagement has become one of the most consequential indicators of organizational health. Gallup's most recent global survey estimates that only 20% of employees worldwide were engaged at work in 2025, a shortfall associated with approximately US$10 trillion in lost productivity (Gallup, 2026a), and its latest meta-analysis of 736 studies shows that business units in the top quartile of engagement outperform those in the bottom quartile by 23% in profitability and by 18% in productivity (Gallup, 2024). Indonesia presents an instructive paradox. A regional workforce survey reported that 75% of Indonesian employees were very or moderately satisfied with their jobs, 18 percentage points above the Asia Pacific average (PwC Indonesia,

2023), yet only 27% of Indonesian employees were classified as engaged in Gallup's country-level data (Gallup, 2026b). The gap between being satisfied with a job and being energetically invested in it indicates that engagement cannot be inferred from contentment alone and that its psychological antecedents deserve closer scrutiny.

The banking sector offers a particularly demanding setting for such scrutiny. Bank employees work under ambitious sales and funding targets, stringent prudential and compliance regulation, and continuous expectations of service excellence, while the industry undergoes a digital transformation that reshapes jobs and career paths (Lydiana, Gustomo, & Bangun, 2025). In Indonesian state-owned banks, engagement has been shown to carry the effect of organizational culture on employee performance (Hasan, 2023), and leaders of Indonesian banks describe the cultivation of meaningful employee experiences as a core leadership task during digital change (Lydiana et al., 2025). Nevertheless, empirical evidence on the psychological foundations of engagement among bank employees in provincial markets outside Java, such as Jambi City, remains scarce, even though employees there work under the same national regulatory framework and performance management systems.

Meaningful work is a promising starting point for understanding these foundations. It refers to work that individuals experience as significant and positive in valence and that contributes to a broader sense of purpose (Rosso, Dekas, & Wrzesniewski, 2010). Steger, Dik, and Duffy (2012) operationalized the construct through three facets: positive meaning in work, meaning making through work (the sense that work contributes to meaning in life), and greater good motivation (the desire for one's work to benefit others). Meaningful work occupies a central place in engagement theory. Kahn (1990) identified psychological meaningfulness, together with psychological safety and psychological availability, as a condition under which people invest themselves in their work roles, and May, Gilson, and Harter (2004) found meaningfulness to be the strongest of these three conditions in predicting engagement. A meta-analysis of 44 studies involving 23,144 participants reported large correlations (r = .70 or above) between meaningful work and work engagement, commitment, and job satisfaction (Allan, Batz-Barbarich, Sterling, & Tay, 2019), and a systematic review positioned meaningful work as a key resource for both individual well-being and organizational functioning (Bailey, Yeoman, Madden, Thompson, & Kerridge, 2019).

Precision about what is meant by engagement is equally important, because the engagement literature has long been criticized for construct proliferation and inconsistent terminology (Bailey, Madden, Alfes, & Fletcher, 2017; Macey & Schneider, 2008). Work engagement is a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption, and its referent is the work activity itself (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Schaufeli, Bakker, & Salanova, 2006). Employee engagement has been conceptualized more broadly as an active, work-related positive psychological state operationalized by the intensity and direction of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral energy (Shuck, Adelson, & Reio, 2017), and a growing body of work stresses that employees can engage not only with their jobs but also with their organizations. Saks (2006) demonstrated that job engagement and organization engagement are related but meaningfully different: perceived organizational support predicted both, job characteristics predicted job engagement, and procedural justice predicted organization engagement. Revisiting these data, Saks (2019) further showed that work engagement measured with the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale predicts organizational commitment and intentions to quit. Farndale, Beijer, Van Veldhoven, Kelliher, and Hope-Hailey (2014) likewise provided evidence that work engagement and organisation engagement are empirically distinguishable and argued that research and practice should state explicitly which referent is being measured. Following this line of work, the present study treats work engagement as engagement with one's work tasks and employee engagement as engagement with the employing organization, that is, the vigor, dedication, and absorption that an employee directs toward the bank as a whole.

Two theoretical perspectives explain why meaningful work should be associated with both forms of engagement. Job Demands–Resources (JD–R) theory proposes that job and personal resources initiate a motivational process that culminates in work engagement (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017); the sense that one's work is significant and purposeful functions as such a resource because it energizes effort and makes investment in the role worthwhile. Social exchange reasoning, in turn, implies that employees who perceive their organization as a source of meaningful contribution reciprocate with engagement directed at the organization itself (Fairlie, 2011; Saks, 2006). The greater good facet of meaningful work is especially relevant here because it connects individual effort to the mission of the organization and to the welfare of customers and communities. Empirical studies support these links. Meaningful work has been associated with work

engagement and, through it, with organizational commitment (Geldenhuys, Łaba, & Venter, 2014); with employee engagement through affective commitment among Indian service sector employees (Kaur & Mittal, 2020); and with work engagement, strengths use, and performance (van Wingerden & van der Stoep, 2018). In Indian service sectors, including banking, meaningful and challenging work was the strongest predictor of employee engagement (Rathee & Sharma, 2024), and work engagement has been linked to employee satisfaction within sustainable human resource management (Sypniewska, Baran, & Kłos, 2023). Most directly, Sinisterra, Peñalver, and Salanova (2025) found that work engagement only partially mediated the association between meaningful work and organizational engagement, which indicates that the two engagement referents are related yet separable and that meaningful work may relate to organizational engagement through more than one route.

Whether work engagement operates as a mechanism or as a boundary condition in these relationships remains contested. A mediation account treats work engagement as the process through which meaningful work translates into broader organizational attachment, whereas a moderation account treats work engagement as a condition that strengthens or weakens the association between meaningful work and an outcome. The two propositions are conceptually and statistically distinct and require different tests (Baron & Kenny, 1986; Hayes, 2022). JD–R theory accommodates both, because resources may operate through engagement but may also interact in their effects (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). Johnson and Jiang (2017) contrasted the two accounts with two-wave data and found that work engagement mediated but did not moderate the association between meaningful work and work-to-life enrichment. Importantly, mediation is a claim about a causal process that unfolds over time, and indirect effects estimated from cross-sectional data can be severely biased relative to their longitudinal counterparts (Maxwell & Cole, 2007). Because the present data are cross-sectional, this study does not test mediation. Instead, it examines whether work engagement moderates the association between meaningful work and employee engagement, and whether each predictor carries a unique association with employee engagement once the other is taken into account.

The study addresses three gaps. First, most evidence on meaningful work and engagement comes from samples outside Southeast Asia, whereas Indonesia combines a collectivist, high-power-distance culture (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010) with a rapidly transforming banking industry; in such a context, meaning may be anchored in contributions to family welfare, customers, and the community as much as in the task itself. Second, few studies have examined job-referenced and organization-referenced engagement within the same design, which leaves open whether meaningful work relates to organizational engagement over and above its association with work engagement. Third, the banking workforce in regional centers outside Java has received little empirical attention. Accordingly, this study examined the associations among meaningful work (MW), work engagement (WE), and employee engagement (EE) among bank employees in Jambi City, Indonesia. Four hypotheses were tested: MW is positively associated with WE (H1); WE is positively associated with EE (H2); MW is positively associated with EE, including after WE is controlled (H3); and WE moderates the association between MW and EE, such that the association is stronger at higher levels of WE (H4). Differences by gender and associations with age were examined as exploratory questions.

Method

This study used a quantitative, cross-sectional, correlational design. The target population comprised employees of banking institutions operating in Jambi City, Jambi Province, Indonesia. Participants were recruited through purposive sampling with two inclusion criteria: (1) active employment, on either a permanent or a contract basis, in a banking institution, and (2) a minimum tenure of three months, which ensured sufficient experience to appraise the meaningfulness of one's work and one's engagement. The questionnaire was distributed online through Google Forms, both via social media and through contact persons in the participating institutions. Before responding, participants were informed about the purpose of the study and the voluntary nature of participation, provided informed consent, and were assured that their identities and responses would remain confidential and would be used solely for research purposes.

A total of 83 questionnaires were returned. Nine submissions (10.8%) were incomplete and were excluded listwise; consequently, every descriptive and inferential analysis reported in this article is based on the same analytic sample of $N = 74$ complete cases, and the gender comparisons used $n = 31$ men and $n = 43$ women. Table 1 summarizes the characteristics of the analytic sample. The sample was predominantly female (58.1%) and relatively junior: 85.1% of respondents had a tenure of six years or less. Respondents reported 17 institution names; after labels referring to the same bank were harmonized (for example, “BCA” and “Bank

Central Asia", or "Bank 9 Jambi" and "BPD Jambi"), they represented 15 distinct institutions, which were grouped into five types. A sensitivity analysis (Cohen, 1988) indicated that, with $N = 74$ and a two-tailed α of .05, the study had 80% power to detect bivariate correlations of approximately .32 or larger, an omnibus regression effect of $f^2 \geq 0.16$ for three predictors, and a single term increment of $f^2 \geq 0.11$. Smaller effects, including the small interaction effects typical of field research (McClelland & Judd, 1993), could not be detected reliably.

Table 1. Characteristics of the analytic sample ($N = 74$)

Characteristic	Category	*f*	%
Gender	Male	31	41.9
	Female	43	58.1
Tenure	Less than 1 year	7	9.5
	1 to 3 years	33	44.6
	4 to 6 years	23	31.1
	7 to 10 years	6	8.1
	More than 10 years	5	6.8
Type of institution	State-owned commercial bank	35	47.3
	Regional development bank	21	28.4
	Private commercial bank	13	17.6
	Central bank	4	5.4
	Rural bank	1	1.4
Total		**74**	**100.0**

Note. Nine of the 83 submissions (10.8%) were incomplete and were excluded listwise. State-owned commercial banks: Mandiri (12), BNI (9), BRI (8), BTN (3), and BSI (3). Regional development banks: Bank 9 Jambi (20, including two respondents who reported "BPD Jambi") and BJB (1). Private commercial banks: BCA (6, including one respondent who reported "Bank Central Asia"), Danamon (2), OCBC NISP (2), CIMB Niaga (1), Bank Mestika Dharma (1), and Nobu Bank (1). Central bank: Bank Indonesia (4). Rural bank: BPR Jambi (1). Percentages within a characteristic may not sum to 100 because of rounding.

Three self-report instruments with Likert-type response formats were used, and higher scores indicate higher levels of each construct. MW was measured with a 10-item scale constructed from the three dimensions of the Work and Meaning Inventory (Steger et al., 2012): positive meaning in work, meaning making through work, and greater good motivation. WE was measured with a 16-item scale based on the three dimensions of the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004), namely vigor, dedication, and absorption, with the work activity as the referent of the items. EE was measured with a 16-item scale developed by the author on the same three energetic dimensions but with the employing organization, rather than the work itself, as the referent of the items. This operationalization follows the organization engagement approach of Saks (2006) and Farndale et al. (2014): the WE and EE scales share a dimensional structure but differ in the object toward which engagement is directed, which is the conceptual basis for treating them as distinct constructs. Response options ranged from "very unsuitable" to "very suitable", with four or five options depending on the instrument. Item validity and internal consistency reliability of all instruments were examined in a tryout before the main data collection, and empirical evidence of discriminant validity between WE and EE in the main sample is reported in the Results and Discussions section.

Analyses were conducted in JASP. Descriptive statistics were computed for the whole sample and by gender, and normality was examined with the Shapiro–Wilk test. Because MW and WE departed markedly from normality, bivariate associations were estimated with Spearman's rank correlation (ρ), and 95% confidence intervals were obtained through Fisher's *z* transformation with the standard error recommended for Spearman coefficients (Bonett & Wright, 2000). Gender differences were tested with the Mann–Whitney *U* test, with the rank biserial correlation (r_{rb}) as the effect size. To separate the unique association of each predictor with EE from the variance it shares with the other predictor, partial Spearman correlations were computed (Kendall & Gibbons, 1990); these rank-based coefficients are robust to the non-normality of the predictors and are unaffected by the collinearity that a product term introduces into a regression model. Differences between

dependent correlations were tested with Steiger's (1980) *Z*, applied to the rank coefficients as an approximation.

H4 was tested with moderated multiple regression in which EE was regressed on MW, WE, and their product (Aiken & West, 1991). Ordinary least squares estimation was retained for this model because the outcome, EE, was normally distributed. Centering the predictors is a linear reparameterization of this model: it leaves the model R^2, the omnibus *F* test, and the estimate, standard error, *t* value, and *p* value of the product term unchanged, and it alters only the lower-order coefficients, which in a product term model represent conditional effects rather than main effects (Dalal & Zickar, 2012; Olvera Astivia & Kroc, 2019). Inference about H4 was therefore based on the product term, and effect sizes were expressed as f^2 (Cohen, 1988). All tests were two-tailed with α = .05. Regarding the scope of the method, the design permits inferences about association but not about causal direction or temporal mediation (Maxwell & Cole, 2007; Spector, 2019), and because all measures were self-reported in a single session, estimates may be inflated by common method variance (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, & Podsakoff, 2012).

Results and Discussions

Descriptive statistics by gender are reported in Table 2, and whole sample means and standard deviations are reported in Table 3. MW scores were high (*M* = 40.12 against a maximum possible score of 50, equivalent to an item mean of 4.01 on a five-point format) and negatively skewed, with medians (42.00) exceeding the means in both gender groups. MW (*W* = .624) and WE (*W* = .801) departed significantly from normality in the whole sample (both *p* < .001), whereas EE was approximately normal (*W* = .993, *p* = .944). EE also showed the smallest dispersion of the three variables (*SD* = 3.37). The concentration of MW scores near the upper end of the scale indicates a ceiling effect that restricts variance and is likely to attenuate correlations involving MW.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics and Shapiro–Wilk tests by gender

Variable	Gender	*M*	*Mdn*	*SD*	Min	Max	*W*	*p*
MW	Male (*n* = 31)	39.97	42.00	7.26	17	46	.598	< .001
	Female (*n* = 43)	40.23	42.00	5.72	18	50	.631	< .001
WE	Male (*n* = 31)	56.94	59.00	6.77	37	67	.766	< .001
	Female (*n* = 43)	57.07	58.00	5.03	39	65	.838	< .001
EE	Male (*n* = 31)	51.06	51.00	3.62	43	59	.981	.847
	Female (*n* = 43)	50.47	50.00	3.19	44	58	.964	.194

Note. MW = meaningful work; WE = work engagement; EE = employee engagement (organization-referenced); *M* = mean; *Mdn* = median; *SD* = standard deviation; *W* = Shapiro–Wilk statistic.

No gender differences emerged for MW (*U* = 755.5, *p* = .326, $|r_{rb}|$ = .13), WE (*U* = 719.0, *p* = .567, $|r_{rb}|$ = .08), or EE (*U* = 749.5, *p* = .364, $|r_{rb}|$ = .12), and all effect sizes were small. Age showed small positive correlations with MW (ρ = .20, *p* = .086), WE (ρ = .23, *p* = .051), and EE (ρ = .15, *p* = .216), none of which reached significance. The absence of gender differences is consistent with the small gender differences typically observed with UWES-based measures (Schaufeli et al., 2006), and the weak positive trend for age accords with meta-analytic evidence that older employees tend to hold somewhat more favorable job attitudes (Ng & Feldman, 2010). Given its marginal status, the age trend is not interpreted further.

Table 3 and Figure 1 present the zero-order and partial Spearman correlations. MW correlated positively with WE, ρ = .36, 95% CI [.14, .55], *p* = .001, which supports H1, and with EE, ρ = .34, 95% CI [.12, .53], *p* = .003. WE correlated positively but weakly with EE, ρ = .24, 95% CI [.01, .45], *p* = .041, which supports H2 at the bivariate level. These magnitudes should not be read as a ranking of effects. Steiger's tests showed that the correlation of MW with WE did not differ from that of MW with EE (*Z* = 0.17, *p* = .864), and neither differed significantly from the WE–EE correlation (*Z* = 0.99, *p* = .323, and *Z* = 0.82, *p* = .413, respectively). The wide confidence intervals also reflect the modest sample size.

Table 3. Means, standard deviations, normality tests, and Spearman correlations (N = 74)

Variable	*M*	*SD*	*W*	1	2	3
1. Meaningful work (MW)	40.12	6.36	.624***	—	.31**	.28*
2. Work engagement (WE)	57.02	5.78	.801***	.36**	—	.13
3. Employee engagement (EE)	50.72	3.37	.993	.34**	.24*	—

Note. Zero-order Spearman correlations are shown below the diagonal, and partial Spearman correlations controlling for the remaining variable are shown above the diagonal. The 95% confidence intervals of the zero-order correlations are [.14, .55] for MW and WE, [.12, .53] for MW and EE, and [.01, .45] for WE and EE. W = Shapiro–Wilk statistic for the whole sample. *p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

The WE–EE correlation also bears on the concern that the two engagement measures, which share a dimensional structure, might capture the same construct. Were the two scales redundant, their correlation would approach the limit set by their reliabilities; instead, the rank correlation was .24, which corresponds to about 6% of shared variance, and the upper limit of its confidence interval (.45) lies well below the .80 level at which discriminant validity becomes questionable (Rönkkö & Cho, 2022). The two scales also behaved differently in distribution, because WE was markedly non-normal whereas EE was not. Although this evidence falls short of a confirmatory factor analytic test, it indicates that job-referenced and organization-referenced engagement were empirically distinguishable in this sample, in line with Saks (2006) and Sinisterra et al. (2025).

Partial correlations clarify the unique contribution of each predictor. With WE controlled, MW retained a significant association with EE (partial ρ = .28, p = .016), which supports H3. With MW controlled, the association between WE and EE was small and not significant (partial ρ = .13, p = .273), which indicates that most of the bivariate WE–EE association is shared with MW. The association between MW and WE remained significant when EE was controlled (partial ρ = .31, p = .008).

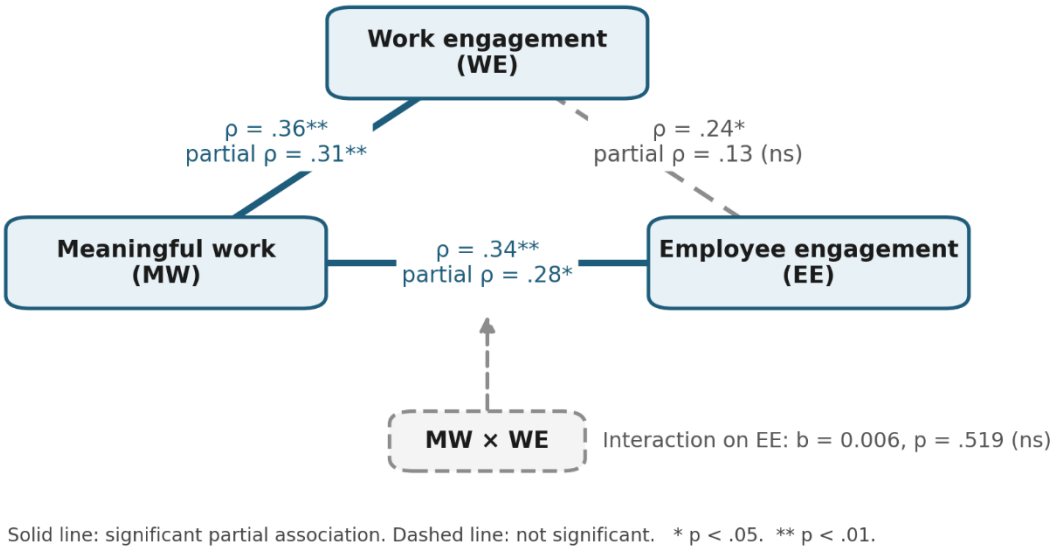


Figure 1. Zero-order and partial Spearman associations among meaningful work, work engagement, and employee engagement (N = 74)
(source: author's analysis of the survey data)

Table 4 reports the moderated regression. Jointly, MW, WE, and their product explained 16.7% of the variance in EE, $F(3, 70) = 4.69$, p = .005, R^2 = .167, adjusted R^2 = .132, which corresponds to a medium effect (f^2 = 0.20). The product term, however, was small and not significant, b = 0.006, SE = 0.009, $t(70) = 0.65$, p = .519, and uniquely accounted for about 0.5% of the variance in EE (f^2 = 0.006). H4 was therefore not supported: the association between MW and EE did not vary detectably across levels of WE. None of the predictor coefficients in this model reached significance. For the lower-order terms, this pattern is expected rather than anomalous. When a product term is included, the coefficients of MW and WE estimate the effect of each predictor when the other equals zero, a value far outside the observed ranges (MW 17 to 50; WE 37 to 67), and they are highly

collinear with the product term. This nonessential collinearity inflates their standard errors but has no bearing on the omnibus test or on the product term, both of which are invariant to centering (Dalal & Zickar, 2012; Olvera Astivia & Kroc, 2019). The unique associations of MW and WE with EE were therefore evaluated with the partial rank correlations reported above rather than with the lower-order regression coefficients.

Table 4. Moderated multiple regression predicting employee engagement (N = 74)

Predictor	*b*	*SE*	*t*(70)	*p*
Intercept	51.64	15.32	3.37	.001
MW (conditional effect at WE = 0)	−0.060	0.429	−0.14	.889
WE (conditional effect at MW = 0)	−0.214	0.357	−0.60	.551
MW × WE	0.006	0.009	0.65	.519
Model fit: R = .409, R^2 = .167, adjusted R^2 = .132, *RMSE* = 3.137, $F(3, 70)$ = 4.69, p = .005, f^2 = 0.20				

Note. Unstandardized coefficients estimated with raw scores. Centering MW and WE leaves R^2, the F test, and all statistics of the product term unchanged; the lower-order terms are conditional effects evaluated at zero on the other predictor, a value outside the observed ranges, and are not interpreted as main effects (unique associations are reported in Table 3). Standardized coefficients are not reported because they are not interpretable for uncentered product terms. MW = meaningful work; WE = work engagement.

The positive association between MW and WE corroborates the proposition that psychological meaningfulness is a condition for investing the self in work (Kahn, 1990; May et al., 2004) and that meaning functions as a motivational resource within JD–R theory (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). Its magnitude, however, is considerably smaller than the meta-analytic estimate of r = .70 or above (Allan et al., 2019). Three explanations are plausible. First, the ceiling effect in MW restricts variance and attenuates correlations. Second, rank correlations estimated in a small sample are imprecise, and the upper bound of the confidence interval (.55) approaches values reported elsewhere. Third, bank employees in Jambi may derive meaning partly from sources that are not tied to the daily task, such as providing for their families or serving their communities, which would loosen the coupling between meaning and task-level engagement. This interpretation is consistent with the collectivist orientation of Indonesian work culture (Hofstede et al., 2010) and with accounts of Indonesian bank leaders who emphasize relationship-oriented values and recognition as sources of meaningful work (Lydiana et al., 2025), but it remains a hypothesis for future research.

The most distinctive finding is that MW, but not WE, retained a unique association with EE. Because EE was defined as engagement directed at the organization, this pattern suggests that engagement with the bank is more closely aligned with the sense that one's work serves a worthwhile purpose than with the vigor and absorption experienced in daily tasks. This reading accords with evidence that meaningfulness relates to employee engagement through affective commitment (Kaur & Mittal, 2020) and with the finding of Saks (2006) that organization engagement depends on organization-level antecedents such as procedural justice, whereas job engagement depends more on job characteristics. It also complements Sinisterra et al. (2025), who found that WE only partially transmitted the association between meaningful work and organizational engagement, which implies a direct association of the kind observed here. The weak unique contribution of WE further implies that initiatives aimed solely at task engagement may not translate into engagement with the bank, which is likely to depend additionally on perceived organizational support, leadership, and fairness (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002; Saks, 2006). Two alternative explanations must nevertheless be acknowledged. The greater good facet of MW refers to contributing beyond oneself and may overlap semantically with organizational purpose, which could inflate the MW–EE association; and because all measures were self-reported at a single time point, common method variance may have contributed to every observed association (Podsakoff et al., 2012).

The absence of moderation is informative in its own right. It agrees with the two-wave evidence of Johnson and Jiang (2017), in which work engagement mediated but did not moderate the consequences of meaningful work, and it suggests that WE is better conceptualized as a potential mechanism than as a boundary condition of the MW–EE association. This conclusion must be qualified by statistical power. The study could detect only interaction effects of $f^2 \geq 0.11$, whereas interaction effects in field research are typically much smaller (McClelland & Judd, 1993); the present result therefore rules out a moderate or large interaction but not a small one.

Theoretically, the findings extend engagement research by showing, in an Indonesian banking context, that the referent of engagement matters: meaningful work is associated with both job-referenced and organization-referenced engagement, but only its association with the latter persists independently of the other form of engagement. This supports calls to specify the target of engagement explicitly rather than to treat work engagement and employee engagement as interchangeable labels (Bailey et al., 2017; Farndale et al., 2014; Macey & Schneider, 2008). Practically, and with the caution that the evidence is correlational and requires replication, banks may consider strategies that make the purpose and social contribution of banking work visible, such as communicating how employees' work affects customers and local communities, recognizing individual contributions, and allowing employees to craft aspects of their tasks and relationships (Rudolph, Katz, Lavigne, & Zacher, 2017; Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). Because engagement interventions tend to yield modest effects (Knight, Patterson, & Dawson, 2017), such initiatives should be evaluated with controlled designs before being scaled up.

Several limitations qualify these conclusions. The cross-sectional design precludes causal inference and any test of temporal mediation (Maxwell & Cole, 2007; Spector, 2019). The sample was modest, purposive, and drawn from a single city, which limits generalizability and statistical power. Respondents came from 15 institutions of five types, and organizational culture, target systems, and work pressure are likely to differ across state-owned, regional, private, and central banks. Because several institutional categories contained very few respondents (one to four), bank type could not be modeled as a covariate or a moderator without producing unstable estimates, and the nesting of employees within institutions could not be taken into account, which may have biased the standard errors. This institutional heterogeneity is therefore acknowledged as an explicit limitation of the present findings. The EE scale was developed for this study and, although it was empirically distinguishable from WE, its factorial validity has not yet been established with confirmatory methods. Finally, the ceiling effect in MW and the reliance on self-reports may have attenuated or inflated specific estimates.

Future research should (a) employ multiwave designs and test indirect effects with bootstrapped confidence intervals (Hayes, 2022), so that the mediating role of WE can be examined properly; (b) measure employee engagement with established instruments that separate referents, such as the organization engagement measure of Saks (2006) or the Employee Engagement Scale of Shuck et al. (2017), and test discriminant validity with confirmatory factor analysis (Rönkkö & Cho, 2022); (c) recruit larger samples across bank types and regions and use multilevel models that treat bank type as a higher level variable; and (d) incorporate organizational resources such as perceived organizational support, leadership, and organizational justice, which are likely to account for much of the unexplained variance in EE.

Conclusions

Among bank employees in Jambi City, meaningful work was positively associated with both work engagement and engagement directed at the employing organization, and work engagement was only weakly associated with engagement with the organization. Taken together, meaningful work, work engagement, and their interaction accounted for a modest but meaningful share of the variance in employee engagement; however, their individual contributions could not be separated within the interaction model, and work engagement did not moderate the association between meaningful work and employee engagement. When each predictor was adjusted for the other, only meaningful work retained a unique association with employee engagement. These results do not establish that work engagement mediates the role of meaningful work, a question that requires longitudinal designs, but they indicate that meaningful work is the more robust correlate of employees' engagement with their organization and that job-referenced and organization-referenced engagement should be distinguished in both research and practice.

For banking institutions, the findings suggest, provisionally and pending replication with larger, multilevel, and longitudinal samples, that efforts to strengthen employees' engagement with the organization are more likely to succeed when they cultivate the perceived purpose and social value of banking work than when they target task engagement alone. The study thereby offers a context-specific contribution from a provincial banking market in Southeast Asia to a literature that has so far relied largely on samples from other regions.

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Declaration of Generative AI Use

During the preparation and revision of this manuscript, the author used generative artificial intelligence tools to support language editing, the restructuring of the text in response to reviewer comments, and the verification of statistics derived from the analytic output. The author reviewed and edited all AI-assisted content and takes full responsibility for the content, analyses, interpretations, and conclusions of this article.

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