Meaningfulness among Indian dentists: An inter-occupation analysis

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Abstract

The objective is to draw an inter-comparison between the degree of meaningfulness experienced by professionals in dentistry, teaching, business, IT, and insurance. Work as Meaning Inventory (WAMI) was administered on a sample of 500 men and women, randomly selected from distinct work spheres, belonging to middle-income group of National Capital Region of Delhi (Delhi NCR), India. Descriptive analysis revealed that dentists experienced the least degree of meaningfulness (68.08%) whereas insurance agents the highest (82.86%). Females superseded males with higher meaningfulness scores, particularly in teaching and IT sector, with the exception of business. Male dentists, however, obtained the lowest scores, suggesting serious job challenges pertaining to job satisfaction. ANOVA and t-test for independent measures design, revealed significant differences between males-females and six profession combinations. Further, item-wise means were compared cross-sectionally between various professions to outline the specific nature of work-meaningfulness experienced, along with subscale scores of meaning. This paper raises attention towards the nature of Indian work environments and the need to uplift meaningfulness among the employed class.

Introduction

The meaning of the word "Work" has different connotations for different individuals. Most people work for obvious reasons like getting paid for their labor, but there are reasons beyond earning money for one's living. Work provides a means to occupy one's time, and a forum to satisfy achievement needs [1]. Meaningful work (MW) incorporates a subset of coinages such as work meaning, work meaningfulness, and the positive connotations associated with the meaning of work. MW has been understood as the amount of significance people perceive to exist in their work [2]. Most people want to engage themselves in work which is meaningful and want their careers to mean something, since it has been found to accompany one's positive thinking, wellness, self esteem, job satisfaction, life satisfaction and minimal degree of distress etc. [3].

Across the differing meanings [4] defined Meaningful Work as work that is significant and positive in valence (meaningfulness) and not just what work means to people (meaning). Furthermore, they add that the positive valence of MW has a eudaimonic (growth- and purpose-oriented) rather than hedonic (pleasure-oriented) focus. Work is considered to be meaningful, when it is perceived to have a distinct and higher purpose [5]. Research scholars have also defined MW as a key to greater satisfaction and performance for individuals as well as organizations. People deriving a greater meaningfulness from their work are found to view work for a greater social or communal good, are better adjusted, possess qualities desirable to organizations such as work unit cohesion [6]. Although a lot of research has been done in the area of importance or use of meaningfulness of work with respect to the individual's well- being and its benefits for the organization, some closely associated terms are 'calling' or 'job

satisfaction'. Defined as an emotional state emerging from a cognitive appraisal of job experiences [7], job satisfaction focuses mainly on hedonic well- being than personal fulfillment, whereas, the concept of work meaning emphasizes on eudaimonic aspects of well-being (e.g., a sense of purpose, contribution, and pro-social attitudes).

The theoretical framework proposed by several researchers reviews that with change in time, the meaning or the concept of MW has also undergone a major transformation, as depicted in Table 1.

The most comprehensive theoretical model on MW has been proposed by Rosso, *et al.* that outlines the reciprocal dynamics between individual and collective effort at workplace. They propose four main sources of MW (*i.e.,* the self, others, the context, and the spiritual life) and mechanisms through which work becomes meaningful (*i.e.,* authenticity, self-efficacy, self-esteem, purpose, belongingness, transcendence, and cultural/interpersonal sense making). They further offer two dimensions of MW based on where impetus in the workplace is located (agency to communion) and the target of one's work efforts (self-directed to other-directed action). Recent work on MW has been focusing on individuals working in various fields and environments hold different connotations about the meaningfulness of work and thus, the way they craft their jobs and think about the role of work in

Table 1. An overview of various theoretical constructions of MW.

Name of the proponent / Model	Findings
Job Characterstics Model (Hackman & Oldham, 1976)	MW mediates between job characteristics of skill variety, task identity, and task significance & outcomes.
Britt, Adler, & Bartone, (2001)	MW assessed by identity, engagement, and importance.
Britt, Dickinson, Moore, Castro, & Adler (2007)	MW assessed by task significance, military pride, engagement, and challenge.
Clark et al., 2007	Spirituality used as a means of indicating MW.
Osco´s-Sa´nchez, Osco´s-Flores, & Burge(2008)	MW explained by good pay and reputation.
Multidimensionalmodel (Roberson, 1990)	MW involved work centrality, work values, and intrinsic work orientation.
Pratt &Ashforth (2003)	MW with core constructs of belongingness, authenticity, and transcendence.
Lips-Wiersma& Morris (2009)	MW emphasizes on existential meaning, self-other and being-doing.
Wrzesniewski (2003) & Pratt and Ashforth (2003)	Importance of workplace relations to the experience of meaning at work.
Grant (2007)	Model on how relational job design facilitates motivation and prosocial behaviour at work.

their lives, differ greatly both between and within jobs [8]. There seems to be a common overlap between one's work and one's life work [5,9], such that finding meaning in one's work helps people deepen their understanding of their selves and the world around them, facilitating their personal growth.

Considering the multitude of meanings, derivations and conceptual categories assigned to a contemporary term called MW, finding a stringent instrument can be challenging. With only a handful of measures of work meaning available that offer an operational assessment of MW, we observe that most commonly used tools in the past measured job satisfaction [10-12], spirituality [13], meaning of work [3,14] and calling in work [1,8,15]. However, one of the most recent tool for measuring meaningful work is developed by Steger, *et al.* [4], called as Work and Meaning Inventory (WAMI) that assesses three core components of meaningful work viz.:

•   Positive Meaning (PM) i.e. the degree to which people find their work to have significance and purpose,

•   Meaning-making through work (MM) i.e. the contribution work makes to finding broader meaning in life, and

•   Greater good motivations (GG) i.e. the desire and means for one's work to make a positive contribution to the greater good.

This new and stringent instrument measures the experiential nature of degree of meaningfulness derived from one's work that has otherwise been a rather ignored sphere of work-life. Moreover, this tool has been found to be used extensively on a wide variety of cultural settings, including Asian population [16-18].

Methodology

Objective

1.   To assess the degree of total and sub-types of MW across different occupations, namely, teaching, business, IT, dentistry and insurance.

2.   To study meaningfulness at work on the basis of gender, between and within different professions.

Sample: The total sample consisted of 500 subjects, with 100 subjects from each profession, namely, teaching, business, IT, dentistry and insurance. These work areas were selected on the basis of diversity in work spheres such as education, market, technology, health and commerce, to ensure variety in their job roles. It was ensured that the sample was constant with respect to their age, socio-economic status, location and job experience. Thus, the targeted sample consisted of young adults in the age group of 22-28 years from middle-class families living in National Capital Region of Delhi (NCR Delhi) and with a minimum experience of two years at their respective workplace. In each category, 50 males and 50 females were selected. Table of random numbers was used to randomly select employees working in various organizations. In addition, it was also ensured that all participants were fluent in English language and could understand the questionnaire. To, further, arrive at a parity among the selected participants, following is a brief description of the educational profile and affiliated institutes for each of the respective five categories.

Teaching: Middle school teachers, with graduate degrees and specialization in education and teaching in private schools.

Business: Businessmen running small-time private business such as daily goods, motor vehicles, hardware etc., usually graduates or college dropouts.

Information technology (IT): Engineering graduates and MBAs working in leading IT firms in India.

Dentistry: BDS (Bachelor of Dental Surgery) graduates working in private and government clinics.

Insurance: Commerce graduates working independently or in tie-ups with public and private sector banks in the area of life insurance.

No attempt was made to control the number of hours in a job, structure of employee-employer dynamics, amount of workload, job stability, competition and employment opportunity, work infrastructure, employee-reward program and scope for personal growth, since these were some of the differentiating characteristics unique to each profession.

Tool: Work as Meaning Inventory (WAMI) by Steger, *et al.* [1] was used in this study. It consisted of 10 items on a 5-point rating scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree. This has further been divided into 3 subscales namely Positive Meaning (PM), Meaning Making through Work (MM through work) and Greater Good Motivations (GG). WAMI is a highly standardized measure with high overall internal consistency correlates (α=0.93) as well as that for subscales (.89, .82, and .83 for PM, MM through Work and GG respectively). It is important to note here that this tool was carefully chosen since its test-construction in line with the objectives of this paper of outlining the experiential dimensions of MW and not the identification of causes of MW.

Procedure: Upon the random selection of subjects from their respective professional institutions using table of random numbers, WAMI was administered on 100 professionals from each occupational group. It was ensured that all subjects understood the instructions

properly, were fluent in English language and gave their first natural response to each item. It was also made sure that control variables with respect to age, socio-economic status, mental set, location and years of experience were kept constant. The responses of the entire sample was pooled and exposed to descriptive and inferential statistical measures. In order to rule out the differences due to time of administration, it was ensured that all data collection was completed within a stipulated time period of ten days.

Analysis: Upon obtaining the total raw scores of each participant, mean percentage of overall work-meaning, each of the three subscales namely PM, MM and GG, as well as for males and females was computed. In addition, to test for significance difference between the above calculated means, inferential statistical procedures were adopted. ANOVA and t-test was used for independent measures design, as in case of this study since more than two different sample groups were tested separately on the same variable. These can be studied in table 2 through 5. All statistical calculations were done using SPSS version 8.0. Furthermore, graphical representations in the form of column and bar graphs for mean percentage of meaning at work was depicted on the basis of profession and gender. An inter-item analysis was also done by comparing the scores by various professionals on each WAMI item and plotted using bar diagram.

Results and discussion

MW is a highly nuanced concept, it is often misconstrued with other closely overlapping themes of work role, job satisfaction, calling or orientation. Among others, Steger, *et al.* [1] offer the most comprehensive operational definition as well as a statistically sound psychometric instrument to assess MW. For an individual with high work-meaningfulness, they held, work matters for its own sake and makes an important, generative contribution to one's quality of life. One's profession is, then, likely to be experienced as motivating, satisfying, and meaningful, and a rich part of one's life experience [4]. It must also be noted that the proponents of this tool have drawn a clear distinction between the sources or causes of meaningful work and the nature of experiencing work as meaningful. Therefore, all results reported here are simply an indicator of how professionals from diverse work backgrounds experience meaning in their jobs.

The first objective was to assess the degree of total and sub-types of MW across five different occupations, namely, teaching, business, IT, dentistry and insurance. After the data was gathered using WAMI administration to a sample of 500 subjects, the pooled data was exposed to descriptive and inferential analytic procedures, as shall be discussed here.

The mean percent values for MW are depicted graphically in Figure 1. Among the 5 diverse professions, the highest degree of meaning in their job seemed to be experienced by insurance agents with a mean MW of 82.86%. The second most meaning was derived by teachers *i.e.,* 79.17%. Both these high scores stood as distinct from other professions with lower scores but still in the fairly high category such as IT (76.85%) and business (75.7%). The least degree of MW emerged in

the branch of dentistry with 68.08%. Moreover, with SD scores ranging from 2.5 to 4.61, these values emerge as a consistent measure of work-meaningfulness within each job category.

We can, therefore, interpret that insurance as a profession seems to incorporate greater elements of satisfaction as well as motivation such that work matters for its own sake. Not only did they experience their work as very fulfilling but also reported a higher and distinctive purpose. Understanding these results in the light of the dynamics of life insurance, as a profession, justifies itself. In the Indian scenario, daily life witnesses high competition, stress, depression, burden and uncertainty in the lives of the middle class [19-22]. Being one of the most urgent concerns of the present day, it is life insurance agents who offer an opportunity to restore a greater security and mitigating risks in the lives of their clients and impacting the growth in industry positively [23]. Other than the financial soundness of the customers, it is also a profession that assures fixed returns to the employees. Flexibility of time, office hours, place etc. also seems to add to a greater openness experienced by these individuals. Insurance is emerging as one of the leading professions in the Indian mainstream, not only in terms of job structure but also job output and job returns, since it not only covers economic stability but also unites the masses in terms of social support. The insurance industry in India is the fifth largest life insurance market in the emerging insurance economies globally and is growing at 32-34% per annum [24], as more and more private players are entering the competitive business market [25]. These interpretations are further validated in the light of the highest scoring item 10 ("The work I do serves a greater purpose.") and item 2 ("I understand how my work contributes to my life's meaning."). This resonates with Seligman's [26] ideas about meaning consisting of connecting with endeavours larger than one's self.

Life-insurance agents also obtained highest values in the subtypes of MW across all professions chosen in this study. With mean percent
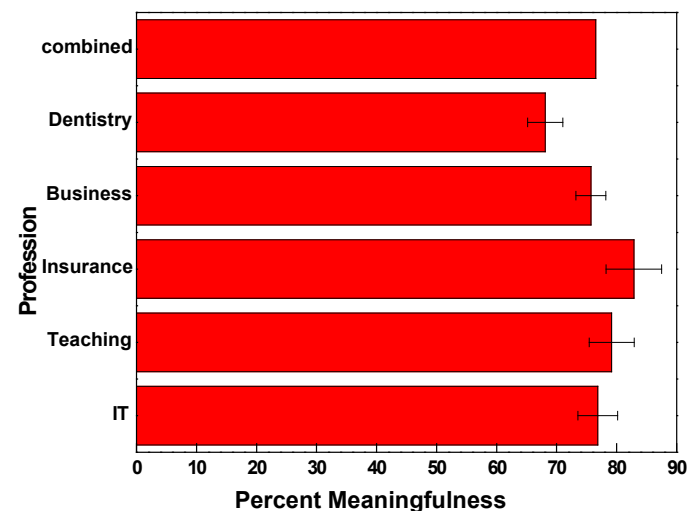

Figure 1. Mean percent MW scores for various professions.

Table 2. ANOVA computations (α=0.01) for total MW scores in each profession.

	IT	Teaching	Insurance	Business	Dentistry
IT	-	5.71*	1.51	3.41*	14.41*
Teaching	-	-	1.20	9.23*	3.23*
Insurance	-	-	-	1.45	1.71
Business	-	-	-	-	6.50*
Dentistry	-	-	-	-	-

scores of 84.49 in MM, 82.9 in PM and 81.67 in GG (Figure 2), we gather that life insurance, as a profession, contributed the most in deriving greater meaning in life as a whole, facilitating personal growth, purpose and goodness for others.

Teaching as a profession emerged second in terms of MW. Although belonging to a very different discipline of education, teaching, like life-insurance, seemed to carry a strong component of doing a greater good for the society, being selfless, shaping and nurturing others. With almost similar MM (80.35%) and GG (80%) scores, it appeared that teachers find a positive meaning not only in their profession but also in life in general, such that they make active contributions towards wellness of the future generations by active pedagogic techniques. Several studies in the past have found that teachers are often characterized as having more positive personality traits like openness to change, agreeableness and conscientiousness and lesser negative traits like neuroticism [27]. Extensive literature has been written on how the teaching profession exalts service above personal

Figure 2. Percentage of 3 subscales of MW for various professions.

gains [28], with nurturance, connectedness, warmth and love [29,30]. This further comes to light with a highest MW score of 88 obtained by teachers on item 9 ("I know my work makes a positive difference in the world."). However, one must notice that in the Indian setting, teachers also deal with issues of too much work responsibilities, high student-teacher ratio and relatively poor infrastructure.

These two highly-rated professions in their degree of meaningfulness were followed by IT professionals and businessmen, with a fair degree of MW i.e. 76.85% and 75.7% respectively. Both these scores are indicative of the fact that the purpose and satisfaction that technology-based professionals and entrepreneurs derived was reasonably well. Both of them also scored the highest in MM subscale, suggesting that, owing to their work, both kinds of workers understand the world around them better. However, differences were observed in terms of their respective scores on other two subscales. An IT professional scored higher on GG (76.43%) and the least on PM (74.86%), whereas the opposite was true for a businessman with PM=75.48% and GG=74.04%. Individuals, qualified as engineers and working with multi-national IT companies seemed particularly lagging in terms of the personal significance their work had for them. This is evident from the fact that the least scoring items (Figure 3), by this group, were item 6 i.e. "My work helps me better understand myself." and item 4 i.e. "I have discovered work that has a satisfying purpose." with MW score of 69.38% and 73.19% respectively. We could, then, assume that while IT jobs are secure in terms of money and infrastructure, but the employees often feel removed from the work they do [31]. Nair [32] hypothesized that '*knowledge workers*' (e.g. financial/business consultants, R&D engineers, computer/IT analysts) experience work alienation that is characterized by powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, isolation and self estrangement. Their high education, increased expectations from work [33], frequent job switching [34,35], experienced burnout [36], loss of control over the product of one's labor, loss of control over the work process [37], high structuralization at workplace, lack of autonomy, absence of variety, challenge and creativity and work that does not allow for self expression are possible sources of feeling removed from their work and not finding enough meaning in it.

Small-time businessmen seemed to believe that their work has no positive influence on others, nor were they inclined to be convinced about its virtues for their personal growth. This is further justified
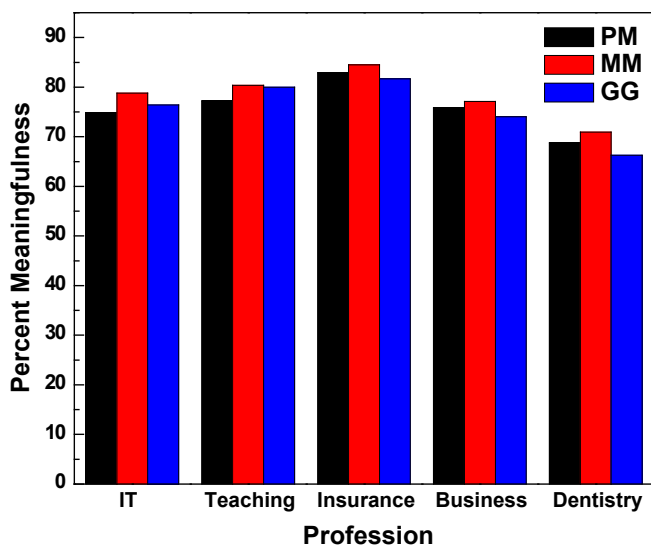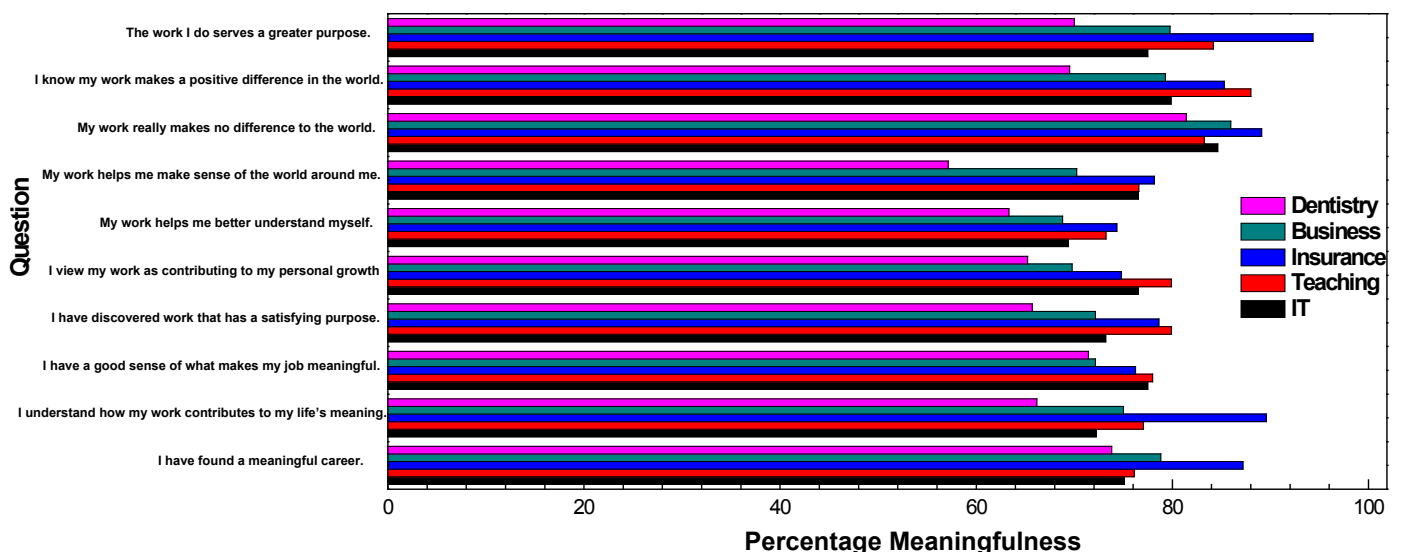

Figure 3. Item-wise mean scores obtained by various professionals on WAMI administration.

by this group's highest average MW score (85.95%) on item 8 ("My work really makes no difference to the world.") and lowest (69.76%) on item 5 ("I view my work as contributing to my personal growth). It is imperative to understand these set of values in the cultural context of the Indian setting, where local businessmen carry their work to run basic errands, are not highly educated and are likely to be associated with low self-esteem and poor moral maturity [38,39]. In this system of things, the choice of their careers ends up being a mere continuation of their forefathers businesses, with much struggle around commerce and money and little to think in terms of greater goodness for society or for improving the quality of their own lives [40,41]. In a study on north-Indian businessmen, Rastogi, *et al.* [42], conducted survey and focused group discussions and found that 81% of the respondents belonged to the age group of 20-30 years, who started their careers by joining their family business and about 47% were graduates. Further, 48.4% of the sample consisted of Potential Successors,' i.e. respondents who joined their family business because of their own inclination as well as due to the pressure from the parents and other family members. These people had a low self-esteem and risk taking ability, suggesting that they did not yearn to carve a distinct identity for themselves, were happy in joining the family group as a team-worker, did not wish to venture into unprecedented arenas and intended to protect the lifestyle that they have been enjoying [43,44].

The occupation of being a doctor, though, is often perceived as noble and altruist, and, therefore, satisfying. However, our results are clearly not in accordance with this stereotype. Dentists were the group of individuals obtaining the least degree of meaningfulness from their jobs (68.08%). This observation comes to light from the fact that most dental graduates struggle in terms of a suitable placement, poor work conditions, work load and poor income, particularly in the Indian scenario. This thought is seconded by Jain, *et al.* [45] who found that in Udaipur, India, BDS qualified auxiliaries experienced lesser job satisfaction due to difficulties in income, recognition, opportunity to develop professionally, quality of care, fatigue, leisure time and non-patient tasks. High job stress aggravated by job specificity among dentists worldwide has been reported by several researchers in the past, which is found to correlate with a wide variety of physical and psychological ailments [46-50]. Research indicates that more primary-care physicians in the U.S. report dissatisfaction, thereby effecting the processes, quality, and outcomes of medical care. Structural and psychological components associated with workplace explains the changing position of knowledge workers (such as physicians) in the new economy [51]. Similarly, dentistry group's failure to view their job as a significant contributor to the work process, predicts work alienation [52], owing to the gap between high educational background and poor job settlement opportunities. Furthermore, dentists also obtained the least values on GG subscale (66.28%), while the other two values were also relatively lower (PM=68.76%; MM=70.95%). This reiterates the understanding that dentists did not consider their work as personally relevant or find it subjectively fulfilling. It was also surprising to gather that, despite working for public health, they were convinced that their work contributes little in terms others' wellness. Bhola, *et al.* [53] emphasize on the negligent attitude of Indian youth towards oral hygiene, partly suggesting that low MW scores could be associated with perception of the masses towards insignificant role of the dentist in overall healthcare. Item 7 ("My work helps me make sense of the world around me") obtained the least MW value of only 57.14% whereas item 8 ("My work really makes no difference to the world.") was highly rated with 81.42% meaningfulness. These findings have implications towards improving the dental care system, not just

for the patients but for trainers as well.

Table 2 depicts ANOVA results of Fischer's F test, as applied on combined scores of MW for various professions. It was found that mean differences between 6 job combinations of IT-teachers, IT-business, IT-dentists, teachers-business, teachers-dentists and business-dentists were found to be significantly different at 0.99 level of confidentiality with F values of 5.71, 3.41, 14.41, 9.23, 3.23 and 6.50 respectively. It can, therefore, be interpreted that professionals working with information technology experienced meaning in a distinctive way as compared to teachers, businessmen and dentists. In addition, the teaching professionals, too, were significantly different from businessmen and dentists, as were the domains of business and dentistry. These values not only suggest variations in the descriptive indices of how meaningfulness is experienced at diverse workplaces but also hints in the direction of future research into the causative factors of these differences. It could, thus, serve to study each profession in a more detailed fashion, in order to gauge the determinants of a meaningful work experience and introduce suitable changes in the workplace from a behavior management perspective.

Objective two aimed to assess meaningfulness at work on the basis of gender, between and within different professions. As can be seen in Figure 4, the bars for males are much smaller in height, as compared to females, across all professions. While combined mean MW for women was 78.15%, that for men was 74.91%. This mean difference of about 3.24 points, can further be interpreted using F calculated value of -5.55 that depicts a significant difference at α=0.01 level of confidentiality between combined males versus combined females. It is an intriguing observation that Indian women derive a greater degree of personal value from their respective professions. Though it would be far-sweeping to suggest possible causes for this phenomena, but based on past literature, it could be partly based on the gendered form of suppression in a patriarchal society. This holds particularly true for Indian women who fit into a cultural stereotype of being the meeker sex, with far lesser degree of personal autonomy, competitiveness, freedom and control over their personal, social and work lives [54,55]. D'Mello [56] studied issues of self, identity and gender among IT professionals working in Global software organization (GSOs). Local social arrangements emerged at the workplace such that urban Indian
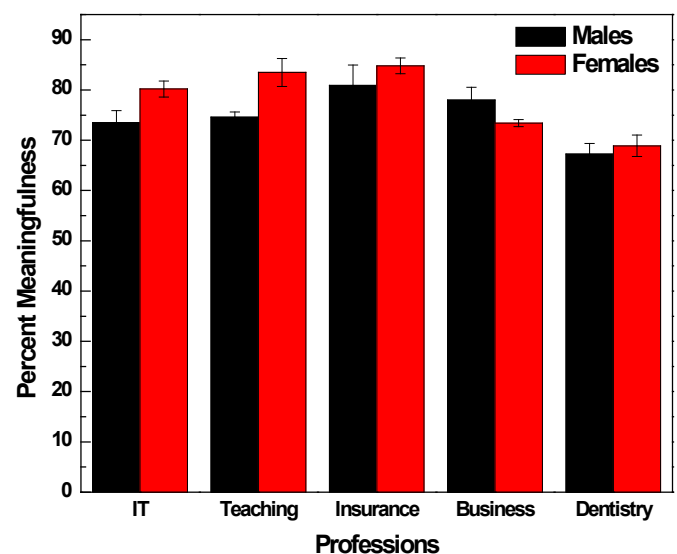

Figure 4. Gender-wise mean percent scores of MW.

families were found to be firmly anchored in role specific identities that emphasize female submissiveness. With this socio-cultural mindset, it comes as no surprise that women far exceed men when given an opportunity to venture out of home, learn, interact and develop their identities. This emerging change signifies a change in modern India, particularly among the middle class women living in urban cities who are exposed to extensive educational training, unlike those from the rural background. Work adds to women's strategies of pursuing power and security, thereby, leading them into "bargains with patriarchy" and an implicit reconstitution of gender inequality in India [57]. Thus, modernity seems to diminish patriarchal attitudes towards working women [58]. Table 3 depicts t values for profession wise male-female comparison. With the exception of business, women professionals in all other domains exceeded their male counterpart with a significantly different experience of meaningfulness. Teaching and IT took the lead with highest mean differences (male-female) of -8.64 & -6.67 and F values of 10.46 & -9.96 respectively. This could be attributed to several factors in the female teachers (MW=83.49%), such as nurturance, capacity for greater goodness, more time for self and family etc. On the other hand, a general perception of a man (MW= 74.85%) being a school teacher was not taken in a positive light owing to limited income, working hours, feminine job etc. [59]. Attitude of teachers have been found to be influenced by gender by Dodeen, *et al.* [60] who found that female teachers have more positive attitude towards teaching profession as compared to male teachers. Similarly, women in the IT sector (MW=80.19%) seemed to experience a greater degree of personal freedom due to active choice-making, higher income, late working hours and surviving competition in a male-dominated industry. While the differences in insurance (-3.88) and business (4.6) sectors were smaller, but they were still found to be significant at 99% confidentiality levels ($F_{insurance}$=-4.24; $F_{business}$=8.28). Relative to males, females in both these professions seemed to experiencing a greater degree of work-related meaning ($MW_{insurance}$=84.8%; $MW_{business}$=73.4%), perhaps due to similar work features such as large social network [61], field exploration, tolerance of risks (flexible income and working hours) and opportunities for growth [62]. Both these professions depended on adequate product knowledge and working well with people, that includes needs assessment, art of convincing, connecting with diverse populations, goal setting and meeting targets [24]. However, we noticed that entrepreneurs were the only group where men exceeded women in MW scores (78%). A possible reason could be that while small-time businesswomen, perhaps, found it challenging to balance home and work front in a job that suffered the risk of no fixed income, for men, the availability of time, social exploration, knowledge of commerce as well as a lineage of businessmen forefathers was far greater [42]. Social learning theory [63] suggests that parents' employment has a strong influence on occupational choices of their children [64]. Children and particularly sons tend to follow the occupational path of their fathers [65]. Research in family business successors has indicated that many family members derive a sense of self-identity from their firms [66]. While leadership skills are not found to vary over gender in business group, self-esteem is found to be significantly different, with males

showing a higher degree of self-esteem as compared to the females. Rastogi, *et al.* [42] suggest that this pattern in India indicates that the females are still governed by conventional norms, they do not prioritize personal goals over family goals, do not aspire to craft a distinct identity for themselves, and feel content with their role in the family businesses. It must also be noted that among entrepreneurs in India, women constitute only about 10% of the total entrepreneurs [67]. Lastly, dentists were the only group with not only the least degree of MW but also the minimum difference (-1.63) between male and female doctors. This suggests that all the 100 participants in the dentistry group experienced a similar degree of meaningfulness, irrespective of their gender ($MW_{male\ dentists}$=67.27%; $MW_{female\ dentists}$=68.9%). Thus, this signifies unanimity in a relatively poorer degree of MW in this group, as also indicated by a F score of -2.24 with no significant difference.

A within-gender comparison of MW scores suggests that for males, insurance and business were two professions with highest experienced meaningful satisfaction (80.92% and 78%). Both these professions depended on a large social network, personal time and immense scope for growth, other than carrying a greater personal autonomy and choice-making. On the other hand, professions namely dentistry, IT and teaching seemed to offer little meaning to men (67.27%, 73.52% & 74.85%). Male dentists have found to report higher depersonalization and working hours than female dentists, often causing burnout among male doctors [68]. Moreover, large number of females joins teaching willingly but men often saw teaching as an alternative rather than their ideal career aspiration [69]. In addition, job security, poor salary, supervision by a senior head teacher (usually female) and work environment are determinants that contribute to poor satisfaction experienced by men serving the role of teachers in a patriarchal society. Table 4 shows profession-wise Fcal values for males. Four profession combinations were found to generate significant differences in the males group, viz., dentistry-IT, dentistry-teaching, dentistry-business and teaching-business with F scores of -9.66, 7.89, 31.61 and 9.41 respectively. All-females comparison suggests that insurance, teaching and IT professions offered greatest degree of personal meaning to their employees (84.8%, 83.49% and 80.19%). On the other hand, business women and female dentists experienced least degree of MW (68.9% and 73.4%). Past literature suggests greater struggle and only average degree of work satisfaction in the lives of working women, particularly businesswomen and female employees of private sector [70,71]. For the dental group, literature indicates that females worked for few hours, saw less patients, earned lesser incomes and had lower scores on affective and behavioral professional commitment measures [72,73]. However, anova computations (Table 5) reveal that only two profession combinations of females had a significantly different MW experience, namely dentistry-IT and teaching-business with F scores of -14.65 and 8.41. In what could serve as guiding work in the Indian work psychology, this paper has served to identify the nature of meaningfulness as contributing to various occupational streams.

Table 3. t scores (α=0.01) comparing male-female MW scores in each profession.

	IT males	Teaching males	Insurance males	Business males	Dentistry males	Males combined
IT females	-9.96*	-	-	-	-	-
Teaching females	-	-10.46*	-	-	-	-
Insurance females	-	-	-4.24*	-	-	-
Business females	-	-	-	8.28*	-	-
Dentistry females	-	-	-	-	-2.24	-
Females combined	-	-	-	-	-	-5.55*

Table 4. ANOVA computations (α=0.01) for MW scores for males in each profession.

	IT	Teaching	Insurance	Business	Dentistry
IT	-	3.40	0.35	1.42	-9.66*
Teaching	-	-	0.72	9.41*	7.89*
Insurance	-	-	-	0.84	1.64
Business	-	-	-	-	31.61*
Dentistry	-	-	-	-	-
Females combined	-	-	-	-	-

Table 5. ANOVA computations (α=0.01) for MW scores for females in each profession.

	IT	Teaching	Insurance	Business	Dentistry
IT	-	0.27	0.54	0.063	-14.65*
Teaching	-	-	0.87	8.41*	1.58
Insurance	-	-	-	0.28	1.65
Business	-	-	-	-	3.35
Dentistry	-	-	-	-	-
Females combined	-	-	-	-	-

Conclusion

This paper has attempted to outline the degree and nature of meaningfulness experienced by professionals employed in various work domains namely teaching, business, IT, dentistry and insurance. MW was understood with respect to a detailed delineation of these professions in terms of gender as well as subtypes of meaning. This study enables us to also understand several closely associated notions that contribute to effective MW, such as positive work attitudes, well-being, intrinsic work motivation, job satisfaction, life satisfaction, meaning in life and psychological distress Steger, *et al.* [1]. Thus, we come to see that experiencing a greater meaning in one's work has positive influence not only in broader aspects of one's life but is also conducive for the growth of the organization as a whole. Companies benefit from having employees who are committed to their organization's mission and welfare, they hold. This commitment not just ensures a greater longevity into the job but also lower withdrawal intentions and fewer days of absence. The current research, therefore, also serves to offer insight into the possible differences in the nature of work environment, challenges, pressure, employee-employer relationship among various sectors of work. This, in turn, could better inspire the future researchers to study the role of work dynamics in contributing to the experienced meaning. Recommendations can also be conceived in terms of proposing positive work, family and motivational related changes, particularly to young business workers, medical and IT professionals, in order to better engage in work for its own sake and to add a generative dimension to the quality of their lives. Moreover, a more integrative role of the management team that facilitates greater role clarity, work comfort and faith in the contribution of one's work may also be suggested, in addition to a detailed, intra and causal modality of studying various professions.

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