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The Impact of Job Crafting, Demands, and Resources on Meaningful Work Among the Self-Employed

A Qualitative Study

Master's thesis in psychology, specialization in work and organizational psychology
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May 2022

Master's thesis

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Abstract

While most people desire work that is meaningful, there is a lack of research investigating it among self-employed individuals. To that aim, this paper sought to investigate the ways in which job crafting, demands and resources impact meaningful work among the self-employed. It also aimed to investigate a three-way division of the meaning-concept (coherence, significance, and purpose). Through a qualitative study, semi-structured interviews were conducted on five individuals in Norway that had all chosen self-employment. The subsequent analysis revealed that "autonomy", "variety", and "flexibility" are job crafting antecedents; "cognitive crafting" and "behavioral crafting" are job crafting forms; "dealing with bureaucracy", "demands from others", "economic uncertainty", "lack of work-relationships", "role conflict", and "workload" are demands; "identity and self-knowledge", "gaining feedback", and "experience and competence" are resources part of coherence; "prosocial behavior", "being authentic and adhering to personal values", "having support", "having influence and feeling that you matter", and "being engaged and interested" are resources part of significance; and "allowing the direction to unfold" and "development of oneself and one's skills" are resources part of purpose. By viewing the results in relation to an adapted version of the job demands-resources theory and previous literature, they indicate that job crafting, job resources and challenging demands positively impact meaningful work among the self-employed. Conversely, hindering demands negatively impact meaningful work among the self-employed. While further research is needed to establish these connections, these findings have implications for the experience of meaningful work among the self-employed, and in turn the positive outcomes it might bring for individuals and society.

Sammendrag

Selv om de fleste ønsker arbeid som er meningsfullt, er det mangel på forskning som undersøker dette blant selvstendig næringsdrivende. Derfor søkte denne oppgaven å undersøke på hvilke måter job crafting, krav og ressurser påvirker meiningsfylt arbeid blant selvstendig næringsdrivende. Den siktet også på å undersøke en tredeling av meningskonseptet (sammenheng, betydning og hensikt). Ved en kvalitativ studie ble semistrukturerte intervjuer holdt på fem individer i Norge som alle hadde valgt å være selvstendig næringsdrivende. Påfølgende analyse indikerte at «autonomi», «variasjon» og «fleksibilitet» er forløpere til job crafting; «kognitiv crafting» og «atferd crafting» er former for job crafting; «håndtering av byråkrati», «krav fram andre», «økonomisk usikkerhet», «mangel på arbeidsrelasjoner», «rollekonflikt» og «arbeidsmengde» er krav; «identitet og selvkunnskap», «motta tilbakemeldinger» og «erfaring og kompetanse» er ressurser del av sammenheng; «prososial atferd», «være autentisk og følge personlige verdier», «ha støtte», «ha påvirkning og føle at du har betydning» og «være engasjert og interessert» er ressurser del av betydning; og «tillate at retningen utfolder seg» og «utvikling av en selv og ens ferdigheter» er ressurser del av hensikt. Ved å se disse resultatene gjennom en adaptert versjon av jobbkrav ressurs modellen og tidligere litteratur, indikerer de at job crafting, job ressurser, og utfordrende krav har en positiv påvirkning på meningsfylt arbeid blant selvstendig næringsdrivende. På den andre siden, hindrende krav har en negativ påvirkning på meningsfylt arbeid blant selvstendig næringsdrivende. Selv om mer forskning trengs for å etablere disse sammenhengene, har disse funnene implikasjoner for opplevelsen av meningsfylt arbeid blant selvstendig næringsdrivende, og i sin tur de positive utfallene det muligens har for individ og samfunn.

Foreword

I have been interested in meaning all throughout my degree in psychology. I have also been

fascinated by self-employment for some time. This thesis was a chance to combine the two. I

want to thank those who have supported me during this process. I want to thank my

supervisor Trygve Steiro, who has aided me with valuable feedback and encouragement. I

also want to thank my dear classmates for support and socialization. Lastly, I am truly grateful

for the participants that agreed to participate in this study.

Jonas Ressem

Trondheim, Våren 2022

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Self-Employed: A Qualitative Study

"There are three main avenues on which one arrives at meaning in life. The first is by creating a work or by doing a deed" (Frankl, 2006, p. 145).

Work is a major part of life and consumes a big part of an individual's waking hours. As such, most people desire more than a monthly paycheck (Ward & King, 2017): they want their work to be meaningful (Casio, 2003; Lysova et al., 2019). Some studies even show that people are willing to accept lower pay if the work is considered as meaningful (e.g., Hu & Hirsh, 2017). These tendencies are explained by research, as in addition to being a desirable outcome in and of itself, meaningful work is related to several positive outcomes in the workplace, such as higher levels of commitment, work engagement, and satisfaction (Allan et al., 2019). It also seems to improve one's life outside of work, with respect to increased well-being (Jebb et al., 2020; Shockley et al., 2016), better physical and mental health (Arnold & Walsh, 2015; Heintzelman & King, 2014b), and a greater sense of meaning in life in general (Ward & King, 2017).

While several researchers have investigated the factors that constitute the experience of meaningful work in traditional occupations (e.g., Lips-Wiersma et al., 2016; Lysova et al., 2019), there seems to lack research on those who work as self-employed. Considering that self-employed workers comprise a growing share of the workforce, standing at 15.3% in the European Union as of 2018 (OECD, 2022), and there are more than 170.000 sole proprietorships registered in Norway as of 2020 (Statistics Norway, 2020)**,** it might be worth taking a closer look given their importance to the economy; contributing to productivity, innovation, and growth (Van Praag & Versloot, 2008). Interestingly, there have also been arguments that work for the self-employed, compared to that of the traditional wage-employed, is richer in meaning due to greater opportunities for job crafting (Baron, 2010;

Cardon et al., 2009) and for expressing one's identity (Rosso et al., 2010) and authenticity (Allan et al., 2016; Martela et al., 2017). But here too is there little research on job crafting relative to that of wage-employment (Lazazzara et al., 2020). Given that job crafting is linked to such outcomes as higher work-engagement (Frederick & VanderWeele, 2020), performance and satisfaction (Rudolph et al., 2017), it gives further reason for investigating this area.

Ultimately, investigating the experience of meaningful work among the self-employed might bring about positive effects such as increased well-being and engagement for the individual (Gorgievski & Stephan, 2016), but there is also a point to be made for the societal impact of self-employment, seeing how these positive effects might lead to better performing workers, which in turn aids economic growth for all (Bögenhold, 2018).

Given its modesty, several authors have noted the necessity for research in these areas. In a meta-analysis on meaningful work, Allan et al. (2019) called for more research on the relationship between job crafting and meaningful work, and so did a review by Bailey et al. (2018). Additionally, in going through the literature, Ward and King (2017) noted it would be valuable to investigate which factors at work are the most predicative of meaning, not simply reiterate the point that work can be meaningful.

Considering these notions, I conduct a qualitative study in where I will attempt to answer the following research question: *In what ways does job crafting, demands and resources impact meaningful work among the self-employed?*

This paper will first provide the theoretical framework of the thesis. Then follows a presentation of the methodological consideration. Next, the results of the study will be presented. And lastly, there will be a discussion about the ways in which job crafting, demands and resources impact meaningful work.

Theoretical Framework

In this chapter, I will provide the theoretical framework of my thesis. I will present definitions of the key concepts: self-employment, meaningful work, and job crafting. And I will outline the theories I will use, as well as empirical findings and considerations from the research literature.

Self-Employment

Self-employment, in contrast to wage-employment, is simply an occupational situation in which individuals provide their own wage (Poschke, 2019). However, this situation may or may not be proactively decided upon, which is strongly dependent on the economic situation of one's country (Bennett & Rablen, 2014; Poschke, 2019). For the purposes of this thesis, however, self-employment will be viewed under the lens of a self-determined choice, which is usually the case for richer, more developed countries such as Norway (Baron et al., 2016). Given that consideration, a common definition posits self-employment as: an occupational choice where individuals choose to work for themselves, and with that, on their own risk and responsibility (Gorgievski & Stephan, 2016; Hébert & Link, 1982; Stephan, 2018).

Related to self-employment as a proactive choice is a consideration of what type of person who is likely to make this choice in the first place (see Postigo et al., 2021). Investigating the personality of self-employed people, or what they called an entrepreneurial personality, Cuesta et al. (2018) found eight different dimensions: Autonomy, achievement, innovation, internal locus of control, optimism, risk-taking, self-efficacy, and stress tolerance. Others have noted that a key indicator of performance among self-employees is proactivity and persistence in the face of uncertainty (e.g., Frese & Gielnik, 2014), where proactiveness is about finding opportunities and seeing solutions in uncertain situations (Hernández-Sánchez et al., 2020). Multiple studies have also shown there is a positive association between this

proactive personality, self-efficacy, and intentions for self-employment or entrepreneurial activity (Rosique-Blasco et al., 2018; Travis & Freeman, 2017).

In the literature, the terms "self-employed", "freelance" and "entrepreneur" are all used to indicate the same type of working-condition; namely, one in where individual's work for themselves (Bencsik & Chuluun, 2019). This thesis will take an inclusive look at the literature, investigating studies which have used any of these terms, but ultimately take base in the definition above.

Three Meanings of Meaning

"Meaningful work" and its related terms—such as "meaning" and "meaningfulness"— can be a source of confusion due to ambiguous definitions and certain reductionistic operationalizations (Bailey et al., 2018; Martela & Pessi, 2018; Pratt & Ashforth, 2003). It is therefore important to first distinguish these terms to ensure sufficient clarity of the topic. While "meaning" is akin to a cognitive component, related to the human capacity to make sense of something, "meaningfulness" is akin to an evaluative component, related to the human capacity to hold positive feelings toward something (Lips-Wiersma et al., 2016; Martela & Steger, 2016).

In an attempt to better understand these conceptual issues, Martela and Steger (2016) looked at the theoretical and psychometric landscape and proposed a three-way division of the term, thus providing a sharper distinction between its nuances. They argued, in line with other researchers (e.g., Heintzelman & King, 2014b; Krause & David Hayward, 2014) that meaning is a global term reflecting three underlying components: *coherence*, *significance*, and *purpose*. Coherence is parallel to "meaning", being about understanding, comprehensibility, predictability, and sense-making; Significance is parallel to "meaningfulness", being about evaluation, worth, feelings of mattering and importance; and purpose is parallel to

"meaningfulness" as well, but is more future-oriented, akin to a motivational component that comprises of having core goals and a direction in life (Martela & Steger, 2016).

With these distinctions, it might be easier to see how different things contribute to the different components (although some things can contribute to two of them or all three), with the practical implication that one can better know what to focus on to increase one's experience of meaning (Martela & Steger, 2016). It must be noted, however, that there is an intricate relationship between these factors, and that it is theorized that changes in any one of these factors influence the overall experience (Martela & Steger, 2016). Relatedly, the components might influence each other, such that increased coherence leads to increased significance and purpose; and vice versa, in all directions. Indeed, the three components are highly correlated (Krause & David Hayward, 2014), which suggests that in everyday language, the term "meaning" might be used to indicate whichever of the three, and where the context reveals which factor is at center.

Furthermore, since people are fundamentally motivated to search for and pursue meaning (Frankl, 2006), changes in the components might occur through a constant and dynamic process (Heintzelman & King, 2014a). The uniting reason for this, it is argued, is because it is a process that integrates the different aspects of life—namely, cognition, evaluation, motivation—into a coherent whole; and that feels meaningful (Lips-Wiersma & Wright, 2012; Martela & Steger, 2016).

Meaningful Work

Although the three-way distinction originally took base in an understanding of meaning in life, Ward and King (2017) called for a similar investigation in the workplace, arguing it might be the ideal place for it. What is most looked at, here, is the term "meaningful work", which in the field of organizational psychology has often been used interchangeably with "meaningfulness" (Rosso et al., 2010). That is to say, work that is meaningful is

experienced as something positive or significant. Indeed, based on prominent definitions, meaningful work can therefore be defined as: work that is experienced as significant and valuable (Both-Nwabuwe et al., 2017; Martela et al., 2021). Alas, I will use the terms "meaningfulness" or "meaningful" interchangeably with "meaningful work" based on what is most fitting.

To further complicate the concept, there is a highly subjective nature to what someone finds significant and valuable; that is, what is meaningful work to one person is not necessarily meaningful to another (Martela & Pessi, 2018). Still, in investigating the concept, researchers have extracted some commonalities in what contributes to meaningful work. In a review by Martela and Pessi (2018), they argued there are two main dimensions to meaningful work: *Broader purpose*, which is about serving some greater good or having a prosocial impact. And *self-realization*, which is about having autonomy and expressing authenticity. Similarly, in a longitudinal study done by Martela et al. (2021), they also showed the importance of prosocial behavior and autonomy in experiencing meaningful work.

Other researchers have supported these factors, as well as brought attention to additional ones. Looking at the Work and Meaning Inventory (WAMI), one of the most used instruments for assessing meaningful work, there is support for the following factors: experiencing positive meaning in one's work, sensing that one's work is central to making meaning, and perceiving that one's work aids the greater good (Steger et al., 2012). In a review investigating how organizations can help foster meaningful work, Lysova et al. (2019) found three main characteristics. Meaningful work is linked to a) quality jobs that provide opportunities to job craft, b) facilitative social environments and high-quality relationships, and c) having access to decent work. Although not specifically applicable for self-employees, these factors still hint to some of the conditional factors for meaningful work. Lastly, in

addition to autonomy, there have been found links between meaningful work and the basic needs of relatedness, and competence (Autin et al., 2021; Martela & Riekki, 2018).

Job Demands-Resources Theory

In the field of organizational psychology, the job demands-resources (JD-R) theory is one of the most popular frameworks used to investigate the relationships between job characteristics and employee well-being (Lesener et al., 2018). Studies has also used it to investigate meaningful work (e.g., Albrecht et al., 2021; Dan et al., 2020; Landells & Albrecht, 2019; Sánchez-Cardona et al., 2021), which is suiting as meaningfulness is highly related to well-being (Jebb et al., 2020; Lips-Wiersma et al., 2022).

The central idea of the JD-R theory is that job characteristics can either be categorized as job demands or job resources (Demerouti & Bakker, 2007). Job demands can be explained as physical, social, or organizational aspects of a job that entail sustained physical or mental effort, and are thus associated with certain physical and mental costs (Demerouti et al., 2001). Conversely, job resources can be described as physical, social, or organizational qualities of a job that might be functional in achieving goals at work, reduce job demands and its costs, and stimulate personal growth and development.

The essential assumptions of the JD-R theory posits that these characteristics work to create two causal, largely independent processes: 1) job demands usually create a health-impairing process or strain, which increases the risk of negative consequences such as poor mental health, health complaints, or, relevant to this thesis, a lack of meaningful work; 2) job resources usually create a motivational process, which increases the chance if positive consequences such as higher performance, increased commitment, or, relevant to this thesis, experiences of meaningful work (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). There are also two supplementary assumptions of the JD-R theory, where a) certain demands are seen as challenges that promote engagement, and b) resources have the ability to buffer against the

negative impact of demands (Lesener et al., 2018). The JD-R also have a set of propositions that help explain various other mechanisms. Not all are relevant to this thesis, but proposition 7 of the JD-R theory will be explained further below (see Bakker & Demerouti, 2017).

Most of the JD-R research has been done in the context of wage-employment, and as such, there have been categorizations of which characteristics are job demands and which characteristics are job resources (Lesener et al., 2018). (In the presentation of the literature below, demands and resources are marked within quotation marks (" ") for eased reading). Common demands include "time pressure", "role conflict" and a "heavy workload", and common resources include "autonomy", "organizational support", and "encouraging coworkers". As for challenging demands, having a "stimulating workload" can lead to engagement (Dan et al., 2020); and as for buffering effects, "autonomy" has been shown to make the experience of demands less effortful (Häusser et al., 2010).

Although there exists much less research in the context of self-employment, there has been found some identifying characteristics. While the aforementioned demands and resources might also apply to the self-employed, there are some that seem more specific.

Demands Among the Self-Employed

Compared to wage-employees, self-employed workers face more intense working conditions, involving higher levels of "uncertainty", "complexity" and "responsibility" (Schonfeld & Mazzola, 2015; Stephan, 2018). There are also usually "longer working hours" and a more intense "time pressure". Concerning the social environment, this is markedly different, as there are no supervisors and far fewer colleagues (if any), which makes the self-employed susceptible to "loneliness" (Fernet et al., 2016). Furthermore, "Unpredictable structures", "lack of foresight", "economic uncertainty", "family/work conflict", "external pressure", and "identity pressure" has also been found to be demands among the self-employed (Vaag et al., 2014). On top of this, the average earnings for the self-employed are

lower than if there were to work under wage-employment (Van Praag & Versloot, 2008), suggesting that "economic challenges" might be present among the self-employed.

Resources Among the Self-Employed

Compared to wage-employees, self-employed workers have higher levels of "autonomy" and "job control" (Gelderen, 2016). In a study of freelance musicians, Vaag et al. (2014) found that "support from family" and "support from professional network" were important social resources. They also identified "dedication", "entrepreneurial skills", "flexibility and proactivity", "internal locus of control and resilience" and "fostering and maintaining core values" to be important resources. In their study of factors that lessened the impact of COVID-19 on intentions to go self-employed, Hernández-Sánchez et al. (2020) found that "optimism" and "proactiveness" were resources. These are akin to the aforementioned personality characteristics of the self-employed. Studies have also shown that "education" (Annink et al., 2016) and "experience" (Pérez-López et al., 2019; Politis, 2008) are resources among the self-employed that buffer against demands such as "failure" and "economic hardships".

As an overall remark on demands and resources, Stephan (2018), concluded that the hallmarks of self-employment are "uncertainty" and "autonomy".

Job Crafting

Job crafting can be defined as self-initiated changes in one's job-demands and resources (Tims et al., 2012; Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001; Zhang & Parker, 2019). Based on the individual worker's preferences, passions, and motives, these changes are employed with the overall goal to improve the working condition. More specifically, Tims et al. (2012) argued that job crafting is about: 1) increasing structural resources, such as variety and autonomy, 2) increasing social resources, such as social support and feedback, 3) increasing demands that are challenging, such as heightened responsibility and a stimulating workload,

and 4) decreasing demands that are hindering, such as emotionally depleting social interactions and workloads that are too big. This focus on job demands and job resources places job crafting within the JD-R theory, with its proposition 7 stating that motivated employees are likely to use job crafting behaviors, which in turn leads to greater levels of job resources and even greater levels of motivation (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017).

Zhang and Parker (2019), proposed that job crafting might be viewed as a hierarchy of job crafting levels, consisting of 1) orientation (approach versus avoidance), 2) form (behavioral versus cognitive), and 3) content (job demands and job resources). Approach orientation is job crafting towards positive states (i.e., the motivational process of the JD-R theory; Bakker & Demerouti, 2017), while avoidance orientation is job crafting away from negative states (i.e., the health-impairing process of the JD-R theory; Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). Behavioral form are changes in one's actions on the job (which can be toward the amount or content of a tasks or the amount and intensity of relationships; Tims et al., 2012), while cognitive form are changes in one's view of the job or aspects of it (aiming to change its meaning in a positive way; Tims et al., 2012). Lastly, content simply refers to the changes in one's job design with respect to demands and resources. All these levels of job crafting can help individuals achieve a greater extent of meaningful work (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001).

It must be noted that, while engaging in job crafting might vary across time, the *opportunities* to job craft can be viewed as relatively stable, given they are tied to the nature of one's work environment (Petrou et al., 2016). This opportunity to job craft, in turn, influences the extent to which job crafting is carried out. Relatedly, Lazazzara et al. (2020) remarked that context might influence how job crafting is carried out. And Zhang and Parker (2019) argued that different job crafting behaviors might be utilized in different contexts, depending on the resources and demands that accompany it.

Job Crafting and Context

While context is of relevance to job crafting, there has been little research investigating specific context factors among the self-employed. In a synthesis of the qualitative literature, Lazazzara et al. (2020) argued that for self-employed workers in well-defined work contexts (occupations regulated by professional norms, qualifications, or certifications), it could constrain job crafting behaviors if the "pressure to behave in prescribed manners" were high. For wage-employees, on the other hand, the same paper showed that job contexts with "high social support", "openness", "a proactivity-oriented culture", "flexibility", and a "shared organizational identity", supports the extent of job crafting behaviors. Conversely, they showed that contexts with "low social support" and "minimal collaboration" were constraining to job crafting behaviors.

In their review of the job crafting literature, Zhang and Parker (2019) found that "leadership", "perceived organizational support", and "autonomy" supported job crafting behaviors among wage-employees. There were also some findings on moderate effects of "coworker support" on job crafting. In a relevant study on female self-employed workers, Peters et al. (2020) suggested that career satisfaction might be influenced by freelancers "national context", their "household context", and their "work context", and noted that the "blurred lines between work-life" could hinder satisfaction if job crafting behaviors did not provide adequate results. Indirectly, a diary study by Petrou et al. (2012) found, especially for proactive personalities, that "work pressure" was related to crafting aimed at reducing hindering demands, but that when autonomy was high, the crafting was aimed at gaining more resources.

Job Crafting and Self-Employment

When self-employment is a proactive, self-determined choice, the self-employed individual has a unique chance to shape their work-environment in line with their preferences,

passions, and motives; i.e., creating a better person-job fit (Baron, 2010; Stephan et al., 2020). Indeed, because they are self-employed, they have the freedom to choose *what* to work on, *how* to work on it, and *when* to work on it (Parker, 2014). In turn, this means they have the opportunity to shape their work in a way that is experienced as meaningful.

Despite the fact that self-employed workers have these opportunities—and that they might operate in different contexts than the wage-employed—it is a surprisingly neglected research area with only a few studies suggesting that job crafting behaviors are present among the self-employed (Buonocore et al., 2018; Meged, 2017; Peters et al., 2020). Interestingly, the study by Buonocore et al. (2018) found that the factor "autonomy" influenced the extent to which self-employed workers engaged in job crafting.

According to Zhang and Parker (2019), autonomy might be seen as an antecedent to job crafting, meaning it is a factor, or resource, that influences subsequent job crafting behavior. Other antecedents are such things as "variety", "engagement", "competence", and a "proactive personality". Some additional information can be gleaned from the research on the point of proactivity, with the notion that a proactive personality is common among self-employed workers (e.g., Frese & Gielnik, 2014) and that this, in turn, is linked to increased amounts of job crafting (Neneh, 2019; Tims et al., 2012).

The Model for This Thesis

Based on the theoretical notions above, I have formed a model for this thesis in line with the JD-R theory in Figure 1. However, I have adapted it for the specific purposes of this thesis, as in line with the theory's basic flexibility (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). This model is shown in Figure 2. Although correlations and causations cannot be steadily discovered in a quantitative study (Rose & Johnson, 2020), the model is provided for illustrative purposes and eased traceability of the relevant factors. Offering a model will also make this thesis more accessible to future researchers wishing to test assumptions quantitatively (Briggs, 2007).

Figure 1

Figure 1. The job demands-resources model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017)
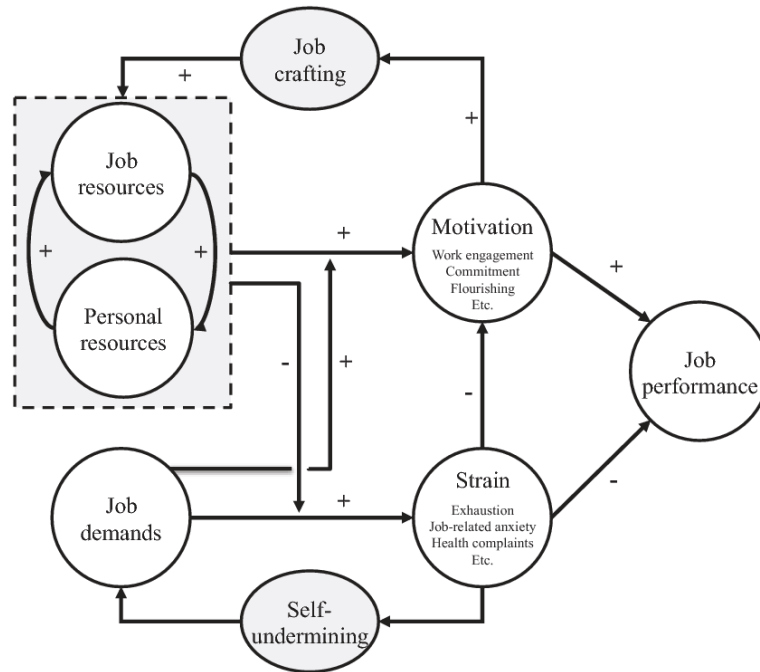
Figure 2

Adapted JD-R model for the current study

In this thesis's model, "work is experienced as meaningful", and "work is not experienced as meaningful", will be the two outcomes of the JD-R process. Other than that,

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components relevant to this thesis are kept within the new and adapted model, while components that are not applicable have been omitted.

From this model, it might therefore be theorized that: 1) Resources lead to work that is experienced as meaningful. 2) Demands lead to work that is n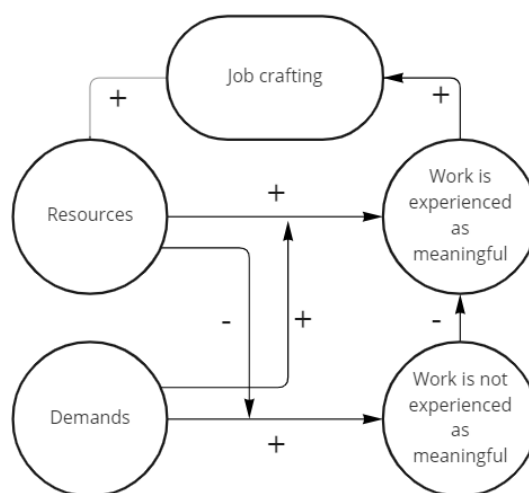ot experienced as meaningful. 3) In experiencing meaningful work, people are more likely to job craft to further increase their resources. 4) Resources can buffer against the negative effects of demands. 5) Some demands are challenging, which lead to work that is experienced as meaningful. 6) if work is not experienced as meaningful, it negatively effects the experience of meaningful work.

Job Crafting and Meaningful Work Among the Self-Employed

Few studies have investigated the specific links between job crafting and meaningful work among the self-employed, but there do exist some. In a study among female freelancers, using the JD-R model as their theoretical framework, Peters et al. (2020) found that even though they engaged in job crafting, achieving meaningful work was difficult when the aim was to also achieve work-life balance and financial independence at the same time, implying that "conflicting values" is a relevant job demand among self-employed workers. In another study using a qualitative approach, Meged (2017) found that self-employed tour-guides were likely to engage in job crafting in order to create a more meaningful work-situation, and that it was "intrinsic motivation" that fueled these behaviors. In addition to these studies, there exist several studies which have investigated different combinations of these factors, and thus there might be important insights to obtain here.

Self-Employment and Meaningful Work

There is research on self-employed workers and their experience of meaningful work. In a qualitative study by Geldenhuys and Johnson (2021), it was found that purpose was the primary factor among self-employed workers in experiencing meaningful work. Here, purpose stimulated the individuals' "authenticity" and facilitated "creative expression". It was

also found that "cooperation" encouraged involvement in meaningful work in the same study. In their large multi-level study across several European countries, Stephan et al. (2020) argued that because self-employment might be a more self-determined career choice than wage-employment, it results in more meaningful work due to "autonomy." The same authors noted that "a country's legitimacy of self-employment" moderated the relationship between self-employment and meaningful work, indicating that "social norms" or "bureaucracy" can be demands.

Job Crafting and Meaningful Work

Several studies have investigated the link between job crafting and meaningful work. In a three-wave study by Petrou et al. (2016), it was found that individuals that crafted their job to include resources such as "autonomy" and "increased learning opportunities" experienced greater extents of meaningful work. Conversely, the same study also found that the resource "social interactions" had no relation to meaningful work. Their cautious explanation of this was that the crafting could be aimed at ventilating feelings, which in being a short-lived form of pleasure did not make the work more meaningful as a whole.

In their meta-analysis, Rudolph et al. (2017) found a positive association between "workload" and job crafting aimed at increasing challenging job demands. On this note, Petrou et al. (2016) found no relationship between this and meaning as coherence. It was suggested that, while challenges promote engagement, they need longer time to be incorporated into one's understanding of oneself and one's work. Rudolph et al. (2017) also found that "autonomy" had a negative association with job crafting aimed at decreasing hindering job demands. This was interpreted as having to do with withdrawal from work, thus reflecting a positive process where due to autonomy one can choose to focus on increasing resources or challenging demands instead.

Another three-wave study found that individuals increased their experience of meaningfulness when they crafted their resources to include "autonomy" and "support" because it lead to a better person-job fit (Tims et al., 2016). In a study investigating the different forms of job crafting, Geldenhuys et al. (2021) found that cognitive job crafting had an especially important role in achieving meaningful work, wherein workers could think of how their work could make a "prosocial impact", how they could make it more "authentic" and how it aided their "self-knowledge." In a study done on firefighters, it was found that when they engaged in job crafting behaviors, specifically aimed at increasing resources such as "trying to learn new things at work", "support from supervisor" and "increasing the workload to challenge me," it resulted in an increase in meaningful work (Dan et al., 2020). The same study also found that "engagement" was positively associated with meaningful work.

Demands, Resources, and Meaningful Work

Of all the clusters, there have been most research on the relationship between demands, resources, and meaningful work. The ones below are done in the context of wage-employees. In a qualitative study by Bailey and Madden (2015), it was found that when providing employees with "autonomy", "time to develop projects" and "expressing creativity", it promoted greater levels of meaningfulness. In a study among participants from several different industries, Albrecht et al. (2021), showed that "job variety", "autonomy", and "opportunities for development" had a direct and positive association with meaningful work. Petrou et al. (2016) proposed that when employees want to grow through their work, then "task significance", "task identity", "autonomy", "skill variety" and "feedback" led to more motivated employees, and explained that this, in turn, allowed for greater experiences of meaningful work through "engagement" with work that is valuable. The results of another

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study indicated that job resources such as "task variety", "skill variety" and "task significance" was positively associated with meaningful work (Sánchez-Cardona et al., 2021).

In a two-wave study by De Boeck et al. (2019), it was found that work that provided people with "opportunities to realize their future work-selves" was experienced as meaningful. Lips-Wiersma et al. (2022) found that "job security", as in the perception of a steady and continued employment, was related to higher levels of meaningful work. In a systematic review of the literature Dewi et al. (2022) found that recourses such as, "development" and "giving employees opportunities to influence processes and participate in making effective decisions", resulted in more meaningful work. Similarly, another study found that when employees perceived that they could "voice their opinions", it had a positive effect on meaningful work (Ganjali & Rezaee, 2016).

As for demands, Allan et al. (2017) found that "underemployment", such as insufficient pay or status, was negatively linked to meaningful work. In another study by Lee et al. (2017) it was found that "bureaucracy" and a "rigid hierarchical culture" was negatively associated with meaningful work.

Lastly, in a study by Tan and Yeap (2021), it was found that "meaningfulness", in and of itself, was a resource that buffered against the detrimental effects of job demands. This was corroborated by Meng et al. (2022), who in their two-wave study found that it specifically concerned hindering demands.

Method

In this chapter, I will outline the methodological considerations as they relate to this thesis's objective. This includes the scientific framework used, research design, recruitment of the participants, the interview guide and procedure, and the analysis. There will also be considerations of reliability and validity, as well as a note on ethical considerations.

Thesis Objective

The main objective of this thesis is to answer the following research question: *In what ways does job crafting, demands and resources impact meaningful work among the self-employed?* I do not intend to approximate any explanations of causal or correlational relationships between these factors. I will simply uncover what the factors entail and provide discussions as it relates to my research question. It is also of interest to investigate the three-way division of meaning in a workplace setting, specifically for the self-employed.

The decision to work with this research question stems from my personal interest in meaningful work and self-employment, as well as it being a relatively small research-area. The focus on job-crafting stems from its central role in the JD-R theory (see Bakker & Demerouti, 2017), which is one of the most popular theories within occupational psychology (Lesener et al., 2018). It is also interesting due to the hypothesized role of job crafting among the self-employed.

Before I go on and elaborate on the methodological choices, I want to state the scientific framework that have influenced this process.

Scientific Framework

This thesis and its methodological choices are inspired by a critical realist framework (see Clarke et al., 2015). It is a scientific stance that posits there exists a "true" reality, but that a full and direct access to it is not possible through the scientific method (Bhaskar, 2013; Clarke et al., 2015). Researchers and participants alike are limited by their interpretive resources and can only access a partial and particular understanding of reality. I see it as an acceptable stance for this thesis, as I cannot know the full extent of the participant's reality, and with that, their understanding of meaningful work. All I can work with are the words they use to describe the phenomena, at the point of inquiry, which matches the focus of a semantic thematic analysis (Clarke et al., 2015).

Relatedly, the thesis is also inspired by the epistemological and ontological stance of post-positivism on the point that social sciences are influenced by those who conduct the research (Fox, 2008). Keeping with this, I acknowledge any influence I might exert on the methodological procedures, such as human error and bias (Levitt et al., 2017). However, it is also in keeping with post-positivism, that I, as a researcher, has the responsibility to minimize such influences in myself, approaching the data as objectively as I possibly can.

Research Design

Concerning the highly subjective nature of meaningful work, I decided that a qualitative research design was the most suitable as I wanted to gain detailed descriptions of the participant's experience; to find out how they experience their current situation and extract out the perspectives they have concerning the research topic (see Thagaard, 2018). I also wanted to investigate whether or not there were other resources and demands than those already described in the literature, which a qualitative study is suitable for (Clarke et al., 2015). In alignment with these desires, I chose to conduct semi-structural interviews as it allows for exploration through follow-up questions (Magaldi & Berler, 2020). The semi-structured nature ensures some similarity in the questions asked, steering the progression with key points, but it does not constrain the participants' answers in full as it allows for follow-up questions where it is suited.

Sampling and Recruiting

With the purpose of investigating self-employed workers, an approach was developed to attain such participants. I began searching for participants using the Brønnøysundregisteret, which is a database that contains all registered companies in Norway. This database gave me the option to filter by my selection criteria of 1) sole proprietorships, and automatically give me the criteria of 2) proprietorships registered in Norway. This is called a purposive sampling method (Berndt, 2020).

A challenge to this approach, I discovered, was there was no easy way of contacting the people in the database because few had any contact-information available. It was also a relatively slow method as I had to contact one person at the time. After finding six participants, I decided to send out an e-mail to test the response so far, describing the purposes of the study and a request to participate. Two participants replied with interest, and I followed up by sending them a document with complete information and a form of consent, based on the template by the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD) (See Appendix A). One of the participants fell through at this point.

Weighing this approach against time usage, I decided to do a supplementary selection, using a self-selection sampling (Berndt, 2020), wherein I specified the inclusion criteria and then those who were interested could choose to participate by free will. I joined a private Facebook group for self-employed workers, and posted the same information I had used in the e-mails. I also specified my selection criteria. Of the approximately 2700 members (at the time of writing), I got five replies, which I sent the complete information and the form of consent to. One of the participants fell through at this point. Now, in total, there were five participants that had consented to take part in the study.

After completing the five interviews, a consideration of whether or not to conduct more interviews were done. Given the last couple of interviews had not provided much new information relating to the research question, as keeping with the principle of theoretical saturation (see Boddy, 2016), I was content with what I had. Also, in weighing this trend in the data against cost and time-usage, for which Boddy (2016) advocates, I decided that five interviews were enough.

Malterud et al. (2015) argue that saturation is not the only principle in guiding the sample size of qualitative research, and proposes a practice of "information power." This principle, as similar to that of saturation, takes base in the information density of the samples,

meaning the more information an interview holds, the less participants are needed. But instead of just comparing new interviews against previous interviews, information power also accounts for factors such as the 1) aim of the study, 2) specificity in the sampling method, 3) use of theory, 4) quality of dialogue, and 5) the strategy of the analysis. In addition to saturation, the factors of "use of theory" and "quality of dialogue" aided my decision to not hold any more interviews.

Interview Guide

In alignment with the aim of the study, a semi-structured interview guide was developed (See Appendix B). I first formulated a series of questions, more or less intuitively, based on what I thought would give answers to my research question. I then iterated the guide to include questions informed by the JD-R theory, job crafting, and the understanding of meaning as a three-way distinction. At the point of development, I was proportionally more acquainted with the meaning literature than the job crafting literature, which resulted in a more general approach to the latter and a combination of general and more specified to the former. Overall, however, the questions did not follow the theory too strictly, but were formulated more naturally and in line with how these concepts might be talked about in everyday language. After receiving feedback from my advisor, I decided to include some supplementary questions because I felt they could provide some additional information of interest.

The guide was divided into three sections. First, a set of introductory question, such as the participant's own descriptions of their work, and if relevant, comparisons between being wage-employed and self-employed. The next section asked question relating to the JD-R theory and job crafting, with questions such as "What opportunities do you have in shaping your own workday?" and "Is there any particular challenges you experience in your job?"

The last section asked questions relating to meaningful work, with questions such as "Which things at your job contributes to you experiencing meaningfulness?" and factor-specific questions such as "Can you say something about how your work contributes to an understanding of yourself and the world around you?" In wrapping up, I asked if there was anything the participants would want to add.

Given the participants were of Norwegian nationality, the interview guide was written in Norwegian. In translating the above questions into English, I have tried my best to stay close to the original meanings, although some of the phrasing has been changed for purposes of clarity.

Interview Procedure

The interviews were done one by one. They were conducted in Norwegian and thus the answers were given in Norwegian as well. This was done because I supposed it was both more natural and easier to hold an in-depth conversation in the participants native language. Due to geographical barriers and COVID-19 regulations, four out of five interviews were most appropriate to conduct using Zoom, a digital meeting platform. The exception was held in the offices of one of the participants. I acknowledge a minor difference in the character of the interview, in how elaborative the participant was, but whether this was due to the interview setting or the nature of the participant is unknown. While the first interview lasted around 25 minutes, the last four lasted between 40-45 minutes and provided a sufficient amount of data, in keeping with the principle of information power (Malterud et al., 2015)

Transcription and Thematic Analysis

After conducting all the interviews, I transcribed the audio material using the automatic transcribe function in Word. As this didn't produce seamless results, I listened to the entire material to double check it against the text, fixing any problems and cleaning up the transcriptions. To analyze the material, I decided to conduct a thematic analysis (TA), based

on the work of Braun and Clarke (2006). This suited the aim of the study as well as the scientific framework. While I will detail the process in its respective stages below, it was not strictly linear as I went a little back and forth between the stages. As Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) points out, however, this might result in a more thorough outcome. Going into the analysis, I leaned towards an inductive TA as I wanted to explore the material without too many restrictions and potentially discover something outside of the established. However, I acknowledged any deductive influence I might have hold from my previous knowledge of the literature.

Given the material's density, I took a substantial break before I started, as I wanted to approach it with fresh eyes (see Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). I then started coding the material in line with thematic analysis, and I went through the interviews in a different order than for the transcriptions. Clarke et al. (2015) point out that this mitigates the effect of comparing the data to the first collected item. In the initial coding, I looked for material that stood out as interesting or that related to my research question. Upon encountering such material, I highlighted the relevant section of text, and spontaneously named them with suitable labels. After going through all the manuscripts, I had developed a substantial number of codes.

After the coding, I took another pause to clear my mind before I began the process of searching for themes. I took base in the codes I had extracted from the data, and by creating a thematic map, I clustered together similar codes (see Appendix C for the initial thematic mapping). Clarke et al. (2015) point out that a theme should be a meaningful unit and also relate to the research question, and I kept that in mind as I worked through the codes and their corresponding highlighted text. Initially, I ended up with six overarching themes, a number of subthemes, and some sub-subthemes associated with each of them. A good thematic analysis usually contains a balanced amount of overarching themes, and usually there isn't too many

subthemes and sub-subthemes (Clarke et al., 2015). Based on this latter notion, I worked on my themes a little more.

After yet another pause, I went on to the next step of the thematic analysis, which was a review of my themes. Following the recommended procedure of Clarke et al. (2015), I first reviewed the themes against the coded material. This resulted in some significant changes, both for the overarching themes, the subthemes, and the sub-subthemes. Specifically, my understanding of the overarching themes was adjusted a little, and for the subthemes, I was able to condense the amount by seeing there were more coherent units. I was also able to incorporate all of the sub-subthemes into relevant first-level subthemes, thus cleaning up my thematic map. Although some of the subthemes fit into more than one overarching theme, I tried my best to place them where it was most relevant, as well as where I thought it would be most stimulating for a subsequent discussion. Through this stage of the process, I realized I adapted a more deductive focus, which I allowed to unfold as it made the most sense to me in the clustering of the themes. The second part of this step was a review of the themes against the entire data set. The goal was to check whether the themes was appropriately aligned with the research question, and at the same time, sufficiently reflect what was present in the transcribed material. Being content with the results, I continued to the last phase of the analysis.

The last phase consisted in renaming the themes where it was relevant. In naming the overarching themes, I found it easy to use terminology I knew from the research literature, taking the analysis into a yet more deductive focus. This made sense to me, as I saw the connections the subthemes had to the concepts I knew from the literature. For this reason, it became important to find appropriate names for the subthemes, and to know what these meant and how they related to their overarching themes. Thus, the analysis ended up as a mixture between a deductive and inductive TA, which seems to compliment the objectives detailed at

the beginning of the method-section (see Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006 for an example of a hybrid approach).

As I came to work with the results of the study, I made some additional changes to the themes (as in line with their multiple fits) with the purpose of creating a better connection to the theory.

Reliability and Validity

In choosing to conduct a qualitative study, there are different criteria for reliability and validity than in quantitative research (see Noble & Smith, 2015; Yardley, 2015). A common aim for the two, however, is to ensure the overall trustworthiness of one's research (Rose & Johnson, 2020). To that aim, I have tried my best to be transparent and to acknowledge my position as a researcher, hoping to enhance both reliability and validity. Given that I am taking base in the frameworks of critical realism and post positivism, I acknowledge how my role influences the scientific process—in all stages of the thesis. Particularly, in formulating open-ended interview-questions, choosing which analysis to perform, and how I have interpreted the findings, I cannot claim the same reliability and validity as in quantitative research (Rose & Johnson, 2020; Yardley, 2015). However, as Yardley (2015) points out, such concerns are inevitable when maximizing the benefits of qualitative research, on points such as active engagement with the participants, seeking to extract out subjective experiences during an in-depth interview, and in analyzing the material, trying to find patterns and meanings that provide insights into individual differences and context.

On that latter note, it might be said that the generalizability of qualitative research falls short in its application to a wider population (Yardley, 2015). But that is not the main point of qualitative research either. Instead of population-wide implications, it provides an insight into the context which it was conducted in. This means these findings might not be replicable in an exact fashion, but rather, might be useful when conducting research in similar contexts.

Rose and Johnson (2020), points out there will always be a tension between the subjectivity of qualitative research and the attempts to make it, if not objective, at least more trustworthy. Despite these concerns, there do exist criteria that can be followed when conducting qualitative research, and thus, will enhance the respective trustworthiness of the study (Noble & Smith, 2015; Rose & Johnson, 2020; Yardley, 2015). Not all are applicable to every study, but below are some that are relevant to this one. Based on Yardley (2015), these are as follows:

First and foremost, I have detailed my scientific stance and the implications that might ensue from it. In the analysis, I have also tried to detail the process as best as I can, and a "paper trail" detailing rawer material from the analysis is found in Appendix C. In the results, subthemes that only one participant reflected upon is not included, because it could be that it is only applicable to that specific person or their occupation. These are not disconfirming examples, per se, but has been left out because this study wished to find some commonalities among self-employed workers. Relatedly, all the participants are represented, showcasing both the individual and their context. Furthermore, in a thorough familiarization with the literature, I have tried my best to be aware of any individual and contextual differences when interpreting the results. Next, given my personal interest in the topic, as well as an insight into self-employment by having tested it myself, I believe that my empathetic stance has provided sufficient depth in the interviews. Lastly, I have tried to provide clarifications for the choices I have made, in all parts of the thesis. Potential limitations of this study will be discussed in more detail below.

Ethical Considerations

Before beginning this study, an application was sent to the NSD. Based on their suggested template, I detailed the study's purpose and requested to collect general personal

information from the participants. This entailed getting the participant's names upon consenting and doing recordings of the interviews. This was approved (see Appendix D).

After approval, the first step was to ensure the participants could give their informed consents to take part in the study. After initial contact, I sent the participants a document describing the purposes of the study, their rights concerning withdrawal and anonymity, and how they could go about giving their informed consent. This was based on the template by the NSD (see Appendix A).

Concerning the interviews, they were taped on my personal mobile phone before they were transferred to the NTNU network in an encryption-secure location. The original file was deleted immediately after. No personal information, such as the name of the participants was saved anywhere. It was only the audio file that was stored. After this thesis is finished and delivered, the subsequent handling of the personal information will follow the procedures of the NSD and will ultimately cease to exist.

Results

In this section, I will present the results from the conducted analysis. First, I will introduce some descriptions of the participants, to show the context the results have originated in. Next, I will present the overarching and subordinate themes. Here, I will give primary weight to the direct quotations from the participants to illustrate the meaning-content. Where it is fitting, however, I will make notes to situate them within the context of the theory. I will also represent each of the participants, although I will mainly select the quotes that I think gives the best illustrations of the themes. It must also be noted that they are translated from Norwegian to English, but that I have done my best to stay close to the original meanings of the content. Minor changes have been done to the phrasing for eased reading and comprehensibility, and brackets ([ ]) have been used to ensure anonymity.

For clarity and fit with the JD-R theory, I will present the results in sections: one for job crafting, one for job demands, and one for job resources categorized under coherence, significance, and autonomy. It must be noted, again, that there are intricate links between the themes, and that some might fit into more than one overarching theme. This comes to light in the presentation of the results.

Descriptions of the Sample

The five participants were heterogeneous in several ways. The sample consisted of three females and two males; all the participant's had different occupations; four had worked as self-employed between one and a half and five years, while the last participant had worked as self-employed for twenty-five. All had previously been employed, and was able to give comparisons between their current situation and when they were wage-employed (one participant was currently employed in both categories).

Job Crafting

As an overarching theme, job crafting emerged as I specifically asked questions relating to job crafting, but it also came to light because the participants spontaneously talked about it in the context of other questions. Two categories of job crafting emerged: job crafting antecedents, with the subthemes of autonomy, variety, and flexibility; and job crafting form, with the subthemes of behavioral crafting and cognitive crafting. In Table 2, the overarching theme of job crafting and its subordinate themes are presented.

Table 2

Job crafting

Theme	Subtheme
Job crafting	Autonomy
antecedents	Variety

	Flexibility
Job crafting form	Behavioral crafting
	Cognitive crafting

Job Crafting Antecedents

Autonomy. Autonomy emerged as a frequent theme among the participants (they often used the word "freedom", which might be seen as synonymous with autonomy and is perhaps a more common word in everyday language). Already in the introductory questions, it was brought up in many of the interviews. When I asked about the biggest differences between being wage-employed and self-employed, one of the participants simply stated, "It is the freedom. Freedom to choose what to fill my days with, who I should take assignments for, and how much I should work." This seems to reflect how autonomy enables behavioral crafting concerning tasks and relationships for this participant.

In the job-crafting section of the interview, I asked about how a typical workday might look like, and the opportunities to shape it and in what ways. In response to that question, the word freedom, again, was brought up by another participant. They said:

> "The thing about being freelance is that I can actually take my job with me, and I can sit anywhere to do it . . . It is a lot of freedom, and a pleasure to be able to do so. It is not always possible, and it is not always appropriate to do it either. But there is the thing about having the [opportunity] . . . One is not very tied up. So that is something I really appreciate about being freelance."

This quotation, as well as the above, seem to showcase how choosing to be self-employed is an implicit job crafting initiative that increases one's autonomy. In response to a specific question about how the degree of autonomy affects one's work, some differences showed in

how much autonomy the participants had, but they stressed that it depended on context. One of the participants said:

> "It largely depends on what kind of [workplace you are in] . . . . For me, it is very fifty-fifty how much autonomy you have . . . And it largely depends on what kind of role you have."

Variety. Variety was also a frequent theme among the participants. In each of the interviews, it was brought up almost immediately in response to a question about describing one's workday. One of the participants simply stated that, "There is very much variation. I cannot say that anything is typical." Another participant said, "There are many different projects I work with and many different teams I work with." This latter quotation highlights there are variety in both tasks and relationships, and possibly in skill-utilization too. Concerning relational variety, this theme also emerged in response to a question where I asked them to describe their work-relationships. One of the participants said:

> "It gives me very much joy . . . that I do not have to relate to the same people for a whole year . . . There are many I meet for 6 hours, and then I never see them again. And that is totally fine, because I am impatient and very social, so for me it is totally super."

This suggests that variety might act as an antecedent to crafting that is directed towards the amount and intensity of social interactions. Common to all participants was that variety was mainly seen as something positive. However, two of the participants highlighted there was a dual nature to it, in that it was also experienced as demanding. One of them said:

> "I am very happy with variation . . . There are new people. New settings. There is always something new to relate to. So I am happy with that, instead of it being very predictable. . . It is exciting, I think, but it is also very taxing to always meet new people, new settings, and having to relate to new problems."

Flexibility. Being flexible was a theme that was present among the participants. It seemed to be mentioned as an antecedent that allowed the participants to master the contents of job crafting; i.e., demands and resources. When asked about the opportunities to shape one's own workday, one of the participants said: "There can be a lot of clients at the same time, so then it is about getting all these paths to work together . . . It requires a certain level of flexibility." When I asked if there were any particular resources they benefitted from, another participant said this:

> "I almost always say yes [to assignments], and I go far to say it too, such that I, for example, can do two assignments in one day. So then I have to be very flexible, or I wish to be, to be able to say yes to as much as possible."

Both quotations indicate there is room for behavioral crafting because of the participant's flexibility. Specifically, it seemed to enable them to tolerate an increase in workload.

Job Crafting Form

Behavioral Crafting. In general, the participants talked about controlling and shaping one's work situation. Here is what one of the participant's said when reflecting upon why they chose self-employment in the first place (name has been changed):

> "What I wanted was . . . to get a little more freedom to be able to shape my own workday . . . People say to me, '[Clara] you must have created the dream job for yourself.' And that is totally correct, because in a way I do what I most of all want to do. And then I have stopped doing the things I did not think was so fun."

This quote suggests there are multiple opportunities for behavioral crafting because the participant has chosen self-employment. Another participant said this when I asked them to describe their workday:

> "I like what I do. I decide my own projects, in a way that I do not feel I sit and are bothered by a task I do not want to do . . . I have chosen the project myself and I have chosen the team I want to work with myself."

This quote hints at behavioral crafting aimed at both tasks and relationships. When asked the specific question about autonomy, one of the participants said:

> "The timeframe is so limited in [my line of work], so there is often a requirement that people, in a way, do what they should. But it does not compromise the creativity, so I like to call creativity for autonomy."

This quote reveals that the participant used creativity as a specific job crafting behavior when the situation restricted their autonomy.

Cognitive Crafting. Cognitive crafting was a frequent theme among the participants, in that they seemed able to reframe demands into something positive. When reflecting about the nature of their work-relationships, with much variety and little stability, one of the participants said, "The advantages outweigh the disadvantages." This reveals how the crafting was utilized concerning relationships. Another participant touched on the theme of income, showing how the crafting was aimed at the work-situation of being self-employed. Here is their condensed response to various questions:

> "You are not guaranteed any income. Especially in creative occupations . . . But at the same time, it is that freedom you get when being freelance, so I think it is very much worth it . . . For me the freedom means so much . . . It is worth more than the safety a steady employment gives me."

When I asked about which parts of the job that might hinder meaningfulness, one of the participants shared their cognitive crafting on projects were they did not have much influence on the processes:

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"You can say that it is not much meaning in being a drone for someone else, but at the same time, you get much meaning when you find out that which is being [created] is either shown . . . or that you have been part of a type of campaign you stand for. So for me, that weighs up the negative."

When asked the same question, another participant first brought up administrative work, but as they continued with their answer, this came to light:

"But in a sense it is fine. Because you know that if you do not send out invoices you do not get any money . . . it is like fundamental to live . . . it is meaningful because I know that if I do not do it, then there is not any business either."

These latter quotes reveals that the crafting could be utilized towards the nature of tasks as well.

Job Demands

The overarching theme of job demands emerged in response to a specific question about demands, as well as in relation to various other questions. There were six categories: dealing with bureaucracy, demands from others, economic uncertainty, lack of work-relationships, role conflict, and workload. In Table 3, job demands and its subordinate themes are presented.

Table 3

Job Demands

Theme	Subtheme
Job demands	Dealing with bureaucracy
	Demands from others
	Economic uncertainty
	Lack of work-relationships
	Role conflict

Dealing With Bureaucracy. Dealing with bureaucracy showed itself as a frequent theme, and was primarily detailed in response to two questions. One asked about the presence of demanding actors, and one asked about things that might hinder the experience of meaningfulness. When asked about the former, one of the participants immediately stated, "The government posits demands, like say, you pay your bills and stuff." Another participant elaborated on these governmental demands, when at the end of the interview they were asked about if there was anything they would like to add to the conversation:

"What I see as the biggest challenge, that I see other people see as the biggest challenge, is how knotted the system is when it comes to considerations about how much taxes and bureaucracy and paperwork that is involved in this."

Another participant shared this view as well, and said at the end of their interview: "It is very little accommodated for by the public sector, so that you must figure it out yourself." Although the former quotes indicated that bureaucracy was hindering to the participants, this latter quote indicates there is a lot of learning involved, indicating there is a challenging component to it as well.

Demands From Others. Demands from others was another frequent theme among the participants. When asked about what kind of actors that pose demands, one of the participants said:

"It is clear that my clients demand a fair part of me. So it is first and foremost my clients I think . . . [And] the better you do, the more it demands of you . . . I will say that there is a pressure to perform, and of course my clients do not express it explicitly, but it is still there. When they pay much money for it, then of course they expect that they should get good quality."

This quote suggest it is a challenging demand, because it pushed the participant to excel at a higher level. In response to the question about what factors that might hinder the experience of meaningfulness, the same participant stated that:

"Sometimes it can be that I meet clients that I actually do not cooperate that well with, or that I actually do not like . . . then I feel it is just about doing it as best as I can, but I know it is not 100%. When the attitude is like 'yes but to talk about feelings and all this that you stand for, that is really meaningless.' Then I can feel like, 'this was not fun.'"

This shows that demands from others can be hindering, in that it reduced the participant's engagement and joy. This feeling was shared by another participant, which in reflecting on past wage-employment, said:

"One of the reasons I chose to bet on [self-employment] was that, in the two firms I worked in [before], I disagreed with the management . . . I did not think it was a good form of leadership and that made my very frustrated. So then I found out that I am better suited to have control over my own business."

This quote also indicates how choosing self-employment was a way for the participant to job craft their way out of hindering demands.

Economic Uncertainty. This theme revealed itself as the most prevalent demand among the participants. When I asked about how uncertainty influences the job, one of the participants simply stated, "It lies in the back of my mind that it can burst . . . The fear lies . . . within me and on my level, that I am terrified to lose my income." This suggests that it was a hindering demand for this participant. In response to the question about what kind of actors that pose demands, another participant came to this reflection:

"When you are working for yourself, you have no safety net. So that, you have to earn money and you yourself have to perform . . . Like in corona-times, as self-employed, it

is not very lucrative. Because you do not have a steady job, or steady paycheck. So

that has been pretty challenging."

This quote might suggest that it has a challenging aspect to it as well, as the participant

talked about having to perform (at a higher level). This answer also brought up the aspect of

corona or COVID-19, which seems to have a hindering effect. Another participant said the

following:

"It can go months before we know if we get an assignment again. And it was very

much of that in the corona-timeframe . . . And it was like that up until things opened in

March this year, it was very uncertain."

When asked about how uncertainty influences the job, one of the participants said:

"When I make a lot of money . . . I save that money, because I know that maybe it will

come a [down period], well January is always a bad month. It is very little projects

then . . . So it is very important to me to have a buffer account, so that I know I have

something, that I maybe have a little money for half a year without, if suddenly there

is not any work".

Lack of Work-Relationships. This theme was a moderate one among the

participants. Although relational variety was brought up as something positive in the job

crafting section, many of the participants still acknowledged that a lack of relationships could

be demanding. Specifically, it seemed to only be talked about in terms of a hindering demand.

In response to the question that asked if the participants could describe their work-

relationships or a lack thereof, one of the participants said:

"The thing I can miss, which I do not have, is a [social] work environment. That I do

not have colleagues to talk with when things happen. And to be together on

assignments. Because it can once in a whole be a little lonely when you are traveling .

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. . And that is perhaps the most challenging thing. That you do not have anyone to

discuss things with."

Another participant put it in this way:

"Because I work much freelance, you can say that there is a big lack of work-

relationships. And because as soon as a project is finished, it can be like 'yes thanks

and goodbye.' . . . It never becomes any long-lasting relations."

Even though one of the participants did not feel this demand at the time of the interview, they

acknowledged it was a potential demand of being self-employed: "It is not necessarily so

good to be freelance because you do not have the same social safety as when you are steadily

employed."

     Role Conflict. This theme emerged in response to various questions, but was the least

frequent demand among the participants. When asked about what kind of challenges they

experienced on the job, one of the participants said:

"What I think is a little challenging is that as self-employed, you must have a lot of

different roles. Like I do my own accounting . . . and you must also be the project

manager, you must get other people to do service for you, so if I should make a

website then I have to get someone that programs there . . . So there is very much

project management in that way."

This quote reveals that role conflict is potentially both a hindering and a challenging demand.

It seems to require a lot, but also enable a lot of learning and opportunities for personal

growth. Another participant said this in response to a question about how much time they

spend on working:

"It can be that I go and think while I do other things . . . I have an assignment that lasts

from 10 to 14, and then it is only those hours I define as work, but then I go and think.

So it is therefore hard to define. It is a little more fluid."

This hints that role conflict is a hindering demand for the participant, in that it caused a lack of boundaries between work and life.

      Workload. Workload showed itself as a moderate theme among the participants, and was represented as something related to time and to the difficulty of a task. In response to the question about what challenges they feel on the job, one of the participants stated, "It is really only time, because now I have gotten such big assignments that there are much to do in evenings and on the weekends." Another participant said, "A challenge has been time . . . I have had the time squeeze, but it is less of it now. But it is absolutely a challenge."

      These quotes suggests that workload was a hindering demand concerning work-life balance. On the other hand, a workload might also be challenging and promote learning and growth, which one of the participants indicated when they said:

> "Sometimes I have undertaken tasks that are a little too big, which at times have been very challenging . . . But I have come through on the other side, but it has had its costs. But I have learned a lot from it . . ."

Resources as Coherence, Significance, and Purpose

      In alignment with the purposes of this thesis, I have placed job resources within the framework of the three components of coherence, significance, and purpose. For coherence, there were three subthemes: identity and self-knowledge, gaining feedback, and experience and competence. For significance, there were five subthemes: prosocial behavior, being authentic and adhering to personal values, having support, having influence and feeling that you matter, and being engaged and interested. For purpose there were two subthemes: allowing the direction to unfold, and development of oneself and one's skills. Table 4 displays these overarching themes and their subthemes.

Table 4

Resources as coherence, significance, and purpose

Theme	Subtheme
Coherence	Identity and self-knowledge
	Gaining feedback
	Experience and competence.
Significance	Prosocial behavior
	Being authentic and adhering to personal values
	Having support
	Having influence and feeling that you matter
	Being engaged and interested
Purpose	Allowing the direction to unfold
	Development of oneself and one's skills

Coherence

Identity and Self-Knowledge. This theme was prevalent among the participants, and emerged primarily in response to a question about how the work contributes to an understanding of the participant and the world around them. Here, one participant stated that working on knowing themselves was a regular part of their work and life:

"I think that in a greater degree than many of the other occupations, you have the opportunity for self-inquiry . . . [I also] have a walkthrough of my own life . . . And that makes it so I get to brush off some dust of the history quite continually."

The same participant elaborated more on this theme at the end of the interview, when asked about an overall evaluation whether or not their work was meaningful:

"To create your own workplace, create your own identity and reputation, seen from both within and without. I think it has been a little cool . . . and I do feel a certain amount of pride concerning it . . . it is meaningful to me."

Another participant said this in response to the question about how work contributes to an understanding of themselves and the world around them:

"I think that my job, and that with being a freelancer is a pretty big part of me. Because it is involved in that whole freedom-feeling, which is a very big part of me . . . And so, it facilitates that I can live out those sides of me . . . It is a part of my personality and builds that understanding of myself."

This quote seems to hint that self-employment, in and of itself, contributes to this participant's identity and self-knowledge. In response to the same question, another participant said:

"Yes, [my work contributes to my understanding]. I trust things a little more that I sort of have had an inner idea about. And you watch a certain amount of movie-clips, then you learn a little more about yourself . . . You go pretty in-depth on things. That is pretty cool . . . So that I recommend . . . Even though it hurts on many occasions."

While the first part of this quote indicates that self-knowledge is a good thing, the last sentence also suggests that it is a demanding process, but perhaps one that was worth going through for this participant.

Gaining Feedback. This theme came about moderately among the participants. When asked about the differences between being wage-employed and self-employed, one of the participants said:

"[In self-employment] it is a direct link between effort and reward, in the form of money. But of course, also the feedback from clients. It is very closely linked. That is, if you do a good job, you get an immediate response on it. When you are employed somewhere, it is a little more hidden. It is not so direct . . . [In self-employment] I think it is very nice that you get very quick feedback on how you work."

This quote hints that the participant gained feedback both from the behaviors they took and from other people. Another participant said this in response to the question about how work contributes to an understanding of themselves and the world around them:

> "In the [work teams], you meet a lot of people, from totally different backgrounds. And especially when you work with [this special kind of assignment], you get sent into a society which is completely new, and it is very like . . . you did not know anything about this, you have a desire to learn much more about this."

This suggest that feedback was obtained from putting themself into a new environment. Another participant had these reflections when asked if they wanted to add something at the end of the interview, highlighting the feedback gained from others:

> "I think that a great advantage of freelancing or self-employment, is that you get to meet so incredibly many people and then you learn a lot. Like in every project you are involved in, or in every team you have worked in."

Experience and Competence. This theme was a prevalent one among the participants, and emerged in different parts of the interview, but especially in response to the questions about resources on the job, and the one about how the work contributes to understanding. In response to the latter question, one of the participants said:

> "The thing about just making different choices, and putting on all those different hats . . . it contributes to giving you a little more security in yourself, that you can solve things and a little higher self-feeling in the way that you actually fix things that you are not educated for."

This answer indicates that through inhabiting different roles, it contributes to an increased competence through experience with these things. Another participant had more to say on the point of competence, in this condensed answer to various questions:

> "[It is meaningful] when my knowledge is transformed into results . . . To see that
> even though I have sat and struggled to accomplish things, and to succeed in the end.
> It is meaningful when things work. I see that those strategies I employ work. And I
> know that with the strategies, it also gives me a safety that when I have delivered my
> services then I know it will generate income [for my clients] . . . So it works. And that
> gives me safety."

When asked about how work contributes to understanding of themselves and the world around them, another participant had this to say:

> "It is interesting, because I am educated [in another field] from way back and I have
> never really used that education . . . But now I do, suddenly. Now I have realized I am
> [inhabiting that role], [although it looks a little different] . . . And I see that in the job I
> have today, I have use for almost everything I have done previously in my work life. I
> get to employ my experience . . ."

This quote seems to reveal there is a tight link between experience and competence. In response to the question about resources, another participant brought up experience as a specific resource:

> "Experience is also a resource, though it is not always a resource. But I feel that I have
> worked with extremely many people through the years and different groups, and dared
> to try out things that are pretty intimidating."

The notion that it is not always a resource suggests that it has a dual nature to it for this participant.

Significance

Prosocial Behavior. Prosocial behavior was a moderate theme among the participants, and showed itself as they talked about providing value or meaningful experiences to others.

When simply asked about what it means that something is experienced as meaningful, one the participants stated:

> "That is when someone appreciates what I do, that I help someone through what I do. That I solve something for some clients . . . That we have a nice time together. That is what is most meaningful to me."

In response to a question about what parts of the job that contributes to making something meaningful, one of the participants said:

> "What is experienced as meaningful? It is to create value for others, for example. That others experience that I contribute to them getting ahead, that they can develop. That is, it is the client's feedback that [makes] you feel you make a difference."

When asked about how the work contributes to an experience of value and importance, another participant said, "I feel that if I am contributing to making something more functional or available to people, then that is meaningful to me."

Being Authentic and Adhering to Personal Values. This theme showed itself as a prevalent theme among the participants. One of the participants said this concerning the reason for doing their job: "Not that I do it just for the money. That is, it has to feel genuine." When asked about what parts of the job that contributes to making something meaningful, the same participant said:

> "I think most of it is that . . . to tie my own values to what I am doing . . . For my sake, my own satisfaction, I need to feel I am in on this . . . it is my quality, that I go into something with all of me . . . Then it becomes meaningful, and then I am also satisfied with my own effort when I succeed in that . . . to feel that it is real that which you are doing."

Another participant said this in response to the question about what it means that something is experienced as meaningful:

"A couple of months ago we did [something] for the children's cancer association. So for my sake it is, if I, first and foremost make something that is shown [in public], then I view it as meaningful. That it is a job . . . that I can stand for, that I like and then I help get it out there."

Another participant said this when reflecting on their journey as a self-employed worker:

"I found out that I would rather work for my dream, that is, that I can choose what I do, and then in a way stand for what I do . . . It is just exhausting to work for someone else's dreams all the time, when you have in a way, you put so much of your soul into it."

This quote seems to indicate that choosing self-employment over wage-employment increased this resource for the participant. Lastly, in reflecting on the interactions between different values, one of the participants stated, "For me, today, it is much better to be free than to belong."

Having Support. Although relational variety was brought up as a good thing in the job crafting section, it seems that support from those relationships is important. This is what one of the participants said in response to a question that asked directly about support: "I feel that others [in my occupation] and those I work with is very, they cheer me forward . . . Others [in my occupation] are supportive of what I do." The same participant said this when asked to describe their work relationships:

"I feel that I have a very, even though I sit alone and do this, I have many relationships in various ways. And I have others [in my occupation], which I of course have a network with on social media and stuff, which you can share, and show, and get tips and tricks and such . . . So you always have some feedback and some communication. Even though it is only through a screen, you still have a little livelier network."

The two quotes above reveals that the participants got support from the professional network and the teams they engaged with. Another participant answered this when asked directly about support, bringing up that support could also come from the family:

"My husband . . . even though he has a completely different job, he is very engaged in what I do, often comes with ideas . . . [and] my daughter is certainly very engaged . . . she is very good with helping me."

In response to the same question, another participant brought up having support from their clients:

"I have support from [my husband], and I have very many good work-relationships, right, in my clients . . . I have several that I have worked with over a long period, and we have a very near . . . if not friendship . . . at least very close."

Having Influence and Feeling That You Matter. This theme emerged primarily in response to two complimentary questions, one about what factors that contributes to an experience of meaningfulness, and one about what factors that hinders an experience of meaningfulness. When asked about the former, one of the participants said:

"I think it is that to be appreciated and to be seen. To be seen as a part of the team, that is something I really appreciate even though I am freelance . . . that they feel it is a teamwork and that I am not just placed to do some projects, but that my opinion matters."

The same participant said this when asked about what hinders meaningful work: "I think it is that . . . you do not feel that what you bring to the table or your involvement have an impact . . . to not get a thank you at the end." Another participant said this in response to what hinders meaningfulness: "It is the thing about, that you feel you are very much like a drone in a much larger mechanism." Then they continued:

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"It is that [in my occupation] is so much hierarchy . . . if you feel it is meaningful to get your creative inputs on the finishing result . . . you can often get negative feedback from the [people in charge]. Like, in a way, 'you are just hired muscle, and should only set things up.' Then it feels, in a way, not very meaningful."

Being Engaged and Interested. Being engaged and interested was reflected as a prevalent theme among the participants. When asked about what contributes to meaningful work, one of the participants said:

"To be able to do the thing I am passionate about, that is meaningful . . . [in my occupation] it is a lot of interesting things to do I think . . . So I would have chosen the same thing all over."

The participant who was both wage-employed and self-employed said this when asked about if they enjoyed the self-employment part: "Yes, I enjoy it so much that I forget time. Because this is what I burn for. That is why I consider whether or not I should bet on doing this 100%." The same participant said this when asked about the biggest differences between being wage-employed and self-employed:

"It has to do with the inner drive and interest. To work for another company that has other visions and see things in a slightly different manner, but that you are bound by a contract . . . that can be a motivation killer."

This quote reflects that demands from others hindered engagement and interest for this participant. Another participant said this in relation to a question about how the work provides direction and goals, illustrating the kind of interest that came with choosing self-employment, "I think that if I were to sit in a regular job, then I had thought much more about when to retire than what I do now, because now I do not think of that at all."

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Purpose

Allowing the Direction to Unfold. This emerged as a prevalent theme among the participants. Common to all of them was that they did not focus too much on a specific goal or direction; it was more about allowing the direction to unfold and evolve as they went on. One of the participants, who were more recently self-employed, said this in response to how the work contributes to direction and goals:

"That is something I have been wondering about, because I am still very much on a wave, on top of a wave where I feel that it was so right to start for myself . . . And then I think, what if I suddenly get tired of it some day? . . . If I do get a little tired of it, then I can do a little more of [alternative activities] instead, so I can always adjust this . . . So I do not have a fear that I will come to bore myself or regret it, then I think I have to adjust a little and continue in a little different direction."

Another participant said this in response to the same question:

"I have never had to market anything, so it just snowballed, and then an area develops there, and it just happens a little more dynamically in a way, perhaps without me having specific goals for what I have worked with."

This is a condensed answer to various questions by another participant:

"I really do not have a plan concerning what this job should do with me, or what that with being self-employed, how it should, in what direction it should go . . . I really do not have such plans, [because] it is not that it should get me into a steady job or that it should solve things economically . . . Right now it is just because I think it is working very well and I enjoy it."

Development of Oneself and One's Skills. This theme was also prevalent among the participants. When working together with someone else, one of the participant stated this when asked about what is experienced as meaningful, "That all parties grow because of it, that

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we learn something from it." The same participant said this when asked if there was anything they would like to add at the end of the interview:

"I think it is very easy to stagnate if you have a steady job and you do the same work-tasks and you talk to the same people every day. And I experienced that when I worked at a studio . . . You don't get challenged in the same way. But I think when you are self-employed . . . you get to learn things."

Another participant said this in response to the question about how work contributes to goals and direction:

"In the beginning of the career you get very focused on the field and you want to get better at what you do. To know more, [I] said yes to incredibly many different assignments to get better within my field . . . In the beginning you are very like, really an ambition to develop yourself and learn as much as possible and get good at the job. [Today], the goal is more about being better at what I do, and develop, and of course the goal is that the clients are satisfied every time."

The latter part of this question suggest that development might be a specific goal for this participant. When asked the same question, another participant said that self-development was a nice side-effect of helping their clients grow. They said: "[I too,] get continual growth on the personal level."

Summary of the Results

To give a brief summary of the results, there emerged a total of 21 different themes: "Autonomy", "variety", and "flexibility" were categorized as job crafting antecedents; "cognitive crafting" and "behavioral crafting" were categorized as job crafting forms; "dealing with bureaucracy", "demands from others", "economic uncertainty", "lack of work-relationships", "role conflict", and "workload" were categorized as demands; "identity and self-knowledge", "gaining feedback", and "experience and competence" were categorized as

resources under coherence; "prosocial behavior", "being authentic and adhering to personal values", "having support", "having influence and feeling that you matter", and "being engaged and interested" were categorized as resources under significance; and "allowing the direction to unfold" and "development of oneself and one's skills" were categorized as resources under purpose. The discussion will go on to say more about each of these themes, and relate them to the purposes of this thesis.

Discussion

The aim of this thesis was to investigate the impact of job crafting, demands and resources on meaningful work among the self-employed. It was also of interest to explore the presence of the three factors of meaning (coherence, significance, and purpose) and to uncover what these entailed. In the discussion that follows, I will use the JD-R theory (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017) to shed light on the interplay between job crafting, demands, resources, and meaningful work. I do not, however, intend to approximate explanations of causal or correlational relationships between these factors. As this is a qualitative study, a primary goal was to uncover what job crafting entails and reveal what kind of demands and resources that are present among the self-employed, which was done in the results section. Subsequently, however, in an attempt to say something about how these factors relate to each other and impact meaningful work, they will be placed within the adapted JD-R theory. Ultimately, the discussion will attempt to answer the research question: *In what ways does job crafting, demands and resources impact meaningful work among the self-employed?*

In the discussion that follows, I will first lay out the JD-R theory as it applies to this particular thesis. Then, I will present the results within the context of previous research and discuss what they entail. To provide transparency and eased traceability, I will present the discussion in sections similar to that of the results, although arguments from the different themes will be drawn in as it fits. Lastly, I will incorporate what I have found into the JD-R

framework, and say something about the impact of job crafting, demands and resources on meaningful work among the self-employed.

The JD-R Theory Applied to Meaningful Work

As indicated by the empirical literature above, it seems that job crafting, demands and resources, all interact with each other and that they impact meaningful work. The JD-R theory might be used to explain these relationships (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Lesener et al., 2018). Following the main tenets of the adapted JD-R model (see Figure 2) it is assumed that: 1) Resources lead to work that is experienced as meaningful. 2) Demands lead to work that is not experienced as meaningful. 3) In experiencing meaningful work, people are more likely to job craft to further increase their resources. 4) Resources can buffer against the negative effects of demands. 5) Some demands are challenging, which lead to work that is experienced as meaningful. 6) if work is not experienced as meaningful, it negatively effects the experience of meaningful work.

For this thesis then, it can be theorized that to experience meaningful work, self-employed workers should a) have sufficient resources and challenging demands because it promotes meaningful work and buffer against the negative effects of hindering demands, b) have a minimal presence of hindering demands because it decreases the experience of meaningful work, and c) engage in job crafting behaviors because it further increases their resources.

Job Crafting

The results indicated that job crafting was a large part of the participants work and lives, specifically underscored by different antecedents and forms (Zhang & Parker, 2019). Previous research has shown there is a link between job crafting and increases in meaningful work (Baron, 2010; Cardon et al., 2009; Dan et al., 2020; Geldenhuys et al., 2021; Meged,

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2017; Petrou et al., 2016; Tims et al., 2016; Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001), which also seems to be the case in this study.

Adding to the statement by Parker (2014), the participants seemed to have the opportunity to choose *what* to work on, *how* to work on it, and *when* to work on it, but also, *whom* to work with, *where* to work on it, and *how much* to work on it. Notably, these things seemed to flow from the participants having choosing self-employment in the first place. Indeed, following the overall goal of job crafting, which is about self-initiated changes aimed at improving one's working condition (Tims et al., 2012; Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001; Zhang & Parker, 2019), it seems that proactively choosing self-employment is one of the biggest changes one can undertake because it transforms the entire work-situation with all its demands and resources (Gelderen, 2016; Schonfeld & Mazzola, 2015; Stephan, 2018; Stephan et al., 2020) and therefore also enables a better person-job fit (Tims et al., 2016). Consequentially, it creates a situation where certain job crafting antecedents are present.

Job Crafting Antecedents

Autonomy. The participants revealed they had high levels of autonomy, which is consistent with the self-employment literature (Cuesta et al., 2018; Gelderen, 2016; Stephan, 2018). According to Zhang and Parker (2019), it is an antecedent to job crafting, which in their study was shown to support job crafting behaviors among the wage-employed. Given that the participants reflected on how autonomy, or freedom, allowed them to influence their work-situation concerning both tasks and relationships, it seems to have the same effect among self-employed workers. This is also supported by Buonocore et al. (2018), who found that autonomy influenced the extent to which self-employed workers engaged in job crafting.

As for the aims of job crafting, Rudolph et al. (2017) found that autonomy had a negative association with crafting aimed at decreasing hindering job demands, i.e., avoidance oriented (Zhang & Parker, 2019). This was interpreted by the authors as having to do with a

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withdrawal from work, thus reflecting a positive process where due to autonomy one can choose to focus on increasing resources and challenging demands instead, i.e., approach oriented (Zhang & Parker, 2019). The study by Petrou et al. (2012) aids in this explanation as they found, especially for proactive personalities (which is linked to self-employment; Frese & Gielnik, 2014; Rosique-Blasco et al., 2018; Travis & Freeman, 2017), that when autonomy was high the crafting was aimed at gaining more resources. However, it seemed that among the participants, a lot of the crafting was aimed at decreasing hindering demands and that it was choosing self-employment that accomplished this. Therefore, it might be that in already having reduced hindering demands by being self-employed, the crafting is then more aimed at gaining resources.

The way the participants talked about autonomy also suggest that is a resource in and of itself, as pointed out in the literature (Lesener et al., 2018; Stephan, 2018; Tims et al., 2012). Numerous studies have indicated that autonomy has a direct and positive effect on meaningful work (Albrecht et al., 2021; Autin et al., 2021; Bailey & Madden, 2015; Lips-Wiersma et al., 2022; Martela et al., 2021; Martela & Pessi, 2018; Martela & Riekki, 2018; Petrou et al., 2016; Stephan et al., 2020; Tims et al., 2016), which also seemed to be the case here. This hints at the possibility that autonomy, as an antecedent, promotes job crafting which further increases autonomy as a resource and in turn experiences of meaningful work. This reciprocal relationship might be seen in line with proposition 7 of the JD-R theory, which states that motivated employees are likely to use job crafting behaviors, which in turn leads to greater levels of job resources and even greater levels of motivation (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017).

Variety. Variety is another antecedent to job crafting (Zhang & Parker, 2019), which the results indicated the participants had large amounts of—both concerning tasks, relationships and skills. For the participants, it seemed to have something to do with working

on briefer assignments, which results in more frequent changes to their work-context. As a finding, it might be seen against the notion that self-employment comprises of unpredictable structures (Vaag et al., 2014), thus enriching the literature in suggesting these things are linked. In general, variety was seen as something positive, though it was revealed that it could also be taxing. One explanation of this might be that entering into new contexts requires effort in line with the effect of job demands (Demerouti et al., 2001). As for the aims of job crafting, the participants talked about variety in a way that suggests that it helped them decrease the hindering demand of emotionally depleting social interactions (Tims et al., 2012; Vaag et al., 2014), in that, firstly, the participants could choose whom to work with, and secondly, their work-relationships were relatively short-lived.

In addition to being an antecedent, it has been categorized as a resource (Tims et al., 2012), which some have linked to increases in meaningful work; namely in the forms of job variety, task variety and skill variety (Albrecht et al., 2021; Petrou et al., 2016; Sánchez-Cardona et al., 2021). Given the participants have variety in both work-context and in which roles they inhibit, it is likely they touch on all three aspects. Lastly, the idea that it is both an antecedent and a resource suggests there is a reciprocal relationship here as well (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017).

Flexibility. The results indicated that the participants had a certain amount of flexibility. In their study on wage-employees, Lazazzara et al. (2020) showed that job contexts with high flexibility supports the extent of job crafting, which suggest that it is an antecedent. Given that the participants shared how flexibility allowed them to master their job's demands and resources, it appears to be the case for self-employed workers as well. Additionally, in their discovery of resources among the self-employed, Vaag et al. (2014) grouped flexibility together with proactivity. This proactivity, on its part, was identified as an antecedent by Zhang and Parker (2019), and linked to greater extents of job crafting by others

(Neneh, 2019; Tims et al., 2012). This link to proactivity might also suggest that flexibility is, to some degree, part of the participant's personality (Frese & Gielnik, 2014; Rosique-Blasco et al., 2018; Travis & Freeman, 2017). Lastly, to my knowledge the literature does not contain findings showing that flexibility has a direct effect on meaningful work. However, given that it is found as a resource, it might have an impact on meaningful work as in keeping with the assumptions of the JD-R theory (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017).

Job Crafting Form

The antecedents, in their turn, influences the extent to which people engage in job crafting (Buonocore et al., 2018; Zhang & Parker, 2019), which the results of this study seemed to support. Notably, the participants revealed that it was not always appropriate, or possible, to utilize job crafting, but it was important to feel they had the opportunity. This might be seen in line with Baron (2010) and Cardon et al. (2009), who argued that because of the great opportunities for job crafting, self-employment is an occupational form that is rich in meaning. Furthermore, the opportunity to job craft is tied to the nature of one's work-environment (Petrou et al., 2016), which for wage-employees, working at the same job for an extended period of time, can be seen as relatively stable. For the self-employed, however, given that they work on briefer assignments, their work context also changes more frequently. And indeed, as in line with the literature (Lazazzara et al., 2020; Petrou et al., 2016), it seemed to influence the extent to which job crafting was carried out by the participants.

Behavioral Crafting. Based on the results, it seemed that the participants engaged in behavioral crafting with the aims of making changes to their demands and resources. This adds to the literature that self-employed workers do engage in job crafting (Buonocore et al., 2018; Meged, 2017). As an overall trend, the participants engaged in behavioral crafting aimed toward the amount and content of tasks, as well as the amount and intensity of work-relationships (Tims et al., 2012; Zhang & Parker, 2019). On the topic of context, Lazazzara et

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al. (2020) argued that contexts with stricter conditions and prescribed behaviors might constrain job crafting behaviors among self-employed workers. This was touched upon by the participants, but it was also revealed how creativity could be utilized in spite of this, which can be seen in line with Zhang and Parker (2019), who proposed that different job crafting behaviors might be utilized in different contexts, depending on the resources and demands that go along with it.

      Cognitive Crafting. The results revealed that the participants engaged in cognitive crafting towards relationships, tasks and their context, adding to the literature on self-employed workers (Buonocore et al., 2018; Meged, 2017; Peters et al., 2020). In particular, the participants seemed to use cognitive crafting when they reflected on how job demands could be seen as something that was worth going through, as it allowed them to maintain self-employment, thus instilling a positive meaning in it (Tims et al., 2012; Zhang & Parker, 2019). Concerning such things as economic uncertainty, demanding workloads, and not having much influence in processes, they were able to see how the positive outweighed the negative. An adjacent explanation might be that the participant's resources, such as autonomy, authenticity and prosocial impact, acted as a buffer against the negative effects of demands (Geldenhuys et al., 2021; Häusser et al., 2010; Lesener et al., 2018).

Job Demands

      Dealing With Bureaucracy. The participants revealed that dealing with bureaucracy was a demand that negatively affected their sense of meaningful work, which is in line with Lee et al. (2017). A country's legitimacy of self-employment might also influence this relationship negatively, which based on the participant's experiences, suggest that Norway has some bureaucracy tied to self-employment. It might also touch on the findings that there are higher levels of complexity among the self-employed (Schonfeld & Mazzola, 2015; Stephan, 2018), and that external pressure poses a demand for them (Vaag et al., 2014). While

bureaucracy was mostly detailed as a hindering demand, as in requiring sustained effort and cost (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Demerouti et al., 2001), it also forced the participants to learn new things, which might make it a challenging demand (Lesener et al., 2018). In turn, this might promote engagement and personal development and thus increase the experience of meaningful work (Dan et al., 2020; Demerouti et al., 2001; Petrou et al., 2016).

Demands From Others. The finding there were demands from others corresponds to the previous work by Vaag et al. (2014), who showed that external pressure was a specific demand among the self-employed. Based on how the participants talked about this theme, it seemed to be both a hindering and a challenging demand. As for hindering, working with highly demanding clients was not enjoyable, and seemed to limit engagement and interest. Additionally, in reflecting on previous wage-employment, it could cause a sense of frustration when leaders posed demands, which is in line with the findings that a hierarchical culture negatively affects meaningful work (Lee et al., 2017). Both notions are in line with the idea that job demands can increase the risk of negative consequences (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). As for challenging, it stimulated the participants to grow and deliver work of high quality, corresponding to the idea that challenging job demands can promote engagement (Demerouti et al., 2001; Lesener et al., 2018), which in turn might increase the experience of meaningful work (Dan et al., 2020; Petrou et al., 2016).

Economic Uncertainty. The participants revealed that economic uncertainty was a prevalent job demand, which is consistent with the self-employment literature (Lips-Wiersma et al., 2022; Peters et al., 2020; Schonfeld & Mazzola, 2015; Stephan, 2018; Vaag et al., 2014). This demand seemed to have a dual nature to it as well. At face, it seemed like a hindering demand for the participants, both because it was demanding in and of itself, and also because it might have enlarged the participant's responsibility (Schonfeld & Mazzola, 2015; Stephan, 2018). However, because of this heightened responsibility, it also seemed to

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increase their attention to, and willingness to perform at a higher level, thus acting as a challenging demand (Lesener et al., 2018). In turn, this might lead to meaningful work (Dan et al., 2020; Petrou et al., 2016). It is also in line with Frese and Gielnik (2014), who noted that proactivity and the ability to persist in the face of uncertainty are key indicators of performance among self-employed workers. Consequentially, it might precisely be this high performance that aid their economic sustainability (Bögenhold, 2018).

Relatedly, the theme of COVID-19 was brought up as a thing that affected the participant's economy. Despite it, however, they persisted in their self-employment, which might be due to their personality (Cuesta et al., 2018; Frese & Gielnik, 2014), as Hernández-Sánchez et al. (2020) found that optimism and proactiveness were resources that buffered against it. Lastly, given that the participants related their work as meaningful, that itself might have acted as a buffering resource (Meng et al., 2022; Tan & Yeap, 2021), as well as making them willing to accept lower income (Hu & Hirsh, 2017).

Lack of Work-Relationships. As consistent with self-employment literature (Fernet et al., 2016; Stephan, 2018), the participants talked about how a lack of work-relationships could be demanding, in that there were no supervisors and no stable work-relationships to utilize when things happened at work. Although relational variety was seen as a good thing, the participants noted that this was an obstacle to long-lasting relationships and the feeling of having a social work-environment. It was also related that it could sometimes bring about feelings of loneliness, which is in line with Fernet et al. (2016), who noted that self-employed workers are susceptible to it. Concerning meaningful work, Petrou et al. (2016) found that social interactions had no relation to it, explaining that when it was about ventilating feelings, which is a short-lived form of pleasure, it did not make the work more meaningful as a whole. Although uncertain, it might have had the same limited effect on meaningful work among the participants.

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Role Conflict. Role conflict was a demand that was brought up moderately by the participants, which in the general literature has been identified as a demand (Lesener et al., 2018). It was noted that self-employment had few boundaries between work and everything else in their life, which is in line with Peters et al. (2020), who found that demands could arise due to conflicting values because of the blurred lines between these. It might also correspond to the findings that identity pressure and family/work conflict are demands among the self-employed (Vaag et al., 2014). It was also related that having many roles were challenging, but that it forced the participants to try and learn different things, thus revealing a dual nature to this demand (Demerouti et al., 2001; Lesener et al., 2018). This, in turn, might lead to experiences of meaningful work (Petrou et al., 2016).

Workload. The participants shared how their workload could be a job demand, both related to time and difficulty, adding to the existing literature on self-employment that suggests there are longer working hours and a more intense time pressure (Schonfeld & Mazzola, 2015; Stephan, 2018). A workload that is too high has been identified as a hinder in the general literature (Lesener et al., 2018). From the way the participants talked about it, however, their workload seemed to have a dual nature to it (Demerouti et al., 2001; Lesener et al., 2018). On one hand, it could hinder the participant's leisure time, but on the other it could challenge them to learn and accomplish bigger things (Tims et al., 2012). Indeed, Dan et al. (2020) found that having a stimulating or challenging workload can lead to engagement, which in turn might enhance the experience of meaningful work. Relatedly, Rudolph et al. (2017) found a positive association between workload and job crafting aimed at increasing challenging job demands. Lastly, Petrou et al. (2012) found, especially for proactive personalities, that work pressure was related to crafting aimed at reducing hindering demands. In turn, this might bring about more meaningful work as in line with the JD-R theory (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017).

Job Resources as Coherence, Significance, and Purpose

Coherence

Identity and Self-Knowledge. The results indicated that the participants were concerned with matters of knowing themselves and their identity, which corresponds to the coherence component of meaning; being about understanding (Martela & Steger, 2016). Seeing it as a resource that contributes to meaningful work, it adds to the previous literature (Dan et al., 2020; Geldenhuys et al., 2021; Petrou et al., 2016). It was related how self-employment allowed for greater self-inquiry than other occupational contexts, which might be adjacent to the notion that there are greater opportunities to *express* one's identity in self-employment (Rosso et al., 2010). Being self-employed also seemed to facilitate actions that were in line with the participants personality and inner convictions, which in turn helped them learn and build their understanding of themselves. This might hint at a reciprocal effect between knowing oneself and being able to job craft such that one increases the person-job fit (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). This, in turn, has been linked to more meaningful work (Tims et al., 2016)

It also came to light that knowing oneself could sometimes be a painful exercise, indicating that it is a practice that require sustained effort (Demerouti et al., 2001) or simply because it might be painful to change one's conception of self. The emphasis on learning, however, seem to make it a challenging demand rather than a hindering one (Lesener et al., 2018), which in turn supports the idea that it leads to meaningful work (Dan et al., 2020; Petrou et al., 2016). Lastly, by simply reflecting on how work aids their self-knowledge, as a form of cognitive crafting, the participants might experience more meaningful work, as in line with Geldenhuys et al. (2021).

Gaining Feedback. The results revealed that feedback was a consistent part of the participant's lives, which has been identified as a resource that leads to meaningful work by

previous researchers (Lysova et al., 2019; Petrou et al., 2016). In gaining feedback, it might

add to one's understanding of oneself and the world, thus mapping to the coherence

component (Martela & Steger, 2016). This seemed to be the case for the participants, which

gained direct feedback on behaviors they performed, as well as feedback from the

environment and others. It was shared how the feedback was more noticeable and direct in

self-employment than in wage-employment. Whether intentional or not, this corresponds to

the idea that choosing self-employment is a job-crafting initiative aimed at increasing

feedback (Tims et al., 2012). Furthermore, Petrou et al. (2016) proposed that feedback led to

more motivated employees, and explained that this, in turn, allowed for greater experiences of

meaningful work through engagement. It might also touch on a reciprocal effect (Bakker &

Demerouti, 2017), in that through feedback, the participants get motivated to craft their work

to include more resources that allow to increase their coherence.

Experience and Competence. The participants seemed to relate experience and

competence as a resource, as in keeping with the self-employment literature (Annink et al.,

2016; Pérez-López et al., 2019; Politis, 2008). It has also been shown to contribute to

meaningful work among the general population (Autin et al., 2021; Martela & Riekki, 2018).

The participants shared how their experience and competence increased their understanding of

themselves and their business, which in turn lead to feelings of predictability and safety,

corresponding to the coherence factor of meaning (Martela & Steger, 2016). Several studies

have noted how experience and competence acts as buffers against demanding situations

(Annink et al., 2016; Pérez-López et al., 2019; Politis, 2008), further suggesting that it buffers

against the uncertainty of self-employment (Lesener et al., 2018; Stephan, 2018). The

participants also shared how undertaking various challenges added to their experience and

competence, which might suggest a reciprocal effect (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017) in that

experience and competence enable them to take on even more challenges. This also lends

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credibility to how experience with different challenges and roles might buffer against the conflicting aspect of roles.

It was also noted that experience was not always a resource. One possible explanation might be that one can get stuck in ways of doing things and thinking that one knows everything there is to know, thus limiting personal growth. This hint that experience, in some form, might be a hindering demand (Lesener et al., 2018; Tims et al., 2012). Lastly, Zhang and Parker (2019) mentioned competence as an antecedent to job crafting, which might have underscored the participant's ability to craft their work in line with their experience with being self-employed; i.e., creating a better person-job fit, thus increasing the experience of meaningful work (Petrou et al., 2016).

Significance

Prosocial Behavior. The results indicated that the participants engaged in prosocial behavior and that it added to their experience of meaningful work. Specifically, the participants talked about providing value and meaningful experiences to others—to their clients as well as to the greater good of the larger society. This seems to correspond to the significance factor of meaning (Martela & Steger, 2016), and is also consistent with previous research that have found that meaningful work includes a factor of prosocial behavior and impact (Martela et al., 2021; Martela & Pessi, 2018; Steger et al., 2012).

It was also noted how prosocial impact could make demands seem as worth it. This is in line with Geldenhuys et al. (2021), who found that cognitive crafting had an important role in achieving meaningful work, wherein workers could think of how their work could make a prosocial impact. The same authors also noted that prosocial impact could buffer against demands, as in line with the JD-R theory (Lesener et al., 2018).

Being Authentic and Adhering to Personal Values. The results indicated that authenticity and adhering to one's own values was important to the participants, which

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previous research has found might lead to more meaningful work (Allan et al., 2016; Geldenhuys & Johnson, 2021; Geldenhuys et al., 2021; Martela & Pessi, 2018; Martela et al., 2017; Rosso et al., 2010; Vaag et al., 2014). Furthermore, it seems to map to the significance component of meaning; being about worth and importance (Martela & Steger, 2016).

It has been noted that the opportunities for expressing one's authenticity is greater among the self-employed, which in turn is linked to meaningful work (Allan et al., 2016; Martela & Pessi, 2018; Martela et al., 2017). This was reflected by how choosing self-employment, working on their own dreams and being able to stand for what they did, was better than exhausting oneself for someone else's dreams. It was also related how the work had to feel genuine, and that it was more important than money, keeping with the finding that some people are willing to accept lower pay in exchange of more meaningful work (Hu & Hirsh, 2017). It also seems to correspond to the finding that authenticity can have a buffering effect (Lesener et al., 2018), in that by employing cognitive crafting, people can think of how to make their work more authentic, which has been linked to increases in meaningful work (Geldenhuys et al., 2021).

Lastly, Peters et al. (2020) suggested that conflicting values might hinder meaningful work among self-employers, in spite of job crafting. However, it seemed the participants were more of less clear on their priorities.

Having Support. The literature suggests that support is a resource, and that it aids job crafting (Lazazzara et al., 2020; Lesener et al., 2018; Zhang & Parker, 2019). Other studies have also indicated that it leads to more meaningful work (Autin et al., 2021; Geldenhuys & Johnson, 2021; Lysova et al., 2019; Martela & Riekki, 2018; Tims et al., 2016). Despite a lack in work-relationships, the participants related how support was an important factor to them, and shared how they got it from sources such as their professional network, clients and family, which is in line with the findings by Vaag et al. (2014). Although I am not aware of

any literature suggesting that is falls within the significance factor, it was placed here by the fact it seems to be significant and valuable to the participants.

For wage-employees, Zhang and Parker (2019) found moderate effects of coworker support on job crafting, but greater effects of perceived organizational support. Dan et al. (2020) also found that when wage-employees engaged in job crafting aimed at increasing support from supervisor, it resulted in an increase in meaningful work. This suggests that co-worker support is not as important as organizational or supervisor support, which is good news to the self-employed as they are more or less their own organization and supervisor. Furthermore, Lazazzara et al. (2020) showed that job contexts with high social support aids the extent of job crafting among wage-employees, and that contexts with low social support and minimal collaboration are constraining to job crafting behaviors. Similarly, specific to self-employed workers, Geldenhuys and Johnson (2021) found that cooperation was linked to meaningful work. It seems then, that support and collaboration is more important than simply having people around.

Having Influence and Feeling That You Matter. The results indicated that the participants were concerned with influence and mattering. Given that feelings of worth and mattering are tied to significance (Martela & Steger, 2016), it seems to fit within this component of meaning. Furthermore, it also seemed to be tied to meaningful work for the participants, which is in keeping with research showing that being able to voice one's opinions and having the opportunity to influence processes and participate in making effective decisions leads to more meaningful work (Dewi et al., 2022; Ganjali & Rezaee, 2016).

It was shared how feeling like they were appreciated as a part of the team contributed to meaningfulness, which might be seen in line with how the basic need for belonging is linked to meaningfulness (Autin et al., 2021; Martela & Riekki, 2018). It might also be seen

in line with the contrary finding that hierarchy is negatively associated with meaningful work (Lee et al., 2017), which was related in the data.

Being Engaged and Interested. The participants talked about how engagement and interest fueled a lot of their work, which are resources that previous research have linked to increases in meaningful work (Dan et al., 2020; Meged, 2017; Petrou et al., 2016). Given the participants talked about being engaged with something of value and importance, it seems to fit with the significance component of meaning (Martela & Steger, 2016). Indeed, both Petrou et al. (2016) and Sánchez-Cardona et al. (2021), found that task significance was associated with meaningful work.

As indicated in the job demands section, the participants revealed how some of their demands could be challenging, which in the JD-R theory is seen to promote engagement (Lesener et al., 2018). Relatedly, the study by Petrou et al. (2016) argued that task significance, autonomy, skill variety, and feedback (which has been revealed as resources among the participants) led to more motivated employees, and explained that this, in turn, allowed for greater experiences of meaningful work through engagement with work that is valuable. Furthermore, Zhang and Parker (2019) categorized engagement as an antecedent to job crafting, and Meged (2017) proposed that motivation fueled job crafting aimed at creating more meaningful work. It seems then, that through job crafting, the self-employed can choose to do things they view as valuable, engaging, and interesting, which in turn leads to meaningful work (Baron, 2010; Stephan et al., 2020). This touches on proposition 7 of the JD-R theory, which states that motivated employees are likely to use job crafting behaviors to increase their job resources (such as meaningful work; Meng et al., 2022; Tan & Yeap, 2021), which in turn promotes even greater levels of motivation (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017).

Purpose

Allowing the Direction to Unfold. Purpose is about having core goals and a direction in life (Martela & Steger, 2016). For the participants, however, they were more concerned with allowing their direction to unfold rather than setting and having a specific goal. As to my knowledge, this is a novel finding. Still, it seems to map to adjacent arguments: Given that the effort to find meaning is a constant, dynamic pursuit that extends into the future (Frankl, 2006; Heintzelman & King, 2014a), one that integrates different aspects of one's life into a whole (Lips-Wiersma & Wright, 2012; Martela & Steger, 2016), it might be that allowing the direction to unfold aligns with that continuous process. Similarly, De Boeck et al. (2019) found that work that gives people opportunities to realize their future selves is experienced as meaningful, which might have been the case for the participants. Furthermore, Geldenhuys and Johnson (2021) found that purpose among self-employed workers stimulated authenticity, which might suggest that allowing the direction to unfold is the authentic thing to do (which is part of the significance component and linked to meaningful work). Lastly, it might also be seen against the high levels of proactivity and flexibility that the self-employed workers inhibit (e.g., Frese & Gielnik, 2014; Vaag et al., 2014), which make them better able to deal with situations that are less certain and also find opportunities in them (Cuesta et al., 2018; Hernández-Sánchez et al., 2020).

Development of Oneself and One's Skills. The results indicated that development was important to the participants, which previous research has identified as a resource and linked to more meaningful work (Albrecht et al., 2021; Dan et al., 2020; Dewi et al., 2022; Petrou et al., 2016). It was shared how being self-employed challenged the participants in ways that promoted learning and personal growth, which is one of the theorized effects of job resources (Demerouti et al., 2001). It was also related how development, as a general process, was an aim for the participants, thus revealing itself as part of the purpose factor (Martela &

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Steger, 2016). Furthermore, Bailey and Madden (2015) found that providing employees with time to develop projects promoted greater levels of meaningfulness. Given that work for the self-employed consist of projects largely chosen by themselves, this association might be especially potent for them.

The Impact of Job Crafting, Demands and Resources on Meaningful Work

Following the assumptions of the JD-R model, it seems that job crafting, demands, and resources all impact meaningful work in various ways. It also appears there are intricate interactions among these factors.

Job Crafting

Based on the discussion, it is suggested that the job crafting antecedents of "autonomy", "variety" and "flexibility" were important in enabling the job crafting forms of "cognitive crafting" and "behavioral crafting." Autonomy, in particular, might be argued to have a more certain impact due to its prevalence in the results and the amount of literature supporting it. Notably, the antecedents appeared, to some degree, to be part of the personality of the self-employed worker, suggesting that self-employment and job crafting is inextricably linked. It is therefore indicated that there are certain people that are more likely to seek out self-employment, and are possibly better suited for it as well given its particular demands and resources. Concerning the forms of job crafting, they seemed to impact the experience of meaningful work in a positive way. As to their approach, they seemed to be primarily aimed at gaining resources, though also at increasing challenging demands and reducing hindering ones. Moreover, it seemed that choosing self-employment was a job crafting initiative in and of itself that had implications for demands and resources. Furthermore, some of these antecedents and forms seemed to be resources in and of themselves that directly impacted the experience of meaningful work. Of these, flexibility was a little more uncertain in having a direct impact. Lastly, there seemed to be some reciprocal effects, in that resources and

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meaningful work motivated job crafting which in turn increased resources and meaningful work.

Demands

The discussion suggested that "dealing with bureaucracy", "demands from others", "economic uncertainty", "lack of work-relationships", "role conflict", and "workload" were demands among the participants. With the only exception of lack of work-relationships, they all seemed to have a dual nature to them, in that they could be both hindering and challenging. Acting as hindering, it seemed to make for work that was not experienced as meaningful. Acting as challenging, it seemed to promote engagement (which was identified as a resource among the participants), which in turn made work feel meaningful. Of all the demands, it seemed that economic uncertainty and workload had a more pronounced role than the others, while lack of relationship had a more uncertain role.

Resources

The discussion indicated that the resources of "identity and self-knowledge", "gaining feedback", and "experience and competence" could be seen as part of the coherence component and promoted meaningful work. Of these resources, it seemed that identity and self-knowledge, and experience and competence, had the more pronounced effects. Although there were hints that experience, in some form, might act as a hindering demand, this is uncertain due to the lack of support in the related literature.

The discussion also suggested that "prosocial behavior", "being authentic and adhering to personal values", "having support", "having influence and feeling that you matter", and "being engaged and interested" were part of the significance component and fostered meaningful work. As reflected by the results, this was the most prevalent of the three components. In particular, it seemed that being authentic and adhering to personal values, and

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being engaged and interested, had the more certain roles in this relationship, given their prevalence in the results and the amount of literature supporting them. Having support might

Lastly, the discussion indicated that "allowing the direction to unfold" and "development of oneself and one's skills" were part of the purpose component and promoted meaningful work. Given that the participants were concerned with allowing the direction to unfold rather than having specific goals and a set direction, it does not directly map onto the definition of the purpose component. However, because it might be seen as a novel finding, it needs further investigation to establish its credibility.

As a general note on these resources, some of them might also be seen as antecedents to job crafting. Additionally, some of them also seemed to buffer against the negative effects of hindering demands, which included "meaningful work" in and of itself. Lastly, it seemed that the three components were related to, and influenced each other in various ways, in that some of these resources might have fit with and contributed to more than one component.

The Impact of Job Crafting, Demands and Resources on Meaningful Work Among the Self-Employed

To answer the research question, it seems that a) job crafting impacts meaningful work indirectly through antecedents and forms that increases resources, and directly as resources that promote meaningful; b) challenging demands positively impact meaningful work positively and hindering demands negatively impact meaningful work; c) resources positively impacts meaningful work in a direct way, but also indirectly through buffering against hindering demands; and d) when work is experienced as meaningful, it creates a reciprocal effect that motivates job crafting and promotes further increases in meaningful work.

These interactions are in line with the theorizations of the adapted JD-R model (see Figure 2).

Conclusion

In this section, I will first discuss the strengths and limitations of this study. Them, I will outline some implications and future directions. Lastly, I will give a summarized conclusion.

Strengths and Limitations

The findings of this study were based on the interviews of five participants, which were recruited through a mix of purposive sampling and self-selection sampling. While purposive sampling can be advantageous because of selection based on a set of criteria (Berndt, 2020), the role of it is lessened in this study because it was not the sole sampling method, and the fact that only one participant came from this method. Given that four out of five participants came from the self-selection sampling, it might give more weight to this method. In it, participants are motivated to share their experiences more truthfully because they choose to participate (Berndt, 2020). The flip side of this, however, is a selection bias in which the participants might represent exaggerated or special findings because of their willingness to talk about them. It might therefore limit the generalizability of this study.

Furthermore, given the heterogeneity of the participants, in that they worked in different occupations and industries, it might be that contextual factors beyond the grasp of this study influenced their experience of meaningful work. If this is the case, it might hamper the reliability of the study. On the other hand, given the sufficient overlap in what the participants talked about, despite their different backgrounds, it might provide a slight argument for generalizability for self-employed workers in general. Consequentially, this might be a good starting point for future researcher because of the relatively scarce literature on this topic. Lastly, while generalizability is not the main aim of qualitative research (Yardley, 2015), this study still provides an insight into the context of self-employed workers in Norway.

Implications and Future Directions

Meaningful work among the self-employed is an important topic to study because it might bring about positive outcomes such as higher levels of commitment, engagement, satisfaction, and well-being. In turn, these individual outcomes might provide positive economic outcomes for the larger society. In addition, since most people desire meaningful work, in and of itself, it is important to understand what kind of factors that bring about this experience. This thesis investigated the impact of job crafting, demands and resources on meaningful work, and provided insights to this end.

The present findings might have implications for self-employed workers in Norway, as well as countries with a similar socioeconomic landscape. Specifically, there are demands that are more pronounced among the self-employed workforce, such as uncertainty and lack of relationships. While the essence of self-employment is working at one's own risk and responsibility, it might be important for countries to find ways to aid their experience of meaningfulness, especially if they wish to maintain the positive outcomes and the economic contributions.

While this study uncovered some of the factors that might impact meaningful work, and also proposed possible explanations, future research might try to uncover causal relationships to establish the specifics of these connections. It might also be interesting to conduct industry-specific research to better reveal contextual influences, both qualitatively and quantitively. Furthermore, given the cues in this thesis, it might also be interesting to further investigate the links between personality, job crafting and self-employment. Lastly, there might be utility in investigating the differences between self-employment as a self-determined choice and self-employment as the only choice, lending insights to less developed countries with different socioeconomic factors.

Conclusion

This thesis presented an adapted model of the JD-R model, and proposed that job crafting, job resources and challenging demands positively impact meaningful work among the self-employed. Conversely, hindering demands negatively impact meaningful work among the self-employed. Further research is needed to establish these connections. Based on the findings of the discussion, it seems that the factors of autonomy, economic uncertainty, workload, identity and self-knowledge, and experience and competence, had the more pronounced effects. Notably, it also offered the idea that choosing self-employment, to begin with, is an initiative that effected job crafting, demands, and resources in various ways. It also seemed that personality had an impact, indicating there are certain people that are more likely to seek out self-employment, and are possibly better suited for it as well given its particular demands and resources. Furthermore, this thesis also suggested that the three components of meaning (coherence, significance, purpose) is present in meaningful work among self-employed workers. It also indicated which factors that fit within the different components. It is also of note that there are intricate interactions among all the factors that were investigated in this thesis. Overall, these findings have implications for the experience of meaningful work among the self-employed, and in turn the positive outcomes it might bring for individuals and society.

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Appendix

Appendix A: Information and form of consent

Appendix B: Interview guide

Appendix C: Paper trail of initial thematic mapping

Appendix D: Approval from NSD

The appendixes are in Norwegian. If you would like to inquire about an English version, please contact me at jonasres@stud.ntnu.no

Vil du delta i forskningsprosjektet

"Sources and disruptors of meaning among

the self-employed and the employed"?

Dette er et spørsmål til deg om å delta i et forskningsprosjekt hvor formålet er å undersøke kilder og hindringer til meningsfylt arbeid, og eventuelle forskjeller mellom selvstendig næringsdrivende og tradisjonelle arbeidstakere. I dette skrivet gir jeg deg informasjon om målene for prosjektet og hva deltakelse vil innebære for deg.

Formål

Prosjektet gjennomføres fordi forsking peker på at meningsfullhet er en av de viktigste faktorene i arbeidslivet. Det er viktig for individet for å føle velvære, engasjement og tilfredshet. Og det er også viktig for samfunnet, da det er lønnsomt med arbeidere som har god mental helse og som er engasjerte i jobben sin. Videre er forskning rundt meningsfullhet i vekst, og denne studien kan forhåpentligvis bidra i utviklingen. I tillegg finnes det lite forskning som omfatter selvstendig næringsdrivende, noe som denne studien kan være med å

belyse. Problemstillingen er som følger: Are there different sources and disruptors of meaning among the self-employed and the employed?

Dette er en masteroppgave i arbeids- og organisasjonspsykologi ved NTNU. Etter endt studie kan dataene bli brukt i en bok, om dette vurderes som relevant.

Hvem er ansvarlig for forskningsprosjektet?

Jonas Ressem, ved NTNU er ansvarlig for prosjektet.

Hvorfor får du spørsmål om å delta?

Deltagere til studien blir rekruttert på grunnlag av relevans for problemstillingen, og det er selvstendig næringsdrivende og tradisjonelle arbeidstakere som blir spurt. Henvendelsen går ut til så mange som er nødvendig, til et utvalg på minst 10 personer er oppnådd (5 i hver gruppe). Dine kontaktopplysninger har jeg enten sittet på selv, fått via mitt nettverk eller blitt gitt av deg.

Hva innebærer det for deg å delta?

Deltakelse i studien innebærer å gjennomføre et intervju på ca. 45 minutter. Spørsmålene er på norsk og dreier seg hovedsakelig om mening på arbeidsplassen. Det vil gjøres lydopptak av intervjuet som blir lagret for videre databehandling. Det er derfor kun navn og stemme som blir lagret elektronisk.

Det er frivillig å delta

Det er frivillig å delta i prosjektet, men alle som deltar vil få et gavekort på 150kr. Hvis du velger å delta, kan du når som helst trekke samtykket tilbake uten å oppgi noen grunn. Alle dine personopplysninger vil da bli slettet. Det vil ikke ha noen negative konsekvenser for deg

hvis du ikke vil delta eller senere velger å trekke deg. Det vil ikke påvirke ditt forhold til arbeidsplass/arbeidsgiver.

Ditt personvern – hvordan vi oppbevarer og bruker dine opplysninger

Vi vil bare bruke opplysningene om deg til formålene vi har fortalt om i dette skrivet. Vi behandler opplysningene konfidensielt og i samsvar med personvernregelverket.

- Det er jeg, Jonas Ressem som vil ha tilgang til dataene.

- Ditt navn og kontaktopplysninger vil erstattes med en kode som lagres på egen liste adskilt fra øvrige data. Disse opplysningene vil også bli kryptert.

I publikasjon av masteroppgaven vil ikke navn eller andre personopplysninger kunne gjenkjennes. Det er kun relevante sitater fra intervjuet som eventuelt vil bli publisert.

Hva skjer med opplysningene dine når vi avslutter forskningsprosjektet?

Opplysningene anonymiseres når prosjektet avsluttes/oppgaven er godkjent, noe som etter planen er 1. mai 2022. Etter dette vil personopplysninger og lydopptak bli slettet.

Dine rettigheter

Så lenge du kan identifiseres i datamaterialet, har du rett til:

- innsyn i hvilke personopplysninger som er registrert om deg, og å få utlevert en kopi av opplysningene,

- å få rettet personopplysninger om deg,

- å få slettet personopplysninger om deg, og

- å sende klage til Datatilsynet om behandlingen av dine personopplysninger.

Hva gir oss rett til å behandle personopplysninger om deg?

Vi behandler opplysninger om deg basert på ditt samtykke. På oppdrag fra NTNU har NSD – Norsk senter for forskningsdata AS vurdert at behandlingen av personopplysninger i dette prosjektet er i samsvar med personvernregelverket.

Hvor kan jeg finne ut mer?

Hvis du har spørsmål til studien, eller ønsker å benytte deg av dine rettigheter, ta kontakt med:

- NTNU ved Jonas Ressem. Tlf: 94886108, E-post: jonasres@stud.ntnu.no

- NTNU ved Trygve Steiro. Tlf: 92400546, E-post: Trygve.j.steiro@ntnu.no

- Vårt personvernombud: Thomas Helgesen. Tlf: 93079038, E-post: thomas.helgesen@ntnu.no

Hvis du har spørsmål knyttet til NSD sin vurdering av prosjektet, kan du ta kontakt med:

- NSD – Norsk senter for forskningsdata AS på epost (personverntjenester@nsd.no) eller på telefon: 55 58 21 17.

Med vennlig hilsen

Jonas Ressem

(Masterstudent)

Samtykkeerklæring

Jeg har mottatt og forstått informasjon om prosjektet *«Sources and disruptors of meaning among the self-employed and the employed»*? og har fått anledning til å stille spørsmål.

Jeg samtykker til å delta i intervju*

Jeg samtykker til at mine opplysninger behandles frem til prosjektet er avsluttet*

(Signert av prosjektdeltaker, dato)

*Det er samtykke på epost som gjelder. Gyldig samtykke innebærer at du har lest og forstått innholdet og at du skriver «Jeg samtykker til deltakelse» i en epost til meg.

Intervjuguide

Innledende spørsmål

Jeg vil først stille deg noen innledende spørsmål om virksomheten din (altså det personlige foretaket).

1. Kan du beskrive med egne ord hva du jobber med?

2. *Er du selvstendig næringsdrivende på heltid eller deltid?

    a. *Hvis deltid* Er du ansatt i tillegg, og om så, hvor stor stilling har du?

    b. *Hvis heltid*: Har du tidligere hatt jobber hvor du har vært ansatt?

    c. *Hvis ja og ja*: Hva er den største forskjellen mellom å være ansatt og selvstendig næringsdrivende?

3. Hvor lenge har du jobbet som selvstendig næringsdrivende nå?

4. Hvor mye tid per uke vil du anslå du bruker på din egen virksomhet?

Arbeidshverdag og job crafting

Jeg vi nå stille deg noen spørsmål om din arbeidshverdag i virksomheten din

1. Hvordan vil du beskrive din egen arbeidshverdag?

    a. Trives du i jobben?

2. Hvilke muligheter har du til å forme din egen arbeidshverdag?

    a. På hvilke måter kan du gjøre dette?

3. Er det noen spesielle ressurser du drar nytte av i jobben din?

4. Er det noen spesielle utfordringer du føler på i jobben din?

5. Hvordan vil du beskrive dine arbeidsrelasjoner?

       a. Eventuelt, hvordan vil du beskrive en mangel på arbeidsrelasjoner?

6. Hvilke aktører stiller krav til deg, og hvordan oppleves dette?

7. Hvilke aktører støtter deg, og hvordan oppleves dette?

8. Kan du si litt om hvordan din grad av autonomi påvirker jobben?

9. Kan du si litt om hvordan usikkerhet påvirker jobben?

Meningsfylt arbeid

Jeg vil nå stille deg noen spørsmål om hvordan du opplever meningsfullhet i jobben.

1. Hva betyr det at noe oppleves som meningsfullt for deg?

2. Hvilke ting i jobben bidrar til at du føler på meningsfullhet?

3. Hvilke ting i jobben hindrer at du føler på meningsfullhet?

4. Kan du si noe om hvordan jobben din bidrar til en forståelse av deg selv og verden rundt deg?

5. Kan du si noe om hvordan jobben din bidrar til en opplevelse av verdi og betydning?

6. Kan du si noe om hvordan jobben din bidrar til å gi deg retning og viktige mål?

7. Samlet sett, vil du si at jobben din er meningsfull?

8. Er det noe annet du vil fortelle om angående meningsfullhet eller arbeid?

Appendix C: Paper trail of initial thematic mapping
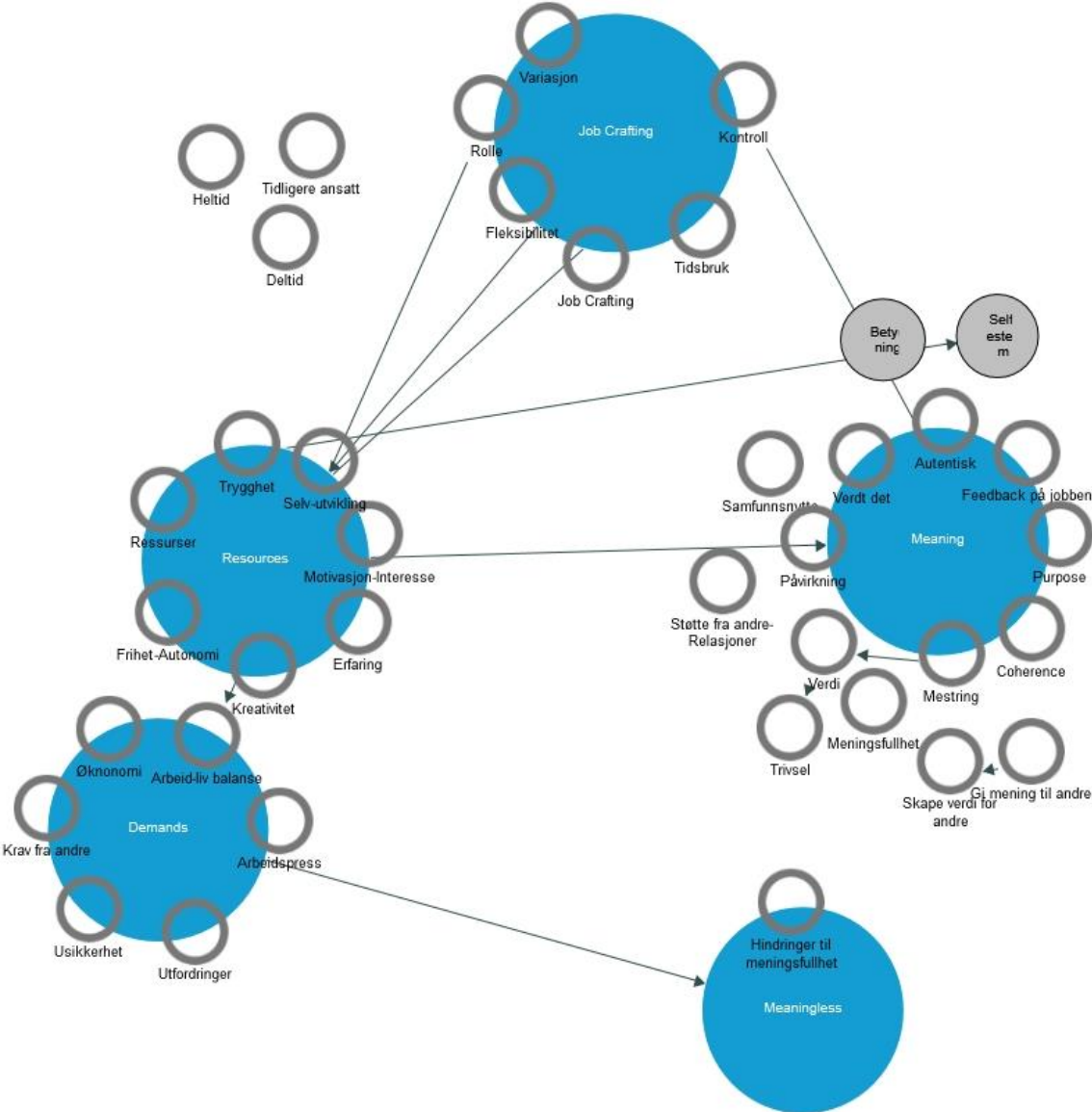
Appendix D: Approval from NSD

Vurdering

Referansenummer

511273

Prosjekttittel

Sources and disruptions of meaning among the self-employed and the employed

Behandlingsansvarlig institusjon

Norges teknisk-naturvitenskapelige universitet / Fakultet for samfunns- og

utdanningsvitenskap (SU) / Institutt for psykologi

Prosjektansvarlig (vitenskapelig ansatt/veileder eller stipendiat)

Trygve Steiro, trygve.j.steiro@ntnu.no, tlf: 92400546

Type prosjekt

Studentprosjekt, masterstudium

Kontaktinformasjon, student

Jonas Ressem, jonasressem@msn.com, tlf: 94886108

Prosjektperiode

01.10.2021 - 01.05.2022

Vurdering (2)

28.09.2021 - Vurdert

Det er vår vurdering at behandlingen vil være i samsvar med personvernlovgivningen,

så fremt den gjennomføres i tråd med det som er dokumentert i meldeskjemaet den

28.09.2021 med vedlegg, samt i meldingsdialogen mellom innmelder og NSD.

Behandlingen kan starte.

TYPE OPPLYSNINGER OG VARIGHET

Prosjektet vil behandle alminnelige personopplysninger frem til 01.05.2022.

LOVLIG GRUNNLAG

Prosjektet vil innhente samtykke fra de registrerte til behandlingen av

personopplysninger. Vår vurdering er at prosjektet legger opp til et samtykke i

samsvar med kravene i art. 4 nr. 11 og 7, ved at det er en frivillig, spesifikk, informert

og utvetydig bekreftelse, som kan dokumenteres, og som den registrerte kan trekke

tilbakee.

For alminnelige personopplysninger vil lovlig grunnlag for behandlingen være den

registrertes samtykke, jf. personvernforordningen art. 6 nr. 1 a.

PERSONVERNPRINSIPPER

NSD vurderer at den planlagte behandlingen av personopplysninger vil følge

prinsippene i personvernforordningen:

• om lovlighet, rettferdighet og åpenhet (art. 5.1 a), ved at de registrerte får

tilfredsstillende informasjon om og samtykker til behandlingen

• formålsbegrensning (art. 5.1 b), ved at personopplysninger samles inn for spesifikke,

uttrykkelig angitte og berettigede formål, og ikke viderebehandles til nye uforenlige

formål

• dataminimering (art. 5.1 c), ved at det kun behandles opplysninger som er adekvate,

relevante og nødvendige for formålet med prosjektet

• lagringsbegrensning (art. 5.1 e), ved at personopplysningene ikke lagres lengre enn

nødvendig for å oppfylle formålet.

DE REGISTRERTES RETTIGHETER

NSD vurderer at informasjonen om behandlingen som de registrerte vil motta

oppfyller lovens krav til form og innhold, jf. art. 12.1 og art. 13.

Så lenge de registrerte kan identifiseres i datamaterialet vil de ha følgende

rettigheter: innsyn (art. 15), retting (art. 16), sletting (art. 17), begrensning (art. 18) og

dataportabilitet (art. 20).

Vi minner om at hvis en registrert tar kontakt om sine rettigheter, har behandlingsansvarlig institusjon plikt til å svare innen en måned.

FØLG DIN INSTITUSJONS RETNINGSLINJER

NSD legger til grunn at behandlingen oppfyller kravene i personvernforordningen om riktighet (art. 5.1 d), integritet og konfidensialitet (art. 5.1. f) og sikkerhet (art. 32).

For å forsikre dere om at kravene oppfylles, må prosjektansvarlig følge interne retningslinjer/rådføre dere med behandlingsansvarlig institusjon.

MELD VESENTLIGE ENDRINGER

Dersom det skjer vesentlige endringer i behandlingen av personopplysninger, kan det være nødvendig å melde dette til NSD ved å oppdatere meldeskjemaet. Før du melder inn en endring, oppfordrer vi deg til å lese om hvilken type endringer det er nødvendig å melde: https://www.nsd.no/personverntjenester/fylle-ut-meldeskjema-for-personopplysninger/melde-endringer-i-meldeskjema Du må vente på svar fra NSD før endringen gjennomføres.

OPPFØLGING AV PROSJEKTET

NSD vil følge opp ved planlagt avslutning for å avklare om behandlingen av personopplysningene er avsluttet.

Lykke til med prosjektet!

NTNU
Norwegian University of
Science and Technology