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Master Thesis Social, Health and Organizational Psychology

‘The moderating effect of meaningful work in the relationship between work passion and individual work performance’

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Abstract

Passion is described as “an important source of fuel that allows people to go through long, and at times frustrating practice sessions, and that eventually helps them attain high levels of performance” (Vallerand et al. 2007 p. 512). There seem to be two different types of passion, harmonious and obsessive, yet previous findings are not consistent regarding the effects of the two types of passion on performance. Furthermore, not much attention has been paid to other factors that may play a role in such relationship. This survey study, by using data from 152 employees, investigates whether harmonious work passion and obsessive work passion are predictors of performance. Additionally, the study examines the effect that perceived meaningfulness of work has in this relationship. The results of the study show that harmonious work passion is a predictor of performance, while obsessive passion is negatively related to performance. In addition, the study shows that meaningful work does not have a statistically significant moderating effect on the relationship between harmonious passion and performance. On the contrary, results show that meaningful work has a statistically significant moderating effect on the relationship between obsessive passion and performance. The findings have several practical implications for HR managers and organizations. It is now clear that being a passionate employee is not enough, rather, the type of passion an employee experiences matters. Therefore, organizations should pay more attention to the type of passion that employees display, so they can nurture their harmonious passion, or enhance the perceived meaningfulness of work to decrease the negative effects of obsessive passion and consequently and ultimately increase performance. After all, performance is key in order to reach organizational success.

Keywords: harmonious work passion, obsessive work passion, work passion, dualistic model of passion, Self-Determination Theory, work performance, meaningful work.

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Introduction

The current study aims to answer the following research question: *“To what extent does meaningful work influence the relationship between work passion and work performance?”*

Considering the large amount of time that individuals spend at work and the bigger role that jobs have in people’s lives, it has become crucial to investigate the factors that contribute to positive work outcomes such as work engagement, work satisfaction and ultimately performance. The work is becoming increasingly complex, technologically advanced and rapidly changing. This has caused organizations to become more concerned about how to improve employees’ performance. This is because, in a competitive global era, high-performing employees are needed to ensure organizational progress (Pawirosumarto et al., 2017 cited in Mas’ud et al., 2020). For this reason, Organizational Psychology, which is concerned with investigating human behaviour in the context of the work (Truxillo et al., 2016 cited in Mititelu, 2020), has focused on the antecedents or predictors that contribute to higher employee performance.

A concept that has gained a lot of attention in the last decade is the concept of passion. Passion is defined as a “strong inclination toward an activity that people like, that they find important, in which they invest time and energy, and that is part of one’s identity.” (Vallerand & Verner-Filion, 2013 p. 757). Passion is a fairly new concept in the work and organizational context, and the work of Vallerand and colleagues has contributed greatly to psychologists’ understanding of passion in the context of work. Studies show that work passion plays a great role in predicting employees’ performance through the internalization of an activity into one’s identity. That is, passion is like a fuel that helps employees to deal better with long, difficult and frustrating tasks. Passion for one’s work involves deliberate practice that consequently leads to higher performance (Vallerand et al., 2007). However, passion seems to be a dualistic

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concept, Vallerand distinguished between two different types of passion, harmonious passion and obsessive passion, this division has been referred to as the dualistic model of passion (Vallerand et al., 2007). On one hand, harmonious passion results from an autonomous internalization of an activity, this internalization occurs when the individual has freely accepted the activity. When this happens, the activity integrates into one's identity in harmony with other activities in one's life. On the other hand, obsessive passion results from a controlled internalization of the activity. This is generally linked to an obsessive urge to engage in the activity and often leads to workaholism (Vallerand, 2015).

Another factor that has been studied and that is believed to have a positive effect on employees' performance is meaningful work. Meaningful work is defined as a subjective experience of the significance or purpose of work, that is, the degree to which the individual experiences the job as meaningful and worthwhile, as making sense of, or contributing to their reason of existence in the world (Both-Nwabuwe et al. 2017). It is believed that when employees experience their job as meaningful and significant, they tend to exhibit higher work performance because they perform their tasks with dedication and appreciation. Furthermore, meaningful work is a fundamental psychological need that enhances employees' agency and self-worth (Fletcher and Schofield, 2019). Therefore, employees who perceive their work as meaningful can more easily achieve individual, team and organizational goals (Albrecht et al., 2021).

It is important to note that passion and meaningful work are distinct concepts. Passion encompasses a feeling beyond liking and incorporates elements of identification (Ho et al., 2011). When individuals are passionate about their work, they freely and voluntarily view the job as important because of the characteristics of the job itself. On the other hand, perceived meaningfulness of work relates to the purpose and significance that employees attach to their work, "people feel they make a positive, important, useful contribution to a worthwhile

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purpose through the execution of their work” (Albrecht, 2013, pp. 237). That is to say, an individual can be passionate about his work because there are aspects of it that he enjoys (such as the job being challenging, having a nice team, work flexibility or enjoying the tasks) and yet he may not see his work as meaningful because it is not perceived as contributing to a greater purpose.

Hence, organizations are now noticing the benefits of work passion; they increasingly want to hire passionate employees (Vallerand and Verner-Filion, 2013). However, the conditions under which work passion leads to higher performance and whether there are other factors that affect this relationship are not fully understood (Astakhova & Porter, 2015). Additionally, meaningful work appears to be an important predictor of performance. That is, both work passion and meaningful work are thought to contribute greatly to higher work performance, which could suggest that the joint effects of work passion and meaningfulness of work could have a greater effect on individual work performance. However, meaningful work has not gotten much attention in relation to work passion. Yet, a study conducted by Indriasari and Setyorini (2018) found that meaningful work strengthened the link between work passion and work performance. To the best of my knowledge, this is the only study investigating this relationship, which suggests that there is a need to investigate this issue further. Besides, the sample used in that study was rather specific, all participants were accountants working for a specific organization and they were all Indonesian. Thus, it is not concluded whether the findings of the study can be applied to western societies and other fields of work that are not accounting-related. So, in order to address the abovementioned gap, the current study aims to answer the following research question:

“To what extent does meaningful work influence the relationship between work passion and work performance?”

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The findings of the current study will contribute to the existing literature in several ways: First, the study extends prior organizational psychology research on work passion and aims to increase knowledge of the effect of the two different types of passion on work performance. Second, the study aims to increase knowledge of possible moderating factors, namely, perceived meaningfulness of work, and its effect on the relationship between passion and performance. Third, the study has relevance in practice since it will provide organizations with important insights into the underlying mechanisms of work passion as a predictor of performance. Human Resources (HR) managers put a great focus on finding passionate employees, but for this to be effective, the underlying mechanisms of this relationship need to be fully understood. If meaningful work is found to affect this relationship, organizations would be able to change their current policies and practices and create new strategies to enhance the perceived meaningfulness of work among employees. This way they will be making sure that their passionate employees are making full use of their motivation and potential, and consequently display higher performance, which would ultimately lead to organizational success.

Theoretical framework and hypotheses development

Self-Determination Theory and the dualistic model of passion

One of the most common theoretical frameworks used to explain passion is the Self-Determination Theory (SDT). SDT supports the idea that humans are inherently attracted to self-growth and development, and have a tendency to always improve themselves. This theory examines individuals' inner growth tendencies and basic psychological needs that drive motivation and personality integration. Ryan and Deci (2000) recognize three basic psychological needs: the need for competence, the need for relatedness, and the need for autonomy. However, the pillar of SDT is internalization. This refers to taking in a value or behavior and integrating it into one's identity. Work passion is based on an internalization

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process in which a person incorporates an activity that they enjoy, into their identity. Hence, this is the reason why SDT is generally used to explain the underlying mechanism of passion (Astakhova & Porter, 2015).

Vallerand et al. (2003) distinguished between two different types of passion: harmonious passion and obsessive passion. Each type of passion can develop within a person depending on the type of internalisation that takes place. On one hand, harmonious passion results from an autonomous internalisation of an activity, this internalisation occurs when the individual has freely accepted the activity. When this happens, the activity integrates into one's identity in harmony with other activities in one's life (such as spending time with family or hobbies) (Vallerand, 2015). On the other hand, obsessive passion results from a controlled internalisation of the activity. This is generally linked to an obsessive urge to engage in the activity while ignoring other important parts and activities of one's life, which often leads to workaholism (Vallerand, 2015). This type of passion is often the result of a lack of fulfilment of intrinsic needs, and it is not an autonomous process. Instead, individuals see their work as instrumental to achieving rewards such as a pay raise or a promotion (Astakhova & Porter, 2015).

The two types of passion and work performance

In this study, performance refers to "behaviours that contribute to the production of a good or the provision of a service" (Rotundo and Sackett 2002 p. 67). This involves behaviours such as completing job tasks, solving problems, keeping knowledge up-to-date, working accurately and planning and organizing (Koopmans et al., 2011).

As previously mentioned, there is a great need to understand the relationship between work passion and work performance. Several studies have attempted to do so, and there is a general agreement among researchers that passion affects performance (Astakhova & Porter, 2015). However, what is not fully understood is the effect of each type of passion on

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performance. Some suggested that harmonious passion leads to positive outcomes whereas obsessive passion leads to negative outcomes. This is because when individuals display harmonious passion, their work is well integrated into the individual's lifestyle, and they are in control of when, where, and how they engage in the activity (Thorgren et al., 2013). That is, the activity happens in harmony with other activities in their life such as spending time with family, hobbies and so on. On the other hand, when individuals display obsessive passion, their job ends up taking a disproportionate space in the person's life which creates conflict with other activities and is often associated with negative emotions such as shame or guilt (Thorgren et al., 2013). Hence, due to its nature, obsessive passion has an increased potential to lead to negative outcomes, as compared to harmonious passion. Nevertheless, this has not found consistent empirical support (Astakhova & Porter, 2015).

Other studies suggested that both types of passion are predictors of deliberate practice, which in turn leads to higher performance (Ericsson et al., 1993; Vallerand et al., 2008). This is in line with what Vallerand et al. (2007 p. 512) stated: "Passion is an important source of fuel that allows people to go through long and at times frustrating practice sessions, and that eventually helps them attain high levels of performance". Thus, even though according to the SDT both types of passion have different internalization processes, they both have the potential to increase performance through higher levels of deliberate practice. Therefore, in line with the above reasoning, the current study predicts that both harmonious and obsessive passion are positively related to work performance.

Hypothesis 1: Harmonious work passion is positively related to work performance

Hypothesis 2: Obsessive work passion is positively related to work performance

The Job Characteristics Theory (JCT) and meaningful work

Meaningful has been defined as important, valuable and worthwhile. Literature suggests that meaningful work is a multidimensional concept in which 'meaningful' includes

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parts of the self, such as personal growth and self-actualization as well as others, such as contributing to the greater good (Hackman & Oldham, 1976; Pratt & Ashforth, 2003 cited in Both-Nwabuwe et al., 2017).

The Job Characteristics Theory (JCT) was one of the first organizational theories that integrated meaningful work. This theory identified different conditions that were needed for an employee to be intrinsically motivated and consequently have high performance at work. The five job dimensions were: skills variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback. They subsequently lead to three different psychological states: meaningful work, responsibility, and knowledge of results, which then lead to positive work outcomes such as work performance (Hackman & Oldham, 1976).

Several studies have supported this view and have found that individuals who experience their work as meaningful, have higher work performance (Christian et al., 2011; Saks, 2006; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004, cited in Allan et al. 2019).

Thus, according to the literature, both work passion and meaningful work are predictors of performance. This suggests that the joint effects of work passion and meaningful work could have a greater effect on performance. This is supported by a study conducted by Indriasari & Setyorini (2018) that found a statistically significant moderating effect of meaningful work in the relationship between work passion and work performance. Hence, in line with the above reasoning, it is predicted that meaningful work will positively moderate the relationship between harmonious and obsessive work passion and work performance.

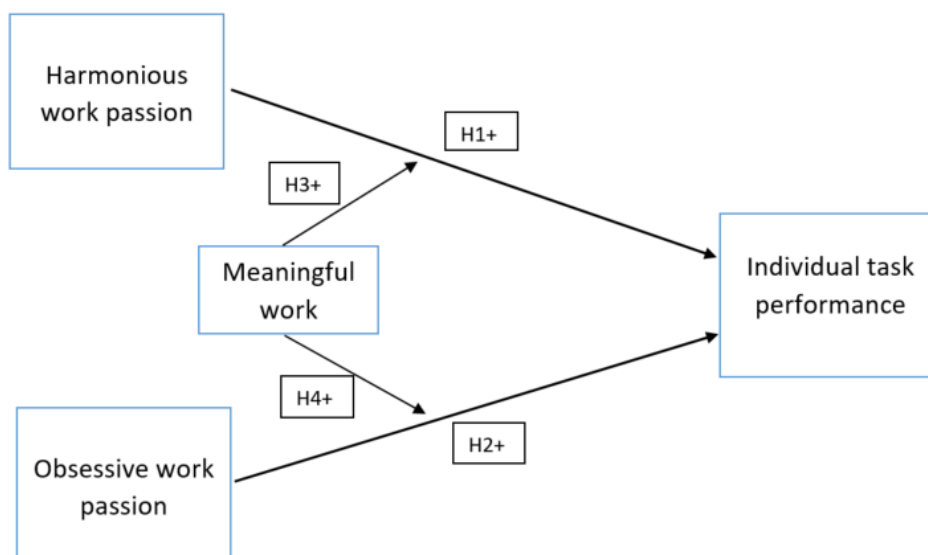
Hypothesis 3: Meaningful work moderates the relationship between harmonious work passion and work performance, such that the relationship is stronger when meaningful work is higher.

Hypothesis 4: Meaningful work moderates the relationship between obsessive work passion and work performance, such that the relationship is stronger when meaningful work is higher.

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Figure 1

Conceptual Model: Hypothesized relationship between the concepts of the study



Note: H = Hypothesis

No control variables are included in the design. This is because the literature did not yield consistent findings of controls that could have a relevant role in the proposed design.

Methods

Participants

According to the G*Power test (version 3.1.9.7), 119 (N) respondents were needed for this study, based on an effect size of 0.15, the alpha level of 0.05, a power of 0.95, and 3 predictors. This effect size of 0.15 was chosen in line with what is common in the literature (Astakhova & Porter, 2015). Nonetheless, in the interest of strengthening the study's generalizability, a larger sample size was strived for than the one specified in the power analysis. The target population was employees. Hence participants needed to be older than 18 and be currently employed. A total number of 225 participants started the questionnaire (N=225). However, 73 participants did not complete it (N= 73). After eliminating the incomplete responses, 152 (N=152) responses were used for the final statistical analysis.

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From the sample population, 38.8% were male (N=59), 60.5% were female (N=92), and 0.7% were non-binary (N=1). The mean age was 26.21 (SD=5.97), with the youngest person being 21 years old and the oldest being 59. From the sample, 7.2% were high school graduates (N=11), 44.1% had a bachelor's degree (N=67), 44.1% had a master's degree (N=67), and lastly, 3.3% had a PhD (N=5).

Design and procedure

The hypotheses were tested by conducting quantitative research. An online survey was jointly created by three student-researchers from Utrecht University. In regards to the data collection, all ethical guidelines were followed in accordance with the Faculty Ethics Review Board (FERB) at Utrecht University, where the study was registered. Before taking part in the study, participants were briefed about the aim of the study and had to sign a consent form. Participation in the study was voluntary and participants' anonymity and confidentiality were ensured at all times. Participation was online and the survey was distributed via social media (Facebook and LinkedIn). The target population was employees (> 18 years old), regardless of the position, employment contract or type or industry. Additionally, the survey was not targeted at Dutch employees only but also internationals, therefore the language used was English. Participants took part in the survey through the online software 'Qualtrics'. The data collection stage took 4 weeks. Next, once all data was collected, it was downloaded and uploaded into IBM's Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 28 for analysis.

Measures

The following scales have been carefully chosen based on the definition of the concepts used in this study. In addition, they have been found to have high validity and reliability in the literature. Lastly, they are highly suitable for the target group since they are understandable to participants from different educational levels.

Passion

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Work passion was measured by the fourteen-item scale created by Vallerand et al. (2003). The scale has two different subscales, one for obsessive work passion (OP) and one for harmonious work passion (HP) with 7 items for each type of passion. Responses will be made to all items on a five-point agreement scale (5 = strongly agree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 1 = strongly disagree). A sample item of HP is: “This activity is in harmony with other activities in my life”. A sample item of OP is: “I have difficulty imagining my life without this activity”. For the purpose of the current study, “this activity” was changed into “my job” in each item of the scale, to avoid any possible confusion. These scales were chosen because they have been widely used and found theoretically sound and highly reliable (Astakhova & Porter, 2015). Furthermore, this scale acknowledges work passion as a dualistic construct, fitting the needs of this study. In previous research, the Cronbach’s alpha was $\alpha = .77$ for HP and $\alpha = .87$ for obsessive passion (Astakhova & Porter, 2015). In the current study, the scales were also found reliable HP ($\alpha = .80$) and OP ($\alpha = .80$). Average inter-item correlation = .37 for HP, and .36 for OP.

Work performance

Work performance (WP) was measured by using the task performance sub-scale of the Individual Work Performance Questionnaire (IWPQ 1.0) developed by Koopmans (2015). This choice was made because the sub-scale aligns with the definition of performance used in the current study. The sub-scale is composed of 5 items rated on a five-point scale (1 = seldom to 5 = always/often). A sample item is: “I was able to plan my work so that I finished it on time.” This is a self-report measure, this choice was made because the literature suggests that self-ratings of performance are consistent with the ratings of supervisors and peers, making it a reliable way to measure performance (Bakker & Bal, 2010; Murphy & Cleveland, 1991). In previous research, the Cronbach’s alpha was $\alpha = 0.78$ (Koopmans, 2015). In the

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current study, the scale was also found reliable $\alpha = 0.73$. Average item inter-item correlation =.35

Meaningful work

Meaningful work (MW) was measured with The Work and Meaning Inventory (WAMI) developed by Steger et al. (2012). Responses will be made to all 10 items on a five-point agreement scale (5 = strongly agree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 1 = strongly disagree). A sample item is: “I view my work as contributing to my personal growth”. This measure was chosen because it captures the multidimensional experience of meaningful work and it aligns with the definition used in this study. Furthermore, as stated by Both-Nwabuwe et al., (2017), based on evaluation of alignment and quality assessment, the WAMI scale has been suggested as one of the most valid and appropriate measurements of meaningful work. The Cronbach’s alpha in previous studies was $\alpha = 0.93$ (Both-Nwabuwe et al., 2017). In the current study, the scale was also found reliable $\alpha = 0.86$. Average item inter-item correlation =.30

Table 1

Reliability of the scales estimated in this study

Scale	Number of items	Cronbach Alpha	Av. Inter-item correlation
Performance scale	5	.73	.35
Harmonious Passion scale	7	.80	.37
Obsessive Passion scale	7	.80	.36
Meaningful Work scale	10	.86	.30

Note: N= 152

Demographic questions

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The demographic questions that were included in the questionnaire were age, gender, level of education and the average number of hours that participants worked per week. These questions were used to obtain a more refined view of the sample population for this research, however, they were not part of the analysis.

Statistical analysis

In order to test the hypotheses of this study, the IMB Statistical Programme for Social Sciences (SPSS) 28 was used. First, the reliability of the scales was tested with Cronbach's alpha (α). Then, the assumptions of regression were tested. Next, the descriptive statistics and Pearson correlations of the data were analysed. After, the entire model was tested in one run in SPSS by conducting a linear regression analysis using the manually computed interactions variables (HP x MW and OP x MW). Next, after the entire model was tested, the direct paths in the model (H1 and H2) were tested by conducting regression analysis (in two separate runs). Then, PROCESS macro SPSS package (Hayes, 2018) was used to test the interaction effects (H3 and H4). In order to do this, PROCESS model 1 was chosen for the purpose of this study as it fit the present model best. Two separate moderation analyses (one with MW and HP, and one with MW and OP) were conducted as the model could not be tested in one run on SPSS. Lastly, simple slopes analysis and plot were used to interpret the results of the moderation analysis. In the current study, a 95% bootstrapped confidence interval was used to establish the significance.

Results

Descriptive statistics and correlations

In Table 2, the descriptive statistics and the correlations between the variables of the current study are made available. The table shows that most variables are significantly and positively correlated: HP is significantly correlated to OP ($r = .35, p < .05$). HP is significantly correlated to MW ($r = .81, p < .05$). HP is significantly correlated to WP ($r = .30, p < .05$). OP

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is significantly correlated to MW ($r = .33, p < .05$). MW is significantly correlated to WP ($r = .28, p < .05$). On the contrary, non-significant and negative correlation was found between OP and WP ($r = -.06, p > .05$). All the correlation between variables are low or moderate except for the correlation between HP and MW, which is high ($r = .81, p < .05$). This is important to keep in mind, since high correlation between these two concepts might influence the hypotheses testing. No statistically significant correlation was found between gender and age and any of the variables.

Table 2

Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
Harmonious passion	3.40	.66	-					
Obsessive Passion	2.35	.73	.35*	-				
Meaningful work	3.60	.58	.81*	.33*	-			
Performance	3.99	.54	.30*	-.06	.28*	-		
Age	26,21	5.97	.11	.18	.10	-.054	-	
Gender	1,62	.50	-.05	.15	-.05	-.04	.06	-

Note: SD = standard deviation, N = 152

* Significance level at .05

Assumptions testing

As PROCESS runs regression models, interaction variables were computed manually to check the assumptions of regression, which appeared as follows: The assumption of linearity between IVs and DV was met as shown by the scatterplots. The multicollinearity assumption was met since the coefficient table showed no VIF higher than 10 and tolerance scores were well above 0.2. The assumption of the residuals being uncorrelated was met since the Durbin-Watson test was between 1 and 3 (Durbin-Watson = 1.85). The assumption of

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homoscedasticity was met since the standardised residuals vs standardised predicted values showed no signs of funnelling in the plot. The assumption of normality of the residuals was met, as observed in the scatterplot. Lastly, Cook's Distance values showed that there were no outliers present in the data, meaning that the last assumption was also met. Lastly, Cronbach's alpha was found reliable for every scale, so no items had to be deleted (see methods section).

Hypotheses testing

Next, the entire model was tested by conducting a regression analysis. The results indicated that the model explained 16.9% of the variance ($R^2 = .17$), and that the model was a significant predictor of performance. $F(4, 15) = 7.49, p = .00$.

Then, the direct paths in the model were tested:

Hypothesis 1: Did Harmonious Work Passion predict higher Performance?

Hypothesis 1 was supported: harmonious work passion had a statistically significant positive effect on performance ($b = .30, p = .00$).

Hypothesis 2: Did Obsessive Work Passion predict higher Performance?

Hypothesis 2 was not supported: obsessive passion did not have a statistically significant positive effect on work performance ($b = -.15, p = .02$). On the contrary, obsessive passion had a statistically significant negative effect on performance.

Next, the moderators in the model were tested:

Hypothesis 3: Did Meaningful Work have a positive moderating effect on the relationship between Harmonious Work Passion and Performance?

Hypothesis 3 was not supported: meaningful work did not have a statistically significant positive effect in the relationship between harmonious passion and work performance ($b = .03, 95\% \text{ CI } [-.07, .14], t = .59, p = .55$).

Table 3

Results of the moderation analysis 1: Harmonious Passion and Meaningful Work

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	b	SE	t	p
constant	-.03	.09	-.28	.78
HP (centred)	.22	.13	1.66	.09
MW (centred)	.12	.14	.89	.37
HP x MW	.03	.05	.59	.56

Note: b = coefficient, SE = standard estimate

Hypothesis 4: Did Meaningful Work have a positive moderating effect on the relationship between Obsessive Work Passion and Performance?

Lastly, hypothesis 4 was supported: meaningful work had a statistically significant positive moderating effect in the relationship between obsessive passion and work performance ($b = .22$, 95% CI [.05, .39], $t = 2.52$, $p = .01$).

Table 4

Results of the moderation analysis 2: Obsessive Passion and Meaningful Work

	b	SE	t	p
constant	-0.7	.08	-.89	.38
OP (centred)	-.20	.08	-2.55	.01
MW (centred)	.40	.08	4.70	.00
OP x MW	.22	.09	2.51	.01

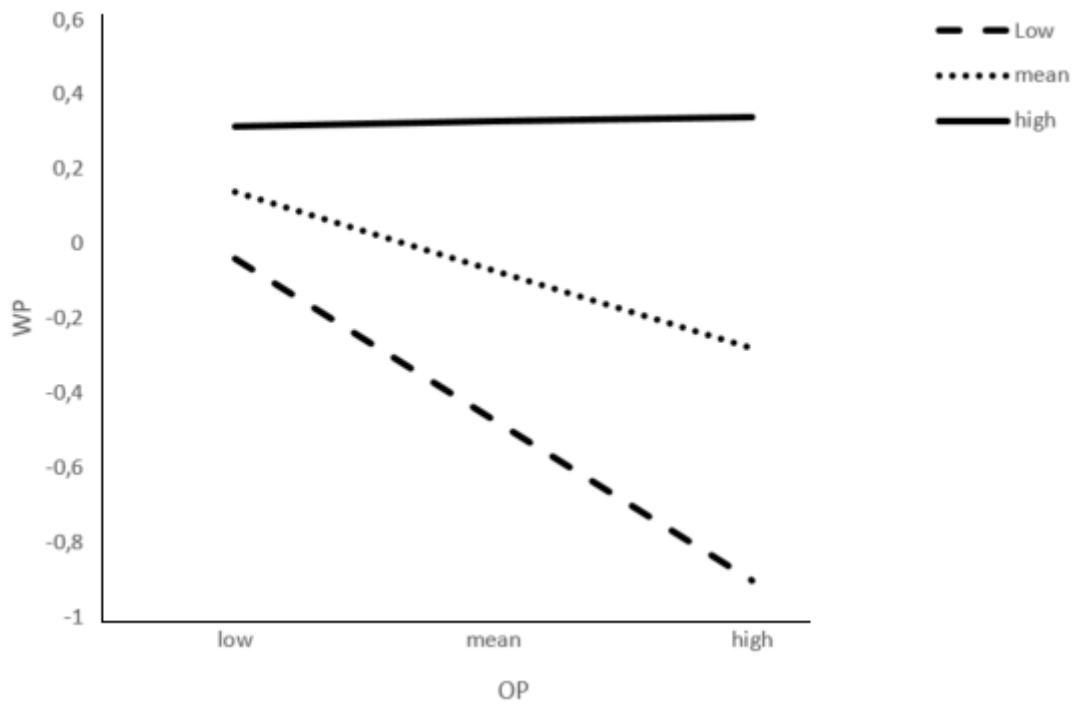
Note: b = coefficient, SE = standard estimate

However, the results of the simple slopes analysis (Figure 2) revealed that only high levels of meaningful work have a positive moderating effect in the relationship between obsessive work passion and performance. That is, mean and low levels of meaningful work fail to positively impact this relationship.

Figure 2

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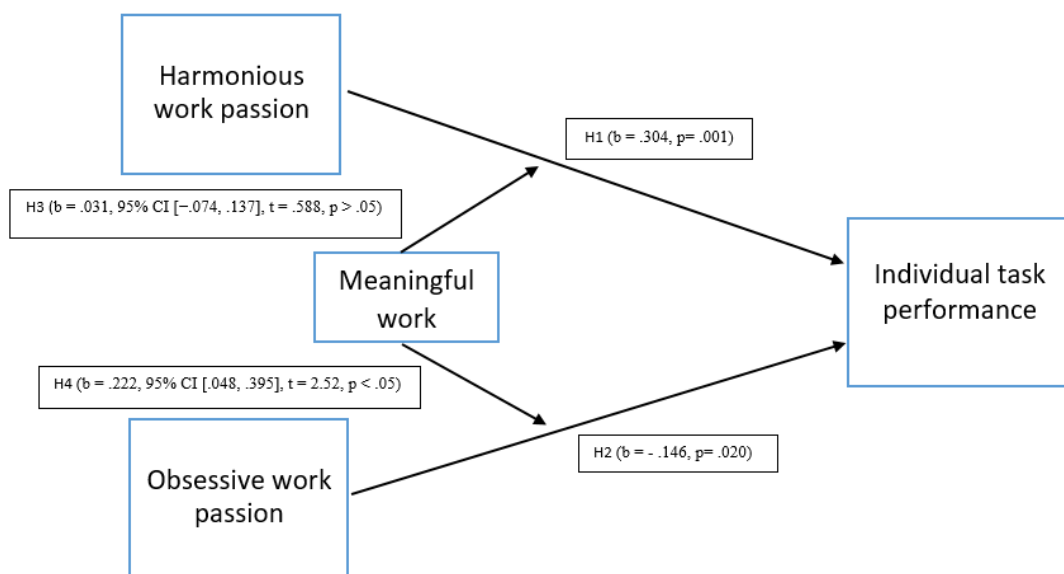
Results of the simple slopes analysis. The moderating effect of Meaningful Work in the relationship between Obsessive Passion and Performance at different levels of Meaningful Work.



Note: OP = Obsessive passion. WP = Work performance

Figure 3

Statistical model including the results of the analyses



Note: H = Hypothesis

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Discussion

The aim of this study was twofold: on one hand to investigate whether both harmonious passion and obsessive passion are predictors of performance, and on the other hand to investigate whether perceived meaningfulness of work moderated the relationship between both types of passion and performance. The predictions made by this study were that both harmonious passion and obsessive passion would positively predict performance.

Additionally, the perceived meaningfulness of work was expected to moderate the relationship between both types of passion and performance, in such a way that when meaningful work is higher, performance is also higher. That is, when an individual is passionate about their work, regardless of whether this passion is harmonious or obsessive, they will display higher performance. In addition, when there are high levels of meaningful work, the relationship between passion and performance is stronger than when low levels of meaningful work are present.

Harmonious Work Passion as a predictor of Performance:

The results of the current study showed that harmonious passion had a statistically significant positive effect on performance. This means that when an individual is passionate about their work, and this passion is in harmony with other activities in their life, they will display higher work performance. This is in line with the predictions and findings from previous research. An explanation for this finding is that when passion is in harmony with other activities in the individual's life (such as hobbies, spending time with family and so on), they will display higher performance at work because even though the activity plays an important role in their life, this does not interfere with other things they enjoy. That is, as stated by Permarupan (2013), 'they control their passion, yet their passion does not control them'.

Obsessive Work Passion as a predictor of Performance:

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Contrary to my predictions, obsessive passion did not have a positive effect on work performance, instead, obsessive passion had a statistically significant negative effect on performance. These results are not in line with the predictions made by this study, yet these results are not a surprise. This is because previous research investigating obsessive work passion as a predictor of performance failed to reach a unanimous answer on the effects of obsessive passion on performance (Astakhova & Porter, 2015). An explanation for this finding is that even though obsessive passion increases deliberate practice, the activity does not happen in harmony with other activities in the person's life, and therefore is associated with negative emotions such as guilt and shame, which eventually take their toll and consequently decrease performance. In the literature, it is clear that harmonious passion has a positive effect on performance, but when it comes to obsessive passion results vary, some suggest that the reason for this is that obsessive passion may produce a short-term positive effect on performance, even though it hinders it in the long run (Ho et al., 2011).

Meaningful Work as a moderator between Harmonious Work Passion and Performance:

Meaningful work did not have a statistically significant positive effect in the relationship between harmonious passion and work performance. This means that when an employee is passionate about their work and this happens in harmony with other activities in their life, they will show higher performance regardless of whether they perceive their work as meaningful. A possible and intuitive explanation for this finding is that when an individual experiences harmonious passion towards their work, they find enough value in it and therefore attach less value to whether their work is contributing to the greater good. Another possible explanation is that meaningful work is a predictor of harmonious passion rather than a moderator. A recent study conducted by Wiroko (2021) found that when meaningful work increased, so did harmonious work passion. This could suggest that when employees see their

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work as meaningful, they will experience higher harmonious passion, and this will consequently lead to increased performance. This possible explanation is also in line with the correlations in this study, which showed that there was a statistically significant and high correlation between harmonious passion and meaningful work.

Meaningful Work as a moderator between Obsessive Work Passion and Performance:

Meaningful work had a statistically significant positive moderating effect on the relationship between obsessive passion and work performance. This means that when an employee displayed obsessive passion towards their work, even though this would normally hinder performance, perceiving their work as meaningful would have a positive effect on that relationship, that is, their performance will be higher when they perceive their work as meaningful. This is in line with the predictions of the study and rather an interesting finding since this means that meaningful work has a 'buffering effect' of the negative effects that obsessive passion has on performance.

Practical Implications

The results of the study have several practical implications. First, the study adds knowledge to the existing literature, the results showed that, in line with previous research, harmonious passion has a positive effect on performance. On the contrary, obsessive passion has a negative effect on performance. This is a useful step forward, since the results of previous studies failed to find a concrete conclusion about the effects of obsessive passion on performance. This could have important practical implications as well, we now know that being a passionate employee is not enough to display high performance, but what really matters is the type of passion you experience towards your work. This is a useful insight for organizations, HR managers should keep this in mind during the recruitment process. Rather than focusing merely on hiring passionate employees, they should shift the focus to the type

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of passion the potential candidates display since not all of those passionate employees will actually benefit from the performance benefits of passion.

Second, the study showed that when a person displays harmonious passion for their work, it is not relevant whether they see their work as contributing to the greater good. This has implications for the literature since harmonious passion seems to be 'enough' to make an employee display higher work performance. This opens up new possible avenues for research. Do passionate employees attach less weight to whether their job is meaningful, is their passion enough to lead to higher performance? Or does meaningful work play a different role in this relationship, perhaps as a predictor of passion rather than a moderator?

Third, the study showed that when individuals experience obsessive passion for their work, their performance will be hindered, however, if they perceive their work as meaningful this would have a buffer effect, and hence their performance will actually improve. This has implications for both the literature and organizational practices. On one hand, this could explain why previous research failed to reach a conclusion on whether obsessive passion would improve or hinder performance. Perhaps some of the studies that found a positive link between obsessive passion and performance could have yielded different results if controlling for meaningful work. On the other hand, this has implications for organizations, knowing this, HR managers could try to enhance the perception of meaningfulness that employees experience, and this could potentially contribute to improving performance.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

Despite the various contribution of the current research, its limitations should also be acknowledged. First, work performance was measured via self-report, and although it has been suggested to be as accurate as supervisors' or peers' reports (Bakker & Bal, 2010; Murphy & Cleveland, 1991), it could be interesting to do a similar study in which another type of performance measurement was used.

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Second, the data in the study was measured only one time. As previously mentioned, there is a chance that obsessive passion has a different impact on performance in the short-term and long-term, potentially increasing performance at first, but hindering it in the long run (Astakhova & Porter, 2015). For this reason, it may be useful to investigate the short term and long term effects of obsessive passion by measuring it at different points in time.

In addition, the current study shows that meaningful work does not moderate the relationship between harmonious passion and performance. The correlations between the variables in the current study show that meaningful work and harmonious passion were highly correlated. Hence, future research should investigate further the relationship between harmonious passion and meaningful work.

Furthermore, it would be useful to investigate whether the link between passion and performance depends on other situational factors of the job, such as the degree of autonomy. This would yield interesting findings that could direct HR managers in the right direction in terms of designing jobs and implementing policies that would nurture employees' work passion and ultimately increase performance.

Lastly, in the current study, passion was studied as an antecedent of performance, and although performance is one of the most important outcomes in organizations (Ho et al., 2011), it would also be useful to investigate the effect of passion on other vital organizational outcomes such as turnover or absenteeism as well as important employee outcomes like job affect and well-being.

Conclusion

To conclude, passion is thought to be highly valuable for both employees and organizations, however, the current study showed that the type of passion an employee experiences matters. The results showed that harmonious work passion was a predictor of performance, but obsessive work passion was negatively related to performance.

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Additionally, the study looked into whether meaningful work would strengthen that relationship, and found that employees who experience harmonious passion did not have any performance benefits from perceiving their work as meaningful. On the contrary, employees who experienced obsessive passion did see a performance improvement when perceiving their work as meaningful. This has important theoretical and practical implications, and by continuing to investigate the underlying processes of passion, HR managers could design jobs to nurture harmonious passion in employees, and perhaps learn how to avoid the negative effects that obsessive passion has on performance. After all, performance is key in order to reach organizational success.

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Appendix A

Participant information and consent

Dear participant,

Welcome and thank you for choosing to participate in my research project! My name is Melissa Gaviria Hoyos and I am a master student at Utrecht University. This study is part of my thesis for MSc Social, Health and Organizational Psychology. The study aims to investigate how some work-related factors relate to the way people perform at work.

The survey should take about 5 minutes to complete and will involve answering some work-related questions. At the beginning of the survey, you will be asked a few questions about your gender, age, nationality, and job. These questions are asked in order to understand the background of the participants taking part in this study. In the survey, you will be presented with statements that relate to you and how you experience your work. You will be asked to indicate to which degree these statements apply to you and/or your work situation. If you are currently not employed, you can apply these questions to your last job. There are no right or wrong answers so you are kindly asked to answer the questions as truthfully as possible.

Taking part in this study is entirely voluntary. If you decide to take part, you are free to withdraw at any time without negative consequence.

All information collected will be anonymous, you will not be identified to the researcher or in any report resulting from the study. Demographic data will be utilized only to classify the overall research sample and cannot be traced back to you.

If you have any questions or comments about this study please do not hesitate to contact me via email on m.gaviriahoyos@students.uu.nl

By selecting the consent button below, you are agreeing that:

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- You are aged 18 or over
- You have read and understood this information
- You are taking part in this research study voluntarily (without coercion)
- You agree for your anonymised data to be used for this study

Appendix B**Passion Scale****Harmonious passion**

1. My job allows me to live a variety of experiences
2. For me, my job is a passion that I still manage to control
3. My job reflects the qualities I like about myself
4. The new things that I discover with my job allow me to appreciate it even more
5. My job is in harmony with the other activities in my life
6. My job allows me to live memorable experiences
7. I am completely taken by my job

Obsessive Passion

1. The urge to work is so strong that I cannot help myself from working
2. I have a tough time controlling my need to work
3. I am emotionally dependent on my job
4. I have difficulty imagining my life without my job
5. My mood depends on me being able to do my job
6. I cannot live without my job
7. I have almost an obsessive feeling for this activity

Appendix C**Performance Scale**

1. I am able to set priorities at work
2. I manage to plan my work so that I finish it on time
3. I manage my time well
4. I keep in mind the work results I need to achieve
5. I am able to carry out my work efficiently

Appendix D

Meaningful Work Scale

1. I have found a meaningful career
2. I view my work as contributing to my personal growth.
3. My work really makes no difference to the world.
4. I understand how my work contributes to my life's meaning.
5. I have a good sense of what makes my job meaningful.
6. I know my work makes a positive difference in the world.
7. My work helps me better understand myself.
8. I have discovered work that has a satisfying purpose.
9. My work helps me make sense of the world around me.
10. The work I do serves a greater purpose.
- 11.