Willingness for Organisational Change: The Influence of Meaning in Life, Self-Efficacy and Age

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Abstract

Change is inevitable for organisations to thrive in the competitive market. And yet, more than half of the organisational change implementations fail because often employees' Willingness for Organisational Change is neglected. This study investigated the Search for and Presence of Meaning in Life, Self-Efficacy and Age as possible influencing determinants of Willingness for Organisational Change expecting a positive influence. The variables were measured quantitatively via an online survey, utilising a cross-sectional design. In total 64 employees from German organisations completed the online survey. The results indicated that stronger beliefs in personal capabilities enhanced the Willingness for Organisational Change. Employees with a heightened sense of meaning in life were more inclined toward the organisational change and demonstrated greater Self-Efficacy. Beliefs in personal abilities further explained the relationship between a sense of purpose and acceptance of the change for employees at or above the average age of the sample. In contrast, searching for Meaning in Life was less influential and proved detrimental when dealing with organisational change. This study contributed to a better understanding of the influence of the individual level during organisational change. It highlighted the nuanced influence of searching for and having Meaning in Life and drew attention to a possible interconnectedness with Situational Meaning. Additionally, it provided new scientific evidence that older employees' advanced cognitive processes are likely to strengthen the relationship between Meaning in Life and their beliefs in abilities, which subsequently enhanced acceptance of organisational change.

Keywords: Organisational Change, Willingness for Organisational Change, Self-Efficacy, Meaning in Life, Search for Meaning, Presence of Meaning, Situational Meaning, Age

Willingness for Organisational Change: The Influence of Meaning in Life, Self-Efficacy and Age

"The world hates change, yet it is the only thing that has brought progress."

-Charles F. Kettering, 1959

Change is inevitable in life and essential for development and success, as also portrayed in the quote by Charles F. Kettering. Not only is progress characterised by change in an individual context but also in an organisational context. Importantly, as people work in organisations and demonstrate themselves as the most important asset, the individual level must be acknowledged when discussing organisational change (Shah et al., 2017). With a broad view, the entire lifespan embodies change, starting from being dependent to becoming independent, going from primary education through higher education to eventually a job. And yet, according to Burnes (2011), the majority of people are sceptical about change as it is accompanied by uncertainties and unfamiliarity. Such uncertainties might cause a feeling of anxiety, leading to a struggle to initiate change (Shah et al., 2017). Despite the claim that the causal attribution of anxiety is the change itself, Kegan and Lahey (2009, p.87) stressed that feeling defenceless in the face of change causes anxiety. Additionally, people possess an immune system of change fuelled by assumptions that change might be harmful which hinders people from fully committing to the change (Kegan and Lahey, 2009, pp.62-73). Hence, despite a possible desire to change a current situation and improve processes, people self-protect themselves due to underlying beliefs which hinder successful change.

In the realm of organisational development, the contradiction between the urgency for change and resistance towards change becomes a major concern. According to Burnes (2011), continuous change is vital for an organization to survive. Without change, an organisation is unable to remain competitive in a continuous and rapidly changing environment due to, inter alia, expeditious development of technology or a fluctuating desire in communication trends between stakeholders and the organisation (Siddiqui, 2011; Shah et al., 2017). Notably, an organisational change is not possible without the support and engagement of employees (Shah et al., 2017). As people's scepticism towards change may also be reflected in employee's attitudes toward *organisational change*, it becomes one of the most challenging parts for an organisation to navigate (Burnes, 2011).

Organisational change is the process by which changes within an organisation are implemented. The ultimate aim is to promote effective interaction with the external environment and to improve processes and performance (Shah et al., 2017). Despite several processual models of change management that provide a step-by-step guide promising

successful implementation of change, 60-70% of change interventions in an organisational context seem to fail (Errida and Lotfi, 2021). This alarming number emphasises the importance of understanding why change is often deemed to fail.
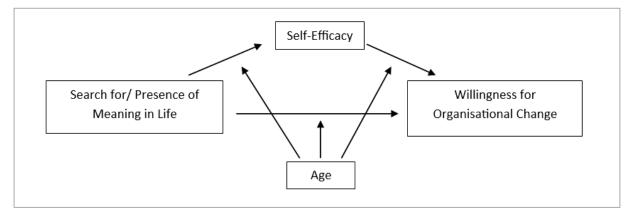
While step-by-step guides most likely focus on organisational resources and tactical means, the individual level characterised by collaboration among and support by employees is often neglected. Notably, an important antecedent to successful change is employees' *Willingness for Organisational Change*, which should thus be enforced (Siddiqui, 2011). To improve the process of motivating employees for the change, mental templates of employees should be considered as underlying determinants of Willingness for Organisational Change (Shah et al., 2017).

Mental templates encompass beliefs, expectations and attitudes that are influenced by a wider interaction of factors beyond organisational confines. Remarkably, it largely influences employees' behaviour at work, especially during organisational changes, since it can affect employees' readiness to change (Shah et al., 2017). According to Kegan (1982, p.72), mental templates are formed on the ground of meaning-making. Meaning-making is a continuous and dynamic process of value-based reflection and construction of *Meaning in Life* and is correlated with cognitive development (van den Heuvel et al., 2009). This process subsequently forms the mental template which encompasses personal resources. One example of personal resources analysed in this study is *Self-Efficacy*, which refers to the extent of people's confidence in their ability to perform behaviours, that either encourage or discourage them from action (Bandura, 1977). As Meaning in Life and Self-Efficacy influence people's behaviour in any life situation, it is suggested that it also influences employees' Willingness for Organisational Change.

Therefore, this study analyses the potential impact of Meaning in Life and Self-Efficacy on employees' Willingness for Organisational Change. Furthermore, since the development of Meaning in Life is continuous and dynamic (van den Heuvel et al., 2009), Age is investigated as a possible moderator. To test the influence of these variables, a survey was distributed among German organisations and employees known to the researcher. The resulting data were assessed with qualitative analysis. In Figure 1 the conceptual model is depicted, demonstrating the possible influencing paths of the variables that will be elaborated on in the following.

Figure 1

Conceptual Model

Theoretical Framework

Organisational Change and Willingness for Organisational Change

Organisational change is conceptualised as conveying new procedures to facilitate the work process, enhance progress, and reduce anxiety towards change to gain a competitive advantage (Siddiqui, 2011). An important factor that enables the successful implementation of organisational change is the Willingness for Organisational Change of employees. Willingness is conceptualised as the positive intention of implementing a transformation within the organisation that consequently incites the employee's support and facilitates the change (van den Heuvel et al., 2009). Accordingly, willingness is the first important determinant to reduce anxiety and accept and consummate the planned change (Siddiqui, 2011). Hereby, Meaning in Life, as well as Self-Efficacy as a personal resource can influence the Willingness for Organisational Change, which will be discussed in more detail in the following.

Meaning in Life

Despite inconsistent definitions of Meaning in Life throughout literature, there is strong evidence that Meaning in Life is essential for understanding experiences (Steger et al., 2006). Likewise, the conceptualisation of Meaning in Life often draws attention to two elements: a sense of purpose which means that people have certain goals they want to achieve in life, and comprehension, marked by an understanding of experiences and relationships, and a personal fit in the world (Park & George, 2013; Steger et al., 2008). Since Meaning in Life is nonuniversal, everyone has their individual meaning-making process, designated through either goals or coherent narratives (Steger et al., 2006). This process is dynamic through role-taking, whereby people understand situations by considering their relationships in interpersonal contexts (Kegan, 1982, p.71). Hence, the evolution of Meaning in Life is contingent upon time,

relationships, and society. Generally, people demonstrate a strong desire to experience Meaning in Life, which consists of searching for and experiencing meaning (Steger et al., 2006). Accordingly, Meaning in Life can be measured by the components of the *Presence of Meaning,* and the *Search for Meaning*.

The Presence of Meaning is the extent to which people have a purpose and comprehend their lives, while the Search for Meaning is the degree to which people attempt to reach this purpose and comprehension (Steger et al., 2009). According to Steger et al., (2008), people who experience low levels of perceived Meaning in Life are more likely motivated to search for meaning compared to those who already have a profound Meaning in Life, also termed the Presence-to-Search Model. Moreover, both components of Meaning in Life contribute to the psychological resilience of people. Firstly, a profound experience of Meaning in Life can have various benefits such as life satisfaction, healthy psychological functioning, well-being, and work enjoyment (Steger et al., 2006; Wang et al., 2021). Secondly, findings on Search for Meaning have been mixed. While some studies associated searching for meaning with negative thinking and a lower sense of personal autonomy others related it to lower levels of distress (Steger et al., 2008; Park & George, 2013).

Moreover, within an organisational context, searching for Situational Meaning, meaning assigned to a specific situation (Park & George, 2013), was found to function as a resource for sustaining performance during change, thus, positively impacting the acceptance of organisational change (van den Heuvel et al., 2009). Prompted by the lack of research about the role of Search for and Presence of Meaning in Life during organisational change, this study strives to fill this gap. Based on the findings of the influencing mechanism of Situational Meaning in connection with the widely spread consensus that Meaning in Life is beneficial in adjusting during stressful times (Park & George, 2013), it is expected that a high level of Search for and Presence of Meaning in Life increases the Willingness for Organisational Change.

Besides, Kegan (1982, p.71) stressed that meaning-making is the foundation for mental templates that entail personal resources. Such personal resources influence people's behaviour making them interesting in the light of change processes. One resource of interest in this study is Self-Efficacy. Due to a lack of research on the concrete influence of Meaning in Life on people's belief in their abilities to cope with any situation, this study aims to start filling this gap. As Meaning in Life has often been proven beneficial, it is hypothesised that the Search for and Presence of Meaning positively impacts Self-Efficacy.

RQ1. Is there a relationship between the Search for/Presence of Meaning in Life and Self-Efficacy?

RQ2. What is the relationship between the Search for/Presence of Meaning in Life and Willingness for Organisational Change?

Self-Efficacy

The personal resource of Self-Efficacy can be used to explain scepticism against change through the estimation and expectancy of personal capability. More specifically, Self-Efficacy describes the belief in one's capacity to successfully perform behaviours and achieve the intended outcomes (Bandura, 1977). Therefore, it is a very powerful resource, not only affecting the choice of behaviours but also determining the extent of invested effort and the time frame of persistence. Notably, the belief in personal abilities can predict the initiation of actions in unfamiliar or threatening situations (Bandura, 1977). Hence, threatening situations that are perceived as being outside of the personal range of capacities seem to be unachievable and consequently, being avoided. One possible explanation for the avoidance of such situations is the preoccupation with self-deficiency, which magnifies the challenging aspect of the situation, creates stress and hence, deflects from the possibility of being able to master the situation (Andrew & Mohankumar, 2017). Additionally, weak beliefs in personal abilities increase the level of anxiety towards situations (Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995). As stated by Shah et al. (2017) change induces anxiety, which could be facilitated when being paired with low Self-Efficacy, supporting Kegan and Lahey's (2009) findings that anxiety is fostered by underlying assumptions of being defenceless. Consequently, having low confidence in personal abilities might lead to resistance to change due to increased anxiety.

When considering organisational alterations, it becomes evident that such changes entail unfamiliarity, instilling a sense of threat among employees which could be countered by employees' positive beliefs in their capabilities. In fact, research has shown a positive correlation between Self-Efficacy and engagement in organisational change (van den Heuvel et al., 2009). Based on these findings and the theoretical framework of beliefs in personal abilities to achieve intended outcomes, it is expected that Self-Efficacy positively influences employee's willingness for change in an organisational context.

Additionally, despite compliant findings of the correlation between Self-Efficacy and Meaning in Life (Kegan, 1982, p.71), some evidence proved that both concepts are distinct and can have independent effects. According to Wang et al. (2021), Self-Efficacy mediated the relationships between Meaning in Life and well-being, indicating that a high level of Meaning in Life increased confidence in problem-solving abilities which resulted in a higher level of well-being. Next, van den Heuvel et al. (2009) highlighted the distinction between Situational Meaning and Self-Efficacy as they presented themselves on two separate factors, supporting

their independence. Moreover, it can be argued that Self-Efficacy comprises different elements than Meaning in Life. While Meaning in Life is marked by the cognitive process of forming comprehension and purpose (Park & George, 2013) Self-Efficacy is marked by beliefs about perceived capability and competence (Bandura, 1977), highlighting their individuality. Hence, despite the interrelatedness of Meaning in Life and Self-Efficacy, they can be seen as distinct concepts, which raises the interest in a possible mediating role of Self-Efficacy between Meaning in Life and Willingness for Organisational Change.

RQ3. What is the relationship between Self-Efficacy and Willingness for Organisational Change?

RQ4. Does Self-Efficacy mediate the relationship between the Search for/Presence of Meaning in Life and Willingness for Organisational Change?

Age

According to Kegan (1982, pp.69-71), meaning-making is an evolutionary development process that is largely dependent on cognitive development. Hence, Age is an influencing factor in the extent to which people form their Meaning in Life. As meaning-making is likewise the foundation for the development of Self-Efficacy, it can be argued that Age indirectly influences the level of Self-Efficacy. Moreover, cognitive development is closely linked with mental complexity, as it describes cognitive processes to integrate new information and engage with abstract constructs, that determine the ability to make decisions and solve problems. Kegan and Lahey (2009, pp.34-40) showed that mental complexity increases with Age, meaning that older people can have qualitative advances regarding their cognitive process instead of simply relying on experiences. Thus, it can be inferred that mental complexity might positively influence Meaning in Life and Self-Efficacy due to enhanced cognitive processes which subsequently leads to a higher Willingness for Organisational Change. Emerging adults, in contrast, have been found to engage in a greater Search for Meaning in Life, as they find themselves in one of the most unstable periods with various changes (Czyżowska and Gurba, 2021). Therefore, it is expected that age moderates the relationship between the Presence of and Search for Meaning in Life and Self-Efficacy as well as the relationship between each of those variables and Willingness for Organisational Change.

RQ5. Does Age influence the relationships between the Search for/Presence of Meaning in Life, Self-Efficacy and Willingness for Organisational Change?

Methods

Design

This quantitative study utilised three different questionnaires to measure the concepts of interest. Thereby, the dependent variable was Willingness for Organizational Change, and the independent variables were Meaning in Life, divided into Search for Meaning and Presence of Meaning, and Self-Efficacy. Age was included as a possible moderator. The design was cross-sectional including descriptive statistics, correlational and regression-based analyses. Moreover, mediation and moderated mediation analyses facilitated a more detailed comprehension of the relationships between the variables.

Participants

The ideally required sample size was determined with the G*Power Software. Hereby, the medium effect size (f^2) was set to 0.25, as this score can provide an observable real-world impact (Cohen, 1992). Further, the α-Level was set to .05, indicating the probability of making the Type I error. Accordingly, the power was set to 0.8, representing an 80% chance of detecting a true effect. Ultimately, the software suggested a sample size of 34 participants. The participants were gathered mainly through convenience sampling, a non-probability type of sampling in which the sample is taken from a group that is easily accessible. More explicitly, four German organisations were chosen, based on no specific criteria, which allowed the survey distribution among their employees: one hotel, a school for children with learning difficulties and two organisations within the automobile industry. The hotel also shared the survey with its partner hotels. To increase the participant size, an additional snowball sampling method was utilised, whereby the survey was disseminated to employees known to the researcher with the request for further distribution. Participants were required to speak German to understand the corresponding German questionnaires. Additionally, employees were excluded if they were under 18 years old, due to the missing capacity of giving consent for their participation. The characteristics of the sample can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1

*Demographic Characteristics of the Sample (*N *= 64)*

		Frequency	Mean	Min	Max	*SD*
Participants		64				
	Male	25 (39.06%)				
	Female	39 (60.94%)				
	Age	64	44	19	63	11.79
	Participation Time (Min)	64	27.48	4.96	413.25	57.80
Organisation						
	Hotel	23 (35.94%)				
	Automobile	7 (10.94%)				
	Tourism	4 (6.25%)				
	School	23 (35.94%)				
	Others	7 (10.94)				
Nationality						
	German	62				
	Austria	1				
	Croatia	1				

Note. Min = Minimum, Max = Maximum, *SD* = Standard Deviation.

Materials

Meaning in Life

The concept of Meaning in Life was measured with the Meaning in Life Questionnaire (MLQ) by Steger (2012). This questionnaire comprises 10 items, of which 5 items measure the Presence of Meaning and the other 5 measure the Search for Meaning. The items (e.g. "I understand my life's meaning" [Presence of Meaning], "I am always searching for something that makes my life feel significant" [Search for Meaning]) are measured on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = *absolutely true* to 7 = *absolutely untrue*). The items of the MLQ were translated from English to German. The German version of the subscale Presence of Meaning showed an alpha of .89 and the subscale Search for Meaning had an alpha of .88, both considered very reliable (Ahdika, 2017).

Self-Efficacy

To measure Self-Efficacy the German scale of the General Self-Efficacy Scale was used, which is called "Allgemeine Selbstwirksamkeitserwartung" (SWE) by Schwarzer and Jerusalem (1999). The scale has 10 items (e.g., "When resistance arises, I find ways and means to assert myself", "It is not difficult for me to accomplish my intentions and goals") that are measured on a 4-point Likert scale (1 = *not at all true* to 4 = *exactly true*). Cronbach's alpha of the German version of this scale was .84, considered very reliable (Ahdika, 2017).

Willingness for Organisational Change

Willingness for Organisational Change was measured with the "Openness toward Organisational Change Scale" (OTOCS) by Miller et al. (1994), including 5 items on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *Strongly disagree* to 5 = *Strongly Agree*). This scale assesses the willingness of employees to support the change as well as their attitude toward the change and focuses on a specific change in the work role. For this study, the questionnaire was slightly modified to refer to a specific or general organisational change instead of the change in the work role (e.g., "I (would) consider myself to be "open" to (the) change at my workplace", "I (would) look forward to (the) change at my workplace."). The modified, German scale showed an alpha of .80, which is considered reliable (Ahdika, 2017).

Age

The age of participants was inquired in the socio-demographic part of the survey, asking the participants to indicate their age in numbers.

Procedure

Before the start of data collection, ethical approval was granted by the Ethics Committee of the Behavioural, Management and Social Sciences Department (BMS) at the University of Twente (#240446). Then the survey, performed on Qualtrics, was distributed to the contact person of each organisation via an online link who made it internally accessible to employees. Additionally, the link was shared with known employees by the researcher who were encouraged to distribute the survey further.

When clicking the link, participants would first receive the information sheet, followed by the informed consent form. When consenting to all information, participants were asked to complete the questionnaires, starting with socio-demographics, followed by the MLQ, SWE and lastly OTOCS.
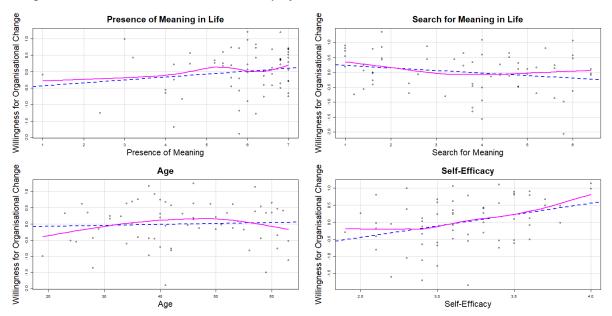
Data Analysis

After finishing the data collection, the data was cleaned by removing all participants who did not consent or did not fulfil the inclusion criteria of being at least 18 years old,

employed and fluently speaking German. After that, the skewness of the variables was estimated to gain a better understanding of the data's distributional properties. The independent variable Self-Efficacy was almost symmetrical with a slight skewness to the left (0.13), which is considered excellent (Hair et al., 2021, p.66). Similar results were found for Search for Meaning with a slight negative skew (-0.13). The variable Presence of Meaning was negatively skewed demonstrating a higher frequency of large values (-1.55), considered acceptable (Hair et al., 2021, p.66). Age showed a skewness of (-0.07) representing a minor left-skewed distribution, considered excellent (Hair et al., 2021, p.66). The dependent variable Willingness for Organisational Change was almost symmetrical with a slightly greater number of high values (-0.47), considered excellent (Hair et al., 2021, p.66).

Following, the parametric assumptions for simple linear regression were tested, including linearity, independence of observations, homogeneity of variance and normality. The linearity assumption was met for all three independent variables, based on component residual plots (see Figure 2). Likewise, the independence assumption was met (Durbin-Watson value = 1.90) as well as the third assumption of homoscedasticity based on the Breusch-Pagan test (BP = 2.81, $p = .58$). Lastly, the Shapiro-Wilk test was statistically insignificant, indicating a normal distribution of the sample (W = .99, $p = .494$).

Figure 2

Component Residual Plot to Test Linearity of Data

Note. The blue line represents the component line, showing the linear relationship between the independent and dependent variables with the fitted values. The pink line represents the residual line.

Then, correlational analysis was conducted, to investigate the relationships between the variables. Afterwards, linear regression analysis assessed the strength between the three independent variables and the dependent variable Willingness for Organisational Change. This approach enabled the investigation of the separate importance of each independent variable by statistically eliminating the effect of the other independent variables.

To investigate the role of Self-Efficacy in the relationship between Meaning in Life and Willingness for Organisational Change a mediation analysis was conducted. Therefore, the bootstrapping approach Hayes Process-Macro Model 4 was utilized, which estimates the indirect effect of Meaning in Life on Willingness for Organisational Change through Self-Efficacy as a mediator.

Lastly, the Hayes Process-Macro Model 59 was used for the moderated mediation analysis to assess the indirect effect at different age levels. The moderator was Age, while Self-Efficacy mediated the relationship between Meaning in Life and Willingness for Organisational Change.

Results

Descriptive Statistic

Statistical analysis was performed, with the independent variables Meaning in Life, divided into Search for and Presence of Meaning, Self-Efficacy and Age and the dependent variable Willingness for Organisational Change to answer the research questions. Firstly, the mean, measures of dispersion and correlations were computed (see Table 2).

Table 2

Means, Standard Variations, and Correlations Among variables for Total Sample (N=64)

	Mean (*SD*)	1	2	3	4	5
1. Presence of Meaning	5.82 (1.25)	1				
2. Search for Meaning	3.67 (1.71)	-.29*	1			
3. Self-Efficacy	3.17 (.37)	.29*	-.05	1		
4. Age	44 (11.79)	.23	-.28*	.008	1	
5. Willingness for Organisational Change	3.85 (.76)	.31*	-.26*	.39**	.14	1

Note. *p <.05, ** p<.01, ***p<.001.

Meaning in Life

To get detailed information for the first research question "Is there a relationship between the Search for/Presence of Meaning in Life and Self-Efficacy?", a linear regression analysis (ANOVA) between Self-Efficacy and Presence of Meaning was conducted due to a statistically significant correlation, $r(3) = .29$, $p = .02$ (see Table 3). The results outlined that employees with a more profound sense of purpose exhibit stronger beliefs in their capabilities, $F(1,62) = 5.57$, $p = .021$. The Presence of Meaning explained approximately 8.24% of the variance in Self-Efficacy.

Table 3

Regression Analysis: Presence of Meaning on Self-Efficacy

	Estimate	SE	95% CI		p
			LL	UL	
Intercept	2.668	.216	2.24	3.10	<.001
Presence of Meaning	.086	.036	.01	.16	.021

Note. $N = 64$. CI = confidence interval; *LL* = lower limit; *UL* = upper limit.

To answer the second research question "What is the relationship between the Search for/Presence of Meaning in Life and Willingness for Organisational Change?", a linear regression analysis (ANOVA) between Meaning in Life and Willingness for Organisational Change was conducted. Both components of Meaning in Life, Presence of Meaning, $F(1,62) = 6.50, p = .01,$ and Search for Meaning, $F(1,62) = 4.47, p = .03$, yielded a statistically significant result. Presence of Meaning explained approximately 9.5% of the variance in Willingness for Organisational Change, while Search of Meaning explained around 6.7% (see Table 4). These results demonstrated the benefits of having a profound sense of meaning in the context of organisational changes as employees who felt a strong purpose more willingly accepted the change. In contrast, employees who searched for meaning in their lives to a greater extent were less prone to engage in organisational change.

Table 4

Regression Analysis: Meaning in Life on Willingness for Organisational Change

	Estimate	SE	95% CI		p
			LL	UL	
Presence of Meaning					
Intercept	2.764	.434	1.89	3.63	<.001
Meaning Presence	0.186	.073	.04	.33	.013
Search of Meaning					
Intercept	4.27	.219	3.83	4.71	<.001
Meaning Search	-.115	.054	-.22	-.01	.038

Note. $N = 64$. CI = confidence interval; *LL* = lower limit; *UL* = upper limit.

Self-Efficacy

To investigate the relationship between Self-Efficacy and Willingness for Organisational Change and, hence answer the third research question "What is the relationship between Self-Efficacy and Willingness for Organisational Change?", a linear regression analysis (ANOVA) was conducted (see Table 5). The results indicated a statistically significant effect of Self-Efficacy on Willingness for Organisational Change. Self-Efficacy explained 14.88% of the variation in Willingness for Organisational Change, $F(1,62) = 10.84$, $p = .002$. This shows that employees' confidence in their capacity to successfully perform behaviours made them more accepting and willing towards the organisational change.

Table 5

Regression Analysis: Self-Efficacy on Willingness for Organisational Change

	Estimate	*SE*	95% CI		*p*
			LL	*UL*	
Intercept	1.38	.754	-.13	2.89	.072
Self-Efficacy	.778	.236	.31	1.25	.002

Note. N = 64. CI = confidence interval; *LL* = lower limit; *UL* = upper limit.

Mediation

To answer the fourth research question "Does Self-Efficacy mediate the relationship between the Search for/Presence of Meaning in Life and Willingness for Organisational Change?", the bootstrapping method Hayes Process-Macro Model 4 was used. The mediation was tested for the two evident relationships between the Search for Meaning, $b = -.12$, $p = .038$, and the Presence of Meaning, $b = .19$, $p = .013$, and the outcome variable Willingness for Organisational Change.

The results of the analysis for the mediating effect of Self-Efficacy on the relationship between Search for Meaning and Willingness for Organisational Change showed a statistically significant effect of Self-Efficacy on Willingness for Organisational Change, $b = .75$, $p = .002$. When including Self-Efficacy in the relationship between the Search for Meaning and Willingness for Organisational Change the effect of the Search for Meaning maintained statistically significant, $b = -.11$, $p = .038$. The limits of the bootstrapped 95% confidence interval included a zero, 95% CI [-.05, .03], indicating that there is no statistically significant mediation effect of Self-Efficacy (see Table 6). These results indicated that regardless of the

beliefs in abilities to successfully perform behaviours, employees who were extensively searching for Meaning in Life were less likely to engage in change at the workplace.

Table 6

Mediation Effect of Self-Efficacy on Search for Meaning and Willingness for Organisational Change

Predictor	Estimate	*SE*	95% CI		*p*
			LL	*UL*	
Influence of SM on SE					
Intercept	3.21	.11	2.98	3.43	<.001
Search for Meaning	-.01	.03	-.07	.04	.712
Influence of SE on WfOC					
Intercept	1.85	.77	.31	3.38	.019
Self-Efficacy	.75	.23	.29	1.22	.002
Direct Effect					
Search for Meaning	-.11	.05	-.21	-.01	.038
Indirect Effect					
Self-Efficacy	-.01	.02	-.05	.03	--

Note. SE = Standard Errors, CI = Bootstrapped confidence interval; *LL* = lower limit; *UL* = upper limit, SM = Search for Meaning, SE = Self-Efficacy, WfOC = Willingness for Organisational Change.

Next, mediation analysis for the relationship between the Presence of Meaning and Willingness for Organisational Change was conducted. Self-Efficacy had a significant effect on Willingness for Organisational Change, *b* = .65, *p* = .009. When including Self-Efficacy in the relationship between the Presence of Meaning and Willingness for Organisational Change the effect of the Presence of Meaning was not statistically significant, *b* = .13, *p* = .08, demonstrating no direct effect. The limits of the bootstrapped 95% confidence interval did not include a zero, 95% CI [.03, .13], demonstrating a statistically significant indirect effect. Thus, there could be a potential mediating effect of Self-Efficacy between the relationship between the Presence of Meaning and Willingness for Organisational Change (see Table 7). To further understand this mediation, a Sobel test was conducted, which was not statistically significant, *z* = -.57, *p* = .57. Conclusively, there was no statistically significant mediation of Self-Efficacy

on the relationship between the Presence of Meaning and Willingness for Organisational Change. This means that regardless of employees' confidence level in their ability to engage in behaviours, a strong sense of meaning in their lives increased their tendency to accept the change.

Table 7

Mediation Effect of Self-Efficacy on Presence of Meaning and Willingness for Organisational Change

Predictor	Estimate	*SE*	95% CI		*p*
			LL	*UL*	
Influence of PM on SE					
Intercept	2.67	.22	2.24	3.10	<.001
Presence of Meaning	.09	.04	.01	.16	.021
Influence of SE on WfOC					
Intercept	1.02	.77	-.52	2.56	.189
Self-Efficacy	.65	.24	.17	1.14	.009
Direct Effect					
Presence of Meaning	.13	.07	-.01	.27	.08
Indirect Effect					
Self-Efficacy	.06	.03	.01	.13	--

Note. SE = Standard Errors, CI = Bootstrapped confidence interval; *LL* = lower limit; *UL* = upper limit, PM = Presence of Meaning, SE = Self-Efficacy, WfOC = Willingness for Organisational Change.

Age and Moderation

Based on the simple linear regression (ANOVA) results, there was no statistically significant relationship between Age and Willingness for Organisational Change (see Table 8). Age explained 1.89% of the variance in the dependent variable, $F(1,62) = 1.19$, $p = .28$. Hence, employees' age did not impact the likelihood of accepting the change at the workplace.

Table 8

Regression Analysis: Age on Willingness for Organisational Change

	Estimate	*SE*	95% CI		*p*
			LL	*UL*	
Intercept	3.46	.37	2.72	4.19	<.001
Age	.009	.008	-.01	.02	.28

Note. N = 64. CI = confidence interval; *LL* = lower limit; *UL* = upper limit.

To answer the last research question "Does Age influence the relationships between the Search for/Presence of Meaning in Life, Self-Efficacy and Willingness for Organisational Change?", the Bootstrapping method Hayes Process-Macro Model 59 was used. The moderated mediation was tested upon the Search for Meaning and the Presence of Meaning.

Firstly, the interaction between Age and Search for Meaning, b = .00, *SE* = .01, t= .28, p= .28, or Self-Efficacy, b = .03, *SE* = .02, t= 1.43, p= .158, on Willingness for Organisational Change were both statistically insignificant. The effect of Search for Meaning on the beliefs in personal capabilities did not vary among ages, b = -.00, *SE* = .00, t= -.10, p= .31. The overall moderated mediation was statistically insignificant with all bootstrapped 95% confidence intervals including a zero (see Table 9). Therefore, the indirect effect of the Search for Meaning on Willingness for Organisational Change through Self-Efficacy did not vary among ages. This means that regardless of the employee's age, searching for Meaning in Life made employees feel less accepting of organisational change. Similarly, employees' belief in their abilities to successfully engage in behaviours made them more accepting of the change, regardless of their age.

Table 9

Moderated Mediation: Age, Search for Meaning, Willingness for Organisational Change

Predictor Variables	B	SE	t	p	R^2
DV: Self-Efficacy					.02
Search for Meaning	-.01	.03	-.34	.736	
Age	-.00	.00	-.18	.859	
Search for Meaning x Age	-.00	.00	-1.02	.310	
DV: Willingness for Organisational Change					.24**
Search for Meaning	-.09	.05	-1.74	.071	
Self-Efficacy	.76	.23	3.27	.002	
Age	.00	.01	.50	.552	
Search for Meaning x Age	.00	.01	.28	.782	
Self-Efficacy x Age	.03	.02	1.43	.158	

Conditional Indirect Effects at Different Levels of Age	Bootstrapped Indirect Effect	Boot SE	LL 95% CI	UL 95% CI
- 1 *SD*	.01	.02	-.03	.07
M	-.01	.02	-.05	.04
+ 1 *SD*	-.05	.05	-.15	.03

Note. SE = Standard Errors, CI = confidence interval; *LL* = lower limit; *UL* = upper limit, Bootstrap sample size = 1000, p<.01 **.

    Next, the independent variable Presence of Meaning was used in the model. Firstly, age did not moderate the effect of the Presence of Meaning, *b* = .00, *SE* = .01, *t*= 2.90, *p*= .773, or Self-Efficacy on Willingness for Organisational Change, *b* = .02, *SE* = .02, *t*= .98, *p*= .328. However, the interaction between the Presence of Meaning and Age explained approximately 8.5% of the variance in Self-Efficacy, hence age statistically significantly moderated the effect of the Presence of Meaning on Self-Efficacy, *b* = .01, *SE* = .00, *t*= 2.48, *p*= .016. Lastly, the conditional indirect effects were tested upon three different levels of Age, which yielded a statistically significant moderated mediation (see Table 10). This shows that the impact of having a profound Meaning in Life on beliefs in their competence varied depending on employees' age. Moreover, employees aged 44 or above showed that having a heightened sense

of Meaning in Life increased personal beliefs in abilities and competencies, which subsequently increased the likelihood of engaging in organisational change.

Table 10

Moderated Mediation: Age, Presence of Meaning, Willingness for Organisational Change
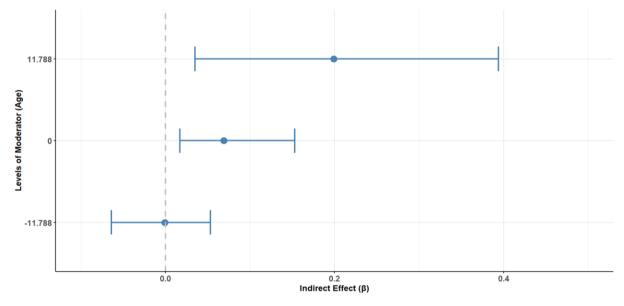
Predictor Variables	*B*	*SE*	*t*	*p*	R^2
DV: Self-Efficacy					.17**
Presence of Meaning	.10	.05	2.87	.006	
Age	-.00	.04	-.77	.443	
Presence of Meaning x Age	.01	.00	2.48	.016	
DV: Willingness for Organisational Change					.47**
Presence of Meaning	.11	.08	1.29	.199	
Self-Efficacy	.65	.26	2.49	.016	
Age	.01	.01	.63	.53	
Presence of Meaning x Age	.00	.01	.29	.773	
Self-Efficacy x Age	.02	.02	.98	.328	

Conditional Indirect Effects at Different Levels of Age	Bootstrapped Indirect Effect	Boot *SE*	*LL* 95% CI	*UL* 95% CI
- 1 *SD*	-.00	.10	-.06	.05
M	.07	.04	.02	.15
+ 1 *SD*	.19	.09	.03	.39

Note. SE = Standard Errors, CI = confidence interval; *LL* = lower limit; *UL* = upper limit, Bootstrap sample size = 1000, p<.01 **.

To clarify the results, Figure 3 illustrates the conditional indirect effect of having a sense of purpose on the willingness to support the organisational change through beliefs in personal abilities, which is moderated by Age.

Figure 3

Conditional Indirect Effect of Presence of Meaning on Willingness for Organisational Change Through Self-Efficacy at Different Age Levels
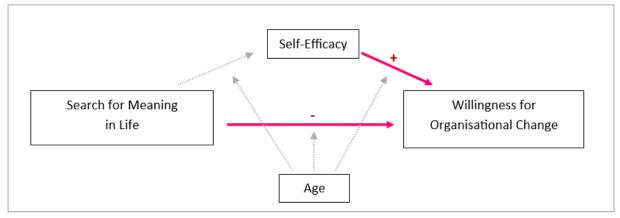

Note. The figure demonstrates the indirect effect of the Presence of Meaning on the Willingness for Organisational Change through Self-Efficacy. The Y-Axis represents three different levels of Age. 0 indicates the mean age (44), +/- 11.788 represents a change in one standard deviation. The dots indicate the indirect effect, while the error bars depict the bootstrapped 95% confidence interval.

Discussion

Despite change being an important ingredient for an organisation to survive, many change initiations seem to fail, which makes it of utmost importance to understand the underlying determinants for successful organisational change. Since employees' mental templates, next to workplace factors, are crucial influencing determinants of organisational changes this study investigated a few that have yet to be analysed in detail. More specifically, the relationships between employees' beliefs in their ability to cope with challenges (Self-Efficacy), their sense of and search for Meaning in Life, Age and their willingness to engage and accept organisational change were investigated. Overall, the model including the Presence of Meaning in Life proves to be most significant compared to the model with the Search for Meaning. Both components of Meaning in Life also exhibit different impacts on the willingness to engage in organisational change (see Figures 4 and 5). The findings and implications will be discussed in detail in the following.
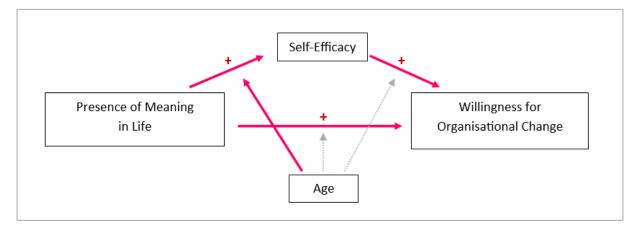
Figure 4

Significant Pathways in the Moderated Mediation with Search for Meaning as an Independent Variable

Note. grey = no statistically significant relationship, coloured = statistically significant relationship, + = positive relationship, - = negative relationship

Figure 5

Significant Pathways in the Moderated Mediation with Presence of Meaning as an Independent Variable

Note. grey = no statistically significant relationship, coloured = statistically significant relationship, + = positive relationship, - = negative relationship

Relationship between Meaning in Life and Self-Efficacy

The results of this study for the first research question "Is there a relationship between the Search for/Presence of Meaning in Life and Self-Efficacy?" show that employees with a strong purpose in and comprehension of their lives exhibit greater confidence to perform behaviours successfully. Similarly, previous studies by Steger et al. (2008) found higher

perceived environmental mastery in people with a profound sense of meaning, indicating that people feel more in control when experiencing a meaningful life. This potentially signifies why beliefs in personal abilities are enriched through a strong sense of meaning. Furthermore, according to Czyżowska and Gurba (2021), a strong perceived meaning reinforces confidence in abilities while a weaker sense of purpose inhibits confidence in abilities. Therefore, with these previous findings and the results of the present study, it can be speculated that the purpose and comprehension of life boost employees' beliefs in their ability to successfully perform behaviours and achieve intended outcomes.

In contrast, the process itself of searching for meaning is less influential on confidence in personal capabilities. Similar findings were made by Czyżowska and Gurba (2021), yet no scientific explanation was presented. Despite significant support for the Presence-to-Search Model within literature which posits that searching for meaning is sparked by the absence of Meaning in Life, different motivational factors can be suggested, which leads to changing correlations between searching for meaning and other variables (Steger et al., 2008). This could potentially explain why searching for a purpose does not affect the belief in personal abilities. To better understand the reason for this insignificant relationship more research needs to be conducted, with consideration for motivational factors.

Relationship between Meaning in Life and Willingness for Organisational Change

Regarding the second research question "What is the relationship between the Search for/Presence of Meaning in Life and Willingness for Organisational Change?", this study demonstrates that employees with a strong sense of meaning are more inclined to embrace organisational change. As mentioned before, Steger et al. (2008) outlined that people who possess a profound Meaning in Life feel more control over their environment. Speculative, this could lead to feeling powerful in the face of an organisational change, which reduces anxiety and enhances the willingness to embrace the change (Kegan and Lahey, 2009, p.87). It is advisable to measure employees' anxiety levels towards organisational change in future studies to understand a more nuanced influence of the Presence of Meaning in organisational contexts. Moreover, having Meaning in Life also leads to perceiving oneself as fitting with the world and experiencing positive relationships (Steger et al., 2008). Translated to an organisational realm, it might be that employees have a greater sense of purpose as they feel more aligned with the organisation and colleagues, which could foster security and result in a greater acceptance of organisational change. Taking together the findings of this study and previous research it is speculated that having a profound Meaning in Life is a powerful resource when facing changes in an organisational context, which various further factors could influence.

Furthermore, this study identifies a negative relationship between the Search for Meaning and the Presence of Meaning. This indicates that employees who possess a great sense of meaning in their lives show less initiative in searching for meaning, congruent with the Presence-to-Search Model supported by Steger et al. (2008). Employees with a greater incentive to search for meaning are similarly less prepared to engage in organisational change. This contrasts the findings of a positive influence on the Search for Meaning within situations on acceptance towards organisational change by van den Heuvel et al. (2009). Hence it might be argued that searching for meaning within the specific change is a powerful facilitator for acceptance while the Search for Meaning in Life negatively affects the disposition towards organisational change. To comprehend these contrasting results, it is important to understand the conceptualisation of the two constructs.

While Meaning in Life encompasses overarching goals and a broader purpose, Situational Meaning involves interpretations and assigning meaning to specific situations, usually distressing, making it appear more relevant in this context (Park, 2010). Hence, employees likely assign meaning to the organisational change as they perceive it as distressing. Additionally, people evaluate possible discrepancies between their search for Situational Meaning and Meaning in Life (Park, 2010). Extreme discrepancies result in more distress and subsequently could foster reluctance toward change through anxiety (Park, 2010; Kegan and Lahey, 2009, p.87).

Thus, it can be speculated that the search for meaning within the organisational change in the study by van den Heuvel et al. (2009) resulted in less discrepancy with their search for Meaning in Life, highlighting the interconnectedness between Situational Meaning and Meaning in Life. In contrast, the present study focused solely on searching for Meaning in Life which is associated with pessimistic thinking about the past and present, feeling helpless in a current situation, and having little control over the environment (Steger et al., 2008). Having negative thoughts about the change itself can activate employees' immune systems of change, which motivates them to protect themselves and thus avoid engaging in the change (Kegan and Lahey, 2009, pp.62-73). In addition, feeling helpless and losing control over the environment can lead to a feeling of powerlessness in the ongoing organisational change, resulting in a reluctance to embrace the change. Findings by Kegan and Lahey (2009, p.87) are supporting, stressing that a feeling of defencelessness in the change causes anxiety, fostering reluctance. Therefore, the negative consequences of searching for a purpose according to the literature explain why employees are less motivated to support organisational change.

Furthermore, Hadden and Smith (2017) stressed that Meaning in Life emerges on an everyday basis through assigning meaning to daily situations, highlighting the volatile nature of Meaning in Life. Accordingly, it can be claimed that Situational Meaning and Meaning in Life are not as distinctive and independent as initially thought. Arguably, solely measuring Meaning in Life might overlook the comprehensive nature of meaning. It is advisable to apply a dual approach of measuring both, Meaning in Life and Situational Meaning, which enables the identification of the level of meaning that employees assign to the organisational change, while also understanding the influence of Meaning in Life.

Relationship between Self-Efficacy and Willingness for Organisational Change

Regarding the third research question "What is the relationship between Self-Efficacy and Willingness for Organisational Change?", the results reveal that employees with more profound beliefs in their capabilities are more willing towards organisational change, consistent with previous findings by van den Heuvel et al. (2009). Bandura (1977) highlighted the significant role of Self-Efficacy in the execution of behaviours especially in challenging situations. In addition, employees with stronger confidence in their abilities likely feel less defenceless and anxious about the prospective change (Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995; Shah et al., 2017), increasing their willingness to embrace the change. Moreover, as the scale to evaluate Willingness for Organisational Change (OTOCS) consists of measuring the willingness and attitude toward the change (Miller et al., 1994) it can be argued that employees experience a more positive attitude when believing in their capacities to engage in the change. This is consistent with findings by Nwanzu and Babalola (2019), that Self-Efficacy fosters a positive attitude of employees toward organisational change. Based on these findings, employees with stronger beliefs in their abilities to perform behaviours successfully, exhibit positive attitudes and experience less anxiety and vulnerability. This subsequently encourages their support for organisational change.

Mediation of Self-Efficacy on the Relationship Between Meaning in Life and Willingness for Organisational Change

Results for the fourth research question "Does Self-Efficacy mediate the relationship between the Search for/Presence of Meaning in Life and Willingness for Organisational Change?" support that employees with a strong sense of meaning in their lives are more willing to engage in organisational change regardless of the strengths of beliefs in their abilities to act effectively. This however changes, when age is considered in the equation, which will be elaborated upon in the next section. Similarly, employees searching for meaning are more reluctant towards the change regardless of their confidence in their abilities. The non-evident

influence of beliefs in personal abilities on the relationship between the Search for/ Presence of Meaning and willingness towards change might be explained through workplace elements not addressed in this study (Shah et al., 2017).

Remarkably, organisational change involves a more comprehensive set of factors which might dilute the mediating effect of Self-Efficacy. One of those factors could be Perceived Organisational Support. According to the Organisational Support Theory, employees "develop a general perception concerning the extent to which the organisation values their contributions and cares about their well-being" (Kurtessis et al., 2015), referred to as Perceived Organisational Support. A high Perceived Organisational Support has been found to increase emotional commitment to the organisation, job satisfaction and organisational identification (Edwards & Peccei, 2010). Hence, it is likely that Perceived Organisational Support has a dominant role in organisational behaviour and changes as it serves a sense of security. This sense of security might reduce anxiety, which is also one operating component of Self-Efficacy during organisational change. It can be argued that Perceived Organisational Support is, henceforth, more powerful in reducing anxiety compared to Self-Efficacy. While beliefs in personal abilities positively influence the acceptance of organisational change, its mediating role between the Search for / Presence of Meaning and Willingness for Organisational Change could possibly be diminished by Perceived Organisational Support's more direct and practical dominant influence. Nevertheless, this potential interplay warrants future research.

Impact of Age on the relationships between Meaning in Life, Self-Efficacy and Willingness for Organisational Change

Regarding the last research question "Does Age influence the relationships between the Search for/Presence of Meaning in Life, Self-Efficacy and Willingness for Organisational Change?", it was expected that age has a moderating role on the relationship between the two independent variables Meaning in Life and Self-Efficacy and their relationship with the outcome variable Willingness for Organisational Change. Firstly, Willingness for Organisational Change is not influenced by the age of employees. Explanations for this offered findings by Rhodes (1983), who outlined the important influence of environmental factors on age-related differences, including work supervision or reward structure. While older employees tend to exhibit a higher commitment to their organisation than younger employees, these findings cannot be universalised as it does not apply to all organisations (Rhodes, 1983). Therefore, occupational variations exist in the influence of age and commitment. Consequently, the potential impact of age on Willingness for Organisational Change might have been

mitigated by work factors and the limited variation of organisations within this study (Rhodes, 1983).

Interestingly, when accounting for age, a moderated mediation is found in the model between the Presence of Meaning, Willingness for Organisational Change and Self-Efficacy as a mediator. Notably, the indirect effect of experiencing a profound Meaning in Life on the willingness to embrace the organisational change through strong beliefs to successfully perform behaviours is only apparent in people with age equal to or above the mean age of the sample. This could be explained by the findings of Kegan and Lahey (2009, pp.34-40) who demonstrated that the underlying mental structure becomes more complex with age, accounting for qualitative advances in cognitive processes. These more sophisticated processes likely foster the relationship between experiencing Meaning in Life and believing in personal abilities to cope with challenges which subsequently positively influences their willingness to embrace changes in organisational contexts.

Additionally, employees with an above-mean age exhibit a more profound relationship between their sense of meaning and confidence in their abilities. Based on previous research, meaning-making is the basis for developing personal resources, including beliefs in individual abilities and capacities, which is an evolutionary process (Kegan, 1982, pp.69-71). Findings often accentuated, that older individuals exhibit a stronger sense of meaning, compared to younger individuals who are more likely to search for meaning in their lives (Steger et al., 2009). Thus, experiences and reflections of ageing employees likely result in a deeper integration of personal beliefs, boosting the influence of meaning on confidence in personal abilities. Next to that, a notable observation from the sample shows a narrowed distribution of age with the most frequent ages of 40 and 46. According to an analytic company in Germany, there is no distinct cohort with unique characteristics between the ages 40 and 46 (Statistisches Bundesamt, 2024). Such age homogeneity might have contributed to the initial failure of finding a mediating effect of Self-Efficacy on the relationship between the Presence of Meaning and Willingness for Organisational Change. Additionally, it could explain why the moderating effect of age was only found for employees aged at or above the mean, which requires further research.

Conversely, the direct relationship between strong beliefs in personal capabilities and a higher Willingness for Organisational Change is not subjected to employees' age. This highlights the strong influence of beliefs in personal abilities in unfamiliar situations regardless of age (Bandura, 1977).

Lastly, the results reveal that younger aged employees demonstrate a more extensive search for purpose, which is consistent with findings by Steger et al. (2009) that younger individuals emerge in their social roles, identities and careers leading to a higher search for meaning in their lives. He further pointed out that an extensive search for meaning leads to lower well-being among all ages, suggesting the relatively low influence of age in this relationship. Similarly, within the study at hand, employees who search for meaning to a greater extent are less likely to embrace the organisational change regardless of age. It can therefore be speculated that searching for meaning possesses an inherent nature which seemingly influences other variables independent of age. This speculation should be further investigated to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the powerful nature of the Search for Meaning in life.

Limitations

Within this study, a few limitations and shortcomings must be considered and should be accounted for in future research. One Limitation of the study is its generalisability, due to a limited variability in the organisations. The two main professional fields participants worked in were hotels and a school, resulting in the experience of similar work environments and occupations. This could lead to a bias in the results (Rhodes, 1983), which makes it difficult to generalise the findings to the entire population of employees. It is therefore highly suggested to conduct further research about the variables of interest among different organisations. Furthermore, as often recognised in social sciences, this study focuses on a Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich and Democratic (WEIRD) society, presenting a lack of diversity in the sample. Thus, the generalisability is limited as the WEIRD populations often reflect different phenomena compared to other cultures (Pollet et al., 2024). Follow-up research should investigate the effect of Meaning in Life, Self-Efficacy, and Age on Willingness for Organisational Change in a more diverse cultural setting.

A further limitation and thereof resulting recommendation for future research is the exclusion of workplace factors that represent important influences during organisational changes. While solely focusing on personal resources, the comprehensive nature of change in organisational settings is not fully acknowledged, leading to an incomplete picture of factors that influence Willingness for Organisational Change (Shah et al., 2017). One such factor as mentioned before, is Perceived Organisational Support, while others might include communication or the organisational culture. These workplace factors are likely to directly impact employees' behaviours and attitudes and confound the effect of personal resources (Shah et al., 2017). Future research should incorporate workplace factors to gain a more holistic understanding of influencing components during changes in organisational settings.

Another limitation of this study is the exclusive reliance on the quantitative research method. Despite its advantage of investigating a larger sample size and possibly having the power to generalise the results, it fails to capture the more nuanced experiences of participants and contextual factors that influence their attitudes (Taherdoost, 2022). Applying qualitative methods to understand the influence of Meaning in Life and Self-Efficacy on Willingness for Organisational Change would have provided a more detailed understanding of participants' feelings regarding the organisational change. This, for example, could have revealed, whether participants relied on their beliefs in personal abilities or other factors that shaped their response to the change. Consequently, the absence of qualitative data limited the insight into the interplay between the variables, potentially missing the complexity of the relationships and dynamics of employees' experiences (Taherdoost, 2022). Ultimately, since quantitative and qualitative data both represent benefits, the application of a mixed-method design is suggested for future research.

Suggestions for Future Research

Based on the findings of this study the complex influence of Meaning in Life on employees' willingness to engage in organisational change becomes apparent. Opposing the hypothesis that searching for meaning increases employee's willingness to engage in organisational change, it reduces their willingness. Since the expectations were based on the findings by van den Heuvel et al. (2009) who identified a positive effect of Searching for Meaning within situations on the acceptance of change further literature review was conducted. According to Park (2010), people assign meaning to situations they are experiencing and fit it against their overall Meaning in Life. If a discrepancy results from this, people experience more distress in the situation. This might indicate that employees' search for Meaning in Life is influenced by the assignment of Situational Meaning which accounts for the fluctuating nature of Meaning in Life as argued by Hadden and Smith (2017). Hence, future research should investigate the relationship between the search for Meaning in Life and assigning Situational Meaning in the realm of organisational change since this dual approach might lead to important insights into Meaning and how it can be utilised in an organisational context.

Additionally, the findings on the relationship between the Search for Meaning and Self-Efficacy left some open questions which pave the way for future research. As consistent with (Czyżowska and Gurba, 2021) search for meaning shows no influencing effect on confidence in personal capabilities to deal with challenges. However, there is still a lack of explanation for these findings. Based on other literature, it would be more understandable if the Search for Meaning might reduce Self-Efficacy due a heightened pessimistic thinking, feelings of

helplessness or reduced environmental mastery (Steger et al., 2008). Steger et al. (2008) further suggested that the motivators driving people to search for Meaning in Life might play a significant impact on the influence that this search exerts on other variables, with the notation that more research needs to be conducted. Taking the present findings and findings by Czyżowska and Gurba (2021), it becomes even more apparent how important it is to understand the driving factors of meaning and its influencing capacities on, for instance, Self-Efficacy. Future research should delve into the determinants that drive employees to search for Meaning in Life, and how this could impact the relationship between the Search for Meaning and beliefs in the capacity to successfully perform behaviours.

Lastly, follow-up research based on this study should focus on the unique findings of the mediating effect of Self-Efficacy between a profound purpose and inclination to support organisational change. Especially, the interesting evidence that the mediation effect is only present in employees aged at or above the mean age of this sample paves the way for in-depth investigation. Consequently, future research should focus on the underlying cognitive mechanism that determines the integration of beliefs in personal abilities due to a profound Meaning in Life, which furthermore sparks motivation to engage in organisational change. This could enhance understanding of how the relationship between Meaning in Life and confidence to successfully execute behaviours evolves. Additionally, research should test whether these findings apply to different cohorts to prove that such an effect can be generalised to various employees.

Scientific and Practical Implications

This study contributes to a growing body of evidence about employees' mental templates as important determinants of organisational change implementations. One of the most crucial resources identified is employees' belief in their abilities to successfully perform behaviours. The findings indicate that strong beliefs in personal competencies lead to an amplified willingness to engage in organisational change. While these findings are supported by previous work of van den Heuvel et al. (2009), new insights on confidence in abilities as a mediator between possessing a sense of purpose in life and supporting the organisational change are introduced. Specifically, for older employees, believing in personal abilities links the sense of meaning to employees' willingness to engage in the change. This aligns with findings by Kegan and Lahey (2009, pp.34-40) who showed increased complexity of cognitive processes in older people, which fosters a more sophisticated integration of resources and beliefs. Hence, this study advances the scientific comprehension of Self-Efficacy in the context of

organisational change, while highlighting its mediating effect between having a sense of meaning and supporting organisational change in older employees.

On top of that, the findings of this study facilitate the understanding of the complex and nuanced influence of Meaning in Life during organisational changes, while dividing it as having a sense of meaning and searching for meaning (Steger et al., 2009). The results support the Presence-to-Search Model, positing that people with a strong sense of meaning are less inclined to search for meaning and vice versa. Most importantly, both components show different influences on employees' willingness to embrace the organisational change, a novel finding in this field. While a profound sense of Meaning in Life enhances the Willingness for Organisational Change, searching for meaning hinders the acceptance of change, which contrasts with findings by van den Heuvel et al. (2009), who outlined a positive influence of creating Situational Meaning. This prompted further investigation into the distinction between Meaning in Life and Situational Meaning, revealing a potential interplay of both components during organisational change. It can be speculated that employees' assignment of meaning to the organisational change is influenced by the search for Meaning in Life. A greater discrepancy leads to increased distress which might reduce the willingness to engage in organisational change. Thus, this study suggests a connection between Situational Meaning and Meaning in Life during organisational changes which paves the way for further investigations.

Lastly, this study starts to fill the gap in the research between Meaning in Life and personal beliefs in abilities to behave effectively. The results reveal once again a significant difference between possessing a sense of meaning and searching for meaning. Possessing a strong sense of meaning reinforces confidence in personal abilities. In contrast, searching for meaning does not influence the beliefs in personal abilities, which supports previous findings and stresses the importance of further investigation into this relationship. Markedly, the relationship between a strong purpose and beliefs in competencies is stronger in employees aged at least 44 and above. This highlights a unique finding contributing to an extended knowledge of the benefits of age-related cognitive advances due to better integration of personal beliefs and meaning.

Based on the novel scientific implications, some practical suggestions for organisations arise. Firstly, employers should foster employees' belief in their capabilities and competencies at work when implementing an organisational change. Furthermore, employees who possess a heightened sense of meaning in their lives experience greater levels of Self-Efficacy as well as Willingness for Organisational Change. It is therefore advisable to foster a sense of meaning in employees' lives to boost their beliefs in their abilities and willingness for change. This could

be done, for example, by facilitating connections between employees as this could lead to a feeling of belongingness (Steger et al., 2008). Additionally, the relationship between a strong sense of purpose and beliefs in effective abilities becomes stronger with increasing age, which subsequently also links employees' sense of meaning to their willingness to engage in the change. Therefore, an emphasis on older employees to promote a sense of meaning could be most beneficial. Ultimately, despite the importance of focusing on work factors and the strategic component of the change, it is likewise important to consider different personal resources of employees and encourage those to ensure a successful implementation of the organisational change.

Overall, this study provides novel findings on the complex connection between the individual level and organisational change. Through the elucidation of the impact of Meaning in Life and the personal resource to belief in abilities, the study offers valuable scientific implications, which can be translated into practice for managers who want to optimise organisational change processes. Next, this study prompts future research to refine theories within change management and expand the unique connection between the organisational and individual levels.

Conclusion

As more than half of the initiated change implementation within organisational settings, despite several strategic guides, are deemed to fail, it is crucial to determine the underlying individual factors that can positively impact the acceptance of change. This study started to fill the literature gap about Meaning in Life and Self-Efficacy as influencing factors during organisational change. Markedly, Meaning in Life demonstrates a nuanced relationship within its subcomponents, providing an important and novel finding to science. A profound sense of Meaning in Life is beneficial for beliefs in personal abilities to achieve intended outcomes and facilitates embracing organisational change as an employee. Contrastingly, the search for Meaning in Life causes employees to be more reluctant toward organisational change although searching for meaning within specific change situations proved beneficial. Therefore, this study also highlights a distinction as well as an interconnectedness between searching for meaning within a specific organisational change and searching for Meaning in Life.

Additionally, believing in personal abilities to deal with challenges is important when facing organisational changes. Interestingly, these beliefs influence the relationship between the Presence of Meaning and willingness to engage in the change for the average-aged and older employees within this sample. Thus, this study highlights a new valuable finding about age on personal resources and how this can influence organisational behaviours and attitudes regarding

organisational change. More specifically, it demonstrates that age-related cognitive advances can intensify the link between experiencing a purpose in life and believing in abilities to achieve intended outcomes, ultimately facilitating acceptance and engagement in organisational change.

Finally, this study encourages the emphasis on individual factors of employees during organisational change for a successful implementation which ensures the preservation of a competitive advantage. Focusing on employees' sense of purpose and beliefs in their abilities to effectively execute behaviours potentially counteracts employees' immune systems of change and encourages them to take the next step towards improved organisational processes and performance.

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AI Statement

During the preparation of this work, I used the automatic spelling and grammar check in Word and Grammarly to ensure a correct English language. I also used the citation tool Scribbr, to facilitate the creation of my references and in-text citation. Furthermore, I used ChatGPT to get assistance during my statistical analysis in R and occasionally some inspiration on how to logically articulate my ideas, thereby, I never used copy and paste.

After using these tools / Services, I thoroughly reviewed and edited the content as needed, taking full responsibility for the final outcome.

X _____
Julia Scha