

Career Experiences of Non-Profit Organization (NPO) Employees: An Exploration
Research of NPO Employees' Work Meaningfulness and Work-life Balance.

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Abstract

Career Experiences of Non-Profit Organization (NPO) Employees: An Exploration Research of NPO Employees' Work Meaningfulness and Work-life Balance.

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With the recent challenges societies have had to face, including natural disasters and wars, non-profit organizations and the aid they provide, by the means of a mixed workforce: both local and expatriates, have become even more prevalent. However, they are facing a “talent war” as they are struggling to retain and attract new employees. Mega events, including COVID-19, have shed additional light on certain elements related to one’s well-being, mainly one’s work-life balance and work-meaningfulness, making them more valuable to employees, thus important to organizations wanting to limit turnover rates. These working experiences are seemingly still lacking understanding across the non-profit industry due to scarce research on the topic. This micro-levelled qualitative study will further explore the working experiences of non-profit employees, locals and expatriates, across a variety of non-profit organizations. 21 participants were recruited across 5 countries and their interviews were thematically analysed. Findings show that non-profit employees have an overall good sense of work meaningfulness. Work-life balance was found satisfactory by interviewees’ self-perceptions but was objectively more conflicting. Expatriates were found to have an overwhelming greater sense of work-meaningfulness compared to locally employed workforce which was seemingly associated with greater work-family conflicts. This research contributes not only to the current non-profit literature but also to practitioners, by bringing additional insights into the working experiences held across the non-profit industry as well as those that employees enjoy experiencing. Future research should focus on further establishing quantitatively this research’s findings.

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Introduction

Given the current international context, with wars including the Ukraine-Russia conflict (ACLED, n.d. (1)), the Mali conflict (Nsaibia, 2023) as well as the Israel-Hamas conflict (ACLED, n.d. (2)), climate change which has recently caused humongous wildfires in Canada and several European countries but also unusual floodings and dryer/hotter summers and other recurrent global issues (i.e., poverty such as noticed in various African countries including South Sudan, Burundi, Madagascar and many others; but also common in other countries such as Nepal and Cambodia; Ventura, 2024), it appears that the aid from various organizations, such as Doctors Without Borders/Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders, 2022; 2023), as well as from Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), such as the United Nations (United Nations, n.d.(1); n.d.(2)) has become crucial. As a student on the edge of seeking employment, I started to wonder whether I would enjoy working for these types of organisations that seem to act for the greater good. Hence, I started to wonder what it would be like to work in such organisations, as well as more generally about the industry and its organizations.

Non-Profit Organizations (NPOs) represent important contributors to our society via their unique and specific goals usually steered towards nurturing a better, more equal, diverse and healthy world/society, commonly known as handling “grand societal challenges” (George et al., 2016). Grand societal challenges refer to great problems, often multi-dimensional as to involve several fields, affecting society. These challenges may affect a single or selected few countries (i.e., no access to water) as much as they can sometimes affect societies internationally (i.e., war). Thus, understanding NPOs’ way of functioning, their structure, as well as their implemented strategies, is of high importance because NPOs influence a wide range of beneficiaries in need around the world. On the other hand, it is assumed that only highly dedicated employees would allow such organizations to successfully attain their goals (Lazarova et al., 2021). In other words, only those with great motivation, whether intrinsic or extrinsic, would fit in and perform well in NPOs, allowing them to achieve their purpose of aiding societies across the globe.

In addition, job performance has been previously linked with job satisfaction (Jalagat, 2016; Brayfield & Crockett, 1955) which in turn has been associated with one’s career experiences. (Myrtle et al., 2011). Effectively, when employees have positive and benevolent career experiences, such as when they work alongside supportive colleagues and supervisors,

they appear to subsequently experience greater job satisfaction (Stater & Stater, 2019). In turn, this has been widely acknowledged and shown to be positively correlated to job performance (Gomes, 2000; Sarmiento et al., 2007; Pushpakumari, 2008; Al-Ahmadi, 2009; Dizgah et al., 2012; Okta et al., 2015) which ultimately benefit the organization (Pfeffer, 1998).

Similarly, it is also presumed that NPOs with different aims and focuses, in terms of how they are aiding societies across the world, would induce different working experiences for their respective employees. For instance, a UNICEF staff member, working towards improving children's situation from disadvantaged backgrounds, wouldn't experience the same working experiences as employees working for the American Psychology Association (APA), where they would be working towards expanding the awareness and implementation of psychology-related knowledge to aid society. However, to the best of my knowledge, scarcely any research has attempted to explore the career experiences of employees across various NPOs, whether large or small, which hold a different focus in terms of their aims for aiding the world, thus producing shedding light on the overall working experiences held in the non-profit industry. Instead, certain working experiences have been consistently assumed to be had within the non-profit sector across studies, in particular, that non-profit work is intrinsically meaningful (Kuhn et al., 2008; Dempsey & Sanders, 2010; Flores, 2014; Rodell, 2013; McAllum, 2014). The current literature does have a few exceptions such as McFadden's (2016) study outlining employees' work-life balance in different small non-profit organizations, as well as Robichau & Sandberg's (2022) and Sandberg & Robichau's (2022) studies finding non-profit organizations as environments where employees find meaningful work, or even Venter et al. (2019) who investigated the 'double-bind' in non-profit care organizations.

However, most studies in the current non-profit literature have so far focused more on individual organization's induced working experiences, and/or on individual factors (for an exception, see Ruder & Riforgiate, 2018) including work meaningfulness (Marchiori & Buzzanell, 2017) and work-life balance (Riforgiate & Kramer, 2021; Visser et al., 2016) within the studied organization. Consequently, there is a need for additional research exploring both of these working experiences together as well as across all types of non-organizations, regardless of their aims, area of operation (national vs international) or sizes. Moreover, research's attention has also been focused on exploring these associations in the context of more regular-typed employees, such as those working in for-profit organizations (Gaertner & Nollen, 1989; Kidd, 2008; Makarem & Wang, 2020). Ridder et al. (2012) notably called for additional research on non-profit organizations as they "are facing increasing demand to become more efficient and effective, especially given increasing financial cutbacks, the rising

demand of service and the push toward performance-related management” (p.607). Understanding NPO employees’ career experiences is thus vitally important not only to help current and future non-profit organizations understand their human capital, more specifically to understand how they may succeed in helping them (i.e., achieving their individual goals), but also to enable some growth potential for the organization, in terms of adapting their strategies, and to allow a greater understanding of what kind of career experiences are developed and nurtured in the non-profit industry. This thesis will address this need to further understand the industry, and organizations as well as its related and/or underlying mechanisms by exploring the working experiences held by both expatriates and non-expatriates employed in non-profit organizations.

Literature Review

The Non-Profit Industry: Non-Profit Organizations vs Non-Governmental Organizations

For clarity purposes, this study will outline their chosen definition and understanding of NPOs. There have been discrepancies in the definitions of the non-profit sector and as such its organizations. Simon (1987) based the definition on a legal point of view while the United Nations (1968) based it on a more financial/economical point of view and O'Neill (1989) based it on a more functional point of view. Salomon & Anheier (1992) concluded that the most appropriate and internationally adequate definition is more based on the organizations' operations and their core structure, rather than their revenue sources or their purposes. They defined the non-profit sector as an industry that regroups any organization which integrates 5 characteristics: (1) private (separate from the government); (2) formal (somewhat institutionalized); (3) non-profit distributing (are not giving generated profits to the directors/owners); (4) voluntary (has i.e., having the board of director's members volunteering for such positions); and (5) self-governing. Within such an industry, the typical understanding is that there are 2 main types of organizations: the Non-Profit Organizations and the Non-Governmental Organizations. NPOs refer to "an organization whose aim is to make money for a social or political purpose or to provide a service that people need, rather than to make a profit" (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.) or since 1896 to "not conducted or maintained for the purpose of making a profit" (Merriam-Webster, n.d.).

On the other hand, the NGO expression was initially used by the United Nations to refer to organizations that would be societal actors acting within the purview of the UN (Martens, 2002). However, today, this term has been democratized and refers more commonly to "A private international organization that acts as a mechanism for cooperation among private national groups in both municipal and international affairs, particularly in economic, social, cultural, humanitarian, and technical fields." (Gooch & Williams, 2014) or to "formal (professionalized) independent societal organizations whose primary aim is to promote common goals at the national or the international level" (Martens, 2002).

While there have been discrepancies in the definitions of the non-profit sector and as such its subsequent belonging organizations, this research bases its definition of the non-profit industry on Salomon & Anheier's (1992) as it seems to be the most adequate one. However, the only difference with their definition of the industry and its underlying organizations, is that

this study does not consider the industry to be private. Consequently, it includes both NGOs as much as NPOs, even if the latter ones have a connection with, or are under the authority of a government. As long as the profits generated are not reallocated to the government, they are here considered as belonging to the non-profit industry. Hence it includes various organizations, covering a wide range of services, with different legal statuses, aims, or forms such as charities, unions, non-governmental organizations, social enterprises and others (Salamon, 2015; Kendall, 2003).

In my thesis, NPOs are here defined as organizations that have a humanitarian or an aiding purpose, whether on a local, national, or international scale.

Non-Profit Employees in Non-Profit Organizations

Recent literature has shown that employees are drivers of an organization's success. In fact, since the early years of 2000, the value of a firm is at around 65% dependent on intangible yet critical assets, being people (Black, 2019; Kortmann et al., 2014; Pfeffer & Veiga, 1999). This implies that NPO's employees, knowing their organizations' mission, would be even more important to their organization. Nelson's study (2019) supports this implication by providing quantitative data revealing employees as being NPO's backbone. Thus, it is placing human capital, and their skillsets as a firm's primary asset (Thunnissen, 2016) which they need to cultivate, such as through strategic recruitment (Conference Board, 2018). Consequently, a new wave of micro-levelled research, focusing on employees emerged (Jones et al., 2019; Adamovic, 2018; Van Buren et al., 2011). This shows the emerging importance attributed to the understanding of employees, their characteristics, career experiences, as well as motivations showing the need for such research. Therefore, supporting the need for this research. Recently, an emphasis was also particularly made on employees' well-being (Casjens, 2022; Nielsen, 2022; Nguyen, 2023; Laine, 2013), which is strongly related to one's work-life balance (Hoffmann-Burdzińska & Rutkowska, 2015). While a scarce part of this recent wave of research focused on exploring NPO employees' well-being (Furtak & Barnard, 2021), additional research on this topic is necessary. In that regard, employees' demands in terms of their working environment and conditions have evolved (Jùrgensen et al., 1992). They are now asking for greater well-being benefits such as increased work-life balance (including retirement plans and paid family leaves) and don't seem to be willing to compromise on their new demands anymore (Kultalahti & Viitala, 2014). In addition, skilled employees who are the core actors in allowing organizations to achieve their success goals, a fact they are aware of, have become a unique and scarce resource leading to attraction and retention challenges (Jain and

Bhatt, 2015; Rodríguez-Sánchez et al., 2019). This potentially explains why many firms seem to be facing a war for talent in the current employment environment (Kwon & Jang, 2021). In other words, lately, organizations seem to be having a hard time retaining their employees which can therefore be tied back to the increased demands for and lack of well-being-related benefits, such as a good work-life balance and meaningful work.

Since employees are the core asset of organizations (Black, 2019; Kortmann et al., 2014; Pfeffer & Veiga, 1999), employers want and need to attempt to retain their employees by any means, including improving their career experiences to make their roles more attractive.

To do so, they must first understand their employees' career experiences to improve them. They should particularly focus on understanding their employee's work-life balance which employees increasingly demand (Kultalahti & Viitala, 2014), as well as their sense of work meaningfulness which positively mediates the relationship between task significance and job performance (Allan et al., 2018; Allan et al., 2014), the latter leading to effectiveness, which ultimately benefits the organization (Borman & Motowidlo, 1997). Work-life balance as well as one's sense of work meaningfulness respectively contribute to one's job satisfaction (Haar et al., 2014) and intrinsic motivation (Bailey et al., 2019), in turn leading to greater levels of talent retention (Miao et al., 2020), which ultimately helps to solve the talent retention challenge the general employment market, and especially the non-profit sector of it (Bhati & Manimala, 2011; Jones, 2015), is currently facing. Given that employees represent the core performance-related asset for organizations and presumably even more so for NPOs, understanding how to increase the likelihood of their employees remaining within the organization is crucial (Cruzado, 2004), even more so if they are not nurtured the same in each NPO. As such, looking back at the UNICEF vs APA example given above, the UNICEF staff member could be experiencing a greater sense of work meaningfulness than the APA employee. Likewise, the APA employee may have developed a greater work-life balance than their UNICEF peer. Hence, there is an increased need for organizations to better understand their employees' career experiences. Said need is further highlighted by the fact that the non-profit industry is competing with for-profit organizations offering greater compensation in terms of salaries (Quartz, 2019; Leete 2006).

Non-Profit Industry

Research in the non-profit industry has recently gotten more attention from researchers but is still relatively scarce so far. Existing research that has attempted to bring more insight

into the industry has often used macro-level analysis. In other words, they tend to compare the different organizational strategies used in non-profit and for-profit organizations (Moore, 2000; Goulet & Frank 2002), as well as strategic management in the non-profit industry (Kong, 2008). Nevertheless, while there starts to be some research at a micro-level focusing on employees, a general insight into the perceived career experiences from and of employees working in non-profit industries remains limited. Indeed, it was for instance determined that the work in NPOs demands greater time investment (in terms of the working hours) than is pre-determined by the role and that this overtime tends not to be compensated (Baines & Charlesworth et al., 2014; Almog-Bar & Livnat, 2019). Thus suggesting, that there seems to be some recurrent imbalance between NPO employee's work and family lives. Furthermore, recent events, namely the sanitary pandemic, raised additional awareness on, and increased the value of certain factors such as one's work-life balance (Vyas, 2022) and work meaningfulness (van Zoonen et al., 2022). Further research has supported this trend by showing that they held a great importance in one's sense of life satisfaction (Hinestroza et al., 2022) which in turn has been associated with lower rates of turnover intentions (Rafiq et al., 2022).

Work-Life Balance

Work-life balance is a concept that has been widely researched over the years mostly in the for-profit (Golden, 2013; Nordbäck et al., 2017; Wieland, 2011) but recently also in the non-profit sector (Ruder & Riforgiate, 2018; Dempsey & Sanders, 2010). In fact, it has been defined as how an individual can dedicate enough of their time, person, and resources to meet their job responsibilities as much as their responsibilities for their own personal time and/or toward their family (Johari et al., 2018). This thesis drew on Johari et al.'s (2018) definition to produce a new, more explanatory definition to facilitate the interviewee's understanding of the work-life balance concept. Hence, it was defined as "the harmonious interactions between one's work life and their personal life. As such, one would meet both personal and professional commitments by consciously managing their time between both aspects of their lives." (See Appendices, Appendix B).

The recent and continuous technological advancements our society is facing lead to a rapid escalation of work's rhythm which in turn also leads to work-family issues, particularly in terms of the boundary between these two facets of one's life (Golden, 2013; Blithe, 2015; Mikolajczyk, 2021). A perfect balance in itself is shown to be hard to achieve, mainly to be able to be satisfied with both the work and personal components of one's life while meeting both their work and personal needs (Wilton & Ross, 2017). As a result, it has become an

important issue in our society, and in turn, has gotten the attention of many researchers over the years. So far, work-life balance has been associated with well-being (Di Fabio, 2017; Hoffmann-Burdzińska & Rutkowska, 2015; Sirgy & Lee, 2018; Lyness & Judiesch, 2014; Ferguson et al., 2012), life satisfaction and job satisfaction (Kirby, 2017; Kossek & Ozeki, 1998; Haar et al., 2014; Saeed & Farooqi, 2014), organizational commitment (Mahmoud et al., 2021), organizational performance (Allen et al., 2000; Byrne, 2005; Johari et al., 2018), as well as mental health (Kluczyk, 2013). On the other hand, work-life conflicts were associated with alcoholism and depression (Frone et al., 2011), as well as being drained emotionally (Geurts & Sonnentag, 2006; Schaufeli et al., 2009). The conflict between an individual's personal and work life further affects the organization self in particular because it increases turnover and absenteeism (Greenhaus et al., 2001; Anderson et al., 2002), thus contributing to the aforementioned attraction and retaining issue non-profit organizations are facing. In the non-profit sector specifically, work-life balance was shown to be quite challenging due to the urgency of their work as well as the resulting long hours of labor and the sometimes dangerous working environment (Kosny & Eakin, 2008).

Nonetheless, work-life balance hasn't been studied in the non-profit industry across various organizations from different countries, with different aims as well as from different sizes. Additionally, it hasn't been thoroughly explored alongside one's work meaningfulness (for an exception, see Ruder & Riforgiate, 2018), while the latter could influence the former. Exploring these elements would aid in further discovering the working experiences particularly in terms of the work-family equation fostered in various organizations, thus perceiving whether from one organization to another there may be fundamental differences.

Work Meaningfulness

Moreover, another fundamental need that has been consistently established in the past is employee's need for meaning in their work (Martela, et al., 2021; Berthoin et al., 2018). Grant (2007, 2008) has recently established that employees' performance was linked to the significance of their tasks, which may be interpreted as the degree to which it aids their peers, society, and/or the world. Additional studies have consistently shown work involving tasks with a certain degree of significance to be particularly meaningful (Allan et al., 2014; Humphrey et al., 2007).

A distinction needs to be made between the terms "meaning" and "meaningfulness" which have been used to describe the term "work meaningfulness" (Marterla, 2010; Baumeister, 1991; Baumeister & Vohs, 2002). "Meaning" refers to a cognitive process through which

individuals attempt to consciously make meaning out of their lived experiences, while meaningfulness refers to the fact that individuals find a greater purpose and/or a greater hedonistic connotation somewhat intrinsically attached to their experiences. As such, work meaningfulness has been defined as “work experienced as particularly significant and holding more positive meaning for individuals” (Rosso et al., 2010, p.95). In this thesis, however, we kept a rather large definition of work meaningfulness in the prospect of the interviews with participants. Indeed, to make sure they would understand the concept, the definition was inspired by the above-mentioned one while being kept to a vague, yet understandable concept using the following definition: “In this study, we define work-meaningfulness as how significant one values their work, whether via their workload, their work-relationships, the impact their work has, or via any other work-related process and mechanisms” (see Appendices, Appendix B).

The current literature outlines how work meaningfulness is correlated to positive organizational outcomes including pro-social behaviors and commitment to the organization (Tyler & Blader, 2003), individual hedonistic sensations such as employees’ happiness (Ryan & Deci, 2001; Deci & Ryan, 2008), workforce’s well-being and motivation (Hackman & Oldham, 1980; Parker et al., 2001; Antonovsky, 1987; Martin, 2000) as well as physical and psychological health (Dunn, 1996; Treadgold, 1999; Baumeister, 1991; Ryff & Singer, 1998). These were in turn found to positively influence one’s job performance (Jalali & Heidari, 2016; Sharifzadeh, 2013; Cropanzano & Wright, 1999) thus relating to the aforementioned studies directly linking meaningful tasks at work with greater performance (Grant, 2007, 2008).

On the other hand, lacking meaningful work has also already been associated with non-hedonistic experiences first for the employee, such as their engagement (May et al., 2004; Kahn, 1990), motivation as well as well-being (Pratt & Ashforth, 2003; Michaelson et al., 2014); leading to similarly negatively-connotated outcomes for their organization, including on the employee’s job performance (Rodell, 2013). As a result, overall, previous studies have largely investigated predictors (Chalofsky, 2003; Rosso et al., 2010; Lips-Wiersma & Morris, 2017) and outcomes of work meaningfulness.

Additional research on the topic has found non-profit employees’ motivation to work in such an industry to be driven by social values, in particular the fact that they held similar ones to their organization, instead of monetary rewards (Dempsey & Saunders, 2010; Evers & Laville, 2004). This implies that non-profit employees would be committed to their organization because they align with its signaling, the values, and the types of expected behaviors it is projecting to its current and future employees. Moreover, several studies suggest

that nonprofit employees invoke the notion of the calling to explain their high commitment to their work, and to justify why their compensation may be at odds with dominant career discourses and ideology (Lewis, 2005; Mize Smith, et al., 2006; Scott, 2007).

As previously mentioned, the literature has a well-established assumption across studies, which relates non-profit work to be inherently meaningful to employees (Kuhn et al., 2008; Dempsey & Sanders, 2010; Flores, 2014; Rodell, 2013; McAllum, 2014). It has also shown, as stated priorly work meaningfulness to be related to the non-profit industry within specific and/or narrow contexts (McFadden, 2016; Robichau & Sandberg, 2022; Sandberg & Robichau, 2022; Venter et al., 2019).

In terms of their working experiences, less research has focused on those gained by employees within this non-profit industry across a variety of different organizations. Organizations that could potentially lead to different employment experiences. As much as two different sectors are inducing different types of working experiences (Jelstad, 2007), organizations with different aims could also cause different types of working experiences.

Additional research is thus urgently needed to help understand the non-profit industry and the type of career experiences it fosters for its employees, particularly in terms of their work-life balance and sense of work meaningfulness.

Given the elevated turnover risk in the non-profit industry (Hustinx, 2010; Garner & Garner, 2011; Haski-Leventhal & Bargal, 2008), there is a need for organizations to actively cultivate the meaningfulness of work to retain and attract the most talented employees (Havener, 1999) which they seem more prone to do as they are more inclined to adapt themselves to their workforce's demands and preferences in terms of work-related conditions (Meisenbach & Kramer, 2014; McAllum, 2018) including allowing greater flexibility and independence in terms of their working hours (Dartington, 1998). To enable this, organizations need to understand better their employees' working experiences to adapt their work policies to what enables greater hedonistic experiences for their current and prospective workforce. Therefore, this study will aim to broadly explore NPO employees' career experiences to better understand the non-profit industry and its workforce, focusing on employees' work-life balance and their sense of work meaningfulness and studying these on an international level with multiple industries. In other words, non-profit organizations (i.e., with consequently possibly multiple offices across the globe) with each a specific yet different focus on helping societies worldwide.

A focus will also be brought to expatriates' working experiences, comparing them to their local experiences. In fact, they are a subset of the population that does not get enough research attention (see the following overviews: Eby et al., 2005; Bianchi & Milkie, 2010) and

therefore are so far less understood. Research already shows that being an expatriate within the non-profit industry can lead to challenging working conditions, and as such a more fragile, if not conflicting, work-life balance (Oelberger, 2014; Dickmann et al., 2010; Fechter, 2012). In addition, moving to a new position in a new city and/or country is destabilizing for one's family, and in turn for oneself particularly concerning their new position, they all need an adjustment period (Jablin & Kramer, 1998), thus posing as a work-life challenge for employees who recently moved. This also relates to expatriates, as expatriation is presumed to begin by moving city and/or country to a new workplace. In addition, the turnover rate of expatriates working in the non-profit sector is extremely high (Telford & Cosgrave, 2007; Loquercio et al., 2006; Richardson, 2006) once again contributing to the previously described attraction and retention of talents issue in this industry.

By focusing on all these aforementioned factors, my thesis aims to make several contributions. First, it contributes to the current non-profit literature especially by conducting micro-leveled qualitative research, so far scarcely used, focusing on and therefore aiming at shedding additional light on the general work experiences employees have in such industry. Secondly, it will also address the growing need for insights on what leads to a greater job, hence life satisfaction, by focusing some of its explorations on two main factors contributing to said satisfaction, being work meaningfulness and work-life balance. Indeed, current research has called for further investigations regarding work-life balance experiences (De Janasz et al., 2013), especially in terms of broadening the scope of research (Kamenou, 2008; Maertz & Boyar, 2011, Kossek et al., 2010). On the other hand, the literature has been researching work meaningfulness in various occupations across fields (Bailey & Madden, 2016) and also specifically in the non-profit and public sectors (Robichau & Sandberg, 2022). However, so far there seems to be scarcely any research on it in the context of non-profit organizations with different purposes. Hence, the literature is implicitly calling for additional research on the matter.

Finally, the current literature is also calling for additional research on a different subset of the population, the expatriates (Ridgway & Lowe, 2022). Indeed, typically studies focus on different subsets of the population, specific civilizations such as Americans (Hwang et al., 2005; Pilowsky & Wu, 2006) or even Europeans (Karwetzky, 2022; Weinrich, 2018). In addition, organizational expatriates, employees who become expatriates by relocating for a pre-determined/limited time to another country before returning "home" (Collings et al., 2007), are not rare in organizations as they represent strategic choices such as allowing them to relocate to hold key positions in foreign subsidiaries and/or to handle new (possibly foreign) markets

(Harzing, 2001; Caligiuri, 2000). Their particular status in an organization is believed to possibly affect their working experiences differently from nationally recruited employees. Therefore, my study aims to explore the working experiences of both local employees and expatriates, specifically their work-life balance and sense of work meaningfulness, within various NPOs focusing on different challenges in society.

Indeed, recent studies have shown that while it seems that harboring an international career and as such, becoming an expatriate allows one to lead a successful career (Mello et al., 2023). On the other hand, adapting to the life of an expatriate is challenging due to cultural shocks (Dousin & Sulong, 2021). Hence, this struggle in adapting to a new lifestyle might impact one's working experiences, in particular their work-life balance as well as their ability to create/nurture a strong work meaningfulness.

Overall, my thesis will therefore further explore not only employees' working experiences, in particular their work meaningfulness and work-life balance, across various non-profit organizations, but it will also explore the differences between expatriates and locals in terms of their career experiences.

Methodology

Design

In the non-profit literature, most of the recently emerged studies have used a qualitative methodology to explore its sector (important illustrations include Knutsen & Brower, 2010; Dale, 2018; AbouAssi, 2012; Englert et al., 2020; Bies, 2010; Carnochan et al., 2014; Pratt, 2009; Kissane & Gingerich, 2004; McNamee & Peterson, 2016). In addition, qualitative methodologies allow to inform on practitioners' "lived experiences" (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Knowing that this research aims to explore the employees' perception of their career experiences while working for an NPO, using a qualitative methodology seems therefore the most appropriate one. To explore those employees' career experiences, semi-structured, ensuring in-depth, interviews will be conducted. This approach allows for a collection of rich and detailed descriptions accounting for each NPO employee's unique career experience, suited for the exploratory nature of this research. Following the semi-structured interviews, the data will also be analyzed qualitatively with the use of a thematic analysis as it offers the possibility of highlighting recurrent patterns across NPO employees' described career experiences (Percy et al., 2015). Here in particular, it will allow the researcher to identify whether there are similar characteristics across participants' subjective understanding of their career experiences working for different NPOs, as well as inform on the existence of potential relationships between the NPO's environment, expatriates, work-life balance and their sense of work meaningfulness.

While some researchers have criticized the use of thematic analysis in the past arguing it lacks structure and is subjective (Attride-Stirling, 2001; Braun & Clarke, 2006), it still is the most practical and common analysis to use in qualitative research, as it is "a source of well-grounded, rich descriptions and explanations of processes in identifiable local contexts" (Miles et al., 2014) and because it can be used to answer many research questions from a wide range of topics (Braun & Clarke, 2012). Indeed, it is a method used on a wide scale yet still poorly recognized (Boyatzis, 1998; Roulston, 2001). Particularly in terms of a primary understanding of which factors could be perceived by participants as the cause of their experiences. Braun & Clarke (2006) developed guidelines for thematic analysis in response to those critiques. Thus, their guidelines will be used to mitigate the previously identified weaknesses of thematic analysis in qualitative research. These guidelines consist of 6 steps: (1) becoming familiar with the data; (2) generating initial codes; (3) seeking themes; (4) reviewing those themes and

creating a thematic map based on the analysis; (5) titling and describing each of the themes; and finally (6) generating the report based on the summary of the main and important findings.

Participants

In this study, the aim was to recruit equally as many females (minimum 10) as males (minimum 10) for a total of, minimum, 20 participants. However, during the recruitment process, it became clear very soon that the subset of the population here targeted was rather niche and as such, it was very difficult to find participants interested and willing to take part. In addition, as the interviews were mostly held between November and December, thus at the end of the year, employees often had many projects to close/finish at that time, right before the holidays which start in the second half of December, and were as such not available, although interested, to participate in this study. Therefore, due to time-constraints reasons on the researcher's end, any interested and available participants who matched the recruitment criteria were interviewed. A purposeful sampling technique, commonly employed in qualitative research, was used to best serve this study's aim. This technique follows Patton's (2002) recommendation stating that only those possessing a rich amount of information on the theme of interest should be recruited, for the researcher to effectively make use of the available but limited resources. Thus, this qualitative study aimed to purposefully sample participants aged 22 and above, who have a job tenure of at least 1 year working in an NPO. This specific sample is targeted as we assume that 1 year of work experience in an NPO is enough to build relevant experiences. A total of 21 participants from 5 different countries were recruited and interviewed matching the above-described criteria. Hence, it is subsequently estimated that it allows for trustworthy findings. It was also aimed at recruiting participants in 4 different NPOs, each one with a differing purpose, to get a better and balanced understanding of career experiences across the entire non-profit field. Instead, the research participants were recruited across 12 organizations, and between 1 to 5 employees were interviewed in each organization. A snowball sampling strategy was employed to initially recruit 4 participants, one in each selected NPO, and then recruit the following 4/5 participants in each NPO via our first one in each respective NPO. This technique was chosen as it offers various advantages, the main one is that it nurtures openness and trust due to the approach (being recruitment via entrusted colleagues; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moser & Jorstjens, 2018). In turn, it also allows to ensure the richness and consistency of the collected data. Indeed, Kirchherr & Charles (2018) showed that snowball sampling was an appropriate method to collect data in qualitative research as it allows for the retrieval of information with greater depth. Thus, given the aim of this study is

to explore in-depth non-profit employees' working experience, this method seems the most appropriate. Hence, overall, five or six different participants in each NPO were aimed at being gathered to obtain knowledge on career experiences held in each. However, once again, the external constraints, in particular the fact that certain participants worked in very small NPOs, hence it wasn't possible to recruit many different employees within the same NPO, in addition to the ones mentioned above regarding participants' recruitment, made the initial recruitment target challenging and ultimately non-attainable. As such, the snowballing technique was used in its initial form outlined above but was also extended beyond one's organization. Specifically, it was used to ask recruited participants to refer the researcher to some of their peers working for different NPOs. Thus, various employees were recruited from 2 large NPOs, being the United Nations (UN) and the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF). However, not all NPOs are large organizations, and based on the niche pool of participants, some of the recruited participants were from different organizations. Therefore, multiple testimonies from different employees were gathered within both the UN and WWF while for other, smaller, organizations such as FEMNET, only one testimony from 1 employee was gathered. In addition, half of the participants were located in North America, and the other half in Western Europe.

Materials

As it was expected to have both French-speaking and English-speaking participants, every material tool was created in both French and English to accommodate participants' preferences.

To advertise this research appropriately and to attempt reaching out to a wider variety of employees, a poster (see Appendices, Appendix B) was created which outlined the title, recruitment criteria of this study, and the email address to contact if interested in the study.

In addition, an invitation letter (see Appendices, Appendix C) was created to send to the participants which outlined this research's aim, the role of the participant as well as their rights in detail. This letter was used and sent to each of the participants targeted to participate in this study. Once their interest was confirmed, a consent and debrief form were also used and sent to them at appropriate timings, outlined below, during the data collection process.

Furthermore, a document with the interview guidelines, meaning the open-ended questionnaire (see Appendices, Appendix D), was used during interviews by the researcher. This questionnaire was created for this study based on several well-established measurement tools for certain elements of one's working experiences. More specifically, the work-life balance's related questionnaire items were inspired by the reliable and known measurement

tool created by Fisher-McAuley et al. (2003). Additionally, the sense of work meaningfulness's related questions were drawn and adapted from the measurement tool known as the Work And Meaning Inventory (Steger et al., 2012). Ultimately, my thesis' questionnaire was composed of demographic-related questions with items such as "How long have you been working?"; work meaningfulness-related questions with several questions including "Do you understand how you contribute to the organization's mission?" and "How engaging would you describe your work?"; work-life balance with items such as "Have you ever missed a personal event because of work?"; working environment with a couple of questions including "Please describe your working environment."; as well as expatriate-related questions, for those who have been or are currently expatriates, with items such as "1. How would you describe your work-life balance before becoming an expatriate?".

Finally, given the post-COVID-19 environment, this study has offered participants to have their interviews take place, both in-person or online. As such, the use of the online software program known as Teams (using the 1.6.00.4464 version) was used to conduct the interviews with all participants as they chose to participate remotely. Although there are both advantages and disadvantages to collecting data remotely, research also poses in-person and remote data collections to be similar (Woods et al., 2015; Lumsden et al., 2016; Assmann et al., 2016; Backx et al., 2020). Hence, remote data collection could be as reliable as in-person ones. This method of data collection is therefore thought to be reliable in terms of collecting data for this research.

Procedure

An ethical application was submitted on the 26th of September 2023. This application contained all the documents mentioned above. Although certain topics addressed by this study such as one's work-life balance may have at first seemed like rendering this study medium risk, given that the targeted participants are employed adults, it was believed that this study would ultimately be considered as low-risk. Hence, the application has been cleared upon minor changes by the 26th of October 2023. After receiving the ethical clearance (Certification Number: 30018911), the recruitment process involving several methods started. The first participants as well as NPOs matching this research's recruiting criteria were directly contacted by email which contained an invitation letter alongside a consent form. Social media, including WhatsApp, Instagram as well as LinkedIn, were also used to recruit participants. A poster (see Appendices, Appendix B) explaining the headlines of this study (i.e., the aim and the recruitment criteria) was posted on these social media alongside an invitational message adding

onto the poster with a little more detail on the study's aim. They were either posted on the researcher's social media profile, to be shared by their network and/or trigger responses from potentially interested individuals, or directly sent to employees who, with research, were found to correspond to the research criteria. Finally, individuals, such as researchers, and/or organizations involved in this area (being non-profit organizations with different work focuses) were contacted to obtain access to individuals matching this research's recruitment criteria. Some participants were sent a reminder or a follow-up email (See Appendixes, Appendix E) 1 week after the first invitation email was sent when no answer, whether negative or positive, was received from them. This follow-up email contained very similar information to the original letter as it was simply enquiring whether the potential candidate had had a chance to look over the letter and as such might be interested in taking part. Once participants had expressed an interest in participating and had returned the consent form signed, an interview date and time was scheduled. Interviews were expected to be held hybridly, both online and in-person depending on the interviewee's preference and availability. This allowed for a greater outreach in terms of potential interested participants as they could be on different continents and in different time zones without it preventing their participation. The interviews were in fact, all held online as none of the participants were in the same area as the researcher at the time of the scheduled interview. These online interviews were conducted via the use of an online meeting software, Microsoft Teams, and automatically transcribed with the use of an artificial intelligence, known as Notta.ai. Notta.ai also automatically saved the meetings' audio on its online platform, specifically on the researcher's password-protected account on Notta.ai's online platform. The exchanges followed the pre-developed open-ended questionnaire as the base structure. Follow-up questions were asked based on how the conversation was unfelt to complement the initial questionnaire. Each interview ended with a small informal debrief, thanking the participant for their time and openness in sharing. Before leaving the meeting, participants were also each asked if they knew someone who might be interested in this research topic, to whom they could refer the research, and/or if they minded sharing the poster with their colleagues and acquaintances who also work in the non-profit industry. The official debrief form was sent officially by email after each interview. The data collected was securely held both on a password-protected Notta.ai online account, where the transcription and audio recording of the meeting were automatically saved, as well as on a password-protected computer, specifically on Concordia University's digitally secured storage system (OneDrive). Once, imported and securely saved on the password-protected computer, the interviews' automatic transcriptions were cross-checked with their respective audios (saved

on the online platform as described above) and were then anonymized by replacing any item allowing to identify the interviewee by a pseudonym.

Data Analysis

Once all the interviews were transcribed and anonymized, the online computer software NVivo was used to perform the thematic analysis.

An abductive approach was used to analyze and categorize the collected data, which involves engaging with both empirical data and existing theoretical understanding (Thompson, 2022) to derive the most meaningful explanation for the phenomenon of interest. This approach considered a "middle ground" between deduction and induction (Timmermans & Tavory, 2012), is guided by theoretical parameters but allows for flexibility in exploring new ideas from the collected data for potential explanatory findings (Peirce, 1974). It is the chosen and preferred method to the induction approach; which is a more subjective interpretation of the theory (Gioia et al., 2013); and the deduction approach; which refers to mostly theory-driven evaluations of phenomena.

Here, however, due to a lack of theoretical frameworks, found revolving around this study's topic in the current literature, my thesis mainly focused on the readily available empirical data. The transcripts underwent an initial coding process where each incident/event was analyzed at a broad level to become acquainted with and later correctly interpret the raw data. Every important detail in the research participants' testimonies was assigned to a code in NVivo (Charmaz, 2014; Saldaña, 2015). These codes were first broad categories gathering all the details relating to the same general subject (i.e., work meaningfulness vs work-life balance vs expatriation). Subsequently, as my comprehension increased, more in-depth rounds of coding were carried out. This focused coding method enabled the removal, merging, and/or addition of categories throughout the analyses. In turn, this method allowed to facilitate the interpretation of data gathered from the 21 interviewed employees (Saldaña, 2015).

Using this software and approach to the thematic analysis, several patterns were identified across participants' testimonies that go beyond the detailed level of description on interviewees' experiences typically associated with categories (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004). Specifically, 4 main themes were found: 1) Work Meaningfulness; 2) Work-Life Balance; 3) Expatriate Status; & 4) Working Experiences and each one had sub-themes that correspond to the smaller more specific patterns that were identified across the dataset.

Findings

Reviewing the collected data allowed for a better overall understanding of individuals working in non-profit organizations (See demographics in Appendices, Appendix A). Indeed, testimonies were gathered from multiple organizations with different aims, including World Peace (28.57% of them); Nature & Sustainability (14.29% of them), Humanitarian Aid (19.10% of them), Equality (14.29% of them), Education (14.29% of them) as well as Mental Health (4.76% of them) & Financial Aid (4.76% of them).

This thesis focused on 2 main aspects of one's working experiences: employees' work-life balance as well as their sense of work meaningfulness. While results revolve around these, a few other elements of their lives were simultaneously studied in relation to them. Hence, each of these elements and aspects of one's working experiences constitute the 4 main themes of this thesis' findings. They have been labeled as follows: 1) Work Meaningfulness; 2) Work-Life Balance; 3) Expatriate Status; & 4) Working Experiences.

A deeper analysis allowed for more specific patterns to emerge. Indeed, it was noticed that certain experiences described by one employee were also shared by few, some, or most of the other interviewed employees, who reported similar events. On the other hand, certain testimonies described unique experiences not shared with any other research participant.

Overall, these constitute the main and unique working experiences within the non-profit industry. They have been gathered and categorized under several sub-themes labeled and further explained in Tables 1, 2 & 3 below.

Work Meaningfulness

As mentioned, the first aspect of one's working experiences we focused on was research participants' work meaningfulness. Indeed, its value has significantly increased over the years, and employees now value having a sense of work-meaningfulness more than other rewarding benefits, including pay, their work settings, or even their prospects of obtaining promotions (Cascio, 2003; Hurst et al., 2016). The thematic analysis conducted revealed several patterns of experiences held by participants which have been labeled and briefly outlined in Table 1 below.

Table 1

Patterns of Work-Meaningfulness Experiences: definition, number of participants who experienced it and representative examples.

Sub-Theme	Definition	Employees experiencing it (N = 21)	Representative Examples
Sense of Fulfillment	When participants feel satisfied for multiple reasons such as, in the work context, for achieving or having achieved a task as well as having developed or developing an ability.	21	I find it fulfilling in the sense that I really like the topic. My colleagues are very nice, we get along well. I find the project we do really important also. (World Wide Fund for Nature – Participant 4, November 2023)
Sense of Engagement	When participant’s attention is drawn to their work, responsibilities, and their organization’s mission.	21	My work is deeply engaging. Like it's engaging, you really have to think through what you do. And you have to read about a country that you're going for in advance. On a scale, I was telling you on a scale of 0 to 10. It's 11. (African Women's Development and Communication Network – Participant 14, December 2023)
Gains	Personal skills, such as inter-personal ones, as well professional skills, such as leadership or team management, and/or general experiences participants acquired via their job with the organization.	21	I think definitely something I never thought I would gain was learning how to politically manage, or politically navigate what you need to achieve. The UN, being highly political, you have to learn how to play your cards well. (United Nations – Participant 9, November 2023)
Sense of Value	How esteemed employees feel by their colleagues, supervisors, the society, and the organization.	21	Definitely. [...] I mean, mostly in the way that they communicate with me the way that they value my work, the way that they include me in projects. And also the way that my supervisor within our one to one talks about my work. (Médecins Sans Frontières - Participant 20, December 2023)
Overall Career’s Meaningfulness	The sense of meaning employees experienced throughout their careers, all industries combined.	19	Alors pas de la même façon. Mais oui, c'est à dire que moi j'ai vraiment eu besoin d'avoir mon premier travail. Je pense qu'il y avait une fierté en fait. J'avais 22, 23 ans. Je sortais de mes études, j'ai trouvé un job où on m'a donné

Sub-Theme	Definition	Employees experiencing it (N = 21)	Representative Examples
			des responsabilités tout de suite [...] tout a toujours eu du sens. Ou en tout cas c'est moi qui le donnait. (Alliance Française Westchester – Participant 6, November 2023)
General Workforce Commitment	Whether participants perceived their colleagues as being dedicated towards achieving the organization's mission.	18	Definitely. Most of my colleagues feel very strongly about the role, and we also get to we have a very tightly knit networking platform. So, we correspond on WhatsApp, even though we are scattered all over the world. (United Nations Development Programme – Participant 13, December 2023)
Life Meaningfulness	Participant's experienced sense of work meaningfulness has contributed to giving their life meaning.	20	Yeah, sure. Especially again as I told you I'm really honored and lucky to have the opportunity to work in UN. It is the most important international organization in the world. And the values and the behaviors at the UN. I serve with those values in the organization. (United Nations – Participant 12, December 2023)

Sense of Fulfillment

Our findings show that every participant (21/21) described being fulfilled in their current position. 76.19% (16/21) of them are working for large non-profit organizations with multiple offices across the world, while the remaining 23.81% (5/21) of them work for smaller non-profit organizations operating on a more local scale. While all participants reported feeling fulfilled, they did not seem to experience it at the same intensity. Indeed, two main types of fulfillments were noticed: feeling greatly fulfilled and feeling periodically fulfilled.

Greatly Fulfilled

Nearly 50% of interviewees (10/21) reported feeling greatly fulfilled for multiple reasons. As one of them outlined, “it's also a question of personality and personal preferences” (World Wide Fund for Nature - Participant 4, November 2023), which suggests that reasons may differ from one employee to another. Although their reasons differ, they all seem to experience the same resulting sense of fulfillment.

Several reported enjoying their ability to help others as part of their job, whether that would be to help their colleagues, as outlined by an employee – working for World Wide Fund for Nature Brussels’ Office – grow and benefit from their own experience or to help their clients whom they are serving via their role in the organization:

“At the same time, a fulfilling aspect which I find in my role is that with the experience I have, I feel like I can provide a bit of guidance and coaching to people in the field who might be struggling on certain topics. [...] I feel like I can be of good support and provide guidance and help understand why monitoring what we do is so important. Yeah, I would say that the fulfilling part would be having the sensation that I'm helping maybe other people grow also somehow.” (World Wide Fund for Nature – Participant 4, November 2023)

An aspect relatively common across interviewees’ testimonies is that many particularly enjoyed their co-workers, from interacting to working alongside them, they enjoy the social aspect of their work:

“Alors je me sens épanouie dans mon travail parce qu’il y a aussi une bonne ambiance et un bon relationnel et pour moi ça fait partie, c'est 50 % du travail.” (Alliance Française Westchester - Participant 8, November 2023)

Moderately Fulfilled

Another 38.01% (8/21) of participants felt like they were only moderately fulfilled by their work which one of them explained as a natural process: “I think as humans, we are always on the lookout for if the grass is greener on the other side, so we always get into I think it's sort of every person goes through this phase of like, “maybe, I need a change in work”” (United Nations - Participant 9, November 2023).

Half (4/8) of the above 38.01%, felt only moderately fulfilled because they don't occupy a position that enables them to use their full set of skills or that brings them a certain distinguished recognition from the organization, to acknowledge either their seniority in the organization or their commitment and great involvement in their job.

As such, an interviewee – working for African Women's Development and Communication Network – described how they don't feel entirely appreciated by the organization for the work they are providing:

“Ideally from a corporate point of view, usually after two years, people normally give you, they upgrade you. They give you a higher role. They did my appraisal, of which I was beyond, I moved beyond the expectations but there's no upward role I can move to. I can only be given more tasks. What is missing is maybe just the reward system whereby, you've worked for this role for two years now maybe it's time for you to do something else. I wouldn't mind maybe having a senior role. Or maybe mentoring other people” (African Women's Development and Communication Network – Participant 14, December 2023)

However, the remaining 50% (4/8) of the aforementioned 38.01% of participants feeling moderately fulfilled explained this experience via the need to satisfy greater ambitions: “as a young person in this organization, I want to have a tangible career” (United Nations - Participant 9, November 2023) and “Working in the danse industry abroad is super tough [...] So my choice of working in a Alliance Française is to link dance and travel like I'm going to live abroad working in the cultural industry” (Alliance Française Chiclayo – Participant 18, December 2023). For some those greater ambitions also involve being able to take care of their families: “Mais quand on a décidé de plus être carriériste ou en tout cas pas pour les mêmes raisons et que on veut encore s'occuper des enfants, il y a beaucoup de frustration permanente.” (Alliance Française Westchester – Participant 6, December 2023). Nevertheless, they explained how they feel that they were able to grow and feel fulfilled during their career at the

United Nations Headquarters in New York, but they also feel that their career can, at this stage, only further grow in a different work environment due to the specific industry they are specialized in, being Information Technology (IT):

“That's something I've had in my previous role, where I always had this... try to embrace positivity and even in the darkest time when nothing seems to be working. And there's work, piling up, and then let's always look to the brighter side. We accomplished this. [...] I always brought this throughout my career that I've had at the UN, and as I grew professionally [...] I definitely see myself leaving the UN. I feel like because I'm in tech, I want to go out there and see what the tech companies are doing” (United Nations – Participant 9, November 2023).

Hence, they are mainly only moderately fulfilled as of the interview's date due to the potential growth they foresee acquiring by working in an organization more specialized in their expertise area which they wouldn't be able to have while staying in their current inter-governmental organization.

Periodically Fulfilled

Finally, 14.29% (3/21) of participants expressed feeling fulfilled periodically. Both of these employees had at least a portion of their job related to the delivering of a task to clients at certain times of the year. They feel fulfilled when on the edge of delivering or when working on these tasks however once done and waiting for the next task, they seem to no longer feel as fulfilled.

A participant – working for Fondation Jeunes en Tête in Montréal – notably shared more details on their activity and how it affects their sense of fulfillment:

“What makes me feel fulfilled is orienting the teens, and we have one workshop that's very, very prone to that happening, and the other where a lot less. [...] Just because one is very confrontational in terms of, this is mental health illness [...] And the other one is kind of like, here's how to take care of your mental health. So it's like, more chill. [...] And so, orienting very much helps me feel fulfilled. So, if, if I were to do the workshop I'm doing right now, which is the more chill one for the rest of the year, for instance, I feel like that would make me less fulfilled.” (Fondation Jeunes en Tête – Participant 19, December 2023)

The only other interviewee describing a similar pattern for their sense of fulfillment further outlined how alongside their task's timeline, their sense of fulfilment evolves from one extreme to another:

“I only feel fulfilled during the 2 or maybe 3 days of the Congress. And after that, directly after it I feel underwhelmed. And directly before I feel totally overwhelmed. So, yeah, that's not that nice, actually.” (Médecins Sans Frontières – Participant 21, January 2024)

Sense of Engagement

Our findings also reveal that every single interviewed employee is feeling engaged in their role while working for a non-profit organization. Indeed, they are involved in their work partly due to the responsibilities, but also due to the social relationships they are forming and maintaining (United Nations – Participant 12, December 2023). In fact, 85.71% (18/21) of them also disclosed having many responsibilities which makes them more engaged. These can range from managerial functions to administrative ones, as well as client-facing ones. However, here too, their sense of engagement is not experienced at the same level. In fact, two main types of engagement were observed: employees highly engaged and those moderately engaged.

Highly Engaged

80.95% of participants (17/21) were very engaged at work, in their role. 82.35% (14/17) of them had moderate to wide ranges of responsibilities. For some employees with strong engagement, their job and all functions inherent to it made their work very engaging while, for some, it is the social aspect of work that keeps them engaged, for others it was also the flexibility required when working in a non-profit organization no matter the position you are working in.

An interviewee – working for Alliance Française Westchester Office – outlined how for them being able to have a social aspect to their work allows them to be more engaged. In other words, them being able to interact and communicate with a wide variety of individuals, whether it is the clients they are providing for or the rest of their office's workforce, old and new colleagues, makes their work engaging every day:

“Alors c'est stimulant et motivant quand on arrive à avoir des nouveaux clients, qu'on répond à leurs attentes, [...] que derrière on nous remercie [...] Donc c'est agréable de travailler avec des anciens parce qu'ils connaissent le fonctionnement et c'est sans faille, la vie est presque comme un long fleuve tranquille et puis [...] c'est stimulant de se

dire, non pas j'agrandis l'équipe parce que souvent on est à peu près à effectif constant mais le renouvellement d'équipe s'a permet d'apporter des nouveaux points de vus, de se poser des questions, de se remettre en cause sur certains sujets.” (Alliance Française Westchester – Participant 8, November 2023)

A research participant – working for the World Wide Fund for Nature Office in Brussels – shared how they are engaged in their work because it is inherent to the type of organization. They are committed to a cause and are therefore also committed to their job once in an organization that acts for that cause:

“Like when you work in the nonprofit sector, you choose organization where your heart goes to, so you're committed from the base because you've chosen it. When I was picked to have that function, I was over the moon actually, because it was my dream to work there. [...] And I was like, okay, I will be part of a great mission. I will do my best to help. So, yeah, that's actually me choosing the organization that makes me committed because I'm committed from the base.” (World Wide Fund for Nature - Participant 5, November 2023)

Another interviewee – working for the United Nations Headquarters in New York – described the flexibility, which seems to come with the status of working for a non-profit organization, that allows them to be and remain engaged:

“I think one of the things of working in a nonprofit is that you wear many hats. It's not like in a private sector, where you are hired to do X, Y, and Z. You do ABC, and then XYZ. You have to be able to switch hats. So, a typical day, I think it's been a while since I had a typical day at the UN.” (United Nations - Participant 9, November 2023)

As such they take care of their own attributed responsibilities but are also “pitching in” when and where needed to aid their colleagues which ultimately aids the organization and the mission it and they aim for. Their engagement is so high that they don't solely perceive it as a regular job where “you punch in, you punch out”, but rather as a “career, something that I'm so passionate about”. (United Nations – Participant 9, November 2023)

One of the interviewed employees shared a different experience than the majority of the other research participants in that they do not have many different responsibilities, but they do treat various topics throughout the year, and this variety in the content they are treating is

an aspect of their work they enjoy, hence aligning with the enjoyment and engagement the other research participants reported drawing from their varying responsibilities:

“I’m super happy with how different it is. I am not a person that is really good with a very clear defined schedule. I mean, of course I need a schedule, but I like variety very much. So, for me, it suits my needs very well.” (Médecins Sans Frontières - Participant 20, December 2023)

Moderately Engaged

A minority of research participants (19.05%) described their work as being periodically and/or moderately engaging. They mentioned feeling engaged on certain occasions, thus linking their sense of engagement with their tasks at work and their rhythm.

An employee – working for the United Nations Development Program, Office in New York – further described how they know their work could be more engaging in a different position, one they had been in before. They are therefore only moderately fulfilled because they have more engaging previous experience to compare their current work to:

“My work could be a lot more hands on than it is actually. But because the role is based now in Headquarters [...] it's a lot of meetings, and it's a lot of virtual conversations and not so much hands on, really. Being on the field, interviewing people, getting the stories out, taking photos so that is more the responsibilities of the people in the field. My work is mostly coordination, liaison, advising and coaching.” (United Nations Development Program – Participant 13, December 2023)

A single research participant described their work as more periodically engaging based on their workload. Due to their functions, which relate to one specific event held once a year, they shared only feeling engaged before and during that event as they can be very active and gain knowledge:

“when it comes to the Congress itself, I like to be very engaged when it comes to thinking about a topic, when it comes to forming the panels and sessions, and to form an overall design of the conference and then I'm very active, for example, and I'm very enthusiastic when it comes to talking with people about the topic, learning about all those new perspectives. Learning about all those new things that I do not know before. [...] So, what's very inspiring to me as I always am speaking to other speakers, to other people who are engaged to it. [...] when they get excited that we're doing a conference about it, I'm getting excited that we're doing a conference about it. And I'm very inspired

by them as well, I do not want to fail them. I want to make a good platform.” (Médecins Sans Frontières - Participant 21, January 2024)

Gains

Our findings reveal that 100% (21/21) of interviewees have gained something from their role within the organization. Indeed, they both gained at least either if not both personal and professional skills as well as experiences that have allowed for their personal and/or professional growth. The findings do indicate that employees tended to gain more professional skills (100% of participants) than personal ones (66.67% of participants) via their role in the organization. They also were explained by most as being gained through both personal wills, their own choice to discover, learn, and thus gain more by extending their knowledge, but that it also was a joined effort with their organization that made it possible by making certain things available and/or via the way certain postings are structured:

“You’re not forcing yourself, but you did that for yourself going into it; this is what I want to get out of it, for instance. And also, maybe because of the context of the organization or how they help you implement certain things that allow you to gain others, such as training. And then maybe you get to learn new skills or learn about the world.” (United Nations – Participant 2, November 2023)

Personal Gains

Interviewees claimed having gained personal skills such as interpersonal ones or general knowledge about what the organization strives for and how they operate via their job.

An interviewed employee – working for the United Nations Headquarters in New York– described how their role gave them access to a wide variety of knowledge and they have therefore been able to so far acquire a deeper understanding of the UN and its intrinsic and complex structure:

“Yeah, of course, in all my jobs, my working experience I always gain something. In this case I feel that I'm super lucky and super honored to work in a very cultural environment, where everybody serves the values and the principle of UN. So it's really rewarding and I'm very grateful about it. It's amazing. I'm always learning about the job, about UN, because UN is huge. They have so many departments, the UN common system is huge.” (United Nations – Participant 12, December 2023)

Another interviewed employee – also working for the United Nations, but in the Swiss Office based in Geneva – claims to have acquired greater language skills as well as general awareness of the world due to their position and their organization:

“And this understanding of the various cultures, it's so important because otherwise you can be very quickly stuck into a whole. So, that helps a lot and I've increased this awareness of different nationalities because the UN is a reflection of the Member States and there are lots of different nationalities and working with them on a regular basis, it's not only nice, it's something that has brought me a lot of additional knowledge and awareness of the world in general.” (United Nations – Participant 10, November 2023)

Other interviewees claimed having gained personal skills in the form of a sense of achievement. Being able to accomplish certain things, to attain certain milestones, and/or to see the result of their work on the intended aided subset of the population represents a personal achievement as further described by someone working for the United Nations Population Fund below:

“The main is the result that you achieve for the population, right. That is the most important, that's why, personally, that's why I'm working for the UN, right. So, it's to make a difference, and to make something positive. And to deal with issues and try to solve them or to act in a way that you are bringing solutions and progress.” (United Nations Population Fund – Participant 13, December 2023)

Professional Gains

In addition, all participants reported having gained professional skills, which include but are not limited to learning some job-related skills such as man, general experience on the job but also how to navigate the working environment.

An interviewee – working for the United Nations Headquarters Office in New York – shared how they learned to better navigate their working environment by better understanding themselves. Understanding what they were still lacking versus what they could already bring to their role to later increase their performance capacities in their role:

“I've learned more in terms of understanding myself in performing this role. [...] I'm directly interacting with managers of managers. [...] I've had a privilege of working with these folks. So that has, in a way in building me a sense of humility in how I approach what I'm doing. But at the same time, it gives me a lot of, in terms of foundation, on building on that and identifying gaps [...] seeing their style of leadership

and learning from them. How they are able to move things from point A to point B, or navigate conversations which are very sensitive, which are very high level. So being able to be in those meetings or conversations has helped me a lot.” (United Nations – Participant 16, December 2023)

Similarly, several employees described their professional gains as being specific skills needed in their jobs such as “My network, my net worth” (African Women's Development and Communication Network – Participant 14, December 2023) or even “J'ai gagné en gestion de la décision” (Alliance Française Westchester – Participant 8, November 2023). Some have later also specified that these professional gains have by extension contributed to their personnel development:

“Absolutely, yes, I've learned through work that engaging with people on a social setting. It's so rewarding, because when you ask someone something that they're so passionate about, you create this bond with this person socially. And if you're able to hone that power, that you don't necessarily have to just keep it work, [...] be able to engage with this person socially, outside work. [...] You start making a different type of friendships.” (United Nations – Participant 9, December 2023)

Sense of Value

In general, research participants reported feeling valued by various organisms. They have a feeling of belonging and being esteemed by their surroundings, whether that is their supervisors, colleagues, society, and/or the organization. They reported feeling so, for the majority, by these different or single organisms both for their work and/or themselves “as a person” (United Nations – Participant 16, December 2023).

Valued by the Organization

76.19% (16/21) claimed to feel valued by their organization for their work within their role. However, while some of them also felt valued by the organization for them as individuals, the majority of them still couldn't particularly tell as they generally claimed it to be an entity too broad and vast to be able to get a sense of it towards them as individuals.

They were able to tell that they were valued by their organization via various elements including feedback from the hierarchy above and alongside them for work they have accomplished such as described by an employee at the United Nations, Headquarters Office in New York:

“I stepped in, I made changes, and I improved things and so, I got the feedback. For example, those training in the field that I did on organizational design. I remember, I got a personal letter from the USG. The undersecretary general. Yeah, that was nice. Yeah, it's not nothing.” (United Nations – Participant 2, November 2023).

Someone else outlined that they perceived this value through the type of packages and benefits the organization made available to them, including various pieces of training: “on a plein de possibilités de formation et je trouve que ça c'est valorisant, quand les organisations investissent dans les gens.” (World Wide Fund – Participant 1, November 2023)

A research participant working for a different organization further described those benefits to also include “really good work contracts. [...] holidays. [...] a lot of freedom within our daily work structure, like how we use our hours and when we work.”, which altogether allows them to “feel valued by the organization.” (Médecins Sans Frontières - Participant 20, December 2023)

One final interviewed employee explained that they felt valued as a person by their organization partly due to the position they are occupying, as it allows them to be of assistance to their peers and colleagues who have consistently given positive feedback in return, but also partly because of them as they are carrying the work out:

“I feel valued as a person because I provide support. So, the people I provide support to, are very appreciative of the work, of that support. So, whether I advise a communication peer, or whether I advise a manager on a reputation crisis. So, I get this feedback that the support is very much appreciated. It's very personal, I mean, it's based on a person basis, but because of the role of being a support role and coaching role. Yes, it comes with the job.” (United Nations Development Program – Participant 13, December 2023)

2 interviewees (9.52%) claimed not feeling recognized enough by their organization. In fact, they believe they should have been promoted for the loyal and committed work they have provided over the years. One of them notably mentioned the fact that they feel valued by the organization, however not fully as they are confident, with the work they have been providing and the positive feedback they have been receiving over the years, that they would have been promoted already should the organization fully value them:

“Yeah. I think so. Not only the colleagues direct what I'm supervising. But my colleagues who are on top of me. The boss of my boss often tells me he's so happy to

see me and to have me, and he knows how much I am [...] he understands that I'm a key element for sure. But I'm not using this to make it my own promotion by the way. I don't want to be that guy, but I hope that my time will come because I am recognized. [...] By the organization, yes, in a way, but if I was more valued, I think they would have said something like, "okay, P10 you are on the post for so many years now, we all know that you deserve something else". (United Nations – Participant 10, November 2023)

Valued by their Colleagues

Similarly, 100% of research participants described feeling valued by their colleagues. Colleagues seem to value them both for their work as well as for themselves as individuals and are, just like for the organization, sensing this sentiment of their co-workers towards them mainly via "positive feedback" (World Wide Fund – Participant 4, November 2023) which often comes in the form of an anonymous "evaluation system" (European Commission – Participant 15, December 2023).

In addition, many have also explained how they seem to have developed connections with their coworkers which seem to expand/reach beyond the workplace. They have bonded personally and as such have shared personal information and are interested in each other's lives:

"I would say, because I know for sure my first-year colleagues definitely appreciate me, because after it was over, we went on vacation together. We did on a camping trip and everything. You don't go on a camping trip with someone you don't appreciate, right?" (Fondation Jeunes en Tête – Participant 19, December 2023)

Another interviewee working at the United Nations further explained and described this bond as a "personal connection beyond work talk" where they "start knowing your co-workers' family, what they do for the holidays, what they cooked for Thanksgiving. How their mom is doing. If their mom is having treatment or something like that" which ultimately "makes me feel valued because I know they're listening to me. I'm a being heard" (United Nations – Participant 9, November 2023).

A few research participants did describe a pattern that is disruptive to their sense of value. In other words, their colleagues and more importantly their supervisors; even those with whom they never interact as they are much higher up in the organization's hierarchy; have a rotational system that impacts who they interact and/or work with, ultimately impacting their

sense of value. Hence, they currently feel valued by their colleagues and have been since they arrived in their position a few years back, but they also know this is a constantly evolving situation. They may feel valued one day and not the next in reason of a change in the head of the department or sometimes in reason of a switch in the organization's leader which is even more disruptive. While they acknowledge there might be similar rotation-like changes in other organizations and/or industries, they specify that it seems to be specific to their organization's family, and even more so to their organization. This was for instance described by this employee working for the United Nations Development Program, which is an organization linked to the United Nations just like many other organizations who are also linked to it. Consequently, they describe the reason for this ever-evolving sense of value from their co-workers as follows:

“Definitely more than I would be in the private sector but the problem with the UN and the UNDP in particular is that and I guess it's the same problem in the private sector, but there is a rotation, there is a turnover of management and so every 4 years, the overall administration, like the Secretary General of the UN, for instance, it rotates. And so, they can extend the service up to 8 years. But every 8 years, management changes. [...] I'm also up for renewal in the coming years. In 4 years, my job is going to be up for what we call the mobility. And so, it makes for adjustments. And every time there is a new manager, every time there is a new head of the organization. It's always adjustments.” (United Nations Development Program – Participant 13, December 2023)

This was further concurred by another interviewed employee who is working at the United Nations, headquarters Office in New York, by stating that it all depends on who they are working with at a certain point in time:

“Being in the UN, it really comes down to the teams that are working. And that basically cascades into the different levels within the organization. So, I've worked with different managers. I've worked with different colleagues.” (United Nations – Participant 16, December 2023)

Valued by the Society

Interviewees had for a small majority (13/21, thus 61.91%) the sense that they were valued by society. They perceived this once again via “feedback” (United Nations Population Fund – Participant 11, November 2023), but also via various other ways including how they've

been entrusted to carry out certain activities by their clients, part of the society: “valorisée par beaucoup de façon, je dirais par des mots, par des façons, par la confiance donnée, par beaucoup de choses comme ça.” (Alliance Française Westchester – Participant 6, November 2023).

A minority of research participants had a more mixed perception of how, and if, they were valued by society. Otherwise expressed, 38.10% reported feeling valued by society for working for their organization as it has a great and positive reputation for aiding societies and acting towards the greater good but didn’t feel valued for their own work per se. As such when the name of their organization is mentioned society’s reactions are different: “Yes, of course, when you mentioned UN; it's different” (United Nations Department for Safety and Security – Participant 7, November 2023).

They explain this with the public’s ignorance. The society they are surrounded by usually knows the organization they work for and that it is acting in favor of society, however, they are unaware of what their role entitles. Thus, interviewed employees don’t feel valued by society for their particular position in the organization as society is sometimes ignorant of its existence and/or implications:

“Pour le travail que je fais, non parce que les gens autour de moi savent pas trop ce que je fais je pense. Mais pour l'ONG, oui. Quand je dis que je travaille pour WWF, les gens sont toujours très positifs.” (World Wide Fund for Nature – Participant 1, November 2023)

Another interviewee working for the Friends of Fondation de France further described this and described that they do feel valued by their society however they also feel that to some extent, their organization and its industry in general are more inherently seen as contributing less to a country’s economy and to be environments where employees’ work is not as serious and important to the country than those working in organizations belonging to different industries:

“Oui, la société, la différence c'est que je pense que quand on travaille pour du non-profit, les gens ont toujours l'impression que c'est pas un travail aussi sérieux que les autres. Mais en fait, ça m'est complètement égal parce que je n'ai pas du tout d'ego de ce côté-là et que ça ne m'affecte absolument pas, donc, mais c'est quelque chose qu'on ressent quand même fréquemment. C'est à dire que les gens ont l'impression qu'on ne travaille pas vraiment dans le monde économique. On n'a pas un vrai rôle. Après voilà, moi, ça m'affecte pas du tout et ça n'affecte pas du tout la vision que j'ai de mon travail

ou de mon avenir dans cette organisation.” (Friends of Fondation de France – Participant 3, November 2023)

Others described this mixed sense of value as being related to their position. While they also feel valued by society, mainly, once again, because of the organization they work for, they also sense that the society sometimes does not perceive positively their particular position within the organization. One of the research participants – working for World Wide Fund, Belgian Office in Brussels – detailed how their position in the domain of fundraising, raising money to fund several of WWF’s projects, has relatively often negative echoes as people don’t understand where the money goes or what it is used for and therefore feel somewhat taken advantage of:

“That’s a tricky one, because people don’t get fundraising. People feel like we’re stealing money actually, or they’re already donating to an organization. This organization is like doing this actually, and asking me for money. That’s great. But the ones not giving money for good reasons. Feel like you’re there to rob people and take their money and they do have so much bills to pay. [...] fundraising gets a bit tricky. My family and people around me, they’re like, “What is that fundraising? Why do you do it?”.” (World Wide Fund for Nature – Participant 5, November 2023)

Another employee – also working for World Wide Fund for Nature, Office in Belgium – further explained their colleagues’ argument by adding that depending on the geographic location they are working in, the society will or not value them, their position, and/or the organization they work for. They notably came to that conclusion by comparing the two different experiences they have had while working for the same organization, World Wide Fund for Nature, with one job relocating them as an expatriate in Laos, while the other one was a local position in Belgium:

“Well, that’s a bit hard to say... by the society as a whole, I feel like in a lot of the places where we work, our role is viewed either as a bit of militantism and these people who care about the bears or pandas or whatever. Sometimes we work even in environments where we are threatened, so yeah, or where it’s very, very difficult to implement projects like it was in Laos. It’s very difficult as a foreign organization to work in Laos. In Belgium, I think the WWF has a very positive image amongst the large public. But yeah, I still feel like when I speak with my friends or things like that about the work I’m doing, they’re just like, “wow, it’s amazing”. But yeah, I don’t think we are seen as

a critical chain of... society either.” (World Wide Fund for Nature – Participant 4, November 2023)

Overall Career’s Meaningfulness

The majority of research participant in my study (15/21, thus 71.43%) claimed to have had and to continue to have in their current roles a meaningful career. While the reasons may differ as to how they came to that perspective on their professional career, the outcome is highly similar if not alike across interviewees. Indeed, many outlined how working for a non-profit organization automatically provided them with some level of work meaningfulness. While they did outline that the various jobs they have had within the industry did not have the same level of work meaningfulness, they ultimately always had some sort of meaningfulness aspect attached to their work.

An interviewee – working for Médecins Sans Frontières – further described their meaningfulness journey in the non-profit industry as follows:

“I was very lucky to start my professional career within NGOs. So that factor was always there. So, I always felt like I am definitely at the right organization or in the right field, because this work itself has meaning. But there were definitely times when I was in a role that didn't 100% suit me or I wasn't challenged enough, so I wouldn't say that I was always 100% satisfied. But because it was an NGO, at least you don't have to kind of worry about that aspect of the job, right? Like, the bigger picture is always there, but then the individual roles that can sometimes change.” (Médecins Sans Frontières - Participant 20, December 2023)

Various interviewees claimed that work meaningfulness is essential to their careers. As such, they wouldn't be able to perform in their role without having some sort of work meaningfulness. Some explained that they would actively seek to change position and or organization if they lose that meaningfulness aspect of their work:

“Yes, and if not, I would look for meaning because I think that's something that frustrates people in any job, it's that once they start seeing it as a 9am to 5pm job where you go in, you do whatever you have to do, and then at 5pm you disassociate and you go home. That to me, it's not gratifying. That to me doesn't mean satisfaction. So, if that sense is not there for me, I try to look for it. If that means I have to leave where I'm

working, to go find it somewhere. Let that be.” (United Nations – Participant 9, November 2023)

A few research participants (28.57% of them) described not having a career entirely meaningful or meaningful in mixed ways. For some it was their previous positions in different industries, both the public and for-profit industry, that seem to have lacked meaning such as described by an interviewee currently working for the World Fund for Nature:

“j'ai pris mon premier job un peu comme ça au hasard et je me suis retrouvée dans cette agence de recrutement et je n'ai pas fait ça parce que j'étais passionnée par le recrutement et je voulais changer la vie des gens [...] Et puis au fur et à mesure que j'ai avancé et que j'ai travaillé plus profondément dans les ressources humaines, disons. Là, j'ai commencé à avoir un peu de sens dans mon job parce que c'est vrai qu'une bonne équipe de ressources humaines, ça fait quand même beaucoup sur beaucoup de monde. On voit quand même qu'on apporte des améliorations quand on apporte de l'aide.” (World Wide Fund for Nature – Participant 1, November 2023)

A single interviewee described having a periodic meaningful career, which they explained by claiming that they only find meaning in their work when they can achieve something. Thus, their career's meaningfulness has always been sporadic relying on results, more specifically their successes and accomplishments at work:

“Not always. It's only in burst it's when I'm particularly successful with one initiative, or other project does really well or that again, I managed to have a very good campaign, that I achieved.” (United Nations Development Program – Participant 13, December 2023)

Further drawing on this sense of accomplishment, whether directly or as part of the organization's chain, they all felt that their involvement in their job and their position in the organization is important and relevant to society as here described by an interviewee for their own position in their organization:

“I believe so because UNDSS supports all the UN Agencies, all of them. So, where the children need education, where people need water, where like a peacekeeping, or peace is required, UNDSS is there. So, in as much as the mandate of UNDSS is not to the community, it provides covering to the people who are supporting the community. So

that way those services are provided in a stable/predictable manner.” (United Nations Department for Safety and Security – Participant 7, November 2023)

Meaningful Role to the Organization

Every interviewee claimed that their current role is meaningful to the organization. Some even claimed that processes wouldn't run as smoothly if they weren't in the position they were holding. An interviewee – working for Alliance Française Westchester in New York – notably described their role in the organization as follows:

“Si demain, il m'arrive quelque chose, le temps de me remplacer [...] il y aurait un vrai creux dans l'activité. Je ne me considère pas indispensable, personne n'est indispensable mais je considère que je suis un des piliers du fonctionnement.” (Alliance Française Westchester – Participant 8, November 2023)

Nevertheless, they also claimed to be part of a chain, that they are replaceable and are part of a larger movement. Their specific role matters to the organization, and therefore they do so alongside the skillset they are bringing; however, the organization would keep on running after they've left or moved on to another position:

“Yes, because we have a very big unit. We are with a lot of people because we have a lot of projects. We run billions of euros. My role is small, but it's important.” (European Commission – Participant 15, December 2023)

And

“This is not just for me, but also for my staff and the board of directors in HQ. So, without those people, the fund cannot be obtained the program cannot be implemented” (VIYAN – Participant 17, December 2023)

Another research participant shared how their contribution to the organization is very important as they are responsible for a great deal, given their role as director of what they call “Chapter”; which refers to their offices in Westchester versus the other chapters of the organization (the Alliance Française) in different cities across the world; but also because they are somewhat in a volunteering spirit there as well. Indeed, they take on tasks they weren't meant to or to handle situations that were not initially in their job description, all the while their salary isn't compensating for any of it. An interviewee even claimed that they still might not be fully aware of the extent of their responsibilities as they are continuously learning on the job:

“Parce qu’en fait si je le fais pas, mon Chapter malheureusement il s'écroule. Ils ont mis beaucoup de temps à trouver quelqu'un en fait qui accepte ce genre de poste. C'est un poste qui est quand même très... On est quand même aux États-Unis, donc il y a de fortes responsabilités puisqu'on est quand même [...] seul aux commandes où on nous demande à être multi-task, [...] l'aspect comptable, l'aspect assurance, l'aspect, même location immobilière et puis recrutement là encore une fois, vérifier les visas, vérifier la nationalité. [...] Multitask avec, l'énorme inconvénient d'avoir un salaire limité. Donc je dirais que il y a une partie, quelque part, où il faut avoir un esprit bénévole, enfin il faut vraiment avoir un esprit. [...] Voilà alors que je n'ai pas forcément la formation, les compétences sur tous les points, et que je pense que je n'ai pas encore conscience de tous, tous les risques, toutes les responsabilités qui m'incombent.” (Alliance Française Westchester – Participant 6, November 2023)

General Workforce Commitment

Not only does 100% of participants feel committed to their organization and its aim of bettering the world, but the majority of interviewed employees (80.95% of them) also reported believing that their colleagues were for the most part as committed as they were to the organization, their values but most of all the mission it is pursuing. However, most of them also acknowledged that their colleagues' commitment didn't particularly represent the entire workforce's commitment as it is an individual characteristic, thus could evolve from one person to the next:

“For me, it's clear, and I have a strong principle, right. Some other people are more the purpose is not that important for them, and they see it more as an income, right. A source of income. And the motivation, sometimes but it's person for person. It depends on the personality.” (United Nations Population Fund – Participant 11, November 2023)

And:

“I would say that most of the colleagues that I work with, that's a very good thing, actually, so positive. I find it is something, that's the kind of energy that I see on our floor here in Human Resources Service division. I would say it's not common. The good thing is that there's a culture of really valuing the input of different colleagues. And it doesn't matter, I mean, there are people, there's a hierarchy in the UN, but at the same time, at least in our division, that hierarchy is basically removed. We have teams. We flatten things out and make sure that everyone is valued in what they are doing so that's

the kind of setting that I'm in. I would not say that this can be replicated easily in other departments of the UN, but we are privileged in the sense that at least where I work, my colleagues are really showing up. They roll up their sleeves. They are putting in their best in the work that we do.” (United Nations – Participant 16, December 2023)

One research participant – working for the United Nations, Headquarters in New York – further argued on this, by pointing out that it might be a cultural thing, hence explaining why some people are slightly less or not as committed as they are:

“And I don't expect everyone to operate on the same level. It's just that, I think it's part of how I was brought up, I tend to expect a lot out of myself. And so, having to distinguish what I expect for myself, from what I expect from others.” (United Nations – Participant 9, November 2023)

One interviewed employee – working for Alliance Française, Westchester Office in New York – mentioned a new aspect that impacted this slight variability that can be seen in their organization’s workforce’s overall commitment to its aims. They described how while they believe their colleagues to be as committed as they are to their organization’s goal, they also perceive a distinction between full-time and part-time employees. Those working part-time would be committed to the organization however only for a few hours here and there when they are working, while full-time employees have a bigger picture and a longer-lasting commitment:

“Et on a de la chance parce que je trouve qu'on est face enfin vous savez, la plupart des professeurs et des personnes qui se reconvertissent à leur vie ici et qui du coup mettent une énergie incroyable et ils font vraiment un travail exceptionnel, meilleur que un prof qui aura été à l'éducation nationale en France et qui aura été usé parce que y en a. On se dirait, les professeurs qui travaillent pour nous sont des professeurs qui en général font ça parce qu'ils ont du temps. Mais pas forcément le besoin financier, [...] ça les intéresse de s'investir et d'apprendre mais c'est pas, comment dire, un métier qui va permettre de vivre. Enfin, c'est pas ça qui va faire la différence. [...] forcément, quelqu'un qui travaille 1h par semaine va pas avoir le même investissement que quelqu'un qui travaille 10h.” (Alliance Française Westchester – Participant 6, November 2023)

Life Meaningfulness

For this element too, 95.24% of participants (20/21) responded positively when prompted about their life meaningfulness. In other words, all employees believed their work, and all it entails including its resulting meaningfulness, has positively contributed to giving their life meaning.

In fact, an employee – working for the United Nations Headquarters Office in New York – shared that their job is not simply their function for revenue, it is part of their life, who they are as a person, and as such contributes to giving their life meaning:

“Absolutely. Because I definitely see a correlation to people who are disgruntled at work. They probably don't have a good relationship at home. [...] if what you do for 8 hours in a day makes you miserable. You're going to be miserable at the end of the day. Because that's the feeling that you have been accumulating throughout the whole day and it's not like you have a switch. An on and off switch where you go, “Well. 5pm. Is here, I'm going to leave this place, and I'm going to be happy about it”. It's something that you bring into your life.” (United Nations – Participant 9 December 2023)

They seem to explain this relationship by what their work has been able to give them. It seems to have opened certain doors for them such as being able to travel, gain new skills, or fulfill a dream:

“Yeah, sure. Especially again as I told you I'm really honored and lucky to have the opportunity to work in UN. It is the most important international organization in the world. And the values and the behaviors at the UN. I serve with those values in the organization. And that was one of the reasons that I feel very comfortable and honored to work for the organization.” (United Nations – Participant 12, December 2023)

And:

“Yes, well, I've been able to invest better. Traveling, working in different 43 countries in the world. I really know what goods I can sell in certain countries, what stories I can tell better. It's been enriching, it's been meaningful.” (African Women's Development and Communication Network – Participant 14, December 2023)

Interestingly enough, another interviewee – working for the United Nations Geneva Office - specified that their work was able to contribute to their life's meaningfulness via the type of organization rather than the industry in particular. Certain types of benefits, greatly

influencing someone's life meaningfulness, aren't specific to the industry but rather to the organization:

“International organization can be nonprofit and profit organization. It brings benefits and the benefits mainly that I was attracted by is the fact that they were helping families to have, staff members to have their kids in international schools. [...] And frankly, if I had stayed in Y or X, they would not be the same there was no international schools. I'm not even sure I would have been able to afford it. [...] My life would have been completely different and not only me but my kids. The way they are now with the luggage, with the background they have, the international environment. That's so helpful. In a difficult work environment where everything is complicated.” (United Nations - Participant 10, November 2023)

Finally, only 4.76% (1/21) of interviewees didn't feel like their work had contributed positively to giving their life meaning. Instead, they have experienced the opposite, their negative experiences at work have been transferred to their personal life. In other words, spreading those negative work-initiated elements to each aspect of their life, thus negatively affecting their overall life's meaning:

“No, it's hard. I really like those line-management experiences. [...] what I'm doing right now is... does not make me happy on the long run. I know that. So, this is kind of an impact on my life. [...] But so far, because of those stressful times, it impacted my life in a way that it made my private life also more stressful than it was necessary.” (Médecins Sans Frontières – Participant 21, January 2024)

Conclusion on interviewees' experienced work-meaningfulness

As previously mentioned, most of the questionnaire's items were inspired by a well-established and reliable measurement tool for work meaningfulness, commonly used in quantitative research, known as WAMI (Steger et al., 2012). The majority of research participants' testimonies revealed positive experiences when it came to those WAMI-inspired items, including experiencing a high sense of fulfillment and engagement; feeling as though their sense of work meaningfulness contributed, between moderately and greatly, to giving their lives meaning as well; feeling valued for their work as much as they believe to be of value to their organization as well as both having had and continue to have a meaningful career.

Most employees consistently shared positive and beneficial experiences when asked, both implicitly (with items such as “How engaging would you describe your work?”) and explicitly (with items such as “how is your sense of work meaningfulness? On a scale from 1-10”), about their work-meaningfulness, thus it seems that there is a correlation between experiencing a good-to-great sense of work meaningfulness and working within non-profit organizations.

It is therefore concluded that there is a rather strong influence from working in non-profit organizations, and by extension in the non-profit industry, on one’s ability to develop and maintain a good-to-great sense of work meaningfulness.

Work-Life Balance

The second main focus of this research in terms of one's working experiences is their work-life balance. Fostering and developing a good work-life balance has been a desire of employees for more than a decade (Tippet & Kluvers, 2009). Recently, several articles and studies have outlined the rising need for a better work-life balance that is sought by today's workforce and is considered one of their priorities, over monetary compensation (Wigert, 2022). While it is understood that working hours and socially accepted norms depend on the culture of the country an employee works in, most interviews were conducted in the United States and Belgium. In both countries, the regular working hours are respectively between, 8am-5pm (Federal Public Service, Employment, Labour and Social Dialogue, n.d.) and 6am-8pm (but no more than 8-hours worked per day; HTIR, Work-Study USA, n.d.). Although they don't have the same timeframes, in both countries employees shouldn't work above 8-hours a day. Hence, it was here agreed that regular working hours would refer to working between 9am-5pm, a regular 8-hour day shift. The thematic analysis allowed us to unveil specific patterns in interviewees' experienced work-life balance.

Table 2

Patterns of Work-Life Balance: definition, number of participants who experienced it and representative examples.

Sub-Theme	Definition	Employees experiencing it (N = 21)	Representative Examples
Working Habits	When participants have atypical and unconventional work rhythms as well as when they are working both from the office and from home on different days of the week	20	C'est 9h-17h mais ce n'est pas des heures obligatoires, c'est-à-dire, si j'ai envie de commencer à 08h00 et de terminer à 16h, je peux aussi. C'est très flexible. (World Wide Fund for Nature – Participant 1, November 2023)
Working Overtime	When participants are working outside regular office hours, on weekends and/or during holidays	13	Sometimes I'll work on the weekends and the times on the holidays. The reason being that the work is round the clock. The UN is hiring all the time. And then it's not as if because I'm on holiday, the urgency or the need to attend to a very important issue stops. It doesn't stop. (United Nations – Participant 16, December 2023)
Variable Workload	The number of tasks and projects participants are handling at work throughout the year	20	Oui, il y a des périodes plus intenses que d'autres effectivement, mais il n'y a jamais de période creuse. [...] Là depuis début septembre jusqu'à la semaine dernière c'était hyper chargé. (Friends of Fondation de France – Participant 3, November 2023)
Work and Non-Work Projects	When participants are involved in either a professional matter preventing them from tending to their personal life, or a personal matter preventing them from tending to their professional life	14	I was trying to find someone else, but I always came back to me like, you are the one. So, I should do it. And I did travel like in 5 different places in the world during February to June, and it created a lot of tension. (United Nations – Participant 10, November 2023)

Working Habits

Flexible Working Schedule

95.24% of interviewees (20/21) outlined having a flexible working schedule. In other words, their working habits are not as per the usual schedule, between 9am-5pm. Instead, their work schedule varies throughout the days of the week as well as from one week to the other. Nevertheless, they are still contractually set for 8 hours of work per day, what differs, however, is when they complete these hours. They are sometimes scattered across employees' entire day, thus between 7am and 8 or even 9pm, instead of being carried out in one set.

An employee – working for the World Wide Fund for Nature, in the Belgian Office – notably described how these hours can be flexible while still having conventional hours at which all employees are expected to be working to coordinate the work better:

“Franchement c'est 9h-17h mais ce n'est pas des heures obligatoires, c'est-à-dire, si j'ai envie de commencer à 08h00 et de terminer à 16h, je peux aussi. C'est très flexible. Donc tant que mon travail est fait, que mes heures sont faites, je fais ce que je veux. [...] On demande quand même aux gens d'être là dans des heures un peu typiques de bureau. Pas de commencer à 02h00 du matin et terminer à 12h00, ça, ça ne va pas. Mais flexible dans les heures raisonnables de travail.” (World Wide Fund for Nature – Participant 1, November 2023).

Another interviewee – working for the Friends of Fondation de France, in the New York Office – further detailed and explained their flexible schedule as being linked to their work. Specifically, their work rhythm is directly related to the type of projects and tasks they will be handling on certain days. The tasks they will be undertaking on Monday will be different than those they will handle on Thursday and therefore will dictate different working schedules on both days of the week:

“Je n'ai pas 2 journées identiques. Je dirais que théoriquement ma journée de travail, elle est supposée être de de 09h00 à 17h00 contractuellement. En réalité, je pense que j'ai jamais fait une journée de travail de 09h00 à 17h00. Donc après ça dépend si c'est des jours où j'ai des rendez-vous extérieurs, à Manhattan [...] je pars vers 07h30 et puis je passe ma journée au bureau et je rentre. Ça dépend des jours. J'ai beaucoup d'événements le soir parce que je suis obligée enfin d'assister à des galas, des événements de levée de fonds, à des événements, ce que je disais professionnel. [...] Les jours où je suis à la maison, enfin où je travaille depuis la maison, souvent je

démarre beaucoup plus tôt le matin, parce que j'ai des rendez-vous pas mal avec la France.” (Friends of Fondation de France - Participant 3, November 2023)

85.71% of the above interviewees (18/21) have expressed being satisfied with their flexible working schedules because it allowed them to tend to their personal lives when needed. They detailed it by outlining that in their everyday lives, small tasks, responsibilities, or challenges on the personal side arise and need to be taken care of in a certain, rather short, or time-sensitive, timeframe that cannot wait until after their workday. These include for instance attending medical appointments on a weekday between 9am-5pm (Participant 5), tending to their pets (Participant 9) or even looking after their children as mentioned by an employee working for the World Wide Fund for Nature: “je peux aller déposer ma fille quand je veux à la crèche, je peux aller la chercher, j'ai pas de problème.” (World Wide Fund for Nature – Participant 1, November 2023).

Another participant – working for the Friends of Fondation de France, in the New York Office – provided a detailed scenario of when they would cut their workday to take care of personal matters and then resume their workday once done:

“Les jours où je vais à Manhattan, j'essaie de rentrer pas trop tard pour que mon fils qui est encore à la maison ne soit pas tout seul tous les jours quand il rentre de l'école. Donc parfois j'essaie d'être rentrée pour 3h, 3h30, puis je finis ma journée de travail à la maison. Donc suivant les jours il n'y a jamais 2 jours qui se ressemblent mais j'ai une grande liberté pour organiser mon emploi du temps et mes horaires.” (Friends of Fondation de France - Participant 3, November 2023)

One interviewee – working for Alliance Française, in the Westchester Office – notably mentioned that this type of work schedule has appeared to be more efficient, thus leading to a more productive workday, than a stricter and more stable one as it allows employees to cater to personal matters while waiting for a response or a breakthrough on their partners and/or colleagues' end:

“Je m'organise et je travaille un peu avant. Je m'absente et je reviens à la maison et je me reconnecte, je retravaille un peu donc ça c'est très appréciable. Je me rends compte que professionnellement c'est plus efficace. Parce que de me dire que c'est prévu que je travaille de 8h à midi et puis imaginons que j'ai lancé tous mes emails à 10h, et que je suis en attente et que je ne peux pas avancer parce que je n'ai pas les réponses en

face. Que ça soit les membres, ça soit les profs, voilà je ce sont des heures qui ne sont pas efficaces pour l'Alliance.” (Alliance Française Westchester - Participant 8, November 2023)

Nevertheless, the few research participants unhappy with their flexible working schedules claimed it to be because of a lack of predictability. Their schedule was flexible like their peers in the sense that they weren't always working 8-hours straight, but also in the sense that work could arise at any point during the day or night subsequently forcing them to work at unorthodox working hours thus resulting in a work day longer than 8hours a day:

“Yeah, for sure. Having a clear schedule is much more better comfortable for the person. For me fixed hours are more comfortable, but we need to make sure that it will have the range to keep responsive to any things happens. We are talking about balance responsibility emergency, urgent task with a clear path of time” (VIYAN – Participant 17, December 2023)

Hybrid Working Arrangements

90.47% of interviewees (19/21) described their working arrangements as being hybrid. It is differentiated from the above flexible working schedule as it only refers to where interviewees are working and not when or for how long. In other words, they are all allowed by their organization to work both from home and the office during the week. However, the number of days for which employees need to work from the office and/or are allowed to work from home differs across participants from different organizations.

For instance, 23.81% of interviewed employees (5/21), are working for the United Nations, and are requested to work 3 days in the office and 2 days from home. On the other hand, 14.29% of interviewees (3/21), who are working for the World Wide Fund for Nature, are asked to work from the office 2 days a week and are allowed to work the remaining 3 days from home.

Other interviewees shared how for them; the organization has not imposed a minimum number of days they should spend in the office. Instead, it is up to them, and the type of work they need to handle during the week that dictates whether or not they will be going to the office. Thus, they may not go to the office for the entire week as much as they could go every single day to the office during the next week:

“Quand en plein mois d'août, là cette année quand j'avais pas, enfin dans les semaines où j'avais pas de rendez-vous à Manhattan, je passais toute la semaine ici à la maison

et parfois effectivement, il y a des semaines où il faut que j'aie tous les jours au bureau.”
(Friends of Fondation de France – Participant 3, November 2023)

One of the research participants – working for the United Nations Population Fund – notably mentioned that there is a switch currently happening in which they are being re-directed to the old working arrangements of being 9am-5pm in the office every day but also mentioned it hasn't been reinforced entirely as of yet and that it seems to be specific to their organization:

“Right now, there is a definite shift towards getting back into the office. The 9am to 5pm. At least 3 days a week, and I find this a bit constraining [...] It's very difficult for me to have [...] all my meetings in a non-confidential environment. So, I have to stop those meetings. I'm wasting 1 hour of my day in the morning 1 hour of my day in the evening. Just commuting, so I find it very difficult [...] So, it was good for the past three years. And there's now a shift towards more conventional and traditional working hours, which is going to be an issue.” (United Nation Development Program – Participant 13, December 2023)

Organizational Structure

Many of the interviewed employees (11 of them) reported having some structural support from their organization and/or their colleagues. It allowed them to have that additional flexibility in terms of their working habits, which they in turn tend to use to improve their work-life balance. In particular, one of the research participants – working for the United Nations Population Fund, Headquarters' Office in New York – shared how the organizations provide limited leave-of-absence days for specific reasons such as sickness, they are also allowed for unjustified leave-of-absence, and they also have the possibility to discuss the matter with their co-workers. In fact, they can do so to work around and accommodate their personal and/or other concern which seems to be in conflict with their current work schedule and its inherent meetings and such:

“You can have days of absence justified or not. And at the project level you can talk with people involved in the project and maybe postpone or meet different times or different days or change a bit the schedule of the project or review the work allocation, things like that. There are many, but it's everywhere, right? It's the same for new project.”
(United Nations Population Fund – Participant 11, November 2023)

Personal Endeavour

Equally as many research participants (11/21) mentioned being personally involved in their work-life balance. Indeed, they are active agents in that equation in the sense that they can, but most of all have decided that they have a say as to when and for how long they should be working. Hence, setting certain boundaries beneficial to their work-life balance. They don't, however, abuse that ability as they are still working at least the minimum demanded number of working hours a day:

“I think it depends a little bit also on yourself and how you view your job. I think if you're good at setting boundaries, almost any job you can do, you can be like, no, this is just my working life and I'm putting my pen down now it's 5pm and I'm going home.” (Médecins Sans Frontières – Participant 20, December 2023).

Additionally, several interviewed employees further explained that obtaining and developing a good work-life balance was also partially due to the recent global pandemic of Covid-19. It forced organizations to have their workforce work online for a rather long period of time, a period during which they adapted their working styles and behaviors. Research participants described some sort of clairvoyance as being the outcome of the pandemic-related working habits. They started being able to set boundaries in terms of appropriate working times and amount of labor hours:

“No, it's definitely a personal decision that I've given enough of my time and of my day and of my interest to the organization that now is me time. [...] I'm better able to manage the guilt or the feeling that I'm not doing enough. I should be doing more for the work. But I wasn't able to do that for a very long time. So, it's very recent. [...] it's majorly you who puts some boundaries or doesn't put some boundaries. Because I was given the opportunity to do so during COVID.” (United Nation Development Program – Participant 13, December 2023).

Working Overtime

A little over half of the employees, specifically 52.38% (11/21) of them, reported working overtime. The remaining 33.33% (7/21) of them claimed not to work overtime, however, they also shared that they would work on weekends, on holidays as well as after office hours on occasion but not systematically. An employee – working for World Wide Fund for Nature Brussels' Office – described their overtime work as follows:

“Weekends, never. Holidays I try to be available if someone needs me because sometimes you leave, and there are so many things ongoing. And you just need to be aware, but again, it's my choice. I would rather cut for a week and then be a little there to help than just be away for 2 weeks. And then you come back and it just explodes and you don't know what to do, but that's my choice, too.” (World Wide Fund for Nature – Participant 5, November 2023).

Thus, factually a total of 85.71% (18/21) do work overtime. It suggests that they are technically working overtime but aren't considering it overtime work, as it isn't done routinely nor are they forced to do so, and some consider it simply as a little extra work for the organization: “It's not imposed. It's my personal choice [...] I'm committed to the work, and I don't want to penalize the organization if I'm not here.” (United Nations – Participant 10, November 2023).

One interviewee – working for the United Nations Headquarters' Office in New York – explained their overtime work with the workload they were dealing with. Indeed, they are in an atypical position of holding two roles until a new employee is hired to take over the position from which they are transitioning from. Thus, their workload is nearly double what it usually would be, as they have help from their colleagues but are still considered the sole actor in each role, hence explaining why they tend to work overtime in order to fulfill tasks given in these two different roles:

“There are times that I work after hours, especially because I'm supporting two teams and sometimes in order to fulfill the deadlines, I have to work extra hours.” (United Nations – Participant 12, December 2023)

Other employees further explained that in the non-profit environment, employees need to remain flexible and help out where and when they can, showing that Participant 12's experience might not be as uncommon and atypical as they thought/described. Indeed, they are regularly helping their colleagues with their own individual and/or group projects, thus not occupying two roles at once but still partially acting in the capacity of other roles when needed:

“When you're managing a team, you have to show that you are also pulling the weight. It's not only that you are delegating work, but you also have to show by example of like you are helping, you are part of the team as well. I'm not just telling you what to do, but I'm also helping you to lift this weight.” (United Nations – Participant 9, December 2023)

Finally, another employee – working for Alliance Française Westchester, in the New York Office – is working part-time and was therefore explaining that although they don't typically work overtime, they are happy to work overtime when needed as it would mean they are working nearly full-time, while if they were to work full-time, they would probably be less willing to work overtime in those settings:

“Si j'étais à temps plein et qu'on me demande encore plus, au-dessus de 40h, je n'aurais pas envie de le faire mais là, comme je suis à temps partiel le plus reste dans la limite acceptable.” (Alliance Française Westchester - Participant 8, November 2023)

Overall, 66.67% of participants working overtime (12/18) don't seem to mind it as “Ça fait partie du travail” (Friends of Fondation de France - Participant 3, November 2023), they describe it as not being overwhelmingly time-consuming, even though this is an indication that they aren't fostering a great work-life balance. However, 83.33% of them (15/18) described their overtime labor as being periodical. In other words, they aren't working overtime every single day, it is rather depending on what they are handling in terms of projects and/or tasks at work. Some (66.67% of them; 12/18) will work “Weekdays, holidays. Just late in the evening and early in the morning” (Médecins Sans Frontières – Participant 21, January 2024), while the others (the remaining 33.33%; 6/18) will only be working on either the weekend, holidays or after office hours:

“Oui alors les vacances je ne suis pas supposée travailler, en revanche comme il y a une personne pour relever mes mails, répondre. Je m'accorde tous les jours en vacances une demi-heure pour lire mes mails et répondre au mails urgents.” (Friends of Fondation de France - Participant 3, November 2023)

Thus, working overtime is linked by the majority of employees to the workload they are handling at certain points in time.

Variable Workload

Nearly every interviewee (20/21) described their workload as variable, which leads to overtime work. It is variable depending on the months in the year, specifically based on the activities held during these months.

Here too, most employees interviewed rather appreciated this fluctuating workload: “I'm very happy with my workload” (Fondation Jeunes en Tête – Participant 19, December

2023), as it allowed them to “take a breather” (United Nations – Participant 9, December 2023) and not overwork themselves: “I cannot imagine a team that functions at 100% capacity all the time. People get burnout” (United Nations – Participant 9, December 2023)

Finally, 14.29% of participants (3/21) shared that they are not satisfied with their workload, and 66.67% of them (2/3) reported not being satisfied with it because they are forced to work overtime a lot, regardless of whether they are on holidays or weekend, due to strict deadlines they need to meet in a rather medium-to-short timeframe. They are also unsatisfied with it because it drives them to miss out on personal events:

“Ideally, I'm supposed to work 8am to 5pm Monday to Friday, but it doesn't happen like that. Sometimes I can work like... on Saturday, I worked until 3am. [...] Ideally, right now, I'm supposed to be on leave, but there are some things I have to do tomorrow to make sure that certain people have their work done. Sometimes the workload can be a lot. Sometimes the workload can be manageable.[...] So that means that if I was traveling with Ethiopian airline, it would mean that I have to wake up at 11pm my time so that my taxi driver comes and pick me at 2am to catch the flight at 5am. And in that time, I have to work on my report, which I'm going to present immediately when we land. It is exceptionally strenuous. Then also not having time to spend with the person I'm dating. Not having time for them is also not very good. [...] it is exceptionally frustrating.” (African Women's Development and Communication Network – Participant 14, December 2023).

The other 33.33% (1/3) explained their dissatisfaction with their workload for similar reasons, being that they have to work overtime. While they mentioned that “I have no problem with working overtime”, they do struggle with having to work overtime a lot to make the deadlines. They also further describe their workload’s variability as being at two different extremes: “Under-challenged, over-challenged. Overwhelmed and underwhelmed” (Médecins Sans Frontières – Participant 21, January 2024). They detail these two opposite poles in terms of workload, which then affects their work schedule as follows:

“I have one phase of the year where I do not have that much of responsibilities because the whole steering committee is some kind of in a sleep and they do not want to think about Unitarian Congress until March/April whatsoever. And of course, they're dropping their energy levels after the Congress, which is happening in October. [...] So, those two phases, which are very different from when it comes to the intensity of

my work. [...] I start working overtime in around late July, August. And then there is no day where I work... every day I work overtime, since August until the Congress has passed. For the next 2 and a half months. And I collect hours, I think up to 140 hours plus and having 13 to 16 hours days, also on the weekdays, and after the congress, when it all drops, I come at 11am and I leave at 3pm and even then, that's how I reduce all those working hours as well. Try to have a more relaxed workday and because I do not really know what to do directly the months after the congress.” (Médecins Sans Frontières – Participant 21, January 2024)

A specific research participant – working for the United Nations Department for Safety and Security – interestingly mentioned that they didn’t consider working overtime, instead, they simply were putting in “Additional time if needed.” (United Nations Department for Safety and Security – Participant 7, November 2023) to get the job done:

“It's very difficult to fight against that because it's become the norm. In the UN so everyone is wearing multiple hats. And it's very difficult to go and fight. They are what do you call that. Associations. And there are ways and human resources are trying to. Get the staff more agile, but again. The motto for the last three years is, you have to do more with less [...] when there is a crisis, then it's all hands on deck and all the rest takes second priority.” (United Nation Development Program – Participant 13, December 2023)

Work and Non-Work Projects

66.67% of interviewed employees (14/21) explained being involved in personal or professional projects that are interfering with respectively either their professional or personal lives. 21.43% of them (3/14) were involved in personal projects or endeavors, such as re-starting a student life, which impeded on their professional lives, and as a consequence they would sometimes miss out on work.

An interviewee – working for the World Wide Fund for Nature – described how their family situation sometimes impedes on:

“J'ai un enfant en bas âge, elle va avoir 2 ans donc quand elle a eu quelques fois des maladies ou des trucs comme ça où j'ai du prendre congé last minute, là ça a un impact sur le l'équilibre du travail. Parce que du coup j'ai pas su travailler pendant 1,2,3,4 jours

et ça, ça a un impact sur le travail.” (World Wide Fund for Nature – Participant 1, November 2023)

The remaining majority, 78.57%; thus 11/14 interviewees, described being involved in professional matters and projects which prevented them from tending to their personal lives. One of them is involved in both at times personal matters which impede on their professional life and at other times in professional endeavors which impede on their personal lives, they were therefore included in both the former 21.43% and the latter 78.57% ratings of participants. Those who are involved in professional matters impeding on their personal lives described it as being periodical as shown hereafter:

“Quite a few, I feel like I have a friend group that does gatherings that I have to miss on weekends. The most often it's like Sunday nights, because if we have workshops on Monday mornings in a far away destination. We have to leave on Sunday night. So, I'll miss those. But it's not super often either.” (Fondation Jeunes en Tête – Participant 19, December 2023)

Few interviewees (21.43%; thus 3/14) tend to have professional lives that impede on their personal lives, nevertheless they will always try to arrange things so as to not miss out on too important personal events, such as kids' recitals and birthdays. On the other hand, they will miss out on certain, usually less important, personal events as they can't always accommodate their schedule and workload as described by an employee working for the United Nations:

“Usually when I have an important personal event. That I would like to attend and also, even I have to. I try to make the arrangements in order to be able to attend. And also fulfill in advance all my tasks and that's it. But sometimes it's not compatible.” (United Nations – Participant 12, December 2023)

Conclusion on interviewees' experienced work-life balance

As indicated above, the questionnaire items pertaining to one's work-life balance were here too drawn and adapted from a pre-established and reliable measurement tool for Work-Life Balance developed by Fisher-McAuley et al. (2003). According to this tool, most participants do not have an excellent work-life balance.

However, overall, most interviewees (90.48% of them, thus 19/21) reported being satisfied with their work-life balance. Indeed, although 85.71% of them (18/21), reported

working overtime and 95.24% of them (20/21) described having variable workloads as well as working schedules, they ultimately also disclaimed being satisfied with their overall work-life balance (see ratings in Figure 2). While these results seem incompatible, each participant consistently shared that they were deciding actors in their current work-life balance, thus potentially explaining why they are satisfied with and perceive their current work-life balance as being good to excellent.

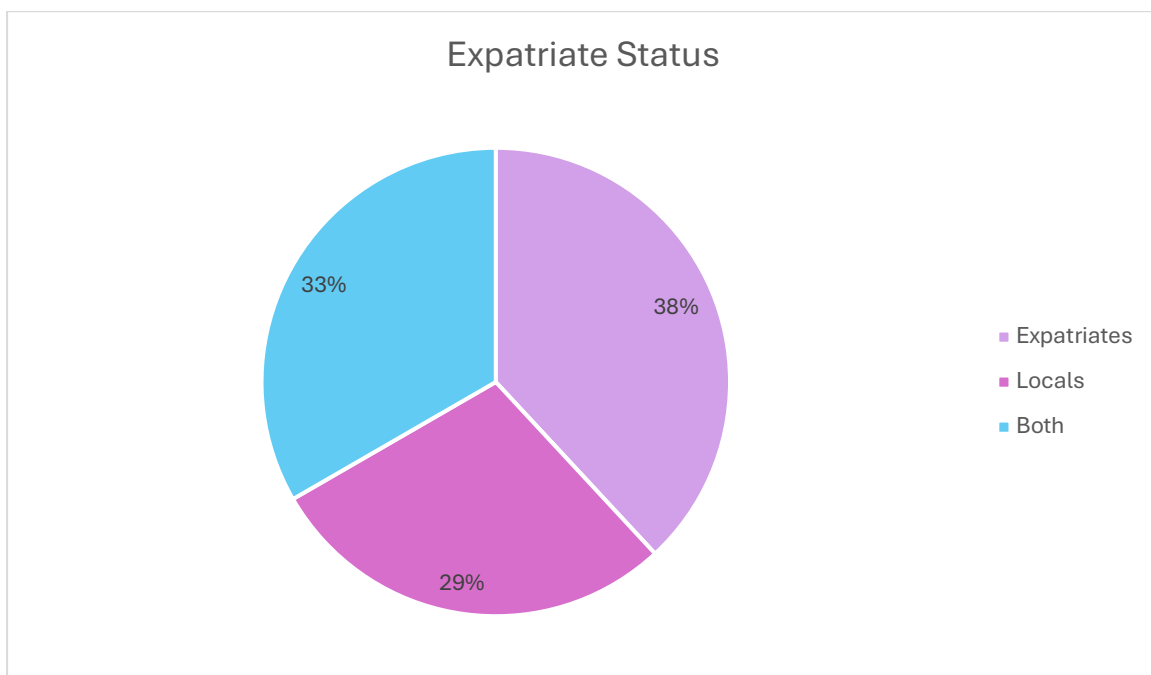
Expatriate Status

The penultimate focus of this thesis was on expatriates' working experience. More specifically on non-profit employees who identify as expatriates and their experiences while working abroad.

A total of 15 research participants reported identifying as expatriates. However, while around 67% of interviewees identified as either an expatriate or a local seemed straightforward, the remaining 33% had a harder time defining their status. They seemed torn between both statuses without entirely identifying with either. In fact, as shown in Figure 1, these 14 research participants (33%) revealed a mixed identification relating to their local and expatriate statuses. For clarity purposes, the findings below are regarding all those who partially and fully identify as expatriates.

Figure 1

How research participants identify: as expatriates, locals, or as both expatriate and local.



An employee - working at the United Nations Headquarters Office in New York – even described it as an international status, suggesting they no longer have a single home country and instead can feel as local in countries they weren't born and/or raised in, as they would in their home country:

“We have a unique status in where we work. And I would say it’s in between international or expatriate status as well as local, because there are certain aspects that require us to function within confines of the country or local that we live in. Personally, I look at myself from a global perspective that I’m an international civil servant, and my view is really in that sense” (United Nations – Participant 9, December 2023)

Thus, it would seem that the lines get blurred as you work for a non-profit organization in terms of your status. It is suggested that this might be the result of traveling often and being posted in various cities and countries around the world throughout their career. As a result, they wouldn’t recognize a single home country per se, but might instead have several where they stayed long enough to foster that sensation of home country.

Table 3

Patterns of Expatriates: definition, number of participants who experienced it and representative examples.

Sub-Theme	Definition	Employees experiencing it (N = 15)	Representative Examples
Positive Influence	When a beneficial effect is perceived from working abroad as an expatriate	2	“Oh, yes, of course because the nature of the work is different when you are expatriate right. [...]So, I was motivated, and I was involved and engaged.” (United Nations Population Fund.- Participant 11, November 2023)
Mixed Influence	When a dual impact, combining some positive elements and some negative ones, is had one interviewee’s working experiences because of their expatriation	10	“Anything I would do in the field would be more meaningful to me.”, but “there's no life” (United Nations – Particiapnt 2, November 2023)
Neutral Influence	When no significant impact was perceived by employees from their expatriation on their working experiences.	3	“No, not really, no. [...] not in your work life balance, or any other aspect of your life.: (United Nations Department for Safety and Security – Participant 7, November 2023)

Positive Influence

9.52% of interviewees (2/15) described either a positive or a negative influence from holding an expatriate status. 2 of them claimed to be very fulfilled thanks to being an expatriate, as everything was new. Hence, they were able to have a huge learning curve and to be intellectually challenged at work while also being able to discover their new cultural environment in their own personal time:

“Well, in general, to be an expat, right, that is much more interesting because it's a change because you have to learn a lot, because you see things that you don't know. And you have potential, [...] you discover things that you have not seen. You are meeting a new culture that you have to live with. And every time you see something different. So, I think that is a very interesting. And that is great. So, it's there at work, that culture that is different, but not only it's in the street, it's where you live and whatever you do. So, I think that is very rich and very interesting” (United Nations Population Fund – Participant 11, November 2023).

Mixed Influence

47.62% of research participants (10/15) claimed to perceive a mixed influence from working abroad as expatriates on their working experience, whether or not they identified as only expatriates.

Positive work meaningfulness and negative work-life balance

3 of those 10 research participants have reported gaining as expatriates greater work meaningfulness at the cost of a work-life imbalance. Indeed, while they were extremely engaged as expatriates, with 2/3 of research participants having been expatriates working in the field, they also acknowledged that their work-life balance suffered from this overly engaging work as described by an interviewee below:

“It was maybe a little bit too much. Actually, one of the decisions why, I decided to go back home was that it was a lot, constantly on every single topic. So, yeah, managing teams, managing several grants, doing the fundraising, doing the monitoring and evaluation, writing the report. I was doing everything, so coordinating with the government. Yeah, so, yes, very engaging and demanding.” (World Wide Fund for Nature – Participant 4, November 2023).

Other

The remaining 70% described various experiences resulting from being expatriates. These experiences always had both beneficial and negative elements to it. Indeed, while for some interviewees, being expatriates allowed them to be more discover new things (both professional and personal) it also came at a slight cost for their work-life balance. Effectively, besides “not seeing a lot of my friends and family back in France” which “sometimes, that's tough.” (Alliance Française Chiclayo – Participant 18, December 2023), they would also spend more time with their family to help them settle in and make sure they would get a smooth transition to their new life, in a new city, new school, potentially new language as well:

“j'avais besoin de temps et je voulais avoir du temps pour m'acclimater moi. Pour que mes enfants s'acclimatent correctement. Pour moi, c'était l'expatriation qui a fait aussi que ... c'était un besoin de pouvoir prendre ce temps personnel, plus que d'habitude.” (Alliance Française Westchester – Participant 8, November 2023)

Others described this mixed influence as being the need to adapt to the local culture and language (which is not the mother tongue), thus work can be difficult due to the amount of novelty (both the content – with a new position – and the form it is done in – the language it has to be done in) but you also get to interact with various people and learn from them which is both a culturally and professionally enriching experience for them:

“I knew English some years ago, but I never had to use it for working when I worked in Spain. So yes, being an expatriate, and because my mother tongue it's different of my working language, yes that affects it. [...] But also, I'm working in a very multicultural environment in which most of us are expatriates. So that also helped to connect with each other and to share this different experience. And you can learn from others that have been expatriates for more time than you.” (United Nations – Participant 12, December 2023).

Neutral Influence

3 interviewees reported not having perceived any particular significant influence from their expatriation on their working experiences. While they do acknowledge that being an expatriate has a slight influence, they also maintain that there is no significant impact on their work experiences. Being expatriate does slightly alter their work-life balance for instance which they only need to readjust, hence it does not have a long-lasting significant impact:

“forcément l'équilibre vie personnelle /vie professionnelle pour tout le monde je pense qu'il est, c'est quelque chose qui est toujours en évolution donc après je pense que ça dépend des personnes” (Friends of Fondation de France – Participant 3, November 2023)

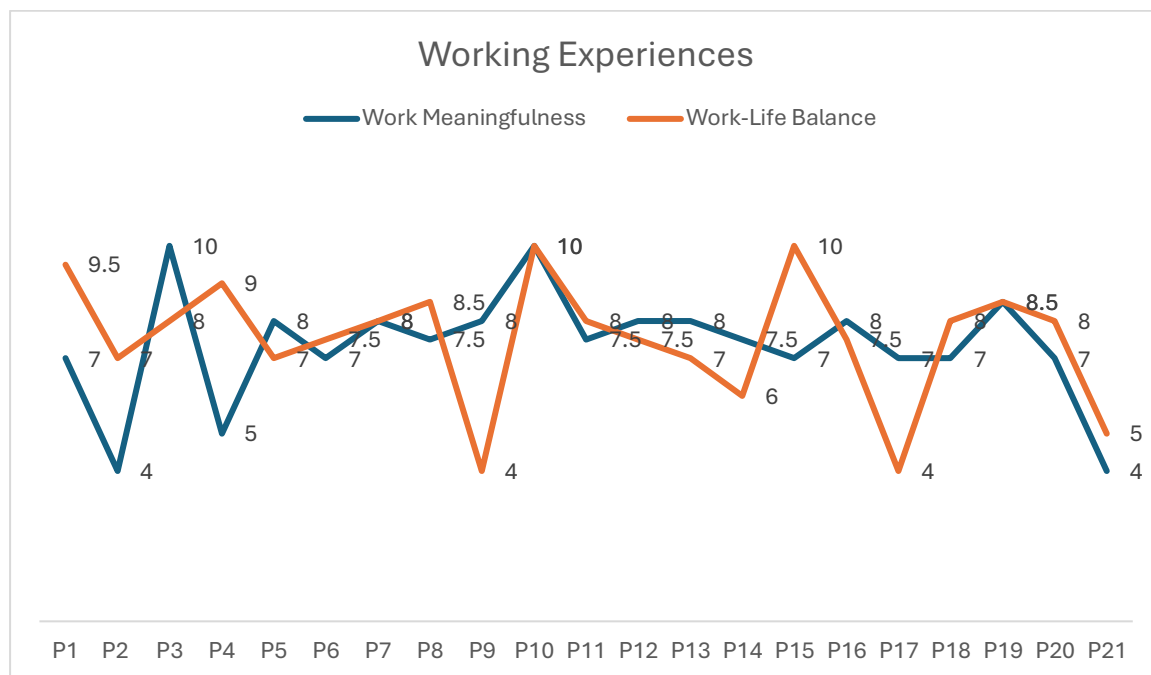
An interviewee also mentioned that it was because they were relocated to a country near to their home country, where the culture wasn't fundamentally different, and the language was the same as in their home country. Hence, they didn't have any major changes induced by being expatriates:

“not necessarily because as I am French, and there are so many French, and we are in a French speaking country. So not so much as expatriate. I don't feel expatriate really, France is a few kilometers away, but I am an expatriate although my home is Geneva now.” (United Nations – Participant 10, November, 2023).

Working Experiences

Overall, interviewed employees seem to have both positive and negative working experiences within the non-profit industry (see the above analyses). Nonetheless, their perceptions of their own working experiences are generally positive with an average self-perceived sense of work meaningfulness of 7.33/10 and an average self-perceived work-life balance of 7.52/10. Except for one single interviewee experiencing under-average working experiences for both their work meaningfulness and work-life balance, the other research participants all have at least one, if not both, of the two self-rated working experiences' elements rated very positively as displayed in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2
Self-perceived working experiences



Note. This figure displays the ratings for research participants' self-perceived work meaningfulness and work-life balance on a 10-points scale.

It should be noted here that the work-life balance self-rating for P21 is an average score calculated on both ratings provided by the interviewee. They had two very different types of work-life balance styles throughout the year induced by their periodic workload being extremely high during certain months and then extremely low during the remaining ones. Thus, an average score of both was calculated and included in Figure 2 above.

Comparing these self-perceived ratings and the above findings, participants' self-perceived working experiences seem to be in some cases better than those they experienced. Effectively, some of the more objective measures (with items such as "How engaging would you describe your work?") seem to contradict some of the participants' self-perceived ratings. Indeed, as previously detailed, an employee – working for the United Nations, Office in Geneva – described working overtime, after office hours, on the weekends, and sometimes on the holidays as well as claimed having missed personal events because of work, but they also self-rated their work-life balance as a 10, on a 10-points scale. Hence, while they objectively don't seem to have a good work-life balance, they still perceive it as: "I feel I have a perfect balance" (United Nations – Participant 10, December 2023).

Additionally, over half of the research participants who had prior experience in the for-profit and/or public industries (9/14 of them) reported not being willing to go back to these sectors as they have had better working experiences altogether in the non-profit industry in comparison to their prior working experiences in these industries. An interviewed employee – working for the European Commission – notably described their current versus their previous working conditions as below:

"Definitely not. No. I would not return to the private sector now. [...] Because it's the life balance, it's much better where I work now than in the private sector. [...] And even the income is very good compared to the salaries they pay in the private sector. So, I don't see any reason to return back to the private sector." (European Commission – Participant 15, December 2023)

A peer working for a different organization further elaborated on the subject by outlining the major differences in terms of working conditions and underlying factors which they prefer and find more attractive in terms of employment in their current non-profit organization as opposed to their previous for-profit employer:

"No. Absolutely not. I think the very fact that at least there is a larger goal. Except than getting a salary and making as much money as possible for the company. That alone and also the multidimension of the work. And it's not just typing one thing on a computer. There's such a broad mandate. For the UN and for the UNDP in particular. I get to hear and I get to learn about all sectors." (United Nations Development Program – Participant 13, December 2023)

Working Experiences per organization: United Nations (UN), World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), Alliance Française (AF), and Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF)

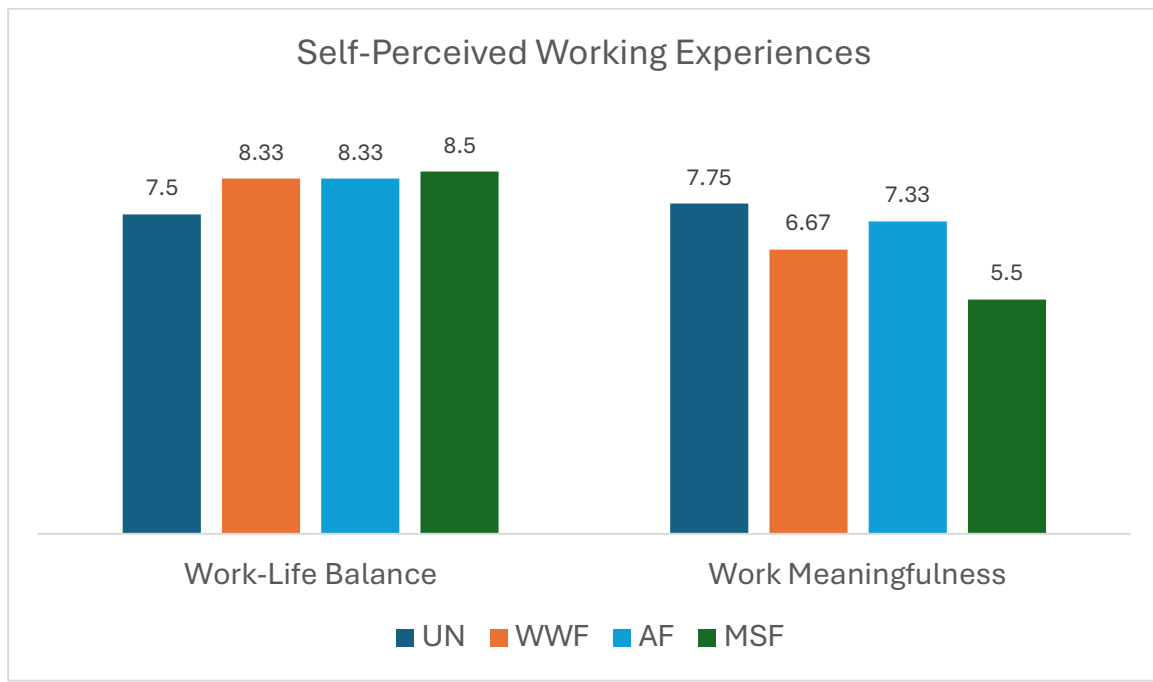
Within 4 different organizations, multiple testimonies were gathered. In total 16 were obtained across these 4 organizations, with a majority (8 of them) belonging to employees working within the UN. Hence, I obtained a clearer vision of the working experiences held in the United Nations, World Wide Fund for Nature, Alliance Française, and Médecins Sans Frontières, all large NGOs.

Figure 3 below illustrates these organizations' average self-perceived work-life balance and work meaningfulness on a 10-points scale. Curiously, work-life balance was by most self-rated as greater than their sense of work meaningfulness even though the latter was always rated as above the average. As a result, the general experience of those NGOs is positive. However, as aforementioned, for various of these interviewed employees, the experienced work-life balance wasn't as good as the one suggested by their self-ratings. For instance, 62.5% (10/16) of them did work overtime (i.e., on the weekends, holidays, and/or after regular business hours) as mentioned previously.

Consequently, the above 4 organizations' resulting working experiences do concur with the overarching experience found through my thematic analysis. They indeed show that all 4 NGOs are inducing overall positive and satisfying experiences for their employees regardless of how they are objectively being experienced (i.e., the work-life imbalance easily developed in this industry as concluded before).

Figure 3

Average self-perceived working experiences within 4 different organizations: UN, WWF, AF and MSF



Discussion

Working experiences have been extensively researched over the years (Jalagat, 2016; Brayfield & Crockett, 1955; Myrtle et al., 2011) especially in the for-profit sector (Gaertner & Nollen, 1989; Kidd, 2008; Makarem & Wang, 2020), but recently also in the non-profit industry (Furtak & Barnard, 2021; Hinestroza et al., 2022; Rafiq et al., 2022), as well as with a particular focus on work-life balance (Riforgiate & Kramer, 2021; Visser et al., 2016) and work meaningfulness (Kuhn et al., 2008; Dempsey & Sanders, 2010; Flores, 2014; Rodell, 2013; McAllum, 2014). However, additional research is still required to both gain more insight and knowledge on this non-profit industry as well as to aid practitioners, particularly today where, attracting and retaining employees has become a challenge (Kwon & Jang, 2021; Kultalahti & Viitala, 2014). Ridder et al. (2012) are calling for this additional research by indicating that non-profit organizations “are facing increasing demand to become more efficient and effective, especially given increasing financial cutbacks, the rising demand of service and the push toward performance-related management” (p.607).

This research answers the above need as it provides a qualitative exploration of the working experiences within organizations of the non-profit industry. In particular through the two research questions: (1) to further identify how work meaningfulness and work-life balance are experienced across the non-profit industry and (2) to explore how different expatriates’ experiences are to locally employed individuals within this non-profit sector. Below I discuss the findings from my qualitative investigation.

1) Non-profit organizations’ resulting working experiences: Support for the perspective of developing individualized working experiences

a) A unique sense of work meaningfulness

From the thematic analysis above, all interviewees have rather positive working experiences in the non-profit industry. They experienced a strong sense of WM. This result supports the current literature where several researchers have found non-profit employees to possess a strong sense of WM (O’Connell, 1988; Dempsey and Sanders, 2010; Wang and Seifert, 2022; Sanders, 2020). It also aligns with a different aspect of the current literature where several studies have both consistently assumed non-profit organizations to provide WMs as employees work towards the “greater good” (Benz, 2005; Light, 2002; Dempsey and Saunders, 2010; Cunningham, 2010; Robichau and Sandberg, 2021; King, 2017), and determined that non-profit employees have different working experience and attract different

types of individuals than the for-profit ones (Schepers et al., 2005; Rawls & Nelson, 1975; Wittmer, 1991; Handy and Katz, 1998; Rawls et al., 1975; Jelstad, 2007).

As mentioned, the majority of research participants possess a good sense of WM which implies that working for non-profit organizations allows individuals to foster a positive sense of WM, and by extension to have pleasing working experiences. Interviewees did not explicitly link some of their working experiences with their resulting moderate-to-good sense of WM (self-perceived). However, certain patterns have emerged in the findings outlining certain factors as positively correlated to one's WM.

The majority of interviewed employees described having a wide variety of responsibilities which would differ on a weekly and/or daily basis; having committed colleagues and working alongside wonderful teams but also that they would be willing to help and regularly offer their assistance to their co-workers with their tasks and projects (voluntarily); as well as having had a meaningful career because they need to have some sort of work meaningfulness, without it, they wouldn't be able to perform in their role. The above respectively suggest task variety and pro-social behavior to be linked with WM as well as posing it as a basic human necessity. These patterns and subsequent suggestions all support previous studies; including Hackman & Oldham's (1975) Job Characteristics Model (JCM) which explains the obtention of work meaningfulness via three main pillars including the variance of one's responsibilities and tasks; as well as many other studies in the current literature (Grant, 2007; Williams, 1997 & 2007; Cunningham, 2008; Hulin, 2014; Greenberg et al., 1997). In fact, my research findings indicate that non-profit employees seem to have multiple responsibilities. Several interviewees referred to them as to be wearing "many hats" (United Nations - Participant 9, November 2023), thus carrying out many different tasks. Indeed, some mentioned having to work in the urgency and based on the current geo-political context, are always working on different projects. Most of these tasks are done within the purview of their role, but others are carried out as "favors" of sorts to aid their colleagues when in need. While time-consuming, they explained this ability to alter tasks regularly to be stimulating. This directly relates to the first main pillar identified in the JCM (Hackman & Oldham, 1975): task and responsibilities variance. My findings also allowed me to show that interviewed employees seemed to have found a purpose for and in what they were doing. Indeed, they described their work as having value for the organization. They also found, via their organization, value in their work for society. They perceive and understand their work as being important to them, the organization, their colleagues as well as the society. This relates to the 2nd main pillar being task significance. Finally, certain interviewed employees described

having the possibility of seeing projects through whether on their own or as one of the parties involved. Once allocated to them, they carry it out and have a position adequate to witness first- or second-hand the outcomes of their work on the targeted population. This in turn allows them to identify with their job, making them proud of what they are contributing to and working towards achieving. Once again, my findings here also relate to Hackman & Oldham (1975), specifically to their final main pillar: task identity.

In addition, while not all interviewees experienced work meaningfulness alike, as previously detailed, the majority of employees (95.24% of them) still believed and felt that their work has contributed to giving their lives meaning and satisfaction. It adds to current and previous research on the matter which has already shown work to be positively related to life meaningfulness (Ward & King, 2017; Dik et al., 2013; Steger & Dik, 2010), thus work meaningfulness could be an aspect in one's work that particularly promotes life meaningfulness. In fact, interviewees overall described being satisfied and happy about most of their detailed working experiences. Work meaningfulness was linked with greater well-being (Lee & Oh., 2015), and positive affect has in turn been shown as a contributor to one's life meaningfulness (Chu et al., 2019; Miao & Gan, 2019; Tov & Lee, 2016; Hicks et al., 2012; King et al., 2006). At last, this also further implies that one does not need to experience very high or perfect levels of work meaningfulness to have it contribute to one's overall life meaningfulness as well.

Interestingly enough and as previously mentioned, an employee working for the United Nations Geneva Office claimed that the type of organization they are working for is what has allowed their work to positively contribute to their life's meaningfulness. Hence, they dissociated the organization from its industry in that regard. In fact, interviewed employees' testimonies do not show whether NPOs allow for a greater meaning of life via their work meaningfulness. This brings in a new perspective, presenting the type of organization, international or not, to be the influencer instead of the industry employees work in. On the other hand, interviewees from smaller organizations with no international status, also reported feeling as though their work strongly contributed to giving their life meaning. Hence, it could be argued that the contributor might be a mix of both, the industry and the organization.

Curiously, there was a minority of research participants who reported feeling valued by society in a mixed way (38.10% of them). It is suggested that given they are serving society in one way or another, whether firsthand or as part of the bigger chain, society would inherently value them for the work they provide and their services as part of the organization. While this may be the case, it does not seem to be perceived as such by all the non-profit employees. Indeed, interviewees did mention that they believed and noticed their organization as being

automatically valued by most societies for its aim(s) and activities' outcomes, however, they felt less so about themselves. Many explained it with the fact that the society knows their organization by reputation, but sometimes don't even know everything the organization is involved in, much less what most of their employees do. Hence, they don't feel valued personally, but they do, as being part of a well-established organization with a reputation to be working for the greater good. It is interesting to notice how their work meaningfulness remains positive despite not feeling very valued by society. One could argue that this is because they already feel valued by their co-workers and their organization, individuals they mostly interact with on an everyday basis, and thus might not need this recognition from societies. This argument is also supported by someone who has had experience working in the field, and who described feeling much more valued by society when they were working in that position, as they were providing first-hand support, whereas in their current more in-the-office position, they did not feel this value from society anymore. This implies that for in-the-office roles, feeling valued by their colleagues and their organization could be intrinsically rewarding, enough to positively influence their work meaningfulness (Tippet & Kluvers, 2007; Thomas, 2009).

It is also fascinating to notice that although they believe their work and involvement in it to be meaningful for society, some on the one hand still don't feel totally valued by it, but on the other hand, seem to have a good sense of work meaningfulness. This suggests that there is a correlation between perceiving one's work as being meaningful to the society it serves and one's work meaningfulness.

My thesis confirms the suggestions previously made pertaining to the high level of motivation and commitment required from employees to perform in their roles (Lazarova et al., 2021) which was shown to also be linked with greater performance (Al-Mulla et al., 2019; Colquitt et al., 2011; Mohamed et al., 2018; Shahzadi et al., 2014). Every single interviewee did claim to be committed to their organization and its goals. While they weren't unanimously describing their respective colleagues to be equally as motivated and committed, the majority did tend to describe their peers as such.

Furthermore, a majority of interviewees (15/21, thus 71.43%) described having had a meaningful career so far. Many of these interviewed employees have either had prior experience in the non-profit industry but with different organizations or have been working for their current non-profit organization for more than 10 years (See Appendix A, Figure A2). Hence, they have been building their career at least partially in the non-profit industry, thus suggesting that the non-profit industry seems to positively influence one's ability to develop a

meaningful career over time. Otherwise expressed; by working for a non-profit organization even for only a few years, employees seem to see their sense of WM increase.

Overall, it seems that employees working in the non-profit industry, regardless of the size; aims, or geographic locations (country and/or city wise) of the organization, experience WM. This implies a strong correlation between the industry and WM, even though WM is not equal across the non-profit industry as its level (on a 1-10 points scale) and experience are unique to each research participant. Thus, making it possibly inevitable for employees working in the non-profit industry to experience at least a moderate sense of work meaningfulness. If WM is inevitably experienced in the non-profit industry, it further implies that the underlying related known factors, such as those enquired about in the well-established WAMI (Steger et al., 2012) questionnaire, are to a certain extent also positively experienced in it. Some will be experiencing factor A (i.e., their sense of WM to be contributing to giving their life meaning) higher than factor B (i.e., their work aids them to understand themselves) while others vice-versa, but ultimately both result in the same experience of a good WM. For instance, non-profit employees would know how their role and work are important to the organization and by extension, the society, subsequently leading to experiencing a good sense of WM.

b) A distinctive work-life balance experience

On the other hand, the results regarding research participants' work-life balance are less obvious than those noticed for their experienced sense of WM. In fact, the overall self-perceived work-life balance is rated relatively positively across employees with an average of 7.52 out of 10 (see Figure 2) while their actual work-life balance does not seem to reflect such a great balance in their work-family equation. The latter is consistent with current literature which has established that working in the non-profit industry tends to be the source of anxiety and stress for its employees which in turn leads to an imbalance in the work-family equation (Ruder & Riforgiate, 2018; Dempsey & Sanders, 2010).

The fact that their work-life balance is not good seems to be due to the industry itself as multiple participants consistently described it as being very unpredictable:

“The context of humanitarian NGO [...] is little bit complex. It's not a regular, I would say regular duties with a fixed period or working hours to sit. It's more required flexibility, responsiveness to be prepared eventually. We are talking about humanitarian sector, so you need to respond to the needs, and the needs do not acknowledge the time.”
(VIYAN – Participant 17, December 2023)

The majority of participants reported operating under hybrid working arrangements, using their at-home days to focus on individual tasks while the in-the-office days were used for group projects, meetings as well as interactions with colleagues. They later also self-rated their work-life balance between above the mean and perfect on a 1-10 point scale. These findings support a study that investigated the correlation between working hybrid and one's overall satisfaction with their work-life balance. They found hybrid working arrangements to positively influence one's work-life balance when the in-the-office days had a strong communication and group interaction component (Santillan et al., 2023). Additional research on the matter has reached similar conclusions (Magnusson, 2019; Chung & van der Lippe, 2020; Biron et al., 2022; Choudhury et al., 2022). Participants explained that the flexibility resulting from their flexible working arrangements enables various factors, including allowing them to be more efficient and to look after their health. This adds to the current literature already outlining how hybrid work can facilitate greater satisfaction and performance (Beno, 2021; Lenka, 2021; Choudhury et al., 2021; Naqshbandi et al., 2023), specifically due to the flexibility inherent to this type of working arrangement that employees highly value (Bloom et al., 2022; Aksoy et al., 2022).

On the other hand, certain participants also working in hybrid mode did not particularly detail their in-the-office days as being prone to interactions with their team and colleagues or for group work (Participants 10, 14 & 21). Thus, they are adding to Beno's (2021) study raising concerns about the potentially isolating influence hybrid work could have on its employees.

Being satisfied with their work-life balance, although they aren't experiencing it as such, could be due to personal choices for the majority of interviewed employees. Indeed, most interviewees described working overtime but being willing to do so. Hence, there seems to be a potential relationship between being decision-makers and being satisfied with their work-life balance. This further implies that an employee might not need to have a good-to-excellent work-life balance to have good job satisfaction or even to perform greatly which contradicts previous research that has established a correlation between these work-related elements (Haar et al., 2014; Nurendra and Saraswati, 2016; Adikaram and Jayatilake, 2016; Kasbuntoro et al., 2020).

While 100% of employees described their working arrangements as hybrid, it is understood that they all possess office-based jobs. Some of them travel now and then for their work but they still are based in an office. This is interesting as it could be suggested that

individuals working in the field, otherwise known as frontline workers, wouldn't have the possibility of working from home given that their role involves interacting personally with their beneficiaries, such as victims of hurricanes, and aligns with Hill et al's (2003) findings that humanitarian aids are not allowed to relocate their work environment. It would further imply that they would have a less stable, if not an imbalance in their work-family relationship. This aligns with Dickmann et al.'s (2010) study outlining humanitarian aids working in the field as experiencing an imbalanced work-life equation which has also been confirmed and established in the literature by many other researchers (Dickmann et al., 2010; Mills & Täht, 2010).

It stands to reason that organizations such as Doctors Without Borders whose aim is to intervene as medical humanitarians amidst natural and human-caused disasters or conflicts, including wars and earthquakes (Doctors Without Borders, n.d.), would have part of their workforce in the field, to fulfill their role which is to be ambassadors for their organization's aim. In other words, their role is to provide first-hand support and help in promoting and restoring human welfare. 8.33% (1/12) of interviewees stand out as they disclaimed having an office but never operating from it as their work takes place in the field self, and they are therefore constantly traveling and moving to where the mission takes them (Participant 19). This relates to Salamon and Sokolowski's (2016) study outlining the fact that some non-profit employees do not possess an office while others do.

91.67% (11/12) of interviewees did not report feeling burned-out or exploited but they did mention having periodically stressful work. While this may be true in their current employment situation, several participants either experienced it during previous employment or hinted that being burned out, or stressed due to work was common in the non-profit industry:

“And so, I have definitely seen that as like young professionals, very passionate for the mission that they were taken advantage of, and it wasn't nice. And I think that can happen very quickly and easily within NGOs. [...] they rely on people going above and beyond. And often, the people in charge also feel like, well, you're very passionate about this, and this is super important. This has to happen. So, we just have to do this now, even if it costs you everything, [...] Like this kind of recklessness because the mission is above everything. And we're literally saving lives here. So, we need to do this because it's important. And then they know that they have very passionate, committed employees, and it's much easier to emotionally manipulate them and I'm not saying that it always happens consciously or like all the bosses are terrible people. But I think there is a tendency towards that sometimes.” (Médecins Sans Frontières - Participant 20, December 2023)

These experiences and descriptions align with the already vast research on the topic, consistently describing non-profit employees' work as leading to burnout due to it being stressful, underestimated, and sometimes even exploitative (Chen and Gorski, 2015; Dempsey and Saunders, 2010; Rosso et al., 2010).

All research participants reported not only experiencing great work-meaningfulness but also being highly committed to their work which is how they explained not minding working overtime or being paid less than they could be in either a different position or in a different organization. In fact, an employee – working for the United Nations, Headquarters' Office in New York – explained this very fact as follows:

“I have the background and experience to be in another position with more responsibilities. That maybe that I could feel more I don't know fulfilled. Because I know that I can do more than what I am doing in my current position, but I'm happy I'm aware that I applied for this position, so I'm trying to do my best in my position as I told you to try to improve our procedure, and processes.” (United Nations – Participant 12, December 2023)

This supports Smith et al.'s (2006) study in which they claim that being committed to one's work, its underlying meaning, and to knowing they are working towards the “greater good” explains why participants are willing to be compensated less or to miss out on vertical career progress.

Furthermore, as previously mentioned a total of 99.67% (11/12) of interviewees work overtime without, for the majority (75%; 9/12), being compensated for it: “Sometimes you can work overtime and there's no compensation.” (African Women's Development and Communication Network – Participant 14, December 2023). This research's findings further support another study led by Wrzesniewski (2003) where she determined that although non-profit employees will experience higher job satisfaction, they will also work overtime irrespective of whether they are compensated for that extra time spent at work.

The literature has shown non-profit employees to often be overly involved in their professional lives, thus missing out on personal matters and by extension causing an imbalance in their lives (Dempsey and Sanders, 2010; Ruder and Riforgiate, 2018), which my thesis' results support, but not entirely. Indeed, the majority of interviewees (77.77%; 7/9) claimed being involved in professional endeavors that occasionally disrupted their personal lives. Of these 77.77%, 28.57% (2/7) described also being able to organize things around their personal lives to not miss out on important events, such as birthdays or even recitals. The remaining

33.33% (3/9) participants (as 1 interviewee described being at times more involved personally and at other times more professionally, thus scoring in both categories) shared being involved in personal matters which impeded on their professional work. While those 3 employees' experiences don't align with previous research, this thesis' interesting finding lies with the former 28.57% of participants describing a certain organizational flexibility. Although it is a small percentage, more than 2 participants in 2 different organizations described a similar experience suggesting that it might not be that uncommon in the non-profit industry to hold a certain flexibility in how one arranges their work-life balance. This is also further supported by the general experience of flexibility in different areas of their work-family equation that the majority of interviewees consistently described.

As a result, just like for their WM, each of the research participants' work-life balance experiences are unique. They may be better in certain elements (i.e., having the flexibility to arrange one's schedule) and worse in others (i.e., working on the weekends, after office hours, or even on holiday). This relates back to Bailey & Maddens' (2016) perspective of working experiences being unique to individuals, specifically one's WM. Indeed, they found employees' WM to be a very personal thus unique experience to have while also acknowledging that some main overarching experiences (i.e., positive vs negative) can still be held within the industry. Therefore, the above supports and adds to their perspective by posing not only WM but also WLB to be unique to each employee.

c) General working experiences: unique yet similar overarching experience

Interviewees self-rated for the majority, their WM and WLB relatively positively, however many interviewees had previous working experiences in the same and/or different sectors. It is therefore wondered whether having previous experiences in the for-profit and/or public industries could be an influencing factor on interviewees' self-perceived ratings of their own working experiences. Effectively, 14 interviewees reported having previous experiences in either or both the private and public sector (Participants 5 to 18), and 12 of them have relatively high ratings for both their self-perceived experienced WM and WLB. It is therefore suggested that having prior experience in the public and/or private sector before working in the non-profit one allows employees to be more self-aware of their working experiences. In other words, by comparing their different working experiences, they might be more appreciative of the differences between the sectors/organizations they worked in/for, such as the flexibility consistently mentioned across testimonies regarding working patterns (i.e., schedules,

arrangements, and even workloads) had in the non-profit versus the for-profit work environment.

While this thesis further added to pre-existing research showing organizations within the non-profit industry as having different aims and even different internal management strategies (Aye et al., 2019), it also shows on the other hand that despite this variability the industry still seems to induce similar working experiences. Indeed, although none of the interviewees' experiences were exactly similar to their peers working in different non-profit organizations, the overarching resulting working experiences were for the majority similar; being that they are experiencing a good-to-great sense of work-meaningfulness and are nurturing a self-satisfying, yet objectively, work-life balance. These ultimately result in non-profit employees perceiving their working experiences as overall positive in that industry. This does not entirely align with previous studies outlining how non-profit employees' working conditions have deteriorated due to conflicting demands (i.e., social vs business ones), intense workload and priorities at work (Putnam, 1986; Smith et al., 2013; Baines, 2004; Cunningham & James, 2009; Aronson & Neysmith, 2006; Broadbent, 2014).

Many interviewees had already had a certain career, and as one employee described: "I noticed that with getting older I'm able to find a better balance." (United Nations Population Fund – Participant 11, November 2023). Hence, years of work experience and age together may be influencing one's overall working experiences in the non-profit industry. They would be able to better develop, by becoming participating influencers instead of passive ones, their working experiences over time.

Furthermore, some also outlined how getting older also introduced a new element to consider for them, mainly the familial aspect of their lives. They are considering this new element concerning their work meaningfulness and subsequent resulting working experiences (positive versus negative). This element's value seems to evolve throughout one's life. Furthermore, depending on what they value the most at a specific point in their lives, they do not mind making concessions on the less valued elements of their lives at that time. As such, one interviewee explained for instance their ability to still have an overall, good working experience despite the lower sense of work-meaningfulness (compared to their experience as an expatriate working in the field) thanks to their priorities. In other words, they are valuing different elements of their lives at different periods of their lives. As such, being in a more advanced stage of their adulthood, they value their family life and what it entails more so than their sense of work meaningfulness. Therefore, although they know that their work in the field

was “more meaningful to me” than the one they currently have working in the Headquarters office in New York, they are still overall satisfied with their working experiences as they can spend more time and enjoy their family more so than when they were working back in the field:

“80% having kids and shifting my focus at this part of their lives. I'll become teenagers maybe. And 20% definitely the meaningfulness of the work and you give more when you were interested, when you enjoy it.” (United Nations – Participant 2, November 2023)

As a result, those boundaries and priorities were both inspired from and set to be respected based on their own previous working and/or living experiences. A junior employee wouldn't have that experience to draw from, thus might not be able to set them. This could potentially explain the contrast between current literature and this thesis' findings, where most interviewees seemed to find ways in which to still nurture an overarching positive experience despite experiencing certain work-related factors at a lower and/or more negative level than others. Additional research is however needed to explore whether employees' job tenure and/or age are indeed correlated to their overall working experiences.

Moreover, it would seem that one's work meaningfulness is related to one's work-life balance. In other words, although objectively, interviewees' work-family equation isn't well balanced, they are still satisfied with it as they all expressed choosing to work overtime and to use that flexibility, characteristic of the non-profit industry, to continue working beyond regular working habits because they were driven by their work and the necessity for it to be carried out. Hence, it is suggested that non-profit employees' strong sense of work meaningfulness would tend to drive them to disregard regular working habits and develop an imbalanced work-family equation all the while remaining in most cases satisfied with their working experiences. It would be interesting to pursue this focus in future research with additional data.

Finally, a few participants also made sure to specify when answering questions that their meaningful careers were due to their personalities, their experiences, and their backgrounds as well:

“Oui, tout a toujours eu du sens. Ou en tout cas c'est moi qui le donnait. [...] Enfin tout dépend aussi de ce que vous donnez comme sens.” (Alliance Française Westchester – Participant 6, November 2023).

As such someone else may not similarly experience their career. This supports Bailey & Madden's (2016) study as they too discovered that their participants all seem to have various stories and instances in which they experience WM. While they were able to identify a few conditions or particularities of when their participants experienced WM, it still seems that this

concept is very unique to everyone. Roberts (2003) notably explained WM's uniqueness as being largely due to employees' personalities and backgrounds. According to Bailey & Madden's (2016) findings, if WM is unique to oneself while still adding to a more general type of experience (i.e., positive or negative), it could be argued that working experiences are both a personal experience but also contributing to an overarching type of experience. Thus, this would explain why both WM and WLB were experienced differently by each research participant while still resulting in an overarching similar type of experience. Specifically, this outlines how the industry is allowing employees to foster positive working experiences, while still giving them the freedom to experience it individually differently.

Consequently, while experiencing different work-related elements or induced events, non-profit employees still seem to be developing good work-life balance as well as a good sense of work meaningfulness.

2) Holding an Expatriate Status: A different yet similar experience to their local peers

Those with prior experience as expatriates claimed it to be a mixed (both positive and negative) experience. Indeed, they felt very engaged and fulfilled all the while feeling the need to work longer hours. As such, their work meaningfulness was strong, although their work-life balance was not as much. While some participants preferred the expatriate experience over their local experience, they did not per se prefer it because of the expatriate status self, but rather because of the type of job they were doing while being an expatriate. In particular, working in what they called the "Field". Given this was observed in both the UN and WWF's workforce, both are NGOs, it could be argued that this experience is specific to intergovernmental organizations. Only participants working for these types of organizations mentioned their previous experiences as expatriates, experiences which were for them always in a different position called "Field Officer", as being more enjoyable and positive altogether than their current local office-based positions. They explained this preference by highlighting the fact that they were able to perceive first-hand the results and outcomes of their work in the field (whether that was on local populations and/or on local fauna & flora). This further suggests that employees working in the non-profit industry need to perceive how their work is helping a certain cause or creating an impact on someone and/or something in order to create significant work meaningfulness.

This aligns with previous studies that established and repetitively assumed a positive correlation between working in the field, in particular as humanitarian aid as well as volunteer

work, and one's strong sense of work meaningfulness (Kuhn et al., 2008; Rodell, 2013; McAllum, 2014; Flores, 2014). Sometimes it can even be too strong, resulting in what is being referred to as a meaningfulness 'overflow' in which work meaningfulness' consequences start being negative and not positive (Bailey et al., 2017). This is for instance shown with interviewees describing their work-life balance as non-existent when they were expatriates in the field, while they enjoyed the work wasn't all that enjoyable. Here too, their specific experience of fostering a worse or negative work-family equation supports various research findings stating that humanitarian expatriates will either have their work impede on their family life (Oelberger, 2014; Dickemann et al., 2010; Shortland & Cummins, 2007) or vice versa, their personal life impeding on their professional one (Fechter, 2012).

On the other hand, except for the change in their work-family equation, none of them mentioned any other harsh working conditions that may impact their expatriate experiences negatively. This does not align with current literature which has reported challenging working experiences with issues including cultural or language barriers, revenue, security, and seclusion (Hunt & O'Brian, 2009; Fechter, 2012; Loquercio et al., 2006; Asgary & Lawrence, 2014; Bjerneld et al., 2004), or even being away from known social support systems such as families and friends left behind (Ahmad, 2002; Shaffer et al., 2012). This inconsistency could be due to an underlying factor, such as demographics including age and personality. It could be due to having a spouse as suggested by an interviewee: "Alone I would not have managed so well so there's definitely something to be said for expatriating with a spouse." (United Nations Development Program – Participant 13, December 2023). At last, they may also be outliers to the otherwise so far well-established correlation.

Limitations and future research

While this thesis has offered some answers to the posed research questions, it has also introduced many new questions and suggestions that need additional research to clarify.

In fact, among the above-mentioned patterns observed which resulted in a noticeably good work meaningfulness, there was also being valued by various entities including by their organization. Although it is a very subjective matter as it is a personal sensation, there still is a consensus amongst interviewees in which they do feel valued by their organization. They claimed feeling so via the feedback received from their peers and their supervisors as well as through the different activities made available to them, including professional trainings. When later also asked about their colleagues, many reiterated that they also felt valued but mainly given their positive feedback. Hence, it could be disputed that those claiming to feel valued by their organization may intertwine it with the value they perceive from their colleagues. On the other hand, one might argue that their colleagues and supervisors are part of the organization's workforce and, hence do represent the organization as well. Therefore, the difference, or lack of it, between an organization and its workforce should be both more clearly defined by researchers and better highlighted by interviewees in future research when enquiring about such matters.

Research participants describing a meaningful career all had at least some if not only prior experience in the non-profit industry. Following this logic, it is thus wondered why some research participants with also various years of experience working in non-profit organizations did not claim to have a meaningful career. This could be because not all interviewees have had prior working experiences solely in the non-profit industry. Some reported having worked for the public and/or private sector prior to being employed in their current organization (See Appendix A, Figure A2). Additional data and research are required to ascertain these suggestions. For instance, a quantitative longitudinal study could in the future focus on studying the sense of meaningfulness held by employees from across sectors (i.e., public, private, and non-profit). Thus, employees within all three sectors would be recruited. They would be assessed once a year, over maybe 5-10 years, on their sense of meaningfulness in their current position using a short questionnaire. Such a timeframe would allow enough time to potentially see certain employees switch sectors, after which they would still be answering this questionnaire yearly for the remainder of those 5-10 years. As a result, this research would allow us to determine whether a career held in one sector versus multiple ones does lead to the development of a meaningful career.

While the above findings suggest a strong correlation between non-profit work and WM, it remains to be cross-examined quantitatively with additional research. Specifically, to determine with more accuracy and reliability the perceived positive relationship between working for non-profit organizations in the non-profit sector and having positive working experiences leading to the fostering of a good sense of work-meaningfulness.

Another interesting effect was observed during interviews, specifically between interviews conducted in English versus those conducted in French. While outlined with different words, everyone seemed to have the same definition/understanding of what WM means. A slight exception was seen in the French interviews. However, it could be argued that this would be due to cultural interpretations. In other words the term “WM” was translated as best I could, but it might in itself, neither be a common word/concept in francophone countries nor the French language in general. Hence, francophones were struggling to define the concept by themselves. They did however report experiencing it as much as the anglophones after the concept was defined to them (just like it was defined in the English-conducted interviews). Thus, this different cultural interpretation could represent a limitation to avoid in the future, although it was here mitigated by defining the concept to participants.

Regarding interviewees’ working habits, the current literature has seen an increase in studies warning about the isolating effect of remote working arrangements (Schade et al., 2021; Baruch, 2000; Yang et al., 2022; Gajendran and Harrison, 2007), while also seeing positive outcomes from hybrid work which allows for a harmonious combination of social interaction and social isolation (Knight et al., 2022; Babapour Chafi et al., 2022). Therefore, it would be interesting to determine with additional studies whether these concerns raised in the general working environment on remote work would also apply to the one in the non-profit industry.

Moreover, as previously suggested there seems to be a correlation between being an active agent in one’s WLB and being satisfied with their WLB. In particular by deciding or taking part in the decisions pertaining to where, when, and how long they should work for. Nevertheless, additional research is needed to determine this with certainty.

As previously stated, a correlation between WLB satisfaction and job satisfaction as well as job performance has already been established (Haar et al., 2014; Nurendra and Saraswati, 2016; Adikaram and Jayatilake, 2016; Kasbuntoro et al., 2020), and was here perceived too. These previous studies, however, were consistently conducted in the context of the for-profit industry, thus additional research is needed to determine whether one’s objective work-life balance could not have an impact on one’s job satisfaction and performance in the non-profit industry

Given that certain positions within non-profit organizations are in the field with no hybrid working arrangements possible, it is suggested that the aforementioned effect of hybrid work on employees' WLB can only be perceived in specific types of roles. A few interviewees described not having these hybrid working arrangements when they were expatriates working in the field. Thus, this introduces the possibility that different roles at different levels may not have the possibility of hybrid working arrangements due to the nature of their role. This further suggests that working experiences as a whole may differ across roles at different levels. While this may be a possibility, this research's participant pool was rather large, both across countries and different organizations but also across different types of roles. Hence, additional research is here required to both further explore working experiences held in fundamentally different roles as well as to determine whether employees working in the field have a good work-life balance or one similar to those working in offices for a non-profit organization.

My thesis gives a broader insight into the non-profit industry and the types of organizations held in it but also more specifically those held in various NGOs (including the United Nations and the World Wide Fund for Nature). Nonetheless, additional NGOs and other smaller and more local NPOs, such as Emmaüs and Direct Relief, should also be further examined in future research. These additional explorations will provide even more information supposedly concurring with my thesis' findings. They will further allow the establishment of a more reliable conclusion as to the working experiences fostered by and in non-profit organizations. In addition, it would be very interesting to further explore the working experiences of non-profit expatriates, specifically those working in the field. As seen through my thematic analysis, expatriates working in the field don't have the same working environment as those working in the office. Hence, it would be intriguing to first explore more in-depth what are their working experiences like in field-based roles. Later additional studies should compare quantitatively those working experiences with those of their peers holding office-based roles. It will result in an even greater clarity as to the working experiences held in the non-profit industry both across various types of organizations but also across different types of roles.

At last, while my findings seem reliable based on my dataset's size (21 research participants), future studies should quantitatively determine whether the non-profit industry does indeed provide overall positive experiences. In more detail, it should also test whether the non-profit industry induces a positive sense of work meaningfulness all the while also inducing a relatively poor to low work-life balance.

Practical Implications

This thesis contributes to the current non-profit literature. Indeed, it adds to previous research ascertaining the correlation between non-profit work and one's work meaningfulness (Benz, 2005; Light, 2002; Dempsey and Saunders, 2010; Cunningham, 2010; Robichandberg, 2021) as well as non-profit work and greater work-life imbalance (Ruder & Riforgiate, 2018; Dempsey & Sanders, 2010). It also contributes to a lesser extent to the literature focusing on expatriates and their experiences (Kuhn et al., 2008; Rodell, 2013; McAllum, 2014; Flores, 2014), as many of the interviewees were either currently expatriates or had had previous working experiences as expatriates. Finally, it adds to the literature by further supporting a new perspective: working experiences being unique to employees (Bailey & Madden, 2016) yet resulting in a common overarching experience associated with the industry.

On another aspect, it also represents useful and practical knowledge that the heads of non-profit organizations can use to their advantage, including to reassure current and attract future sponsors and/or stakeholders. They can further use this knowledge to adapt their human resource management strategies to attempt to better retain their current workforce. Thus, mitigating the current war for talent's (Wigert, 2022) effect on their organization. Specifically, they could alter their enforced working habit-related working policies to maintain or re-install some flexibility. Indeed, the interviewees consistently reported enjoying this flexibility, thus indicating that NPOs should persist in implementing it across human resource management policies. For instance, should it not yet be the case, non-profit organizations should install a hybrid working style, with between 2 to 3 days in the office as it was the enjoyed hybrid arrangement described by research participants. Similarly, they should also allow for greater flexibility in terms of their workforce's schedules. In other words, they should give their employees the regular amount of labor hours (i.e., 8h per day) with core hours where everyone is meant to be working (i.e., between 10am-2pm; both online and/or in-person); to have some overlapping working hours across their workforce; while the remaining hours can be completed when it is most convenient to them. This would allow for a smoother blending of both their work and personal lives. As such, they could sometimes leave work earlier to attend to their personal lives (i.e., picking their children up from school), while resuming their work later in the evening (i.e., once the children are in bed) all the while having worked the core hours alongside their colleagues priorly in the day. This should aid in retaining their workforce by increasing the likelihood of inducing positive and enjoyable working experiences.

Nonetheless, my findings show differences in working experiences between employees working in the office (both locals and expatriates) versus those working in the field (here only expatriates). Hence, the above suggestion would only be practically useful for office-based non-profit roles. While my findings do not allow for practical suggestions as to how field officers could develop positive experiences, it does highlight the fact that different working styles could lead to similar results. It also outlines the fact that they should focus on adapting their human resource management policies to their field employees' WLB. Indeed, field employees consistently reported having a great sense of WM but also a very poor WLB.

This research's resulting knowledge can also be used by and practical for prospective employees, who can use it to inform themselves about the industry and its underlying mechanisms. Finally, students with an interest in the non-profit industry could lean, amongst others, on my paper's findings to better understand the industry. In particular, understand or discover what type of working experiences they could potentially develop while working there. Hence, it may ultimately aid them in making their career direction choice. For instance, students who would be seeking meaningfulness, good work relationships, flexibility as well as both giving and receiving a sense of value (i.e., feeling valued by their organization and colleagues but also bringing value to the organization and society), would here be informed that the non-profit industry may be suited for them. Furthermore, they can utilize these findings to become aware of the fact that the non-profit industry seems to offer different types of positions suited for different periods of their lives. In fact, when they don't have any family of their own yet, when they are more focused on their work, or when they are still junior enough to endure certain working conditions (i.e., the harsh ones some field employees can encounter when working in remote and dangerous regions/sites), NPOs offer field positions where one can witness first-hand the impact of their work. It is a highly satisfactory aspect of fieldwork according to the interviewees with experience in these roles. On the other hand, when individuals start valuing family time and safer environments more, NPOs are offering office-based positions. In these positions, employees may not notice first-hand their labor's impact, but they enjoy the interactions with colleagues and the more relaxed workplace. As a result, students deciding to start their career in an NPO will be more aware of what it has to offer as well as what their resulting working experiences may be.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the non-profit industry seems to induce positive and self-satisfying working experiences across countries and non-profit organizations. Effectively, while some interviewees; those with prior experience also in the non-profit industry but in a different role, specifically a field position; acknowledged not experiencing the greatest sense of work meaningfulness ever, they still had in general a moderate-to-great sense of work meaningfulness. Therefore, it implies that the non-profit industry, more specifically its organizations, seems to be a working environment prone to allowing their employees to develop and foster a good sense of work meaningfulness.

Additionally, they also reported being overall moderately to excellently satisfied with their work-life balance even though objectively they are not experiencing such a great balance. Nevertheless, being satisfied with their balance, whatever it might objectively be, seems enough for it to positively contribute to their overall working experiences.

This thesis also calls for additional research each focusing on a different aspect or possible relationship between the explored variables. Most importantly, future research should focus on determining quantitatively whether working in the non-profit industry does indeed impact positively one's working experiences, in particular their sense of work meaningfulness and work-life balance. Moreover, it should also focus on establishing whether holding or identifying as an expatriate impacts one's working experience in a neutral and non-disturbing manner.

Appendices

Appendix A

Work-Related Demographics

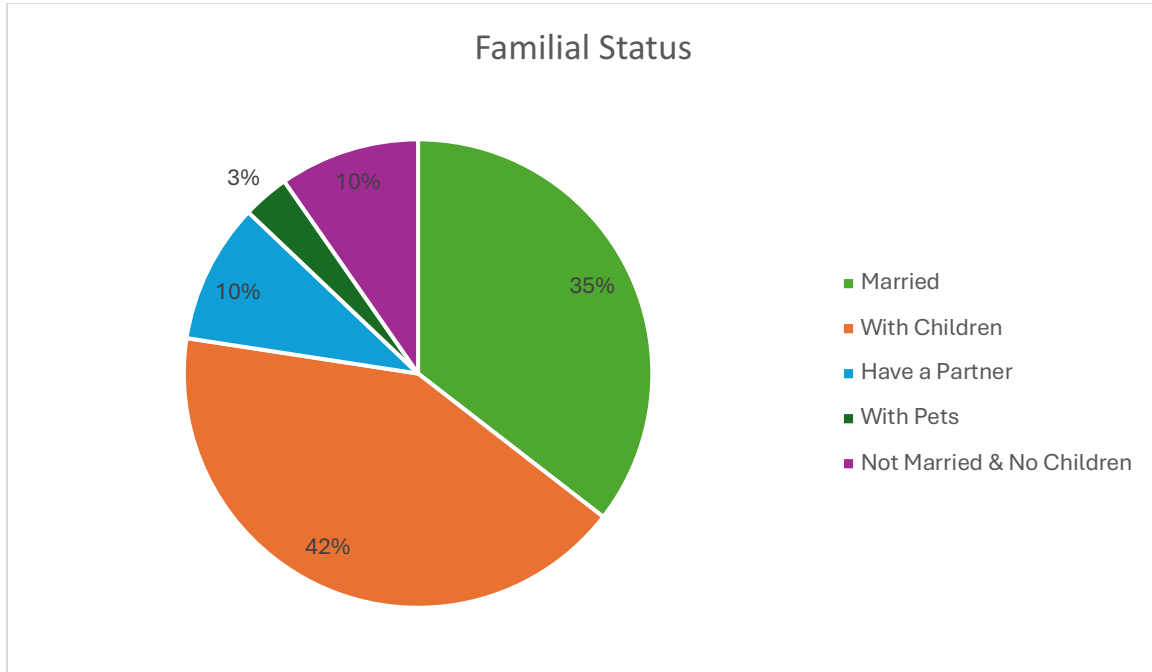


Figure A1. The familial status of the research participants: marital and parenthood status.

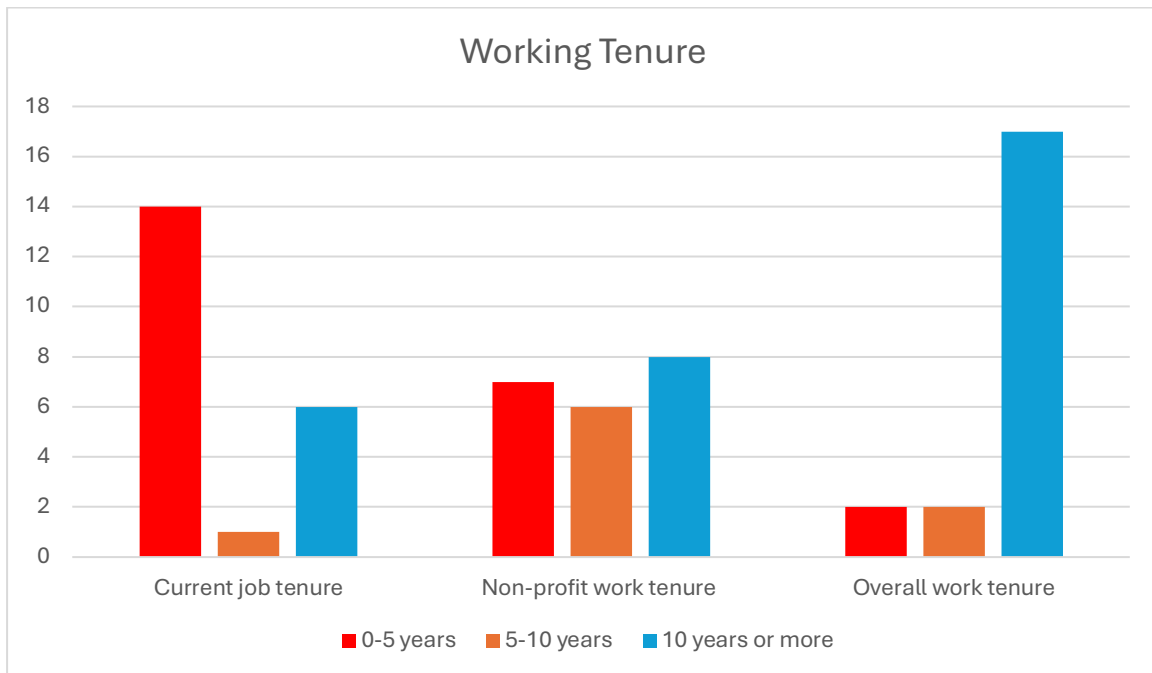


Figure A2. Various working tenure of research participants across industries and within their organization.

Note. The current job tenure refers to their position within their non-profit organization. Non-profit work tenure refers to the overall time they spent working in the non-profit sector within a single or multiple of its organizations and the Overall work tenure refers to one's work tenure across industries.

Appendix B

Posters used for participants' recruitment

The poster features a background image of a desk with a pen and a notebook. The text is centered and reads: "WORKING EXPERIENCES OF EMPLOYEES WORKING IN NON-PROFIT ORGANISATIONS (NPO)". Below this, it says "If you are interested in participating in this study, please contact sophie.boucquillon@mail.concordia.ca for further information or questions." The poster lists criteria for employees: "Looking for employees:" followed by "Aged 22 and above" and "Having a job tenure of 1 year in your current NPO". It also lists recruitment methods: "Being locally recruited OR Being an expatriate".

**WORKING EXPERIENCES OF EMPLOYEES
WORKING IN NON-PROFIT ORGANISATIONS (NPO)**

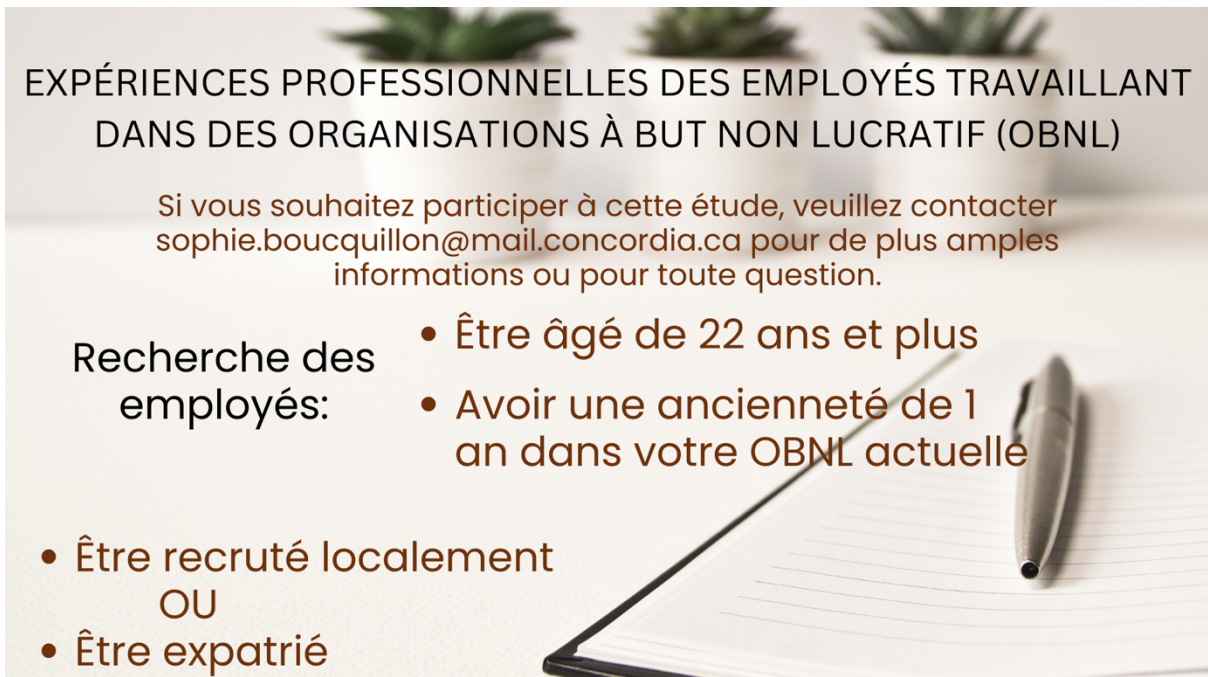
If you are interested in participating in this study, please contact sophie.boucquillon@mail.concordia.ca for further information or questions.

Looking for employees:

- Aged 22 and above
- Having a job tenure of 1 year in your current NPO

• Being locally recruited
OR
• Being an expatriate

Figure B1. English version of the Poster used to recruit participants

The poster features a background image of a desk with a pen and a notebook. The text is centered and reads: "EXPÉRIENCES PROFESSIONNELLES DES EMPLOYÉS TRAVAILLANT DANS DES ORGANISATIONS À BUT NON LUCRATIF (OBNL)". Below this, it says "Si vous souhaitez participer à cette étude, veuillez contacter sophie.boucquillon@mail.concordia.ca pour de plus amples informations ou pour toute question." The poster lists criteria for employees: "Recherche des employés:" followed by "Être âgé de 22 ans et plus" and "Avoir une ancienneté de 1 an dans votre OBNL actuelle". It also lists recruitment methods: "Être recruté localement OU Être expatrié".

**EXPÉRIENCES PROFESSIONNELLES DES EMPLOYÉS TRAVAILLANT
DANS DES ORGANISATIONS À BUT NON LUCRATIF (OBNL)**

Si vous souhaitez participer à cette étude, veuillez contacter sophie.boucquillon@mail.concordia.ca pour de plus amples informations ou pour toute question.

Recherche des employés:

- Être âgé de 22 ans et plus
- Avoir une ancienneté de 1 an dans votre OBNL actuelle

• Être recruté localement
OU
• Être expatrié

Figure B2. French version of the Poster used to recruit participants

Appendix C

Invitation letter

Appendix C1. English version of the Invitation Letter

Dear [Name of Participant],

My name is Sophie Boucquillon, and I am hereby inviting you to participate in a study as part of my MSc. in Management at the Concordia University's John Molson School of Business. Under the supervision of Dr. Yu-Ping Chen, I will be exploring the working experiences of both local and expatriate employees working for non-profit organizations.

My research project is titled "Career Experiences of Non-Profit Organization (NPO) Employees: An Exploration Research of NPO Employees' Work Meaningfulness and Work-life Balance". The aim of this research is to explore and compare the different types of working experiences employees (locals and expatriates) have developed in different non-profit organizations. One of the major implications is for current employees and future jobseekers to be able to better understand what the non-profit working environment induces in terms of career experiences as well as how a profession-related choice (i.e., becoming an expatriate) may impact their working experiences.

I am reaching out because, as a [title of the participant], you have a unique perspective on the type of working experiences that [name of the non-profit organization] induces and nurtures, which makes you the perfect candidate to participate in this study. It will involve an interview of approximately 1 hour, in person or virtually through an online platform such as Zoom or Teams. During the interview, you will be asked to provide details on your working environment, including the non-profit organization you work for, your endeavours outside of work, your role, but also your typical working day/week.

If you wish to participate, please reply to this email. I would be happy to answer any question that you may have and to schedule an interview at a date and time that would suit you. If you decide to participate, you may also request to withdraw at any moment. If you do not wish for the information you disclosed during the interview to be used in this study, please contact the researcher before [2 weeks after the interview].

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Best regards,

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Appendix C2. French version of the Invitation Letter

Cher [Nom du participant],

Je m'appelle Sophie Boucquillon et je vous invite par la présente à participer à une étude dans le cadre de ma maîtrise en gestion à l'École de Gestion John-Molson de l'Université de Concordia. Sous la supervision du Dr Yu-Ping Chen, j'explorerai les expériences de travail des employés locaux et expatriés travaillant pour des organisations à but non lucratif.

Mon projet de recherche s'intitule "Career Experiences of Non-Profit Organization (NPO) Employees : An Exploration Research of NPO Employees' Work Meaningfulness and Work-life Balance". L'objectif de cette recherche est d'explorer et de comparer les différents types d'expériences professionnelles que les employés (locaux et expatriés) ont développées dans différentes organisations à but non lucratif. L'un des principaux buts est de permettre aux employés actuels et aux futurs demandeurs d'emploi de mieux comprendre ce que l'environnement de travail à but non lucratif induit en termes d'expériences de carrière, ainsi que la manière dont un choix professionnel (expatriation) peut avoir un impact sur leurs expériences de travail.

Je vous contacte parce qu'en tant que [titre du participant], vous avez une perspective unique sur le type d'expériences professionnelles que [nom de l'organisation à but non lucratif] induit et nourrit, ce qui fait de vous le candidat idéal pour participer à cette étude. Il s'agira d'un

entretien d'environ une heure, en personne ou virtuellement par le biais d'une plateforme en ligne telle que Zoom ou Teams. Au cours de l'entretien, il vous sera demandé de fournir des détails sur votre environnement de travail, y compris l'organisation à but non lucratif pour laquelle vous travaillez, vos activités en dehors du travail, votre rôle, mais aussi votre journée/semaine de travail typique.

Si vous souhaitez participer, veuillez répondre à ce courriel. Je me ferai un plaisir de répondre à vos questions et de planifier un entretien à la date et à l'heure qui vous conviendront. Si vous décidez de participer, vous pouvez également demander à vous retirer à tout moment. Si vous ne souhaitez pas que les informations que vous avez divulguées au cours de l'entretien soient utilisées dans le cadre de cette étude, veuillez contacter le chercheur avant le [2 semaines après l'entretien].

Nous vous remercions de votre temps et de votre attention,

Je vous prie d'agréer, Madame, Monsieur, l'expression de mes salutations distinguées,

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Appendix D

Interview Guides

Appendix D1. English version of the Interview Guide

Demographics:

1. Please tell me about yourself.
 - a. What's your name?
 - b. What's your marital status?
 - c. How long have you been working?

2. Could you please share some details about your profession?
 - a. In terms of your professional status, do you identify as an expatriate or as a nationally recruited staff?
 - b. How long have you been working in the not-for-profit sector? Have you worked for other NPOs in the past? Have you worked in other sectors (i.e., private or public sector)?
 - c. What organization do you currently work for? What is the aim of your organization?
 - d. How long have you been working there for?
 - e. What is your current role in your organization? How long have you been in this position?
 - f. Could you describe your career's journey since you started working in this organization?
 - i. Have your responsibilities/role evolved since you started? If so, can you describe how?

Work Meaningfulness:

1. Could you please describe a typical day at work.
 - a. What are your daily responsibilities as part of your role?
 - b. What functions do your daily responsibilities cover? i.e., in charge of communication with clients or in charge of creating/updating personnel rules and regulations.
 - c. Are they similar on a daily basis? Or do they differ regularly? If so, how so?
 - d. Do you understand how you contribute to the organization's mission? If so, please describe how.
 - i. Do you consider your involvement/job as meaningful to the organization? And to society?

2. Please tell me more about your work within your organization.
 - a. How engaging would you describe your work?
 - b. Do you feel fulfilled by it? How so?
 - c. What have you already gained from your role and what are you looking to gain from your role in the future? And from the organization?

- i. Have you felt like it has in any way contributed to your personal growth? Professional growth?
 - d. Please describe what resulted in you gaining these/this.
 - e. Do you feel valued by your supervisors/managers as a person? And for your work? How about by your organization, do you feel valued by it? And by society?
 - f. Do you believe that your closest colleagues are committed to the organization's goals?
 - g. What are your aspirations for the next 2 years?
 - i. Do you plan on staying with this organization? If so, why?
 - ii. Would you see yourself working in the same role as today?
 - iii. Are you envisioning yourself working for a different organization?
 - h. How about your goals for the next 5 years?
 - i. *If they envision themselves within a different organization why is that?*
- 3. How would you define your work-meaningfulness?
 - a. Would you say that your career has been and is meaningful?
 - b. What in your actual role/career has made your work meaningful?
 - c. Has your work contributed in any way to your life's meaning? If so, how?

In this study we define work-meaningfulness as how significant one values their work, whether via their workload, their work-relationships, the impact their work has, or via any other work-related process and mechanisms.

- 4. Based on this definition, how is your sense of work meaningfulness?
 - a. On a scale from 1-10 how would you rate it?

Work-Life Balance:

- 1. Please share as much as you feel comfortable about your typical working day.
 - a. What are your working hours? Regular and overtime hours.
 - b. What would you consider overtime hours? Do you have a fixed working schedule?
 - c. Are you satisfied with your working hours?
 - d. Have you ever missed a personal event because of work? If so, please describe as much as you feel comfortable an example of when this occurred.
 - e. What do your working arrangements look like? How does your commute look like? Has it enabled anything in your life professional or personal wise?
- 2. How do you feel about work in terms of the workload?
 - a. Do you feel differently about it depending on the time of year?
 - b. Have you been or are you involved in any particular project or task causing an imbalance to your work-family equation? If so, please provide an example.

3. Do you work on weekends or after hours? How about on vacation?
 - a. If so, how often? and for how long?
4. How would you define your work-family balance?
 - a. On a 1-10 scale, how would you rate your current work-life balance.
 - b. How does your current work schedule affect this balance?

In this study we define work-life balance as the harmonious interactions between one's work life and their personal life. As such, one would meet both personal and professional commitments by consciously managing their time between both aspects of their lives.

5. Based on this definition, how would you describe your work-life balance?
 - a. Please rate how satisfied you are with your current work life-balance on a 1-10 scale.
 - b. What in your opinion has allowed you to develop this sense of work-life balance?

For expatriates

1. How would you describe your work-life balance before becoming an expatriate?
 - a. Have you felt it change? Is it similar or very different?
 - b. *If no* - Why do you believe it hasn't changed?
 - c. *If Yes* - What factors do you believe have induced your work-life balance to change?

Additional questions if time allows it:

1. Please describe your working environment.
 - a. How is it structured (individual desks, open workspace, meeting rooms, social areas)?
 - b. How is it furnished on your floor? (Any plants or greenery, painted walls, pictures, posters, comfortable seating or up-to-date material?)
 - c. How about the building as a whole? Is your floor reflecting the working environment of different floors?
 - d. How would you describe your relationship with your colleagues on your floor. And with the rest of the building?
 - i. Are there any team-building exercises? If so, how often and what do they consist of?

Are there any aspects of the organizations that have affected you negatively? If so, which ones?

Appendix D2. French version of the Interview Guide

Données démographiques :

1. Parlez-moi de vous.
 - a. Quel est votre nom ?
 - b. Quelle est votre situation de famille ?
 - c. Depuis combien de temps travaillez-vous ?

2. Pourriez-vous me donner quelques détails sur votre profession ?
 - a. En ce qui concerne votre statut professionnel, vous identifiez-vous comme un expatrié ou comme un employé recruté au niveau national ?
 - b. Depuis combien de temps travaillez-vous dans le secteur à but non lucratif ? Avez-vous travaillé pour d'autres organisations à but non lucratif dans le passé ? Avez-vous travaillé dans d'autres secteurs (privé ou public) ?
 - c. Pour quelle organisation travaillez-vous actuellement ? Quel est l'objectif de votre organisation ?
 - d. Depuis combien de temps travaillez-vous dans cette organisation ?
 - e. Quel est votre rôle actuel au sein de votre organisation ? Depuis combien de temps occupez-vous ce poste ?
 - f. Pouvez-vous décrire l'évolution de votre carrière depuis que vous avez commencé à travailler dans cette organisation ?
 - i. Vos responsabilités/rôles ont-ils évolué depuis que vous avez commencé ? Si oui, pouvez-vous décrire comment ?

Sens du travail :

1. Pourriez-vous décrire une journée de travail typique ?
 - a. Quelles sont vos responsabilités quotidiennes dans le cadre de votre fonction ?
 - b. Quelles sont les fonctions couvertes par vos responsabilités quotidiennes ? Par exemple, en charge de la communication avec les clients ou en charge de la création/mise à jour des règles et règlements du personnel.
 - c. Ces fonctions sont-elles similaires au quotidien ? Ou différent-elles régulièrement ? Si oui, en quoi ?
 - d. Comprenez-vous comment vous contribuez à la mission de l'organisation ? Dans l'affirmative, veuillez décrire comment.
 - i. Considérez-vous que votre engagement/travail a un sens pour l'organisation ? Et pour la société ?

2. Veuillez m'en dire plus sur votre travail au sein de votre organisation.
 - a. Comment décririez-vous votre travail ?
 - b. Vous sentez-vous épanoui(e) dans votre travail ?

- c. Qu'avez-vous déjà retiré de votre rôle et que souhaitez-vous en retirer à l'avenir ? Et de l'organisation ?
 - i. Avez-vous l'impression qu'il a contribué d'une manière ou d'une autre à votre développement personnel ? A votre développement professionnel ?
 - d. Veuillez décrire ce qui vous a permis d'obtenir ceci/cela.
 - e. Vous sentez-vous apprécié par vos supérieurs hiérarchiques en tant que personne ? Et pour votre travail ? Et par votre organisation, vous sentez-vous valorisé(e) par elle ? Et par la société ?
 - f. Pensez-vous que vos collègues les plus proches s'engagent à atteindre les objectifs de l'organisation ?
 - g. Quelles sont vos aspirations pour les deux prochaines années ?
 - i. Avez-vous l'intention de rester au sein de cette organisation ? Si oui, pourquoi ?
 - ii. Vous verriez-vous exercer la même fonction qu'aujourd'hui ?
 - iii. Vous voyez-vous travailler pour une autre organisation ?
 - h. Quels sont vos objectifs pour les cinq prochaines années ?
 - i. *S'ils s'imaginent travailler pour une autre organisation, pourquoi ?*
3. Comment définiriez-vous le sens de votre travail ?
- a. Diriez-vous que votre carrière a eu et a toujours un sens ?
 - b. Qu'est-ce qui, dans votre rôle/carrière actuel(le), a donné du sens à votre travail ?
 - c. Votre travail a-t-il contribué d'une manière ou d'une autre à donner un sens à votre vie ? Si oui, comment ?

Dans cette étude, nous définissons le sens du travail comme l'importance que l'on accorde à son travail, que ce soit par le biais de sa charge de travail, de ses relations professionnelles, de l'impact de son travail ou de tout autre processus ou mécanisme lié au travail.

4. Sur la base de cette définition, quelle est votre perception de l'importance du travail ?
- a. Sur une échelle de 1 à 10, comment l'évaluez-vous ?

Équilibre entre vie professionnelle et vie privée :

1. Décrivez votre journée de travail typique, dans la mesure où vous vous sentez à l'aise.
 - a. Quels sont vos horaires de travail ? Heures normales et heures supplémentaires.
 - b. Que considérez-vous comme des heures supplémentaires ? Avez-vous un horaire de travail fixe ?
 - c. Êtes-vous satisfait de vos horaires de travail ?
 - d. Avez-vous déjà manqué un événement personnel à cause de votre travail ? Si oui, veuillez décrire, autant que possible, un exemple de ce qui s'est passé.

- e. Quels sont arrangements au niveau du mode de travail (hybride, en ligne, en personne) ? A quoi ressemble votre trajet domicile-travail ?
2. Comment vous sentez-vous par rapport à votre travail en termes de charge de travail ?
 - a. Avez-vous des sentiments différents selon la période de l'année ?
 - b. Avez-vous été ou êtes-vous impliqué dans un projet ou une tâche particulière entraînant un déséquilibre dans l'équation travail-famille ? Si oui, donnez un exemple.
 3. Travaillez-vous le week-end ou après les heures de travail ? Et pendant les vacances ?
 - a. Si oui, à quelle fréquence ? et pendant combien de temps ?
 4. Comment définiriez-vous votre équilibre travail-famille ?
 - a. Sur une échelle de 1 à 10, comment évaluez-vous votre équilibre actuel entre vie professionnelle et vie familiale ?
 - b. Comment votre horaire de travail actuel affecte-t-il cet équilibre ?

Dans cette étude, nous définissons l'équilibre entre vie professionnelle et vie familiale comme l'interaction harmonieuse entre la vie professionnelle et la vie personnelle. En tant que tel, l'individu respecte ses engagements personnels et professionnels en gérant consciemment son temps entre ces deux aspects de sa vie.

5. Sur la base de cette définition, comment décririez-vous votre équilibre entre vie professionnelle et vie privée ?
 - a. Veuillez évaluer sur une échelle de 1 à 10 votre degré de satisfaction par rapport à votre équilibre actuel entre vie professionnelle et vie privée.
 - b. Qu'est ce qui selon vous, vous permet d'avoir cet équilibre ?

Pour les expatriés

1. Comment décririez-vous l'équilibre entre votre vie professionnelle et votre vie privée avant de devenir expatrié ?
 - a. L'avez-vous senti changer ? Est-il similaire ou très différent ?
 - b. Si non - Pourquoi pensez-vous qu'il n'a pas changé ?
 - c. Si oui - Quels sont les facteurs qui, selon vous, ont entraîné une modification de votre équilibre entre vie professionnelle et vie privée ?

Questions supplémentaires si le temps le permet :

1. Veuillez décrire votre environnement de travail.
 - a. Comment est-il structuré (bureaux individuels, espace de travail ouvert, salles de réunion, espaces sociaux) ?
 - b. Comment est-il meublé à votre étage (plantes ou verdure, murs peints, tableaux, affiches, sièges confortables ou matériel récent) ?
 - c. Qu'en est-il de l'ensemble du bâtiment ? Votre étage reflète-t-il l'environnement de travail des autres étages ?
 - d. Comment décririez-vous vos relations avec vos collègues de votre étage ? Et avec le reste du bâtiment ?

- i. Existe-t-il des exercices de renforcement de l'esprit d'équipe ? Si oui, à quelle fréquence et en quoi consistent-ils ?

Y'a-t-il des aspects de l'organisation qui vous ont impacter négativement ? Si oui lesquels ?

Appendix E

Follow-up email post-interview

Appendix E1. English version of the Follow-up email

Dear [Name of Participant],

Thank you for participating in the research entitled “Career Experiences of Non-Profit Organization (NPO) Employees: An Exploration Research of NPO Employees’ Work Meaningfulness and Work-life Balance”. As a reminder, the aim of this study was to further explore the working experiences employees, both locals and expatriates, had developed while working for a non-profit organization, and you may have noticed that a particular focus was given to the work-life balance and sense of work meaningfulness aspects of your working experiences. The aim of this study was also to delve further into the working experiences held by expatriates versus locally recruited staff.

To be added once the Ethics committee cleared it:

This study has received ethical clearance from John Molson School of Business, Concordia University Research Ethics Committee. For any ethics-related concerns or enquiries for the Committee, please contact the Concordia University’s Research Ethics’ Manager at 514-848-2424 (ext. 7481) or oor.ethics@concordia.ca.

Please be reminded that your every identifiable information you shared with me during this research will remain confidential. Once collected, anonymised and analysed for this study, your data will be shared with other scholars via the publication of this study on Concordia University’s platform Spectrum as well as at conferences, seminars or even through presentations.

If this research has caused or triggered any type of psychological discomfort, please find here some organizations you may contact that can provide you with mental health support: Tel-Aide (a free anonymous and confidential listening service) reachable at 514-935-1101 (if you are in Montreal) or 1-877-700-2433 (toll-free - if you are outside Montreal); and International emergency and crisis lines, by country (if you are located outside of Canada).

If you wish to receive more information regarding or a summary on the outcome of this research, please contact me. Once this study finished, I will share those details with you before XX [months] 2024. If you need further clarifications or have any additional enquiries about this study, please do not hesitate to reach out using the details below.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Best regards,

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Appendix E2. French version of the Follow-up email

Cher [Nom du participant],

Nous vous remercions d'avoir participé à la recherche intitulée "Expériences professionnelles des employés d'organisations à but non lucratif (OBNL) : Une recherche exploratoire sur le sens du travail et l'équilibre entre vie professionnelle et vie privée des employés d'organisations à but non lucratif". Pour rappel, l'objectif de cette étude était d'explorer plus avant les expériences professionnelles que les employés, tant locaux qu'expatriés, avaient développées en travaillant pour une organisation à but non lucratif, et vous avez peut-être remarqué qu'une attention particulière a été accordée aux aspects de l'équilibre entre vie professionnelle et vie privée et du sens du travail de vos expériences professionnelles. L'objectif de cette étude était également d'approfondir la découverte des expériences professionnelles des expatriés par rapport au personnel recruté localement.

Cette étude a reçu l'approbation du Comité d'Éthique de la Recherche de l'Université Concordia. Pour toute question relative à l'éthique ou pour toute demande de renseignements au Comité, veuillez communiquer avec le responsable de l'éthique pour la recherche de l'Université Concordia au 514-848-2424 (poste 7481) ou à l'adresse suivante : oor.ethics@concordia.ca.

Nous vous rappelons que toutes les informations identifiables que vous avez partagées avec moi dans le cadre de cette recherche resteront confidentielles. Une fois recueillies, anonymisées et analysées dans le cadre de cette étude, vos données seront partagées avec d'autres chercheurs par le biais de la publication de cette étude sur la plateforme Spectrum de l'Université Concordia, ainsi que lors de conférences, de séminaires ou même de présentations.

Si cette recherche a déclenché un quelconque malaise psychologique, voici quelques organismes que vous pouvez contacter et qui peuvent vous apporter un soutien en matière de santé mentale : Tel-Aide (un service d'écoute anonyme et confidentiel gratuit) au 514-935-1101 (si vous êtes à Montréal) ou au 1-877-700-2433 (sans frais - si vous êtes à l'extérieur de Montréal) ; et les lignes internationales d'urgence et de crise par pays (si vous êtes à l'extérieur du Canada).

Si vous souhaitez recevoir plus d'informations ou un résumé des résultats de cette recherche, veuillez me contacter. Une fois l'étude terminée, je vous communiquerai les détails avant le XX [mois] 2024. Si vous avez besoin d'éclaircissements supplémentaires ou si vous avez des questions sur cette étude, n'hésitez pas à me contacter en utilisant les coordonnées ci-dessous.

Je vous remercie pour votre temps et votre attention.

Je vous prie d'agréer, Madame, Monsieur, l'expression de mes salutations distinguées,

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