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Decent Work Worldwide

Universal Values, Diverse Expressions

CRV

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The editors
Nuno Rebelo dos Santos
Izabela Maria Rezende Taveira
Leonor Pais

SUMÁRIO

INTRODUCTION

This is the eighth book by LAPEEX/PSOT – Research, Teaching and Extension Laboratory: People, Subjectivity, Organizations and Work. The overall aim is to give visibility to science by sharing reliable scientific knowledge regardless of its origin. This laboratory articulates the activities of the extension project Coffe with HR: promoting actions to improve the Quality of Life at Work. The research group involved in this project is named "Management with people and subjectivity in the Oil and Gas". As editors, we joined efforts and our international partners, namely the Center for Research in Education and Psychology of the University of Évora (CIEP-UE) and the Center for Research in Neuropsychology and Cognitive and Behavioral Intervention (CINEICC) of the University of Coimbra.

This book marks our international experience approaching a very relevant topic that is urgent and highly important nowadays: *decent work*. Since this book was funded by the *MPT – Public Ministry of Labor in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil,* it was possible to make it freely available worldwide. We intended to meet a double mission of research and extension of our research centers. Therefore, we hope it can be helpful to researchers and practitioners from different institutions and/or public and private companies to help them reflect on their policies and practices in favor of decent work, the eighth sustainable development goal of the United Unions 2030 Agenda.

Each country has its unique challenges. However, interdependence and responsibility in promoting decent work is a shared responsibility of everyone. Promoting decent work means providing a better quality of life and social peace for everyone through social emancipation and reducing social inequalities worldwide.

The editors
Nuno Rebelo dos Santos
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UNIVERSAL VALUES AND LOCAL PRACTICES IN THE PURSUIT OF DECENT WORK

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Decent work is an aggregating concept on the ILO – International Labor Organization's agenda. This concept enhances and explains the mission of the ILO, mandated since its founding in 1919, to prevent War through increasing social justice (International Labour Office, 1920). Therefore, work is an instrument that can serve peace. In this original conception, expressed in the Versailles Peace Treaty in 1919, profound injustices were considered the origin of social tension predisposing people to War. The ILO's mission is, therefore, a peace mission.

The International Labour Organization coined the concept of *Decent Work* in 1999 to express, in the labor field, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, previously released in 1948. Several landmarks show a path of improvement regarding how Decent Work became explicit and included in formal statements about aspects that should guide work-related issues.

Decent Work was configured in four strategic objectives in 1999 by Juan Somavia (at that time, the ILO Director-General; Somavia, 1999) and was included in 2015 in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (8th Sustainable Development Goal; United Nations, 2015). The United Nations' inclusion of Decent Work in formal documents such as declarations, treaties, and others reinforces the concept's legitimacy. The conceptual improvement of the organizing idea of all ILO activity was carried out over almost a century until the formulation of the concept of Decent Work. It, therefore, constitutes a core element of the ILO peacekeeping mission. Promoting decent Work in the world has become the main objective of this institution, and it called on the various social agents to participate in this process in delivering this mission. In addition to establishing itself as a translation of human rights into labor issues, the concept of Decent Work contains an underlying vision of the human being and its broad-spectrum nature.

Therefore, the sustainability of peace must be rooted in this comprehensive conception of human nature. This conception ensures lasting effects because it covers the different aspects of human nature and people's legitimate aspirations. Any conception of the human being and any concept of Decent Work not rooted in this full range of human nature has short-term effects that

are not sustainable over time. This is why it is crucial to avoid incomplete versions of decent work or simplified versions of the concept.

Although Decent Work should apply to all, cultural diversity makes some differences regarding how different cultural groups practice it. In this book, we highlight those differences and reflect on Decent Work dimensions in ways that suit those cultural specificities. Therefore, although universal values are expressed in the Decent Work concept, their translation to practices depends on cultural characteristics of concern. If it is defensible that Decent Work corresponds to recognized universal values and transcultural human nature, it is to be assumed that there is some variation in the way these values are expressed in practice in each specific culture (dos Santos, 2019; Ferraro *et al.*, 2015). For this diversity of expressions to be legitimate, they must remain faithful to the underlying universal values and the core elements of human nature. However, it is essential to have this awareness to properly carry out actions that promote Decent Work worldwide. If it is true that universal standards seem to be indispensable concerning some dimensions of Decent Work (such as health and safety in the workplace), other more subjective dimensions can express significant variation resulting from how messages are interpreted between different social agents who interact within the work context. That is the organizing idea of this book: while Decent Work proposes a vision of human nature and an assumption about the possible use of labor to prevent War through improving social justice, the way those universal values can be practiced varies among different cultures.

The book is structured according to the seven Decent Work dimensions identified previously by Ferraro *et al.* (2018, 2021, 2023). Diverse perspectives are brought by authors whose education and cultural backgrounds vary. They were invited to contribute to this book through an essay structured around those two-fold ideas: universal values and diverse practices. Each author was invited to focus on a specific Decent Work dimension from the seven mentioned above. However, all authors were free and even encouraged to choose how they would approach the challenge, more focused on universal aspects of the particular dimension, or diverse expressions of the underlying values or even challenging the task proposed.

The authors were invited according to the criteria of having relevant records on the specific topic they were proposed to, having diverse cultural backgrounds and education, and their affiliations were geographically dispersed worldwide. Therefore, this book includes authors from Asia, Europe, Africa, and America (both North and South).

Firstly, Tânia Ferraro presents the seven Decent Work dimensions. That description is relevant to the structure of the sequence of the chapters. However, we highlight again that in the subsequent chapters, all the authors were free to follow the specific way dimensions were defined or to focus on a broader conception of the dimensions.

The first Decent Work dimension, *Fundamental principles and values at work*, was proposed to Clemens Sedmak as the main focus of his essay. He writes his chapter as *Decent Work and Integral Human Development*, emphasizing the universality of human dignity at work.

Rita Berger and Jan Philipp Czakert approach the second dimension, *Working time and workload*, and they titled their chapter *Decent Work: The Relevance of Workload and Working Time in Current Times.* This chapter points out the relationship between work and non-work areas of life, as well as the challenges brought by remote working.

The third dimension, *Fulfilling and productive work*, is approached broadly by Bruno Chapadeiro Ribeiro and Joana Alice Ribeiro de Freitas, who decided to present a deep discussion on the conceptual ground of meaningful work. They titled the chapter *The Meanings of Decent Work in Capitalism.*

Florence Jauvin, Jessica Ouellet, and Jacques Forest address the fourth dimension, *Meaningful remuneration for the exercise of citizenship*. They focus on remuneration practices and well-being in their chapter, whose title is *Compensating Employees in Ways That Help Them Live a Life They Deem Worth Living: The Link Between Social Conditions and Psychological Need Satisfaction*.

The fifth dimension, *Social protection*, is discussed by Jubril O. Jawando, Ghaffar Ogundare, and Adefolake Ademuson. They titled the chapter *Social Protection of Workers: Universal Aspects and Diversity Among Cultures*, focusing on universal standards and social protection conceptualization.

The sixth dimension, *Opportunities*, is addressed by Sumita Datta and Rajiv Agarwal. They present the chapter under the title *Paradoxical Lenses: Threats or Opportunities for Decent Work?* They approach the subject through several lenses throughout the entire chapter.

Vicente Martínez-Tur, Marija Davcheva, Carolina Moliner, Amalia Pérez-Nebra, and Kristina Potočnik address the seventh dimension, named *Health and safety*. The authors focus on descriptive aspects, job insecurity and the concept of healthy aging. The title of the chapter is *Health and Safety at Work*.

We present lastly, after the eight chapters, concluding remarks summarizing the main ideas discussed throughout the book. The multiple wars active in current times show that peacekeeping efforts have not been enough and highlight how much more important it is to work towards more peaceful times between human beings and their multiple institutions and communities. It is along these lines that we position this book. Therefore, the book can contribute expectedly to understanding the Decent Work idea and find rich and diverse paths to put it into practice, contributing this way to accomplish the crucial peacekeeping mission and human fulfillment.

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THE DECENT WORK: A Work, organizational and personnel psychology approach

Tânia Ferraro
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Introduction

The theme of Decent Work (DW) is felt by many as a presupposition of their work. For many others, it is an intangible reality. The notion of what it is to have a job/work perceived as dignified can vary between professional occupations, levels of career development, and even depending on the worker's life cycle. For example, a worker who enjoys climbing as a sport in her/his personal life may, in her/his professional life as an engineer, consider the weekly climb of a wind turbine on the wide and open sea as a motivating element and a highly worthy facet of her/his work. Another worker may consider physical exertion not a worthy element in her/his professional occupation. Some will find this activity worthy if it is early in their career, but after five or ten years, it can be tiring and no longer seem like a decent thing to do. Young workers, newlyweds and those intending to have children or even single mothers and fathers with young children can greatly value the family-friendly benefit policy, such as daycare centres close to the physical location where they work, flexible hours, bank of hours or parental leave. These may make these workers feel their work is worthy, a DW. Other workers who do not intend to have children or who have already passed this stage in their life cycle, not being able to enjoy these benefits, may be indifferent to them. The examples presented help us to understand the scope that must be included in the definition of decent work. These examples can be applied to formal jobs.

If we consider informal jobs, we are talking about workers who do not have any social protection. Therefore, having no protection by labour laws, socially, they do not have guaranteed rights. The extent of the informal labour market and its negative consequences for workers in Latin America and Caribbean (LAC) countries (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, OECD, 2019) is enormous: more than 50% of the working population in LAC countries is engaged in informal employment (Utzet *et al.*, 2021). Ryder (2015) even said that half of the world's active population was

working or engaged in productive activities in the informal sector. “While in the USA and the EU, informal employment is around 18% and 15% of the occupied labour force, respectively, figures are 53% for Latin America, and 88% and 77% in Africa and Asia (excluding China), respectively” (Benavides *et al.*, 2022, p. 169). Updated values can be found at: https://ilostat.ilo.org/topics/informality/#

Portraying the informal economy and working conditions in the informal sector has been the subject of much effort by the International Labour Organization (ILO; ILO, 2002). The informal economy seems to be growing continuously. Many factors contribute to this: difficulties complying with rules and regulations to enter the formal market, for example, due to the cost of this legalization or because the rules are not clear enough for people to comply with them. In this sense, the different realities of each country led the ILO to develop studies that led to the creation of national DW profiles (ILO, 2002). Other times, the rules involve inefficient bureaucracies or corruption that discourage compliance. Often the total costs are far beyond the capabilities of small businesses or potential entrepreneurs. On the other hand, it is precisely small and medium-sized companies and entrepreneurs that have a fundamental social role in job creation (ILO, 2009, 2015).

While the ILO persists in its efforts to gather information on informality to ensure the protection of an increasing number of workers, other initiatives focus on the gaps in formal systems, be they the government system (or the public sphere) or private organizations. We find these examples in the solidarity economy, in social entrepreneurship, business and social enterprises, companies of community interest (CIC), Low-profit Limited Liability Company (L3C, in the United States of America), B-Corporations, companies that propose to use business models and strategies aimed at long-term prosperity, serving multiple stakeholders (such as net positive organizations, Polman & Winston, 2021) and in various social responsibility initiatives (Yunus, 2011). Some of these, new “business” formats or new legal structures, try to fill the existing gap in the current system (Yunus, 2011). The typology of organizations has been enriched with these new types of organizations. There is a new ecology of organizations where each of these “types” of initiatives can be characterized as new ecosystems aimed at meeting human needs (Pinto *et al.*, 2021; Thomas & Autio, 2020). This has implied the creation of new social technologies applied to human needs and new ways of managing organizations. These initiatives add value to society in general, meeting the needs of citizens that are often not met by governments or private organizations that only seek profit. In addition to the usefulness of these initiatives to meet the human needs of citizens, they have in common the creation of work and

employment. With that, they create opportunities for people to have resources to overcome their adversities, a possibility to escape poverty, access to decent housing and access to health care, for example. Yunus (2011, p. 44) says: "When profit and human needs conflict, profit usually wins – which means people lose". Yunus (2011) argues that, in the case of social enterprises, we are seeing the emergence of a new form of capitalism. More and more managers are becoming aware that "profits should not result from creating problems in the world, but from solving them" (Polman & Winston, 2021, p. 12).

We refer here to the Informal Economy and the creative and active approach of new business models/organizations to create shared value. In informality, there are millions of people for whom DW is still a distant aspiration. Little by little, the academic field begins to approach these contexts, and many interesting studies will emerge to promote DW for all people.

The notion of Decent Work at a macro-level of analysis

DW was a theme evoked by Juan Somavía at the 1999 International Labor Conference as a way of (re)affirming, recovering, remembering, and strengthening the main ideas and values that were and remain as the essence of the ILO's mandate (ILO, 1999; Rodgers *et al.*, 2009). After that, on several occasions, he stated that DW, within the proposed scope, is not a concept but a notion. He used this notion to unite the efforts of ILO members: internal (those who work there) and external (national offices) around the mission for which the ILO was created. Therefore, the introduction of the DW notion was a turning point for internal reforms within the ILO itself. At the same time, he sent a clear message to the nations represented at the ILO that work fundamental aspects and its consequences had been lost over time and that it was necessary to rescue them. More than that, it was necessary to go far beyond everything already done. Therefore, at first, the DW notion was proposed at a macro-level of analysis, the level of analysis associated with the ILO's mandate and international relations. Mainly, it was related to the world scenario approaching the turn of the millennium.

However, innovations, closely associated with the development of new technologies, have implemented many changes in the world of work (Konle-Seidl & Danesi, 2022). But not only. The labour, product, and service markets have never been as interconnected and influenced each other as they are now. There is a polarization of labour market opportunities between high-skill and low-skill jobs, unemployment, and underemployment, especially among young people, women, and professionals over 50, stagnant income or losing "purchase value" for many families, and persistent income inequality.

Migration has become a problematic political issue affecting developing and developed countries (brain drain, brain gain, and cultural shocks, among other phenomena; Manyika, 2017). Human knowledge and discoveries are increasingly accelerated and, although they make some daily tasks simpler, they create new and unexpected challenges (expressed, for example, in automation and new ways of working using digital platforms; Manyika, 2017).

Within the ILO, several work instances were set up to develop the DW notion: working groups that delved into DW indicators worldwide. These indicators had different facets: legal aspects (labour legislation around the world), economic aspects, statistical aspects that involved: the databases available throughout the world, and the most relevant topics that have been used as indicators of health and well-being at work and with that, the primary resources available to characterize DW at the country level were identified. More than that, from that time until today, attempts have been made to understand how to characterize DW transculturally, for example, in an international supply chain that passes through several countries. This is just one example that highlights some of the main DW characteristics: interdependence (at different levels), the impossibility of applying it without having an integral view of the different contributions of many elements involved (its inclusive and integral characteristic; Ferraro *et al.* 2015, 2016). The DW notion aligns with humans' yearnings and aspirations at and through work. It says a lot about what we share and have in common and unites us.

This search for indicators, mainly quantitative, based on statistics was developed through several meetings that reviewed previous proposals until the ILO started to call the main themes that represented the DW facets as substantive elements. The total number of substantive elements (SEs) has already varied until it stabilized and has remained at eleven (Anker *et al.*, 2002, 2003; ILO, 2013).

The DW notion gained strength and came to be defended by the ILO and the United Nations system as a whole. It was initially part of a subtopic of Millennium Development Goal 1 (MDG 1 – eradicate extreme poverty and hunger; Maul, 2019). However, in 2015, with the final balance of the Sustainable Development Agenda, it gained the status of Sustainable Development Goal 8 (SDG8; UN, 2015). In this process, the DW notion was progressively included in the work agendas of other agencies such as the World Health Organization (WHO), with the continued appreciation of workers' health; the International Organization for Migration (IOM), with the importance of fair recruitment for immigrants, as well as many other initiatives by other UN agencies.

Interestingly, we encounter a paradox here. If, on the one hand, DW is a universal aspiration as defended by the ILO (ILO, 2001b) and, therefore, it is

something shared by all human beings; on the other hand, the DW experience is something individual, and we can say idiosyncratic. In this regard, the ILO is playing its role at the level of analysis at which it intends to operate and in line with its original and current mandate. However, previously, we noticed other neglected levels of analysis and, therefore, unexplored fields of study.

The concept of decent work at a micro-level of analysis

At the individual and psychological level, we identified the lack of measures regarding what the worker thinks is DW. From this gap, we began a search for the worker's perception of her/his work measurement. We interviewed people. We looked for already validated psychometric concepts and instruments to see if there were any that measured what it was intended to measure. Furthermore, finally, we opted for developing our own instrument to measure the workers' perception of what DW is, its most relevant aspects, and the level of these aspects in their work. Clearly, it is a difficult mission if we consider the immense variety of professional activities with their different characteristics. Equally tricky if we think about the individual characteristics of each worker and what (s)he may want from her/his professional activity.

Part of this story is reported in Ferraro *et al.* (2017, 2018). A psychometric instrument based on the Work, Organizational, and Personnel Psychology theoretical framework was developed. Its initial version had 72 items. After its application in Portugal ($n = 679$) and Brazil ($n = 1639$), the use of exploratory factor analysis maintained 31 items and showed an invariant factorial structure of the two countries with seven dimensions, or seven major main themes (described below):

(1) Fundamental principles and values at work;
(2) Adequate working time and workload;
(3) Fulfilling and productive work;
(4) Meaningful compensation for the exercise of citizenship;
(5) Social Protection;
(6) Opportunities;
(7) Health and Safety;

Next, (a) each of the seven dimensions will be defined based on these findings, and (b) each dimension will be discussed based on its roots historically studied in Work, Organizational, and Personnel Psychology (WOPP).

(1) Fundamental Principles and Values at work

This DW dimension is related to trust and respect at work. Within the DW characterization for people, this is a very important dimension as it is related to the quality of social interactions at work. That is, how these relationships happen at work. Thus, from the point of view of the nomological network of WOPP concepts, this DW dimension is related to trust at work, respect at work, the way decisions are made, the human right or human value of freedom to express what worker think about her/his work and her/his acceptance without discrimination. These are multiple facets of what is perceived and felt as dignified in work relationships. For all these reasons, this dimension has strong relationships with respect for human rights at work and organizational justice, although it is broader than this. DW involves any profession, and autonomous and liberal professionals may not work in organizational structures. In these cases, we need to speak of justice applied to labour relations outside organizational contexts. As for respect for human rights at work, this area receives contributions from different disciplines, such as WOPP, sociology of work, management, and many others. Although the study of human rights at work has been growing, the role of human resource managers (HRM) in promoting respect for human rights still needs to be significantly developed (Ferraro *et al.*, 2021; Ferraro *et al.*, 2023). As well as Organizational Justice, respect for human rights at work cannot be limited to the organizational scope because much work takes place outside organizations. In this regard, we are referring not only to work done in the informal economy but to autonomous or independent work and to domestic work that remains on the edge of informality (ILO, 2021).

Another WOPP concept that can be related to this dimension is equal employment opportunities (EEO). EEO is strongly related to respect and diversity in the workplace. Although there is a large volume of studies specifically on this topic (EEO), namely in the United States of America (USA), we can consider this field of study closely related to Organizational Justice.

We would also highlight the participation and democratization of work (democracy at work, industrial democracy) or participatory democracy associated with a socio-technical approach (Cherns, 1976; Emery, 1972; Emery & Thorsrud, 1969; Pasmore *et al.*, 2019; Taylor, 1975; Trist & Bamforth, 1951). This DW dimension also addresses the perception that decision-making at work is fair and that everyone involved or implicated in decisions feels that they have the possibility of being heard. This leads us to some aspects studied in the socio-technical approach and its development: the democratization of work. We emphasize that the socio-technical approach refers to the people who work in organizations, the relationships between them, and their relationship with their work in organizational contexts. DW is a broader approach to work

as it refers to work in its most diverse circumstances, beyond that which takes place within organizations.

We can say that the essential core of this dimension is related to respect, equity, humanity, dignity, and justice.

(2) Adequate working time and workload

This DW dimension refers to the appropriate working time and workload considering the physical and mental health of the worker, the appropriate balance between work, family, and personal life (Anker *et al.*, 2002; ILO, 2013). Therefore, it is a dimension that involves two major themes: time management and the physical and mental effort/commitment dedicated by workers in their professional occupations. They were followed by the theme of work-family and personal life balance.

The workload is a theme associated with ergonomic studies, mainly concerning determining the limits of human fatigue, the interaction between man, technology and work relations and the entire professional environment (Niu, 2010; Radjiyev *et al.*, 2015). Ergonomics focuses on adapting the work environment to humans performing their professional duties. Considered a psychosocial characteristic of work, the workload can be defined as hours worked per week or month (Pearson *et al.*, 2006) or that the appropriate workload for each job at a given time (or deadline). It can also be understood as the adequate distribution of time for better work organization (work scheduling or work schedule design), considering workers' physical and mental health and respecting the work-life balance. According to Bowling *et al.* (2015), the 'perceived workload' plays a key role in general theories about stress and, specifically, in theories about occupational stress. The workload is influenced by organizational characteristics and environment (context). Stress and various aspects of well-being (such as work engagement, burnout, and job satisfaction) can be seen as themes related to this DW dimension.

Hours dedicated to work have been the subject of several ILO recommendations and conventions (ILO, 1919, 1930, 1935, 1990). These documents address not only the adequate workload per week but also the work within what is conventionally called working days and conventional hours, as well as the work shift. The connection between workload and time management is quite intuitive. The work shift study has shown the consequences of different types of shifts for human health (Baney, 2011; Sparks *et al.*, 1997; Wright Jr. *et al.*, 2013). In this sense, a time management topic complementary to work shifts is working time arrangements (WTA; Boulin *et al.*, 2006; Fagan *et al.*, 2012; Tucker & Folkard, 2012). WTAs refer "to the length and scheduling of a job's working time over various periods, such as the day, the week, the month,

and the year. […]" (Hoffmann & Greenwood, 2001, p. 52). WTAs vary from country to country (involving national laws and cultural preferences), with some countries and regions seeming to accept non-standard work schedules more easily, such as the USA, Europe, and Australia (Martin *et al.*, 2012). There is also variation from organization to organization (involving collective bargaining and agreements) and even between the options adopted by workers within the same organization (preferences of workers and employers in each context; Hoffmann & Greenwood, 2001). There are also variations between an expected (routine) production and a more intensive one due to seasonal or specific demands for different types of business, such as chocolate production at Easter, overtime for service workers at times like Christmas, among other cases. It is also worth considering that there is no standardized terminology either from the point of view of legislation or organizations regarding the different WTAs (Hoffmann & Greenwood, 2001). Also, WTAs vary among occupations. While managers can have work schedules that focus on the format of 5 days of work per week with hours from 9 am to 5 pm – the week with standardized working days – professionals in the health, transport, civil protection, and public security areas need to fulfil shifts, often nocturnal.

Health professionals (doctors and nurses) who respond to emergencies (firefighters and various security systems such as police and military) and other professionals who serve customers and users 24 hours a day (such as transport, some administrative services, and specific types of factories) always need to have someone from the team on call (Harris *et al.*, 2015; Martin *et al.*, 2012). With the changes in work relations and the transformations that organizations have been going through, even professions that previously did not use the shift work resource have been using it, or at least a variation of this system. Some projects are developed continuously (24 hours a day) in different geographic regions of the globe, with different time zones with remote teams (the "follow the Sun model" delivering 24/7 Global Support, or "remote/mobile workforce" such as International Business Machines Corporation, IBM, n.d.). In this case, the project is developed in shifts, but the workers of each geographical region are only in their jobs within their working hours, which are usually conventional (between 7 am and 6 pm).

Blau & Lunz (1999) summarized the investigations on shift schedules in three areas: "[...] (1) physical health variables, (2) family and social variables, and (3) organizational variables" (p. 933). Several studies are devoted to better understanding the relationship between work schedules and/or shift work with different consequences for workers' lives. Among the different shift systems, one of the most studied and that seems to have the most health implications is night shifts (ILO, 1988, 1990, 1993). Mullins *et al.* (2014) highlight the importance of further studies on the interaction between work and sleep to

understand various workplace behaviours, including performance. The study of sleep disorders associated with professional occupation reports that this type of dysfunction can even characterize shift work disorder (SWD; Baney, 2011; Wright Jr. *et al.*, 2013). In this sense, this theme is related to health and safety in the workplace (Johnson & Lipscomb, 2006), one of the DW dimensions we will discuss later.

Time management at work is related to managing working time and time for personal and family life. This dimension is represented in the WOPP nomological network by some concepts, such as work-life balance (Allen, 2013; Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985), and its developments, such as work-life conflict and the phenomenon of spillover between these areas: work, family, and personal life. Greenhaus *et al.* (2003) define work-family balance as "the extent to which an individual is equally engaged in – and equally satisfied with – his or her work role and family role" (p. 513). In this sense, we propose an understanding of work-life balance that follows the update that the concept suggests, in this way, we would have: the extent to which a worker is equally involved in – and equally satisfied with – her/his work activity and all the other aspects of her/his life. That is the balance in the interplay between her/his work, family, and personal lives. In summary, the theme addresses the work-nonwork relationship. The expression brings together several aspects of different roles that one has in life (Allen, 2013).

The interdependence between work and family was initially addressed by the work-family conflict (WFC; Allen, 2013). When it is not possible to achieve work-life balance, work-life conflicts arise, involving different types of interference by work on the family (Work interference with Family, WIF) or by the family on work (Family interference with Work, FIW; Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). Investigations have shown the relationship of both WIF and FIW with various aspects of people's lives, such as: "[...] job satisfaction, life satisfaction, marital satisfaction, burnout, and both physical and psychological strains" (Allen, 2013, p. 700). With the Positive Psychology movement, from 2000 onwards (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000), a new approach to work-family interdependence was developed (Allen, 2013). An approach that values the positive interaction between work and family and addresses some topics, such as positive spillover, work-family facilitation, and work-family enrichment (Allen, 2013). More recent investigations have been devoted to improving the differentiation (which still needs to be clarified) between these three concepts (Allen, 2013).

This DW dimension involves the proper interface between time and workload management. According to Dembe (2009), finding this balance for each professional occupation is also an exercise in balancing between the

employer's rights to determine working conditions and the worker's rights and interests in "[…] maximizing income, gaining better job opportunities, retaining employment, and arranging for an optimal personal and family life outside of work […] (p. 196).

Time management at work as a whole is closely related to adequate compensation; the balance between work and family/personal life; health and safety in the workplace; and, concerning the people who receive the results of what is produced in the organizations (clients and the local community), the quality of what is produced and the organizational results. It can have serious individual consequences, considering the balance that can be favoured with proper management or the human exhaustion associated with work (loss of health and impairment of personal, family, and social well-being in general); organizational consequences, considering that proper time management can make or break productivity (of individuals and teams). It can increase worker satisfaction or have negative impacts such as increased absenteeism, presenteeism, sick leave, compensation costs for occupational diseases and accidents in the workplace, consequences for public health, and social protection and security systems. There is a breadth of developments for WOPP research associated with this DW dimension. Essentially, considering the formal work within organizations, the search for an adequate workload that considers the DW approach, that is, reconciles the worker quality of life in the short, medium, and long term with organizational results.

We can say that the essential core of this dimension is related to balance. It is a dimension closely related to wisdom, good management of resources and life.

(3) Fulfilling and productive work

This DW dimension combines two relevant concepts studied in different conceptual frameworks in WOPP: achievement at work or through work and productivity. The connection of this DW dimension with WOPP research and, in particular, with HRM policies and practices, from an organizational point of view, refers to the availability of economic, material, human resources, knowledge, coordination (management) and leadership, among others, all kinds of resources that enable workers to contribute significantly to the production of wealth and/or value. The organization must create, develop, and maintain a context where workers can produce and commit efforts and skills to producing wealth, whether products or services. Productive work can be understood as engaging and putting yourself to serve an organization's purpose and also to ensure future generations' achievements. The organization (or

employer) is expected to offer an internal structure that provides a guideline for adequate worker performance. Therefore, the worker is expected to present an adequate performance contributing to this wealth production. In an ideal condition, it is expected to have an individual commitment to her/his own results, consequently, with the purpose and purposes of the organization. This can work as described, especially when the worker likes her/his job and feels aligned with the organization.

The concept of realization or self-actualization comes from a Humanistic tradition. Maslow (1970) considered self-actualization the apex of his pyramid of human needs related to human motivations. Productive and fulfilling work is related to the integration of an organization's objectives with the worker's personal objectives. Thus, a job/work evaluated as productive is achieved with a job/work perceived as fulfilling.

When we reflect on the compensation-contribution relationship and the allocation of organizational resources, it becomes unavoidable to address Job Performance. The goals of every organization converge on it. That is why Job performance is a relevant theme at WOPP (Motowidlo, 2003; Viswesvaran & Ones, 2000). Despite the results achieved with the worker's and team's performance, being one of the essential reasons for the existence of an organization, defining it is not simple. Job performance is understood as the result, expected by the organization, of several behavioural episodes that workers perform, within an expected period of time, in favour of organizational objectives (Motowidlo, 2003; Viswesvaran & Ones, 2000), in short: it is the summary of individual contributions to organizational goals. Understanding what is considered adequate job performance in an organization allows the proposition of several strategies and interventions in order to improve it. The concept is essential for defining recruitment and selection, training and development strategies, or even motivational proposals for teams (Motowidlo, 2003) and, in the end, is related to maximizing the organization productivity and effectiveness. Borman and Motowidlo (1997) define job performance as the combination of task and contextual performance. For these authors, task performance refers to the performance of the activities described for a specific function or position, mainly more technical characteristics. In contrast, contextual performance concerns the other helping behaviours and behaviours that contribute to organizational goals.

From a WOPP perspective, the concept of productive work relates to job performance. Organizational goals differ for each organization, but every organization seeks results. The ideal compensation systems consider what is defined as job performance for the organization and are regulated by distributive justice. Greenberg (2001) argues that the perception of justice differs

in different cultures. Deutsch (1985) states that in more individualistic cultures (such as the American one), the principle of equity is more valued than equality or necessity. Culture can affect the understanding and importance of justice in a society and within an organization. In Japan, there is no word for 'fair'. Moreover, while Americans grow up learning to evaluate fairness by the size of the reward they receive, the Japanese do not emphasize this. They value respect, politeness, and social harmony. Distributive justice, as known in the West, is not strong in Japan (Greenberg, 2001). Even when a group of people from different cultures recognize that justice is important, they may, in practice, define it differently (Greenberg, 2001). People from different cultures use different principles for distributing resources as they see as fair. "[...] Americans generally favour the equity norm, people from India favour distributions based on need […], and people from the Netherlands favour equality […]" (Greenberg, 2001, p. 370). In this way, national and organizational cultures can determine the perception of fairness and how workers experience and understand distributive justice in many ways.

This is a DW dimension related to the highest human needs, needs associated with the feeling of being autonomous, competent, and self-efficacious in what you do (Dos Santos, 2019). The perception that your work can provide fulfilment for us (worker) and, at the same time, be constructive for society. We can say that the essential core of this dimension is related to integration. It concerns combining individual and social elements that allow the best possible use of resources towards organizational and individual effectiveness – culminating with the perception of fulfilment. This may involve Gratitude.

(4) Meaningful compensation for the exercise of citizenship

This DW dimension is related to the worker's compensation for the effort invested in her/his work. Therefore, primarily, it is related to the rewards the worker achieves through her/his work and, from the organizational point of view to the organizational compensation systems.

Compensation systems translate an organization's policies and strategies on how to compensate its workers for their efforts in support of the organization's goals. This exchange relationship may involve an implicit or explicit contract that specifies the rights and duties of both parties (Gerhart & Milkovich, 1992), although it is often focused on mutual obligations. In organizations, the compensation system is a central part of the relationship between workers and the organization (Dulebohn & Werling, 2007; Gerhart & Milkovich, 1992). This is one of the means of establishing reciprocity, recognition, and compensation in various ways (monetary and non-monetary)

for the contributions and efforts made by people to produce wealth in the organization. It is a way to encourage productive work and provides workers with basic living conditions.

Many studies on the importance of income to life satisfaction have been carried out regarding the adequacy of compensation (Judge *et al.*, 2010). The findings, however, are contradictory, sometimes suggesting "that income is unimportant to happiness" (Judge *et al.*, 2010, p. 157), sometimes indicating significant relationships between average *per capita* income and average well-being. Several factors seem to intervene in this relationship between income and life satisfaction: time (or the duration of satisfaction), and culture (sample nationality), among others. Judge *et al.* (2010) point out that despite the contradictory findings, there is much evidence of the relationship between income and happiness. For these authors, little attention has been given to the relationship between pay level and job (or pay) satisfaction in Organizational Psychology. Therefore, they conducted a meta-analysis, finding that pay level correlates positively but modestly with job (and pay) satisfaction. This suggests that "pay is not as important as other facets such as work satisfaction" (Judge *et al.*, 2010, p. 162). Earnings are an important part of the quality of work life but not the only one.

Gerhart and Milkovich (1992) add that, in addition to reward systems impacting performance, they can influence the composition of an organization's workforce itself through a self-selection mechanism, through which prior knowledge about an organization's compensation system that is considered adequate would attract and allow the retention of the best professionals in the market, while reward systems considered 'bad' could repel potential workers.

Dulebohn and Werling (2007) present that academic research on remuneration reflects organizational aspects and Human Resources practices with an internal focus on the organization itself. Due to the transformations in the organizations' environments (and in themselves), they defend the need for research on compensation to include an external focus on the organization, starting to consider the external labour market (in addition to the local and regional) and the multiplicity of stakeholders. These authors argue that not only are organizations more exposed to the markets competitiveness where they sell products and services, but also workers are more exposed to the labour market, which is no longer just local or regional, but international and global. With this, Dulebohn and Werling (2007) seek to highlight a mismatch between the way organizations use job evaluation methods and design their compensation systems in practice, increasingly concerned with accompanying external and internal changes, and the focus of the academic investigation, which focuses on the interior of the organization. The authors highlight the

dynamism of the products, services and job markets and the importance of studying the applied 'decision-making models' considering the organizational need to promote constant changes to remain active in the market. This idea also makes us think about how each organization determines job performance. In practice, organizations consider the organization's internal and external aspects, products and services, and job markets. In academic research, Dulebohn and Werling (2007) suggest that attention is focused only on organizations' internal boundaries.

Among the organizational theories studied in WOPP, systemic and contingency theories help to understand this scenario (Caetano *et al.*, 2020; Cunha *et al.*, 2019). Decision-making processes have become more complex as they involve local and global, individual, and collective aspects, with multiple stakeholders simultaneously. It is necessary to consider the organizational, workers, and other stakeholder's needs. The compensation systems subject cannot only consider the organization's internal perspective. The transformations that have been taking place all over the world suggest an increase in the importance of factors external to the organization in decision-making involving remuneration systems and the organizational practices involved in them (job description, job design, job evaluation, job analysis, job performance, performance appraisal, recruiting and retention, among others). This signalling also suggests a need to include a macro-level approach. With that, it is clear how much the previous approach focused on the micro-level approach concerning research in compensation systems. Dulebohn and Werling (2007) suggest that this change may explain the different decisions taken by organizations and their impact on individuals, groups, organizational units and their results. Among the factors to include in a more contingent model would be: "[...] business strategy, human resource strategy, product market, technology, and size as well as external factors such as competition, economic conditions, regulation, and globalization. […]" (Dulebohn & Wertlng, 2007, p. 200). Gerhart and Milkovich (1992, p. 485) propose to add: "[…], location, organization of work, interdependence, decentralization, work force diversity, unions, public opinion […]", among others.

The essential core of this DW dimension is related to another type of integration, different from the previous DW dimension. It concerns the conjugation of diligent effort and what is received for it. This reward is not just monetary. Currently, there is talk about emotional salary, which translates to the countless individual and social compensations that one receives through a professional bond. Once again, attention is drawn to the differences in the "meaningful compensation" received through work carried out within organizations, autonomous and independent work and even through work in the

Informal Economy. This DW dimension highlights that "meaningful compensation" has a direction or meaning that is the common good: it becomes "meaningful" or full of meaning when it allows the worker to be a citizen in her/his fullness.

It is also a DW dimension related to social exchanges, mainly the equity of these exchanges and, once again, organizational justice (in formal Economy).

(5) Social Protection

This DW dimension relates to social security from the worker's perspective. That is her/his perception about the social compensation (s)he receives for her/his diligence to work. If (s)he identifies that (s)he will be entitled to retirement without financial worries after years of service to society. If (s)he feels (s)he is protected in case of unemployment or illness. Whether the social protection system in which (s)he is inserted extends protection to those, who depend on the worker. This DW dimension is related to the security that workers perceive to have access through the employment bond. That they are health subsidies (public or private) for the worker and her/his family; the existence of social programs that come to support her/him (and those who depend on her/him) in case of need and, thinking about the life cycle of every worker.

This DW dimension also has an immense range of WOPP conceptual possibilities to be referred to. From a broader and social perspective, it is a dimension related to social exchanges, equity, and social and organizational justice. There is a wide selection of topics related to this dimension: temporary or contingent employment and each nation's different social security systems (Ghai, 2003). From an organizational perspective, it is also related to the perception of social and organizational support, job security/insecurity, corporate social responsibility (CSR) and sustainability related to social cohesion. From an individual perspective and considering life cycles: the protean and boundaryless career, and studies on retirement.

Secure bonds reduce uncertainty and, with it, often, stress. They can favour the workers' adaptation and productivity. Although, in some contexts, stability can also be associated with accommodation, conformism and obsolescence of workers' knowledge and skills. In other contexts, it allows for investment in continuous development because workers seek to update themselves when feeling safe and realizing that updating knowledge and skills are valued and will be applied to work. Stability impacts the worker' personal life as it avoids family changes and readaptations. Allows the development of more stable bonds in teams. In HR management, it is related to the

career management, job positions and salary plans aligned with performance appraisal and, often, adequate compensation systems.

The essential core of this DW dimension is related to a sustainable professional life. This DW dimension is related to attention and care for individuals and the community, whether from the point of view of health and safety or from the point of view of planning and attention to the workers' quality of life in the present moment and the future. It expresses the possible individual, family, community, and social consequences of DW. A society promoting DW must protect its workers even beyond the moment of their professional performance. This seems more understandable if we consider workers in the formal economy involved in organizational work contracts. However, it is still necessary to expand this reflection and all the social security mechanisms for workers on the edge of informality, such as domestic workers.

(6) Opportunities

Creating employment opportunities is central to all other aspects of the DW approach. No work, no DW. It is necessary to have work, which needs to be in quantity and quality (Ryder, 2015). In WOPP, 'Employment opportunities' relate to a set of actions by individuals and organizations that facilitate, generate, or promote present or future job opportunities. This includes the opportunities for personal and professional growth and development created at work and through work.

This DW dimension includes actions that promote job creation, employability, and the development of knowledge and skills (ILO, 2002). Within the organizational context, this dimension includes concepts such as opportunities for personal and professional growth and development, employability, and entrepreneurship in various forms. From an individual perspective, it includes career management and development.

According to Frese *et al.* (2000, p. 3), "[...] entrepreneurship research is at the boundary of organizational and work psychology. [...]". Entrepreneurship can be considered the origin of job creation. It is from this that a new organization is created (Rauch & Frese, 2012). The results of entrepreneurs' actions are new organizations and ventures; new jobs; new products and services; innovations of the most diverse types, including the potential creation of new markets (Baron & Henry, 2011). Therefore, it can be seen as a central concept for generating more DW.

Employability is at the interface between current work and countless opportunities for personal and professional growth and development that can be found or developed in the job market. Employability refers to the ability

to get a job (Rothwell, 2015). Fugate *et al.* (2004) define employability as active and specific adaptability at work that enables workers to perceive and become aware of career opportunities.

Transformations in labour relations and changes in the labour market have made 'lifetime employment' disappear. There has been an expansion of 'lifetime employability' (Forrier & Sels, 2003) or even the need for workers to become 'entrepreneurs of their own career' (Grip *et al.*, 2004, p. 211). Progressively, there has been a transfer of responsibility for job creation, becoming more and more an individual initiative, which increases the importance of entrepreneurship or employability itself as a way of maintaining the sustainability of professional development. Employability has become the new form of job security or the alternative to it. Thus, for individuals, in addition to seeking to keep up to date to enter the job market, it became necessary to keep constantly updated to ensure new and constant career opportunities, whether inside or outside the organization (Forrier & Sels, 2003). These authors also point out that the definition of employability cannot consider only the individual. Despite defining it as "an individual's chance of a job in the internal and/or external labour market" (p. 106), they also point out that it is not an individual characteristic that can be solely related to ability or will of the individual. Employability must be considered within the personal, labour market, community, local, regional, and even national contexts.

In a WOPP perspective, it is possible to understand the DW dimension, firstly, on the part of the individual, as the set of actions in the sense of developing their performance potential and their capacity to respond to opportunities, as well as their capacity to create opportunities, that is, your initiative and proactivity. At the same time, it is also the set of actions by the organization that generate new jobs and/or opportunities for professional development for workers. In this sense, this dimension is associated with Human Resources (HR) good practices of investing in people's growth and development.

According to Clarke and Patrickson (2008, p. 130), "Employability is an antecedent to employment". From this point of view, 'Employment opportunities' can be understood as consequences of the intervention of entrepreneurs, of employability as a proactive initiative or as a development of modern boundaryless career development and management. In different ways, all these themes are related to the opportunity for employment or work, to be employed, to develop (professionally and humanly) and to fulfil oneself through professional activity.

The essential core of this DW dimension is related to creativity, growth and development, and personal evolution that spreads and generates positive consequences for everyone who depends on the worker, for her/his community,

her/his local society and beyond. There is an association with optimism, hope, self-efficacy, and resilience.

(7) Health and Safety

The issue of health and safety at work was confirmed as one of the DW facets for workers. This is one of the most studied aspects and, among the other DW dimensions, probably the one with the most protective legislation. It could be because it was one of the DW facets whose importance managed to create an international consensus for a long time. In 1976, the ILO launched several initiatives in parallel, such as the "humanization of labour". This initiative was triggered in 1975 in the ILO's Director-General Blanchard annual report referring to the issue under the title "Making work more Human" (ILO, 1975; Maul, 2019). On this issue, the ILO began to navigate, on the one hand, between encouraging the creation of productive employment and, on the other hand, improving its quality. This contributed to turning attention to occupational safety and health at work, a theme shared between North and South, between industrialized and developing countries, at the time.

Several psychological and organizational aspects interact for a safe and secure work environment. This DW dimension focuses on safe and healthy working conditions that promote and preserve the worker's physical and psychological integrity (Anker *et al.*, 2002, 2003). Many ILO conventions and recommendations have already been turned into labour legislation, particularly concerning health and safety in the workplace (ILO, 2001a, 2003, 2014). In organizational environments, these concerns are part of HR policies and practices that promote healthy organizational cultures and positive climates of safety and protection for the worker. These initiatives provide adequate equipment and safety conditions to promote awareness training and updating knowledge on good practices in the most diverse topics related to health and safety at work.

Considering the WOPP perspective, topics such as ergonomics, job/work design, the study of psychosocial factors, and the prevention of psychosocial risks in the workplace are associated with this DW dimension. Ensuring working conditions and promoting improvements often starts with the perception of safety (physical and psychological), preventing accidents and occupational diseases, and promoting workers' health. The prominence of these themes in the work environment is the result of a great movement of humanization at work (ILO, 1975) that grew associated with Quality of Working Life initiatives (Delamotte & Walker, 1976; Grote & Guest, 2017; Guest *et al.*, 2022; Walton, 1973).

The first WOPP theories on this topic focused on individuals both as causes and as a focus of attention for the prevention of accidents and diseases in the workplace. Then, the focus expanded also to involve the individual's work environment, starting to be associated with the causes and the focus of interventions to prevent accidents and occupational diseases Then, environmental, and individual characteristics were considered in a dynamic perspective of mutual influence between the worker's behaviour and the context in which decisions involving work are taken (Zanko & Dawson, 2012).

Considering the DW approach, much can be developed to better understand the traditional (and formal) safe work environment by constructing multilevel models that consider predictors, mediators, moderators, and outcomes of the interaction of individual, organizational, and societal variables. At the same time, focusing on a more specific view of Work Psychology, beyond the work environments created in the formal economy, there is unlimited research to be developed concerning the safe work environment in the informal economy or domestic work, where there is no legal protection, nor supervision that guarantees healthy and safe working conditions.

Final remarks

The research development on DW has transformed that initial notion presented by Juan Somavía (from the point of view of macroanalysis) into a concept (from the point of view of microanalysis). This one was brought to the academy. WOPP's academic area, in its Work Psychology area, has served as an interface between the macro-level of analysis and the worker's daily life. In terms of Organizational Psychology, an interface can be made between the macro-level of analysis and the meso-level where organizations and businesses are located. As part of Personnel Psychology, it helps HR professionals to translate good policies and practices that promote DW into daily lives in organizations. Considering organizational effectiveness, Hodgkinson and Herriot (2002) said that WOP psychologists could contribute to it if to unite theory and practice. The same applies to promoting DW. WOP psychologists hold job positions in organizations and develop fundamental activities for DW defence and promotion. However, they need to start from their solid humanistic formation for action.

DW has been studied in different areas of knowledge and different levels of analysis – all are important and portray some facet of the theme, as observed in the other chapters of this book. In general, to a greater or lesser extent, the notion of interdependence and sustainability, represented by continuity over time and intergenerational sustainability and equity (fairness between generations; Spijkers, 2018), are present in the DW dimensions. Concerning

leadership for DW, empowerment and issues related to virtuous leadership are also present. The interactions between virtuous leadership and DW should be further studied in the future.

Among DW's numerous roots and connections with the WOPP area, the following stand out. At the individual level, the importance of developing self-awareness about one's own work within an organizational and societal maxi mechanism. At the organizational level, organizational change and development are essential to promoting and defending DW and the entire agenda for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Society can be involved with this whole movement to promote DW by watching and promoting efforts to defend human rights at work.

Much still needs to be done to get people out of the informal economy so they can count on protecting their rights. In the formal economy, from a perspective of socially responsible management and the commitment to Sustainable Development Goals, it means committed to the human future, the level of development of organizations varies enormously. Some are totally devoid of a sense of reality, that is, they continue with a predatory management style (completely disconnected from the notion of sustainability or the future). These organizations do nothing to protect the environment or people and continue to aim solely for personal/particular profit. Others seek net zero, that is, to eliminate their carbon footprint and not leave a negative trace of their activities in the world. In other words, by paying attention to everything happening in the world, they try, at least, not to leave a negative footprint.

Furthermore, still, others are beginning to emerge ahead of the others, who have started to work to leave a positive net (Polman & Winston, 2021). In addition to erasing the carbon footprint, they aim to leave their positive fingerprints for the future, make a positive difference, and give more than they take from society, people, and nature. Many organizations are starting to take steps in this direction. These organizations create the space and environment to talk openly about DW. They reflect on DW and have begun to develop strategies for its promotion and implementation. We need to have more and more organizations that defend and promote DW. The movement has many names: conscious capitalism, regenerative capitalism, among others, and it begins with the courage to do things differently because although a lot has been done to get here, there is still much more to do. This movement starts with each one of us (Ferraro *et al.*, 2015).

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DECENT WORK AND INTEGRAL HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

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Introduction

The last hours of December 9, 1948, were significant moments in the history of humanity. Late that night Emil St. Lot, the first ambassador of Haiti to the United Nations presented the final draft of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. St. Lot was a descendant from slaves and the declaration underlining the conviction that all human beings are born free meant a lot to him. The Declaration, he said, was "the greatest effort yet made by mankind to give society new legal and moral foundations." (Sedmak, 2023; United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, 2018).

If there is a minimal global ethic it is the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It was created with the knowledge and experience of two world wars in the first half of the 20t century and offered a statement of moral commitments and key values to prepare humanity for a peaceful future. The Declaration is the recipient of many moral tradition and conveys a sense of history and moral development; its preamble contains a reminder of the fact that "disregard and contempt for human rights have resulted in barbarous acts which have outraged the conscience of mankind". The preamble also refers to the United Nations Charter from June 1945 which, in its preamble, reaffirmed "faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small".

The document is both symbolic and idealistic and the result of real and terrible experiences. Also, the venue of the UN gathering, the Palais de Chaillot, was itself symbolic: On June 23, 1940, Adolf Hitler was pictured on the terrace of the Palais with the Eiffel Tower in the background; and five years later, on May 8, 1945, the US Army celebrated their victory right there. In December 1948 the Palais became the official place of birth of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights with its message of global and universal moral standards based on the dignity of the human person.

The following chapter discusses the universal claims of the concept of human dignity and its relation to the notion of decent work. It will first discuss the concept of human dignity, and then the idea of decent work.

1 The concept of human dignity

The central concept of decent work is the concept of human dignity. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is based on this concept. Even though postcolonial approaches and a growing sensitivity towards cultural pluralism have invited a process of rethinking universal claims, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights still serves as an expression of a global value framework. Its emphasis on dignity is relevant to the idea of decent work.

The Syrian representative to the UN observed in December 1948 that the Declaration was not the work of the General Assembly, but "the achievement of generations of human beings who had worked to that end" (United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, 2018). René Cassin who had written an early draft noted that "the chief novelty of the declaration was its universality" and that it was 'the first document about moral value adopted by an assembly of the human community.' It was therefore universal in origin and aim" (Morsink, 1999, p. 33). Abdulaziz Abdulhussein Sachedina has argued that "the Declaration of Article I of the international document that 'all human beings, are born free and equal in dignity and rights' captures the essential characterization of human wisdom that has been transmitted under different historical circumstances when humans have fought and killed fellow humans, having denied them their dignity" (Sachedina, 2009, p. 7).

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was drafted by representatives with different philosophical, legal, and cultural backgrounds from all regions of the world. Even though the Declaration was promulgated before the decades of decolonization and the attempts to bring the global South more fully into international decision making processes, the 58 member states of the UN in 1948 included Asian nations like Burma, China, India, Pakistan, the Philippines and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, countries of Central and South America (Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, Venezuela), middle Eastern countries (like Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Yemen) and also African nations like Liberia and the Union of South Africa. The claim to universality can also be strengthened by the design of the deliberation process. The deliberation process was based on broad participation with many structured opportunities to shape the text

(Morsink, 1999, pp. 1-35). The declaration cannot light-heartedly be called a Western document.

The World Conference on Human Rights (Vienna, June 1993) underlined the universal claims of the Declaration in the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action by emphasizing "that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights … constitutes a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations." The same document also addressed the general question of balancing universal and cultural claims with this compromise language in article 5: "All human rights are universal, indivisible and interdependent and interrelated. The international community must treat human rights globally in a fair and equal manner, on the same footing, and with the same emphasis. While the significance of national and regional particularities and various historical, cultural and religious backgrounds must be borne in mind, it is the duty of States, regardless of their political, economic and cultural systems, to promote and protect all human rights and fundamental freedoms" (United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, 1993). The claim that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights reflects universal moral commitments can also be strengthened by the observation that "equivalent moral decrees and ideas existed … in the intellectual systems of the indigenous peoples of the Americas long before the arrival of the European invaders" (Pharo, 2014, p. 147)[1].

There is a non-Western and non-Christian way of approaching the dignity of the human person. The Islamic tradition, for example, provides reference points for an understanding of human dignity. Miklos Maroth identified the Arabic expression *karamat al-insan* as an equivalent to "human dignity" (Maroth, 2014). He states that "in Sura 17, one can find the word in its basic meaning, when we read that Allah commanded the angels to prostrate to Adam, which they did" (p. 156)[2]. The human person has a status higher than the status of angels as Sura 7,12 indicates. It is God-given, based on God's dignifying action, and has to be reflected in a proper form of life, in accordance with the divine commandments (Waardenburg, 2002, pp. 160-185). The Cairo Declaration on Human Rights in Islam (August 5, 1990) states in

1 Going back to the moral sources of indigenous peoples could even lead to new nuances in understanding the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, without suggesting contradictions: "Indigenous peoples have an intimate relation to nature where all life and every being are equal. There is a value of 'one dish, one spoon' where humans are responsible in a moral eco-philosophy of equity … The universal value of dignity connected to nature is not expressed in the UDHR" (Pharo, 2014, p. 152). The sensitivity towards non-human life has increased in the second half of the 20th century and the 21st century.

2 The idea of the special status of the human person in creation is also expressed in Sura 17,70: "We have honoured the children of Adam and carried them by land and sea; We have provided good sustenance for them and favoured them specially above many of those We have created." Clearly, God is the source of human dignity, but the idea of dignity and the belief in the special dignified status (elevated position) of the human person is explicitly articulated.

Article 1a: "All human beings form one family whose members are united by their subordination to Allah and descent from Adam. All men are equal in terms of basic human dignity and basic obligations and responsibilities, without any discrimination on the basis of race, color, language, belief, sex, religion, political affiliation, social status or other considerations. The true religion is the guarantee for enhancing such dignity along the path to human integrity" (Cairo Declaration on Human Rights in Islam, 1990)[3]. The text confirms the importance of the idea of human dignity in the Islamic tradition, but leaves in its last sentence the question open whether 'true dignity' can only be found in Islam.

Clearly, the idea of human dignity is not restricted to the Judeo-Christian tradition. It can also be shown, for example, that Confucianism offers a virtue-based understanding of human dignity, grounded in the idea of benevolence and one's capacity to connect with others (Ni, 2014). The Buddhist tradition can also offer important contributions to the discourse on human dignity, especially through the idea of a distinctively human capability for "awakening" and self-liberating (Sevilla-Liu, 2022). We can also find reference points with regard to dignity in Hinduism, especially throughs insights into a tension between inherent dignity of all living beings and the lived tradition that dignity appears in degrees in the social realm (Braarvig, 2014). In other words: many religious traditions and philosophical schools enrich and deepen the discourse on human dignity, which emerges as a colorful concept that is not owned by Western intellectual history.

1.1 Critical voices and some concerns

In spite of the global deliberation process that led to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and its universal claims there have been critical voices that questions its universal reach. Some critics see a particular anthropology and a particular understanding of the good life in the background of the Declaration. A critic of the discourse on human rights, Makau Mutua, articulates epistemological, representative and imperialist reservations: "the human rights corpus views the individual as the center of the moral universe, and therefore denigrates communities, collectives, and group rights. This is a particularly serious problem in Africa, where group and community rights are both deeply embedded in the cultures of the peoples and exacerbated by the multinational nature of the postcolonial state" (Mutua, 2008, p. 34). Similar concerns have been voiced from Asian backgrounds (Koehn & Leung, 2009).

3 See also Article 6a: "Woman is equal to man in human dignity."

Some concerns have been raised regarding vagueness and ineffectiveness, for example by Michael McCann (2014, p. 256): "if rights are so light and supple [in order to gain support], they must also mean very little and carry little weight as a challenge to the status quo; they are merely the superficial 'um' and 'ah' of social and political banter, mere talk rather than action with sufficient material consequence to compel respect." A similar point has been made by Samuel Moyn (2010, 2014) who has identified human rights as the last utopia, an utopia that has lost political power in the context of neoliberalism and is reduced to minimal tasks, "human rights have remained chiefly rhetorical in their inroads into the socioeconomic domain, whereas neoliberalism has transformed the globe profoundly" (Moyn, 2014, p. 168).

Another strand of criticism points to the elitism that shapes the human rights discourse. There seems to be a disconnect between the moral universe of the human rights theorist and activist on the one hand and the moral universe of ordinary, especially vulnerable citizens, as Michael Ignatieff had observed:

"In the moral universe of the human rights activist and the global ethicist, the object of ultimate concern is the universal human being. Human differences – of race, class, or situation – are secondary. In this conception of moral life, one's primary duty is to be impartial, to regard the distinction, for example, between a citizen and a stranger as morally irrelevant. In our conversations surrounding the moral universe of the ordinary virtues, on the other hand, the universal human being was rarely, if ever, the object of ultimate concern. The most striking feature of the ordinary virtue perspective is how rarely any of our participants evoked ideas of general obligation to human beings as such; and how frequently they reasoned in terms of the local, the contingent, the here and now – what they owed those near to them and what they owed themselves" (Ignatieff, 2017, p. 10).

The project of enacting universal and rather abstract ideas of dignity and human rights is in need of proper translations from abstract ideas to 'ordinary virtues' and 'everyday practices.' Catherine Bolten has shown that the introduction of the idea of children's rights in Sierra Leone has changed the patterns of interactions between children and adults, partly eroding traditional care taking structures (Bolten, 2020). This dynamic can be interpreted at least as a caveat – different local traditions are more or less compatible with dignity-language and rights-discourse.

Part of the concern with elitism with regard to human rights and dignity is the question of power, as Christian Reus-Smit (2019, p. 121) observed: "human rights are limited by the realities of power and interest. Human rights matter when, and only when, powerful actors say they do." He also adds: "historically this has been rare." There are also concerns with the lack of a

re-distribution debate and the dynamic of structural blindness (gross atrocities rather than everyday suppressive structures). The shadow of the prevailing colonialism of 1948 is still powerfully present.

Does that mean that the idea of dignity is local and cannot serve as a basis for a global ethics?

1.2 The human condition

The main question with regard to universal claims of dignity and rights may be the following: is there a framework of existence that can be meaningfully called "the human condition"? Are there characteristics that human beings have in common, traits that we share insofar we are human beings?

There is a more abstract way of approaching these questions: what can we identify as aspects of human beings that are shared by the "members of the human family" (a term used in the preamble of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights)? Let me suggest some key features (Sedmak, 2022): (1) Vulnerability and Dependence: all human beings have vulnerable bodies and are exposed to different forms of vulnerability, such as political, legal, moral, or social vulnerabilities. All human beings depend on external circumstances and resources and require external support to live their lives; they all depend on others, including communities. (2) Uniqueness and Particularity: each human being inhabits a particular and unique place in time and space; each human being shows a particular constellation of life shaping factors and has a unique history. (3) Structured experiences: The experiences that human beings go through and the relations they enter and are shaped by are not located on the same level; some relations are more important than others ("special relationships"), some experiences are more significant than others (life changing and life shaping experiences), others are structured by habits. (4) Mortality and limits: all human life is finite and comes to an end, each human being has a limited life span, but also a limited set of capabilities and possibilities. (5) Interiority and Mystery: Human beings share a form of life that makes it possible to construe the postulate of an inner life ("a soul"), to speak about the mystery of the human condition – with open ends to the questions: "Where do we come from?" "Where are we going?".

Notwithstanding the limits of "lists" that seem to simplify the complexity of the human condition (Kittay, 2017)[4] these abstract reference points (vulnerability and dependence, uniqueness and particularity, structured experiences, mortality and limits, interiority and mystery) provide some orientation;

4 The ultimate source of understanding the human person is a second person perspective through encounters (Kittay, 2017).

it seems difficult to reject these considerations as defining features of the human condition because of a lack of counter examples. These five features can be related to human dignity in the sense that the dignity-centered Universal Declaration of Human Rights reflects a deep experience of human vulnerability (the two World Wars); we could even go as far and state that we would not have the discourse on human dignity had we not the deep experience of vulnerability. Articles 4 (on slavery), 5 (on torture) or 9 (on arbitrary arrest) make this vulnerability even more tangible. The emphasis on freedom in the Declaration (Articles 1-3, 18-20) as an important aspect of honoring a person's dignity underlines the dimension of uniqueness; several topics covered by the Declaration (Article 12 on the right to privacy, Article 16 on the right to marry, Article 23 on the right to work, Article 24 on the right to leisure, Article 25 on the special rights of mothers and children) point to the structuredness of human experience. Human limits are mentioned in Article 25 in connection to the right to social security "in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.". Article 27 (on the right to culture and art) expresses a recognition of the non-material dimension of the human condition (as would other Articles like Article 18 on religious freedom or Article 26 on the right to education).

We could therefore read the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as a reflection on universal features of the human condition and as a response to the question: is there a framework of existence that can be meaningfully called "the human condition"? Are there characteristics that human beings have in common, traits that we share insofar we are human beings?

Secondly, there is also a more empirical approach to these questions – what can we observe? We can observe that political leaders refer to universal values. In an important address to the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1998 Nelson Mandela stated that "the values of happiness, justice, human dignity, peace and prosperity have a universal application because each people and every individual is entitled to them". Two years later at the UN Millenium Summit (September 6-8, 2000), the assembly (the largest-ever gathering of world leaders to that date) published a "United Nations Millenium Declaration" that cited six values fundamental to international relations for the 21st century: freedom, equality (of individuals and nations), solidarity, tolerance, respect for nature and shared responsibility (United Nations, 2000). These values were presented as universal. We see the use of the term "dignity" in this Declaration: it is explicitly mentioned in paragraph 2 ("we have a collective responsibility to uphold the principles of human dignity, equality and equity at the global level"), paragraph 6 in connection to the value of freedom ("Men and women have the right to live their lives and raise their children in dignity,

free from hunger and from the fear of violence, oppression or injustice"), and paragraph 26 when talking about refugees and their right to safety and dignity.

We can also observe that dignity has a certain shared meaning throughout cultures Irina Mosel and Kerrie Holloway have carried out a research project to understand what dignity meant to refugees, internally displaced people and returnees in six different countries (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Colombia, Lebanon, the Philippines and South Sudan) "and whether (and how) they feel that their dignity has been upheld in displacement" (Mosel & Holloway, 2019, p. vi). Key aspects of the experience of dignity that came to the fore were respect and self-reliance. These two main themes emerged in all six case studies. Respecting a person means: accepting the person as a source of normative claims and expressing this acceptance in the real effort to honor these normative claims through the consideration of the unique needs and contributions of the person and through properly polite ways of interacting with this person. Self-reliance means the experience of being in a position to make decisions about one's life and to exercise agency in providing for oneself and for one's family. Paul Perrin has undertaken a global literature review on the concept of (respecting) dignity and identifed four aspects that could be identified across cultural settings: acceptance of identity, inclusion, acknowledgment, recognition of agency and autonomy (Perrin, 2022). These findings resonate with the study by Mosel and Holloway. Generally speaking, people seem to have a sense of dignity violations and a sense of what Louis Joseph Lebret had called "dignity needs" (Bosi, 2012). Michael Ignatieff has shown that the moral language that resonates with most people is that of everyday virtues such as trust, tolerance, forgiveness. These "ordinary virtues" serve as the moral fabric of global cities and obscure shantytowns alike (Ignatieff, 2017).

Based on these (admittedly few, but relevant) examples we can identify grounds for the claim that we can identify not only universal aspects of the human condition, but also universal aspects of dignity, especially the aspect of recognition and acknowledgment that includes autonomy and agency. These concerns are also expressed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 6: right to be recognized as a person before the Law; Article 12: right to honor and reputation).

2. The concept of decent work

Decent work is dignity-centered work. Insofar as dignity can claim universal reach, the concept of decent work can claim universal relevance. Work, like Wittgenstein's language games (Wittgenstein, 1967, p. 23) comes in many different shapes and forms; Samuel Clark has offered a list of examples of

work. i.e., of "the familiar things we do in fields, factories, offices, schools, shops, building sites, call centres, homes, and so on, to make a life and a living. Examples of work in our commercial society include driving a taxi, selling washing machines, managing a group of software developers, running a till in a supermarket, attaching screens to smartphones on an assembly line, fielding customer complaints in a call centre, and teaching in a school" (Clark, 2017, p. 62). The many examples of "work" share the same challenge as the category "game" – what do all games have in common? Rather than providing an exhaustive definition, it may be safer to work with the assumption that instances of work are connected through "family resemblances" (Wittgenstein, 1967)[5]. We then operate with an open-ended concept that is open to discussing the questions whether the following examples are or can be instances of "work": writing a poem, painting a picture, killing a person, stealing goods, reading a book, going for a walk, swimming in the sea, feeding one's cat.

The point about decent work is not so much the "what", but the "how" of work. Work serves the purpose of transforming the world; in Hannah Arendt's terminology work is about producing something that will continue to endure in the world after the work is done (a result), whereas labor (washing one's clothes, cooking, shopping) never ends (Arendt, 1958). Work transforms the world and ensures life. We can fundamentally distinguish three main functions of work: life sustenance, self-realization, and a contribution to the common good. Work and dignity are related in at least three ways: a) work ensures living conditions in accordance with human dignity; b) work allows a person to express her uniqueness; c) work enables a person to contribute to the community and to shape this community, thus expressing her status as a member of the community. These aspects speak to the agent-specific aspect of work-related dignity. Additionally, there is d) the activity-specific aspect of work-related dignity, i.e. the nature of the activity and the question whether the activity per se can be justified on dignity-grounds; and we can consider e) the framework and macro conditions of work. Crowley and Hodson (2014), for example, found a correlation between neoliberalist organisational practices and reduced job security, lowe pay and benefits, an increase in humiliation and meaningless work.

If we take the four features of dignity that Paul Perrin has identified (acceptance of identity, inclusion, acknowledgment, recognition for agency and autonomy), we can establish further links between work and dignity:

5 It may be useful to bring some order into the bottomless list of work examples by introducing some distinctions: the distinctions between physical/manual labor vs intellectual work, the distinction between work as process and product/result, the distinction between productive and non-productive work, useful and useless work, prestigious and non-prestigious work, remunerated and non-remunerated work, identity-conferring and non-identity conferring work; the latter points to the question of replaceability of agents. These distinctions do not undermine the idea of family resemblances but offer some possibilities for classification and categorization.

dignity-centered work does not require the person to deny or hide essential aspects of her identity; human-centered work does not exclude employees from major decision making processes, creates a culture of recognition (Petersen & Willig, 2004) and allows for the greatest possible freedom and agency, for example through "job crafting" (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001; Wrzesniewski *et al*., 2013).

The question of dignity at work is a major isse, since the workplace is the single most important site of social experience and cooperative interaction among citizens outside the family. Workplace dignity has been defined as "the ability to establish a sense of self-worth and self-respect and to appreciate the respect of others." (Bolton, 2007; Hodson, 2001, p. 3). The key notion here is: "respect.". The connection between respect and dignity is obvious: if I recognize the dignity of another person, I owe her respect; if I recognize my own dignity, I owe self-respect to myself. Dignity is both personal and relational; it touches upon one's own sense of self and identity, but also on the dependence on others for the experience of having one's dignity respected. The relational aspect also points to a structural dimension – the framework and conditions that ensure dignity in institutional settings. This dimension is a key concern of the political agenda of the International Labor Organization (ILO).

The ILO concept of decent work with its four pillars (employment, social protection, workers' rights and social dialogue) (Ghai, 2003) recognizes dignity as a fundamental part in the ILO's decent work agenda. Employment creation allows for the above mentioned dignity-expressive aspects of work, social protection expresses Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights ("Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control"). Workers' rights acknowedge the fundamental "right to have rights" (DeGooyer *et al.*, 2018), and the connection between rights and dignity. Social dialogue recognizes the role of inclusion and the second person perspective in dignity-sensitive setting. The ILO concept of decent work claims global relevance and validity which can be confirmed through the universal dimension of human dignity.

A dignity-affirmative approach to work is committed to an understanding of Human Rights. Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights[6] expresses major values such as freedom, equality, the right to rights

6 "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood".

and dignity, reason, conscience, and brotherhood. These fundamental values can be translated into values for work: the commitment to allocating a maximum of freedom to each employee, the commitment to fairness and equal pay for equal work, the commitment to worker's rights and their dignity, the commitment to properly justifying decisions and giving reasons for decisions, the respect for the conscience of the worker and the commitment to avoid moral stress[7], the commitment to a proper work climate (since the wording "spirit of brotherhood" points to aspects of climate and culture, moral sentiments and relationality).

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights states in Article 23: "1. Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favorable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment. 2. Everyone, without any discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work. 3. Everyone who works has the right to just and favorable remuneration ensuring for himself and his family an existence worthy of human dignity, and supplemented, if necessary, by other means of social protection. 4. Everyone has the right to form and to join trade unions for the protection of his interests".

This article confirms some of the core values expressed in Article 1 such as freedom, equality, and especially dignity. Additionally, the article confirms the explicit aspects of employment, social protection, workers' rights, and social dialogue with an implicit understanding of decent work.

The emerging picture is close to the idea of decent work and supports the universal claims. But what about local realities?

2.1 Decent work and local realities

Barry Schwartz describes a particular scene with Luke, a custodian in a major teaching hospital. Luke had to clean the room of a young patient who had fallen into a coma after a fight; the comatose patient's father had been keeping vigil for months at his son's bedside. One day the father left his place next to his son's bed and went out to smoke a cigarette; during these minutes Luke cleaned the room. Later, Luke encountered the patient's father in the hall and the father was furious, yelling that the room had not been cleaned. Luke apologized and cleaned the room a second time, before the eyes of the father (Schwartz, 2011).

One could read this situation as a power dynamic and the power gap between the patient's father and the custodian who may have acted out of fear. However, it is also possible to see this situation as an illustration of respect

7 Moral stress is a state born of an individual's uncertainty about his or her ability to fulfill relevant moral obligations or the pressure that arises if a person is unable to operate according to her own well justified moral standards in the workplace (Reynolds, Owens & Rubenstein, 2012).

and self-respect. In an interview Luke about this situation Luke is quoted with the sentences, "at first, I got on the defensive, and I was going to argue with him … Something caught me … I cleaned it [the room] so that he could see me clean it … I can understand how he could be. It was like six months that his son was here. He'd be a little frustrated, and so I cleaned it again. But I wasn't angry with him. I guess I could understand" (Schwartz, 2011, p. 6). Luke showed respect for the father's situation; he was, one could assume, able to do that, since he was standing on moral grounds that allowed him to act with the elegance he did. Luke's self-respect allowed him to deal with this situation in a way that did not propel him to extract a maximum of social honor.

Luke's experience is both common and exceptional; it is sadly common that cleaning staff are treated with little respect. The Equality and Human Rights Commission in the UK issued a report about practices in the cleaning sector emphasizing that "workers did not always feel they are afforded the same dignity and respect shown to others in the workplace. A significant number told us they are treated differently and worse than others, harassed and abused. Workers spoke of being 'invisible' and 'the lowest of the low'" (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2014, p. 8). Cleaners frequently experience invisibility through lack of recognition or even acknowledgement of presence; they experience invisibility of work in the sense that their work seems to be ignored or underappreciated (Rabelo & Mahalingam, 2019). In a series of twenty interviews with cleaners in Salzburg (Austria), we found four main concerns of their experience at the workplace: a) lack of recognition including low remuneration and low prestige; b) powerlessness and lack of integration in the company; c) stress and anxiety due to dense control patterns; d) invisibility[8]. In other words, lack of respect shapes the daily experience of the interviewees.

The interviews also clearly showed that cleaners have both a deep desire for and a deep understanding of respect. They know when they are being respected, they can articulate the lack of respect in their work lives.

The same can be said about female garment factory workers in India. They are able to articulate the lack of respect they experience in the factories – sexual harassment, inappropriate questions, verbal abuse, insults, humiliations, lack of clean sanitary facilities. One worker explicitly said: "We too

8 There seems to be a social imperative for custodians and cleaners to remain invisible, it is perceived as part of a well-functioning institution to take cleanliness for granted: "most of us know when somewhere has not been cleaned but few of us, we suspect, stop to think much about the laboring processes which go into maintaining spaces as clean" (Herod & Aguiar, 2006, p. 427). French anthropologist Anne Sam described her experience working as a cashier in a supermarket; she described the humiliating experience of the many interactions between customer and cashier without eye contact, without any acknowledgment (as if she was part of the machinery of the cash register) (Sam, 2009).

have self-respect and dignity." (Combating Sexual Harassment in the Garment Industry, 2019). It is difficult to argue that a desire for dignity-based respect was not a universal feature.

Similar concerns about respect at the workplace have been articulated by members of the LGBTQ community (Baker, & Lukas, 2017). They experience dignity threats such as social harm inflicted by disrespectful communication, autonomy violations, career harm, and even physical threats. They are subjected to micro aggressions. Nadal, Rivera, and Corpus outlined a taxonomy of seven common sexual orientation specific microaggressions: (a) use of heterosexist and transphobic terminology; (b) endorsement of heteronormative or gender-normative cultures/behaviors; (c) assumption of universal LGBTQ experiences; (d) exoticization (e.g., asking explicit questions about sex); (e) discomfort/disapproval with LGBTQ experience; (f) denial of societal heterosexism or transphobia; (g) assumption of sexual pathology/abnormality (Nadal, Rivera, & Corpus, 2010). These micro aggressions are also identified as such and classified as forms of disrespect, thus violating the expectation of dignity-affirmative treatment with respect.

The concept of dignity can be translated into different types of workplaces such as the tourism industry, the garment industry, or the agricultural sector (Cavanna, 2016; Morries, & Yost, 2019; Winchenbach, Hanna, & Miller, 2019). The "work" that the concept of human dignity for the analysis of workplace situations is analytical and diagnostic, able to offer normative assessments and recommendations. Within the framework of a course, I taught to graduate students on "dignity and work" at the University of Coimbra I asked the students for case studies on "dignity and work." The submitted case studies delt with artisanal and small-scale gold mining, child labor on cocoa farms, a fashion brand and garment factories in Bangladesh, cobalt mining, a fish processing factory in Slovenia, tomato pickers in Italy, the virtual layoff trend within global technology companies. Each case study demonstrated the fruitfulness and relevance of a dignity-perspective as an analytical and evaluative tool. It can hardly be denied that a dignity perspective and a decent work-lens is of global relevance and universal applicability – even though in each case the general and abstract principle of dignity has to be translated into practical categories that have local relevance.

Obviously, this brief section has not provided any general insights into the significance of the concepts of dignity and respect for the analysis of the workplace. I have not added arguments for the universal applicability of the dignity concept. However, I did offer the insight that looking at the most disadvantaged employees in terms of dignity and respect is a normatively fruitful lens and the series of examples provided has shown that in an array

of different industries and geographical areas, we find a clear desire for and understanding of dignity and respect, especially with regard to implementation and realization (or lack thereof). The general concept of dignity has to be translated into locally plausible practical categories. The experience of "being respected" and of "not being respected" serve as key reference points. Once again, a universal claim dimension of dignity and respect seems plausible in the light of the examples.

2.2 Decent work and good work

The ILO defines decent work as "productive work under conditions of freedom, equity, security and dignity, in which rights are protected and adequate remuneration and social coverage are provided" (ILO, 1999). This implies that decent work deficit occurs when work lacks meaning and productivity, when work is forced or when unemployment is involuntary, when fairness standards are not respected, when dignity is violated and human rights are abused, when basic living and income security is compromised, when the wage does not allow for decent living. Decent work can be understood as work in accordance with human dignity. This requires dignity-affirming institutions and conditions. In his seminal analysis of over 100 workplace ethnographies Randy Hodson established four core behavioural domains for attaining and defending dignity at work: resistance to overwork and exploitation, organisational citizenship (taking pride in one's work and contributing successfully and efficiently), the pursuit of meaning through control and mastery, and group relations and social aspects of work life, including friendships and unions (Hodson, 2001). Consequently, denial of workplace dignity consists of aspects such as mismanagement and abuse, over-work, autonomy constraints, and contradictions of employee involvement.

In a research report on "Happiness at Work", based on hundreds of interviews with employees in the UK (Chiumento, 2007), the authors identified lack of communication from the top, uncompetitive salary and lack of benefits, lack of recognition for achievements, poor line manager, little personal development, lack of meaning and joy as the key negative factors affecting job satisfaction. Here again we see the role of recognition and respect. The positive factors leading to increased hapiness at work listed in this report include climate (friendly, supportive colleagues), enjoyable and meanimgful and varied work, good work/life balance, recognition. We see how an understanding of "the good life" is emerging from these points. Di Fabio and Maree (2016) draw together psychological, organisational and societal dimensions in their definition of decent work: "Decent work helps all workers attain a sense of self-respect and dignity, experience freedom and

security in the workplace, and (as far as possible) is afforded the opportunity to choose and execute productive, meaningful and fulfilling work that will enable them to construct themselves adequately and without restrictions and make social contributions“. We can take this to mean that decent work leads to a deeper understanding of dignity and that human dignity leads to a deeper understanding of decent work.

The relevance of a dignity-perspective can be seen from negative examples of dignity violations. The loss of decent work undermines individual and societal well-being, particularly for marginalized groups and those without highly marketable skills (Blustein *et al*., 2019). Negative examples are powerful. It has been established, for example, that the infamous Mid Staffordshire hospital scandal in the United Kingdom that has led to an estimated number of 400-1200 excess deaths between 2005 and 2009, was caused by a misleading incentive structure that did not put the patient and her dignity at the center. The definition of financial and clinical targets had led to a dynamics “that these targets were pursued with a reckless disregard for the well-being and safety of patients” (Robert, 2013, p. 73). The toxic dynamics in the hospital was created through efficiency-driven pressure leading to negative reactions to this pressure (like fear and disengagement) resulting in poor behavior which then became habitual (Smith & Chambers, 2019, p. 196). The pressure created a culture that eroded respect for dignity and led to numbness, apathy and resignation on the side of the personnel. The lesson to be learnt here is that dignity has to be enabled and proper support structures have to be set in place. Even if there is good will and an intuitive understanding of human dignity, there can be institutional pressures, such as lack of resources and time constraints, that can still create “undignifying institutions” (Seedhouse & Galagher, 2002).

Decent institutions create decent work conditions, i.e. conditions for decent work. And decent work expresses human dignity. It is not surprising that dignity and common good are linked in the “Economy for the Common Good“ movement which encourages companies to operate within a common good value framework. This offers new insights into the institutional arrangements that are conducive to decent work (Pereira, dos Santos *et al*., 2021; Pereira, Zappalà *et al*., 2021).

Decent work is one aspect of “good work,” the latter being more demanding and more expansive a concept. Good work leads to and expresses a good life. I would like to define good work through three dimensions: as morally justifiable, happiness-conducive, and meaningful; and I would like to characterize good work through seven features: 1 moments of flow (intrinsic value of activity); 2 contributive value (contribution to the common good and to

community); 3 productive value (fruitfulness); 4 creative value (self-realization, job crafting, subsidiarity); 5 aspirational value (challenges and opportunities for growth); 6 pluralist value (variety of activities); and 7 a proper framework: resources, legal order, horizontal fairness, physical safety, recognition (including compensation), rest, social value (climate, quality of interactions). I would like to suggest that these lenses are relevant for any work context, even though they may have to be locally adapted in the way general approaches are to be translated into thick descriptions and local concepts.

Good work" is connected to the idea of a "good life." Even though there are many concepts of the good life the above mentioned universally shared features of the human condition refer to general insights into the idea of a good human life; the Universal Declaration of Human Rights has made important contributions to a universal understanding of the good life.

Concluding remark

We are faced with "the hard problem" of "how to produce the goods and services we need, while providing people with income, sociability, and significance" (Appiah, 2021). The idea of decent work is an important building block for the response to this challenge. Dignity-centered work conditions will ensure that work is done with appropriate levels of respect and recognition. This is not a local challenge.

On the basis of shared aspects of the human condition (vulnerability and dependence, uniqueness and particularity, structured experiences, mortality and limits, interiority and mystery) and a global plausibility of dignity needs (the need to be respected) we can argue for universal claims that have to be properly translated (contextualized). In other words, decent work is a concept with "relevance for the human condition", and "thick potential". A critique of the concept of dignity would have to happen from a perspective that partly acknowledges key concerns of the concept, namely respect for uniqueness and particularity, freedom, and equality. In other words, the grounds on which to criticize dignity partly presuppose key concerns of dignity as expressed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Given the reality of globalization and the challenges of global ethics, we need "connecting concepts" that can bridge cultural differences and express universal moral claims, even more urgently.

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DECENT WORK:
The relevance of workload and working time in current times

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Abstract

The optimization of workload and working time in the context of Decent Work is not only vital for employee's health and well-being but also for sustainable economic growth. To understand the complex relationship between workload and health outcomes, more longitudinal research is needed that should pay attention to cultural factors and to health aspects of remote work and in developing countries. The concept of workload hereby encompasses the understanding of underload and overload as being crucial for employee well-being. Research shows that job insecurity, salary, promotion, staffing problems, work demands, leadership, organizational and occupational culture are main antecedents of long working hours and excessive workload. Consequences are serious and include poor work-life balance, negative psychological well-being, impaired physical health and reduced organizational commitment as well as reduced job performance, and employee withdrawal. Further, culture plays a role in how employees perceive high workload and long working hours and influences the consequences across societies. HR-Policies should address overwork and the diverse challenges of remote work to improve work-life balance. Recommendations to reduce high workload and long working hours include work redesign, training and development, the creation of a supportive work culture, employee participation and autonomy and the management of staffing problems.

Introduction: the relevance of the Decent Work dimension workload and working time

Within the concept of Decent Work, the dimension workload and working time is of utmost importance. It relates not only to performance and business

outcomes, but specifically to the occupational health and wellbeing of employees. This dimension is therefore associated with the sustainable development goals linking SDG3 (Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages) and SDG8 (Promote sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all). Numerous international reports illustrate that this dimension displays diversely across countries and regions and is heavily affected by recent disruptive changes in the world of work that are related to an increase of more flexible work arrangements.

Recently, the International Labour Organization (ILO) published a global report on trends in hours of work and working time showing a disruptive shift towards more flexible working time arrangements in many countries worldwide (International Labour Organization, 2022). Looking at differences between working hours in diverse countries, the report highlights a wide variety across countries and regions. For example, particularly in Africa and Asia, an elevated percentage of employees worked more than 48 hours a week (between 28.2% and 54.5%), meanwhile in Europe, this amount was between 8% to 14.4% and in Northern and Latin America between 16% and 21.4%, respectively.

This report also deals with the impact of information and communication technologies (ICT) on the blurring of the boundaries between working time and time for personal life leading to a certain imbalance of work and life (e.g., Fagan *et al.*, 2012). The European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (EUROFOUND) contrasts this view and discusses in a recent report the potential benefits of telework and ICT-based work for flexible working time arrangements. Nonetheless, the report also highlights that employees engaged in telework and ICT-based work tend to work longer hours. In a similar vein, ILO mentions in its report of 2021 (Messenger & International Labour Organization, 2021) that work arrangements such as work from home, remote work, or hybrid work may act as additional work demands that may pose increased threats to employee health and wellbeing. For example, it was shown that additional childcare demands in the household lead to more work-home conflict in these flexible work arrangements, posing additional challenges to working parents. Moreover, the management of ergonomic and occupational health and safety measures is seldomly or not at all regulated by the companies or governments, constituting an elevated risk for adverse employee health outcomes.

However, these work arrangements might also be a powerful opportunity to build resources to manage the increasing personal and work demands in a healthy and sustainable way (Wells *et al.*, 2023). Globally, these reports indicate that more flexible work arrangements may produce more effective work,

satisfy the need to organize private and professional demands individually, and therefore contribute to occupational health and wellbeing.

Generally, the report shows that home-based work and household work increased in all countries, especially during the covid-19 pandemic (Messenger & International Labour Organization, 2021). Notably, most of the research during and post the covid-19 pandemic has been conducted in the healthcare and education sector as critical and essential work sectors. By comparing these sectors, it appears that both faced specific demands regarding workload and working time: employees in the healthcare sector suffered excessive working hours and workload because of an increased number of patients, whereas employees in the education sector were confronted with challenges arising around the new forced remote work situation. Aside from the current context, numerous research on the relationship between workload, working hours and company policies, compensation etc. has been undertaken during the last 20 years from economic and political perspective. From occupational psychology, research focused on both, workload and working time, as stressful work demands and their impact on employee health and performance (e.g., Mukti *et al*., 2022). This research stream included concepts such as motivation, satisfaction and wellbeing, and health outcomes e.g., burnout. In fact, research has shown again and again that excessive workload is related to burnout (Perez-Francisco *et al.*, 2020).

Related research is often based on the well-established and validated job demands resources model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). However, the research landscape has been dominated for a long time by cross-sectional research designs, limiting the insights of these studies. Nowadays, more studies apply longitudinal research to be able to analyze the causal and complex dynamics between the demands of workload and working time and their impact on health, such as stress (Kokoroko & Sanda, 2019). The reports of the ILO conducted in diverse countries suggest that high workload and long working time and hours are related to increased costs, number of sick days, accidents at work, reduced mental and physical health (e.g., Tucker & Folkard, 2012), work-life balance (e.g., Fagan *et al.*, 2012), increased work-family conflict (e.g., Huyghebaert *et al.*, 2018), reduced satisfaction, motivation, and performance. ILO mentioned in this report also the short- and long-term impact long working hours have on occupational health, e.g., sleep disorder or unhealthy behavior which are well known and researched since more than ten years (e.g., Tucker & Folkard, 2012).

Given these disruptive changes around ICT-facilitated flexible work arrangements combined with an overall increase of workload and prevalence of inadequate workloads for many employees, the topic of workload and working time requires new organizational and (inter-)national policies that tackle overwork as well as the challenges of flexible work arrangements,

while promoting its associated benefits. For example, European regulations on working time such as The European Working Time Directive (2003/88/EC) and The Work–Life Balance Directive (EU/2019/1158) were further developed to protect the employees (Eurofound, 2020).

To sum up, the relevance of working time and workload is not only given because of potentially reduced performance and quality of human resources such as satisfaction and motivation. It impacts seriously occupational health and wellbeing and leads to elevated costs for organizations. Additionally, during the pandemic covid-19 workload and working time increased in some sectors such as healthcare excessively. Due to new working conditions such as increased remote and hybrid work from home, blurred boundaries between work and home may pose severe threats to the work-life balance and increase work-family conflict of individuals.

These tendencies can be observed in diverse countries. As for working hours it can be observed that continents such as Africa and Asia in general have longer working hours than America and Europe. Research gaps are given specifically for developing countries regarding decent workload and working time conditions and policies as well as regarding influencing cultural factors in general. Further, research on health and safety aspects for remote and hybrid work is also still scarce. Work-life balance as an outcome that can lead to impaired health is nowadays in this context a key topic that needs research giving a deeper insight into the causal mechanisms. This requires overcoming the mostly cross-sectional research study design and use longitudinal approaches. Studies on implementing interventions, that include the leader as support for adjusting workload and working time are also scarce and much appreciated.

In the following, this chapter provides an overview of the scientific concepts and state of the art of the Decent Work dimension workload to explain how the phenomenon has been understood and approached from a scientific point of view. Subsequently, factors at different levels that lead to inadequate workload and working time will be described, as well as consequences that result thereof. Next, the influence of culture will be discussed from a scientific perspective. Finally, some evidence-based recommendations to reduce high workload and long working time will be provided with the goal to spur interest and provide guidance for potential improvement actions.

Concepts and state of the art of DW dimension workload

To build common understanding, it is important to specify what we address in the present chapter when we use the terminology “workload”. So, what exactly describes the term “workload”? When looking at the scientific literature and international reports, it becomes apparent that this simple

term may convey many different yet interrelated aspects. In fact, "workload" has been defined, in various contexts, to mean different things, as researchers already pointed out decades ago (Sheridan & Stassen, 1979). This may include 1) what type of physical and psychological task is assigned; 2) information processing which the human operator of the task actually performs; 3) energy actually expended by the human operator; 4) what emotional stress the human operator experiences; and 5) the overall system performance which finally results.

Following this, occupational health science focuses predominantly on aspects 3) and 4). Here, workload can be defined as the intensity or the extent of work assigned to an employee in a specific time frame (Inegbedion *et al.*, 2020). Another definition is employees' perceived pace, volume, and difficulty of work (Bowling & Kirkendall, 2012). "Workload" often has a negative connotation (Meijman & Mulder, 1998), is typically considered a demand (versus a resource) and operationalized as time pressure and overtime (Sonnentag & Fritz, 2007). A high workload is a common and widely investigated work demand that refers to having too much to do in too little time.

Workload is most commonly associated with working adults, who are exposed to higher amounts of workload from their paid employment (Sonnentag & Fritz, 2007) than are other populations, such as retirees (Pettican & Prior, 2011). However, workload can be more broadly considered as the cost (e.g., fatigue, stress, illness) of performing any tasks (Hart, 2006), whereby high-workload activities can be experienced in both work and non-work times. Excessive work demands can be defined as time and workload pressures (Aybas *et al.*, 2022). Due to the prevalence of too high workload in the modern working world, too high workload as a demand is more often studied than too low workload (Pindek *et al.*, 2022).

Also from an occupational psychology perspective, the Decent Work dimension 2 (DW2) is called "Adequate Working Time and Workload**"** and is detailed in similar ways by ILO (2008) and researchers (Aybas *et al.*, 2022; Ferraro *et al.*, 2018). For example, Aybas *et al.* (2022, p. 4) define the scope of this dimension as follows: "A decent balance between personal and work life is essential. The efforts made for work, deadlines, shifts, and schedules should be adequate.". In a similar way, Blustein *et al.* (2023) also emphasize the time-component of this dimension, describing it as "hours that allow for free time and adequate rest" (p. 291). Ferraro *et al.* (2018, p. 252) state more specifically: "We called factor 2 'Adequate working time and workload', given that it brings together items referring to the proper (or decent) management of time (e.g. "I consider the average number of hours I work per day to be adequate/appropriate"), the distribution of time between work and family (or personal life), the rhythm of work, deadlines and work schedules".

Following this, we can conclude that when relating to "workload", this chapter addresses adequate or inadequate conditions of working time. Specifically, this includes the number of hours worked, how they are organized, and/or the availability of rest periods. It relates to human energy (over-) consumption (ILO, 2022).

It is important to mention that although the predominant focus in occupational health science is on too high levels of workload, people can also experience too low levels of workload that may have impacts on their stress and wellbeing levels (Pindek *et al.*, 2021). Hence, we can distinguish between overload und underload. According to occupational psychology, it is assumed that each employee has a typical workload level, with adverse reactions occurring when their experienced workload deviates from it in either direction (i.e., experienced underload or overload). Yet, experiencing overload is thought to have a more negative impact on subsequent negative emotions and rumination. Moreover, what constitutes a "normal" workload on a day-to-day basis also plays a role for the magnitude of effects of potential workload deviations: "For example, an employee who is almost always overloaded may not suffer any negative consequences from an occasional "slower" day that would serve as a respite that allowed recovery. By contrast, employees who are only moderately busy most days might see an unusually slow day as boring and stressful" (Pindek *et al.*, 2021, p. 305). This suggests what constitutes "adequate" workload depends on the individual context and individual needs.

Yet, there is also objective assessment of overload and underload to inform (inter-)national policy. For example, ILO defines two categories regarding overemployment and underemployment.

"Underemployed" is the standard ILO statistical definition of part-time work to define *short work hours* – less than 35 hours per week. *Very short work hours* are defined as less than 20 hours per week (also less than 15 hours/week is a possible metric) (ILO, 2023).

"Overemployed", in turn, is related to overload and describes working longer hours than preferred (ILO, 2023). *Long hours of work* can be defined as regularly working more than 48 hours per week (ILO, 2023).

Although the enduring concern surrounding the detrimental impact of extended work hours has persisted since the advent of the Industrial Revolution, it continues to be a problem in certain regions and among specific demographics. However, the emergence of reduced work hours, commonly known as "part-time work," has become a significant issue in different global regions and among diverse workforces. The main reason for concern related to both short and very short hours of work is that such situations are often an involuntary state for workers – that is, they tend to be associated with

time-related underemployment. This is perhaps why underemployment is, unlike the overload focus in occupational psychology, of major importance for national policies. In fact, all SDG8 indicators (Sustainable Development Goals, 2023) focus on the reduction of underemployment, that means, to bring more people into full-time employment.

Interestingly, according to a global report by ILO (2023), when objectively mirroring contract working hours vs. factual hours worked, overemployment is more prevalent. Yet, when asking people if they would like to work more to earn more, underemployment is more prevalent. This suggests that many parts of the workforce suffer under too high workload and that at the same time, more workload for more money is appreciated.

To conclude, it becomes apparent that while underemployment is the predominant focus of SDGs and ILO, overemployment is the predominant focus of occupational psychology.

Antecedents of long working hours and excessive workload

Research has focused extensively on the consequences of long working hours and excessive workload, but there is relatively less understanding of the factors that lead to these conditions. This section highlights several factors that influence long working hours and high workload in organizations, with the aim of enabling the design of effective workplace interventions to address these issues. The following factors have been identified as contributing to long working hours and high workload:

Leadership

Numerous studies have explored how leaders within organizations can be potential causes of long working hours and high workload. Two reasons are put forward to explain this relationship. First, the nature of employees' work is determined by organizational structures designed by management (Inegbedion *et al.*, 2020). Ineffective structuring and design of work tasks by leaders may result in excessive workloads and subsequently lead to longer working hours for employees (Bowling & Kirklendal, 2012). Second, negative leadership behaviors, such as destructive or abusive leadership, have been found to significantly contribute to long working hours and high workload (Tummers & Bakker, 2021). Some leaders deliberately impose high job demands, including heavy workloads, on their subordinates, which may necessitate longer working hours to complete tasks (Molino, Cortese & Ghislieri, 2019).

Job insecurity

Job insecurity, defined as employees' perceived fear of losing their jobs (Begum, Shafaghi & Adeel, 2022), has also been identified as a driver of long working hours and high workload. Two reasons can explain this relationship. First, when employees feel insecure about their jobs, they may engage in higher workloads and stay longer at work to demonstrate their value and indispensability to their supervisors or organization (Begum, Shafaghi & Adeel, 2022; De Angelis, Mazzetti & Guglielmi, 2021). They may work harder and longer to prove their commitment and dedication, particularly during periods of layoffs or anticipated job cuts (Begum, Shafaghi & Adeel, 2022; De Angelis, Mazzetti & Guglielmi, 2021). Second, when redundancies occur in an organization, the remaining employees often must take on the additional workload of the laid-off employees. This leads to an increased overall workload and longer working hours for the retained employees.

Wages and Promotion

Wages and promotion play a significant role in driving long working hours and high workload. When employees are financially incentivized for working overtime or exceeding their regular hours, they are more likely to put in extra effort and work longer. The opportunity to increase their income serves as a strong motivation for working overtime and taking on additional workload. This explains why employees in low-income countries tend to work longer hours compared to those in high-income countries (Giattino, Ortiz-Ospina & Roser, 2020). For instance, research (e.g., Giattino, Ortiz-Ospina & Roser, 2020) has shown that employees in countries like Cambodia, with lower incomes, have significantly higher annual working hours (2,456 hours per year) compared to countries like Switzerland (1590 hours per year). On the other hand, when employees do not receive additional pay for working overtime, they may be motivated by the potential benefits it brings for their career advancement. For example, employees may willingly work overtime in the hope of securing promotions or advancements that would lead to increased income in the future (Frei & Grund, 2020).

Varying patterns of work demands

Certain patterns of work in some occupations might create varying demands of work at certain periods (Bowling & Kirklendal, 2012). Some professions experience fluctuating work demands throughout the year, with periods of normal workload and other periods of overwhelming demands.

For instance, tax accountants may face higher workloads during tax deadlines, while occupations like farming, teaching, and healthcare may have seasonal variations that intensify workload and require longer working hours during certain periods.

Organizational and occupational culture

The organizational and occupational culture also plays a role in shaping the level of workload and working hours experienced by workers (Lee & Jang, 2020). In organizations that promote a culture of high workload and employees staying longer at the workplace, employees are more likely to engage in excessive work hours. Additionally, in societies that value masculine work cultures, high workload and long working hours are often seen as positive work attitudes (Baruch, 2011). Workers in such cultures may feel compelled to take on more workload and work longer hours to demonstrate their commitment to the organization.

Staffing problems

Staffing problems within organizations can significantly contribute to high workload and long working hours. Two common staffing problems that can increase workload and working hours are the recruitment and selection of inappropriate workers and insufficient staffing levels. When organizations recruit and select workers who are not well-suited for the job, it often results in higher workloads. For example, new workers lacking the necessary skills, knowledge, or qualifications may struggle to perform their tasks efficiently. This can lead to errors, rework, and inefficiencies, placing an additional burden on other qualified employees. In such cases, those employees may need to invest extra time to assist their less-qualified colleagues or take over their duties, increasing their own workload and working hours. Also, high workload and long working hours could be attributed to insufficient number of employees to adequately get the job done (Hammer, 2021; Lovejoy *et al.*, 2021). When there is a shortage of staff, each employee is required to take on additional tasks and responsibilities to compensate for the lack of workforce. This increased workload can lead to employees feeling overwhelmed and pressured to work longer hours in order to meet the demands of the job.

Consequences of high workload and long working hours

Long working hours and high workload have been known to have several significant impacts on employees. In this section, we focus on some well-known consequences of high workload and long working hours, drawing insights from previous research and stress theories.

Poor Work-life balances

Work-life balance refers to how workers perceive the integration of their work and non-work domains based on their personal values, goals, and aspirations (Casper *et al.*, 2018; Greenhaus & Allen, 2011; Haar *et al.*, 2019). Numerous studies have consistently shown that long working hours and high workload have a clear consequence: poor work-life balance (Gribben & Semple, 2021; Kumpikaite-Valiuniene, Pinto & Gurbanov, 2022; Zappala, Swanzy & Ferdinando, 2022). Working long hours due to overwhelming workloads can lead to a lack of time, energy, and attention that are essential resources for meeting non-work demands (Zappala, Swanzy & Ferdinando, 2022). This is particularly challenging for workers with family responsibilities, as they need to allocate time to fulfil their family demands. Even for workers without family responsibilities, other aspects of their lives, such as spending time with friends, attending important events and activities, or engaging in social activities, can be affected by long working hours and high workload. Several systematic reviews examining multiple studies have consistently highlighted the difficulties faced by employees who work longer hours or have high workloads in meeting their non-work demands, resulting in poor work-life balance (Le *et al.*, 2020; Singh, Aggarwal & Sahni, 2022; Tijani, Osei-Kyei & Feng, 2022).

Psychological wellbeing

Another significant concern of excessive workload and long working hours is the impact it has on employee psychological wellbeing. Hobfoll's (1989) Conservation of Resource (CoR) model offers a conceptual framework for explaining the possible effect of long working hours and excessive workload on employee psychological wellbeing (Bowling *et al.*, 2015). We focus on the second theme of the CoR model which states that an individual's wellbeing will be in peril when he or she encounters a threat of a possible loss or actual loss of resource (Hobfoll, 1989; Hobfoll *et al.*, 2018). This model postulates that we continuously seek to conserve our current resources and secure more resources in order to avoid stressful experiences which consequently affect our wellbeing (Hobfoll, 1989; 2018).

Consequently, when employees experienced higher workloads and long working hours, they will have to invest more time, focus and energy into performing their works. This results in depletion of the valuable personal resource, i.e., the time, focus, and energy needed for other important things. According to the CoR theory, individuals experience stress when there is a loss of resources subsequently leading to poor psychological wellbeing such as anxiety and depression. Besides the explanation offered by the CoR theory, several studies have reported that excessive workload and long working hours makes employees exhausted, significantly contributing to poor psychological wellbeing (Hong *et al.*, 2022; Park *et al.*, 2020).

Physical health

In addition to the psychological impacts, numerous studies have highlighted the significant negative impact of long working hours and high workload on our physical health. Research conducted by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the International Labour Organization (ILO) estimated that in 2016, 398,000 people died from stroke and 347,000 people died from heart disease because of long working hours (World Health Organization & International Labour Organization, 2021). This joint estimation revealed that long working hours accounted for the largest occupational disease burden, representing one-third of the total estimations of work-related burden of diseases. Furthermore, workload has also been found to have a significant impact on employees' physical health. A meta-analytic study by Bowling *et al.* (2015) demonstrated that excessive workload was related to physical illness among workers. Similarly, a review of studies conducted by Bowling and Kirkendall (2012) found that excessive workload was associated with poor physical health outcomes.

Affective organizational commitment

Long working hours and excessive workload can have a significant impact on employees' affective commitment to their organizations. Affective commitment refers to the emotional affection or attachment that employees develop towards their organizations (Meyer, Allen & Smith, 1993). When employees experience long working hours or excessive workload, they may perceive their organizations as lacking consideration and compassion for their well-being, which can diminish their affective commitment. Research conducted by Bowling *et al.* (2015) supports this notion, suggesting that employees who face long working hours and excessive workload are more likely to perceive their organizations in a negative light, resulting in lower affective commitment. Similarly, Pooja, Clercq, and Belausteguigoitia (2016) explain that job stressors such

as excessive workload can make employees feel overwhelmed and strained, leading to a decrease in their emotional attachment to the organization.

Job performance

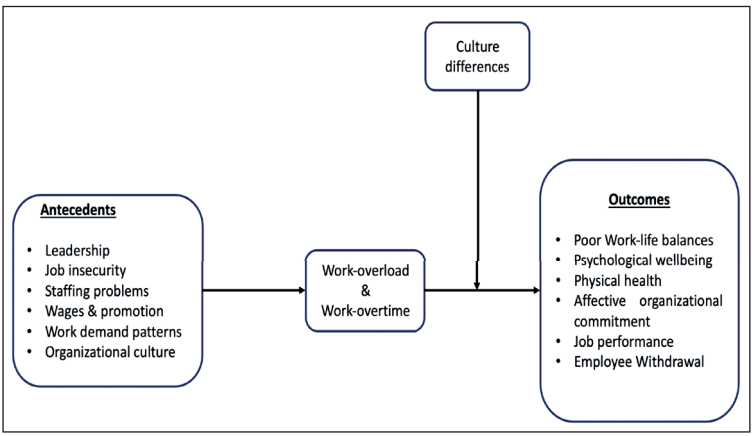
The impact of long working hours and excessive workload on employee performance are equivocal and complex (Bowling *et al.*, 2015; Collewt & Sauermann, 2017; Msuya & Kumar, 2022; Parent-Lamarche & Boulet, 2021). On one hand, drawing from the CoR theory and the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model, long working hours and excessive workload are viewed as job demands that deplete essential resources, such as energy, needed to effectively complete subsequent tasks. This can result in fatigue and subsequently lead to decreased performance (Collewt & Sauermann, 2017; Delmez & Vandenberghe, 2018; Karim, 2020). On the other hand, there are reasons to believe that long working hours and excessive workload may actually increase job performance. The opportunity to work longer hours or handle a high volume of tasks can provide employees with the chance to accomplish more, leading to increased performance (Collewt & Sauermann, 2017; Pourteimour, Yaghmaei & Babamohamadi, 2021). Additionally, some research findings suggest a curvilinear relationship, indicating that as workload and working hours increase up to a certain threshold, job performance also increases, but beyond that point, performance may begin to decline (Bruggen, 2015).

Employee Withdrawal

Research suggests that when employees face demanding job conditions such as long working hours and high workloads, they often resort to various strategies to cope with and reduce their exposure to these adverse job demands (Bowling *et al.*, 2015). These strategies can manifest as withdrawal behaviors, where employees disengage or reduce their effort in the workplace. Examples of withdrawal strategies include arriving late to work, putting less effort into tasks, absenteeism, and even considering extreme measures like quitting their jobs (turnover). The CoR theory offers insights into why these withdrawal behaviors occur. According to the CoR theory, individuals tend to enter a defensive mode when they perceive a loss of resources, such as energy and time. This defensive response aims to protect the remaining resources they have. When employees perceive that their work is draining excessive energy and time, they are more likely to adopt withdrawal strategies as a means of conserving and recouping their resources (Bowling *et al.*, 2015). Additionally, several studies have found a link between high workloads and employee withdrawal attitudes (Bowling *et al.*, 2015; Ticharwa, Cope & Murray, 2019), as well as between long working hours and withdrawal behaviors (DeVaro, 2022; Tsai *et al.*, 2016).

Overall, the factors identified as the consequences of excessive workloads and long working hours should not be looked at separately or individually but rather perceived as being related to one another (Fig. 1). For example, when we examine the relationship between workload and job performance, we cannot conclude that workload has a significant negative impact on job performance (Bowling *et al.*, 2015; Collewt & Sauermann, 2017; Msuya & Kumar, 2022; Parent-Lamarche & Boulet, 2021). However, high workload and long working hours could lead to poor work/life balance, which may negatively affect employees' psychological wellbeing and in turn affect their job performance. Likewise, high workload and long working hours could directly affect employees' psychological and physical health, which could diminish the affective commitment employees have for their organizations, leading to low job performance. Thus, it is better to examine these factors collectively rather than individually.

Figure 1 – Antecedents, the role of culture and outcomes of work-overload & work-overtime



Does culture play a role in how employees perceive and react to high workload and long working hours?

Having explained the consequences of long working hours and excessive workload, one may ask whether these consequences are equivalent to all employees with different cultural background? Scholars have observed that consequences of long working hours and high workload may influence employees differently across cultures. In this current section, we seek to uncover how differences in culture may lead to different consequences of long working hours and excessive workload across national culture drawing on Hofstede's cultural dimensions:

Collectivism versus Individualism

Hofstede's cultural dimension of collectivism versus individualism has been widely used to explain the variations in the perception and consequences of workload and long working hours across different cultures (Baruch, 2011; Vaziri, Benson & Campo, 2019). Individualistic societies prioritize individual self-interest, personal achievements, and autonomy, while collectivist societies emphasize conformity, unity, and the maintenance of harmonious relationships within the group (Vaziri, Benson & Campo, 2019). Studies have shown that individuals from collectivist cultures tend to experience fewer negative consequences of workload and long working hours compared to those from individualistic cultures (Spector *et al.*, 2007; Yang *et al.*, 2012). People in collectivist societies tend to adhere to group norms, shared purpose, and group obligations, rather than focusing solely on individual ambitions and self-interest (Vaziri, Benson & Campo, 2019). Therefore, working long hours or having an excessive workload may be seen as conforming to their group work norms, resulting in less impact on their well-being compared to individuals from individualistic societies. For example, research by Yang *et al.* (2012) found that workers from collectivist cultures reported lower perceptions of workload and long working hours, leading to less impact on their job satisfaction and turnover intentions compared to workers from individualistic cultures. Similarly, Spector *et al.* (2007) discovered that working hours and workload had a stronger impact on work-family conflict among individuals from individualistic cultures compared to those from collectivist cultures.

Power Distance

Power distance, which refers to the degree to which people accept and expect power to be distributed unequally in society (Hofstede, 1980), is another important cultural factor that influences the effects of high workload and long working hours on individuals from different cultures. According to Baruch (2011), individuals in high power distance countries tend to value factors that increase their power and status. Therefore, in such cultures, long working hours and excessive workload may be seen as a means to achieve promotion or higher positions in the workplace, making them more desired and accepted.

Masculinity and Femininity

Masculinity and femininity are cultural dimensions that reflect the extent to which a society values assertiveness, achievement, and competition (masculinity) versus caring for others, quality of life, and consensus (femininity)

(Hofstede, 1980). In masculine societies, there is a higher emphasis on strong work ethic, including long working hours and high workload, as these traits align with the values of achievement and success. On the other hand, in feminine societies, there is more focus on the social aspects of work, caring for others, and overall quality of work life. In such cultures, long working hours and excessive workload may be less valued and may not be seen as a positive work attitude.

Uncertainty Avoidance

Uncertainty avoidance is a cultural dimension that describes the extent to which individuals in a society feel uncomfortable with uncertainty and ambiguity (Hofstede, 1980). In high uncertainty avoidance societies, people have a strong desire to minimize uncertainty and tend to exhibit high levels of work involvement, such as working longer hours or taking on high workloads, as a way to mitigate potential uncertainties that may arise (Baruch, 2011). Consequently, the impact of excessive workload and long working hours may be perceived as less significant in these societies compared to societies with lower uncertainty avoidance.

Long-term versus Short-term Orientation

The dimension of long-term versus short-term orientation reflects how societies balance their focus on past traditions and future challenges (Hofstede, 1980). While there is limited research on the direct influence of this dimension on the perception and response to high workload and long working hours, individuals from societies with a long-term orientation may view long working hours and high workload as necessary for achieving long-term individual career goals and success. In contrast, individuals from societies with a short-term orientation may prioritize immediate results and may have a different perspective on the value and impact of excessive workload and long working hours (Baruch, 2011).

In conclusion, cultural influences play a significant role in how individuals perceive and react to high workload and long working hours. It is interesting to note that many collectivist societies also exhibit high levels of power distance, masculinity, uncertainty avoidance, and long-term orientation. In these cultures, employees may view high workload and long working hours as less impactful, as they may perceive them as positive work behaviors that align with their cultural values. On the other hand, individualistic societies tend to have lower power distance, lower levels of uncertainty avoidance, and

a short-term orientation. In these societies, high workload and long working hours may be perceived as negative workplace behaviors. Understanding these cultural dimensions provides insights into how individuals from different cultures perceive and respond to high workload and long working hours. Thus, Organizations can take these cultural nuances into consideration when designing strategies and policies to address high workload and long working hours, ensuring that they are tailored to the specific cultural contexts and needs of the workforce.

Recommendations to reduce high workload and long working time

Tackling the issue of high workloads and long working hours is a shared responsibility among individual employees, organizations, and policymakers. Below, we provide several recommendations, particularly for organizations since they are in charge in making workplace conducive for employees.

Work redesign

Work redesign can be an effective strategy to reduce high workload and long working hours within organizations (Knight & Parker, 2021). Day-to-day operations and workflows should regularly be assessed by organizations to spot inefficiencies that could be the cause of high workload and subsequently long working hours (Hammer, 2021; Lovejoy *et al.*, 2021). Through this assessment, unnecessary or low-value tasks can be eliminated, suitable work can be redistributed among workers, and procedures can be streamlined to minimize time-consuming operations (Lovejoy *et al.*, 2021). One notable work redesign intervention is the STAR (Support, Transform, Achieve, and Results) model, which has been widely cited as an effective approach. The STAR model aims to create an efficient and successful workplace culture that reduces unnecessary work, increases productivity, and provides individuals with more control over their time (Moen *et al.*, 2016; Kelly & Moen, 2020). Empirical research has demonstrated the effectiveness of the STAR model in managing heavy workloads, improving work-life balance, and enhancing overall employee well-being (Moen *et al.*, 2016; Kelly & Moen, 2020).

Training and Development

Investing in training and development for both employees and leaders is essential for organizations to address issues related to high workload and long working hours (Knight & Parker, 2021). For employees, training and

development programs provide them with updated knowledge and skills to work efficiently (Lovejoy *et al.*, 2021; Gniewek *et al.*, 2023). Organizational training sessions that focus on work prioritization and time management can help employees better manage their time and streamline their job tasks. By acquiring effective strategies and techniques, employees can optimize their productivity and reduce unnecessary work-related stress (Gniewek *et al.*, 2023). Likewise, leadership training programs are equally important to foster a supportive and positive work environment (Czakert & Berger, 2023). By investing in leadership development, organizations can empower their leaders to create an atmosphere that supports employees in managing their workload (Hammer, 2021). These programs should emphasize the importance of assessing work demands, distributing tasks efficiently, and providing adequate resources and support (Czakert & Berger, 2023). Leaders who adopt a supportive leadership style can alleviate excessive workload and promote work-life balance among their workers (Lovejoy *et al.*, 2021).

A Supportive Work Culture

Organizations can help address issues with high workload and long working by nurturing supportive and friendly work culture in the following ways: first organizations can promote work/life balance by adopting flexible work arrangement and other work/life programs. Organizations can encourage employees to take breaks, use vacation time, and establish clear boundaries between work and personal life, can contribute to achieving a better balance between work and personal life. Second, organizations can create supportive work environment that encourages open and honest communication between employees and management through frequent dialogues and feedback that can assist workers to get support in dealing with or managing high workload they experienced (Gniewek *et al.*, 2023; Willard-Grace *et al.*, 2023). Third, organizations can provide assistance and support to employees to manage stress accompanied by high workload and long working hours by receiving emotional and psychological support, such as counseling services, employee assistance programs (EAPs), or well-being initiatives. Lastly, organizations can shift their focus from solely valuing long working hours to emphasizing productivity and results. Studies, such as the pilot studies conducted in Iceland by the Reykjavík City Council and the Icelandic national government, have shown that reducing the workweek from 40 hours to 35 or 36 hours can lead to improved productivity, work/life balance and overall employee well-being (ILO, 2022). By prioritizing efficiency, organizations can create a work culture that values output rather than the number of hours worked.

Employee Autonomy and Participation

Giving workers autonomy over their work and including them in decision-making processes, where practicable, may help them experience a feeling of ownership and control. This enables them to better manage their workload and make decisions that are in line with their priorities and skills (Lovejoy *et al.*, 2021). Employees may identify methods to work more efficiently, make the most of their time, and lighten their workload by having a voice in how tasks are carried out and setting up realistic deadlines (Harju *et al.*, 2018; Tummer & Bakker, 2021). Organizations might investigate flexible work alternatives, such as altered schedules, remote work options, or reduced workweeks, by including workers in talks about their workload and working hours. These personalized arrangements provide employees with more control over their time, enabling them to work effectively and efficiently (Lovejoy *et al.*, 2021).

Addressing Staffing Problems

Addressing staffing problems such as recruiting and selecting right candidates and having adequate staff is crucial for managing workload and working hours effectively. Organizations should strive to recruit and select candidates who possess the necessary skills and qualifications for the job, ensuring a better fit between employees and their roles. Employees can perform jobs quickly when they have the requisite knowledge and abilities, which eliminates the need for working overtime to make up for skill or knowledge shortages. Additionally, it is essential to maintain appropriate staffing levels by evaluating workload demands and allocating sufficient resources to meet those demands (Gniewek *et al.*, 2023; Knight & Parker, 2021; Lovejoy *et al.*, 2021). When the workload is distributed among enough workers, workers are less likely to be overwhelmed by excessive tasks. Adequate staffing helps distribute the workload more evenly and reduces the need for excessive overtime or extended working hours (Gniewek *et al.*, 2023; Hammer 2021).

To sum up, it is pivotal to build a common understanding when tackling workload issues. Both overload and underload conditions are possible. Workload imbalances negatively affect employee wellbeing and other business-relevant outcomes. Several cultural factors might play a role in how people perceive and react to overload. Organizations are advised to engage in a variety of proactive measures to tackle workload mismatches.

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THE MEANINGS OF DECENT WORK IN CAPITALISM

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Introduction

The intellectual exercise that will be developed in the following lines is configured as a theoretical-critical essay on the concept of *Decent Work*. The more fluid way of writing a book chapter as opposed to a scientific article allows us a "free association" with the object to be understood. It also demands, however, greater sociological imagination for opening a range of mediations that can be endless.

In this sense, this text aims an attempt to provide answers regarding the current meanings and centrality of work in the 21st century, the ways in which it is configured, its expressions, and therefore how, in the field of reality, it presents itself. It is noted *a priori* that the concept of *Decent Work* does not account for the structural and structuring pillars of the social metabolism of capital that needs precarious labor for its development and valorization. In order to account that we will use the historical-dialectical method, combining both a diachronic analysis, concerned with the genesis and development of the concept, and a synchronic analysis, considering its structure and function in the debate on the meanings of labor in recent capitalism.

ILO's Decent Work thesis and its historical origins

The concept of Decent Work[9] was coined by the International Labor Organization (ILO) in an attempt to express, in the field of labor, the principles and values intertwined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (ILO, 1948). The latter was approved by the United Nations (UN) in 1948 and stated in its Art 23 that "everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment" (UN, 1948, p. 6).

9 Gonçalves (2021) points out that it is important not to confuse the term "decent" and its antonym "indecent" with occasions linked to morality, as it only refers to the bad conditions in which labor is carried out, removing it from the usual moral consideration.

It should be remembered that then, the world had gone through important events that latter resulted at the structural crisis of capital, such as the two Great Wars (1914-1919 and 1939-1945), the Spanish Flu (1918-1920) and the Great Depression of the 1930s that forced capital to reinvent itself, moving towards a reconstruction of nation-states and adopting a Fordist-Keynesian perspective of the *Welfare State*.

> It is in such a context of confusion that we have to understand the highly diversified attempts within different nation states to arrive at political, institutional and social arrangements that could accommodate the chronic incapacities of capitalism to regulate the essential conditions for its own reproduction (HARVEY, 1990, pp. 127–129).

ILO's origins date back to the efforts made to avoid war through the promotion of social justice, as well as the Treaty of Versailles (1919) – both from 1919. Again, it is worth resume the science of history to understand the phenomena, less as natural data originated by spontaneous generation, and more by a tangle of totalities and contradictions that occurred socially and historically from mediations and crossings of political order.

In the fateful year of 1919 the world had gone through its First World War, the Spanish pandemic and the Soviet Revolution, in addition to the various international Socialist Congresses that threatened the capitalist *status quo*, especially in terms of changes in what capitalism cannot do without in order to value himself: human labor. ILO itself (2004, p. 3), nodding to the capitalist bloc, says that it was born in this scenario "by and for the industrial countries".

However, the Treaty of Versailles (1969, p. 254) ratifies that "labour should not be regarded merely an article of commerce". Here is the sore point that runs through the concept of Decent Work and which we intend to problematize in this chapter.

Gaze, Leão and Vasconcellos (2011)[10] note that some previous agreements relating to labor processes are incorporated into article 282 (Part X – Economic Clauses) of the aforementioned Treaty. The authors also emphasize that the sly use of the word "trade" with the idea that labor would be more than a simple commodity clearly signals that the intention of the industrialized countries with the creation of ILO was that labor should be protected by a special right (Labor Law). In this regard, protecting labor also means protecting trade. According to Wandelli (2015), Labor Law and Labor Misfortunes are born precisely at this historical moment throughout the world and at the same time in Brazil.

10 The aforementioned authors note that it is not a mere "coincidence" that the year of creation of ILO matches the enactment of the first Accident Law in Brazil (January 15th 1919).

On May 10th 1944, the 26th ILO Conference adopts the Declaration of Philadelphia which reaffirms, in Article 1, its fundamental principles. Among them, it is said that "labour is not a commodity" (ILO, 1944, p. 1) and that the "poverty anywhere constitutes a danger to prosperity everywhere" (ILO, 1944, p. 1), which clearly denote its nod to the capitalist bloc of the world then polarized by the arising of the Cold War. As stated by Gaze, Leão and Vasconcellos (2011, pp. 221–222), the first 40 years the ILO's activity focused mainly on the elaboration and application of international labor standards and after the Second World War, however, it intensified its activities regarding aspects related to human rights and reforming labor legislation.

Harvey (2008) reminds us that the long period of post-war expansion, which lasted from 1945 to 1973, was based on a set of labor control practices, technologies, consumption habits and configurations of political-economic power, and that this set can rightly be called Fordist-Keynesian. But the collapse of this system after 1973 with the structural crisis of capital (Mészáros, 2009) derived among other mediations from the oil shock, initiating a period of rapid changes, fluidity and uncertainty. The resulting inequalities produced serious social tensions and strong social movements on the part of the excluded, such as May 1968 springs around the globe.

In Brazil, the Federal Constitution of 1988 is a synthesis of the social upheaval provoked by the political reopening, after 21 years of Civil-Military Dictatorship (1964-1985). It brings the same conception of obliterating the capital-labor conflict when, for instance, it addresses labor, already in item IV of its Art. 1st, anchored "in the social values of labor and free initiative" (Brasil, 1988). The Item XIII of Art. 5 says that "all are equal before the law" (Brasil, 1988) and that "is free the exercise of any labor, trade or profession, meeting the professional qualifications established by law" (Brasil, 1988). Meanwhile, item XLVII reinforces that there will be no "forced labor penalties". Art. 6, in turn, places labor as a social right. With regard to workers' rights, precisely Art. 7 expresses the conformities to which labor in Brazil should be framed if the prescription was carried out. It is known that reality has presented itself in a different way, towards structural precariousness that went against the grain of the Decent Work proposal, as we will also see later in this chapter.

Returning to the diachronic analysis of ILO, on its 50th anniversary in the year 1969, it was honored with the Nobel Peace Prize, for its role in the development of labor legislation around the world. In the wake of this movement, on the eve of the turn of the 21st Century, in 1998, at the 86th International Labor Conference, ILO adopted the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work (ILO, 1998), ratifying labor rights established in previous conventions and recognizing the responsibility in help countries achieve their goals. Santos (2019) also highlights the 1999 United Nations Global Compact

as a precursor to the Report, from June of the same year, in which the ILO finally presented the concept of Decent Work.

The report[11] brings the understanding of Decent Work as being "to promote opportunities for women and men to obtain decent and productive work, in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity" (ILO, 1999, p. 5) and expresses the challenges concerning the world of labor pointing out the limits in relation to previously proposed analyzes. The alluded report is purposeful in the sense of establishing the general strategic guidelines that support Decent Work[12], or its "four strategic objectives" (ILO, 1999, p. 1), namely: "fundamental principles and rights at work; employment; social protection; and social dialogue" (ILO, 1999, p. 1), but also "the elimination of all forms of forced or compulsory labour; the effective abolition of child labour; and the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation" (ILO, 1999, p. 13).

The transformations in the political economy of capitalism at the end of the 20th Century have shown signs and marks of important modifications in labor processes, consumption habits, geographic and geopolitical configurations, State powers and practices etc. in which we witness a transition in the regime of accumulation and in the mode of social and political regulation associated with it. Harvey (2008) tells us that there are two broad areas of difficulty in a capitalist economic system that have to be successfully negotiated for that system to remain viable. The first stems from the anarchic qualities of price-fixing markets, and the second from the need to exercise sufficient control over the use of labor power to ensure value addition in the production and therefore positive profits for the greatest possible number of capitalists.

Now, in its constitution, prepared by the International Labor Legislation Commission and created by the Versailles Treaty, ILO has a permanent and tripartite nature, with representatives of the State, employers and workers and being the State an entity in the social metabolism of capital that assumes the character of a bourgeois State, that is, largely occupied by representations of an employer elite, the worker already loses 2x1 in this display of forces.

It should also be noted that the concept of Decent Work was adopted at the height of the transformations produced by the main events of the end of the XXth Century which, as Gonçalves (2021) reminds us, greatly impacted underdeveloped countries: the Washington Consensus, the birthplace of the neoliberalism, the process of technological development with the

11 Report of the director-general: decent work (ILO, 1999) was prepared by the then Director General of the Organization, the Chilean ambassador Juan Somavia, at the 86th International Conference and is at the core of discussions on the UN Millennium Development Goals.

12 It also establishes objective propositions including combating forced labor, child labor and human trafficking for the purposes of sexual and commercial exploitation, promoting equal opportunities and treating gender and race at work and promoting decent work for young people, among others.

so-called productive restructuring and the globalization/mundialization of capital (Alves, 1999).

In the 1990s and 2000s, the intensification of the logic of financialization and the constitution of a new level of social barbarism due to the deepening imbalance of forces between capital and labor, as well as the financial crises (1987, 1996, 2001 and 2008) exposed the new manifestations of labor's structural precariousness and the proletariat's social dynamics (Alves, 2012).

After "thirty years" of development and crisis of global capitalism (1990-2020) through its neoliberal form, Alves (2018) points out that we live in a new stage of capitalism that is glimpsed in the beginning of the 21st century and that leaves far behind post-war Fordist-Keynesian perspective, the apex of the civilizational development of historical capitalism – at least in the central capitalist countries, which until then guided the agenda of the ILO itself.

> The "perverse thirty years" of global capitalism were times of drastic historical changes comparable only to those that occurred with the First Industrial Revolution at the turn of the 18th to the 19th centuries in Western Europe. We had structural transformations – which still continue – in the global economy, bourgeois sociability, technological base, structure of political domination, morphology of the world of work and its union and social representation, culture and psychology of the masses and forms of social estrangement (Alves, 2018).

In the midst of such a situation, the discussion of Decent Work is included among the Sustainable Development Goals proposed by the United Nations – a sequence of 17 objectives defended by the international body from 2015 and which aim, as its name suggests, to promote sustainable development in the world with goals to be achieved by the year 2030[13]. its agenda defines three priorities: the creation of more and better jobs, with equal opportunities and treatment; the eradication of slave labor and elimination of child labor, especially in its worst forms; and the strengthening of tripartite actors and social dialogue as an instrument of democratic governance. "Employer' and workers' organizations must be consulted at all times during the process of implementing the agenda" (Renast, 2001).

UN has recognized the achievement of Decent Work as an appropriate development goal for 2030 by declaring the importance of "promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all" (UN, 2022, p. 15).

However, since 2018 the global economy has indicated a new slowdown (still resulting from the global financial crisis in 2008) that could lead

13 https://www.estrategiaods.org.br/o-que-sao-os-ods/

developed capitalism to a global recession in 2020. As stated by Alves (2020), a series of IMF and OECD indicators showed heavy clouds on the horizon of the global economy: Brexit; US-China trade war; the fall in the price of oil in February 2020 due to the OPEC conflict between Russia and Saudi Arabia; and more recently, the health crisis of the Covid-19 pandemic (2020-2023) and the Russia-Ukraine war, which are still economically and socially felt worldwide. The challenges for truly decent work are herculean in this scenario.

In view of the historical survey of the inclusion of the Decent Work concept proposed by the ILO in a broader macroeconomic, political and social context, the aim is to understand the advances represented by the ILO proposal, as well as its limits, in terms of the meanings that work presents now.

Eric Hobsbawm (1989) even claimed that the 19th Century ended not in 1900 but in 1914, the year in which World War I began. Schwarcz and Sterling (2020) include another element in this dating: the end of the same event and the advent of the Spanish flu in 1918 that devastated the world, and point out that, in this sense, the 21st century only begins, in fact, in 2020 with the coronavirus pandemic.

What are the meanings of labor in a post-pandemic world? Among the different aspects of analysis that can be proposed when discussing Decent Work in the 21st century, which ones refer to the issue of the social reason of labor from an emancipatory point of view? Can labor considered decent within ILO's parameters be considered meaningful?

The problem

Work as a category has a structural (and structuring) historical-ontological meaning for it constitutes the social being from the organic exchange between the human being and nature. Marx defined work as a "*vital activity*" (Marx & Engels, 1979a), endowed with a primordial meaning not only as "a special productive activity, exercised with a definite aim, an activity that appropriates particular nature-given materials to particular human wants" (Marx & Engels, 1979e, pp. 52–53), that is, as a *technical* human-nature exchange mediated by objects of work, means of production of social life to satisfy needs "whether, for instance, they spring from the stomach or from fancy" (Marx & Engels, 1979e, p. 45), but also as a reproduction of humanity insofar as "the objectification of the human essence, both in its theoretical and practical aspects, is required to make man's *sense human*, as well as to create the *human sense* corresponding to the entire wealth of human and natural substance" (Marx & Engels, 1979a, p. 302).

According to Lukács (1980), work is *social praxis,* a concrete human activity as it has a conscious dimension that is part of the genesis of the

humanization process. It demands from the human being the observance of certain practical-cognitive abilities for the manipulation of the nature of which he is also a part. There is, therefore, an ineradicable bond between *action* and *consciousness*, *work* and *teleology*, which interact reciprocally in the process of social production and reproduction. In the words of Antunes (2018b, p. 1179): "at the same time that individuals transform the *external nature*, they also alter their own *human nature*, in a reciprocal and inter-relational process, which converts *social work* into a central element of the development of human sociability and its emancipation".

It is primarily from *work* that individuals differentiated themselves from pre-human and animal forms (Vigotski, 1994). This vital activity is the foundation from which the relationship between human beings and nature is established, with instruments or tools as concrete mediators of this relationship. According to Vigotski (1994), this relationship makes possible, dialectically, on the one hand, the construction of culture by human beings and, on the other hand, the construction of the human psyche itself, which is constituted from social interactions.

In this regard, Vigotski (1994, 2002) once again helps us by making use of the concept of "higher psychological functions" – voluntary attention, conscious memorization, planning capacity, emotions, among others. According to the author, these are the specifically human characteristics that differentiate us from other animals, which are indefinitely linked to nature based on elementary psychological functions – those of a biological nature, reflex actions and automatic reactions.

As Saviani (2003) states, it is therefore through work that human beings produce themselves. Work is, therefore, the human essence, that which allows the objectification of its subjectivity, possible only because human beings are the only kind of animal endowed with superior psychological functions.

However, from the constitution of capitalism, work becomes a special commodity, the *labor power*, earning wages in a generalized way, aiming solely at the production of commodities, which is why it preconizes abstract labor as expenditure of human labor power.

As *useful* and *concrete* labor, creator of *use values* it constitutes a condition of vital human existence. On the other hand, as an *abstract* labor it assumes as a dominant meaning the fact of being a source of extraction of *surplus value*, creator of *exchange values*, a source of essential wealth for the private accumulation of wealth and for the valorization of capital (Antunes, 2018b, p. 1179). In other words, another Antunes (2018, p. 83) helps us understand that "the *separation* between the result of work and the human being, between product and producer – *promoted by capitalism* – causes that need, which, in the first place, impelled, moved, the very process of transformation of nature, cannot be immediately satisfied by the produced object". This process is called *labor*

alienation. That is, such separation occurs in a relationship of expropriation, domination and even hostility towards the work of the worker.

That is, "the definition of buying [of *labor power*] already implies that he [the human being] regards his product as an object that is no longer his, an estranged object" (Marx & Engels, 1979b, p. 52). Thus, with the *universalization of alienated work* under the aegis of the capital system, all advances of the productive forces, in short, all human relations that are built from labor, are somehow affected by alienation. With this *alienated* division of labor in capitalism, within which each human being begins to have "a particular, exclusive sphere of activity, which is forced upon him and from which he cannot escape [...] if he does not want to lose his means of livelihood" (Marx & Engels, 1979c, p. 47). From a more subjective point of view Engels (Marx & Engels, 1979d, p. 277) concludes that "in the division of labour, man is also divided".

That is, if work is the starting point for the constitution of the social being, a central category that makes the human being what he is, a means to "exteriorize *his* own *need*, objectifying his *essence*, his *subjectivity*, his *individuality*, externalizes his *life*, *puts himself in the form of an object*" (Antunes, 2018a, p. 51), once alienated, separated from the product and process of labor, this same human being is also split (-*schizo*) from himself, from his subjectivity, from the health of his mind (-frenia) and stranged of his peers because they are also subjected to the same logic of *alienated* social division of work (Ribeiro, 2020).

But what makes us human is what also determines our ways of living, carrying with life, getting sick and dying. Which means that the social way in which labor is organized and divided has direct impacts on our health, determining it. "In its capitalist form [...] illnesses involve not only the alienation of work processes and products in the name of form salary, but also by the loss of self-reference of oneself and others as a generic being. Illness is alienation, and health is emancipation" (Ribeiro, 2021, p. 232).

The loss of mental health, expressed in the illness and death of the human person under the sphere of *universalization of alienated labor* in capitalism, is just the limit situation of the phenomenon of *alienation* that permeates bourgeois society, a sick society due to the structural imbalance between human being and nature, caused by private property and the hierarchical division of labor. As Marx (Marx & Engels, 1979a, p. 80) explains, "under these economic conditions this realization of labour appears as loss of realization for the workers" (Marx & Engels, 1979a, p. 272). *Entwirklichung,* is the German verb for de-effectivization /de-realization that Marx uses to mean "to deprive of reality and/or of effectiveness". It is the madness of the worker (Alves, 2013, p. 130).

In the Brazilian case, the absolute lack of decency, approaching the very indecency of labor is, as pointed out by Alves (2021), on one hand, in the deindustrialization and expansion of the metropolitan commerce and services sector, historically characterized by low productivity, miserable wages and

incipient organization trade union; and on the other hand, in the spread of "uberization" of labor, in the new wage precariousness and in the new way of manifesting the overexploitation of the labor power.

At the dawn of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, the world of urban labor in Brazil was potentializing its ability to produce wealth and, therefore, increasingly loses its solidary and emancipatory sense, which leads to desubjectivation and pathological processes of estrangement from oneself and from others.

In this sense, can Work, in the specific case of Brazil, according to the assumptions of the ILO, be Decent?

The sense of (In)Decent Work in Brazil

The first measures to make labor relations more flexible in Brazil took place during the civil-military dictatorship, which strongly repressed union activity. Among other misdemeanors are also the introduction of the Guarantee Fund for Service Time (FGTS), replacing the guarantee of job stability after ten years of employment, and the approval of the law that regulates the temporary job contract.

From the 1990s onwards, in line with the central capitalist economies, the Collor-Franco-Cardoso[14] governments marked the full acceptance of neoliberal principles in determining economic policy and the role of the State in the economy. During that decade, began the ideological diffusion of the thought that, due to the increase in competitiveness and uncertainty, results of a more "globalized" world, required less presence in the State and greater flexibility in the labor market, a fact that which is precisely contrary to what is proclaimed by International Organizations such as the ILO.

In the midst of the Plano Real[15], there were several measures to make Brazilian labor relations more flexible, such as those pointed out by Capelas, Neto and Marques (2010):

a) the legislation on profit sharing. Even originally a historical claim of trade unionism, in the manner in which it was implemented it contributed significantly to the flexibilization of labor relations in Brazil; the end of wage policy with salary de-indexation;
b) stipulation of the minimum wage disassociated from any inflation index;
c) establishment of the professional cooperatives, which allowed workers to organize themselves to provide services or perform work in a company without this characterizing an employment relationship;

14 Fernando Collor de Mello, Itamar Franco and Fernando Henrique Cardoso were the Brazilian presidents from 1990 to 2003.

15 Economic plan that was set in motion by President Itamar Franco and his then Ministry of Economics, Fernando Henrique Cardoso, aiming to stabilize Brazil's hyperinflation.

d) establishment of the bank hour system;
e) establishment of the part-time labor (less than 25 hours a week);
f) establishment of the possibility of suspending the employment contract for an indefinite period for the professional (re)qualification of the worker, as long as it was negotiated between the union and the company.

According to Krein (2003), the successive changes in Brazilian legislation were intended to relieve companies of the social counterparts related to labor rights, through a permissive role of the State. Outsourcing, for example, previously allowed only for secondary activities, is generalized to all activities. In this wake, the approval of the Labor (Counter)Reform Law, among many harmful points that promote the dismantling of the Labor Rights, validated intermittent labor. In this way, flexibilization, outsourcing, deregulation, intermittence and the capture of public funds become the current mantras of Brazilian neoliberal laborism.

Thus, as stated by Franco, Druck and Seligmann-Silva (2010, p. 243), in the midst of flexibilization, the loss of labor social reason from the process of social loss of belonging leads to the weakening of ties, leading in the limit to social breakdown, with the proliferation of social violence, suffering and illness, with emphasis on increasingly frequent mental disorders. For the authors, this loss of the meaning of labor:

> a) constitutes the core of the forms of mental exhaustion originated by the perverse metamorphosis of work organization; b) substantiates forms of mental exhaustion that lead to depression and burnout, in addition to acting in the pathogenesis of other psychic and psychosomatic disorders (Franco, Druck & Seligmann-Silva, 2010, p. 240).

Antunes (2018a, p. 64) states that today the forms of labor intensification, the circumvention of rights, overexploitation, living between formality and informality, the demand for goals, the routinization of labor, the despotism of bosses, coordinators and supervisors, degrading wages, intermittent labor, harassment, illnesses, ailments and deaths resulting from working conditions are on the rise in Brazil. Processes that are repeated in various parts of the world and configure a condition *sine qua non* of the new morphology of the working class.

Such factors, combined with a prioritization of exacerbated competitiveness, productivity requirements and the prioritization of profit, marks elevated precariousness of labor at the same time that the use of the workforce as a mere commodity at the service of capital, something that denotes the dissonance with ILO's concept of Decent Work.

For Antunes and Praun (2015, p. 419), in these labor contexts there are different and sophisticated mechanisms of control and coercion that exacerbate

the consumption of human physical and mental capacity. It is in the meantime that the worker is subjected to situations that affect his living conditions and deliberately compromise his health.

For Seligmann-Silva (2007, p. 79), faced with the demands of labor, the individual often feels fragile and incapacitated, even in situations in which his professional training and experience would allow him to do well. Added to this is the ever-present threat of losing role or place in the hierarchy and, even worse, the threat of losing the job.

With the expansion of these large contingents of workers who become intensely precarious or lose their jobs and the demand for activities endowed with greater "qualifications" and "competences", therefore providing greater intellectual potential (in the managerial sense of intellectual capital) become whether the new fetish necessary for the prevailing forms of valuing value. Therefore, in agreement with the thesis of Antunes (2018a, p. 92),

> we are witnessing an intensification and expansion of the ways of extracting surplus labor, of the forms that generate value, the result of the articulation of a highly advanced machinery (of which ICTs are an example that invaded the world of goods), with the requirement made by capital to seek greater "qualifications" and "competences" of the workforce.

As part of this "modernization" of companies in the era of globalization, outsourcing is seen in the managerial discourse as a possibility of greater "specialization" of productive activities. However, Antunes and Praun (2015, p. 423) say that companies also outsource to transfer risks to workers with which they are released from complying with the requirements of legislation and labor rights, which become the responsibility of outsourced companies. Thus, it is not difficult to see that outsourcing has become one of the elements that significantly increase the rates of accidents at work, present in practically all branches, sectors and work spaces.

Therefore, the logic of financialization, of dismantling social rights, in which outsourcing, intermittent and precarious labor are necessary corollaries, becomes the non-negotiable requirement of large corporations, increasingly suppressing technique, time and space. Despite exalting ideals of "social responsibility", "environmental sustainability", "collaboration", "partnership" and so on, the objective of the Michel Temer government (2016-2018) was to corrode Protective Labor Laws and fulfill the "requirement" of the Brazilian business community, whose objective is none other than to implement a society of total precariousness of labor in Brazil (Antunes, 2018a).

As the Labor (Counter-)Reform did not solve such precariousness, as well as unemployment problems as promised, the Social Security will also not be able to mitigate the social inequality as ensured. Capital needs crises to reinvent,

expand and value itself. History shows us that poverty and inequality tend to get worse in Brazil, therefore contrary to the assumptions of Decent Work of the ILO.

Ahmed (2022) shows (via an OXFAM report) that in Brazil almost 4 thousand richest individuals (0.0016% of the population) hold 16% of all the country's wealth, more than 182 million Brazilians (85% of the population). Marcolan (2018) even finds that in the period in which the Brazilian ethical-political-economic crisis (comprised between the years 2014-2017) is accentuating, with high unemployment rates generating more social-economic inequality, another public order social problem, such as suicide, has its rates increased. Stansfeld and Candy (2006) already pointed out the increase in unemployment as a factor of vulnerability to mental suffering and, consequently, suicide.

If inequality has always been inherent to capitalism, including for it to be able to reproduce itself, neoliberalism has been the perfect tool for aggravating social suffering which, of course, involves the loss of the meaning of labor. Wood (2006) says that under capitalism, from the moment that some sell the workforce and others buy it, there is no democracy.

The concept of Decent Work, which Brazil and the global south are far from incorporating, goes through the understanding that the loss of the social reason for work is only the limit situation of the phenomenon of alienation that pervades bourgeois society. A sick society due to the structural imbalance between person and nature caused by private property and the hierarchical division of labor.

In this sense, would the notion of Decent Work be naive or, as says the expression deliberate, "just for show"?

The checkmate

Having laid the foundations from which work is understood by the authors of this chapter, as well as the other discussions that were made about the paths of labor throughout part of the 20th and the 21st Centuries, it is possible to analyze the concept of Decent Work, proposed by the ILO as well as the values that surround it from a critical perspective.

First, it is undeniably important to discuss decent work or kinds of labor that era endowed with some meaning for those who perform it. The discussions undertaken above bring us more than enough elements to understand work as a central dimension to human beings. For this very reason, it is so important to analyze aspects related to the impacts that labor brings both in more specific dimensions such as health, maintenance of life etc., and what is most fundamental to us, such as the constitution of our subjectivity and human formation.

Precisely for this reason, it was necessary to discuss the social determinations that surround not only the elaboration of the concept of Decent Work, but also the most fundamental values defended by the ILO. In order to understand

this complexity, attention was first drawn to the social and economic context in which the Decent Work report was prepared. It was the end of the 1990s, on the eve of the entry into the 21st Century. At that time, there were already being felt the effects of both the productive restructuring, set in motion in peripheral as well as in core countries of capitalism, and the mundialization of capital.

Based on the discourse of financialization, the proposal of neoliberal governments for broad reform of the State emerged as one of the foundations of public policies in the 1980s, based on the idea of flexibility in labor processes, labor markets, products and standards of consumption. In the words of Franco, Druck and Seligmann-Silva (2010, p. 233), "globalization has consolidated the flexibilization/precariousness binomial and the loss of the social reason of labor".

The flexibilization of labor, therefore, was adopted as one of the central elements in this process as a bet on the way out of the structural crisis of capital – a crisis that, according to Mészáros, is so profound (exactly because structural) that ands up "invading not only the world of more or less parasitic global finance but also every single domain of our social, economic and cultural life" (Mészáros, 2009, p. 24).

ILO's understanding of this context is, on the other hand, rather different. The idea of crisis is replaced by the expression "times of turbulence" (ILO, 1999, p. 3) and these are understood as "moments of opportunity" (ILO, 1999, p. 3). Even when the concept of crisis appears, it is analyzed from a phenomenal perspective, only in its appearance.

> We are in a prolonged period of adjustment to an emerging global economy. The recent crisis in the emerging markets is only the latest in a series of adjustments which began with the oil shocks, followed by the debt crises of Africa and Latin America in the seventies and eighties and the European transitional crisis of the nineties, not to speak of the particular situation in which Japan and the countries of the European Union find themselves today (ILO, 1999, p. 6).

As mentioned throughout this chapter, the political stance of the ILO is perceptible when we can read that the objective of the report is "to create a unity of purpose among the three constituents – governments, workers and employers – which will send a clear and distinctive message about the Organization to public opinion at large" (ILO, 1999, p. 1).

This concept takes us back to the ideas defended by Frederick W. Taylor, responsible for the proposition of the self-alleged "scientific management" of work, that the prosperity of the capitalist would lead to the prosperity of the salaried worker[16].

16 Discourse similar to that of "making the cake grow, and then sharing it" stated by the economist Antônio Delfim Neto during the Brazilian civil-military dictatorship (1964-1985).

As Faria (2010, p. 30) points out, “generalized prosperity only deals with unilateral prosperity, as only a small portion of the results is given to workers, with a view to their collaboration”. On the same subject, we draw attention once again to the fact that in a context in which governments, workers and employers are present, the latter is at a disadvantage, since workers are on one side, while employers and governments are ‘across the table’.

We problematized the fact that the proposals present in the Report of director-general: decent work (ILO, 1999) address critics to the world of labor in addition to proposing changes without, however, committing to a structural critique of the context in which this labor takes place, namely: the capitalist mode of production.

In this sense, the possible changes that might arise within the discussion of Decent Work would be welcome only from ILO’s circumstantial point of view and would reach only what is on the surface. The complexity of the issue resides in the fact that the working class has presented legal demands for the regulation of labor at the same time that, dialectically, it needs to refuse and overcome work in the way we find it in bourgeois society, solidified in and by the rules of capital, and, therefore, alienated.

An example of this is present in the following statement.

> Through many social and political struggles, the ILO’s message has, in several respects, been embodied in the law and practice of what are today considered the *developed societies*. The test of time has shown that the ILO stands for values for which people care (ILO, 1999, p. 3, *emphasis added*).

This mention makes us think in two ways. Firstly, that the model to be followed can be glimpsed in the so-called central capitalist economies, that is, the criticisms are made from within the capitalist system itself, without questioning it. Secondly, it does not take into account the international division of labor that puts different countries in a relationship of interdependence in such a way that, for a Netherlands to exist, there must be a South Korea and a Turkey[17].

Finally, we warn of the limits of this type of initiative, as well as the fact that radical transformations of the capitalist mode of production are necessary – changes that put its very existence in check. That is why, in the words of Mészáros (2009, p. 38), “Marx is more relevant today than ever before. For only a radical systemic change can offer historically sustainable hope and a solution for the future.

17 Mention to the countries that have records of the longest working hours, Turkey and South Korea, with more than 20% of the population working 60 hours a week, while in the Netherlands the population works around 29 hours per week.

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COMPENSATING EMPLOYEES IN WAYS THAT HELP THEM LIVE A LIFE THEY DEEM WORTH LIVING: the link between social conditions and psychological need satisfaction

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Introduction

Over the course of their lifetime, the average worker spends around 90,000 hours at work (Pryce-Jones, 2010). For that reason, one should find a workplace with tasks that stimulate them and colleagues with whom they can build meaningful connections to maximize their happiness at work. Contrary to what some may believe, *money can't buy happiness.* In fact, a recent study conducted in 164 countries by Jebb and colleagues (2018) reported a satiation effect of personal income on emotional well-being in the range of $60,000 to $75,000. In other words, beyond that, annual income not only stops promoting well-being, but even appears to have a negative impact. Thus, a question that may emerge is the following: how can remuneration practices in organizations all over the world be designed to help workers achieve a life they deem successful?

In this chapter, our aim is to explain how organizations can design their remuneration practices to allow, in part, employees to be living a life with dignity, autonomy, and independence (or to be a "full citizen," as suggested by the Decent Work Model). As argued by various authors, Self-Determination Theory (SDT), a macro-theory of human motivations and functioning, can help to further our understanding of how the workplace should be designed to optimize workers' functioning and well-being (e.g., see Forner *et al.*, 2020). Hence, SDT will be used as a theoretical framework to provide an answer regarding how to design remuneration programs for them to become meaningful to workers. We will begin the chapter by digging deeper into the meaning of Decent Work's fourth factor called "Meaningful remuneration for the exercise of citizenship" by relating it to both SDT's psychological needs

(Ryan and Deci, 2000) and Rawls' social primary goods (2001). Both SDT and Rawls' social primary good will be further explained in the following section. A thorough explanation of SDT's motivational taxonomy will then be presented so that you can understand how a remuneration program can influence a worker's well-being and functioning both at work and in their personal life. We will then dive into what should be, according to us, the main concerns when it comes to design the most satisfying and meaningful remuneration program. These include notably the amount of money offered to employees given their positions and responsibilities, equity and fairness perceived in the process of compensating employees and the functional meaning of money. Throughout each part, one will be able to understand that, considering that the value of satisfying psychological needs has been deemed important in dozens of countries over the past 50 years (Forest *et al.*, 2023), the process of reaching meaningful remuneration should be quite similar in most countries.

1. Decent Work: meaningful remuneration for the exercise of citizenship

The fourth dimension of Decent Work, known as "Meaningful remuneration for the exercise of citizenship" refers to the benefits and earnings perceived as fair and sufficient to be a "full citizen" in society which includes living a life with dignity, independence, and autonomy as an individual, providing well-being for oneself and those who depend on the worker (Ferraro *et al.*, 2018). There are two critical elements that should be considered. First, meaningful remuneration must be sufficient to satisfy the worker's needs, going from the basic needs (e.g., access to food) to the more self-actualized ones (e.g., having enough resources to feel autonomous and independent). The second important element is the focus on the employee's perception of what is deemed fair and sufficient, which highlights the subjectivity of this dimension. Two individuals could receive the same remuneration, yet one may perceive it as fair and sufficient while the other may be dissatisfied with it. In the following pages, we will uncover the factors that could justify such different assessments of remuneration. We will notably argue that, in opposition to what many may think, the amount of money received on its own only plays a small role when it comes to perception of fairness in a remuneration program.

1.1 Using SDT to further understand *Meaningful Remuneration*

As it identifies both the antecedents, the processes, and the outcomes of human motivation, SDT can serve as a theoretical framework to understand

how meaningful remuneration can be reached and how it affects human functioning and well-being. As elicited earlier, the main purpose of meaningful remuneration is to compensate employees in ways that they deem fair and sufficient and that allow them to live a life they judge as successful. SDT, a meta-theory of human motivation, would argue that to reach this optimal functioning in life, but also at work, a critical objective that remuneration practices should have is to promote and increase their employees' quality of work motivation (Gagné *et al.*, 2015).

Gagné and Deci (2005) explain that the distinction between autonomous and controlled motivation is central to SDT. On the one hand, autonomy refers to acting based on choices one has the possibility to make or acting with a sense of volition. On the other hand, when being controlled, people act out of a sense of pressure, internal or external, or a feeling that they *must* engage in this activity. Additionally, SDT presents a third type of motivation, called amotivation, that refers to a lack of intention and volition.

Autonomous and controlled can be further divided into different types of regulation, based on the degree to which behaviors are exerted out of autonomy or control. Autonomous motivation includes both intrinsic motivation and identified regulation. ***Intrinsic motivation*** is observed when people engage in activities strictly out of interest and pleasure. Activities that are not deemed intrinsically interesting or pleasurable must, prototypically, be motivated extrinsically. A critical postulate from the theory implies that extrinsic motivation varies in the extent to which it is autonomous or controlled. In other words, the activity would be initiated based upon the perceived contingency between the act and its consequences (e.g., approval of others, pride, tangible rewards, benefits). ***Identified regulation***, being that most autonomous type of extrinsic motivation, is observed when people engage in an activity because they understand the importance and identify with the value of a behavior for their own personal objectives and identities. ***Introjected regulation*** is next type of regulation down the continuum of autonomy as it has been taken in by the person but has not been accepted as their own. Hence, introjected regulation is controlling the individual. Contingent self-esteem and ego involvement are great examples as the person would be engaging in a behavior out of an internal pressure to feel worth or to protect their ego. Although the regulation is internalized, it is a relatively controlled form of extrinsic motivation. Finally, ***external regulation*** is observed when someone behaves only with the intention of receiving or avoiding a consequence. When comparing extrinsic and intrinsic motivation more at large, extrinsic motivation refers to external regulation. Globally speaking, SDT presents a self-determination continuum which ranges from amotivation, being a complete lack of self-determination, to intrinsic motivation, represented by someone being completely self-determined.

Many researchers have shown that autonomous motivations (intrinsic motivation and identified regulation) lead to greater well-being and performance than controlled motivations or amotivation (e.g., see Gagné and Deci, 2005; Deci *et al.*, 2017). Thus, promoting these two types of motivation is a key factor that organizations must consider when implementing their remuneration programs. But how can they do that? SDT postulates that both intrinsic motivation and identified regulation require nutriments – being the satisfaction of the psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness – to be optimized. The need of ***autonomy*** refers to making your own choices and decisions in accordance with your values. The need of ***competence*** implies feelings of efficiency and mastery of your environment, and the need of ***relatedness*** encompasses meaningful and reciprocal relationships that you share with others (Gagné and Deci, 2005). It has been suggested that when these three needs are satisfied, not only are autonomous motivations promoted, but controlled motivations are diminished. However, it is important to note that environments do not always promote the satisfaction of psychological needs. Indeed, there exists environment that are more controlling, rejecting, critical or toxic – environments that would rather thwart or frustrate individuals' psychological needs of autonomy, competence and affiliation. Such environments can elicit defensive functioning and ill-being (Vansteekiste and Ryan, 2013). Interestingly, to this day, there is empirical evidence in 164 countries that psychological needs satisfaction is crucial in promoting subjective well-being, above and beyond general life satisfaction (Tay and Diener, 2011). Although the claim of universality should always be made with precautions, these findings suggest that needs satisfaction is in fact relevant for individuals in most areas of the planet. Consequently, organizations should aim, through their remuneration practices, to satisfy their employees' psychological needs to reach positive outcomes in terms of both well-being and performance.

1.2 Social primary goods

In addition to ensuring a need-satisfying environment in line with SDT, we argue that organizations should also promote the five social primary goods presented by Rawls (2001) – namely the (1) basic rights and liberties (e.g., "My rights and freedom are protected in this society"), (2) freedom of movement and occupation (e.g., "I am free to travel and live where I want to in this country"), (3) responsible positions of authority and responsibility (e.g., "I am free to vote in elections and participate in the civic life of my community"), (4) income and wealth (e.g., "I have access to enough healthy food and safe drinking water"), and (5) social bases of self-respect (e.g., "People like me are looked down on in this society" – reversed). Rawls (2001) proposed that these

five conditions should be met for citizens to perceive the constitutional system as fair and pursue their own conception of a satisfying life. The benefits of the social primary goods result, partly, from the extent to which people consider they practically have access to them – this issue of perception is notable because accessibility to these primary goods varies between societies and between social groups within a society. Bradshaw *et al.* (2021) conducted two studies in which they compared participants' perception of primary goods across countries (Study 1; namely Australia, the United States, South Africa, India, and the Philippines) and across self-identified social groups (Study 2; sexual minorities, ethnic minorities, religious groups, and political groups within the United States). Wanting to observe the links between Rawls' theory, SDT, and psychological well-being, they showed that perception of primary goods is positively link with well-being and negatively link with ill-being, and those links are, in part, respectively explained by the satisfaction and frustration of SDT's psychological needs. Their studies suggested that when one perceives that their society provides extended freedoms, equal opportunities, and fair and sufficient resources to all, their psychological needs will likely be satisfied, which will in turn lead to greater well-being. Although the perceived access to social primary goods was lower for South Africans as well as sexual and ethnic minority groups, this association was found within all groups of the two studies.

Researchers studying social primary goods have mostly looked at them in societal context, precisely examining participants' perception of how laws and societies' policies respond (or not) to their primary goods (for example, see Bradshaw *et al.*, 2021). However, we believe that these goods are quite relevant in organizations as well. In fact, while societies promote the social primary good through their laws, constitutions and policies, organizations can promote them, in part, by ensuring a meaningful remuneration to their employees. In other words, organizations remuneration practices could (1) protect all employees' rights and freedom, (2) offer flexible job design and schedules, (3) allow all employees to be heard and to participate in decisions that impact them, (4) have sufficient resources to feed themselves and their families, and (5) make sure no one is looked down on in the workplace. That way, organizations would contribute to workers pursuing their own conception of a good life.

An important thing to consider nowadays when thinking of remuneration is that it goes above and beyond financial compensation: although monetary rewards are critical, all surrounding working conditions, procedures, and values put forward by organizations will also play an important role. Financial compensation must be complemented by other humanitarian benefits such as flexible schedules, health programs, employment security, quality management, and more. Receiving a given annual salary may not fulfill

employees' basic rights and freedoms, yet adequate supervision can. Global remuneration varies from one organization to another, but the main idea is to formulate and establish policies to remunerate people fairly, equitably and in accordance with the organizations' values. Since an employee's perception of meaningful remuneration would go beyond the pay they receive, organizations would gain from adjusting their policies to ensure it is perceived as fair and sufficient from all employees.

2. What should be considered when thinking of meaningful compensation?

Economic inequality has become one of society's most critical challenges and has kept on growing throughout the last three decades (e.g., Amis *et al.*, 2020; Atkinson, 2015; Stiglitz, 2012; etc.). There is evidence that larger income differences in societies are strong determinants of increased health and social problems occurring mostly at the more precarious levels of the social ladder and affecting not only the poor, but a large majority of the population (Wilkinson and Pickett, 2017). In fact, consequences related to greater income inequality have led to detrimental health outcomes such as shorter life expectancy, increased rates of mental illness and obesity and social issues such as lower levels of child well-being, educational attainment, and even social cohesion (Wilkinson and Pickett, 2017). Wilkinson and Pickett (2017) found some evidence suggesting that greater inequality was related to an increased perception of status differences and social evaluative threat, both leading to problematic forms of psychopathologies. On the other hand, the authors presented more egalitarian societies as enjoying more social cohesion, increased community life and interpersonal trust (Wilkinson and Pickett, 2017). Therefore, one could ask if the same trends apply to the organizational life, more precisely regarding how organizations contribute to income inequality. Wage and employment practices implemented by organizations have been identified as having one of the most critical impacts on societal economic inequality (Bapuji *et al.*, 2020). In fact, the last decades have been marked by an increase of pay disparity between top management/shareholders and the rest of the organization which led to an increase in overall societal inequality (Bapuji *et al.*, 2020). The shareholder logic and external market orientation have led income distribution to be in favor of the highest paid, leaving the interests of the working class and all other organizational members far behind (Bapuji *et al.*, 2020). In other words, organizations and the way they shape their internal practices, especially regarding remuneration have a central role to play in shaping income inequality (Amis *et al.*, 2020). In fact, as pay represents the

most important source of income for the vast majority of the population it is crucial understanding how organizations can better help mitigating inequality throughout the practices they implement and the decisions they promote when it comes to compensation (Amis *et al.*, 2020).

The next section of the chapter will elaborate on three main considerations that organizations should have when designing their remuneration programs – namely the amount of money offered, the functional meaning of money and the employees' perceived equity regarding the programs. We will argue that there is in fact such a thing as "enough money," that outcomes are favorable when money takes on an informational meaning and that programs should value transparency and justice for employees to perceive them as equitable.

2.1 Is there such a thing as enough money?

A long-lasting debate regarding remuneration revolves around the amount of money earned by employees and its relation to their well-being (Killingsworth, 2021). We will see in this section how different research have explored the topic and the main conclusions we can derive from them.

Research on income and well-being tend either to observe evaluative well-being (a person's evaluation of their own life/life satisfaction) or experienced well-being (an evaluation on how one feels during the day-to-day moments) (Killingsworth, 2021). As observed by Killingworth (2021), vast majority of studies on income and well-being have focused their attention on the former, these studies tending to report a positive association between greater income and evaluation of well-being (e.g., Deaton, 2008; Diener *et al.*, 2002; Stevenson *et al.*, 2008). However, a more recent study by Jebb and colleagues (2018), intrigued on the relation of income level with both evaluative and experienced well-being has helped to shed more nuance on the former assumptions, these authors claiming there can be such a thing as enough money. In fact, Jebb and colleagues (2008) have conducted a worldwide study on a representative sample of over 1.7 million individuals around 164 countries trying to understand if there is a level of income at which satiation occurs, more precisely if there is a specific level to which the increase in income no longer produces meaningful benefits towards happiness. Compared to previous studies, the authors have found that there is indeed a satiation point for life evaluation occurring at approximately $95,000 USD and a satiation level for emotional well-being occurring between a range of $60,000 USD and $75,000 USD (Jebb *et al.*, 2018). These results represent an agglomeration of the global data. However, the authors also found the satiation point tended to be higher in more wealthy regions, this result being due either to the standards of social

comparison being higher or the income being able to yield better standards of living in wealthier regions (Jebb *et al.*, 2018). An interesting conclusion from this study also reflects it is presumably not the value of the income in itself that drives the reduction of subjective well-being, but the cost associated with it, as high incomes are typically associated with higher job demands (Jebb *et al.*, 2018). In relation to those findings, a recent article by Gagné and Forest (2020) has helped to better understand how compensation systems should be designed in order to increase psychological needs satisfaction and promote autonomous motivation. The authors, based on the assumption that employees seek income security and employers want to retain good employees, have reinforced the need for a competitive base salary at a minimum satiation point. Gagné and Forest (2020) have specified not only the need for a competitive base salary, but also one that is not contingent on performance, this proposition resonating with the findings of Kuvaas and colleagues (2016). In fact, Kuvaas and colleagues (2016) suggested that base pay level should be given greater importance as their study revealed it was positively associated to autonomous work motivation, the amount of base pay being positively related to work effort and employee engagement.

As mentioned earlier, the relationship between money and well-being has long been contested, some studies still claiming larger income being robustly associated with greater well-being (Killingsworth, 2021). However, what one should take away from these findings is not only the extrinsic value of money in itself, but the working mechanisms that help explain why a specific amount of money may (or may not) generate higher levels of well-being.

2.2 Functional meaning of money

As seen previously, remuneration has an impact on individual's well-being. However, if the extrinsic value of money was one of the first debate explored, this section will allow us to better understand the functional meaning of money which refers to the subjective meaning given by employees to the cash rewards they receive (Thibault Landry *et al.*, 2017a). While earning a salary is fundamental to explaining an employment relationship, it is necessary to move the debate away from the amount of money being paid and shift the focus on its meaning and significance (Forest *et al.*, 2023).

SDT, as mentioned throughout this chapter, is a comprehensive framework that will help us better understand the mechanisms that link the functional meaning of cash rewards to the attainment of psychological needs, therefore employees' well-being. According to this theory, cash rewards may take on different meanings depending on employee's perception resulting

either in need satisfaction or need frustration (Thibault Landry *et al.*, 2017a). As reported by Thibault Landry and colleagues (2022), SDT research has consistently demonstrated that the effect of rewards on intrinsic motivation is dependent of its functional significance, which is influenced by the type of rewards and the context in which they are given. Cash rewards can be perceived as being either informative (presented as encouraging employees' efforts and participation in the activity and conveying an appreciation of their contribution) or controlling (pressuring employees to attain organizational goals and endorsing behaviors to accessory get rewards; Thibault Landry *et al.*, 2022). Studies that tested those postulates empirically lead to understand that the different perception of cash rewards by employees lead to different psychological responses and functioning at work (Thibault Landry *et al.*, 2017b; 2019; 2022). In fact, when employees perceive monetary rewards as being informative, it appears to be positively associated not only with the attainment of the three psychological needs contributing to motivating employees in a healthy way (competence, relatedness and autonomy), but it also has buffering effects on incompetence, oppression and rejection, therefore resulting in better work functioning (Thibault Landry *et al.*, 2017b; 2019; 2022). On the other hand, controlling cash rewards have been associated with less healthy motivational mechanisms, leading employees to feel less committed, more psychologically distressed and tempted to pertain deviant behaviors (Thibault Landry *et al.*, 2017a).

This goes to show that monetary rewards, if used adequately, can act as an efficient enabler of employee motivation and well-being (Thibault Landry *et al.*, 2022) However, compensation practices need to be designed, deployed and communicated in such a way that employees perceive its informative intentions rather than its controlling effects.

2.3 Equity and fairness

Is the desire for equity universal? This is a difficult claim to make with absolute certainty. However, within a sample of 50,000 people across 40 countries, Kiatpongsan and Norton (2014) found a common desire for equitable pay. Indeed, an organization's approach to equity and fairness is just as important as their compensation offered, and this is notable in countries all over the world. Gagné and Forest (2020) argue that one's compensation should be based on individual contributions aiming to align employees' goals with organizational goals but should also promote equity perceptions by granting greater salaries to employees that perform better. An equitable approach does not imply that everyone should be paid the same amount but rather that workers are paid fairly

in proportion to their efforts and contributions in their workplace. Both Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory and Adams' (1965) equity theory are relevant for that argument. Expectancy theory postulates that work motivation depends on both the employee's competence to perform at a given level and the expectancy of being rewarded when reaching that performance level (Vroom, 1964). The latter argues that, in addition to that, work motivation depends on whether the employee perceives that their performance/rewards ratio is equal to the ratio of other employees doing similar tasks. In fact, Adams (1965) specifies that workers continuously monitor their inputs and outputs at work and evaluate their workplace as fair and equitable when their input-output ratio are equals to other workers. He adds that dissatisfaction or discomfort can emerge when one perceives inequity, regardless of where they are in the compensation ladder: an over-paid employee may report feelings of guilt towards their coworkers while an under-paid employee may express anger. Inequity can be observed between competing organizations or within an organization. Nash (1972) conducted a study where participants where asked which situations, out of the three suggested, would make them the angriest: 1) being paid less than employees who do similar work in other organizations, 2) being paid less than employees who do the same work in their own organization, and 3) being paid less than employees who do different work in their own organization. 78% responded that being paid less than employees who do the same work in their own organization would make them the angriest. This frustration potentially emerges because of the underlying message understood by the employee through these procedures deemed unequitable. Indeed, Thibault-Landry *et al.*, 2017c) explain that compensation can signal to an employee whether they are a valued asset worth the investment, or not. Consequently, employees that perceive inequities in the compensation programs of their organization may interpret that they are not valued or worth a fair investment – which frustrates their needs of competence and relatedness. In contrast, compensating employees at or above market value could satisfy their needs of competence and relatedness by implying, through remuneration, that their efforts are recognized and appreciated and that they belong in the organization.

Another question that may emerge is the following: how can an organization promote perceived equity among its employees? Colquitt (2001) suggests that by ensuring organizational justice on four levels – namely the distributive, procedural, informational, and interpersonal levels – employees would feel as though the social exchange is increasingly valued by the organization, making them feel appreciated and recognized. Distributive justice involves the perceived equity of the distribution of the organization's resources (e.g., salary, bonuses). Precisely, employees may be concerned with

whether their compensation reflects their efforts and their contributions in their work, is appropriate for the work they have completed, and is justified given their performance. Procedural justice pertains to the perceived equity regarding the procedures used to decide on employees' compensation. In line with this subtype of justice, employees may assess whether their perspectives are heard or considered during those procedures and whether the procedures are applied consistently, free of bias, based on accurate information, and uphold ethical and moral standards. More simply, employees could question how (informational) bonuses, raises, salaries, or promotions are given. Informational justice refers to the perceived equity in the communication approaches of the organization's procedures. Here, workers could wonder about the honesty, the thoroughness, the reasoning, and the adaptability of their managers regarding the procedures of allocating financial compensation as well as the delay within which the information is conveyed. Finally, interactional justice refers to employees' perception of how fairly they are treated by their managers. They may consider whether they are being treated politely, with dignity, and with respect (Colquitt, 2001). Olafsen and colleagues (2015) have suggested that employees' perception of procedures used to evaluate performance and make decisions regarding financial compensations are especially important in this perception of equity. Without undermining the importance of the rewards distribution across an organization, this entails that organizations should first demonstrate to their employees that financial compensations are determined based on consistent procedures and on accurate information that is bias-free. They should also be open to hear workers' perspectives and encourage them to express their appeal.

Conclusion

All in all, there is not one magical specific recipe to design remuneration practices that please and satisfy everyone's needs. However, by following the principles of SDT (Ryan and Deci, 2000) and of Rawls' social primary goods (2001), an organization's practices that nourish employees' psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness as well as their social primary goods are a first important step in allowing, in part, employees to consider their remuneration meaningful and live a life they perceive as worth living. Organizations have a critical role to play in limiting societal economic inequality. The remuneration practices they implement and the strategic orientation they pursue in favor or not of specific stakeholder groups directly affects pay disparity across all employee levels (Bapuji *et al.*, 2020). As we have seen, the amount of income granted to employees has an impact on their wellbeing,

but once a satiation point is reached, other factors need to be taken into consideration by practitioners when designing their compensation programs. In fact, the functional meaning of money, referring to the subjective meaning given by employees to the cash rewards, plays a huge a part in explaining the mechanisms leading to employee wellbeing or illbeing (Thibault Landry *et al.*, 2017a). As described in previous sections, monetary rewards, when perceived as being informative are positively related to psychological needs contributing to motivation and better work functioning. Whereas, monetary rewards, when perceived as being controlling, are associated with less healthy motivational mechanisms. We do not imply all employees should get paid the same. Rather we believe, organizations should compensate their employees equitably and congruently with their individual and organizational efforts. One of the most important factors to keep in mind is to promote equity through organizational justice. In fact, remuneration practices should be congruent with employees' efforts and contributions (i.e., distributive), should be applied consistently and consider employees' point of view (i.e., procedural), should be transparent, thorough, and given in timely manners (i.e., informational), and given by the managers in a polite and fair manner (i.e., interactional). Furthermore, compensation practices should be designed in ways that encourage employees' contribution in their workplace and convey an appreciation for their efforts rather pressure them to reach organizational goals. Organizations must understand that very few employees strictly value being the richest possible. Rather, the concept of *Meaningful Remuneration* encompasses an income that allow the person to live their life with dignity, independence, and autonomy as an individual, providing well-being for oneself and for those who are dependent on them (Ferraro *et al.*, 2018) – and for this to be achieved, money itself only plays a small role.

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SOCIAL PROTECTION OF WORKERS: universal aspects and diversity among cultures

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Introduction

In this chapter, we will be looking at social protection as a multidimensional concept as examined by different scholars. Social protection has become mainstreamed in development discourse in development studies literature and among policymakers implementing social protection programmes. Different perspectives have evolved in the conceptualization of social protection. For example, some see social protection as a new label or identity for old-style social welfare targeted at the poor and vulnerable (widows and orphans, or people with disabilities). On the part of the policymakers, they compare social protection with social safety nets or interventions that cushion the poor against production and consumption shocks (Devereux & Sabates-Wheeler, 2004). There are others that adopt a very broad approach by adding education and health subsidies, job creation and micro-credit programmes and safety nets for groups that may be vulnerable to shocks. In recent times, social protection has been extended to cover equity, empowerment and economic, social and cultural rights, rather than limiting it to the scope of social protection targeted at income and consumption transfers (Devereux & Sabates-Wheeler, 2004; Babajanian *et al.*, 2014). The emphasis is now on the potential to achieve social justice outcome for marginalized social groups (Jones & Shahrokh, 2013).

In this chapter, attempt will be made to look at social protection from various perspectives. To do this, we will first examine the concept of social protection; then shift our attention to looking at workers' aspirations in terms of social protection. We will also look at what is diverse among cultures in the way social protection is reached and perceived by workers and what is universal standard of measuring social protections for workers using the dimension of decent work.

Conceptualizing as Social Protection

The issue of social protection came into existence to address the 'safety nets' discourse in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Safety nets was one of the World Bank's three-pronged approach to 'attacking poverty' (World Bank, 1990), and were considered as conservatist social assistance in countries too poor and administratively weak to introduce comprehensive social welfare programmes (Devereux & Sabates-Wheeler, 2004). In the 1990s, the emphases were more on the livelihoods, risk and vulnerability as well as the multi-dimensional aspect of poverty, which were more pronounced. Safety nets issue received increasing criticism and more sophisticated alternatives were proposed (Devereux & Sabates-Wheeler, 2004). Coincidentally, the broader potential of social protection came to the fore and more claims for what social protection can and should attains became evidently clear.

Social protection is concerned with the reduction of poverty and multi-dimensional deprivation. It is directed at the processes, policies and interventions which respond to the economic, social, political and security risks and constraints the poor and vulnerable people face, and which will make them less insecure and less poor, and more able to participate in economic growth (Asian Development Bank, 2003; Devereux & Sabates-Wheeler, 2004). Social protection has five major elements namely the labour markets, social insurance, social assistance, micro and area-based schemes to protect communities and child protection. The definition of social protection is in line with international development standard and differences may exist in social policy definitions in high-income countries. Social protection usually consists of 'a set of nationally-owned policies and programmes' (UNDP, 2016:12) that is usually provided by the state (from domestic resources, either contributions or tax finance) with international donors' support for less developed and lower-middle-income countries (UNDESA, 2018).

Workers' social protections have received significant awareness in 21st century because everyone knows their rights and are conscious to defend them. Social protection is a powerful device for influencing employees and quality of their work (Emmy, Van Esch & Flora, 2016). The Social Protection is the third dimension of decent work by ILO and the fifth dimension in Ferraro *et al.* (2018) model. Social protection arose from the perceived condition of a worker, about likely illness or unemployment and future retirement. This dimension includes the worker's family within social protection mechanisms.

Social protection is considered to be one of the important social achievements in the 21st century. The International Labour Organization defines social protection as:

> [...] the set of public measures that a society provides for its members to protect them against economic and social distress that would be caused by the absence or a substantial reduction of income from work as a result of various contingencies (sickness, maternity, employment injury, unemployment, invalidity, old age, and death of the breadwinner); the provision of health care; and, the provision of benefits for families with children (Bonilla, Garcia & Gruat, 2003, p. 13).

This objective aims at promoting both inclusion and productivity, by ensuring that women and men enjoy working conditions that are safe, allowing for adequate free time and rest, taking into cognizance family and social values, providing for adequate compensation in case of lost or reduced income and permitting access to adequate health care (Okafor, 2012). From the point of view of Barrientos (2007), the social protection implication apparently relates to lack of access that many flexible and informal workers have on the contract of employment and legal employment benefits. Kalleberg *et al.* (2000) noted that nonstandard jobs pay poorly, lack health insurance and pension benefits, are of uncertain duration, lack the protection that trade unions and labour laws afford and they are problematic for workers. In recent decades, there has been a dramatic increase in nonstandard jobs due to such factors as: massive unemployment, globalisation, the shift from the manufacturing sector to the service sector and the spread of information technology. This has equally affected the standard employment relations which is the front burner for social protection of workers.

The aspects of social protection considered in the measurement of decent work often include: the share of national budgets spent on public health, education and access to pensions and health care insurance. Floro and Muers (2009) argue that data on public expenditure on unemployment benefits, pensions and health care is often tough to get and spending in these areas has followed the same downward trends in many countries. Spending may also be unequal across gender lines as these social benefits are often in the form of insurance and thus offered only to the formal sector and full-time employees.

Floro and Muers (2009) further observe that, in some developing countries, efforts have been made to develop alternative forms of social protection in response to the shift in jobs from the formal sector to the informal sector and reductions in the state role in providing health care and education services. Saith (2004) presents multiple dimensions which cover a broad range of the spectrum of phenomena or domains over which protection is sought.

These include food and nutritional security, health, aspects of employment or work-related insecurity, old-age cover, children's education, and access to legal aid. He also identifies fourteen ways in which social protection

could connect with independent elements, among which are norms, which give full visibility and recognition not just to food requirements, but also to all basic needs; an income level that meets all fully recognized basic needs; money income that is sufficient to meet basic needs; and the system that avoids or bears shocks and fluctuations in the basic needs of life arising from exogenous and endogenous factors, which influence the various components of income separately. Others are a social protection system that must adequately cover the relations between work and citizenship, by underwriting security, identity, dignity and citizenship rights, all understood as the mutual obligations arising from peaceful multi-cultural coexistence; and the system that should be based on the principle of universal basic socio-economic security for all as a right, and not on a narrowly motivated instrumental or politically inspired programme targeted at selected groups of selected items.

Similarly, Social aid programs assist the poor and the disadvantaged groups while the workers and the employers finance social security, social aid is often financed by the taxes (Barrientos, 2010). The World Bank (2011) noted that a wide variety of social protection dimensions are ignored as social protection is considered within a narrow scope as social security networks, social insurance and labour market interventions. Kapar (2015) argued that social protection can be associated with social security in three different ways. One, that social protection concept includes only the poorest and needy individuals excluded from society results in the less comprehensive description of it than social security. Two, social security and social protection concepts are so entangled that they can be used interchangeably. In other words, both concepts focus on the mechanisms that aims to ensure income security against income poverty, low income and income level or risks that is responsible for high expenditure. Three, social protection is a concept that combines all elements of social security but which is broader than it. It is noteworthy to state that social protection is more comprehensive and detailed than social security, while the limitations of the subjects that social protection personifies other than social security are determined by choices, values and priorities of the person who deserves it. In developed countries, the emphasis on social protection is geared towards sustaining income for everyone and preserving living conditions, while in developing countries, social protection concentrates on reducing poverty and providing support to the poorest and the vulnerable (Garcia & Gruat, 2003, p. 2).

Within employment scope, social protection is basic human right. According to Berry (2013) social protection programs are expected to encompass the following: guaranteed working programmes, working schedules designed for crisis situations, unemployment insurance, unconditional income support,

unconditional food and subsidies, unconditional income support to the children from poor families, support for health and education to affect labour supply, minimum wage application and other labour regulations, attitude towards the role of labour unions, microfinance support and support for regional groups or NGOs to consolidate small scale agriculture. Non-provision of social protection has dire consequences for all segments of society. One of these consequences is that there is a positive correlation between poverty and being disadvantaged and lack of social protection or weak social protection. There is discontent and uneasiness as a result of social exclusion. People lose their potential to make positive and meaningful contribution to individual development and collective social, political and cultural development due denial of basic goods and services and their rights to good lives.

Another associated consequence of neglect of social protection is loss of economic productivity in society due to great number of people living in poverty and unemployment (Günaydın, 2017). There is also the issue of increase in wage demand when social protection or any support is not provided and this becomes a burden on the employer or the state. There is human capital cost too, leading to decrease in life expectancy, health, education, skills and insufficient investment in younger generations as a result of insufficient investment into public interest and services. In sum, ignoring or neglecting social protection weakens the legitimacy of the government and jeopardize democracy (Garcia & Gruat, 2003, pp. 18-19).

Social protection arising from a worker's viewpoint or perspective, concern his/her possible illness or unemployment and future retirement. The perception is what is the benefit of his/her family in social protection mechanism? Scholars from different fields such as law, economic, sociology of work, organizational and personnel psychology have studied various components of social protection dimension (Burke & Maramaldi, 2016; Zhang, Bartram, Mcneil & Dowling, 2015). Their concern relates to the design of mechanisms that can join together the worker's social protection and organizational competitiveness (Dos Santos, 2019).

Workers' aspirations in terms of Social Protection

The concept of Aspiration is well-grounded in Sociology and Psychology. It is the degree or quality of performance which an individual wishes to attain (Locke & Latham, 2002). In a nutshell, Aspirations are goals, dreams, ambitions and targets for the future. It can be related to educational attainments, social status, health, security, income, wealth or things that an individual considers important for his/her welfare (Kosec & Mo, 2017). Aspirations is

influenced by various internal and external factors such as a person's social circle, life experiences, personality, awareness, perception, reasoning and judgment, which affect how they approach and perceive their future (Borgers & Sarin, 2000; Bendor, Mookherjee & Ray, 2001; Ray, 2006).

The International Labour Organization aptly captured the workers aspiration in 1999 when it defined decent work as work that is productive and delivers a fair income, security at the workplace and social protection for families, better prospects for personal development and social integration, freedom for people to express their concerns, organise and participate in the decisions that affect their lives and equality of opportunity and treatment for all women and men.

Recent development in the world shows that the global and financial crisis has further worsened decent working conditions. While unemployment and inequitable labour market outcome remain significantly high in developed countries, labour markets in developing countries continue to be plagued with high levels of underemployment, vulnerable employment and informal work (UNDP, UNDESA & ILO, 2012).

The right to social security is firmly stated in the international human rights articles 22 and 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) that everyone, as a member of society, has the right to social security and to standard of living adequate for their health and well-being. Subsequently, the 1966 adoption of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), ratified by 170 countries, established a clear legal obligation, worldwide, for countries to progressively implement the right to social security in line with available resources (Articles 2 and 9) with fiscal policy.

The pronouncement of the right to social security denotes that states accept obligations under International law to respect, protect and accomplish those rights and that they are under obligation to bring them to fulfill them. States are obligated to work towards the realization of human rights. In reference to social protection, states are expected to expand the coverage (in terms of range of risks encountered over the life cycle) and appropriateness of social protection, and expand the fiscal space for protection (Razavi, 2022).

The aspirations of any workers must be in tune with the four main values expressed in the decent work agenda which is (i) promoting standards and fundamental principles and rights at work, to ensure that workers' constitutionally protected rights to dignity, equity and fair labour practices are protected by appropriate legal framework; (ii) Promoting employment creation and income opportunities, with the goal of not just creating jobs, but acceptable quality jobs; (iii) access to and improvement of social protection and social security, aim at reducing poverty , inequality and problem of care responsibilities; and (iv) promoting social dialogue (ILO, 1999, 2001, 2008).

Taking a critical look at the first objective, Fajana (2008) noted that the first objective is aimed at minimising the unemployment rate. Noble as these

objectives are, employment promotion has become central to decent work agenda. ILO has continuously sought to enlarge the world of work. Hence it is concerned with unemployment and underemployment. An important indicator of decent work is the extent to which a country's population is employed (Anker *et al.,* 2003). Employment opportunities may be measured using either (a) the employment-to-population ratio (EPR), which measures the proportion of the working age of the population that is employed; or (b) the unemployment rate (UR), which measures the number of unemployed persons as a percentage of the labour force. Bell and Newitt (2010) assert that employment creation is critical or central to poverty reduction and that it has clear links to some policy areas, including economic growth, private sector development and trade. In recent times, factors such as working time and working intensity, wage levels, and safe working environment have continued to dominate the discussion on decent work practices. Ghai (2003) points to the fact that the goal or aspiration of all workers, in state enterprises, the formal or informal economy or self-employed is their desire to receive remuneration in cash or kind, which at least provides a minimum standard of living for their families. Workers also wish to work in safe and healthy conditions and have a secure livelihood. Like other citizens, workers in all categories also seek the right to form their organisations to defend and promote their interests and to participate in decisions that affect them as workers. Among scholars who shared this sentiment is Rodgers (2007), he emphasises that the goal of decent work is best expressed through the eyes of the people. For some people, it is the primary way to get out of poverty. For some other people, it is about realising personal aspirations in their daily existence and solidarity with others. For many people, decent work is about securing human dignity.

Work is seen as a central aspect of people's lives, which drives and motivates them to make it a fulfilling and productive activity. Participation of workers have shown a significant impact on productivity (Doucou-liagos, 1995), job satisfaction, commitment and trust in managers (Timming, 2012). Today there is stern competition among organisations which has pushed workers in the white-collar jobs to work harder and show high performances in the era of digitalization and industrial revolution putting down under serious pressure and giving rise to negative work-related outcomes and deterioration of their health and well-being (Aybas, Ozcelik & Uyargi, 2022). It is pertinent to note that employees deserve decent working conditions as part of their social protection and in fulfillment of their aspirations in life. As a matter of fact, every job that people hold is surrounded by job resources and job demands. The job resources are those physical, psychological, organizational and social aspects of the job that aid job autonomy, feedback, access to social support, high quality supervisor relationship (Bakker & Vries, 2021) adequate working time and workload distribution, opportunities for personnel and professional

development and the provision of adequate remuneration, health, well-being and security conditions (Ferraro, Moreira, dos Santos & Pais 2018; Ferraro, Pais, dos Santos & Moreira, 2018). With global competition in modern times and coupled with the high levels of job demand and work pressure, work overload and other job stressors such as job insecurity, constant need for periodic training and personal development, work can become a strenuous experience. It has been noted that when job demands exceed the job resources, it can hinder job resources creating detrimental employee outcome, intention to leave (Schaufeli & Taris, 2014; Demerouti & Bakker 2011; Lewig, Xanthopoulou, Bakker, Dollard & Metzer, 2007) and health Impairing effects e.g., acute fatigue and exhaustion (Gu & Wang, 2019). Industrialization in modern times has further compounded the problems of economic, physical and social problems to the workers. Workers face many problems such as unemployment, disease, occupational disease, work accident, elderliness and maternity. To address these myriads of problems, the social protection practices which is an indicator of social sensitivity is implemented to assuage the fears of the workers and bring them hope needed to attain their aspirations. Research also showed that compensation systems have positive effect on workers' motivation and perception of fairness (Dulebohn & Werling, 2007; Gerhart & Milkovich, 1992; Judge *et al.*, 2010). Adequate earnings are one of the ILO's Substantive elements of decent work (ILO, 2008, 2012, 2013a, 2013b).

Cultural diversity in Social Protection among workers

Regardless of region or locality social protection is expected to proffer some basic functions such as mitigating the structural causes of poverty, prioritizing quality education, ensuring good health and wellbeing, and promoting gender equality, decent work and economic growth. These in turn are expected to redirect and adjust the scale of unequal power relations leading to vulnerabilities between and among workers around the globe (McCord, 2013). The Asian Development Bank (2003) suggests that reforms of social protection systems vary in terms of its motivation and the strategies employed from one country to another, but it is of paramount importance to all regions. Reasons for the discrepancies are born out differences in the country's need, resources available at the disposable of the countries, various institutions present in such country and the implementation preferences of the country in terms of social concurrence and political support.

Since the early 2000s in Africa and Asia, giant strides have been made regarding social protection in different countries. However, such efforts do not cut across major areas, as only a minute portion of the population still has access to various national social protection programs available in the country (Kapar, 2015). Most times, workers who work in public sectors of the economy

or those engaged in formal employment are usually the only beneficiaries of the social protection schemes (ILO, 2017a). Due to the level of developmental priorities and current national situations, countries sequentially begin with singular protection programs aimed at employment challenges then tend to expand gradually to pensions, maternity and healthcare, physically challenged persons and finally with benefits for the unemployed (Selim & Günçavdi, 2014). The accretion of broad social protection schemes has not been a smooth sail. Short term social support were promoted rather than universal social protection plans by multilateral financial institutions and donors which were very cost effective in ameliorating abject poverty in poor countries especially during the 1990s. For example, universal programs were jettisoned for leaner means-tested programs (ECLAC, 2015). It was discovered by the ILO in 2014 that over 100 countries had narrowed down public expenditure on social protection in part of its GDP as far back as 2010 which was as a result of the financial crisis in 2008 when countries income was in jeopardy (ILO, 2014).

Table 1 – Social protection schemes in some selected countries

Country	Scheme	Nature	Scope	Effects
Argentina	Asignacion Universal porHijo	Allowance for Children	Covered up to 85% of children	Lowered poverty Doubled household income Bridged income gap
Brazil	Bolsa Familia	Cash transfers	Covered up to 26% of country's population	Poverty gap significantly reduced Reduced income inequality
Brazil	Rural Insurance Scheme	Disability and pension cover for poor rural workers	Covered up to 80% of workers in agricultural sector	Reduced poverty among rural populations
Columbia	System of Social Security in Health	General health Scheme	Covered up to 90% of the populace	Improved utilization of healthcare facilities among rural and poor people
India	Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee program	Wage employment scheme	Households of up 52.5 million benefited	Improved education in rural areas Improved access to health services
Mexico	Oportunidades	Cash transfers	Covered up to 25% of the populace	Increase in education among in rural areas Improved health and healthcare service
Rwanda	Vision 2020 Umurenge Program	Public works and financial aids	Households of up to 9,692 benefited	Reduction of poverty
South Africa	Grant for Child Support	Contributory Cash Transfers	Up to 10 million children benefited	Poverty gap reduced by 28.3% Income inequality reduced
Thailand	Universal Coverage Program	General healthcare scheme	Covered up to 80% of the populace	Improved access to quality healthcare

Source: ILO (2011).

The Asian Development Bank (2003) explains that the needs of a country is majorly determined by the assessment of its demographic analysis, dichotomy of its population in rural and urban areas, nature of its formal sectors and the risk involved. The nature of the labour force of a country such as the formal and informal sector size, portion of the population engaging in either service, industry and agriculture, the working conditions of the labour force, and adherence to international standards and labour laws determines the social protection to be adopted. The stretching of legal provisions does not, however, ensure that coverage will adequate and effective which will become a bottleneck in the implementation of such schemes. Legal coverage is used as a yardstick for entitlement as stipulated by the law while effective coverage measures how legal provisions are implemented. Despite the increase in the past years, it is estimated that only 45% of the world's population is adequately covered by at least one social protection scheme (ILO, 2017a). This translates that the rest of the 55% of the population estimated around 4.1 billion are not covered at all. These estimations reflect large regional differences.

In developing countries, investigation on cash and in-kind exchanges revealed that on the short run, social protection schemes have aided the promotion of school enrolment, improved access to healthcare and wellbeing of people among the families of the beneficiaries. This evidently reveals that social protection programs have a meaningful impact on non-monetary variations of poverty such as health and quality education (Bastagli *et al*., 2016; ILO, 2010). In rural geographies and most among girl child, social protection is believed to have higher significant impact in instances where the educational and health levels are the barest minimum (Aguero, Carter and Woodlard, 2007; ILO, 2010). In a study by Attanasio, Gomez, Heredia and Vera-Hernandez (2005) in Columbia where the social protection program *Familias en Acción* was launched to address the bottlenecks in its education sector. The outcome showed an improvement in its educational sector where children between the ages of 12-17 had a 10% and 5% increase in school attendance rate in rural and urban areas respectively.

It is evident that sub-Saharan Africa is not keeping pace with other countries of the world as regards the implementation of Decent Work Agenda (World Bank, 1997; Alayande & Soyibo, 2002; Standing, 2004; Nyambari, 2005; ILO, 2005; Adewumi & Adenugba, 2010).

In Nigeria, Social Protection varies among sub-national entities, (state governments were encouraged to introduce modified versions of social welfare programmes that give credence to territorial nuances and populations). Therefore, the probable consumption of national-level requirements is constrained by state-level variations in the intensities of supply-side support.

According to Shadare (2020) and Akinola (2017) two extinct social protection programmes readily comes to mind *In Care of the Poor* (COPE) and the *Subsidy Reinvestment and Empower Programme* (SURE-P), initiated by the World Bank in 2007 encountered enormous implementation challenges, which also underscored the influence of transnational institutions as major actors in Nigeria's social protection landscape. Also, The World Bank also supported federal and state governments with loans to implement different programmes in the past decade (Shadare, 2022). Again in 2016, the Nigerian government launched another national CCT programme, (The Household Uplifting Programmes) with $500 million loan from the World Bank, while the previous programmes, with all of the infrastructures and personnel, were disbanded. Shadare (2020) noted that singular act, fundamentally caused a 'territorial conundrum' in the governance of Nigeria's social protection. The fact that some of the borrowed funds were used to establish agencies such as the National Social Safety Net Coordination Office (NASSCO), which oversees social investment programmes and the National Cash Transfer Office (NCTO), which coordinates cash transfer grants to beneficiaries, whilst a progression of the governance nature of social protection, did not fundamentally alter the dynamics of Nigerian social policy (National Cash Transfer Office, 2018).

The short-term effects of such social protection schemes has been well established but the long run impacts are not well known since there are little evidence to show that such in-kind and cash transfers improved knowledge of students, improved their academic performance and eventually resulting in greater employment opportunities (Araujo, Bosch & Schady, 2016; Baez & Camacho, 2011). Social protection schemes in form of cash transfers have also proven to have a relative impact on some certain social problems in some African regions. As examined by Baird, Özler and McIntosh (2016) in Malawi where cash transfer programs, although temporarily, was recorded to have positive impact reducing acute diseases, teenage pregnancies, and early child marriage few years after those who benefited from such transfers stopped benefitting from the program. Within the same country, a conditional cash transfer program showed no substantial increase in employment but educational level was largely imparted.

The effects of social protection on employment relation and participation in labour markets suggest that the willingness to work among the working age population group may be declining due to the availability of unemployed benefits as evident in developed nations in their social policy reforms. There have been concerns that the prevalence of labour market programs such as the availability of benefits for the unemployed do demoralize people from looking for work where in essence such plans were targeted at assisting workers

who are changing from one place of work to another or sometimes engaging personal developments such as acquiring new skills or obtaining higher education (Butcher, 2017). Alternatively, provision of social protection to workers helps in absorbing the shocks of consumption; spending and incomes which will in ardently assist the economy and promote demand for labour (Wagle, 2017). It has been well established that social protection do lead to reduction of abject poverty, balancing the inequalities in income level and improving general wellbeing of workers but there are less evidence of its impact among various social groups. Some research has indicated that some social groups benefits from social protection than others (ILO, 2017a).

Universal standards of Social Protection of workers

Generally, availability of social protection typically improves the quality of protection, enables risk-sharing between employees and employers, and prevents negative impacts when compared to types of protection based on an agreement with a specific business (Berg, 2015; ILO, 2016b). Current systems of social protection and the implicit social contract may come under increasing pressure due to deficiencies in social protection provision, rising levels of informality, insecurity, and inequality, and weakening labor institutions. National priorities, as expressed in laws promulgated and its mode of implementation, determine the accessibility and terms of social protection benefits. In essence, it is worthy of note that there is no universal solution to the issue of social protection as various countries adopt singular or multiple forms of cover for its workers. Although, the synthesis of multiple social protection schemes has proven to proffer improved cover especially when such protection is culminated with residency and proper employment leading to improve socio-economic standards of workers (ILO, 2016; Spasova, Bouget, Ghailani & Vanhercke, 2017).

In a bid to achieving a universal social protection, the ILO (2017) suggests that adopting a protection scheme that covers a wide range of workers including those who are self-employed under a single umbrella so as to ensure that both employers of labour and workers are on the same page. Also suggested was having a structured scheme of unemployed, maternity and national health insurance rather than individual employer having its own health plans or paid maternity leave (ILO, 2017a). The rationale behind such idea was due to the fact that, most times such benefits were very small and inadequate for the workers leading to poor living standards and consumption. Some probable solutions provided by some scholars also include having universal social protection scheme that are contributory and non-contributory. Contributory

schemes have been concluded to providing proper benefits in terms of wider and higher level of cover for workers while non-contributory schemes are essential for providing for the general unemployed populace who are not covered by any social protection. Separating employment from social protection would translates to allocation more functions to private arrangements which will in turn widened the scope of the social protection to accommodate for gender pay gaps and reduce the pressure of provision of social protection to workers by their employers (Alfers, Lund & Moussie, 2017). In view of current global challenges, universal social protection is an issue of right that allows for inclusive, equitable and sustainable social protection for all (ILO, 2017a).

An improved financial combination of social security systems can be attained by including workers in non-standard employment in social protection schemes. The shortcomings of social insurance coverage can put non-contributory systems under greater strain, if many of these workers have to depend only such systems for a bit of social protection. If more individuals are absorbed in social insurance schemes, the weight on social protection financed by tax systems may probably abate (European Commission, 2017). Contributory social protection are thus integral to guaranteeing equity in sustaining and financing social protection schemes for a long time (ILO, 2017a).

Adequate protection of workers rests mainly on some factors such as rules of eligibility outlined by the national legislation, contribution periods, working hours; and timeframe of employment that have been set by some countries which can sideline some workers from contributing or claiming from social protection programs. These results in these set of workers susceptible inaccessibility to healthcare benefits and income security as they ineligible for any benefits accruing from such programs (ILO, 2016). Some countries such as Tanzania, Brazil, Costa Rica, Kenya, Cape Verde, and Mexico have included workers who are self-employed in their social protection schemes resulting in more coverage of different categories of workers. They do this by either creating new or separate social protection systems or modify the existing protection schemes to assimilate the sidelined workers. The heterogeneous characteristics of workers is mostly alluded to the reason for the creation of new social support scheme such as those obtainable in countries like Germany, Poland, Italy, Germany and Austria (Bertranou, 2007). For instance, Belgium has begun a long process of harmonization to include self-employed workers into compulsory social protection for most social risks, such as, long-term care, disability, maternity, family and pensions (Pacolet & Wispelaere, 2017). These practices are set to ensure institutional coherence, exclude fragmentation and accommodate mechanisms that facilitate coverage for workers with various employers, and ensure the portability of coverage and benefits.

Universal Basic Income (UBI) has been suggested by some scholars as a channel through which uniformity in social protection of workers can be actualized. The problem of incessant increase of income and job insecurity caused by a fluctuating employments and mode of work can be reduced through world countries having a uniform basic take home. The idea of having a basic pay that cuts across board has brought about diverging perspectives, designs and workings relating to the socio-economic effects of such income, potential beneficiaries, content of benefits, examining possible cost and administrative requirements (Kravitz & Stern, 2016; Standing, 2017; Vanderborght & Parijs, 2017). This suggested social protection has actually been faulted on various grounds, such as its workability between developed and developing countries. Owing to the well-known facts that the two sides have huge differences in economic strength and varying social and political dynamics. The UBI ability to ameliorate poverty levels in peripheral countries was also called to question since most workers in such countries constantly rely on work to survive economically (ILO, 2017; OECD, 2017; UN, 2017). Availability of a universal income is also feared to result in employers of labour jettisoning their primary responsibility of providing decent wage and need for collective bargaining. The cost of financing a universal income could also mount undue stress on different government's budgets and make provision of public infrastructures becomes a herculean task (Brown & Immervoll, 2018; IMF, 2017).

Conclusion

All over the world, a vast majority of people want stable jobs, decent wages, social protection and opportunities for improvement (training), unemployment benefits, safe and healthy working conditions, but in reality, this has been an illusion. In an attempt to finding the lowest denominators for quality jobs that are free from any self-reporting bias, some authors defined good jobs in more narrow terms as hours worked, salary and health benefits; income, contractual status, tenure and vocational training; pay, work hours, number of jobs, job security and non-wage benefits. Economic growth and growth in the trade have not led to an equal distribution of income; globalisation has excluded a large majority of people from achieving these benefits. It is hoped that more stakeholders in developing countries will do more to alleviate the plights of poor and vulnerable workers with more robust social protection programmes that will improve the quality of lives of the people.

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PARADOXICAL LENSES: threats or opportunities for Decent Work?

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Introduction

Rapidly advancing technologies, demographic changes, and globalization are reshaping the work environment as well as work-related values (Blustein *et al.*, 2019; Chen *et al.*, 2020; ILO, 2017). Work has always occupied a position of central focus in people's lives, as it impacts facets such as basic needs, identity, social inclusion, health, family, well-being, and quality of life. In 2015, one of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda set by the United Nations General Assembly was termed 'Decent Work and Economic Growth' serving as a fundamental lever for sustainable development. The International Labour Organization (n.d) uses the term *decent work,* as a comprehensive concept that encompasses "opportunities for work that is productive and delivers a fair income, security in the workplace and social protection for families, better prospects for personal development and social integration, freedom for people to express their concerns, organize and participate in the decisions that affect their lives and equality of opportunity and treatment for all women and men". In other words, social inclusion and economic as well as psychological well-being are human aspects that are deeply intertwined with the notion of decent work (Ferreira *et al.*, 2019).With the burgeoning interest in research on *decent work* in the last two decades, recent studies have expanded the concept at multiple levels of analysis. It has been argued that decent work is an important aspect of human rights (ILO, 2008, 2013, 2017). Full employment and decent work are international human rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), among other international instruments recognising specifically that everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work including the rights to equal pay for equal work, to social protection, to rest and leisure, to join and form trade unions and to protection against unemployment (United Nations General Assembly, 1948, art. 23). The United Nations-based legal regime thus frames decent work as a multi-dimensional human right (Bedggood & Frey, 2010).

Recent research propounds a psychological lens on decent work (Duffy *et al.*, 2016), to better understand an individual's well-being in terms of sustainable career development by emphasizing inclusion, social justice, economic growth and political advocacy at both individual and institutional levels (Blustein *et al.*, 2019; Chen *et al.*, 2020). Moreover, decent work aspires to fulfil core universal human needs, namely survival, connectedness, and self-determination (Blustein *et al.*, 2019; dos Santos, 2019). Ferraro *et al.*, (2018) proposed a seven-dimensional measurement model of decent work from the individual worker's perspective, that covers the full range of its substantive constituent elements.

Extant literature provides ample evidence about the applications of the psychology of working theory in different countries and contexts (Buyukgoze-Kavas and Autin, 2019; Dodd *et al.*, 2019; Kim *et al.*, 2019; Wang *et al.*, 2019). Working populations across countries are expected to fluctuate differently, viz. declining in some countries like Japan, Italy and China while rising sharply in others, like India and Australia (ILO, 2017). The advent of communication and transportation technologies have in the meantime enabled emerging economies and advanced societies to become more closely integrated both economically and demographically thus impacting the way people choose to work. Flexible work has become common, and one job for life may become almost impossible in the future (Aubert-Tarby *et al.*, 2018). Unforeseen disruptions such as the covid-19 pandemic have further tested the adaptability and resilience of organizations, leading to paradigm shifts in the occupational landscape. This dynamic mosaic of working, held together by shifting demographics, cultural contexts, technologies, political ideologies *et al.* calls for a renewed focus on "opportunities", an integral part of *decent work*, that focuses on alternative jobs available, allowing a worker to have a choice, as well as professional progress.

In this chapter, the authors aim to elucidate the concept of 'opportunities' by exploring *how opportunities are reached and perceived by workers from different demographic backgrounds. What is diverse and what is universal about worker aspirations and professional development with respect to different cultural contexts?* The essay contributes to the discourse on decent work by analyzing the concept of 'opportunities' from macro, meso, and micro perspectives and drawing out key lenses that may be applied to address the related complex and sometimes paradoxical challenges of the current milieu.

Macro (population-aggregate) perspective

Lens: Developing vs developed nations

The developed nations have more regulation and awareness, which leads to more desire for work-life balance, and better working conditions, usually mandated by law. Hence, strictly enforced labour laws make work better than in developing nations where regulations may not be that extensively regulated or enforced. We see in some nations around the world where regulators may put a blind eye to non-compliances, especially for critical industries, or export-oriented firms. E.g., firms using child labour for carpet weaving, or for mineral mining, etc. Additionally, due to the impoverished nature of most people, they may accept such conditions as they would have no other alternative employment. It may also be pointed out, that as nations see a rise in their incomes, there is a growing tendency for the younger generations to migrate towards higher paying jobs, shunning the traditional businesses of their parents. The growing shortage of artisans in traditional handicraft-based industries is a case in point. Hence, development leads to more work choices for the people who will choose those jobs offering greater potential for progress.

Lens: Economic growth vs Human development

In some countries that have taken a market-oriented approach, employment and decent work have been tied to economic growth. At best, economic growth serves as an important means to human development but when not, the right to decent work is overlooked while striving to avoid an economic crisis. Evidence indicates that economic growth does not necessarily result in the realization of the rights to full employment and decent work (Frey, 2017). At least in some cases, it has been pointed out that the opposite causal relationship might exist, meaning that a boost in worker incomes has a greater impact than corporate investment on economic growth.While the target of full employment and decent work was evidently acknowledged as a valuable human development objective for both its intrinsic and instrumental value, it is largely being seen as a function of economic growth (Rai *et al.*, 2018). Acting on the right to full employment and decent work thus seems to be contrarian to corporate investment-led economic growth.

Lens: Collectivistic vs individualistic societies

In the language of Hofstede's (2001) cultural value framework, collectivist societies place greater importance on the goals and well-being of the group, with a person in such cultures identifying one's self-image with the collective "We". Collectivists identify strongly with their in-group and are heavily influenced by social norms. Individualistic societies on the other hand stress achievement and individual rights, focusing on the needs of oneself and one's immediate family. A person in such cultures is likely to identify one's self-image as "I." Workers in collectivistic cultures are likely to be more dependent on authority, prefer hierarchies and tend to emphasize relationships and loyalty more than those from individualistic cultures which may lead to greater acceptance of unequal distribution of power and wealth. On the other hand, the high-achieving spirit of individualistic societies is likely to fuel individual ambitions through competition that may lead to innovation and economic growth and at the same time accentuate disparities between the 'haves' and 'have-nots' that may be counterproductive for the society at large in the longer term.

Time and again, culture theorists have highlighted the importance of cultural values, particularly social relationship values in the context of the career development process. Such value orientation is explained in literature as a fundamental concept that consists of cognitive, directional and affective elements which are essentially products of one's socio-cultural environment (Carter, 1991). When a collective social relationship is a highly prioritized value for both the decision-maker and the decision-maker's family, the values of the family depending on the structure (e. g. patriarchal) of the family are likely to be primary determinants of career choices. For example, whether to join the family business or not is a decision driven more by cultural value orientation than rational choice-making (Dyer, 1988).

Lens: Formal versus informal work

Sustainable Development Goal 8 cannot be successful in delivering 'decent work for all' until unpaid social and reproductive work is recognised as important as paid employment, in contributing to society, and properly valued and recompensed through state-supported mechanisms, non-state initiatives, and cooperative and community actions. For example, one of the world's largest democracies, India has advanced towards greater industrialization and technological innovation, but there are still areas requiring significant growth that differentiate India from many Western countries. For example, the Indian industrial

relations system has been criticized for failing to adapt to the globalization of India's economy, by concentrating too much power and authority in the state, stifling the bargaining rights of unions, and not acknowledging the needs of India's population of informal and women workers (Hill, 2009). This context is different from the West, where the state has limited ability to confiscate wealth (Weingast, 1995), unions have ample collective bargaining rights, and movements supporting gender equality continue to gain momentum (Jackson, 1998).

As Seguino (2000) has shown, the entry of women into cheap labour markets might support economic growth but does not assist gender equality and empowerment for women and girls. Social and reproductive work within the household is still largely perceived as women's work. This preconception influences not just women's labour market participation (supply side) but also labour recruitment (demand-side) decisions; markets are after all gendered institutions (Fraser, 2014). Therefore, even within the framework of a monetized economy, which privileges economic growth, prevailing gendered norms of the labour market mean not just a loss of realizing human capital worth but also the neglect of social reproductive work.

Meso (firm/enterprise) perspective

Lens: Fast-growing (high-tech/modern/service) vs slow growing (low-tech/traditional/product) businesses

Fast-growing industries would soak up employees at a rapid pace since they would be needing more employees for their growth. They may hire at a frenetic pace, and work out processes to train, induct and monitor them on a large scale. E.g., Infosys and other IT firms in India are recruiting over 100,000 persons annually. This is caused by their rapid growth needs, and also due to the high turnover that they experience (25-30% annually) caused by their people finding better opportunities elsewhere or competitors offering higher compensation to attract talent (Ishwarbharath, 2022).

On the other hand, traditional industry sectors like manufacturing which is an integral driver of any country's economic growth, thanks to the performance of key sectors like automotive, engineering, chemicals, pharmaceuticals, and consumer durables, may not attract newer talent. Rather they would also find it very difficult to retain their existing talent. They are likely to face the dilemma of how to replace their retiring folks, and at the same time, be unable to find fresh recruits who could be trained to take over from the retiring workers. Hence the tacit knowledge would be lost to the firm forever. These industries are thus facing a double whammy as they need to

invest in newer technologies as well as improve labour incentives to move towards digital transformations.

Lens: High tech vs High touch

The use of technology usually makes it possible to offer services in a simple form to a consumer and hide the complexity in the background, away from the user. For example, it is now possible, in most parts of the world, to get a pizza at your doorstep and pay online, by pressing a button on a mobile food delivery app. This simplicity hides the complexity of the entire supply chain, including food preparation, food delivery, location tracking, and payments, which are usually handled by multiple entities. These are somehow integrated to perform the service once the consumer presses that button. No human intervention is needed, though humans are possibly involved in several stages of the supply. There are many such examples where the rapid growth in technology has enabled us to offer faster and in most cases, better services to the customers, usually without human intervention, e.g., food delivery, getting entertained, meeting socially online with friends all over the world, making payments, getting most information, etc. Thus, high tech may be making our lives better, but as it enhances our abilities to do more things independently, it is also increasingly isolating us.

On the other hand, some services need human intervention or social contact. Here, the work is to be done on the individual and hence needs the two humans to be involved, e.g. hairdressers or dentists, need people to interact and communicate, making them "high touch" jobs. These jobs are part of a high-involvement service industry where one cannot, at least at this point in time, be replaced by machines. Humans may use machines/technology in performing the work, but they would still be handling the main aspect of the work themselves.

In fact, technology has enabled work to transcend boundaries and become more democratized in certain dimensions viz: *Software as service; Geography becoming irrelevant; Rise of the Gig workers.*

Software as a service

In this context, we refer to Software to include applications on mobile phones, besides software in the traditional sense, as code /instructions running on a machine for a specific purpose. As technology evolves the need for qualifying exams/certification skills is rapidly changing. There are opportunities available to get new skills which do not necessarily need certification.

Developed countries need certification and licences in most jobs, which decreases labour mobility and encourages monopolistic behaviour amongst those already qualified. These barriers are often raised through revision of the certification examination standards periodically or release of new certifications. Additionally, we find regulatory requirements for licences in certain professions, e.g., investment advising to others like travel agents, home entertainment installers, barbers and hairstylists (in some parts of the USA).

However, with the technology (or the internet) offering multiple choices and options to resolve most issues independently, we are seeing the rise of a DIY (do it yourself) approach to work, which needed professionally qualified workers earlier. This is leading to some of the jobs being replaced by customers using technology, e.g. checking bank balances or investing in stock markets, booking airline tickets, placing orders in fast food restaurants etc. This has been further facilitated by software applications on mobile phones, which are obviating the need for certain jobs that were earlier done by professional services, like photographers, video editors, bank tellers, graphic designers, and so on.

Geography becoming irrelevant

We are seeing companies in the US have shifted their Head offices to smaller towns in response to a demand for their people to enjoy their quality of life away from the urban centers. Working from home even at huge distances away from the office, is now acceptable in the workforce. This is a trend that we are seeing globally. Moreover, with technology and ubiquitous internet, it is easy for workers to share information, collaborate and get work done across distances without any loss of productivity. Which works well, for the moment, for various organisations.

Rise of the independent Professionals (Gig workers)

Today's employees are asking for flexible working hours and work-life balance. This was precipitated by the pandemic, where regular jobs were disrupted, and people were forced to stay with their families and reconsider their careers. This has also led to the re-definition of work opportunities, and the question, what is work? Post the pandemic, organisations realised that they could not go back to business as usual, like in the pre-pandemic era, as the employees resisted. Furthermore, some left to start on their own, giving rise to the gig worker economy. This class of workers prefers independence compared to being tethered to corporate life.

Lens: Organised firms vs entrepreneurial firms

Organised firms will have work well defined, and will have systems and processes to ensure this and avoid overlaps. This assumes that work can be broken up into discrete tasks, based on Adam Smith's concept of specialisation and division of labour, where each employee performs and specialises in doing a small part of a bigger job, hence becoming a super-specialist, working in an environment which ensures that they remain restricted to their small area of operations.

On the other hand, an entrepreneurial firm would tend to have limited people and resources and hence would be compelled to consider multitasking, with each person probably handling multiple responsibilities. In fact, handling multiple jobs would be encouraged! This would increase the scope of work and workload on each person, and hence may not, strictly speaking, come under the definition of *decent work*. Yet, each employee may be driven, either by passion or expectation of future profits, to willingly work insanely long hours under tough trying conditions. The press had written about start-ups in China expecting their people to work under the 996 rule, from 9 am to 9 pm, 6 days a week. And this was the norm, but it still attracted many fresh recruits to these organisations.

We can see from above, that organizations need sustainable work systems that effectively leverage employee capabilities and knowledge while simultaneously mitigating the negative impact of business practices. Sustainable businesses need sustainable human resources (Pfeffer, 2010), and the sustainable goals of organizations cannot be achieved without effective humar resources (HR) practices (Sheehan *et al.*, 2014). The preamble of the ILO Convention Declaration 1998, states that only when the 'worker' is kept at the centre of an organization while designing policies and practices, will one achieve the desired socio-economic progress and environmental conservation (Di Fabio & Bucci, 2016).

To effectively implement the 'decent work agenda', organizations have to figure out more productive and innovative ways to recruit, educate, train, develop, and retain their workers (Suttawet & Bamber, 2018). Proactive HR interventions powered by multiple goals, viz. social responsibility, environmental consciousness, employee development, and well-being, when intricately woven into work practices, lead to sustainable organizations (Randev & Jha, 2022; Sheehan *et al.*, 2014).

Micro (individual) perspective

Lens: Career advancement vs Work-life balance

Studies suggest that apart from meaningful work, learning and career growth, adequate compensation, free time, rest, as well as physical and interpersonal safety are important components of decent work frequently occurring in workers' minds (Blustein *et al.*, 2019). Long working hours, especially for mothers of young children, are a key reason for dropping out of chosen careers (Datta & Shah, 2021). Research further indicates that unemployment causes loss of self-confidence, poor health, disruption of family and social relations, and social exclusion, and has also been associated with mental health as well as social issues (Frey and MacNaughton, 2016).

Career advancement is often seen to be contingent upon workers' availability on-demand to external and internal customers leading to neglect of non-work priorities which causes stress and has adverse effects on well-being. Work-life balance initiatives when actively pursued by workers are perceived to be detrimental to career advancement (Datta & Agarwal, 2017). Work–life literature, especially those written from a feminist perspective, have focused on gender equity, promoting mothers' right to remain in the labour market following childbirth and arguing that domestic and childcare labour should be shared more equally between mothers and fathers. However, despite the introduction of such measures, the tendency for a large proportion of females to exit the workforce in the age bracket of 30 to 40 remains entrenched. Male workers have also been found to scale back their work and choose to refuse career advancements, which usually come with additional work responsibilities. Of course, this behaviour is explained by a combination of societal, economic, work profile, marital, and familial factors and alternate options available for the employee (Donnelly, 2015). The recent pandemic in 2020 has caused many workers to rethink their relationship with work and they have been responding accordingly by choosing to scale back their work hours to devote long hours to their family and themselves.

Lens: Objective well-being vs subjective well-being

Ryan and Deci (2001) concluded that there are two major philosophical perspectives concerning well-being: one is happiness-oriented (i.e., hedonism), defining well-being as the subjective experience of happiness; the other concerns realizing human potential power (i.e., eudemonism), which regards well-being as the result of personal achievement, self-actualization,

or self-positioning. Opportunity for professional development and career success thus play a vital role in promoting well-being.

Career literature in the last couple of decades has advanced from a traditional model of vertical hierarchical growth to a no-boundary career development model, wherein the organization's role in-career success of an employee, and monetary rewards, upward growth, has become less salient (Dai & Song, 2016). This implies that there are always two sides to a career: a publicly observable phenomenon relying on social comparisons (or objective side) and an intrinsic (or subjective side) that is personally desirable. Thus interpreting career outcomes from objective or subjective perspectives involves a complex interplay of both psychological and sociological factors.

Considering the subjective and objective well-being components, research suggests a key role of the family role identity schema that determines the intensity of objective satisfaction accrued through promotion, titles, positions, and other organisational rewards. Social role-based stereotyping when it comes to doing certain kinds of careers often drives career choices of men and women rather than their natural optimal choice (Datta & Shah, 2021). With changing social values, opportunities for greater career choices will be instrumental in promoting well-being amongst new generation workers.

Lens: Seeking autonomy vs seeking security

High-skilled workers are said to seek autonomy, career advancement, variety of tasks and novelty, as well as status and relationships while less qualified workers associate work with effort, responsibility, remuneration, employment, service, study, future, dignity, independence, and achievements. Cultural contexts which offer greater autonomy are thus likely to attract highly skilled workers which can boost innovation and entrepreneurship by creating opportunities for experimentation.

Gig work and protean careers are rapidly rising. Careers are now not the foremost as labour is now making increasing demands on their employees on what is acceptable. Google employees did not want their organisation to do US department of defence work since they believed that it would harm people. And against the stated values of Google, "*don't do harm*". (This value was removed later on from their website).

In developed nations, there are some discussions on restricting immigrants. But the events like Brexit, or tougher migration laws have shown that the lower valued jobs were being done by immigrants or were often off-shored (like call centers to other developing countries where labour is available at lower costs). The lack of immigrants has shown to be leading to

hardships for the existing population as they represented the invisible economy whose impact is only felt in its absence. Hence we had cases of arduous tasks remaining incomplete, like crops not being picked, or household helpers and other lower-profile tasks found no takers.

Insights and Implications

In this essay, the authors have drawn on current economic definitions and psychology of work theory (Blustein, 2013), to focus on opportunities for decent work that promote individual dignity; access, control and autonomy at work; value congruence; a sense of purpose and meaningfulness, and connection to society. Contextualizing "opportunities" in the local culture is of paramount importance. Cultures differ in what are considered "opportunities" for decent and acceptable work and that inherently encompasses the underlying socio-economic mechanisms for the prevention of exploitation and discrimination. Societies vary in ideas revolving around justice, fairness, and similar concepts that are integral to 'opportunities' as a core dimension of decent work as a function of their unique cultural factors as well as the prevailing economic contexts. Therefore, this chapter attempts to evolve a holistic understanding of opportunities in Decent Work from a macro, meso and micro perspective highlighting the paradoxical lenses that emerge upon considering universal psychological mechanisms embedded in cultural and demographic diversity. Each of the paradoxical lenses within the three perspectives holds insights and implications for policymakers, business leaders and workers across cultures with respect to antecedents as well as outcomes of 'opportunities' for decent work have been summarised in Table 1.

Table 1 – Paradoxical lenses of Decent Work: Insights & Implications

Key Perspectives	Paradoxical Lenses	Insights & Implications
Macro	*Developing vs developed nations*	Evaluation of the longer-term impact of international trade policies with respect to 'opportunities' in the labour market.
	Economic growth vs Human development	Job retention is considered a core objective and practice of HRM.
	Collectivistic vs individualistic societies	Develop sensitivity about cultural biases to realise full human potential.
	Formal versus informal work	National policies to support and regularise decent work practices in traditional informal industries.

	Fast-growing (high-tech/ modern/service) vs slow-growing (low-tech/traditional /product) businesses	Incentivization of traditional businesses to surmount the talent crunch by improving their wages, and introducing inclusive and family-friendly benefits.
Meso	*High-tech vs High touch*	Labour policies to foster an inclusive eco-system that encourages a diverse workforce.
	Organised firms vs entrepreneurial firms	Designing progressive HR practices would be important for stimulating decent work in entrepreneurial firms. Learning about local cultural practices from entrepreneurial firms would be important for building social capital in organized firms.
	Career advancement vs Work-life balance	With an increasing number of workers adopting boundary-less, protean careers involving self-directed careers, organizations need to take several key steps to engage such talent.
Micro	*Objective well-being vs subjective well-being*	Educational institutions, career coaches and HR specialists need to design programs that can facilitate opportunities for workers by strengthening their personal resources, such that they function to the best of their abilities, both as individuals and in collaboration with their colleagues.
	Seeking autonomy vs seeking security	Organizations would need to re-frame their psychological contracts with the new-age workers.

Macro perspective

Lens: Developing vs developed nations

Insights: Work opportunities arise at the intersection of population demographics, geo-political dynamics and economic development. Since a few decades we have witnessed a large-scale movement of skilled workers as well as work across continents as part of business process outsourcing. Very often motivated by access to skilled workers, corporate profitability, time to market etc. jobs, especially in Information technology sectors have been off-shored to lost cost developing countries. As an effect of such free trade policies between countries, youth in predominantly agri-based economies like India got lured to jobs in the urban areas leaving their traditional work in agricultural industries.

Developed countries struggling with ageing populations promoted policies that facilitated the migration of young workers from developing countries having high young populations like India. Highly skilled workers in the field of information technologies left from developing countries in hordes attracted by opportunities to work and live in developed countries often even at comparatively lower wages than the local workers.

Implications: Migration of jobs from developed to developing countries might have led to new jobs and higher wages but also unethical practices, exploitation of workers, and eroding work conditions in the low-cost

destination countries. The consequent impact of the movement of workers from traditional jobs to new economy jobs has undermined growth and productivity in the core industries like manufacturing, in developing countries and decreased job security in the high-cost countries. It thus calls for adopting a macro-level perspective and evaluating the longer-term impact on the labour market when deciding on international trade policies.

Lens: Economic growth vs Human development

Insights: The covid-19 crisis brought about some novel human resource management initiatives like furloughing instead of just retrenching workers during the period of lockdown. These were a departure from the typical, liberal market-driven response to the crisis and potentially challenged the prevailing tough, 'calculative' approach to people management adopted by many firms worldwide. Governments in many countries sought to protect those in work in the face of a slowdown of the economy and society through job retention schemes. In the UK, 11.5 million jobs have been furloughed under the auspices of the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) (HMRC, 2021).

While covid-19 primarily emerged as a health crisis, it has nonetheless had considerable labour market consequences bringing into focus the effectiveness and consequences of specific policy measures aimed at avoiding job loss. Such initiatives helped to maintain people in jobs: firms have retained workers as opposed to making them redundant. According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) reports, by May 2020 as many as 50 million jobs globally were being supported by job retention schemes, a tenfold increase compared to the Global Financial Crisis (GFC) of 2007/08 (Scarpetta *et al.*, 2020). Furloughing during covid-19 helped industries to get back to their customers full steam once the pandemic got over and the world returned to business as usual.

In contrast to market-led regimes of restructuring, negotiated or state-led regimes offered alternative responses to the crisis, through practices designed to support the management of retention rather than redundancy.

Implications: Job retention can be seen as a central aim and practice of people management, rather than simply an outcome. Job retention as a practice when advanced through strategic HR planning and labour economics frameworks within the wider political economy of restructuring regimes can lead to human development in the longer term. Job retention has been found to be useful in demonstrating how an active approach to retention management can reduce costs for firms while conferring benefits to workers (Dodd *et al.*, 2019).

Lens: Collectivistic vs individualistic societies

Insights: National culture plays a key role in influencing 'opportunities' for decent work. Opportunities for work and their outcomes could lie on a spectrum with individual contribution and recognition on one hand and group accountability and collective reward on the other. Taking a cultural relativism perspective, human capital is likely to drive opportunities more strongly in individualistic societies and social capital might be held in higher regard in collectivistic societies. While both human – as well as social capital, are important to cultivating overall human development, opportunities often get filtered through the cultural lens leading to contentious issues around fairness and social justice.

Implications: Societies defined by strong cultures tend to entrench their shared values and norms across generations for perpetuity. The evolution of decent work and opportunities thereof tend to follow the deeply rooted cultural philosophies across informal to formal economies, unskilled to highly skilled occupational sectors and private to public-owned enterprises. Creating opportunities for decent work thus requires an awareness and sensitivity to such cultural biases to realise full human potential across nations.

Lens: Formal versus informal work

Insights: Any economic activity that is partially or fully outside government taxation, regulation, and surveillance but governed by local customs or personal endeavour is known as the informal economy and work or employment falling in this category is termed as informal work. Although the informal economy is on the rise in many nations (International Labor Organization, 2013), lived experiences of workers in the informal economy have largely been ignored from the decent work mainstream literature (Saxena, 2021).

Recently, psychologists have argued that a mere cost-benefit analysis of economic sustenance may be a very narrow approach and is quite inadequate in appropriately capturing all the nuances of decent work (Seubert *et al.*, 2021). It thus raises the question of whether work in the informal economy is deficient in decent work. Some recent studies on skilled people engaged in informal work reveal their innate sense of pride and dignity in their work, autonomy and control over their work, social integration with the community, and intergenerational transmission of knowledge and skills. This goes on to suggest that work in the informal economy is not decent work deficit and may be contrary to dominant ideas around inevitability and lack of choice for workers in the informal economy.

Implications: With increasing globalisation and restructuring of formal economies influenced by complex geo-political forces, it is cogent to

understand how nations can maintain their traditional industries and progress. How can nations create more jobs which development typically entails, and yet maintain their older traditions?

Meso Perspective

Lens: Fast-growing (high-tech/modern/service) vs slow growing (low-tech/traditional/product)

Insights: Firms operating in the high-tech industries, grew unprecedently in the last few decades, resulting in a much higher number of job opportunities compared to the traditional industries like manufacturing, infrastructure, healthcare, hospitality etc. Recruiters were able to lure talent from traditional industry sectors to the tech-driven industries leaving them with inadequate capabilities for driving business transformation for survival and growth. The fast-growing IT/ITES sectors were also first movers concerning family-friendly policies that attract a large number of women to the workforce.

Implications: There is a need to incentivize businesses that operate in the traditional industry sectors to rise to the challenge of the talent crunch by improving their wages, family-friendly facilities like creches, safety measures, flexi-working, housing, transport etc. Such policies can have far-reaching impacts on creating sustainable businesses.

Lens: High tech vs High touch

Insights: Due to technological advancements, there has been an increase in job opportunities on digital platforms. Of course, many jobs have become obsolete due to the introduction of machine-intensive work, but there has also been an increase in job creation in the service sector. Work experiences are becoming increasingly unequal — as labour market divisions have sharpened depending on sectoral, skill, and demographic differences. Increased performance monitoring, demanding expectations of effort and work intensity, and the blurring of work-life boundaries have made flexible and gig work more attractive. The rise of gig work and the platform economy has drawn attention to precarious work, insecure contracts, and non-sustainable self-employment.

Research suggests that women are sometimes compelled to accept precarious work because they have to undertake unpaid care work which stems from family obligations (Vyas, 2021). Precarious work which includes part-time work, agency work, etc. is more prevalent among women than it is among men. Likewise, workers from diverse demographic categories viz.

immigrants, young people, etc., are more prone to take up precarious work specially in the platform economy.

Implications: There is a need to reconsider and evaluate labour policy that fosters an inclusive eco-system not only to improve the conditions of minorities in non-standard employment but also to facilitate the transition from precarious work to full-time work by making working conditions suitable for minorities. Attraction and retention of a diverse workforce can potentially lead to innovation and organizational growth.

Lens: Organised firms vs entrepreneurial firms

Insights: Organizational cultures vary in strength and consistency, and have profound implications for employees' experiences at work. Given that leaders play a significant role in shaping and disseminating organizational culture, promoter-driven entrepreneurial firms are likely to have their own unique homegrown work culture and commensurate opportunities. Organized firms run by professional management on the other hand are likely to be more amenable to external influences and thus adopt more global practices for opportunities for decent work.

Implications: Locally founded small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) could be described as 'porous' in the sense that they are likely to incorporate and reinforce local cultural values. On the other hand, organized professional firms are likely to adopt global management practices. It may be unwarranted to judge either workplace culture as good or bad concerning opportunities for decent work. Undoubtedly, healthy entrepreneurship is critical for the socioeconomic development of any nation. Hence, designing progressive HR practices that keep the workers at the centre would be important for the growth of decent work in entrepreneurial firms. On the other hand, learning about local cultural norms from entrepreneurial firms would be important for building social capital in professionally organized firms.

Micro (individual) perspective

Lens: Career advancement vs Work-life balance

Insights: To obtain a balance between work and non-work priorities, more and more people are opting for flexible work arrangements (e.g., part-time work, flextime) and looking for family-friendly benefits from employers. The covid-19 brought this trend into sharp focus when most employees were reluctant to go back to on-site working about things got back to normal. Last

year another phenomenon known as quiet quitting was widely talked about on social media. Quiet quitters have been described as those who continue to fulfil their primary responsibilities, but don't engage in activities known as citizenship behaviours: no more staying late, showing up early, or attending non-mandatory meetings.

Implications: With an increasing number of workers adopting boundaryless, protean careers that offer them self-direction of their careers, organizations need to take several key steps to engage their talent. Organizations need to build and design human resource development (HRD) programs that meet the new changing career values.

Lens: Objective well-being vs subjective well-being

Insights: Work represents an important context for studying the well-being of individuals, especially as it provides different sources that have an impact on mental health, social relationships and performance, and because it demands a significant portion of workers' time and effort. Recent studies on well-being at work posit well-being at work to be a multi-dimensional construct that subsumes both objective as well as subjective elements (Ferreira *et al.*, 2019).

Implications: With emerging models of work, viz. part-time work, contingent work, and gig work (e.g., freelance or contract work), it is cogent to understand whether objective indicators of career success are still relevant in an environment where meaningfulness and external mobility are becoming the norm. Educational institutions, career coaches, and HR specialists must design programs that can facilitate opportunities for workers by strengthening their personal resources, such that they function to the best of their abilities, both as individuals and in collaboration with their colleagues.

Lens: Seeking autonomy vs seeking security

Insights: Marginalization and socioeconomic constraints, viz. social class, level of education, unemployment, and job insecurity, prevent access to decent work, which in turn reduces work fulfilment and well-being. The new social values amongst the millennials suggest that workers might be satisfied with their jobs and their lives if they feel capable of making choices in their careers regardless of the characteristics of the actual jobs they are doing.

Implications: The young generation of workers seems to prioritise autonomy and work-life balance. Hence it may be expected that they may demonstrate a higher commitment to their work than their employers. Organizations

would thus need to re-orient their psychological contracts with the new-age workers to create meaningful opportunities for decent work.

Conclusion

Employment and work are the cornerstone of economic and social development as we see it today. However, with the rapidly changing nature of the globalised world, 'sustainable' employment is a growing concern. Employment that is not extractive and exploitative, is not harmful, and positively augments people's lives and capabilities is the need of the hour. This is reflected in the SDGs of the United Nations General Assembly's 2030 Agenda that includes aspects of work like productive, secure, fair paying, socially protecting families, allowing freedom of expression, participative decision making, equal opportunity and treatment, regardless of gender' under the umbrella of 'decent work' (Frey & Mc Naughton, 2016). In fact, 'decent work' is being argued as a basic human right over the years. There is a large consensus among economists, development practitioners, and human rights activists about generating employment that is sustainable, equitable, and that can contribute to social progress.

Given this importance, policy makers and business leaders will have to figure out how they can offer 'opportunities' to attract, train and retain workers. Given the diverse milieu, this proposes to be an increasingly complicated endeavor. The trade offs between various aspects of macro perspectives (which includes the national development, economic growth, societal behaviours, type of work), meso perspectives (which include business growth rates, human intervention, usage of technology, type of firms,) and micro perspectives (which includes priority of the work, well being definition, desire for autonomy or security) will need to be considered carefully for decision making. These factors, may seem paradoxical at times and leaders will have to be mindful of designing work keeping these in mind. While the current environment is dynamic with challenges unseen before, work organizations will have to be quick to adapt and design work, and offer attractive opportunities. Such initiatives would include actions at the macro level, considering international trade policies, sensitising cultural biases, and formulating labour policies for traditional informal industries. Similarly, for meso level, one would have to consider incentives, labour policies, and HR practices to encourage decent work. And at the micro level, re-design career advancement programs, enhance work-life balance and re-frame psychological contracts to foster overall well being. With the current era of mobile, gig workers and the constant battle to attract and retain talent, this will become an imperative which leaders can only ignore at their own peril.

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HEALTH AND SAFETY AT WORK

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Introduction

Health and safety in the workplace are the components of one of the dimensions of decent work (dos Santos, 2019; Ferraro *et al.*, 2018). It is evident that workers in any country aspire to have their jobs provide health and safety. However, it is also true that countries and cultures vary in the way they conceive these aspects of work. On the one hand, there are countries with limited economic development where people value the possibility of earning an income that allows for some physical security, and where traditional values related to family and respect for authority are still prevalent. On the other hand, there are countries with strong economic development and a population that has very different aims in terms of values, emphasizing self-expression, personal growth, individual freedom, and rational decision-making. If one compares these two types of countries in terms of the pretensions of their populations regarding health and safety, there are likely to be differences.

Therefore, a universal aspiration, such as obtaining a healthy and safe job, is achieved differently depending on the economic development and values of the country. Based on this general idea, we will focus on three main areas. First, we provide a descriptive analysis of the characteristics of jobs, risks, and indicators of well-being and health at work, comparing three groups of European countries that represent different economic and cultural situations. We try to discern whether economic development – accompanied by cultural values linked to individual freedom, rationality, personal growth, self-expression, etc. – leads to better working conditions (in terms of job characteristics and risks) and experiences of well-being and psychosocial health at work.

Second, we analyze job insecurity as a possible factor that potentially reduces decent work. We review the relationship between job insecurity and health. Likewise, we critically analyze the relationship between emotional security and job security. We emphasize that the research is biased, favoring the use of samples from economically developed countries, when issues related

to job insecurity are likely to be more significant in hindering decent work in developing countries.

Finally, we consider another factor that is a universal concern: healthy aging at work. We analyze research on how age is related to health. In general, citizens and families in all countries are concerned with achieving healthy aging. However, countries vary greatly in terms of the factors they consider crucial. Whereas some countries may value financial security, others may emphasize life satisfaction, among other aspects.

In this chapter, therefore, we analyze three areas of decent work that are linked to workers' health: working conditions (characteristics, risks, and indicators of well-being and health), insecurity, and healthy aging. Populations in all countries universally aspire to achieve decent work in these areas, facilitating a healthy work experience. However, the way each country or culture achieves this may differ depending on relevant aspects such as their economic situation and the prevailing values in their population.

Differences in Workers' perceptions across European Countries

One of the ultimate goals of a society is the well-being and psychosocial health of its citizens, and a good working life is crucial for this purpose. Therefore, monitoring work conditions and workers' experiences is a relevant matter. With this in mind, we explore similarities and differences among European countries by drawing a picture of workers' perceptions from the European Working Conditions Survey (EWCS) (Eurofound, 2015). Specifically, we focus on the 2015 EWCS because in this survey edition a variety of indicators about the quality of working life were considered[18]. We compare some European countries that represent diversity in economic development and cultural values, considering the gross national income per capita and the Atlas of European Values (Halman *et al.*, 2022). First, we considered the perception of job characteristics and risks. Second, we also included the subjective experiences of well-being and psychosocial health in the workplace.

Regarding the job characteristics, we differentiated between classic facets such as job control, job enrichment, and organizational participation, on the one hand, and the balance between work and other areas of life, on the other. All these factors are connected to the (re)design of work. As indicators of risk in the workplace, we included emotional demands, mental workload, and physical risks. Finally, we considered a set of indicators that represent

18 There was a more recent edition carried out in 2021. However, this edition was focused on the pandemic created by covid-19, and the variety of measures is lower. For example, measures of workers' experiences were very limited.

subjective experiences in the workplace related to well-being and psychosocial health (job satisfaction, stress, and burnout).

As mentioned above, we considered the Atlas of European Values (Halman *et al.*, 2022) in order to select countries that represent a variety of values. Every nine years, this atlas collects information from across the entire continent. It provides a procedure to identify common values among Europeans, but also cultural differences. To do so, some relevant values are considered, arranged at opposite ends of the following continua, with European countries varying in the degree to which they are closer to or further from their extremes:

Modernization dimension: Traditional vs. Secular. Traditional values treasure the nuclear family, religion, and showing respect for authority. At the opposite pole, secular values reflect non-religious, legal, and rationally based values held by modernization, emphasizing autonomy, individual freedom, and personal life choices.

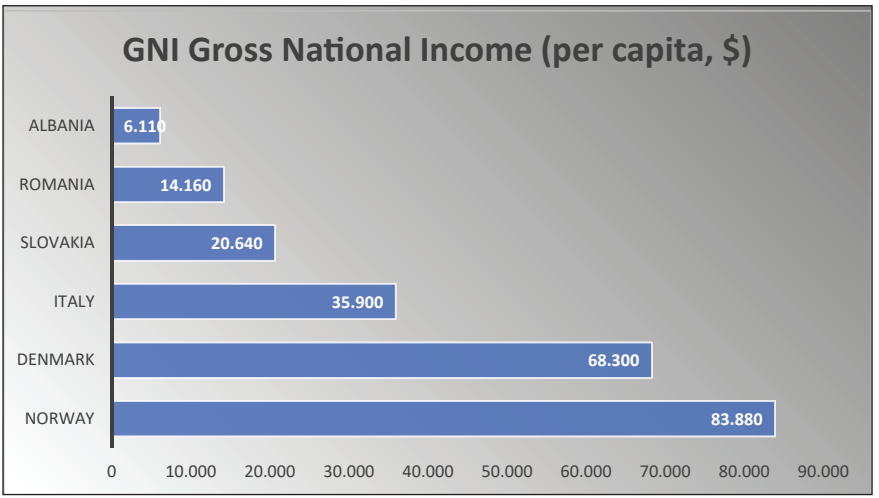
Post-modernization dimension: Survival vs. Self-expression. Survival values primarily include work, as well as economic and physical security. People high in this value present low levels of trust, intolerance toward outgroups, and low support for gender equality. By contrast, self-expression values reinforce personal growth and individual well-being, attributing low importance to material possessions. This continuum represents the polarization between an emphasis on economic security and conformity, on the one hand, and an emphasis on self-expression, participation, and quality of life concerns, on the other.

Differences in values are usually related to economic development. In fact, the revised version of the modernization theory by Inglehart and Welzel (2010) proposes that low-income societies are more characterized by traditional and survival values, whereas in high-income societies, secular-rational and self-expression values tend to predominate more.

Selection of countries based on economic development and values

Using the gross national income per capita (see Figure 1, from (https://wdi.worldbank.org/table/WV.1) and the Atlas of European Values (see Halman *et al.*, 2022), we selected three groups with two countries each in our exploratory analyses, for which we also had survey data from the 2015 EWCS.

Figure 1 – Selected countries ranked by gross national income



Source: World Bank national accounts data, and OECD National Accounts data files.

The first group of countries is composed of Romania and Albania. They represent countries with a low gross national income per capita, high survival values, and high traditional values (supporting family and religion). The second group of countries is composed of Norway and Denmark. They represent the opposite extreme. They are countries with a high gross national income per capita and high secular and self-expression values. Finally, Italy and Slovakia represent the mid-point in gross national income per capita and values (traditional vs. secular and survival vs. self-expression). As Inglehart and Welzel (2010) suggested, there is an association between economic development and values. Countries with higher gross national income per capita (Norway and Denmark) (see Figure 1) are also countries high in secular and self-expression values according to the Atlas of European Values (Halman *et al.*, 2022).

Competing Propositions: Situational Driven Hypothesis vs Easterling Paradox

Two competing propositions emerge regarding the possible differences between workers from different European countries: the Situational Driven Hypothesis vs the Easterling paradox. From the situational driven perspective, it is reasonable to argue that richer countries with secular and self-expression values will provide their workers with a better situation in the companies. Thus, they could have better working conditions (job characteristics), fewer risks at work, and higher well-being and psychosocial health. By contrast,

countries with lower wealth and survival and more traditional values face greater difficulties in providing optimal healthy work environments. They provide their workers with worse working conditions and increased risks, which has negative effects on their well-being and psychosocial health.

However, according to the Easterlin paradox, the differences in working conditions across countries do not always translate into differences in subjective experiences (Easterlin, 1974). Experiences are also based on expectations. When something is taken for granted, it is expected and does not always result in such positive experiences. The habituation mechanism seems to lie, according to this paradox, in the bases of the understanding that more money (higher income) is also linked to higher expectations. Accordingly, it is possible that workers from richer countries who have high expectations associated with self-expression values do not experience high positive work experiences. They may have higher expectations that make it difficult, compared to other countries, to value the conditions of a better work environment.

Sample and Measures

We used the sample of participants in each country who responded to the measures of the 2015 EWCS that capture the aforementioned variables (Table 1). Specifically, the sample sizes and characteristics were the following: Romania (N = 1052; average age = 55.59; women = 48%); Albania (N = 1002; average age = 53.79; women = 55.9 %); Italy (N = 1400; average age = 53.64; women = 48.3 %); Slovakia (N = 992; average age = 51.89; women = 56.6 %); Norway (N = 1019; average age = 43.34; women = 46.4 %); and Denmark (N = 1002; average age = 40.57; women = 48.5%).

Table 1 – Measures used

JOB CHARACTERISTICS	
Control* *(3 items)*	Generally, does your main paid job involve… ▪ You can take a break when you wish? ▪ You are able to apply your own ideas in your work? ▪ You can influence decisions that are important for your work? 1: always; 2: most of the time; 3: sometimes; 4: rarely; 5: never Alpha: .713
Job enrichment* *(2 items)*	Generally, does your main paid job involve: ▪ learning new things? ▪ complex task? 1, yes; 2, no.
Participation* *(3 items)*	▪ You are consulted before objectives are set for your work? ▪ You are involved in improving the work organization or work processes of your department or organization? ▪ You have a say in the choice of your work colleagues? 1: always; 2: most of the time; 3: sometimes; 4: rarely; 5: never Alpha: .689

continues...

continued

JOB CHARACTERISTICS	
Balance between work and other areas of the life* *(5 items)*	How often have you…. ▪ Kept worrying about work when you were not working? ▪ Felt too tired after work to do some of the household jobs which need to be done? ▪ Found that your job prevented you from giving the time you wanted to your family? ▪ Found it difficult to concentrate on your job because of your family responsibilities? ▪ Found that your family responsibilities prevented you from giving the time you should to your job? 1: always; 2: most of the time; 3: sometimes; 4: rarely; 5: never Alpha: .781
JOB RISKS	
Emotional demands* *(2 items)*	Does your main pain job involve…? ▪ Handling angry clients, customers, patients, pupilts, etc...? ▪ Being in situations that are emotionally disturbing for you? 1: all of the time; 2: almost all of the time; 3: around ¾ of the time; 4: around half of the time; 5: around ¼ of the time; 6: almost never; 7: never Alpha: .611
Mental workload* *(1 item)*	Does your main pain job involve…? ▪ Dealing directly with people who are not employees at your workplace? 1: all of the time; 2: almost all of the time; 3: around ¾ of the time; 4: around half of the time; 5: around ¼ of the time; 6: almost never; 7: never
Physical Risk* *(9 items)*	Are you exposed at work to...? ▪ Vibrations from hand tools, machinery, etc.? ▪ Noise so loud that you would have to raise your voice to talk to people? ▪ High temperatures which make you perspire even when not working? ▪ Low temperatures whether indoors or outdoors? ▪ Breathing in smoke, fumes? ▪ Breathing in vapours such as solvents, and thinners? ▪ Handling or being in skin contact with chemical products or substances? ▪ Tobacco smoke from other people? ▪ Handling or being in direct contact with materials which can be infectious? 1: all of the time; 2: almost all of the time; 3: around ¾ of the time; 4: around half of the time; 5: around ¼ of the time; 6: almost never; 7: never Alpha: .829
WELL-BEING AND PSYCHOSOCIAL HEALTH	
Job satisfaction* *(1 item)*	▪ On the whole, are you very satisfied, satisfied not very satisfied or not at all satisfied with working conditions in your main paid? 1: very satisfied; 2: satisfied; 3: not very satisfied; 4: not at all satisfied
Stress* *(1 item)*	▪ You experience stress in your work? 1: always; 2: most of the time; 3: sometimes; 4: rarely; 5: never
Burnout* *(1 items)*	Please, tell me how often do you feel this way...? ▪ I feel exhausted at the end of the working day. 1: all of the time; 2: almost all of the time; 3: around ¾ of the time; 4: around half of the time; 5: around ¼ of the time; 6: almost never; 7: never

**All measures have been reversed to facilitate interpretation.*

Source: European Working Conditions Survey, 2015; EWCS; Sixth European Survey on Working Conditions, 2015.

Findings

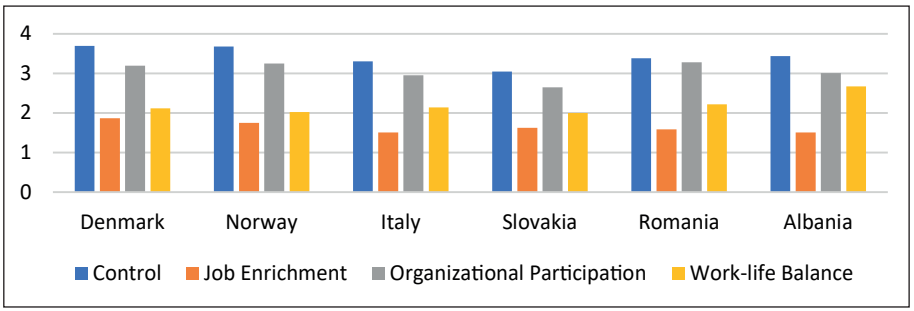
We computed descriptive statistics to compare workers' responses on the EWCS (2015) in the selected countries related to the perception of job characteristics, risks, well-being, and psychosocial health.

Job characteristics

As Figure 2 shows, the "job control" indicator was higher in workers from Norway and Denmark. By contrast, the lowest levels of job control were observed in workers from Italy and Slovakia. "Job enrichment", in terms of complexity of the task and learning opportunities, also showed higher levels in Norway and Denmark, whereas workers from Albania and Romania reported the lowest levels of job enrichment. Regarding "participation", workers from Norway and Denmark again reported the highest level, but workers from Romania also showed high levels of participation. The lowest level of participation was observed in workers from Slovakia and Italy. Finally, workers from Albania and Romania had better opportunities in terms of work-life balance.

In general, we observed that employees from rich countries with secular and self-expression values have better job characteristics in terms of control, enrichment, and participation. It seems that the wealth of the countries and the predominance of these values are translated into richer working conditions. It does not seem, however, that workers in these countries achieve a better work-life balance.

Figure 2 – Differences in job characteristics between countries



Source: Eurofound (2022). European Working Conditions Survey, 2015. [data collection]. (4th ed.). UK Data Service. SN: 8098, DOI: 10.5255/UKDA-SN-8098-5.

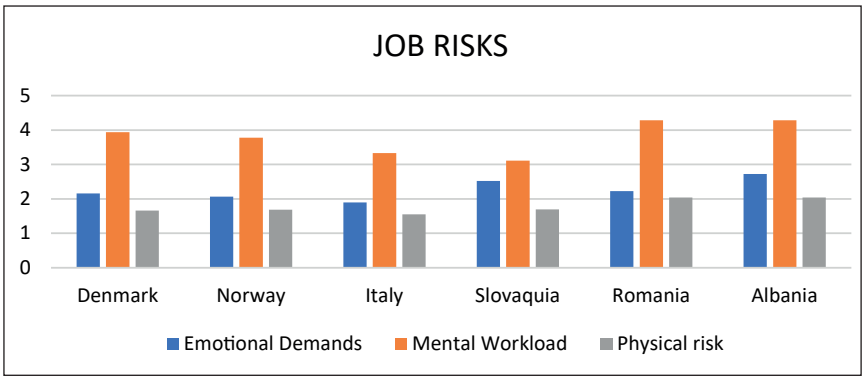
Job risks

The absence of risks is also a feature of job quality and decent work. We considered "emotional demands", "mental workload", and "physical risk" in the workplace as indices (Figure 3). The highest levels of "emotional demands" were found among employees from Albania, Romania, and Slovenia, whereas workers from Italy, Norway, and Denmark reported the lowest levels of emotional demands. Workers from Albania and Romania also reported the highest levels of mental workload, followed by workers

from Denmark and Norway. Workers from Slovenia and Italy had the lowest levels of mental workload. Finally, workers from Albania and Romania again reported the highest psysical risk.

In general, workers in countries with lower economic development reported more risks. Although with some exceptions, it seems that not having achieved a certain level of economic wealth and holding values associated with tradition and survival hinder risk reduction in the workplace.

Figure 3 – Differences in job risks between countries

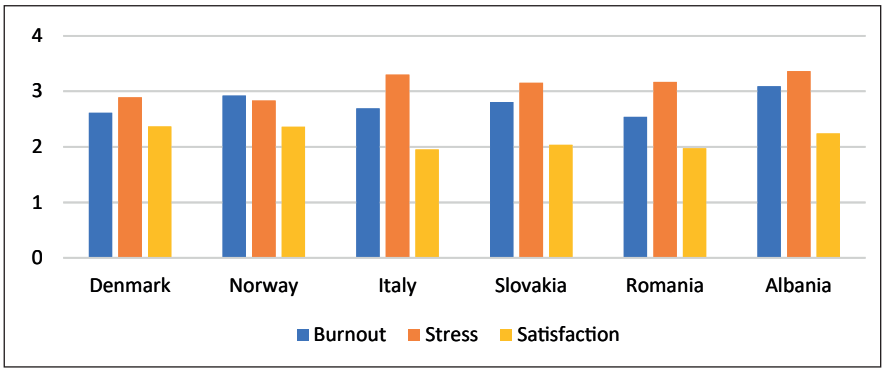


Source: Eurofound. (2022). European Working Conditions Survey, 2015. [data collection]. 4th Edition. UK Data Service. SN: 8098, DOI: 10.5255/UKDA-SN-8098-5.

Well-being and psychosocial health

As mentioned above, we considered three indicators of well-being and psychosocial health in the workplace: job satisfaction, stress, and burnout (Figure 3). Workers from Norway and Denmark reported the highest levels of job satisfaction and the lowest levels of burnout. Workers from Denmark also showed the lowest levels of stress at work. Generally speaking, our findings suggest that the wealth of the country and associated secular and self-expression values translate into better experiences of well-being and psychosocial health in the workplace.

Figure 4 – Differences in well-being and psychosocial health between countries



Source: Eurofound. (2022). European Working Conditions Survey, 2015. [data collection]. 4th Edition. UK Data Service. SN: 8098, DOI: 10.5255/UKDA-SN-8098-5.

Conclusion

In general terms, the Situational Driven Hypothesis is confirmed. Greater economic wealth in countries, along with the predominance of secular and self-expression values, creates a situation or context that makes it possible for workers to enjoy better job positions (except for work-life balance). These workers also exhibit higher levels of well-being and psychosocial health in the workplace, in terms of satisfaction, burnout, and stress. By contrast, in countries with lower economic wealth and a predominance of traditional and survival values, workers perceive more risks in their jobs. Aspirations for better workplaces are universal, but the context and values of each country influence whether there is a better or worse design of job positions, as well as different experiences of well-being and psychosocial health.

Job insecurity

Job insecurity is one of the stressors that can lead to health problems. In this section, we relate job insecurity to health. We also analyze job insecurity as a source of emotional safety in the workplace.

Insecurity in employment and health

In a constantly changing labor market, we are increasingly witnessing new ways of organizing employment. Nonstandard employment arrangements (e.g., part-time, temporary work, on-call work) are progressively replacing the standard employment relationships (SER) (e.g., full-time, permanent jobs).

However, the consequence of this greater flexibility in the labor market workplace is job insecurity for workers, given the threat of job loss (Kalleberg, 2009). This is a universal matter around the world, although insecurity differs from one country to another.

Employees in non-SER arrangements, such as temporary and part-time jobs, show higher levels of job insecurity (i.e., perceived powerlessness to maintain the desired continuity in a threatened job situation, Greenhalgh & Rosenblatt, 1984) than employees in SER. Objective job insecurity proceeds from nonstandard working conditions, such as a specific contract duration. In addition to objective job insecurity, subjective job insecurity, that is, the individual perception of job insecurity, prevails among these workers. Objective job insecurity can translate into subjective because temporary workers are objectively insecure due to their limited contract duration (Keim *et al.*, 2014), but they also experience low job control and low predictability, which adds to the subjective perception of insecurity (De Cuyper & De Witte, 2007). Moreover, working in a part-time job is associated with greater perceptions of job insecurity (Fullerton *et al.*, 2020). Specifically, this insecurity is highlighted in times of downsizing, when part-time employees feel that the organization will only retain full-time employees (Näswall & De Witte, 2003). In fact, temporary and part-time employees are not as protected by the organization as employees in permanent and full-time jobs (Sparks *et al.*, 2001).

Job insecurity is a known stressor for employees, challenging decent work. The rationale behind this can be found in the Stress Appraisal Theory (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). According to this theory, stress occurs as a result of a two-stage process. The *primary* appraisal represents the evaluation of the threat in the situation, whereas the *secondary* appraisal includes the evaluation of resources that one has to cope with that threat. Because job insecurity represents a threat to one's job and is followed by perceived powerlessness, it leads to experiencing stress (De Witte *et al.*, 2016, Urbanaviciute *et al.*, 2019).

Job insecurity as a stressor is negatively related to employee health (De Witte, 2015). Research has shown that employees who perceive job insecurity become more likely to develop health complaints as a consequence of stress compared to those with perceived job security (Urbanaviciute *et al.*, 2019). Empirical evidence has shown that job insecurity has negative effects on various aspects of health (Green, 2020; De Witte *et al.*, 2016). For instance, job insecurity has a negative relationship with physical health (e.g., heart disease, Schnall *et al.*, 2016), psychosomatic health (Nella *et al.*, 2015), and mental health (Kim *et al.*, 2017). Moreover, employees in nonstandard insecure employment are more likely to engage in health damaging behaviors such as alcohol and tobacco consumption, which further aggravates their health (Kivimäki *et al.*, 2003).

In addition to the stressor mechanism, there are other possible mechanisms that impair employee health in nonstandard insecure employment. These mechanisms stem from the precarious disadvantaged situation of employees in nonstandard insecure employment. In general, temporary employees are more likely to be injured at work, and they are more exposed to physical psychosocial hazards at work than permanent employees, due to the lack of safety training and task control in their jobs (Foley, 2017). Moreover, insecure employees are also less likely to report an injury at work (Quinlan, 2015), and they are more likely to show sick presenteeism (going to work when having health problems), which can further exaggerate their ill-health condition (Quinlan, 2015).

The lack of power in negotiations with their employers puts insecure employees in a situation with less worker leverage, which leads to implicit pressures that affect their workload (Sauer *et al.*, 2022) and can increase their chances of experiencing burnout. Insecure employment also means *financial vulnerability,* characterized by insecure payment and social welfare benefits, which leads to less financial opportunity for health prevention, treatment, and a healthy lifestyle overall (Macmillan & Shanahan, 2021).

The *length of exposure to insecure employment* is crucial in determining its effects on employee health. Prolonged exposure to nonstandard insecure employment arrangements is a chronic stressor for employees, leading to stronger negative effects on their mental and physical health (Benach *et al.*, 2014). Research on career trajectories has highlighted that the accumulated uncertainty and volatility along the career path has more adverse effects on employee health than experiencing one or a few states of precarious and insecure employment (Giudici & Morcelli, 2019).

In the past few years, the evidence on nonstandard, insecure employment arrangements, and their negative influence on employee health, has been accumulating. Research has shown that job insecurity is one of the biggest stressors and represents a crucial issue in the contemporary labor market characterized by increased nonstandard employment arrangements. Work and organizational psychologists should collaborate with policy makers to understand how nonstandard insecure employment can be a steppingstone toward secure and healthy employment rather than a trap leading to a vicious cycle of unhealthy employment arrangements. This is a universal matter around the world, although insecurity differs from one country to another.

Work security as a source of emotional safety

Work security is usually defined and analyzed from the perspective of macro-level markets. However, the person who suffers the consequences of

work insecurity is the worker. Thus, we seek to define it from the perspective of individuals, adopting a psychological perspective of work security (Blustein *et al.*, 2016). This psychological perspective of work security leads us to two work-demanding axes of relations with emotions. One of them is work that is emotionally safe (non-hazardous), and the other is work that protects the worker from insecurity or precarious employment.

According to the International Labor Organization (ILO) definition of decent work, one important factor that emerges is Safe Work Conditions (SWC). Under this umbrella, measures that were developed to assess decent work from the psychological perspective include the absence of mental or emotional abuse (Duffy *et al.*, 2017; Su *et al.*, 2022) and being treated with dignity (Ferraro *et al.*, 2018). Specifically, in Duffy's Decent Work Questionnaire, in the SWC factor, the items that compose it were related to the feeling of being emotionally safe or at least not attacked (e.g., "I feel emotionally safe interacting with people at work" or "at work, I feel protected from emotional or verbal abuse of any kind"). Ferraro *et al.* (2018) also present items related to it (e.g., "At my job, I am treated with dignity"; "At my work, I am accepted for who I am, regardless of sex, age, ethnicity, religion, political orientation, etc."). In some sense, it is aligned with being treated with respect or having a respectful interaction, which is a dimension of workplace dignity (Thomas & Lucas, 2019).

The empirical evidence suggests that SWC are positively related to well-being variables and negatively to ill-being. For instance, SWC are positively related to job satisfaction, free time and rest, and work meaning, and negatively related to withdrawal intentions in Brazil (Ribeiro *et al.*, 2019) and the US (Duffy *et al.*, 2017). In Hong Kong, they are positively related to job resources and work engagement, and negatively related to job demands (Su *et al.*, 2022). Decent work, composed of SWC, as the biggest load, also predicts job satisfaction in Korea (Kim & Kim, 2022).

The other line of discussion considers the increasing prevalence of precarious work (e.g., temporary work/contracts). It is a concern for the ILO and it is also aligned with the United Nations Development Goals of No Poverty and Decent Work. Perceived job (in)security is considered an important domain of decent work in psychological terms. Work insecurity includes financial uncertainty about the future (i.e., income), impeded or denied work-related communication, excluding a person from contract protection (i.e., vulnerability), being less recognized and valued as a person and experiencing emptiness (Blustein *et al.*, 2016; Seubert *et al.*, 2019), losing their job due to skill obsolescence (Karasek *et al.*, 1998), or fear of being fired (and replaced by someone cheaper or a machine).

Job insecurity, related to precarious work as the emotional axis, also presents an empirical relationship with well-being and ill-being. It is positively related to knowledge hiding (Feng & Wang, 2019) in China, psychological and physical demands (Karasek *et al.*, 1998) in the US, presenteeism (Miraglia & Johns, 2016) internationally (mostly from the US and Europe), and burnout (Yip & Rowlinson, 2009) in Hong Kong. By contrast, it is negatively related to skill discretion, decision authority, decision latitude (Karasek *et al.*, 1998), and absenteeism (Miraglia & Johns, 2016).

Many workers are now facing work insecurity around the world. However, we still have limited knowledge about its effects. Most of the studies have considered WEIRD samples (samples that are drawn from populations that are White, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, and Democratic). We probably ignore the problematic aspect in the workplace related to exploitation (Bal, 2020), with important ethical implications (Islam & Zyphur, 2006). Insecurity at work is likely to be more prevalent in countries that are less represented in the mainstream study samples (e.g., Africans, Asians, and Latin Americans, who together represent more than 80% of the global population), and its relation with well-being could be influenced by different cultural values (Tordera *et al.*, 2020).

Regardless of the different possible explanations, in moments of crisis (e.g., Covid-19; Pérez-Nebra *et al.*, 2021) or chronic crises (e.g., Latin America and African context; Kozusznik *et al.*, 2022), in our practices as work and organizational psychologists, we should reconsider our aims. It is necessary for us to risk being involved in the problems we wish to understand and manage, viewing situations from other perspectives in order to solve or mitigate the problem. In sum, it requires having a critical perspective of work and organizational psychology (Abrams *et al.*, 2023; Islam & Zyphur, 2006) and revisiting the angles (as stated in Kozusznik *et al.*, 2022).

Healthy aging at work

The world population is aging. The recent World Population Prospects data show that 9.7% of the world population is over 65 years old, ranging from 3.0% in Sub-Saharan Africa to 18.7% in Europe and North America (UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, 2022). This demographic trend is predicted to continue, with data showing that 16.4% of the world population will be over 65 years old by 2050, 4.7% in Sub-Saharan Africa and 26.9% in Europe and North America. The workforce around the world, particularly in developed countries, has also been aging, with the proportion of workers over 55 years old steadily increasing (OECD, 2021). Against

this backdrop, one of the main concerns of employees, employers, and policy-makers has focused on how to achieve and promote healthy aging in general, and at work in particular (Peiró, Tordera & Potočnik, 2012; Potočnik, 2017).

Healthy aging is a concept that encapsulates aspects of both physical and mental health as well as social functioning in later life, and it has often been used interchangeably with terms such as successful aging, active aging, positive aging, productive aging, sustainable aging, and aging well, among others (Huang, Kempen, & De Vries, 2010; Potočnik, 2017; Zacher, 2015). Huang *et al.* (2010) have found interesting cross-cultural differences in what individuals consider healthy aging. For instance, in Asian countries, aspects of family and financial security were highlighted as important domains of healthy aging, whereas in North America and Europe, the focus was predominantly on mental, physical, and social functioning, as well as life satisfaction. Referring specifically to healthy aging in the workplace, Kooij (2015) has argued that employees who maintain their health, motivation, and work ability now and in the future are those who are aging healthily or successfully. In this context, referring to the decent work agenda that stresses equal work opportunities and full, productive employment for everyone, older employees should be viewed as a valuable part of the workforce, with key competences and knowledge that are necessary for organizations to achieve their goals (Potočnik, 2017).

In addition to the moral imperative for decent work and providing equal employment opportunities to all, the research on healthy aging has shown that older employees tend to experience positive outcomes, and in the areas where they do show a significant decline, this can be ameliorated by appropriate workplace support (Potočnik, 2017; Steffan & Potočnik, 2023). There is evidence showing that older employees do not experience a significant decline in their mental health, although they do show a slight decline in objective indicators of physical health, such as blood pressure, body mass index, and cholesterol levels (Ng & Feldman, 2013). Other evidence has shown that older employees experience higher job satisfaction and lower job burnout, as well as more positive people- and organization-based attitudes, such as higher satisfaction with their supervisors and affective commitment to organizations (Ng & Feldman, 2010).

Although aging in itself does not necessarily lead to poorer health and well-being, employees are likely to experience age-related changes as they grow older. As a result, they tend to engage in different behavioral strategies to manage their everyday life and work-related tasks (Freund & Baltes, 2002). The selective optimization with compensation (SOC) framework is one of the major theories that has been used to explain how individuals use such strategies to cope with their age-related losses and opportunities (Steffan & Potočnik, 2023). For instance, older workers may draw from the selection strategy and

prioritize their work goals to address any age-related changes, such as lower cognitive flexibility. They may use the optimization strategy, which focuses on improving and securing the necessary resources to achieve their goals, or they may engage in the compensation strategy, trying to obtain new resources to complete their tasks and goals. There is a growing amount of evidence that supports the usefulness of these strategies for achieving healthy aging at work (Moghimi, Zacher, Scheibe, & Van Yperen, 2107; Steffan & Potočnik, 2023).

In addition to drawing from personal resources and using individual coping strategies, organizations can also help older employees to achieve healthy aging by providing adequate workplace support and having policies for extending working lives meaningfully, such as offering bridge employment or part-time working arrangements (e.g., Dingemans & Henkens, 2014; Potočnik, 2017; Topa, Alcover, Moriano & Depolo, 2014). Organizations can also offer training and development practices, which can translate into older employees perceiving greater organizational support and ultimately remaining at work (e.g., Armstrong-Stassen & Ursel, 2011). Some studies have also shown how age-inclusive HR practices (i.e., practices that organizations offer to everyone, regardless of their chronological age) can support older workers in achieving healthy aging, for instance, by improving their thriving at work (e.g., Oliveira, 2021), fostering knowledge seeking from their younger counterparts (e.g., Fasbender & Gerpott, 2022), and maintaining and improving their work ability (e.g., Rudolph & Zacher, 2021).

Achieving healthy aging at work is becoming a global concern because we are witnessing an increase in the older workforce around the world. To this end, older employees should take a proactive role in maintaining and protecting their health, work ability, and ultimately their performance, but employers should also foster a supportive work environment where older employees can feel included, valued, and encouraged to realize their full potential. Healthy aging at work is essential for encouraging older employees to stay in the workforce longer, and policymakers and employers should create workplaces that allow older workers to thrive.

Main conclusions

In this chapter, we have analyzed three areas that are relevant to understanding decent work in terms of health and safety: working conditions (job characteristics, risks, and psychosocial well-being and health experiences), job insecurity, and healthy aging at work. Regarding the working conditions, in general terms, differences are observed depending on the economic development and predominant values of the country. The results indicate that

countries that have achieved higher levels of wealth – and whose population holds values related to rational decision-making, individual freedom, personal growth, and self-expression – have workers who perceive better working conditions and have better work experiences. By contrast, societies with lower economic development – and where values linked to tradition, respect for authority, and survival still predominate – have workers who perceive worse working conditions and experience lower well-being and psychosocial health. Although there are exceptions to this (for example, in the work-life balance), it is possible that economic development, as well as and secular and self-expression values, favor the achievement of better working conditions in general (although difficulties in balancing work and other areas of life may persist or even be accentuated).

Job insecurity is confirmed as a potential stressor that hinders the achievement of decent work. The problems caused by this insecurity, in terms of health and emotional safety, can be particularly significant in developing countries. However, studies tend to use samples from economically developed countries, and this bias limits our knowledge about job insecurity and its implications for decent work. In any case, research indicates that job insecurity, especially long-term job insecurity, harms a person's health through the experience of stress. However, there are other mechanisms, beyond stress, that also explain the consequences of job insecurity for health. People with greater insecurity probably receive less safety training and have less control over their work, experience greater financial vulnerability, and consume more alcohol and tobacco.

Active aging is also a relevant factor in understanding decent work in terms of health. Although differences between countries are evident, the global population is aging in general, and achieving the healthy contribution of this increasingly older group of workers has become a crucial challenge. Some factors facilitate healthy aging at work, such as maintaining skills and contributing to work goals. For this purpose, it is important that workers maintain the necessary resources to achieve their objectives and/or develop new ones to perform their tasks. However, this is not solely the responsibility of workers. Organizations can provide support and facilitate work at older ages (e.g., through part-time employment) by developing inclusive human resources policies and practices.

In summary, the three areas analyzed are crucial for understanding decent work in terms of health and safety. They are universal concerns that can be found in all countries. However, countries have their specific characteristics, and these three areas (a-working conditions, risks, and workers' experiences; b-job insecurity; and c-active aging) vary depending on aspects such as economic development and the predominant culture.

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CONCLUSION

Leonor Pais
Nuno Rebelo dos Santos
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We are reaching the concluding pages of this insightful volume, whose chapters are written by authors from different parts of the world with unique, rich, and complementary approaches.

In the first chapter, the author performs a micro-level analysis, formulating the decent work concept based on a psychological approach, describing the seven dimensions empirically identified in the Work, Organizational, and Personnel Psychology (WOP-P) research. She explores the interactions between these dimensions within the WOP-P nomological network and discusses the contributions of WOP-P to DW studies while also identifying areas for future research. The study demonstrates that each dimension of DW is conceptually robust and is linked to many empirical studies in the WOP-P field.

The author of the second chapter, focused on *Fundamental principles and values at work,* reads the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as a reflection on the universal characteristics of the human condition. The author concludes that there are grounds for identifying not only universal aspects of the human condition but also universal aspects of dignity, especially recognition. The author also ends with a clear global desire for dignity and respect, especially regarding its implementation and fulfilment. However, the general concept of dignity must be translated into locally plausible practical categories. The idea of decent work is fundamental to the challenge of producing goods and services, providing income, sociability, and meaning to those who produce them, and ensuring that the work is carried out with respect and recognition, regardless of cultural borders. This is particularly crucial in globalization and ethical challenges, where the need to "link concepts" to express universal moral claims becomes even more pressing.

The authors of the third chapter, related to *Working time and workload,* state that improving these aspects is vital for the health and well-being of workers and sustainable economic growth. They consider that to understand the complex relationship between workload and health outcomes, more longitudinal research is needed that studies cultural factors and the health aspects of remote work in developing countries. They conclude that HR policies must address overwork and the various challenges of remote work to improve work-life balance. Recommendations to reduce high workload and long working hours

include job redesign, training, and development, creating a supportive work culture, employee participation and autonomy, and managing staffing issues.

In the fourth chapter, centred on *Fulfilling and productive work,* the authors critically analyse the concept of Decent Work proposed by the ILO, problematizing alienated work and showing the limits of the perspective that approaches it from within itself, seeking to reconcile the capitalist mode of production. Based on a specific discussion about the situation of (In)Decent Work in Brazil and focusing on aspects related to health, the authors conclude that although Decent Work represents necessary advances, it comes up against the insuperable limitations of the capitalist mode of production.

Based on the Self-Determination Theory, the authors of the fifth chapter, devoted to *Meaningful remuneration for the exercise of citizenship,* provide relevant guiding elements for human resources management, specifically regarding remuneration practices. They consider these can be designed to facilitate a life of dignity, autonomy, and independence for employees. Specifically, they indicate that significant remuneration for decent work is obtained through the promotion of psychological needs and autonomous motivation, as well as primary social goods. The authors consider that individuals currently seek well-being and the possibility of providing the same to those who depend on them. This is a Significant Remuneration in which money plays only a minor role.

The authors of the sixth chapter focus on the *Social protection* of workers in Africa and its inadequacies. They consider that workers' claim to social protection includes a fair income, job security, prospects for personal development, freedom to express personal concerns, and participation in decision-making. The conclusions they present result from the analysis of the variation in social protection in Africa about that existing in the developed world, the reasons for the discrepancies found, the various regimes available to workers in some countries, and the scope and their impact on workers' lives. The authors end the chapter by presenting acceptable universal social protection standards for employed, self-employed, or unemployed workers.

In the seventh chapter, concentrated on *Opportunities*, the authors question the construction of the concept of decent work and use multivariate lenses to understand how it translates into different concepts. For the authors, cultures differ in what are considered "opportunities" for decent and acceptable work, inherently encompassing the socioeconomic mechanisms underlying the prevention of exploitation and discrimination. This chapter presents ideas that can be used by political decision-makers, business leaders, and academics to promote the collective aspiration of decent work.

The authors of the eighth and final chapter, reflecting on *Health and safety,* started from the core idea that a universal aspiration of decent work is achieved differently depending on the country's economic development and values. They drew on three main areas (working conditions, risks, and worker experiences; job insecurity; and active aging) to conclude that there are universal concerns about decent work that can be found in all countries. They highlight, however, that different countries have their specific characteristics and that these three areas vary depending on aspects such as economic development and predominant culture.

This book explored diverse perspectives on relevant aspects of decent work and found a wealth of knowledge and insights that challenge us to deepen and develop the meaning of dignity in the workplace. Each chapter contributed to a multifaceted mosaic revealing that, although approaches may vary, the aspiration for dignity at work is universal. As we close these pages, we remember that, regardless of our origin, culture, or context, decent work continues to be a beacon that guides us in the search for a world where everyone can prosper with respect, justice, and fulfilment. May this journey inspire continued dialogue and actions that shape a future where decent work is a reality for all.

We have witnessed the undeniable power of universal values, harmoniously intertwined with local practices, in the relentless pursuit of decent work.

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INDEX

R

S

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W

ABOUT THE BOOK
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This book marks our international experience approaching a very relevant, urgent, and crucial topic nowadays: decent work. Since this book was funded by the MPT - Public Ministry of Labor in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, it could be made freely available worldwide. We intended to meet a double mission of research and extension of our research centers. Therefore, we hope it can be helpful to researchers and practitioners from different institutions and public and private companies to help them reflect on their policies and practices in favor of decent work, the eighth sustainable development goal of the United Nations 2030 Agenda. Each country has its unique challenges. However, interdependence and responsibility in promoting decent work is a shared responsibility of everyone. Promoting decent work means providing a better quality of life and social peace for everyone through social emancipation and reducing social inequalities worldwide.

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