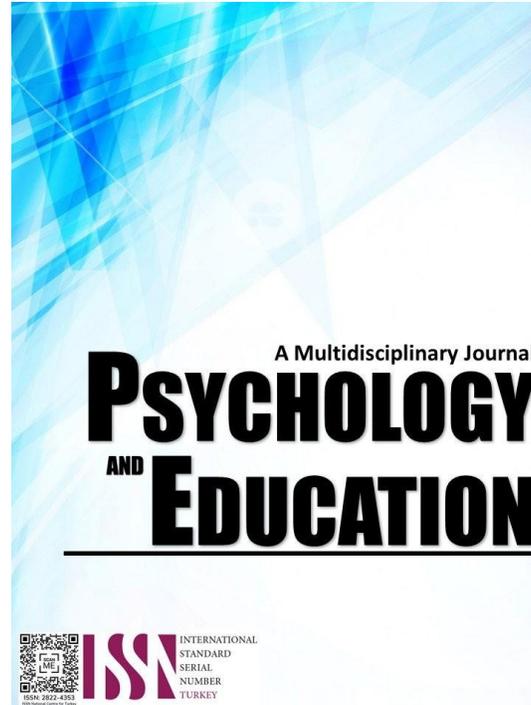


# THE ROLE OF MEANINGFUL WORK IN SCHOOL CULTURE AND MEANING IN LIFE OF GUIDANCE DESIGNATES



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## The Role of Meaningful Work in School Culture and the Meaning in Life of Guidance Designates

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### Abstract

This study examined the role of meaningful work in the relationship between school culture and life meaning among guidance designates (GD's) in the Philippines. Using a correlational quantitative design, data were collected from forty-three (N = 43) GDs employed in public and private schools across the country. Standardized instruments were used, including the School Culture Triage Survey (SCTS), Work and Meaning Inventory (WAMI), and Meaning in Life Questionnaire (MILQ). Results showed that most GDs perceived a positive school culture, particularly in professional collaboration (76.74%) and affiliative collegiality (67.44%), while self-determination or efficacy scored moderately lower (60.47%). Mean scores for meaningful work were moderate: Positive Meaning (M = 17.67), Meaning-Making through Work (M = 13.51), and Greater Good Motivations (M = 12.77). Most respondents (86.04%) reported high levels in both the presence and search for meaning in life. Regression analyses revealed that school culture significantly predicted meaningful work ( $\beta = 0.447$ ,  $p = 0.003$ ,  $R^2 = 0.200$ ) and meaning in life ( $\beta = 0.333$ ,  $p = 0.029$ ,  $R^2 = 0.111$ ). Meaningful work also significantly predicted meaning in life ( $\beta = .350$ ,  $p = .021$ ,  $R^2 = .122$ ), but it did not mediate the relationship between school culture and meaning in life ( $R^2 = .161$ ). These findings underscore the importance of cultivating positive school cultures and promoting meaningful work experiences to enhance the psychological well-being, life satisfaction, and professional identity of GDs.

**Keywords:** *guidance designates, school culture, meaningful work, meaning in life, professional fulfillment, psychological well-being, education, life satisfaction*

### Introduction

The demand for mental health services in basic education institutions across the Philippines has increased steadily in recent years (Lacson et al., 2024). However, the shortage of registered guidance counselors (RGCs) has compelled many public schools to appoint teachers as guidance designates (GDs) or guidance advocates to fill the gap (Subong IV, 2025; Harrison, King, & Hocson, 2023; Cervantes, 2019; David et al., 2019; DepEd, 2021; Mendijar & Manamtam, 2020; Valdez, 2018). These designated teachers often manage both teaching and counseling responsibilities without adequate training, compensation, or institutional recognition (Dizon & Chavez, 2022; Balajadia & Fabella, 2023; Ushiyama, 2025). As a result, they carry multiple roles that challenge their professional capacity and emotional resilience.

Guidance designates serve a dual purpose in schools—fulfilling their duties as classroom teachers while also implementing guidance and counseling programs (Subong IV, 2025; Pasco & Fabella, 2023; Maestrado & Bucar, 2024). They are expected to address students' academic, personal, and socio-emotional needs while meeting instructional demands. This overlapping of roles often leads to role ambiguity, administrative overload, and professional marginalization (Harrison et al., 2023). Consequently, GDs may experience increased work-related stress, reduced job satisfaction, and a weakened sense of professional identity (Sanchez-Maddela & Cruz-Cada, 2024).

In response to these ongoing challenges, the enactment of Republic Act No. 12080, or the Basic Education Mental Health and Well-being Promotion Act, represents a significant policy development. This legislation aims to bridge the gap in mental health service provision by authorizing qualified individuals who are not registered to serve as "School Counselor Associates." This initiative signals a national recognition of the growing need for mental health support in schools and underscores the importance of empowering those already serving in similar capacities. Moreover, it emphasizes the importance of providing targeted training and wellness support for GDs to enhance their performance and professional fulfillment (Chi, 2024).

Despite these policy advancements, many GDs continue to struggle with maintaining a sense of purpose and well-being amid their complex responsibilities. Research on workplace psychology emphasizes the importance of meaningful work—the perception that one's job holds purpose and contributes to a greater good—as a key determinant of employee satisfaction and motivation (Steger et al., 2012; Allan et al., 2018; Steger, 2019). Similarly, a supportive school culture, characterized by collegiality, empathy, and shared values, has been shown to significantly influence employees' engagement, well-being, and sense of meaning (Wagner, 2006; Wallace, 2019; Jones, 2020; Limone & Toto, 2022; Lei, 2024).

For guidance designates, finding meaning in their work and being part of a supportive institutional environment are vital in mitigating the pressures of dual roles. A strong sense of meaningful work can sustain their motivation despite systemic limitations, while a nurturing school culture can buffer the adverse effects of stress and professional fatigue. Together, these factors contribute to their overall sense of meaning in life, a psychological construction linked to resilience, satisfaction, and mental well-being.

Despite the increasing attention on teachers' well-being and organizational culture, limited empirical studies in the Philippine context have specifically examined the experiences of guidance designates—particularly how meaningful work and school culture shape their sense of meaning in life. Most existing research focuses on registered guidance counselors or teachers in general, leaving a gap in understanding this unique group that bridges the roles of instructional and psychosocial support. Addressing this gap is essential for formulating evidence-based wellness programs, capacity-building initiatives, and policy interventions that enhance the professional identity, job satisfaction, and mental health of GDs within the country's basic education system.

## Research Questions

The primary objective of this study is to examine the school culture, meaningful work, and meaning in life guidance designates (GDs) in the Philippines. Specifically, the study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. How do guidance designates perceive their school culture, their work as meaningful, and their meaning in life?
2. To what extent does school culture influence meaningful work and meaning in life among guidance designates?
3. How does meaningful work relate to meaning in life among guidance designates?
4. To what extent does meaningful work mediate the relationship between school culture and meaning in life among guidance designates?
5. What wellness support services can be proposed based on the findings of the present study?

## Literature Review

### *Meaningful Work*

Recent literature highlights meaningful work as a crucial foundation for personal and professional well-being. Steger et al. (2012) emphasized that examining how perceptions of meaningful work influence work-related outcomes and overall well-being has become an increasingly important area of inquiry among scholars, organizations, and individuals seeking to enhance job satisfaction and career purpose. Meaningful work is broadly defined as work that individuals perceive as significant, fulfilling, and aligned with their values and identity. The concept is grounded in theories such as eudaimonic well-being, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, and Rogers' theory of the fully functioning person (Chalofsky & Cavallaro, 2019; Soren & Ryff, 2023), all of which suggest that true fulfillment stems not merely from pleasure but from self-actualization and personal growth.

According to Steger et al. (2012), meaningful work comprises three interrelated components: finding positive meaning in one's work, viewing work as a central source of meaning in life, and perceiving work as beneficial to the greater good. These components are positively correlated with life satisfaction, work engagement, and psychological well-being. The first dimension—positive meaning—refers to the joy and fulfillment derived from one's tasks. The second—meaning-making through work—emphasizes the role of work in constructing personal identity and life purpose. The third contribution to the greater good highlights the idea that work becomes most meaningful when it has a positive impact on others or society. Collectively, these dimensions present meaningful work as a multidimensional construct essential for understanding how individuals experience and evaluate the significance of their professional lives.

Empirical studies consistently link meaningful work with reduced burnout and enhanced psychological well-being (Allan et al., 2018; Wingerden & Stoep, 2017). It is moderately to strongly associated with life satisfaction, purpose, and general health (Allan et al., 2018), while Hu and Hirsh (2017) reported that individuals who perceive their work as meaningful experience lower anxiety, greater motivation, and less emotional exhaustion. Likewise, Wingerden and Stoep (2017) found that meaningful work increases work engagement and general well-being. In educational contexts, Lei (2024) and Ahmad and Fatima (2022) demonstrated that meaningful work mediates the relationship between leadership, school culture, and psychological health, underscoring its value in sustaining teacher motivation. However, Lips-Wiersma et al. (2022) cautioned that meaningful work, without balance and supportive structures, can lead to overcommitment or burnout—reminding institutions that meaning must coexist with healthy work boundaries.

### *School Culture*

School culture plays a critical role in shaping both individual and organizational well-being. It encompasses the shared values, beliefs, norms, and practices that influence interactions and outcomes within a school community. Theories such as the 4C's Model (Mahafza & Smith, 2022) explain how socio-constructivist principles, when integrated with curriculum design, professional competence, and care, can foster inclusive and responsive environments that enhance academic performance and well-being. Emawati (2019) emphasized that cultivating a positive school culture requires collaboration among educators, parents, and policymakers to build supportive networks that promote resilience and engagement among students and staff alike.

Research shows that a strong school culture bridges leadership practices and school effectiveness (Nassir & Benoliel, 2023). Supportive cultural environments reduce teacher stress, foster collegial relationships, and strengthen social connections (Jones, 2020; Harrison & Hou, 2023). Schools that value diversity and empathy tend to cultivate environments that sustain holistic wellness for all stakeholders (Steenkamp, 2021; Limone & Toto, 2022). Wagner (2006) conceptualized school culture as grounded in three key indicators—professional collaboration, collegial relationships, and self-determination—each of which fosters shared purpose and professional

growth.

Professional collaboration reflects the extent to which educators engage in collective problem-solving, share instructional strategies, and work jointly toward improvement. Collegial relationships encompass the quality of social interactions and mutual respect among staff, promoting emotional well-being and a sense of belonging. Self-determination refers to educators' intrinsic motivation and sense of empowerment to pursue professional goals despite bureaucratic constraints. When these dimensions are strong, school communities experience higher morale, better student outcomes, and greater organizational cohesion (Wagner, 2006). Thus, a positive school culture not only supports academic success but also nurtures the emotional and psychological health of educators and students alike.

### ***Meaning in Life***

The search for and presence of meaning in life has long been recognized as central to human motivation and psychological well-being. Frankl (1963) proposed that the will to meaning—the innate drive to find purpose—guides individuals toward a sense of fulfillment and resilience. When this need is frustrated, people may experience emptiness, depression, or existential anxiety. Similarly, Rachmad's (2017) Modern Meaning Theory posits that meaning arises from an individual's understanding of life purpose, values, and connections with others and society. It emphasizes that meaning is not static but develops through self-reflection, interpersonal relationships, and contributions to the greater good.

Steger et al. (2006) conceptualized meaning in life through two dimensions: the presence of meaning (POM), which refers to perceiving life as meaningful, and the search for meaning (SFM), which involves actively pursuing a purpose. Work, relationships, and environment shape both dimensions. Studies show that individuals in supportive and value-congruent workplaces experience higher meaning and well-being (Begum & Azam, 2021; Sri et al., 2024), whereas misalignment between personal and organizational values heightens the search for meaning (Turner et al., 2024). Holistic work environments that nurture emotional, spiritual, and developmental needs further enhance meaning and satisfaction (Mohamad & Abiddin, 2024).

Meta-analytic findings support the notion that the presence of meaning has a strong positive correlation with well-being, whereas the search for meaning yields weaker and less consistent results (Li et al., 2021). Meaningful work can mitigate the adverse effects of job stress (Allan et al., 2016), and supportive organizational cultures can foster a sense of purpose and belonging (Billett et al., 2021). Family relationships, spirituality, and personal growth also play critical roles in developing a sense of meaning (Grouden & Jose, 2015; Russo-Netzer et al., 2019). Collectively, these studies demonstrate that meaning in life is shaped by the interplay between personal values, work environments, and relational support systems.

### ***Guidance Designates***

In Philippine basic education, the shortage of registered guidance counselors (RGCs) has historically led schools to assign teachers as guidance designates (GDs)—a practice now formally acknowledged under Republic Act No. 12080, the Basic Education Mental Health and Wellbeing Promotion Act (DepEd, 2021; Subong IV, 2025). This law allows qualified teachers and graduates in behavioral science to serve as School Counselor Associates, recognizing their vital role in addressing students' socio-emotional and mental health needs. While this policy marks progress, GDs continue to face systemic challenges, including heavy workloads, role ambiguity, and limited institutional recognition (Decena & Singson, 2022; Harrison et al., 2023).

GDs often perform multiple roles as class advisers, discipline officers, and counselors simultaneously, leading to exhaustion and work-life imbalance (Subong IV, 2025). The lack of clear role definitions and administrative support exacerbates role confusion and emotional strain (Harrison et al., 2023). Hierarchical school structures and misunderstandings about counseling roles further restrict GDs' ability to advocate for their programs (David, 2017), while disparities in authority and compensation discourage them from pursuing professional licensure (Subong IV, 2025). Moreover, counseling in the Philippines is often viewed as supplementary rather than integral to education, which contrasts with international models, such as the ASCA National Model (2019), that position counselors as leaders of systemic change (Harrison, 2022).

Despite these challenges, GDs often display genuine care and empathy toward students—qualities central to effective counseling (Subong IV, 2025). Many view their role not merely as a responsibility but as a calling, deriving personal meaning and fulfillment from their ability to help others (Decena & Singson, 2022). This aligns with Duffy et al.'s (2018) Work as a Calling Theory, which suggests that individuals who perceive their profession as a vocation experience higher motivation and satisfaction despite external limitations. Nurturing this sense of meaningful work and fostering a supportive school culture are therefore essential to sustaining the well-being, resilience, and professional growth of GDs.

Given the evolving role of GDs and the scarcity of local empirical research examining their psychological and organizational experiences, this study addresses a critical gap. While prior studies have focused on role strain, workload, and policy issues, few have explored how meaningful work and school culture influence the sense of meaning in life among GDs. Understanding this relationship is vital in designing effective wellness programs, professional development initiatives, and institutional policies that enhance GDs' performance, job satisfaction, and overall well-being.

## Methodology

### Research Design

This study employed a correlational research design with a quantitative approach to investigate the role of meaningful work in the relationship between school culture and life meaning among guidance designates (GDs) in the Philippines. A quantitative design was deemed appropriate as it allowed the researcher to examine measurable relationships among variables and apply statistical methods to identify patterns and associations (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Specifically, the correlational design facilitated the assessment of the degree of association between naturally occurring variables without manipulation or control (Fraenkel et al., 2019). This approach was crucial in understanding how school culture and meaningful work intersect to impact the sense of meaning in life among GDs.

### Respondents

The respondents of the study were GDs working in both private and public basic education schools across the Philippines. Participants were selected through non-probability convenience sampling to ensure representation from diverse educational contexts. Recruitment was conducted via a public invitation posted on Facebook, where interested participants were required to meet specific inclusion criteria: (1) non-registered guidance counselors performing guidance-related functions as designates; (2) at least two years of service as a GD; (3) licensed professional teachers primarily serving as GDs; (4) currently employed in either public or private elementary or secondary schools; and (5) enrolled or not in any advanced academic program related to guidance and counseling. Respondents voluntarily participated in the study and provided informed consent after being fully briefed on its purpose, procedures, and their rights. Data collection took place from May 13 to May 27, 2025, through Google Forms. A total of forty-three ( $n = 43$ ) completed responses were obtained and included in the analysis, meeting the minimum sample requirement for correlational studies (Fraenkel et al., 2019). The demographic characteristics of the respondents are summarized in the table that follows.

Table 1. *Demographics of Guidance Designates*

<i>Parameters</i>	<i>N = 43</i>	<i>%</i>
<i>Age</i>		
30 and below	5	11.6
31 to 35	8	18.6
36 to 40	9	20.9
41 to 45	6	14.0
46 and above	15	34.9
<i>Sex</i>		
Male	10	23.3
Female	33	76.7
<i>School Type</i>		
Private school	7	16.3
Public school	36	83.7
<i>Length of Service as Guidance Designates</i>		
5 and below	24	55.8
6 to 10	9	20.9
11 to 15	6	14.0
16 to 20	3	7.0
21 and above	1	2.3
<i>Highest Educational Attainment</i>		
Bachelor's Degree	12	27.9
Master's Degree	28	65.1
PhD Degree	3	7.0

### Instruments

Three standardized instruments were utilized in this study: the Meaning in Life Questionnaire (MILQ), the Work and Meaning Inventory (WAMI), and the School Culture Triage Survey (SCTS). The Meaning in Life Questionnaire (MILQ), developed by Michael F. Steger, measures two dimensions of meaning: presence of meaning and search for meaning, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging from .84 to .91 (Steger et al., 2006). The Presence subscale reflects an individual's perceived sense of purpose and psychological well-being, exhibiting inverse relationships with depression and anxiety. The Search subscale, on the other hand, assesses the extent to which individuals strive to find meaning and purpose in life.

The Work and Meaning Inventory (WAMI), developed by Steger et al. (2012), assesses meaningful work through three subscales: Positive Meaning (PM), Meaning Making through Work (MM), and Greater Good (GG) Motivations. These subscales demonstrated high internal consistency ( $\alpha = .89, .82, \text{ and } .83$ , respectively), with an overall reliability coefficient of .93. The PM subscale was found to correlate strongly with job satisfaction and psychological well-being. In contrast, the MM and GG subscales were associated with intrinsic motivation. Together, these dimensions provide a comprehensive understanding of how individuals derive meaning from their

professional roles (Akin et al., 2013; Duarte-Lores et al., 2023; Paola et al., 2023).

Lastly, the School Culture Triage Survey (SCTS) developed by Wagner (2006) was used to measure school culture across three domains: professional collaboration, collegial and affiliative relationships, and efficacy or self-determination. The SCTS provides a structured approach to evaluating a school's relational and professional environment, which directly impacts guidance designates' (GDs) sense of belonging and professional purpose. By capturing these dimensions, the SCTS provided valuable insights into how school culture may indirectly shape meaningful work experiences and life meaning among GDs.

### Procedure

Data collection was conducted entirely online using Google Forms for accessibility and efficiency. The survey link was distributed through professional networks and social media platforms to reach a broad range of GDs across regions. Before participation, respondents were informed about the study's objectives, procedures, potential risks, and confidentiality measures, and they were required to provide informed consent electronically. Upon completion of the data collection period, the responses were downloaded and organized for statistical analysis. Descriptive statistics were first computed to summarize demographic data, followed by inferential analyses to examine correlations and mediation effects among the study variables.

### Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 25. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the respondents' demographic characteristics and their scores on WAMI, SCTS, and MILQ. Standard regression analyses were then performed to determine the relationships and predictive influence of school culture on meaningful work and life satisfaction. To further explore the hypothesized mediating role of meaningful work, mediation analysis was conducted. This approach enabled the researcher to determine whether meaningful work significantly mediated the relationship between school culture and life meaning, thereby providing a deeper understanding of the underlying mechanisms connecting these constructs.

### Ethical Considerations

The study adhered strictly to ethical standards in research. Participants were fully informed about the study's purpose, procedures, and their right to withdraw at any time without penalty. Informed consent was obtained before data collection, and no personally identifiable information was collected. Data confidentiality was safeguarded through secure storage and coding procedures, ensuring the anonymity of the data. All information gathered was used solely for academic purposes and treated with strict confidentiality. The research was conducted in accordance with institutional and ethical guidelines for studies involving human participants.

### Results

This section presents the study's findings and discusses them in relation to the research questions and relevant literature.

#### *Perceptions of School Culture, Meaningful Work, and Meaning in Life*

The findings reveal that guidance designates (GDs) generally perceived their school culture positively. As shown in Tables 2 to 5, a large majority rated professional collaboration (76.74%) and affiliative collegiality (67.44%) as "Amazing," indicating strong teamwork, collegiality, and respect among colleagues. The self-determination or efficacy dimension was also rated favorably (60.47%), though a considerable portion (34.88%) perceived a need for continued monitoring and adjustment. These results suggest that most GDs operate in an environment that values collaboration and relational support; however, institutional challenges—such as bureaucratic barriers and limited autonomy—persist. These findings align with Wagner's (2006) framework, which underscores professional collaboration and collegiality as essential elements of a positive school culture. Similar to Geesa et al. (2024), the results suggest that cooperative relationships among school stakeholders enhance collective efficacy and improve student support systems. However, the slightly lower rating on self-determination reflects structural constraints, such as unclear role boundaries and limited decision-making power, which can hinder GDs' sense of professional autonomy (Elam et al., 2016). Thus, the study highlights the need for greater institutional backing to strengthen the independence and professional growth of GDs (Yulianti et al., 2024).

Table 2. *Guidance Designates' Perceived School Culture - Professional Collaboration*

	<i>Limits</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
Amazing!	20 to 25	33	76.74
Monitor and maintain making positive adjustments	15 to 19	10	23.26
Modifications and improvements are necessary	10 to 14	0	0.00
Critical and immediate attention necessary	5 to 9	0	0.00
Total		43	100.00

Table 3. *Guidance Designates' Perceived School Culture - Affiliative Collegiality*

	<i>Limits</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
Amazing!	24 to 30	29	67.44
Monitor and maintain making positive adjustments	18 to 23	12	27.91
Modifications and improvements are necessary	12 to 17	2	4.65



Critical and immediate attention necessary	6 to 11	0	0.00
Total		43	100

Table 4. *Guidance Designates' Perceived School Culture - Self-Determination/Efficacy*

	Limits	f	%
Amazing!	24 to 30	26	60.47
Monitor and maintain making positive adjustments	18 to 23	15	34.88
Modifications and improvements are necessary	12 to 17	2	4.65
Critical and immediate attention necessary	6 to 11	0	0.00
Total		43	100

Table 5. *Guidance Designates' Perceived School Culture - Overall*

	Limits	f	%
Amazing!	76 to 85	17	39.53
Monitor and maintain making positive adjustments	60 to 75	19	44.19
Modifications and improvements are necessary	41 to 59	7	16.28
Critical and immediate attention necessary	17 to 40	0	0.00
Total		43	100

### Guidance Designates Meaningful Work

Table 6 shows that GDs reported moderate levels across all subscales: Positive Meaning (M = 17.67), Meaning-Making through Work (M = 13.51), and Greater Good Motivations (M = 12.77). These results indicate that while GDs recognize the personal and social value of their work, their sense of fulfillment may not be deeply internalized. This moderate perception may reflect the complex nature of their dual roles as teachers and guidance providers—roles that provide opportunities for purpose but may also bring strain. According to Steger et al. (2012), meaningful work involves perceiving one’s job as significant, aligning with personal values, and contributing to a greater good. The current findings align with prior research indicating that meaningful work enhances job satisfaction and well-being, but may decline when professional expectations and support are mismatched (Lips-Wiersma et al., 2022). Therefore, fostering alignment between the values of GDs and their professional responsibilities, coupled with institutional recognition, may help strengthen their experience of meaningful work.

Table 6. *Means, Quartile, and Standard Deviation of Scores for Meaningful Work and its Domains*

Meaningful Work	M	SD	Q1 (25)	Q2 (50)	Q3 (75)
Positive Meaning	17.67	2.23	16	18	20
Meaning-Making through work	13.51	1.42	12	14	15
Greater Good Motivations	12.77	1.86	11	13	15
Meaningful Work	43.95	5.08	40	44	50

Note: N=43. Q1 Low level of meaningful work and its domains; Q2 average level of meaningful work and its domains; Q3 high level of meaningful work and its domains

### Guidance Designates Perceived Meaning in Life

Table 7. *Guidance Designates Perceived Meaning in Life*

Limits		f	%
Presence of Meaning	Search for Meaning		
> 24	> 24	37	86.04
> 24	< 24	6	13.95
< 24	> 24	0	0
< 24	< 24	0	0
Total		43	100

Table 7 demonstrates that most GDs scored high in both the presence and search for meaning scales (86.04%), suggesting that they perceive their lives as purposeful while actively engaging in continuous self-growth and exploration. This pattern reflects a dynamic balance between fulfillment and pursuit, consistent with Steger’s (2006) conceptualization of meaning in life. The findings indicate that GDs maintain a sense of purpose, yet remain open to redefining it through reflection and life experiences. This duality aligns with Frankl’s (1963) logotherapy and Rachmad’s (2017) Modern Meaning Theory, which view meaning as both a present realization and an evolving journey shaped by personal values and relationships. Promoting self-reflective and wellness-oriented training programs could therefore help sustain GDs’ sense of meaning and well-being amid demanding educational contexts.

### Relationship between School Culture, Meaningful Work, and Meaning in Life

The regression analyses further clarified the relationships among the three variables. As shown in Table 8, school culture significantly predicted both meaningful work ( $\beta = 0.447, p = 0.003, R^2 = 0.200$ ) and meaning in life ( $\beta = 0.333, p = 0.029, R^2 = 0.111$ ). These findings suggest that a supportive and collaborative school culture enhances the experience of meaningful work for GDs and contributes to their

broader sense of purpose. This is consistent with previous studies (Lee et al., 2017; Svendsen & Jønsson, 2022; Lysova et al., 2018) which found that positive organizational cultures promote engagement, motivation, and meaningfulness among educators. Thus, nurturing professional relationships and empowering school communities can strengthen both the personal and professional fulfillment of GDs.

Table 8. *Regression Analysis between School Culture and Meaningful Work and School Culture and Meaning in Life*

Variable	B	95% CI	SE B	$\beta$	R <sup>2</sup>
Constant	28.683*	(18.938, 38.428)	4.825		.200
School Culture (SC)	.237*		.074	.447*	
Constant	44.015*	(29.63, 58.40)	7.122		.111
School Culture (SC)	.247*	(.026, .467)	.109	.333*	

Note: Dependent Variable (Meaningful Work (MW), Meaning in Life (MIL)); CI = coefficient interval.  
\*  $p < .05$

Table 9 indicates that meaningful work significantly predicts meaning in life ( $\beta = .350$ ,  $p = .021$ ,  $R^2 = .122$ ), demonstrating that individuals who perceive their work as meaningful tend to report higher levels of life meaning. This confirms prior findings (Allan et al., 2018; Steger, 2019) showing that meaningful work contributes to psychological well-being, life satisfaction, and resilience. GDs who find purpose in their counseling and teaching responsibilities may integrate their professional experiences into their broader life narrative, leading to enhanced meaning and self-worth. These results highlight the importance of fostering intrinsic motivation and role alignment, as work perceived as valuable and impactful directly enriches one's sense of life meaning.

However, the multiple regression analysis (Table 10) revealed that when school culture and meaningful work were analyzed together, neither exerted a statistically significant direct effect on meaning in life ( $p > .05$ ). Although both variables contributed to 16.1% of the variance ( $R^2 = .161$ ), meaningful work did not mediate the relationship between school culture and meaning in life as hypothesized. This suggests that other unmeasured factors—such as leadership style, personal resilience, or social support—may mediate this relationship more strongly. Bailey et al. (2018) similarly argued that the pathways linking meaningful work and life meaning are multifaceted, influenced by contextual and personal variables. The results, therefore, imply that enhancing meaning in life among GDs requires a holistic approach—addressing not only workplace culture and professional meaning but also individual growth and systemic support structures.

Table 9. *Regression Analysis between Meaningful Work and Meaning in Life*

Variable	B	95% CI	SE B	$\beta$	R <sup>2</sup>
Constant	38.404*	(20.103, 56.705)	9.062		.122
Meaningful Work (MW)	.490*	(.076, .903)	.205	.350*	

Note: Dependent Variable (Meaning in Life, (MIL)); CI = coefficient interval.  
\*  $p < .05$

Table 10. *Multiple Regression Analysis of Meaningful Work and School Culture on Meaning in Life*

Variable	B	95% CI	SE B	$\beta$	R <sup>2</sup>
Constant	33.922	(14.611, 53.233)	9.555		.161
School Culture (SC)	.163	(-.079, .406)	.120	.220	
Meaningful Work (MW)	.352	(-.106, .810)	.227	.251	

Note: a. Dependent Variable (Meaning in Life (MIL)); CI = coefficient interval.

Overall, the findings establish that both school culture and meaningful work are crucial predictors of meaning in life among GDs, even though meaningful work does not mediate their relationship. A positive school culture fosters collaboration, a sense of belonging, and purpose, while meaningful work enhances self-fulfillment and psychological well-being. Therefore, interventions aimed at improving the wellness of GDs should address both organizational and individual dimensions. Schools may consider implementing wellness programs that emphasize collegial support, recognition, reflective practice, and professional autonomy. Strengthening the institutional framework for guidance services—through more precise role delineation and capacity-building programs—can also help GDs experience their work as more meaningful and life-enhancing (Setiawan & Sandra, 2024; Lavy & Ayuob, 2019).

## Discussions

The present study utilized Wagner's (2006) School Culture Framework to examine how cultural forces within schools influence guidance designates' (GDs) experiences of meaningful work and their overall sense of meaning in life. The relatively high scores in the domains of professional collaboration and affiliative collegiality indicate that GDs generally operate within supportive school environments that encourage teamwork, trust, and mutual respect. Such findings affirm the vital role of collegial relationships in

fostering professional efficacy, as collaborative partnerships among counselors, teachers, and administrators are crucial in addressing students' diverse needs and ensuring the effectiveness of counseling programs (Geesa et al., 2024). However, the slightly lower ratings in the self-determination or efficacy dimension may reflect systemic challenges within the Philippine basic education context, such as limited institutional resources, bureaucratic constraints, and role ambiguity. These factors can restrict GDs' sense of autonomy and professional fulfillment, potentially undermining their effectiveness (Elam et al., 2016). Therefore, stronger institutional support and leadership commitment are necessary to promote the professional growth, role clarity, and independence of GDs. School administrators, in particular, play a crucial role in implementing comprehensive guidance programs and reducing administrative barriers that hinder counselors' decision-making and professional autonomy (Dahir et al., 2019; Yulianti et al., 2024).

In terms of meaningful work, the study applied Steger et al.'s (2012) framework to evaluate the degree to which GDs perceive their work as valuable, purposeful, and aligned with their sense of self. The moderate mean scores across all three subscales—Positive Meaning, Meaning-Making through Work, and Greater Good Motivations—suggest that GDs recognize some intrinsic value and purpose in their professional roles but may not consistently experience deep fulfillment. While they may view their work as beneficial to students and the community, this perception may not always serve as their primary motivation. This moderate level of meaningfulness could stem from competing responsibilities, limited institutional recognition, and role ambiguity that obscure the broader purpose of their work. As defined in existing literature, meaningful work is that which is deeply connected to personal values, contributes to others, and fosters self-realization (Chalofsky & Cavallaro, 2019; Soren & Ryff, 2023; Martela & Pessi, 2018). Strengthening GDs' connection to the broader impact of their roles and aligning institutional values with their professional identity may deepen their engagement and sense of purpose. Initiatives such as reflective supervision, professional development, and recognition programs could enhance their experience of meaningful work by fostering a greater alignment between personal values and professional practice.

Concerning meaning in life, the study was grounded in Steger's (2006) conceptualization, which distinguishes between the presence and search for meaning. Findings indicate that most GDs perceive their lives as meaningful yet remain engaged in an ongoing search to deepen that meaning. This dual orientation suggests a dynamic process of growth in which purpose evolves through reflection, learning, and social connection. Frankl's (1963) Logotherapy and Rachmad's (2017) Modern Meaning Theory both support this interpretation, asserting that the pursuit of meaning is an active and continuous journey that contributes to psychological resilience and well-being. Within educational settings, promoting opportunities for self-reflection, peer connection, and personal growth can nurture this process. Programs that cultivate self-awareness, purpose-driven work, and social contribution could therefore sustain GDs' sense of meaning and psychological wellness.

The results of the regression analysis further confirm that school culture significantly predicts both meaningful work and meaning in life among GDs. This finding implies that a positive school culture—one that values collaboration, mutual respect, and professional empowerment—enhances both the meaningfulness of work and the overall sense of life purpose among educators. This aligns with earlier studies that demonstrate the importance of supportive organizational environments in promoting employee engagement and fostering meaningful work experiences (Lee et al., 2017; Svendsen & Jønsson, 2022; Lysova et al., 2018). Accordingly, school leaders are encouraged to cultivate a culture of appreciation and inclusivity that recognizes staff contributions and nurtures their intrinsic motivation (Alsada et al., 2017).

Similarly, the results demonstrate that meaningful work has a direct influence on meaning in life, supporting prior findings that individuals who perceive their work as purposeful tend to experience greater life satisfaction and psychological well-being (Allan et al., 2018; Steger, 2019; Novanto et al., 2021). Experiencing one's work as meaningful enhances self-esteem, promotes positive value shifts, and fosters a stronger connection between professional and personal life (Shim et al., 2022). Thus, for GDs, the perception that their work positively impacts others likely reinforces their sense of life purpose and identity.

However, the multiple regression analysis revealed that while both school culture and meaningful work contribute to meaning in life, neither has a statistically significant direct effect when considered simultaneously. This finding suggests that the relationship between school culture and meaning in life may not operate solely through meaningful work. As Bailey et al. (2018) argued, meaningful work is a multifaceted construct influenced by factors such as leadership style, organizational practices, and personal values. Hence, other unmeasured variables—such as resilience, spirituality, or social support—may play mediating roles in how school culture shapes GDs' sense of life meaning.

Although the mediating effect of meaningful work was not statistically confirmed, the study highlights the direct importance of both school culture and meaningful work in influencing the meaning of life for GDs. This highlights the need for holistic interventions that address both organizational and individual factors. Cultivating positive school environments, promoting reflective practices, and empowering GDs to see the broader significance of their roles can collectively enhance their overall well-being and job satisfaction. Consistent with the findings of Setiawan and Sandra (2024) and Lavy and Ayuob (2019), greater meaning in life among educators is associated with improved performance, motivation, and resilience. Therefore, strengthening both meaningful work and school culture represents a crucial strategy for enhancing the professional and personal fulfillment of guidance designates within the Philippine education system.

## Conclusions

The study established that school culture plays a pivotal role in shaping the meaningful work experiences and overall sense of life meaning among guidance designates (GDs). High levels of professional collaboration (76.74%) and collegiality (67.44%) indicate that GDs operate in environments that generally support teamwork and respect, fostering positive professional experiences. However, the slightly lower perception of self-determination (60.47%) suggests that structural and bureaucratic barriers still limit the autonomy and influence of GDs within their institutions. A supportive school culture that empowers educators and guidance staff is therefore essential for promoting meaningful engagement and professional satisfaction.

Findings from the Work and Meaning Inventory (WAMI) revealed that GDs moderately experience meaningful work, with an overall mean of 43.95, indicating that while they recognize the personal and social significance of their roles, deeper intrinsic fulfillment remains limited. This may stem from competing responsibilities as both teachers and guidance facilitators, which dilute focus and recognition. Addressing these role conflicts through clarified expectations, workload balance, and institutional recognition could enhance the meaning GDs derive from their professional duties.

The Meaning in Life Questionnaire (MILQ) results showed that 86.04% of GDs scored high in both the presence and search for meaning, suggesting that they not only perceive their lives as purposeful but actively seek continuous personal growth. This highlights GDs' intrinsic motivation and resilience despite structural challenges. Programs that nurture self-reflection, career development, and personal growth can sustain this dynamic pursuit of meaning and reinforce psychological well-being.

Regression analyses demonstrated that school culture significantly predicts both meaningful work ( $\beta = 0.447, p = 0.003$ ) and meaning in life ( $\beta = 0.333, p = 0.029$ ). Meaningful work also directly influences meaning in life ( $\beta = .350, p = .021$ ), reinforcing the interdependence between professional and personal purpose. However, the absence of a mediating effect suggests that other factors—such as leadership style, social support, and personal resilience—may also contribute to explaining how school culture influences life meaning. This finding underscores the complexity of human motivation and the need for multidimensional institutional strategies to support GDs.

Educational leaders and policymakers should strengthen institutional frameworks that promote both positive school culture and meaningful work among GDs. Schools must provide opportunities for professional collaboration, autonomy, and reflective supervision to enhance GDs' sense of purpose. Moreover, wellness and professional development programs should integrate self-reflection, value alignment, and career counseling to foster both personal and organizational growth. Future research is recommended to explore mediating variables, such as leadership practices, resilience, and social connectedness, that may further clarify the pathways between school culture, meaningful work, and life meaning. By cultivating these dimensions, schools can enhance not only GDs' well-being but also the overall quality of student support systems.

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