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Work engagement, work meaning and job satisfaction among working prisoners

Zaangażowanie w pracę, znaczenie pracy i satysfakcja z pracy wśród pracujących więźniów

Work is one of the most important factors of resocialisation. Both paid and unpaid work by prisoners is a means of their social readaptation. The study revealed prisoners' approach to work and the validity of continuing a program to employ prisoners for the benefit of their social readaptation.

Key words: prisoner's work, resocialisation, work engagement, work meaning, job satisfaction.

Praca jest jednym z najważniejszych czynników resocjalizacji. Zarówno odpłatna, jak i nieodpłatna praca więźniów jest środkiem ich readaptacji społecznej. Badania ujawniły podejście więźniów do pracy oraz zasadność kontynuowania programu zatrudniania więźniów w celu ich readaptacji społecznej.

Słowa kluczowe: praca więźniów, resocjalizacja, zaangażowanie w pracę, znaczenie pracy, satysfakcja z pracy.

Introduction

Difficulties in adapting to life after release from prison are one of the reasons for using social assistance. These difficulties may result both from the length of the sentence and entering a new stage of life, as well as the need to find one's place on the job market or build a new relationships

with loved ones after leaving prison. The key role in the process of re-socialization of prisoners seems to be played by the competences desired in the free environment, acquired, among others, at work during imprisonment. The need to serve a prison sentence may lead to weakening of social ties and deterioration of prisoners' relations with the environment due to temporary exclusion from particular spheres of life. A key role is played by systemic measures¹ supporting the process of re-socialization of prisoners, including employment of prisoners. The work of prisoners allows to meet the broadly understood needs of themselves and society, provides a simulation of life after being released and sustains confidence in their own chances in the labor market after serving their sentence. Lack of work manifests itself in deficits in the psychological, social or economic sphere, promotes social separation and has a negative impact on self-esteem.

It is quite difficult to implement research on inmate work-taking; however, a review of the available research literature shows that implementing prison work programs reduces recidivism² and creates better opportunities for inmates' social reintegration after prison³. The prisoners' work has a positive impact on their employability after leaving prison, but the reintegration of former inmates into the labor market presents some difficulties⁴. Labor activity already while imprisonment is recognized as one of the basic pillars of rehabilitation. Many branches of the global economy benefit from the production capacity and other services provided by prisoners, and inmates benefit from the acquisition of vocational skills that increase their chances of employment upon release and successful reintegration into the community. The activities of the Polish Prison Service related to increasing the availability of work for inmates are therefore part of the contemporary directions of the employment policy of prisoners.

¹ B.M. Nowak, *Praca szansą skazanych na pomyślną reintegrację społeczną. Postawy pracodawców wobec ekswieźniów poszukujących zatrudnienia – komunikat z badań*, „Probacja” 2019, no.1, pp. 13-32.

² A. Nemme, B. Pandolfo, R. Walden, S. Lie, *A Product System for Meaningful Work, Rehabilitation, and Social Well-Being in Correctional Contexts*, [in:] S. Hai-Jew, *Maintaining Social Well-Being and Meaningful Work in a Highly Automated Job Market*, pp. 25-56, Business Science Reference, 2020.

³ C.A. Visher, V. Kachnowski, *Finding work on the outside: Results from the “Returning Home*, [in:] S. Bushway, M.A. Stoll, D.F. Weiman, *Barriers to reentry? The labor market for released prisoners in post-industrial America* (pp. 80-114), New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2007.

⁴ R. Alos, F. Esteban, P. Jodar, (2015), *Effects of Prison Work Programmes on the Employability of Ex-Prisoners*. “European Journal of Criminology” 2015, no. 12(1), pp. 35-50.

As in the rest of the world, correctional rehabilitation in the form of work programs for prisoners operates in Poland. Implemented in 2016, the “Work for Prisoners” program (in Polish: „Praca dla więźniów”) introduced a number of beneficial solutions in the employment of prisoners. The role of prisoners’ work as a means of their social readaptation has been increased, and work has become a desirable, immanent element of rehabilitation and has a practical and educational function⁵, providing prisoners with expansion of qualifications, teaching discipline, responsibility and management of financial resources⁶.

The article focuses on the inclusion of the work meaning, work engagement and job satisfaction in prisoners’ population, taking into account research reports on the occurrence of the relationship of these variables in conditions of freedom. The discussion begins with an explanation of the variables included in the study. Through work, prisoners learn new roles or improve existing skills, and take part in a simulation of life in freedom. Taking up a job provides a livelihood, motivation for involvement, opportunity for development, and life satisfaction⁷.

Work engagement

For the purpose of this study, the model of work engagement according to W. Schaufeli (2002) was used⁸. Work engagement is defined in this model as positive fulfillment associated with a state of mind characterized by three components: vigor, dedication, and absorption⁹. Vigor refers to the persistence, energy, and willingness to exert work effort and is significant in the relationship between work demands and resources in coping. Absorption is the state of being focused on work, absorbed by work without controlling the time spent on it meaning increased

⁵ D. Pstrąg, *Praca w procesie readaptacji społecznej skazanych*, „Lubelski Rocznik Pedagogiczny” 2014, no. 3(1), pp. 48-151.

⁶ K.M. Richmond, *Why Work While Incarcerated? Inmate Perceptions on Prison Industries Employment*, „Journal of Offender Rehabilitation” 2014, no. 53(4), pp. 231-252.

⁷ C. Uggen, *Work as a Turning Point in the Life Course of Criminals: A Duration Model of Age, Employment, and Recidivism*, “American Sociological Review” 2000, no. 65(4), pp. 529-546.

⁸ W. Schaufeli, M. Salanova, V. Gonzalez-Roma, A.B. Bakker, *The Measurement of Engagement and Burnout: A Two Sample Confirmatory Factor Analytic Approach*, “Journal of Happiness Studies” 2002, no. 3, pp. 71-92.

⁹ A.B. Bakker, *An evidence-based model of work engagement*, “Current Directions in Psychological Science” 2011, no. 20(4), pp. 265-269.

efficiency and ability to cope with difficult situations, more efficient and effective problem solving, which in turn translates into a reduction of tension at work and has a positive impact on mental health and increases the quality of work¹⁰. Dedication is said to occur when an employee cares about work, finds it important, purposeful, inspiring and challenging or feels pride in their tasks¹¹.

Positively related to engagement are job resources: skills, learning opportunities, support from coworkers and supervisors, and performance feedback¹². Schaufeli describes engaged employees as individuals who are energetic and resilient in their work, persistent, willing to put in effort, experiencing feelings of importance, enthusiasm, passion, inspiration, pride, excitement and challenge from their work; and fully focused on their work. Employee engagement is determined by the work meaning, the availability of work and opportunities for development¹³ promotes efficiency and affects the physical and mental well-being of employees¹⁴. In studies conducted among people other than prisoners, correlational links between work engagement and job satisfaction were assumed¹⁵ and indicated that dedication and vigor affect satisfaction more strongly than job absorption. On the other hand, the relationship between job satisfaction and work engagement was determined by the specifics of the organization rather than the job category¹⁶. Constructive effects on employee work engagement include a sense of personal satisfaction, satisfied customers, employee retention, and high wages¹⁷. Job satisfaction and happiness depended on the employee's values and motivation. A sense of work is created when work is perceived as challenging, the

¹⁰ M. Łaguna, E. Mielniczuk, A. Żaliński, K. Wałachowska, *Przywiązanie do organizacji i zaangażowanie w pracę – koncepcje teoretyczne i problemy terminologiczne*, „Medycyna Pracy” 2015, no. 66(2), pp. 277-285.

¹¹ T. Chirkowska-Smolak, *Dopasowanie do pracy a zaangażowanie. Mediacyjna rola przekonania na temat sensowności pracy*, „Psychologia Społeczna” 2016, 11(1), pp. 34-44.

¹² T. Chirkowska-Smolak, *Psychologiczny model zaangażowania w pracę*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM, Poznań 2017.

¹³ A. Wołpiuk-Ochocińska, *Zaangażowanie w pracę i przywiązanie organizacyjne pracowników w przedsiębiorstwach o różnym poziomie kultury bezpieczeństwa pracy*, „Zeszyty Naukowe Wyższej Szkoły Zarządzania Ochroną Pracy w Katowicach” 2016, no. 1(12), pp. 135-148.

¹⁴ W. Schaufeli, A.B. Bakker, *The Conceptualization and Measurement of Work Engagement*, [in:] A.B. Bakker, M.P. Leiter, *Work Engagement: A Handbook of Essential Theory and Research* (pp. 10-24). New York: Psychology Press 2010

¹⁵ Ibidem.

¹⁶ A. Rakowska, R. Mąciak, *Zaangażowanie pracownika a satysfakcja z pracy – modelowanie zależności z wykorzystaniem PLS-SEM*, „Przegląd Organizacji” 2016, no. 5, pp. 48-58.

¹⁷ A.S. Bin Shmailan, *The relationship between job satisfaction, job performance and employee engagement: An explorative study*, “Business Management and Economics” 2016, no. 4(1), pp. 1-8.

tasks involved are varied and allow employees to demonstrate their skills, and the employee perceives their own membership contribution to the organization¹⁸. According to research reports, there is no significant difference in the perception of the possibility of achieving job satisfaction in paid and unpaid inmates, while payment for work plays a large role in shaping the sense of meaning in life and is associated with optimism and self-esteem beliefs¹⁹.

Work meaning

Work meaning is based on internal standards and uncontrollable from the outside, as a person usually discovers it in his/her own way and is responsible for seeking, feeling and controlling the work meaning²⁰. The concept of work meaning was defined by Hackman and Oldham as subjective state of the employee in a model of work characteristics. Work meaning according to this concept was derived from the importance of the employee's tasks undertakes for the benefit of others and the organization. Work meaning is also understood as central to occupational well-being and is conceptualized as a phenomenon involving a matrix composed of two criteria: micro (organization-specific) and macro (globally understood) and egoistic (self-focused) and altruistic (other-focused)²¹. The study used the concept of M. Steger, B.J. Dik., R.D. Duffy, the authors of the WAMI – questionnaire according to which work is meaningful when the employee is subjectively convinced that what he does is important from his perspective²². It is an important parameter of work related to the employee's beliefs in the usefulness and importance of their actions. The ability to create work meaning serves to make one's life more meaningful. Work meaning leads to personal growth by providing reflection on oneself and the world around one,

¹⁸ M. Puchalska-Kamińska, A. Czerw, *Poczucie sensu pracy – czym jest i jak je wspierać?* In: T. Chirkowska-Smolak, A. Hauziński, *Zarządzanie oparte na dowodach. Teoria i praktyka*, (pp. 55-65). Wydawnictwo LIBRON, Kraków 2017.

¹⁹ A. Wróbel-Chmiel, *Praca w warunkach izolacji więziennej a poczucie sensu życia skazanych odbywających kary długoterminowe*, „Probacja” 2017, pp. 69-89.

²⁰ A. Czerw, *Psychologiczny model dobrostanu w pracy. Wartość i sens pracy*, PWN, Warszawa 2017.

²¹ A. Czerw, *Well-being at work—the essence, causes and consequences of the phenomenon*, “International Journal of Contemporary Management” 2015, 13(2), pp. 97-110.

²² M.F. Steger, B.J. Dik, *If one is looking for meaning in life, does it help to find meaning in work?* “Applied Psychology: Health and Well-Being” 2009, 1(3), 303-320.

which enhances the meaning of life. Also important in this theory is the perception of work as being done for the so called greater good, the treatment of work as a vocation, where we are dealing with a sense of fulfilling a mission at work²³ Many researchers have emphasized work meaning as the result of balance between satisfying one's own needs, the need to be (reflect) and act, and the needs of other people²⁴, where the meaning of work is achieved by focusing on oneself and others, which coincides with the egoistic and altruistic perspective²⁵. In the WAMI concept²⁶, work meaning is defined as the state that an employee achieves when realizes own potential (work meaning in the self-perspective) and acts for other people (work meaning in the world perspective). The emphasis is more on the feelings of the employee (making sense of life, sense of development and realization of goals) and less on the qualities of work, which fits into the eudaimonistic dimension of well-being of the employee, meaning life in harmony. When there is coherence between personal projects and the most important aspects of the Self (e.g. personal qualities, competences, values) one can speak of experiencing a sense of meaning in life, which is also important for work meaning. Meaning of work in the world perspective refers to impact of work on others, experiencing motivation to work from outside²⁷. The meaning of work is a combination of skills, the impact of work on the employee's personal and professional life, and the consistency of the tasks performed relating to the goals²⁸ taking into account the values held, leading to the development and realization of these personal goals of the employee²⁹. The meaning of work is related to the possibility of self-expression, having diverse, interesting and satisfying tasks, a sense of personal coherence with the realized goals. A high work meaning is also associated with altruistic actions, treating work as a mission and conditions for development provided by the organization for employees, the higher frequency of employees experiencing positive

²³ A. Czerw, A. Borkowska, *Praca zawodowa jako obszar realizowania misji społecznej*, „Psychologia Społeczna” 2011, 4(15), pp. 303-315.

²⁴ B.D. Rosso, K.H. Dekas, A. Wrzesniewski, *On the meaning of work: A theoretical integration and review*, “Research in Organizational Behavior” 2010, 30, pp. 91-127.

²⁵ A. Czerw (2015). *Well-being...*, op.cit. 97-110.

²⁶ M.F. Steger, *Creating meaning and purpose at work*, [in:] L. Oades, M. Steger, A. Delle Fave, J. Passmore (Eds.), 2018, *The Wiley Blackwell handbook of the psychology of positivity and strengths-based approaches at work* (pp. 60-81).

²⁷ M. Puchalska-Kamińska, A. Czerw, M. Roczniwska, *Work meaning in self and World perspective: a new outlook on the WAMI scale*, “Social Psychological Bulletin” 2019, no.14(1), pp. 2-29.

²⁸ M. Puchalska-Kamińska, A. Czerw (2017), *Poczucie sensu...* op. cit. pp.55-65.

²⁹ M. Puchalska-Kamińska, A. Czerw, M. Roczniwska (2019), *Work meaning...*, op. cit., s. 3.

emotions in relation to work, higher job satisfaction, higher levels of commitment, higher quality of tasks performed, and lower absenteeism at work, and understanding the goals that the employee pursues is a key factor in building this sense. Tailoring work to employee's skills and building positive relationships between employees and customers increases the meaning of work, because it allows employees to feel important and appreciated. Relating the sense of meaning at work to the type of activities performed at work, according to the theory of M.F. Steger and his colleagues, whose questionnaire was used in the study, the belief that positive action for something greater (e.g., community, environment, God) leads to a greater sense of meaning at work³⁰. We should also mention self-actualization at work, which, being a source of well-being, also includes elements such as: engagement understood as preoccupation with work, a sense of effectiveness and, finally, a sense of meaningfulness³¹. The work meaning is therefore both shaped by organizational actions (type of work environment, specificity of tasks) and personal factors of employees (opportunity for development, work fit) and global level (altruistic actions, also for the greater good).

Job satisfaction

Job satisfaction is the positive and negative feelings and attitudes towards performed job duties³² which can be general (unrelated to job factors) or partial (related to specific job factors, e.g. interesting task) job satisfaction³³. Satisfaction is defined as positive when an employee is satisfied with his/her tasks and work conditions (including salary) or negative if the job does not meet the employee's expectations. A factor that influences job satisfaction is salary (the higher, the higher the satisfaction), but only until a certain level of satisfaction is reached, because then this influence is inhibited and one should look for other motivation to work. Subjective evaluation of own chances for promotion, relationships at work, and adaptation of the type of control to employees are also

³⁰ M.F. Steger, B.J. Dik, R.D. Duffy, *Measuring Meaningful Work: The Work and Meaning Inventory (WAMI)*. "Journal of Career Assessment" 2012, no.20 (3), pp. 322-337.

³¹ T. Chirkowska-Smolak, (2016), *Dopasowanie do pracy...*, op. cit. 34-44.

³² D.P. Schulz, S.E. Schulz, *Psychologia a wyzwania dzisiejszej pracy*, PWN, Warszawa, 2002.

³³ A.M. Zalewska, *Skala Satysfakcji z Pracy – Pomiar poznawczego aspektu ogólnego zadowolenia z pracy*, „Acta Universitatis Lodzianis – Folia Psychologica” 2003, no.7, pp. 49-61.

important for building satisfaction (maladjustment may cause frustration and lead to dissatisfaction). Job satisfaction is increased by the lack of competition and pro-social attitude, the possibility to use skills and work experience at work. Satisfaction can be conditioned by organizational factors, job position, individual characteristics (e.g. self-esteem, self-efficacy, self-esteem)³⁴ or personality traits such as neuroticism, extraversion, conscientiousness³⁵. Employees' attitudes and beliefs shape their effectiveness, which is strongly related to work engagement and satisfaction with the compensation they receive – an employee who is satisfied with their compensation is more committed to work³⁶.

Based on a review of Polish and foreign literature, it can be concluded that there is a relationship between work meaning, work engagement and job satisfaction among employees. However, the relationships between these variables have not yet been analyzed among the Polish prison population, and it must be admitted that the work environment conditions of prisoners seem to be specific and interesting. The purpose of this article is to verify the theoretical assumptions concerning job satisfaction of prisoners.

The following hypotheses were posed:

H1. Inmates' work meaning in the self-perspective and world perspective is related to job satisfaction.

H2. Prisoners' work engagement of is associated with job satisfaction.

H3. Dimensions of prisoners' work engagement are related to work meaning in the self-perspective and world perspective.

H4. Prisoners in paid job achieve higher job satisfaction, work engagement and work meaning than inmates in unpaid job.

Participants and Procedure

Employed prisoners (N=210) residing in units of the Lublin District Prison Service were surveyed (female 32%) without division into employed temporary detainees and convicted prisoners. The selection of

³⁴ A. Springer, *Wybrane czynniki kształtujące satysfakcję pracownika*, „Problemy Zarządzania” 2011, no. 4(34), pp. 162-180.

³⁵ A. Czerw, A. Borkowska, *Praca zawodowa jako obszar realizowania misji społecznej*, „Psychologia Społeczna” 2011, no. 4(15), pp. 303-315.

³⁶ K. Kulikowski, *Satysfakcja z wynagrodzenia i zaangażowanie w pracę wśród pracowników firm prywatnych i państwowych*, „Zarządzanie Publiczne” 2016, no. 35(1), pp. 58-67.

respondents for the study was stratified so that all employment categories were represented in the sample. Participation in the study was voluntary, participants completed a set of tests free of charge and in their free time. Table 1 summarizes the characteristics of the study group. Analysis of the study variables was performed using SPSS 25.0 statistical software.

Table 1. Characteristics of the respondents ($N=210$).

	N = 210	%
Sex		
Women	68	32,4
Men	142	67,7
Age		
less than 21	8	3,8
22-30 lat	52	24,8
31-45 lat	110	52,4
46-55 lat	32	15,2
56 and more	8	3,8
Type of Job Payment		
Paid	103	49,0
Nonpaid	100	47,6
Lack of data	7	3,3
Type of Job		
Commissioned	77	36,7
Facultative	133	6

Measures

Considering the capabilities and limitations of the respondents, the tools selected were brief and could be completed without further explanation. Given the nature of the respondents' work environment and the selection of variables, the study used a set of questionnaires with proven psychometric values: UWES-9, Job Satisfaction Scale, WAMI and the author's questionnaire.

Work engagement was measured with the nine-item Utrecht Work Engagement Scale UWES-9 by W.B.Schaufeli, A.B.Bakker, 2003³⁷ (in polish adaptation by Szabowska-Walaszczyk, Zawadzka, Wojtaś, 2011)³⁸. The questionnaire consists of 3 subscales to assess vigor, which refers to the levels of energy and mental resilience while working (e.g., „*At work, I am bursting with energy*”, $\alpha = .76$), dedication, which is a sense of significance, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride, and challenge (e.g., “*I find the work that I do full of meaning and purpose*”, $\alpha = .83$), and absorption, characterized by being fully concentrated and happily engrossed in one’s work (e.g., “*When I am working, I forget everything else around me*”, $\alpha = .67$). Participants respond to items using a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 0 (never) to 6 (always).

Job Satisfaction Scale by A. Zalewska³⁹ were used to measure the cognitive aspect of general job satisfaction as a comprehensive, complex phenomenon requiring conscious job evaluation based on personal criteria. The questionnaire consists of 5 statements: “*in many aspects my job is close to ideal*”, “*I have great working conditions*”, “*I am satisfied with my job*”, “*so far at work I have been able to achieve what I wanted*”, “*if I had to decide again, I would choose the same job*” Respondents were asked to assign to each statement a number from a 7-point scale that best corresponds to their opinion. In study Cronbach’s alpha reliability for the questionnaire was 0.87.

The Work and Meaning Inventory (WAMI) by M.Steger et al.⁴⁰ (in polish adaptation by Puchalska-Kamińska, Czerw, Roczniwska, 2018)⁴¹ measure three dimensions of work meaning: positive meaning, meaning-making through work, and motivation for the greater good. The questionnaire consists of 10 items: 6-relating to meaning of work in a personal perspective (e.g. *I view my work as contributing to my personal growth*) and 4 items relating to meaning of work in a global perspective (e.g. *My work really makes no difference to the world*). Respondents related to the statements on a 5-point scale indicating the frequency of occurrence of a given feeling.

³⁷ W.B. Schaufeli, A.B. Bakker, *Test manual for the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale*, 2003, Retrieved from Utrecht University website: <http://www.schaufeli.com>.

³⁸ A. Szabowska-Walaszczyk, A.M. Zawadzka, M. Wojtaś, *Zaangażowanie w pracę i jego korelaty: adaptacja skali UWES autorstwa Schaufeliego i Bakker*, “Psychologia jakości życia” 2011, no. 10(1), pp. 57-74.

³⁹ A.M. Zalewska, (2003), *Skala...*, op. cit., s. 49-61.

⁴⁰ M.F. Steger, B.J. Dik, R.D. Duffy, (2021), *Measuring ...*, op. cit., s. 322-337.

⁴¹ M. Puchalska-Kamińska, A. Czerw, M. Roczniwska, (2019), *Work meaning...*, op. cit., s. 1-29.

In research the Cronbach's alpha reliability index for the subscales were: personal sense of work 0.91, and global sense of work 0.61.

Results

Table 2 shows the descriptive parameters of the study variables, the reliability coefficients in the study group, and the correlations between the variables.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics, reliability indices, and correlations between variables (N=210).

Variables	M	SD	α	Pearson's correlation coefficients				
				2	3	4	5	6
1. Job Satisfaction	22,39	6,97	0,87	0,53**	0,59**	0,39**	0,33**	0,51**
2. Work meaning in the world perspective	10,09	2,85	0,61		0,78**	0,42**	0,36**	0,54**
3. Work meaning in the self-perspective	24,04	6,69	0,91			0,42**	0,42**	0,59**
4. Vigor	15,20	4,15	0,76				0,66**	0,70**
5. Absorption	14,20	4,25	0,67					0,69**
6. Dedication	14,54	4,66	0,83					

** p<0,001

Job satisfaction positively correlates with the other variables. This means that the higher the work meaning in the self-perspective and world perspective, the higher the level of job satisfaction among the inmates surveyed (H1). Statistically significant relationships also exist between job satisfaction and the dimensions of work engagement: vigor, absorption and dedication (H2). The analyses also showed that higher levels of vigor, absorption and dedication co-occur with higher work meaning in the self-perspective and world perspective, where the strongest relationship is with the aspect of dedication.

A stepwise regression analysis model was used to define which variables explain the work meaning in the inmates under study. The results of the calculations are presented in Table 3. The independent variables that were entered into the regression model were the dimensions of engagement (vigor, absorption, dedication) and job satisfaction. The explained variables were work meaning in the self-perspective and world perspective.

Table 3. Independent variables explaining the dimensional variance of work meaning.

Independent variable	β	t	p
Regression with dependent variable: Work meaning in the world perspective R=0,616; R ² =0,380; Adjusted R ² =0,374; F=63,322; p<0,001			
Dedication	0,365	5,733	<0,001
Satisfaction	0,343	5,387	<0,001
Regression with dependent variable: Work meaning in the self-perspective R=0,679; R ² =0,461; Adjusted R ² =0,456; F=88,532; p<0,001			
Satisfaction	0,392	6,598	<0,001
Dedication	0,389	6,553	<0,0

The analysis showed that dedication as component of work engagement and job satisfaction are significant in predicting work meaning. These variables explained 37% (adjusted R²=0.374; F=63.322; p<0.001) of work meaning in the world perspective and 46% (adjusted R²=0.456; F=88.532; p<0.001) of work meaning in the self-perspective. These results partially support hypothesis H3, according to which engagement dimensions were explain work meaning in the self-perspective and world perspective. The dimension of engagement confirms these relationships, but absorption and vigor do not explain the work meaning meaning in the study group.

It was also tested whether paid inmates would differ from unpaid inmates in terms of satisfaction, work meaning, and engagement. Two hundred three people were included in the analysis because 7 people did not answer the question of whether they work for pay or for free.

Table 4 shows the results of the Student's t-test for independent samples. This analysis revealed significant differences between paid and unpaid inmates in terms of satisfaction ($t=2.899$; $p<0.05$), absorption ($t=3.089$; $p<0.05$), and dedication ($t=2.261$; $p<0.05$). Those who had payed work, they showed higher levels of satisfaction, absorption and dedication than those who do not receive payment for their work. This partially supports hypothesis H4, that inmates in paid job achieve higher job satisfaction, work engagement and work meaning than inmates in unpaid job.

Table 4. Comparison of respondents performing paid work (N=103) or unpaid work (N=100) in the context of variables included in the research.

	t	p		M	SD
Job Satisfaction	2,899	0,004	paid	0,20	0,92
			unpaid	-0,21	1,06
Work meaning in the world perspective	0,928	0,354	paid	0,08	0,97
			unpaid	-0,05	1,03
Work meaning in the self-perspective	1,170	0,243	paid	0,10	1,01
			unpaid	-0,07	0,99
Vigor	1,316	0,190	paid	0,10	0,99
			unpaid	-0,09	1,03
Absorption	3,089	0,002	paid	0,23	0,86
			unpaid	-0,19	1,08
Dedication	2,261	0,025	paid	0,16	0,95
			unpaid	-0,16	

In addition respondents (working prisoners) were responding to the job statements (Table 5).

Table 5. Perception of work among working prisoners ($N=210$, data in %)

What is your opinion on the following statements?	Definitely yes	Rather yes	Hard to say	Rather no	Definitely no
Man is created to work during his life.	32,9	36,2	13,3	11,4	6,2
Everyone should work to the best of his or her ability regardless of whether he or she is properly compensated.	32,4	31,0	11,9	12,9	11,9
Everyone should work to the best of their ability, even if they don't like their job.	26,7	39,5	10,5	13,8	9

Among the employed prisoners opinions attributing an important role to work prevail, as 69% of the respondents believe that man was created for work (“definitely yes” and “rather yes”). Respondents were also mostly in favour of the position that one should perform one’s work-related duties to the best of one’s ability regardless of receiving a salary (63%), as well as when the tasks performed are not liked (66%). On the basis of the respondents’ answers it can be assumed that after leaving the penitentiary prisoners will take up or continue gainful employment, providing services at a level satisfactory to their future employers. Under the conditions of penitentiary isolation, the employment undertaken is of a paid or unpaid nature, but regardless of the type of remuneration, work creates an opportunity to form appropriate, desirable attitudes of prisoners towards work, including conscientious fulfillment of obligations imposed.

Discussion

The aim of the analyses was to verify the relationship between work engagement, work meaning in the self-perspective and world perspective and job satisfaction. The differences in the level of job satisfaction in groups of paid and unpaid prisoners were also examined. It was shown that in the group of employed prisoners, higher levels of job satisfaction co-occurred with higher levels of work meaning in the self- and world perspective and higher vigor, dedication and absorption. The predictors

explaining job satisfaction are personal sense of work meaning and dedication. The results of the study confirmed the research hypotheses H1 and H2, partially confirm H3 and H4. The difference in job satisfaction among paid and unpaid inmates proved to be statistically significant. A higher level of job satisfaction and absorption and dedication as dimensions of work engagement were achieved by those prisoners who receive a salary, which proves the similarity of the convicts to the rest of society. The work meaning does not differentiate between inmates in terms of payment for work.

At the same time, it is worth noting that, despite everything, the value of work in itself in employed prisoners is recognized. Prisoners also showed higher levels of dedication, confirming the results of other studies in conditions working population outside prison⁴². Based on the results obtained, it can be concluded that despite the demanding and difficult work that prisoners perform in the specific conditions of the work environment, there is a reciprocal relationship of dependence of the studied variables. Prisoners have similar perceptions of the importance of work, work engagement and job satisfaction to employees at large, as they derive job satisfaction from dedication to work, perseverance and inspiration to change their life situation⁴³. Work engagement has been shown to be a positive resource that influences job satisfaction, in which the employee is not only positively motivated, even immersed in and absorbed in work (preoccupied with work), but also feels satisfaction from doing it⁴⁴. Work during imprisonment, marked by monotony of incarceration, improves social skills, and provides self-confidence. It teaches useful skills and provides a context for improving relationships with others and experiencing job satisfaction as well as forming a positive attitude toward work after leaving the walls of the prison⁴⁵. The research shows that working prisoners declare their intention to work after the end of their sentence⁴⁶ which may indicate the formation of a work habit reinforced during their sentence. This may have a positive influence on later decisions to take up work in the conditions of freedom. Besides, the performance of work activities by convicts provides an opportunity

⁴² T. Chirkowska-Smolak, (2016), *Dopasowanie...*, op. cit., pp. 36-38.

⁴³ W. Schaufeli, A.B. Bakker, (2010), *The Conceptualization...*, op. cit., pp. 10-24).

⁴⁴ J. Mróz, K. Kaleta, *The Moderating Role of Forgiveness in the Relationship between Work Engagement and Job Satisfaction*, "Annales Universitatis Mariae Curie-Skłodowska" 2019, no. 32(4), pp. 179-195.

⁴⁵ K. Kulikowski, (2016), *Satysfakcja...*, op. cit., pp. 58-67.

⁴⁶ B.M. Nowak, (2019). *Praca...*, op. cit., pp.13-32.

to control the order in their daily functioning and promotes the learning of behavioral patterns and the internalization of values⁴⁷. In a difficult life situation, as prison is considered to be, prisoners function well in work, if, as research indicates, they perceive it as having meaning.

Conclusions

Prisoners feel that their work is meaningful and contributes to their personal well-being (and in prison conditions, such “well-being” can be defined as time spent constructively in isolation), earning remuneration, and being appreciated by superiors. Prisoners engage in it and perceive it in terms of personal values, meaning and benefits, such as deserving to leave prison early. This shows positively about the prison population as potential participants in the labor market, because it emphasizes the role of values in giving meaning to work as a means of readaptation. In the process of employing prisoners, the subjective resources of prisoners should be supported and the social aspect of the value of work for building correct interpersonal relations, satisfaction and motivation and for forming the habit of participating in the labour market after leaving prison should be emphasized. This fits with the idea of empowerment understood as “the process of gaining personal, interpersonal or political power that enables individuals, families or communities to take action to improve their situation”⁴⁸. By doing work already during their imprisonment, convicts have an impact on shaping their attitudes, at least in part of deciding how to fulfill their obligations, they gain control over their lives, which contributes to improving their economic, personal or family situation. Changing the perception of the obligation to work and developing the habit of working create a broader perspective and are, in a way, an alternative to a life of crime, because in certain circumstances work is seen as a way of avoiding imprisonment, which is important in the case of people who are facing consecutive sentences⁴⁹. Community service or work in general can become an alternative to overcrowded

⁴⁷ R. Alos, F. Esteban, P. Jodar, (2015). *Effects...*, op. cit., pp.35-50.

⁴⁸ B. Dubois, K. Miley, *Social Work. An Empowering Profession*, New York: Pearson, 2019.

⁴⁹ G. Mcivor, C. Pirnat, C. Grafl, *Unpaid Work as an Alternative to Imprisonment for Fine Default in Austria and Scotland*, “European Journal of Probation” 2013, no. 5(2), pp. 3-28.

prisons⁵⁰. Under the conditions of penitentiary isolation, the employment is of paid or unpaid nature, however, regardless of the type of remuneration, work creates the possibility of shaping appropriate, desirable attitudes of prisoners towards work, including conscientious fulfillment of imposed duties. Prisoners in paid employment not only derive greater satisfaction from their work, but are also able to pay off their alimony obligations, relieve their families financially, and put aside funds for after their isolation. This proves that it is worth extending the possibilities of paid employment to convicts, but when there are certain limitations, unpaid work counteracts the deprivational character of excess free time in prisons and allows to shape proper attitudes towards it. It is worth noting that in recent years the constantly expanding offer of jobs for prisoners is a precise response to the needs of the prison labour market. The possibility of acquiring competencies in deficit professions (e.g. carpenter, plumber, electrician) and participation in EU vocational courses creates better chances for employment after being released. The work undertaken within the walls of the penitentiary allows, above all, to direct the convicts towards a legal way of earning a living, which they may not have had to deal with before in criminal environments. In a broader perspective, work is only one of the factors of readaptation. It provides an opportunity for a better life after prison, but in addition to the issue of employment, it is necessary to consider neglected relationships with loved ones, the housing problem, or the health status⁵¹ of ex-prisoners, which is important in their functioning in the labor market⁵². These are other issues that are worth exploring in order for the social readaptation of ex-convicts to be effective. It is important to point out the limitations of a study reduced to a single measurement, which in the future can be diversified with reports of larger number of respondents- employed prisoners, which will give a broader perspective on the phenomenon of working oprisoners especially according to particular importance for the evaluation of the nationwide “work for prisoners” program.

⁵⁰ P.F. Cabana, *Paying off a fine by working outside prison: On the origins and diffusion of community service*, “European Journal of Criminology” 2018, no.17(11), pp. 1-19.

⁵¹ A. Montoya-Barthelemy, *The Occupational Health of Prison Inmates An Ignored Population and an Opportunity*, “Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine” 2019, no.61(2), pp. 74-76.

⁵² S. Bushway, *Employment Dimensions of Reentry: Understanding the Nexus between Prisoner Reentry and Work*, New York: New York University Law School, 2003.

Compliance with ethical standards

All procedures involved in the process of diagnosis reported in this case study were carried out in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional and national research committees, and with the 1964 Helsinki Declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards. Written, informed consent was obtained from the case report subject.

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