



## Meaningful Work and Counterproductive Work Behavior of Automotive Company's Employees in Cikarang

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### Abstract:

The automotive industry requires competent and responsible employees, yet counterproductive work behavior (CWB) remains a concern among production workers. Although meaningful work has been proposed as a factor that may reduce CWB, findings from previous studies remain inconsistent, particularly in manufacturing settings. This study examined the relationship between meaningful work and CWB among 228 production employees in an automotive company in Cikarang, Indonesia. A quantitative correlational design with total population sampling was employed. Data were collected using the Work and Meaning Inventory (WAMI) and the Counterproductive Work Behavior Checklist (CWB-C). The results of Spearman's rank-order correlation indicated no significant relationship between meaningful work and CWB ( $\rho = .03$ ,  $p = .652$ ). These findings suggest that meaningful work may not be directly associated with counterproductive work behavior among production employees. Future research should examine additional individual, job-related, and organizational factors that may contribute to counterproductive work behavior in manufacturing settings.

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## Introduction

The automotive industry in Indonesia has experienced significant growth in recent years, particularly in industrial areas such as Cikarang, which hosts numerous multinational companies and serves as a major manufacturing hub. The sector continues to expand alongside the government's efforts to strengthen Indonesia's position as a global automotive producer, including the development of electric vehicles (Kementerian Koordinator Bidang Perekonomian Republik Indonesia, 2023). Industrial regions such as Cikarang play an important role as economic centers that support manufacturing activities and employment opportunities (Dirgantara, 2024; Safarudin et al., 2024). In such a competitive industrial environment, organizations require human resources who not only possess technical competence but also demonstrate high levels of responsibility and work integrity (Becker, 1964; Griep et al., 2021; Super, 1980). However, organizational challenges related to employee behavior remain prevalent, particularly in the form of counterproductive work behavior (CWB), which can negatively affect productivity, operational efficiency, and organizational sustainability (Wiroko, 2021; Sulea et al., 2012; Patriana & Pusparini, 2023).

Counterproductive work behaviour refers to voluntary actions that violate organizational norms and potentially harm the organization or its members (Spector & Fox, 2005; Ones & Dilchert, 2013). These behaviours may include abuse toward coworkers, production deviance such as intentionally working slowly or extending break times, sabotage, theft, and withdrawal behaviors such as lateness or absenteeism (Spector et al., 2006; Berry et al., 2007). If left unaddressed, such behaviours can increase operational costs, reduce product quality, and disrupt teamwork within organizations. In industrial settings where production performance is highly dependent on employee discipline and coordination, the presence of CWB can significantly undermine organizational effectiveness (Sidik et al., 2022; Novanto et al., 2022).

Previous studies have identified several factors influencing the emergence of CWB, including job stress, perceptions of organizational justice, emotional experiences at work, and organizational culture (Fox et al., 2001; Penney & Spector, 2005; Wardhani & Meiyanto, 2017). Employees who experience high levels of stress or perceive unfair treatment within the organization are more likely to express negative emotions that may manifest in behaviours

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detrimental to the organization (Pratiwi et al., 2021). Conversely, supportive work environments, positive organizational culture, and strong interpersonal relationships have been shown to reduce the likelihood of counterproductive behaviours (Veeriah et al., 2023; Amanda & Handoyo, 2020; Novanto et al., 2022b).

One psychological factor that has been suggested by psychology researchers to reduce CWB is meaningful work. Meaningful work refers to an individual's perception that their work has significant purpose, value, and contribution to themselves or others (Steger et al., 2012; Marcus et al., 2016). The concept of meaningful work consists of several dimensions, including positive meaning in work, meaning making through work, and greater good motivations (Steger et al., 2012; Hakim et al., 2024). When employees perceive their work as meaningful, they tend to experience higher levels of motivation, engagement, and job satisfaction, which may indirectly decrease the likelihood of engaging in counterproductive behaviors (Allan et al., 2019; Csordás et al., 2022).

Empirical research has supported the relationship between meaningful work and various positive organizational outcomes. Previous studies have found that meaningful work is associated with higher work engagement, organizational commitment, and job satisfaction (Mulyati, 2020; Veronica & Moerkardjono, 2019; Abdillah et al., 2024). In addition, several studies have shown a negative relationship between meaningful work and deviant or counterproductive workplace behaviours, indicating that employees who perceive their work as meaningful are less likely to engage in behaviours that harm the organization (Sulistiawan et al., 2020; Stefanie & Novanto, 2024). Research has also demonstrated that meaningful work can reduce workplace deviance and counterproductive work behavior by strengthening employees' intrinsic motivation and psychological attachment to their work (Sirbu et al., 2023; Atamba et al., 2024). Despite the growing interest in meaningful work, previous studies have produced inconsistent findings regarding its relationship with workplace deviance and counterproductive work behavior. Several studies reported that meaningful work was associated with lower levels of workplace deviance and counterproductive behavior, suggesting that employees who perceive their work as meaningful are less likely to engage in behaviors

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that harm the organization (Sulistiawan et al., 2020; Sirbu et al., 2023; Atamba et al., 2024). However, other studies have reported non-significant findings, indicating that meaningful work may not consistently predict negative workplace behavior across different occupational contexts (Stefanie & Novanto, 2024). These mixed findings suggest that the relationship between meaningful work and CWB may be influenced by contextual factors, including job characteristics and work environments.

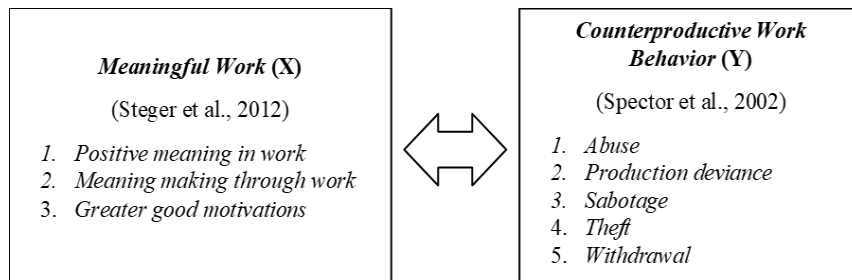
Furthermore, most previous studies have been conducted in service, hospitality, healthcare, or mixed occupational settings, while empirical evidence from manufacturing environments remains limited. This limitation is important because manufacturing employees, particularly production operators, typically perform routine, standardized, and highly structured tasks with relatively low levels of autonomy. Such job characteristics may influence how employees experience meaningful work and how this perception relates to workplace behavior. Consequently, findings from service-oriented occupations may not be directly generalizable to manufacturing settings.

Therefore, the present study extends the existing literature by examining the relationship between meaningful work and counterproductive work behavior among production employees in the automotive manufacturing sector. The study contributes empirically by providing evidence from an underrepresented industrial context in Indonesia and contributes theoretically by evaluating whether meaningful work functions as a direct predictor of CWB in a highly standardized work environment. By addressing these gaps, the study seeks to provide a more contextualized understanding of meaningful work and counterproductive behavior in manufacturing organizations.

Based on the research gap and theoretical considerations described above, the research question of this study is: Is there a significant relationship between meaningful work and counterproductive work behaviours among automotive employees in Company X in Cikarang? The objective of this study is to examine the relationship between meaningful work and counterproductive work behaviours among production employees in an automotive company in Cikarang. The conceptual framework of this study is illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1.

Conceptual framework of the relationship between meaningful work and counterproductive work behaviour.



## Method

### Research Design

This study employed a quantitative correlational approach with a non-experimental cross-sectional design. The cross-sectional design involves collecting data from participants at a single point in time without manipulating the research variables. This approach was used to examine the relationship between meaningful work and counterproductive work behaviour (CWB) among employees in a workplace setting (Gravetter & Forzano, 2018; Hackman & Oldham, 1976). The quantitative correlational method allows the variables to be measured numerically and analysed statistically to determine the direction and strength of the relationship between meaningful work and counterproductive work behaviour.

### Participants

The participants in this study were employees working in the production division of an automotive company located in Cikarang, Indonesia (Company X). The sampling technique used in this study was total population sampling, in which all members of the population who met the research criteria were invited to participate (Field, 2018; Goss-Sampson, 2020). This technique was chosen because the population size was relatively manageable and all members were considered relevant to the research objective. A total of 300 employees were invited to participate in the study, and 228 employees completed the questionnaire, resulting in a participation rate of 76%.

Measurement

*Counterproductive Work Behavior Scale*

Counterproductive work behaviours (CWB) refers to voluntary actions that violate organizational norms and potentially harm the organization or its members. In this study, CWB was measured using the Counterproductive Work Behavior Checklist (CWB-C) developed by Spector et al. (2002). The instrument consists of 32 items categorized into five dimensions: abuse, production deviance, sabotage, theft, and withdrawal. Responses were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (“Never”) to 5 (“Every day”). The Indonesian version of the instrument used in this study was adapted from Gea (2024) through a translation and back-translation procedure to ensure linguistic equivalence. The translated instrument was subsequently evaluated through validity and reliability testing before being used in the main study. Higher total scores indicate higher levels of counterproductive work behaviours. The distribution of items across the five dimensions is presented in Table 1.

Table 1.

Dimensions and item distribution of the CWB-C scale

Dimensions	No. Items		Amount
	Favorable	Unfavorable	
Abuse	8, 9, 14, 15, 19, 20, 21, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32	0	17
Production Deviance	2, 10, 12	0	3
Sabotage	1, 5, 6	0	3
Theft	7, 16, 17, 18, 22	0	5
Withdrawal	3, 4, 11, 13	0	4
Total	32	0	32

*Meaningful Work Scale*

Meaningful work refers to the extent to which individuals perceive their work as meaningful, purposeful, and valuable in their lives. In this study, meaningful work was measured using the Work as Meaning Inventory (WAMI) developed by Steger, Dik, and Duffy (2012). The instrument consists of three dimensions: Positive Meaning in Work, Meaning Making through Work, and Greater Good Motivations, with a total of 10 items. Responses were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (“Strongly disagree”) to 5 (“Strongly agree”). The Indonesian adaptation of the WAMI scale used in this study demonstrated good psychometric properties. The distribution of items across dimensions is presented in Table 2.

Table 2.

Dimensions and item distribution of the WAMI scale

Dimensions	No. Items		Amount
	Favorable	Unfavorable	
Positive meaning in work	1,4,5,8		4
Meaning making through work	2,7,9		3
Greater good motivations	3,6,10		3
Total	10	0	10

**Validity and Reliability of the Scale**

Prior to the main data collection, a pilot test was conducted to examine the psychometric properties of the research instruments. The pilot test results were used to evaluate the validity and reliability of the measurement scales. Item validity was assessed using item–total correlation, while reliability was evaluated using Cronbach’s alpha coefficient (Azwar, 2012). The results indicated that both instruments demonstrated good internal consistency and valid. In the field study, the overall Cronbach’s alpha coefficient for the CWB-C scale was 0.943, item rest correlation 0,368-0,859, while the WAMI scale showed a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.924 and item rest correlation 0,733-0,889, indicating satisfactory reliability and validity standard use in the main statistical analysis. The detailed results of the reliability and validity testing for the field study results are presented in Table 3 below.

Table 3.

Results of reliability and validity testing of the measurement instruments (field study)

		Overall	Dimensions				
			Abuse	Production Deviance	Sabotage	Theft	Withdrawal
CWBC	McDonald's Omega Cronbach's Alpha	0,959	0,943	0,589	0,542	0,934	0,840
	Item-Rest Correlation	0,368-0,859	0,558-0,883	0,349-0,495	0,329-0,565	0,785-0,885	0,648-0,722
		Overall	Positive meaning in work	Meaning making through work	Greater Good Motivations		
WAMI	McDonald's Omega Cronbach's Alpha	0,963	0,924	0,892	0,883		
	Item-Rest Correlation	0,733-0,889	0,751-0,871	0,745-0,814	0,726-0,827		

## Results and Discussion

### *Participant Characteristics*

A total of 228 employees from the production division of an automotive company in Cikarang, Indonesia participated in this study. The demographic characteristics of the participants include gender, age, education level, and tenure in the company. These characteristics provide an overview of the sample involved in the research in Table 4 below.

Table 4.

Demographic characteristics of participants

Demographic Factors	Category	N (Number of people)	% (Percentage)
Gender	Female	117	51,3
	Male	111	48,7
Age	< 21 year	33	14,5
	21–25 year	124	54,4
	26–30 year	30	13,2
	31–35 year	13	5,7
	36–50 year	28	12,3

Last Education	SMA/SMK	192	84,2
	D1 – D3 S1	8	3,5
	S2	24	10,5
		4	1,8
Length of Work	< 2 year	102	44,7
	2–4 year	73	32,0
	5–7 year	14	6,1
	8–10 year	6	2,6
	>10 year	33	14,5

### Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistical analysis was conducted to provide an overview of the main variables in this study, namely meaningful work and counterproductive work behaviour (CWB). The analysis included the mean and standard deviation for each variable. The results of the descriptive statistics are presented in Table 5.

Table 5.

Descriptive statistics of meaningful work and counterproductive work behaviour

		Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Variable	Counterproductive Behavior	34,079	8,006	31	88
Dimensions	Abuse	1,077	0,235	1,000	2,471
	Production Deviance	1,165	0,385	1,000	3,000
	Sabotage	1,142	0,354	1,000	3,667
	Theft	1,063	0,305	1,000	3,500
	Withdrawal	1,149	0,371	1,000	3,500
Variable	Meaningful Work	51,162	11,484	10	70
Dimensions	Positive meaning in work	5,061	1,192	1,000	7,000
	Meaning making through work	5,304	1,206	1,000	7,000
	Greater good motivations	5,001	1,192	1,000	7,000

The results indicate that employees generally reported a moderate level of meaningful work. Meanwhile, the level of counterproductive work behaviour among employees tended to be relatively low. These findings provide an initial overview of how employees perceived the meaning of their work and the extent to which counterproductive behaviours occur within the organization. According to Azwar (2012), categorization norms are a way to group subject scores

into specific categories based on score distribution. In principle, the total score obtained from a research instrument is on a continuum (for example, from "low" to "high"). The results of the categorization norm calculations can be seen in Table 6 below.

Table 6.

Norm Categorization

Levels	Counterproductive Work Behavior		Meaningful Work	
	N	%	N	%
High	12	5	31	13,6
Moderate	216	95	177	77,6
Low	0	0	20	8,8
Total	228 people	100%	228 people	100%

*Normality and Linearity Assumption Test*

Prior to hypothesis testing, the normality of the data was assessed using the Shapiro–Wilk test. The results revealed that the distributions of the study variables significantly deviated from normality ( $p < .05$ ). Consequently, Spearman's rank-order correlation, a non-parametric statistical procedure, was used to examine the relationship between meaningful work and counterproductive work behaviours.

Table 7.

Normality Test

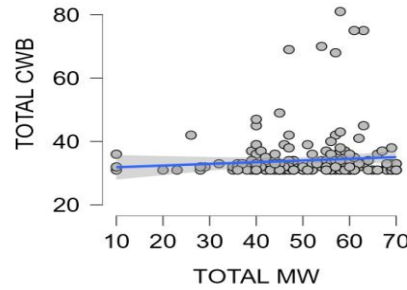
Variabel	<i>Shapiro-Wilk</i>	<i>P-Value Shapiro-Wilk</i>
<i>Counterproductive Work Behavior</i>	0,401	< 0,001
<i>Meaningful Work</i>	0,948	< 0,001

The linearity test was conducted using a scatterplot to examine the relationship between meaningful work and counterproductive work behaviours (CWB). The results indicated that the data points did not form a clear linear pattern, suggesting that the assumption of linearity was not met (Goss-Sampson, 2020). Furthermore, the Shapiro–Wilk test showed that both variables were not normally distributed ( $p < .05$ ). Given these results, Spearman's rank-order correlation

was used because it is more appropriate for non-normally distributed data and does not require a linear relationship. The lack of a significant relationship may also be influenced by the relatively homogeneous characteristics of the respondents, which could limit score variability and reduce the observed correlation between variables.

Figure 2.

Linearity Test.



*Hypothesis Testing (Correlation Analysis)*

To test the research hypothesis, Spearman rho correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between meaningful work and counterproductive work behaviour. The results of the correlation analysis are presented in Table 8.

Table 8.

Matrix Correlation

		CWB Total	WAMI Total	CWB Abuse	CWB Prodev	CWB Sabotage	CWB Theft	CWB Withdrawal	WAMI PM	WAMI MMW	WAMI GGM
CWB Total	rho	-									
	p	-									
WAMI Total	rho	<b>0,030</b>	-								
	p	<b>0,652</b>	-								
CWB Abuse	rho	0,773***	0,047	-							
	p	<0,001	0,483	-							
CWB Prodev	rho	0,673***	-0,098	0,420***	-						
	p	<0,001	0,139	<0,001	-						
CWB Sabotage	rho	0,658***	<b>0,139*</b>	0,419***	0,428***	-					
	p	<0,001	<b>0,036</b>	<0,001	<0,001	-					
CWB Theft	rho	0,401***	<b>0,140*</b>	0,416***	0,420***	0,343***	-				
	p	<0,001	<b>0,035</b>	<0,001	<0,001	<0,001	-				
CWB Withdra	rho	0,698***	0,044	0,522***	0,468***	0,414***	0,419***	-			
	p	<0,001	0,504	<0,001	<0,001	<0,001	<0,001	-			
WAMI PM	rho	0,042	0,967***	0,048	-0,078	<b>0,138*</b>	<b>0,154*</b>	0,061	-		
	p	0,530	<0,001	0,475	0,243	<b>0,038</b>	<b>0,020</b>	0,357	-		
WAMI MMW	rho	0,011	0,936***	0,031	-0,108	0,096	0,084	0,012	0,880***	-	
	p	0,865	<0,001	0,646	0,103	0,147	0,207	0,863	<0,001	-	
WAMI GGM	rho	0,034	0,944***	0,051	-0,104	<b>0,168*</b>	0,129	0,048	0,881***	0,838***	-
	p	0,613	<0,001	0,441	0,118	<b>0,011</b>	0,051	0,467	<0,001	<0,001	-

According to the correlation matrix presented above, there were several significant relationships between Meaningful Work (WAMI) and the dimensions of Counterproductive Work Behaviours (CWB), although their strength was relatively weak. WAMI Total showed a weak but significant positive correlation with CWB Sabotage ( $\rho = .139$ ,  $p = .036$ ) and CWB Theft ( $\rho = .140$ ,  $p = .035$ ). Furthermore, the correlation results between dimensions also showed a similar pattern. The Positive Meaning dimension (WAMI PM) had a weak but significant positive correlation with CWB Sabotage ( $\rho = .138$ ,  $p = .038$ ) and CWB Theft ( $\rho = .154$ ,  $p = .020$ ). Furthermore, the Greater Good Motivation dimension (WAMI GGM) also showed a weak but significant positive correlation with CWB Sabotage ( $\rho = .168$ ,  $p = .011$ ). However, the results of the correlation test between Meaningful Work (WAMI Total) and Counterproductive Work behaviours (CWB Total) showed no significant relationship, with  $\rho = .030$  and  $p = .652$ .

### Discussion

The results showed that meaningful work was not significantly related to counterproductive work behavior (CWB) among production employees in the automotive manufacturing sector. This finding suggests that employees' perceptions of work meaningfulness may not directly influence their tendency to engage in counterproductive behavior. This finding can be explained through the Job Characteristics Model (Hackman & Oldham, 1976), which proposes that meaningful work is one of several psychological conditions linking job characteristics to work outcomes. Therefore, meaningful work alone may be insufficient to predict CWB without considering other job-related and organizational factors. The non-significant relationship may also be influenced by the characteristics of production work. Production employees generally perform routine, standardized, and highly structured tasks with relatively low levels of autonomy. Under these conditions, employee behavior may be influenced more strongly by operational procedures, supervision, and production targets than by perceptions of work meaningfulness. As a result, meaningful work may have a limited direct relationship with CWB in this context.

These findings are consistent with Stefanie and Novanto (2024), who reported that meaningful work was not significantly related to workplace deviance behavior. In addition, the

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relatively homogeneous characteristics of respondents may have reduced score variability, thereby weakening the observed relationship between meaningful work and CWB. Although several dimensions of meaningful work showed weak positive correlations with specific dimensions of CWB, these findings should be interpreted cautiously due to their small effect sizes and require further investigation in future studies. Finally, the use of self-report measures may have introduced social desirability bias, particularly when assessing counterproductive behavior, which is generally considered socially undesirable. This limitation may have contributed to the non-significant findings observed in the present study.

### **Conclusion**

Based on the analysis, this study found no significant relationship between meaningful work and counterproductive work behaviors (CWB) among production employees in an automotive manufacturing company. These findings suggest that employees' perceptions of work meaningfulness may not directly influence their tendency to engage in counterproductive behavior. The findings support previous studies reporting that meaningful work does not always predict workplace deviance or counterproductive behavior. One possible explanation is that meaningful work represents only one aspect of employees' work experiences, whereas CWB may be influenced by a broader range of individual, job-related, and organizational factors.

In addition, the characteristics of production work, which are generally routine, standardized, and associated with relatively low levels of autonomy, may contribute to the absence of a significant relationship between meaningful work and CWB. Therefore, future studies should examine additional variables and organizational contexts to better understand the factors associated with counterproductive work behavior.

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### Theoretical Implications

The findings of this study suggest that meaningful work may not function as a direct predictor of counterproductive work behavior (CWB) among production employees in manufacturing settings. Therefore, future studies should examine additional variables that may have a more direct relationship with CWB, such as job stress, organizational justice, job satisfaction, and organizational climate. Including these variables may provide a more comprehensive understanding of the factors underlying CWB in organizational contexts.

Consistent with the Job Characteristics Model, future research may also consider positioning meaningful work as a mediating variable rather than a direct predictor of CWB. Furthermore, moderation analyses could be conducted to examine whether organizational or individual factors strengthen or weaken the relationship between meaningful work and CWB. Given that the present study employed a cross-sectional design, future studies are encouraged to use longitudinal designs to better understand the direction of relationships among variables. More advanced analytical approaches, such as Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), may also provide deeper insights into the mechanisms linking meaningful work and counterproductive work behavior. Finally, studies involving different industrial sectors are recommended to determine whether the findings observed in the automotive manufacturing sector are context-specific or generalizable across occupational settings.

### Practical Implications

Although meaningful work was not significantly associated with CWB, organizations can still strengthen employees' work experiences through practical initiatives that are relevant to manufacturing settings. First, companies may increase employee participation in continuous improvement activities, such as quality improvement programs, suggestion systems, Kaizen initiatives, and problem-solving teams, allowing employees to see how their contributions support organizational performance. Such initiatives may enhance employees' sense of involvement despite the routine and standardized nature of production work.

Second, supervisors should provide regular and constructive feedback regarding work outcomes, production quality, safety performance, and individual contributions. Organizations may also

strengthen supervisor coaching and mentoring practices to support employee development and foster a stronger connection between daily tasks and broader organizational goals. Third, organizations may implement formal recognition programs that acknowledge employee contributions to productivity, quality, safety, and teamwork. Recognition can help employees perceive greater value in their roles and reinforce positive workplace behavior.

Fourth, companies may consider providing psychological well-being support through employee assistance programs (EAP), employee counseling services, or stress management initiatives. Although these factors were not directly examined in the present study, such programs may help employees cope with workplace demands and maintain positive functioning in manufacturing environments. Finally, supervisors should encourage open communication and employee voice by providing opportunities for employees to express concerns, share suggestions, and participate in work-related decisions whenever possible. Even within highly standardized production systems, opportunities for participation and constructive dialogue may enhance employee engagement and contribute to a healthier organizational climate.

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