# Master

## Human Resources Management

# Master's Final Work

## Dissertation

Organizational Purpose:

A Qualitative and Quantitative Approach to

Conceptualization and Categorization

Susana Pacheco Spínola

September 2024

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Supervisor: Jorge F. S. Gomes

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**Abstract**

In recent years, the concept of organizational purpose has gained particular attention among researchers, reflecting a significant change in the corporate environment which is drifting away from its purely profit-driven purpose. Despite this growing interest, there is a clear lack of literature, particularly in terms of its composition and definition.

This thesis aimed to address these gaps through the examination of the definition of organizational purpose and its implications. Employing a mixed-method approach, the research integrated qualitative and quantitative analyses to uncover how employees perceive purpose statements and its impact on job satisfaction and perceived individual performance. The qualitative phase involved a detailed examination of purpose statements through a multiple coding technique, focusing on their strategic focus and their potential to be transformative, aspirational, and passionate. Meanwhile, the quantitative phase involved the administration of a survey to Siemens Portugal employees to investigate the relationship between perceived organizational purpose and individual experiences, such as job satisfaction and individual performance.

The results from the qualitative approach showed that there are diverse interpretations of purpose statements, indicating that some statements are widely agreed upon as transformative and aspirational, others faced disagreement – the passionate ones- suggesting ambiguity according to personal perceptions. This demonstrated the complexity in defining what constitutes a truly impactful organizational purpose. These findings are complemented by the quantitative data, which confirmed significant correlations between organizational purpose, job satisfaction, and perceived performance. The significant mediation effect of job satisfaction on the relationship between the organization' purpose positively, the clarity and impact of this purpose directly influence their job satisfaction and, consequently, their work engagement.

This alignment of qualitative insights with quantitative evidence underlines the importance of developing purpose statements that are both specific and inspiring to effectively drive employee engagement, bridging the gap between theoretical understanding and practical application. This integrated approach demonstrates that an organizational purpose can be effectively used to enhance both individual and organizational outcomes.

**Keywords:** organizational purpose, purpose-driven organizations, job satisfaction

# Resumo

Nos últimos anos, o conceito de propósito organizacional tem vindo a ganhar destaque entre os investigadores, refletindo uma mudança significativa no ambiente corporativo, que se afasta de um propósito meramente orientado para o lucro. Apesar do crescente interesse em aprofundar este tema, a literatura atual ainda apresenta lacunas, particularmente no que toca à sua definição e composição.

Esta tese procurou colmatar essas lacunas, analisando o conceito de propósito organizacional e as suas implicações a nível individual e organizacional. Através de uma abordagem de métodos mistos, integrou-se uma análise qualitativa e quantitativa para compreender como os colaboradores percecionam o propósito de uma organização e o impacto que este tem no desempenho e na satisfação no trabalho. A fase qualitativa envolveu a análise de vários propósitos através de uma técnica de codificação múltipla, destacando o seu foco estratégico e potencial para serem transformadores, aspiracionais e apaixonantes. Por outro lado, a fase quantitativa consistiu na aplicação de um questionário aos colaboradores da Siemens Portugal, com o objetivo de entender a sua perceção sobre o propósito da empresa e como o relacionam com o seu desempenho individual e satisfação no trabalho.

Os resultados da abordagem qualitativa mostraram que existem várias interpretações dos propósitos organizacionais. Alguns foram amplamente reconhecidos como transformadores e aspiracionais, enquanto outros - os da dimensão "apaixonantes" - geraram divergências, sugerindo que estas se devem às perceções individuais. Revelou-se uma complexidade significativa em definir o que constitui um propósito organizacional verdadeiramente impactante. A análise quantitativa confirmou correlações significativas entre propósito organizacional, satisfação no trabalho e desempenho. O efeito de mediação da satisfação no trabalho sugere que quanto mais positivo, claro e impactante for o propósito, maior é a satisfação no trabalho e, consequentemente, o desempenho.

Em suma, os resultados sublinham a importância de um propósito organizacional inspirador que estimule o envolvimento dos colaboradores, colmatando a lacuna entre a compreensão teórica e a aplicação prática. Demonstrou-se que este pode ser uma ferramenta eficaz para impulsionar os resultados tanto a nível individual como organizacional.

**Palavras-chave**: propósito organizacional, organizações orientadas para o propósito, satisfação no trabalho

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# List of abbreviations

**JS:** Job Satisfaction

**PIP:** Perceived Individual Performance

**POP:** Perceived Organizational Purpose

**PP-OPF:** Perceived Person- Organizational Purpose Fit

**P-OP**: Person- Organization Purpose

# 1 Introduction

Organizations are no longer entirely focused on generating profit; instead, they are emerging as an ecosystem where employees can relate and identify as an individual. According to Hollensbe *et al* (2018), organizations are not just producing products and services; they are also shaping individuals and employees who are influenced by their organizational culture and working conditions. These organizations serve as learning environment that encourage positive behaviors, contributing to employees' character development.

Despite the interest in the subject, there is still a lack of a clear conceptualization of what is organizational purpose and how it should be formally stated (van Ingen *et al*, 2021). "Formally" in the last sentence means the formatting of a purpose sentence, i.e., its linguistics properties. This thesis addresses this gap, as well it explores the theoretical assumption that states a relationship between purpose and performance.

Research on purpose statements is predominantly practical with limited theoretical advancement (Alegre *et al*, 2018). Many statements are generic, offering little challenge to the *status quo*, and some fail to prioritize the concerns of their employees. Therefore, one intends to fulfill some of the existing theoretical gaps. It also acknowledges the potential impact of organizational purpose on overall organizational culture, aligning with van Ingen *et al* (2021) that emphasizes its role as a communication tool for articulating organizational goals concisely and inspiringly. This work is based on the idea that a thoughtful examination of the organization's corporate identity is very much needed.

The most effective way to address a purpose gap is to integrate reflection, exploration, discussion, and action into the core of the business and organization (Joly, 2021). Purpose is a critical element of an organization, seen as a structured content, a process, and an influent mechanism. It is assumed that a well-defined content should reflect the fundamental values and the organization' reason to exist. This study aims to answer the critical question: Is that enough to influence stakeholders and their work performance?

Human Resources are at the heart of any organization, directly affecting the achievement of both organizational and individual purposes. The goal of this study is also to increase professionals' awareness of the significance and value attributed to organizational purpose (Jasinenko & Steuber, 2023). According to Devanna *et al* (1981), an organization must establish a purpose for its existence and a method for using financial, material, informational, and human resources to fulfill its reason of being. Managing strategic and sustainable human resources should begin by recognizing the organization's core business requirements (Schuler, 1992).

## 2    Literature Review

### 2.1    Purpose' etymology

*"Most of us go to our graves with our music still inside us, unplayed"*
Oliver Wendell Holmes

Holmes' quote serves as a good prelude to an exploration of the deep dimensions of purpose from its etymological roots to its organizational significance.

Looking to the etymology of the word "purpose", on *Online Etymology Dictionary*, one can assert that *purpus* is described as something objective, an intention or a target; it is a focal point to be maintained; an inherent purpose for which something exists. In line with this definition, Damon *et al* (2019) refer that purpose can be defined as a consistent and comprehensive commitment to achieve something that has personal meaning and is important to the world beyond the individual. This definition is used to emphasize the following aspects:

1.  Purpose is similar to a goal but goes beyond short-term objectives like "getting to the movie on time" or "finding a parking place in town today." (p.121).
2.  Purpose is linked to an individual's search for personal meaning, yet it includes an external dimension, such as an aspiration to make a meaningful impact on the world.
3.  In contrast to its mere meaning (which may lack a defined end), purpose is always oriented toward an achievement that allows measurable progress.

Ultimately, its essential characteristic lies in the direction it gives, establishing a clear goal for purpose (Damon *et al*, 2019).

### 2.2    The importance of individual purpose

First, to fully understand the meaning of purpose, it is important to comprehend why it is so important to individuals since it is often considered as something fundamental to humankind that requires "intention, awareness, creativity, and expression" (Jones-Khosla & Gomes, 2023, p.3).

Having a purpose is seen as essential in today's world. In an uncertain environment where strategies constantly change and decisions are rarely straightforward, having a sense of purpose is crucial (Craig & Snook, 2014). Moreover, as noted by Kashdan *et al* (2023), metrics are usually focused on individuals having a single purpose. However, it is possible to have multiple purposes in different and independent areas, such as work and parenting for example. Although having multiple purposes might be advantageous to a certain extent, it can also lead to a reduction in time, energy, and attention. If someone is focused on a single purpose and faces significant obstacles, it can result in discouragement. On the other hand, if someone has several purposes in

different areas, it may divert their attention from a temporarily purpose to another, which means that having a diversity of purposes increases overall effort, progress, and benefits.

From the above, one can conclude that having multiple purposes or maintaining a singular focus is something that can vary from person to person and depends on individual circumstances. The challenge lies in finding the best approach that allows individuals to enjoy the benefits of having a purpose (either single or multiple), while maintaining an appropriate level of commitment and progress in each area. It is about discovering and aligning our purposes with the activities we carry out daily; it is about giving meaning to our actions according to what we believe that is the best for us. In another words, it is about enhancing our contribution to our professional and personal world that could leave us with a feeling of fulfilment.

## 2.3     What is an organizational purpose?

Purpose is often considered the guiding principle and main reason for an organization's existence, answering the "why" question (Hurth *et al*, 2018; Khalifa, 2012; Pavez *et* al, 2020; Lang & Lopers-Sweetman, 1991) and should be directly connected with the organization' "superpower" (Leape *et al*, 2020, p.1). It is seen as an organization roadmap that guides the organization along its journey, meaning that it articulates the organization's future goals, how they plan to make it happen, and what it aims to avoid (Lang & Lopers-Sweetman, 1991). Collins & Porras (2008) define it as a guiding philosophy that arises from an organization's core values and beliefs. Despite its inherent complexity, the term "organizational purpose" remains malleable, open to various interpretations depending on its context (Jones-Khosla & Gomes, 2023).

Organizational purpose is viewed as a source of energy that drives action (van Ingen *et al*, 2021). The significance of purpose is reinforced by von Ahsen & Gauch (2021), who highlight its positive impact on employees as well as on customer satisfaction, and by Tutar *et al* (2011), who claim that the perception of a positive work environment is crucial for both organizational and individual performance. Collins & Porras (2008) argue that organizational purpose influences public perception and the organization's ability to meet human needs.

Jasinenko & Steuber (2023), carried out a systematic literature review to be able to categorize the different definitions that an organizational purpose could have. Considering the ambiguity of the concept and to consolidate the definitions that were provided by previous researchers, an inductive content analysis was employed. Regarding the research itself, the authors established that a category was created only if a particular topic appeared more than once in the definitions. The last step was scrutinizing the characteristics of these categories, identifying patterns and connections to formulate conclusions for a better and integrative definition. To confirm the definition of the concept, the ultimate categories were discussed with four academic

experts and later with 17 management executives. This study resulted in four conceptual dimensions of perceived organizational purpose that one considered in that were consistently highlighted on literature: "contribution, authenticity, guidance, and inspiration" (p.1423) – dimensions that were considered and explored further on the quantitative method.

There are two main concerns that could challenge the validity of the definition of organizational purpose: one is conceptual, and the other one is practical (Khalifa, 2012). The conceptual one is around incorporating authenticity and ambition into the purpose definition and on a practical level, there's a question about how an observer or researcher can differentiate between genuine and fake, or between ambitious and unambitious ones. On a conceptual level, the functions that a purpose statement is meant to fulfill, such as providing a sense of meaning or direction, cannot be achieved through invented ones. In another words, an organizational purpose should be passionate, because it stems from human needs, therefore, meeting these needs can generate a positive state of mind or a positive emotional experience for the individual whose needs are satisfied (van Ingen *et al*, 2021).

Purpose is linked to the terms of mission or vision and is also seen as the basic idea that underlies and supports the meaning of these concepts (Rey *et al*, 2019). A purpose statement is just one element within a broader system, which can include a vision statement, values statement, business definition and scope, and/or a strategy statement. It is essential that these guiding statements remain consistent and interconnected, reinforcing each other in a coherent way (Khalifa, 2012).

However, purpose and vision, while related, are distinct concepts. Vision represents future images that are inherently change-oriented, and they are considered as optional – the reason why organizations are not required to have one. On the other hand, having a sense of purpose involves a deep understanding of the most important objectives of the organization and the meaningful reasons behind them. Every organization is established with a purpose; all organizations have a purpose (van Knippenberg, 2020).

Flórez Jiménez & Lleó (2021) suggest that an organizational purpose is composed of three dimensions: "identity, meaning and mission" (p.18). First, the "identity" constitutes the overall presentation of the organization, a set of all the elements that distinguish it, embodying its personality, and reflecting how the organization perceives itself (Shee & Abratt, 1989). Its emergence of organizational identity is a result of interactions among diverse stakeholders both from inside and outside the organization (Diochon & Anderson, 2011). Then, "meaning", as articulated by Allan *et al* (2019), delineates what holds significance for the organization, understanding the purpose behind their actions and why they are meaningful (van Knippenberg,

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2020). Finally, "mission" is succinctly defined as the corporate purpose that mirrors how the corporation intends to impact its stakeholders, embodying the desired to influence on the business ecosystem (Rey *et al*, 2019).

### 2.3.1    The evolution of purpose in modern organizations

When thinking about the reason why organizational purpose is becoming a popular theme among researchers, one should first understand its relationship with organizational sustainability. By organizational sustainability, in this context, one can assume that is a deliberate approach aimed at generating lasting financial value by producing positive impact on society (Grewal & Serafeim, 2020). According to Flórez-Jiménez & Lleó (2021) there is a direct and reciprocal connection between corporate purpose and organizational sustainability. When incorporating sustainability into the organizational goal, employees gain valuable insights into the logic behind sustainability initiatives that promotes a deeper understanding of their significance for the organization. This integration allows stakeholders to align with the corporate identity, resulting in positive behaviours that actively contribute to the organisation's sustainability efforts. Consequently, this new idea sparked interest in developing a sense of purpose within organizations.

This new perspectives on the concept of purpose, both in academic research and in practical applications, are taking a different approach on the creation of value by organizations. These perspectives analyze the reasons of an organization' existence, the methods it employs to generate value, and the nature of its relationships with the stakeholders who contribute to achieve its purpose (Hurth *et al*, 2018). Also, integrating a defined purpose into business practices tends to elevate overall corporate performance (Fontán *et al*, 2019) and the company's commitment to purpose can lead to improved financial success and its reputation (von Ahsen & Gauch, 2021).

The creation of value hinges on the balance between an organization's capability to maintain differentiation and its proficiency in achieving legitimization (Suchman, 1995). Historically, organizations focused on innovating new products and services to achieve this balance. However, contemporary companies increasingly emphasize managing tangible assets and resources, providing an enduring and harder to replicate source of legitimacy (Scherer *et al*, 2013).

In line with the perspective of Rey *et al* (2019), one believed that the increase presence of purpose is a sign of a new evolutionary logic in management both in organizations and individuals that tend to elevate productivity and growth rates (Hutton, 2017). Within the organizational context, a purpose rooted in creating social value has the potential to improve the work environment and provide a path for authentic involvement. However, it can also serve as a

replacement for tangible rewards and act as a source of emotional attachment, which may carry personal costs (Bunderson & Thompson, 2009). Like how classical management led the division of labor and neoclassical management fostered organizational alignment, a new organizational theory may emerge to guide the development of this purpose-driven logic within organizations. It is expected that traditional organizational boundaries will be questioned as they evolve into a broader perspective, in line with the new logic of purpose (Rey *et al*, 2019).

Organizations that tend to keep the old management logic may need to adapt as uncertainty and ambiguity challenge their performance. In contrast, digital economy corporations like Google, Facebook, and Amazon, created with ideals aligned with the new logic of purpose (purpose-driven), are influential proponents of this movement. Similarly, universities, hospitals, and non-profit organizations, often developed under classical and neoclassical logic, are recognizing the potential of the new logic of purpose to align with their true spirit as purpose-driven entities (Rey *et al*, 2019).

Clegg *et al* (2021) consider that organizations are currently under the expectation to be responsive to those whose voices they recognize and who support them financially. This means that they are not only required to generate profit, but also to ensure fair employment practices, address ethical concerns related to their activities, and respect the opinions of their community. The extent of these expectations depends on the intensity, persistence, and political significance of the voices involved.

When analyzing purpose-driven organizations, Rey *et al* (2019) suggest that the use of an incorrect logic obstructs the true power of purpose, and this has been happening because the essence of organizations have been getting lost over time. This aspect is crucial to the ones that really want to create a purpose-driven organization, firstly because if the wrong logic is used, it is difficult to take advantage of the power of purpose; secondly, with misleading logic, purpose is seen as something strange and ambiguous when it is completely the opposite. Purpose-driven organizations often discover that is more straightforward to incorporate purpose at their core, because their leaders emotionally and logically engage with and define the purpose (Joly, 2021). A good example that illustrates this, is the Southwest Airlines that centralizes its business model around its employees, confident that their strong satisfaction and dedication will lead to the delivery of high-quality service for its customers (Fontán *et al*, 2019).

2.3.2    The influence of stakeholders in an organizational purpose

*"Purpose begins with human beings"*

Leape *et al* (2020, p.1)

Rey *et al* (2019) states that its main goal is to inspire and help organizations to overcome limits and pursue what seems to be impossible. That is the reason why each stakeholder has a substantial influence on the organization' performance and to make sure that this influence keeps them motivated, the purpose and goals need to be lined up. Taking a superficial approach to purpose is not advisable, because it can lead to negative consequences, including exposing the organization to accusations of inauthenticity or "purpose-washing". This may result in alienating customers, even to the point of losing them entirely, and causing dissatisfaction among employees at all organizational levels (Leape *et al*, 2020, p.1).

An organization overall goal is to give employees a sense of purpose (Rey *et al*, 2019; van Ingen *et al*, 2021) and Leape *et al* (2020, p.5) state that "employees at purpose-driven companies are four times more engaged at work – a powerful source of competitive advantage". When integrating purpose into the essence of an organization means reevaluating its core elements: its strategy, its operations, and the organization itself (Joly, 2021). However, this is not a one-time project, because the definition and integration of the purpose is a continuous process that needs to be adapted over time and needs to respond to internal and external contextual changes (Fontán *et al*, 2019). Under this approach, employees are required to integrate the organization's purpose into their own perspective to give their efforts a higher meaning. This integration leads individuals to perceive their work not merely as a routine task but as a meaningful contribution to a larger cause. When employees effectively understand the purpose of the organization, they gain a deeper understanding of their work and their daily tasks (Rey *et al*, 2019).

In line with this concept, Rey *et al* (2019) say that researchers typically discuss purpose by considering its flow from the organization to the individual. In this process, organizations define their purpose and then communicate it to employees to inspire them to find meaning in their work, but the success in achieving this purpose goes beyond the internal influence of founders, employees, and the external impact of various stakeholders – it is about something bigger. Although these factors can initiate its emergence, corporate purpose needs to be embraced across all organizational levels to be fully realized. There are three key dimensions of activity that need to happen for this to occur: "(i) framing purpose into a cohesive mission and vision, and a powerful narrative that marries goal and duty-based pillars; (ii) formalizing purpose into organizational practices and processes by embedding, structuring, and governing it; and (iii) realizing purpose by allocating resources to it, transcending value creation or appropriation questions, and generating multi stakeholder impact" (George *et al*, 2021, p. 1851).

However, there is another, but less-explored, aspect of purpose in the literature that is the purpose that is generated from the individual to the organization, which means that individuals merge meaning in their work from their personal purpose. Then, it becomes a significant motivational force, giving tasks a deeper meaning and reinforcing an individual's values, that is the reason why it is considered aspirational. Approaching work from a personal purpose perspective empowers individuals in their current roles, it is like an extra strength, because it goes beyond task completion; employees feel they are authentically being themselves at work, integrating their unique life purpose into the organizational context (Rey *et al*, 2019).

Hurth *et al* (2018) collected data from 14 interviews and concluded that there are four probable effects of an organizational purpose: i) increased psychological wellbeing among employees; ii) might increase scrutiny of stakeholders based on purpose; iii) rise in purpose-driven marketing practices and communications; iv) improved business performance. These effects contributed to positively influencing well-being, quality of life, flourishing, and the advancement of humanity for future generations.

### 2.3.3    Purpose-driven leadership as a motivational force

In a comprehensive interview study conducted by van Ingen *et al* (2021), the voices and perspectives of 44 global experts were considered to enrich academic and societal discussions regarding the modern interpretation and role of organizational purpose. Consequently, within this framework, motivation emerges as a key factor. The interviewees underscored that organizational purpose serves as a potent source of energy, a force that propels individuals into action, whether they are within or outside the organization. The analysis indicated that motivation could be characterized as "the energization of voluntary activities or behaviors either done for their inherent interest (i.e., need fulfillment) or done for the reason of fulfilling the organization's significant, aspirational, directional and unification aspects of purpose" (p.9).

Achieving authenticity in organizational purpose demands an unwavering commitment to address uncomfortable truths and tensions. That is the reason why leaders must effectively communicate the interdependence of corporate purpose and performance (van Ingen *et al*, 2021). According to the research developed by Joly (2021), survey findings reveal that managers frequently encounter dilemmas between purpose and profit, while a significant portion of employees expresses a preference for greater emphasis on purpose over profit. Leaders play a vital role in navigating these tensions and fostering purpose-driven initiatives, even when they involve taking bold leaps. Leading purpose-driven changes, requires empathy, a broad future vision, trust-building, and setting an example. There may be a need to reassess leadership norms

to align with the organization's purpose, acknowledging the personal significance of purpose for individuals.

Craig & Snook (2014) say that leaders consider that identifying and living their purpose is vital for speeding up growth, adding value, and making a meaningful difference, both in their professional and personal lives. The researchers conducted an experiment that the goal was to change the mindset of executives in discovering and defining their leadership purpose and applying it effectively. This mindset was spread across various organizations, and Unilever is an example given by them as a company dedicated to purpose-driven leadership. Jonathan Donner, who was the head of global learning at Unilever, played a crucial role in enhancing the approach. Collaborating with Unilever and several other organizations, enabled them to reach out to over 1.000 leaders through the purpose-to-impact process. Over the past two to three years, they started monitoring and evaluating their progress and many leaders have experienced significant outcomes, such as promotions and sustained improvements in business results. The most important thing is that the majority expresses that they have developed a new ability to prosper even in the most difficult times.

In sum from the above, one can conclude that integrating these perspectives becomes clear that organizational purpose not only energizes and motivates individuals, but also demands authenticity and strong leadership to face the inherent tensions between purpose and profit. Leaders who embrace a purpose-driven approach can promote significant personal and professional growth, driving to organizational success.

## 2.4 The role of job satisfaction in organizational purpose

Job satisfaction is an individual's overall assessment of their job, considering it either positively or negatively. Represents a person's attitude toward their work, involving emotions, thoughts, and behavioral inclinations (Spector, 1997). This concept is one of the most studied concepts in workplace and organizational context, since it is closely related to various factors that are essential to organizations "such as performance, organizational citizenship behavior, and organizational commitment" (Aslan & Atesoglu, 2021, p.1).

From the employees' perspective, job satisfaction plays a crucial role in their overall wellbeing, since it reflects the level of emotional and mental satisfactions, they experienced regarding their job (Spector, 1997). Additionally, job satisfaction can be influenced by diverse factors that can be categorized into individual and organizational-related factors. The individual-related factors might include aspects such as age, income, work conditions, and level of responsibility. On the other hand, organizational-related factors can involve elements like job security, work environment, and the relationship with the supervisor (Aslan & Atesoglu, 2021).

Furthermore, numerous studies have explored the connection between an employee's sense of purpose and their job satisfaction. These studies consistently show that employees who believe their work serves a higher purpose experience higher levels of job satisfaction and a stronger sense of cohesion within the workplace (Sparks & Schenk, 2001). Purpose, as an aspect of an individual's search for meaning, includes the external drive to make a positive impact and contribute to something beyond oneself. Engaging in meaningful work as an expression of purpose has been shown to affect important outcomes in organizational studies, including job satisfaction (Gartenberg et al., 2019).

## 2.5    The impact of purpose statements on individual and organizational performance

Considering that purpose statements are viewed as vital to an organizations' success, many researchers have sought to identify the key components of purpose statements that most significantly influence organizational performance. However, this task is complex, since remains a broad lack of agreement on which aspects of purpose statements truly contribute to an organization's performance (Macedo *et al,* 2016).

Over the last few decades, the concept of performance has attracted increasing attention, becoming prevalent in almost all areas of human activity. Since performance is a subjective perception of reality, it has given rise to numerous critical debates about the concept itself and the instruments used to measure it (Elena-Iuliana & Maria, 2016).

Values and beliefs related to individual performance contribute to organizational cohesion (Awadh & Saad, 2013). Individual performance drives the achievement of personal goals, which in turn supports the organization in reaching its overall objectives. A strong individual performance allows employees to be motivated and dedicated to their work, leading to higher levels of engagement and commitment to the organizational purpose. Exceptional individual performance helps to build employees' confidence in their personal and professional capabilities and enhances the organization's reputation as a desirable and respected workplace. Moreover, excellent individual performance fosters cooperation and teamwork within the organization, as employees trust in their colleagues' abilities and collaborate with a shared sense of purpose to achieve common objectives (Al-Okaily *et al*, 2024).

A strong organizational culture has a significant impact on job performance, as it boosts productivity and a unified cultural approach to resource utilization fosters positive organizational growth. Employee commitment and group efficiency, driven by organizational sustainability, further improve performance. Overall, the strength and influence of organizational culture are key factors in ensuring sustainability and the overall effectiveness of the organization (Awadh & Saad, 2013).

Today, performance cannot be separated from specific goals; achieving those goals is a synonym of achieving performance. However, because an organization's objectives are often difficult to precisely define and increasingly numerous, performance itself became harder to define, as it is a relative measure (Elena-Iuliana & Maria, 2016).

Drawing from self-determination theory and person-organization fit theory, recent research explores how perceived organizational purpose relates to work engagement and the mediating role of person-organization purpose (P-OP) fit. Findings from a study involving 517 knowledge workers in five financial organizations confirmed that organizational purpose positively influences work engagement both directly and indirectly through P-OP fit. These insights suggest that organizational purpose has a direct and indirect impact on engagement, underscoring its critical role in enhancing both individual and organizational performance (van Ingen, De Ruiter, Peters, Kodden, & Robben, 2021).

In short, the main feature of any purpose statement is its ability to inspire both individual and organizational performance (Verma, 2009).

2.6    Core dimensions and characteristics of an organizational purpose

When creating a purpose, organizations tend to simply describe their products or address customers directly (Lang & Lopers-Sweetman, 1991). For a purpose to be effective, Collins & Porras (2008) suggest that organizations should articulate their purpose succinctly and objectively in one or two sentences. Thus, it also must capture the attention and soul of every member of the organization, since it is a way to keep them involved in the organization's dynamics.

An organizational purpose can have different characteristics, such as: "massive, inspiring, highly aspirational, transformative, passionate", among others (Dimitrov, 2022, p. 331). Consequently, as time progresses, it is predictable that organizations will gradually adopt a more aspirational approach since it promotes positive feedback. This means that customers will be satisfied with products and will develop a growing sense of pride in contributing to a wider movement (Ismail *et al*, 2014).

The creation of value is often the most visible part to articulate in a purpose statement and it may or may not be explicitly mentioned. For instance, an organization might choose to focus only on its societal role, assuming that the implemented cause is strongly evident. Alternatively, it may highlight a significant cause to give more meaning to what the organization is already doing, or it could be assumed that people know what they do but want to add a bigger purpose. The flexibility in expressing a purpose statement is extensive, yet it must be concrete and reflect an effective deliberate choice (Khalifa, 2012).

In terms of language, there is no standard format or an ideal number of elements we should include when writing the purpose statement (Khalifa, 2012). One knows that when an organization wants to answer to the question "What is your mission?", must consider whom they serve, and what is their value to those that they serve. Sometimes these questions seem easy to answer, but probably are the most difficult ones (Lang & Lopers-Sweetman, 1991).

Considering the examples below, it is possible to see that the statements may appear to follow the recent trend of condensing organizational purpose to be concise, straightforward, and broadly applicable. However, upon closer examination, it is possible also to observe that each statement is highly aspirational. Instead of detailing the organization's current activities, they express ambitions for what the organization hopes to achieve. These aspirations are not limited in scope and do not focus only on technology. Instead, they aim to resonate with the emotions, aspirations, and imaginations of both internal and external stakeholders (Ismail *et al*, 2014, p.54)

- "**TED**: Ideas worth spreading."

- "**Google**: Organize the world's information."

- "**X Prize Foundation**: Bring about radical breakthroughs for the benefits of humanity."

- "**Quirky**: Make invention accessible."

- "**Singularity University**: Positively impact one billion people."

Now taking into consideration Cisco's purpose statement: "Shape the future of the Internet by creating unprecedented value and opportunity for our customers, employees, investors, and ecosystem partners." (p.54-55), when comparing with the examples given above, it is possible to argue that Cisco's statement somehow lacks inspiration and aspiration. While it contains elements of purpose and is somewhat substantial, it falls short of being transformative and it is a statement that could easily apply to numerous internet companies. However, if we could rewrite it into: "Connecting everyone, everything, everywhere—all the time.", the result is a purpose statement that is more transformative and aspirational (Ismail *et al*, 2014).

To sum up and considering the above literature review, one can conclude that an organizational purpose should have at least three specific dimensions that are common to most authors, namely: transformative (Damon et al, 2019), aspirational (Rey et al, 2019), and passionate (van Ingen et al, 2021).

## 3 Conceptual model and hypotheses

A conceptual model was developed to test the hypotheses and to help to construct an illustration of how the variables interact and influence one another within the organizational context (see table I).

*Table I - Conceptual Model*
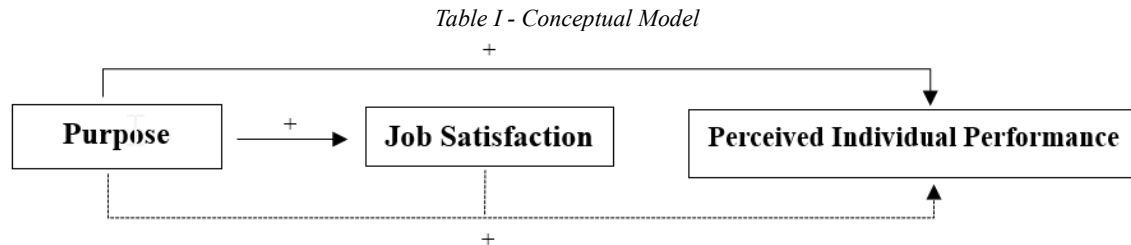


$H_1$: Purpose impacts positively PIP.

$H_{1a}$: POP impacts positively PIP.

$H_{1b}$: Form impacts positively PIP.

$H_2$: Purpose influences positively JS.

$H_{2a}$: POP impacts positively JS.

$H_{2b}$: Form impacts positively JS.

$H_3$: The relationship between Purpose and PIP is mediated by JS.

$H_{3a}$: The relationship between POP and PIP is mediated by JS.

$H_{3b}$: The relationship between Form and PIP is mediated by JS.

Purpose statements can also be invented and that is possible to recognize when they are vague and use excessively positive language. People who are closely involved with the organization (the stakeholders, for example) can usually recognize these fake – or not authentic- purpose statements. The organization's strategy, culture, and actions either support or question the originality and authenticity of the purpose statement. Those who might be deceived by fabricated purpose statements are typically distant observers or audiences without a close relationship with the organization. In practical terms, it is necessary to deepen or ask more probing questions to understand the contextual factors that can help to determine the authenticity and ambition of a purpose statement (Khalifa, 2012). This brings us to the first research question that is: What makes a purpose statement transformative, aspirational and passionate?

Dedication to a clear purpose is perceived as a component of a progression that empowers organizations to meet environmental and social challenges within society (Zu, 2019; By, 2021).

Modern societies expect organizations to generate ethical, social, environmental, and economic value, thereby positively impacting quality of life and well-being (Fontán *et al*, 2019). This leads us to the second main research question: Does organizational purpose influence employees' performance?

Given the nature of the thesis, using a mixed-methods approach was considered the most appropriate one to obtain a more complete and in-depth understanding of the topic. One started with a qualitative analysis to identify the main categories of purpose statements and assess their levels of being transformative, aspirational, and passionate. These dimensions were selected based on literature review. Subsequently, a quantitative method was employed to assess the perception of Siemens' employees regarding its purpose statement, its potential impact on their performance, and the extent to which they view Siemens' purpose as transformative, aspirational, and passionate.

## 4    Method

### 4.1    Design

The mixed-methods approach enabled to add value to the study, enhancing understanding to the main questions of this thesis better than only reporting the outcomes separately (Creswell, 1999). This is method is a "combination or integration of quantitative and qualitative data using a specific type of mixed methods design, and interpretation of this integration" (Creswell, 1999, p.20) where theory is used to frame the design.

The design followed a sequential approach, since the starting point was exploring a problem using a qualitative method, followed by a second quantitative phase using a survey to address the second research question.

To summarize, the integration of both approaches enabled to: i) capture two distinct viewpoints – one derived from personal perspectives (qualitative) and another one from structured data (quantitative); ii) gain a multi-dimensional understanding of one single reality, i.e., of one company; iii) facilitate the initial exploration of the topic with individuals (qualitative research) to ensure that instruments and measures (quantitative research) were suitable for the participants and the thesis' theme in specific (Creswell, 1999).

### 4.2    Qualitative research

The process began by establishing a database of organizational purposes, which was integrated with Dr. Luca Leonardini database that was very helpful for the current study. Dr. Leonardini is an innovation coach, a self-published author of works such as *Codify Your Purpose* and *Pictorial Atlas of 101 Purpose Statements from around the world*, and the founder of The

Purpose Driven Academy. The final database contained 89 statements which purposes covered 26 sectors, including pharmaceutical, financial, cosmetics, retail, energy, banking, automotive, among others. The dataset also included organizations from 19 countries, e.g., Portugal, the United States of America, Switzerland, Brazil, Italy, and Belgium.

Subsequently, an analysis was conducted on these purpose statements to find trends in terms of language, strategic focus, target audience, and most frequent words. This exploration resulted in the creation of five categories based on its strategic focus, a similar exercise conducted by Jasinenko & Steuber (2023). According to Falcão & Régnier (2000), the categorization procedure involves a set of systematic and singular observations made by the observer to a more restricted set of data of information (categories) that include observations that can be unified according to one or more criteria.

The final categories were: 1) social responsibility, sustainability and commitment to the future (when the role of supporting society and meeting its needs is highlighted; when is emphasized commitment to environmentally sustainable practices; or when is related to shaping the future in a positive way); 2) innovation (when the purpose includes a commitment to innovation and technological progress); 3) product or service quality (when is emphasized the delivery of high quality products or services, excellence and customer satisfaction); 4) diversity and inclusion (purposes that promote diversity of gender, race, ethnicity and inclusion in their business practices); 5) financial responsibility (when the idea of providing products or services at low prices is demonstrated).

Following this categorization, 20 random organizational purposes were compiled into an Excel spreadsheet and given to three evaluators to analyze. The evaluators were chosen based on their academic involvement in the theme of organizational purpose. Two of the evaluators are PhD students who are actively conducting research on topics aligned with this study and I also participated as an evaluator, using my expertise and knowledge gained during this research.

The statements were the following:

*Table II – Purpose statements used to do the multiple coding exercise*

| Organization | Purpose Statement |
|---|---|
| Pestana Hotel Group | The time of your life. |
| XPRIZE | Radical breakthrough for the benefit of humanity. |
| Abillion | Inspiring a billion people to become vegan. |
| Modern Elder Academy | Helping midlifers to live a life as deep as it is long. |

| Delta OHM (G. Maestroni) | Creating an environment where each individual unleashes the best part of themselves every day. |
|---|---|
| EDP | Our energy and heart drive a better tomorrow. |
| Four Seasons Hotels | Inspire the world to lead with genuine heart. |
| Mercedes-Benz Auto | First move the world. |
| Sysco | Connecting the world to share food and care for one another. |
| BCG | Unlocking the potential of those who advance the world. |
| Unilever | Making sustainable living common place for 8 billion people. |
| Delta Airlines | Connect people to opportunities. |
| Lego | To inspire and develop the builders of tomorrow. |
| Duolingo | Language learning for everyone. |
| SAP | To make the world run better and improve people's lives. |
| OpenExO | Together we can transform the world for a better future. |
| McLeod & More | We help leaders to drive revenue and do work that makes them proud. |
| Mars | The world we want tomorrow starts with how we do business today. |
| Microsoft | To empower every person and every organization on the planet to achieve more. |
| Evernote | Get organized. Work smarter. Remember everything. |

A multiple coding task was followed to validate all perspectives. This technique is a systematic process for structuring raw data into patterns that helps to understand the information (Baralt, 2011, p.222). In qualitative research, a code typically refers to a word or brief phrase that represents a concise, significant, or evocative characteristic related to a segment of linguistic or visual data (Saldaña, 2021). Due to its influence on how researchers deconstruct their data to generate new insights and ideas, the multiple coding techniques plays a crucial element in the analytical process of data (Elliott, 2018).
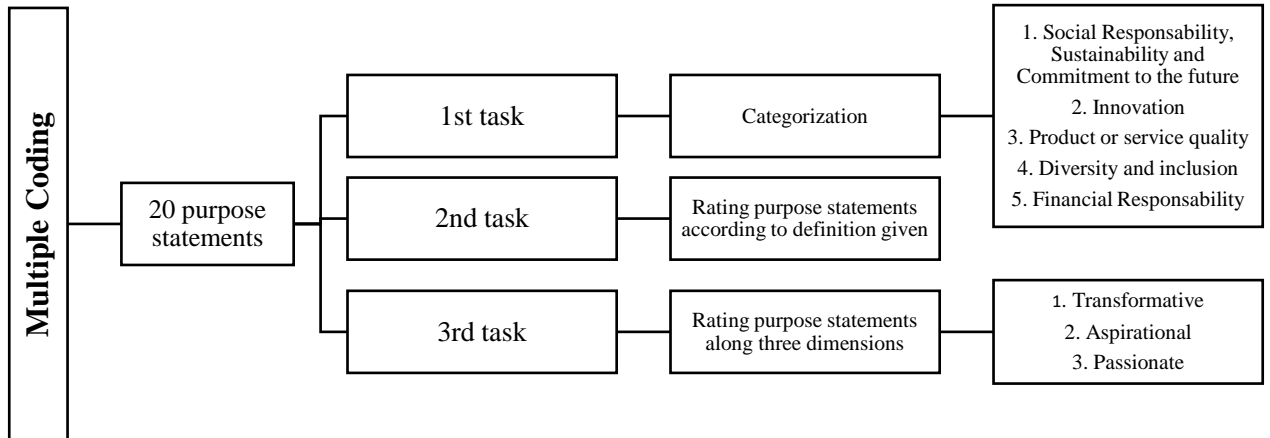
Evaluators had three assignments in this multiple coding exercise (see figure I). The first task was to categorize the statements according to its strategic focus and referring the one that best classified the statement.

On the second task, a definition of organizational purpose was provided, namely "is the guiding principle and main reason for an organization's existence" where they were asked to say to which extend the given purpose matched the given definition of organizational purpose, using a 3-point scale (1- poor matching; 2- medium matching; 3- strong matching).

The third task was to rate each statement along three dimensions (using a 3-point scale: 1- low; 2- medium; 3- strong) based on the literature review mentioned previously, namely: transformative (to which extend the statement aims at a change on a massive scale (e.g., industry,

country, global impact…); aspirational (to which extend it inspires employees to go beyond their individual values); and passion (to which extend it stimulates a deep and intense enthusiasm with a strong emotional connection and dedication).

*Figure I– Explanation of the multiple coding exercise*

```
Multiple Coding → 20 purpose statements
                    ├─ 1st task → Categorization → 1. Social Responsability, Sustainability and Commitment to the future
                    │                              2. Innovation
                    │                              3. Product or service quality
                    │                              4. Diversity and inclusion
                    │                              5. Financial Responsability
                    ├─ 2nd task → Rating purpose statements according to definition given
                    └─ 3rd task → Rating purpose statements along three dimensions → 1. Transformative
                                                                                     2. Aspirational
                                                                                     3. Passionate
```

Based on the conclusions of the third task, the approach was further validated through a quantitative phase, in which surveys were distributed to Siemens employees. The surveys aimed to assess the extent to which Siemens' purpose resonates with employees' personal values and, their overall awareness of Siemens' core values and how these factors influence their performance and job satisfaction.

### 4.3 Quantitative Research

#### 4.3.1 Design

A quantitative approach was also employed by an online questionnaire application (Microsoft Forms) for Siemens S.A. employees. The participation was anonymous, voluntary, and all the information was kept confidential. The questionnaire was distributed in April 2024 through the corporative e-mail and stayed online for one week. It was designed to investigate the impact of organizational purpose on employees' behavior. Each one of them was customized to raise a perceptual response and to encouraged Siemens' employees to contemplate various aspects of their organizational experience.

The questionnaire was created to address the main research question: "Does organizational purpose influence employees' performance?". One wanted to explore the organizational purpose impact on employees' perception of Siemens as purpose-driven entity, as well as its impact on job satisfaction and perceived individual performance.

As the questionnaire was designed to serve a broader aim, only some sections were used to test the hypotheses stated in previous sections (see appendix A for the complete version of the questionnaire). The sections used to test the hypotheses were structured as follows: the section one and three addressed the perception of organizational purpose, and the sections four and five assessed individual performance perception and job satisfaction. Additionally, biographical information was also sought after the perceptual sentences. Respondents were asked to indicate their agreement level on a 5-point scale (from 1- strongly disagree to 5- strongly agree).

### 4.3.2   Variables and their measurement

The first set of sentences on section one was based on a scale developed by Jasinenko & Steuber (2023), to measure focused employees' perceptions of a company's purpose. The Perceived Organizational Purpose scale (POP for short) was created after an extensive literature review by the authors (see section 2.3) and is composed of 12 sentences measuring four subdimensions: contribution, authenticity, guidance, and inspiration. These subdimensions capture distinct aspects of an organizational purpose, contributing to a broader understanding of how purpose is perceived by employees and its potential impact on their work engagement and involvement.

The last three sentences of section one were taken from van Ingen *et al* (2020) and Cable & DeRue (2002). As one mentioned before, van Ingen *et al's* work is important to consider in the current study, as they advanced the theory on corporate purpose by using self-determination and person-organization fit theories to test if the concept of fit or alignment mediated the relationships between perceptions of purpose and outcome variables. The Perceived Person-Organizational Purpose Fit (PP-OPF for short) scale was thus used in the current study as a way to test van Ingen *et al's* findings.

The psychometric properties of these two scales in the current study were very good. The POP scale registered a Cronbach Alpha of 0,927 for the 12 sentences, and the PP-OPF one shown an Alpha of 0,897 for the 3 sentences. The factor structure of POP identified two factors with eigenvalues greater than 1. The first factor accounted for nearly 60% of the variance of all items, thus indicating a unidimensional structure more than a 4-dimensional one, as it should be expected from the original work by Jasinenko & Steuber (2023). For this reason, a one-factor structure was considered appropriate to use in the testing of the model. The PP-OPF scale showed a one-factor solution, with the first factor explaining 83% of the variance of all items.

The section three comprised 7 questions and they were all constructed based on the qualitative phase of the current investigation. Initially, was decided to create 9 questions (3 per each dimension) to validate the research objectives, but one identified that two of the nine

questions were redundant to the existing POP scale. Although these two items were considered important for capturing additional nuances, it was observed that they did not add significant value, helping to avoid questions' overlap and refining the scale to be more straightforward and effective in capturing the dimensions. According to MacKenzie *et* al (2011), when essential characteristics of a construct do not have unique aspects, eliminating any one of them does not restrict the conceptual domain of the construct. In such cases, a shorter and more focused scale that captures the core characteristics without redundancy can lead to more consistent and interpretable data.

To recap, the third section included three concepts related to the form of a purpose statement (Form for short). The phrases in the questionnaire sought to understand the extent to which a statement is transformative, aspirational, and passionate. Cronbach's Alpha for the 7 sentences showed a value of 0,898 and exploratory factor analysis extracted one single factor with an eigenvalue of 4,5, explaining 64% of the variance of all items.

All in all, section one and three were aimed at addressing the notion of purpose from different conceptual angles, and were labelled POP, PP-OPF, and Form. This strategy was followed due to the relatively novel use of corporate purpose in organizational studies, which advised some level of exploration on top of the confirmation approach linked to the model and the hypotheses.

The last sections (four and five) were divided into two parts to assess perceived individual performance and job satisfaction. The individual performance scale composed of four items van Dyne & LePine (1998), after Williams & Anderson (1991) was designed to measure how well employees' perceive their job responsabilities and their effectiveness in their roles. The job satisfaction scale is based on Edwards & Rothbard (1999), with three items. Cronbach's Alpha was 0,889 and 0,930, respectively. Both factors analysis also showed one factor for each variable (respectively, 75% of all variances explained for the perceived individual performance, and 88% for job satisfaction items).

### 4.3.3    Company description and participants

Siemens S.A. is a German technological company that was founded in Berlin 177 years ago by Siemens' brothers. Currently, it is present in more than 90 countries and counts with more than 3,000 employees only in Portugal.

Siemens' strategy includes increasing resource efficiency in factories, ensuring resilient supply chains, and creating smarter buildings and grids to develop cleaner and more comfortable transportation and advanced healthcare solutions. It is an organization that aims to integrate the

physical and the digital world, enabling its clients to revolutionize their respective industries and markets, facilitating the transformation of everyday experiences for billions of people.

Thanks to their innovative strength, global reach, and commitment to sustainability, Siemens is prepared to tackle the most pressing challenges of our time. With over 115 years of presence in Portugal, Siemens significantly contributes to the development of local infrastructure in energy, industry, mobility, and building technologies.

Additionally, Siemens hosts several global competence centers in energy, infrastructure, information technologies, shared services, and application laboratories. These centers not only drive engineering and services in Portugal but also export knowledge to 47 countries worldwide.

Concerning the participants of the quantitative phase, 126 valid answers were collected. Of these, 72 were male and 52 female; 2 preferred not to say.

In terms of age, 69 employees fall into the 20 and 29 categories; 32 in the 30 and 39; 18 in the 40 and 49; 6 in the 50 and 59; 1 employee was 60 older.

Concerning the seniority of Siemens' employees, 32 are within the company for less than a year; 46 employees have been there between 1 and 3 years; 27 between 4 and 6 years; 10 between 7 and 9 years; and 11 employees have been within Siemens for more than 10 years.

## 5    Results

### 5.1    Qualitative Research

Through the analysis of the three evaluators' answers, one had meaningful outcomes that are important to share.

On the first task, the three participants simultaneously agreed on the categorization of one purpose statement (5%); two out of three participants agreed on fifteen statements (75%); and there was no agreement on four of the purpose statements (20%), meaning that each participant categorized each purpose statement differently. Overall, there was some level of agreement among the participants, but the percentages also shows that there are some divergences in the interpretation or understanding of the purpose statements. These discrepancies may indicate potential ambiguity or lack of clarity in the purpose statements, which could lead to misinterpretations or disagreements among participants.

*Table III – Results task number one*

| 1<sup>st</sup> task | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Agreement level** | **Fraction** | **Percentage** |

| 3 participants | 1/20 | 5% |
| 2 out of 3 participants | 15/20 | 75% |
| No concordance | 4/20 | 20% |

On the second task, the three participants agreed simultaneously on four purpose statements (20%), and they also attributed in all those statements the number 3, which means "strong matching". The main outcome is that all participants felt that the statements given had a strong matching with the definition of organizational purpose given. In all of them there is a common theme of aspiration and positive impact, suggesting a strong alignment with the participants' understanding and perception. The statements were the following:

- "Inspiring a billion people to become vegan." (Abilion)
- "Making sustainable living common place for 8 billion people." (Unilever)
- "To inspire and develop the builders of tomorrow." (Lego)
- "To make the world run better and improve people's lives." (SAP)

Still on this task, two out of three participants agreed on eleven statements (55%); and there was no consensus on 5 purpose statements (25%).

*Table IV – Results task number two*

| 2nd task | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Agreement level** | **Fraction** | **Percentage** |
| 3 participants | 4/20 | 20% |
| 2 out of 3 participants | 11/20 | 55% |
| No concordance | 5/20 | 25% |

The final task was to evaluate each statement according to three dimensions: transformative, aspirational, and passionate. The results show that there is some consistency according to the levels of agreement between participants in all dimensions. Regarding the first dimension, all three participants agreed that two purpose statements were transformative, representing 10% of the total statements evaluated, where they assigned the level 3 (high). The sentences are the following:

- "Radical breakthrough for the benefit of humanity." (XPRIZE)
- "Together we can transform the world for a better future." (OpenExO)

Two out of three participants agreed on fourteen statements (70%); and there was no concordance on four of the purpose statements (20%).

On the aspirational dimension, the three participants agreed on four purpose statements (20%), where two purpose statements were considered "high" and two of them "medium"; two out of three participants agreed on thirteen statements (65%); and there was no concordance on three of the purpose statements, which means that every participant had a different insight on three sentences (15%).

Concerning the third dimension, the results differed from the previous ones, although not significantly. The three participants agreed on one purpose statement (5%); two out of three participants agreed on thirteen statements (65%); and there was no concordance on six of the purpose statements (30%). The percentages show us that there was a slight increase in the disagreement levels compared to other dimensions.

*Table IV – Results task number 3 according to each dimension*

| 3rd task | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Agreement level** | **Transformative** | | **Aspirational** | | **Passion** | |
| | **Fraction** | **Percentage** | **Fraction** | **Percentage** | **Fraction** | **Percentage** |
| *3 participants* | 2/20 | 10% | 3/20 | 20% | 1/20 | 5% |
| *2 out of 3 participants* | 14/20 | 70% | 13/20 | 65% | 13/20 | 65% |
| *No concordance* | 4/20 | 20% | 3/20 | 15% | 6/20 | 30% |

Overall, the results show that there are dimensions that can influence the perception and categorization of purpose statements, namely: transformative, aspirational, and passionate. Answering to the research question: "What makes a purpose statement transformative, aspirational and passionate?", one can assess that while transformative and aspirational dimensions tend to be recognized when they clearly define significant change and shared ambition, the passionate dimension is more subjective, varying in perceived impact among evaluators. These findings underline the importance of having clarity and specificity when creating an organizational purpose to ensure a common understanding and consistent interpretation across different stakeholders. Additionally, it highlights the challenges in achieving consensus on what makes a purpose statement truly transformative, aspirational, and passionate; thus, emphasizes the need of careful consideration in terms of language.

However, one considered that these insights needed to be further explored and validated through quantitative research to gain deeper understanding of how they could be also related to individual and organizational performance. According to Gartenberg *et al* (2019), an organizational purpose cannot have a connection to performance when it simply does not impact employee's efficiency or customers choices. On the other hand, purpose can be positively connected to performance by inspiring employees to go beyond their employment contracts (Gibbons & Henderson, 2012). Essentially, this integration allowed to test the preliminary conclusions drawn from the qualitative phase (the third task in specific) and assess whether the identified patterns remained true across a broader sample.

## 5.2    Quantitative research

### 5.2.1    Variables description

The table below shows the descriptive and the correlation matrix between all research variables.

*Table VI - Research variables*

|       | Mean | DP   | POP    | Form   | PIP    | JS   |
|-------|------|------|--------|--------|--------|------|
| POP   | 4,34 | 0,52 | 1,00   |        |        |      |
| Form  | 4,08 | 0,64 | 0,68** | 1,00   |        |      |
| PIP   | 4,39 | 0,55 | 0,25** | 0,30** | 1,00   |      |
| JS    | 4,09 | 0,89 | 0,39** | 0,48** | 0,49** | 1,00 |

The three measures related to the concept of corporate purpose showed means above 4 (all scales between 1 and 5). These results suggest that Siemens employees hold a positive perception about the company's efforts and contribution to a higher cause, including its contributions to the common good, its initiatives for positive global change, and its aspirations that extend beyond self-interest. Employees' perception of individual performance also scored high, and their level of job satisfaction is also above 4.

The most interesting results, however, are maybe the correlations between all research variables. Values vary between small (PP-OPF x PIP: r=0,18) and very high (POP x PP-OPF: r=0,77). If the high correlation values between the three measures of purpose were somehow expected, it is the pattern of medium-size correlation values between the antecedent variables and the outcome variables that is of outmost interest. In fact, PIP, and JS are all correlated with POP, PP-OPF, and Form, with the smallest value between PP-OPF and PIP (r=0,18).

Furthermore, all but one value is significant at the p=0,001 level, which reinforces the idea that the observed pattern in the table is consistent across the population.

### 5.2.2 Model and hypotheses testing

To test the model and the hypotheses SPSS Hayes Process v4.2 macro was used. As the variable "purpose" was approached from two distinct angles (POP, Jasinenko & Steuber, 2023, and Form, based on the current research), two sets of mediation models were tested: one with POP as the predictor variable, and another one with Form as the predictor variable. In both cases, job satisfaction was the mediator, and perceived individual performance was the outcome variable. Model 4 was used in both regression analyses.

Results revealed that job satisfaction indirectly mediates the relationship between POP and PIP (b = 0,266, t(126) = 2,93, p = <0,005; bootstrap =0,0861-0,4465) and also between Form and PIP (b = 0,256, t(126) = 3,50, p = <0,001; bootstrap =0,1109-0,4000). See appendix B for a full display of these results. Both mediation are total mediations, as the direct effect of the predictors on the outcome did not show significant results (POP: c = 0,080, t(126) = 0,90, p = 0,368; bootstrap =-0,0957-0,2566; Form: c = 0,072, t(126) = 0,95, p = 0,343; bootstrap =-0,0781-0,2229). Considering these results, it can be concluded that H1a and H1b are not confirmed in the current research, whereas H2a, H2b, H3a, and H3b are confirmed. In other words, purpose seems to have an impact on performance through job satisfaction.

These results and the ones showed on table VI also suggest that the impact of purpose as measured by Jasinenko & Steuber's scale is smaller than the one developed in the current study. To confirm such observation a multiple linear regression with POP and Form as predictors were performed. Job satisfaction was the outcome variable. Results confirmed the above observations, with and Ra2= 0,223 (Z=18,914, p<0,001), and tPOP= 1,029, p=306, tForm= 3,735, p<0,001. Both tolerance and VIF results suggest that there is no collinearity between POP and Form (tolerance= 0,535 and VIF= 1,868).

## 6    Discussion and conclusions

### 6.1    Synthesis

This study contributes to the growing body of research emphasizing the role of organizational in enhancing employee job satisfaction and overall wellbeing. As previous research, such as van Tuin *et al* (2020), has shown that a clear organizational purpose is seen as essential in creating a dependable environment that meets core human needs of belonging and life direction. This thesis proves the same point of view and the same as the existing literature, since the results provide

insights into how organizational purpose can be defined and its impact on employee satisfaction and performance.

The mediating role of job satisfaction highlights that simply having a purpose statement is not enough. The purpose statements must resonate with employees on a personal level, making them feel aligned with the organization's broader mission.

Building on the study of Jasinenko & Steuber (2023), this research followed a similar path but extended beyond their focus by combining a mixed-method approach to validate their theory in practical terms. The results of the research demonstrated that there is a strong link between individual and organizational purpose and reinforced the connection between these two dimensions, offering an understanding of how they interact to drive to employee satisfaction and performance.

The study explored how organizational purpose can be defined according to literature review and how it can influence on both employees and the organization. A mixed-method approach was employed to address to two main research questions. The first research question, focused on understanding how purpose statements could combine three dimensions: being transformative, passionate, and aspirational. The second research question explored how Siemens Portugal employees interpret their organization's purpose statement and the connection that these interpretations could have regarding job satisfaction, and performance.

The findings of the qualitative approach uncovered the different perceptions that purpose statements could have. Some are widely recognized as transformative and aspirational, while other, particularly the passionate ones, were viewed with more ambiguity. The quantitative analyses confirmed strong connections between a clearly communicated purpose, job satisfaction, and performance, with job satisfaction playing a key role in connecting purpose with performance outcomes.

Overall, the results emphasize the critical role of a well-crafted and inspiring purpose statement in increasing employee job satisfaction and overall organizational effectiveness, underscoring that purpose statements must be both clear and motivating to drive meaningful results and impact.

### 6.1.1 Discussion: qualitative phase

The qualitative research revealed important insights about how purpose statements are perceived and categorized from the evaluator's perspective.

Considering the results of the first task, the level of agreement between evaluators varied, with unanimous agreement on only one purpose statement (5%) and partial agreement on fifteen statements (75%). The lack of concordance, suggests that some purpose statements may be unclear or open to interpretation, emphasizing the need for precise language when creating them.

Concerning the second one, it revealed that there was a strong consensus among all participants. The purpose statements given shared common themes such as aspiration and positive impact, indicating a strong alignment on evaluators' perspective when comparing the purpose statements given with the definition provided as the "the guiding principle and main reason for an organization's existence". However, the lack of agreement in 25% of the purpose statements, points out the challenges in creating universally resonant purpose statements.

The final task, which assessed purpose statements in the transformative, aspirational, and passionate dimensions, was that created most disagreement among evaluators (30%), which suggests that it is more subjective and less consistently recognized. These results emphasize the complexity of designing purpose statements that are both inspiring and universally perceived as passionate.

Considering the first research question "What makes a purpose statement transformative, aspirational and passionate?", one can conclude that the two first dimensions are key to understand purpose statements. Although evaluators showed consensus on transformative and aspirational purpose statements, they disagreed on the passionate dimension. This highlights how ambiguity in purpose statements can lead to different interpretations, which emphasizes the need for specificity when creating impactful purpose statements.

Overall, these findings provide inputs on the characteristics that make purpose statements effective, highlights that to ensure that purpose statements are understood by different stakeholders, there is a need for clarity and specificity in the language used to articulate the organizational purpose.

### 6.1.2   Discussion: quantitative phase

The quantitative research was created based on the results of the third task of the qualitative method, providing insights concerning the variables studied.

The results show that job satisfaction mediates the relationship between Purpose and PIP. Both operationalizations of Purpose (POP and Form) show a positive effect on PIP through Job Satisfaction. However, no significant direct relationship was found between Purpose and PIP, demonstrating that purpose improves individual performance only by increasing job satisfaction.

The correlation analysis further supports this, showing moderate relationships between Purpose, Job Satisfaction, and PIP. Notably, Form had a slightly stronger impact on job satisfaction compared to POP, suggesting that this new measure may better capture purpose in this context. These findings show that job satisfaction is essential for turning organizational purpose into better employee performance, highlighting its importance for organizational success.

About the second research question "Does organizational purpose influence employees' performance?" the quantitative results confirmed that organizational purpose significantly affects employees' performance through job satisfaction. The analysis demonstrated that job satisfaction acts as a key mechanism through which organizational purpose influences performance.

Overall, from a practical perspective, the results suggest that organizations that seek to improve employee performance should focus on increasing job satisfaction. Purpose-driven initiatives alone may not be enough to directly influence results; rather, organizations should ensure that employees feel satisfied with their roles that sequentially can improve their overall work engagement.

## 6.2    Limitations and future research

This study presents some limitations that must be acknowledged, as well as opportunities for future research to address these challenges and further develop the understanding of organizational purpose.

One challenge identified is the ambiguity surrounding passionate purpose statements within an organizational context. Passionate statements are abstract and emotionally charged concepts that may be difficult to convey effectively, potentially leading to confusion or lack of clarity. This suggests that organizations need to be cautious in how they frame passionate dimensions of their purpose, to ensure that they are not overly vague.

Additionally, the sample size of the qualitative research was limited to only three evaluators, which may not be representative of a broader population. A larger and more diverse group of evaluators would provide more insights and a more comprehensive understanding of how purpose statements are perceived across different contexts and people. Additionally, the evaluation of purpose statements was subjective, relying on individual perceptions that can vary from one person to another. This subjectivity introduces potential bias influenced by personal experiences, which could impact the consistency of the results.

The quantitative method also had its limitations. The sample size of 126 responses may be limitative, as it could not fully capture the broader employee perceptions, and it reflects only the reality of one organization within a specific industry. Additionally, the high correlation between

POP and Form measures suggests some overlap, and consequently the impact of each measure separately may be comprised. When two measures are highly correlated, it can be difficult to determine whether each measure is providing distinct information or if their effects are being combined.

Despite these limitations, this study raises some insights that could be developed in future research. Longitudinal studies would be valuable in order to track changes over time and better understand of causal relationships between organizational purpose, job satisfaction, and performance. Such approach would help to reveal whether organizational purpose influences job satisfaction and performance or if other factors contribute to these outcomes. Unlike cross-sectional studies that capture a single moment in time, longitudinal research can uncover long-term effects, making it crucial to understand the sustained impact of purpose-driven initiatives. According to Rajulton (2001) longitudinal studies can track changes over time, and potentially offer an accurate view of cause-and-effect relationships. Plus, longitudinal data establishes a sequence of events and make more stronger causal interpretations.

Future research could explore the influence of organizational purpose on performance across different cultural or industrial contexts, providing insights on how purpose-driven initiatives may vary on a global scale. By addressing these areas, the findings could offer more comprehensive guidelines for crafting an authentic and impactful purpose statements that are understood across different organizational and societal effects.

Finally, a more in-depth study could be conducted to examine the language and vocabulary used when constructing a purpose statement. Its importance lays in how it can significantly influence how it is perceived by stakeholders. Understanding the nuances of language in purpose statements helps to ensure the message is understood for both external and internal audiences.

By addressing these limitations and pursuing future research directions, the study of organizational purpose can be further refined, leading to more effective strategies that enhance employee satisfaction, strengthen organizational alignment, and improve overall performance.

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## 8    Appendix

**Appendix A** – Survey applied to Siemens' employees

| Section 1: This section is about how you feel about your organization's purpose and values. Please indicate your level of agreement with each statement. | Strongly disagree | Disagree | Neither agree nor disagree | Agree | Strongly agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1.  Siemens aims to contribute to the common good | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 2.  Siemens seeks to create a positive change in the world | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 3.  Siemens aims to achieve something that goes beyond its own benefit | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 4.  Siemens remains true to its core values even when conflicts occur | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 5.  Siemens is fully committed to its overarching goals | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 6.  Siemens credibly embodies its core values | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 7.  Siemens' overarching goals provide orientation in complex situations | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 8.  Siemens' higher goals guide decisions and actions | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 9.  Siemens' overarching goals provide stable guidance in times of rapid change | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 10. Siemens unites through inspiring higher goals | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 11. Siemens conveys the idea of being part of something bigger | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 12. Siemens inspires by providing a higher cause | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 13. The things that I value in life are very similar to the things that Siemens values | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 14. My personal values match Siemens' purpose, values and culture | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 15. Siemens' purpose provides a good fit with the things that I value in life | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |

| Section 2: Siemens' purpose reads: "**Transform the everyday to create a better tomorrow**". Considering that, please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements. | Strongly disagree | Disagree | Neither agree nor disagree | Agree | Strongly agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1.  Siemens' purpose is well known to everybody | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 2.  Siemens' purpose is clearly defined | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 3.  Siemens' purpose is credible | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 4.  Siemens' purpose contributes to the definition of the company's strategy | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 5.  Siemens' purpose contributes to creation of value | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 6.  Siemens' purpose is clearly communicated to employees | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 7.  Siemens' purpose is thoroughly understood by all employees | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 8.  The importance of Siemens' purpose is acknowledged by everyone | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 9.  Everybody at Siemens knows how to contribute to its purpose | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 10. Siemens' purpose is a legitimate way to pursue the company goals | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 11. Siemens' purpose reflects the true values of the company | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |

| Section 3: This section is about the impact of Siemens' purpose. Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements. | Strongly disagree | Disagree | Neither agree nor disagree | Agree | Strongly agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 Siemens' purpose aims at change on a planetary scale (T) | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 2 Siemens' purpose inspires employees to go beyond their individual values (A) | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 3 Siemens' purpose is profound and enthusiastic (P) | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 4 I feel an emotional connection with Siemens' purpose (P) | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 5 I believe that Siemens' purpose is inspirational (A) | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 6 Siemens' purpose motivates me to transcend my personal interests (A) | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 7 Siemens' purpose helps to generate commitment and dedication from its employees (P) | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |

| Section 4: This section is about how you feel about your work. Please indicate your level of agreement with each statement. | Strongly disagree | Disagree | Neither agree nor :. | Agree | Strongly agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. I have found a meaningful career | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 2. I view my work as contributing to my personal growth | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 3. My work really makes no difference to the world | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 4. I understand how my work contributes to my life's meaning | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 5. I have a good sense of what makes my job meaningful | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 6. I know my work makes a positive difference in the world | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 7. My work helps me better understand myself | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 8. I have discovered work that has a satisfying purpose | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 9. My work helps me make sense of the world around me | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 10. The work I do serves a greater purpose | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |

| Section 5: This section is about how you perceive your own performance and your level of enjoyment with your work. Please indicate your level of agreement with each statement. | Strongly disagree | Disagree | Neither agree nor disagree | Agree | Strongly agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. I believe I fulfil the responsibilities specified in my job description | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 2. I believe I perform the tasks that are expected as part of my job | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 3. I believe I meet performance expectations | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 4. I believe I adequately complete my responsibilities | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 5. My job is very enjoyable | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 6. In general, I am satisfied with my job | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 7. All in all, the job I have is great | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |

**Biographical information**

To check potential differences between groups of people, we finally ask you to provide some
bio data.

| Gender | Age: Categories | How long have you been with your organization? |
|---|---|---|
| Male: ____ | 20y – 29y | <1y |
| Female: ____ | 30y – 39y | 1y – 3y |
| Prefer not to say: _____ | 40y – 49y | 4y – 6y |
| | 50y – 59y | 7y – 9y |
| | >60y | >10y |

**Appendix B** - SPSS analysis

*Table 1 - Variables Entered/Removed*

**Variáveis Inseridas/Removidas**[a]

| Modelo | Variáveis inseridas | Variáveis removidas | Método |
|--------|---------------------|---------------------|--------|
| 1 | Purpose statement form, Perceived Organizational Purpose[b] | . | Inserir |

a. Variável Dependente: Job Satisfaction

b. Todas as variáveis solicitadas inseridas.

*Source: SPSS*

*Table 2 - Model Summary of JS with predictors (Form and POP)*

**Resumo do modelo**

| Modelo | R | R quadrado | R quadrado ajustado | Erro padrão da estimativa |
|--------|-----|------------|---------------------|---------------------------|
| 1 | ,485[a] | ,235 | ,223 | ,74546 |

a. Preditores: (Constante), Purpose statement form, Perceived Organizational Purpose

*Source: SPSS*

*Table 3- ANOVA Summary for JS model - Impact of Form and POP*

**ANOVA**[a]

| Modelo | | Soma dos Quadrados | df | Quadrado Médio | Z | Sig. |
|--------|--|---------------------|-----|----------------|--------|------|
| 1 | Regressão | 21,021 | 2 | 10,511 | 18,914 | ,000[b] |
| | Resíduo | 68,352 | 123 | ,556 | | |
| | Total | 89,373 | 125 | | | |

a. Variável Dependente: Job Satisfaction

b. Preditores: (Constante), Purpose statement form, Perceived Organizational Purpose

*Source: SPSS*

*Table 4 - Coefficients summary for JS model - Effects of POP and Form*

**Coeficientes**[a]

| Modelo | | Coeficientes não padronizados | | Coeficientes padronizados | t |
|--------|--|-------------------------------|--|---------------------------|---|
| | | B | Erro Erro | Beta | |
| 1 | (Constante) | 1,143 | ,562 | | 2,036 |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Perceived Organizational Purpose | ,180 | ,175 | ,111 | 1,029 |
| Purpose statement form | ,530 | ,142 | ,403 | 3,735 |

*Source: SPSS*

***Table 5**- Coefficients significance and collinearity for JS model*

**Coeficientes**[a]

| | | | Estatísticas de colinearidade | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Modelo | | Sig. | Tolerância | VIF |
| 1 | (Constante) | ,044 | | |
| | Perceived Organizational Purpose | ,306 | ,535 | 1,868 |
| | Purpose statement form | ,000 | ,535 | 1,868 |

a. Variável Dependente: Job Satisfaction

*Source: SPSS*

***Table 6** - Collinearity diagnosis for JS model - Eigenvalues, condition index, and variance proportions*

**Diagnóstico de colinearidade**[a]

| | | | | Proporções de variância | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Modelo | Dimensão | Autovalor | Índice de condição | (Constante) | Perceived Organizational Purpose | Purpose statement form |
| 1 | 1 | 2,983 | 1,000 | ,00 | ,00 | ,00 |
| | 2 | ,012 | 15,727 | ,61 | ,00 | ,50 |
| | 3 | ,005 | 24,314 | ,39 | 1,00 | ,50 |

a. Variável Dependente: Job Satisfaction

*Source: SPSS*