

E-ISSN: 3108-4192

APSSHS

Academic Publications of Social Sciences and Humanities Studies

2026, Volume 6, Issue 1, Page No: 133-142

Available online at: <https://apsshs.com/>

Journal of Applied Organizational Systems and Behavior

Human Dignity, Recognition, and Autonomy in Contemporary Work Systems

Thabo Nkosi^{1*}, Lerato Molefe¹, Sipho Dlamini², Ayanda Mokoena³, Kabelo Ndlovu⁴

1. Department of Human Dignity and Recognition, Faculty of Business, University of Cape Town, Cape Town, South Africa.
2. Department of Autonomy and Work Systems, Faculty of Management, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa.
3. Department of Organizational Ethics, Faculty of Psychology, University of Pretoria, Pretoria, South Africa.
4. Department of Work Design, Faculty of Psychology, Stellenbosch University, Stellenbosch, South Africa.

Abstract

Contemporary work systems increasingly combine digital monitoring, algorithmic coordination, flexible employment, intensified performance demands, and decentralized responsibility. These arrangements can create efficiencies and discretion while also reshaping whether workers are treated as persons with worth, agency, social standing, and legitimate claims over the conditions of their work. This integrative review examines human dignity through four connected domains: meaning and worthwhile contribution, autonomy and non-domination, recognition and respect, and organizational responsibility. The review combines heterogeneous empirical, qualitative, longitudinal, theoretical, methodological, and governance evidence without treating unlike designs as directly commensurable. The synthesis suggests that dignity is not reducible to job satisfaction, meaningfulness, formal autonomy, or recognition programmes. Rather, dignifying work depends on how work systems organize contribution, discretion, authority, social valuation, and responsibility. The literature also contains tensions: autonomy may coexist with algorithmic control; self-management may redistribute responsibility without eliminating hierarchy; recognition may become instrumental; and ostensibly beneficial practices may impose new burdens. The review therefore proposes a dignity-centered work-system framework that treats these domains as analytically distinct but interacting conditions. The framework is an original integrative synthesis, not a validated causal model. Its relationships remain conditional on employment security, inequality, occupational status, technology, organizational position, and institutional context. Future research should test temporal, multilevel, and intervention pathways while preserving distinctions between employee experience, organizational practice, and structural conditions.

Keywords: Human dignity, Meaningful work, Non-domination, Recognition, Organizational responsibility, Work design

How to cite this article: Nkosi T, Molefe L, Dlamini S, Mokoena A, Ndlovu K. Human Dignity, Recognition, and Autonomy in Contemporary Work Systems. J Appl Organ Syst Behav. 2026;6(1):133-142. <https://doi.org/10.51847/WqZRueqALe>

Received: 01 August 2026; **Revised:** 16 October 2026; **Accepted:** 18 October 2026

Corresponding author: Thabo Nkosi

E-mail ✉ thabo.nkosi@uct.ac.za

Introduction

Human dignity is often invoked as a moral baseline for employment, yet organizational research frequently approaches its practical content indirectly through meaningful work, autonomy, respect, job design, inclusion, or well-being. A dignity perspective adds a distinct question: whether workers are treated as persons whose worth cannot be reduced to output, compliance, visibility, or exchange value. Recent scholarship distinguishes dignity that is inherent from dignity that is experienced, granted, threatened, or earned within organizational relations [1]. Empirical work further shows that dignity is associated with engagement and differentiated workplace behavior, indicating that it is not merely philosophical language



© 2026 The Author(s).

Copyright CC BY-NC-SA 4.0

detached from organizational life [2]. The present review therefore treats dignity as both a normative status and an experienced organizational condition, while avoiding the inference that either dimension can be read directly from performance outcomes. The need for a work-system perspective becomes clearer under insecurity and inequality. Longitudinal evidence links precarious work with threats to workplace dignity in a crisis context [3]. Large-scale observational evidence likewise shows that dignity at work is gendered and associated with discrimination, harassment, and unequal status [4]. These findings imply that dignity cannot be understood solely as a personal attitude or supervisor-level interaction. Employment arrangements, status hierarchies, and structural inequalities shape the conditions under which recognition and agency become possible. At the same time, these designs do not establish that one organizational factor universally causes dignity loss; crisis exposure, occupational composition, institutional context, and worker selection remain plausible alternative explanations.

Contemporary technologies sharpen the problem because they can simultaneously expand coordination capacity and reorganize discretion, surveillance, evaluation, and authority. Digital work technologies and algorithmic management reorganize discretion and control, making their implications partly questions of work-system design rather than neutral technological capability [5, 6]. A dignity-centered analysis must therefore distinguish technological capability from legitimate authority, formal flexibility from substantive autonomy, and visibility from respectful recognition. This article uses an integrative review design to connect four domains often studied separately: meaning and worthwhile contribution, autonomy and non-domination, recognition and respect, and organizational responsibility. Its contribution is not a universal dignity formula, but an evidence-bounded framework for explaining how work systems may support or undermine dignity and where empirical testing is still required.

Integrative review method

The review followed a transparent integrative-review approach suited to literatures that differ in theory, method, level of analysis, and evidentiary purpose. Review questions focused on how dignity is defined and experienced, how meaningful contribution and autonomy relate to it, how recognition and organizational responsibility shape its conditions, and which mechanisms or boundaries constrain interpretation. Review design, search concepts, eligibility rules, extraction categories, and synthesis logic were specified explicitly because literature-review rigor depends on making methodological choices visible [7]. Integrative reviewing was used to move beyond descriptive accumulation toward critical comparison and conceptual integration [8], while preserving differences among empirical, qualitative, longitudinal, theoretical, measurement, and governance evidence rather than converting them into a common effect metric [9].

Searches combined targeted publisher and journal-site retrieval, DOI-indexed scholarly metadata searches, and backward and forward citation chaining. Eligible sources were peer-reviewed Q1 journal articles with verifiable DOIs and direct relevance to a planned construct, mechanism, boundary, table element, figure element, or review claim. Duplicate DOI, version, and channel records were removed before screening. Extraction covered context, design, unit of analysis, constructs, mechanisms, outcomes, limitations, and transferability. Appraisal emphasized claim fit, design appropriateness, construct correspondence, and interpretive boundary rather than a fabricated common quality score. PRISMA-compatible reporting was used only to document evidence identification and selection [10].

Figure 1 reports the verified flow of records through identification, duplicate removal, screening, full-text assessment, exclusion, and final inclusion for this integrative review article.

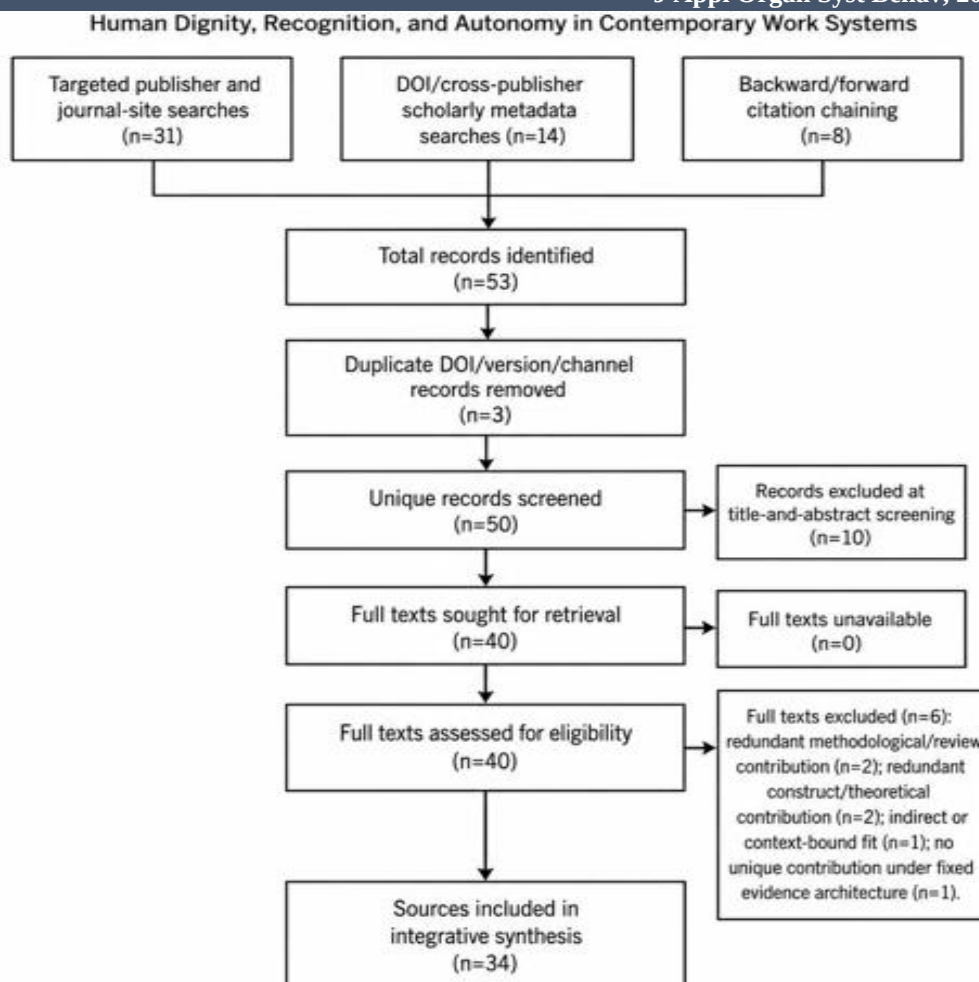


Figure 1. PRISMA Flow Diagram for Evidence Identification and Selection

Meaning and worthwhile contribution

Meaningful work is relevant to dignity because it concerns whether workers can experience their activity as significant rather than merely instrumental. Meta-analytic evidence associates meaningful work with favorable worker and organizational outcomes, although the underlying studies vary in design and do not make meaningfulness equivalent to dignity [11]. Longitudinal evidence strengthens the temporal argument by showing that autonomy and beneficence prospectively contribute to later perceptions of meaningful work [12]. Together, these findings support the importance of contribution and agency, but they do not establish that meaningful work is sufficient for dignified work. Meaning can coexist with overcommitment, insecurity, unequal power, or organizational demands that exploit employees' attachment to socially valued work.

Qualitative evidence further complicates a purely individual account of meaning. Worthwhile contribution is not only a property of tasks; it is interpreted and socially validated through organizational and occupational discourse [13]. A related theoretical synthesis connects meaningful work to absolute autonomy, respectful recognition, and derived dignity [14]. The convergence is therefore conceptual rather than statistical: work is more likely to be experienced as worthwhile when workers can identify a valued contribution and when that contribution is socially acknowledged. Alternative explanations include occupational identity, positive affect, job resources, and worker selection into meaningful roles. Accordingly, the review treats worthwhile contribution as one dignity-relevant condition rather than as a proxy for dignity itself.

Table 1 organizes the evidence, constructs, relationships, uncertainties, and boundary conditions required for review design, evidence domains, and extraction framework for human dignity, recognition, and autonomy in contemporary work systems.

Table 1. Analytical architecture of dignity-centered work-system evaluation

Evidence domain or review construct	Review question	Dignity-relevant condition	What should be examined	Critical distinction	Primary interpretive risk	Boundary for review inference
Human dignity	Is the worker treated as a person of worth rather than mainly as a resource?	Protection of worth and standing	Treatment, status, agency, vulnerability	Inherent worth versus experienced dignity	Reducing dignity to attitudes or performance	Positive attitudes do not establish dignified treatment

Meaning and worthwhile contribution	Can work be understood as significant and socially worthwhile?	Credible contribution without compelled sacrifice	Significance, beneficence, social value	Meaningful work versus manufactured meaning	Assuming meaning offsets insecurity	Meaning is relevant but insufficient
Autonomy and non-domination	Can workers exercise agency without arbitrary control?	Usable discretion with legitimate limits	Choice, contestability, reversibility, dependence	Formal autonomy versus substantive freedom	Treating delegated responsibility as empowerment	More discretion does not prove less domination
Recognition and respect	Are workers accorded consequential standing?	Respectful acknowledgement of personhood and contribution	Treatment, status, listening, influence	Recognition versus visibility or reward	Equating programmes with respect	Acknowledgement does not establish consequential recognition
Organizational responsibility	Does the organization remain accountable for work systems?	Accountable design and risk allocation	Monitoring, authority, safeguards, correction	Participation versus responsibility transfer	Individualizing system-created harms	Adaptability does not establish legitimacy
Work-system conditions	How do arrangements shape the four conditions together?	Coherence across work architecture	Design, security, algorithms, surveillance, HR systems	Isolated practice versus interacting system	Single-practice attribution	System claims require more than individual perceptions
Integrative synthesis	How can heterogeneous findings be combined cautiously?	Evidence-bounded integration	Convergence, contradiction, mechanism, boundary	Integration versus aggregation	Treating unlike methods as comparable	The architecture organizes evidence; it does not validate causality

Table note. Domains are separated to prevent substitution among dignity, meaning, autonomy, recognition, and responsibility. The final row is original review synthesis, not a validated classification.

Autonomy and non-domination

Autonomy refers to workers' capacity to exercise discretion over aspects of their activity, whereas non-domination adds a stronger requirement: freedom from arbitrary, opaque, or structurally unavoidable control. This distinction matters because contemporary work arrangements can increase nominal choice while intensifying managerial reach. Evidence from the global gig economy shows that workers may experience flexibility and task discretion alongside strong platform-mediated control [15]. Conceptual work on algorithmic management similarly emphasizes duality: algorithmic systems can enable coordination or discretion in some respects while constraining autonomy and value creation in others [16]. The implication is conditional rather than technologically deterministic. The same capability may have different dignity implications depending on who sets rules, whether decisions are contestable, and whether workers can meaningfully influence or exit the arrangement.

Self-management creates a parallel caution. Qualitative evidence across self-managing organizations shows that responsibility can be redistributed asymmetrically and hierarchical control may be re-authored rather than eliminated [17]. This makes it important to separate autonomy from responsibility transfer: workers may receive greater discretion while absorbing uncertainty, coordination burdens, or accountability previously held by managers. A relational conception of freedom further suggests that genuine freedom at work depends on institutional and social conditions that enable agency, not merely the absence of direct interference [18]. That argument is normative rather than causal evidence, but it helps specify the non-domination boundary.

For dignity analysis, autonomy is therefore neither unlimited independence nor the simple availability of options. It is substantively usable agency within a structure of legitimate authority. Evidence does not establish that decentralized organization, flexible work, or algorithmic assistance is inherently dignifying or dominating. Their implications remain conditional on enacted authority, reversibility, contestability, responsibility allocation, occupational dependence, and practical capacity to refuse, challenge, or reshape decisions. This boundary prevents a common inferential error: treating technological capability as legitimate authority or formal delegation of choice as proof that organizational power has been redistributed.

Recognition and respect

Recognition concerns whether workers are treated as socially significant persons whose perspectives, contributions, and standing matter in organizational relations. It is broader than praise, visibility, reward, or formal acknowledgement. The Workplace Dignity Scale demonstrates that employees can report multidimensional experiences of dignity, providing an empirical basis for studying respectful treatment without reducing dignity to a single attitude [19]. Yet formal recognition practices are not equivalent to respectful recognition. Critical analysis of employee-recognition programmes shows that recognition can become instrumental when acknowledgement is used primarily to secure compliance, motivation, or identification [20]. The relevant distinction is therefore between being noticed and being accorded standing: a worker may be highly visible while remaining weakly able to influence how that visibility is interpreted or acted upon.

Qualitative evidence makes the relational character of recognition clearer. Research on youth-coded service work shows that social disrespect can threaten adult status and motivate micro-political struggles for recognition and dignity [21]. Research on low-skilled roles similarly suggests that workers may create meaningfulness through anomalous craft practices that generate both autonomy and recognition [22]. These studies converge on recognition as socially enacted rather than administratively declared, but their contexts caution against universalization. Recognition struggles in fast-food or low-skilled work may differ from those in professional, hybrid, or highly regulated occupations. Nor does worker agency eliminate structural inequality. Recognition should therefore be evaluated through enacted treatment, standing, and consequential inclusion rather than programme presence alone. A person can be continuously observed, scored, or praised while lacking substantive influence over decisions affecting status, opportunity, or working conditions. Conversely, recognition may occur through everyday interpersonal and institutional practices without formal rewards. Evidence that workers seek or construct recognition does not establish that managerial recognition programmes satisfy that need, and recognition by itself does not repair unequal employment structures.

Table 2 organizes the evidence, constructs, relationships, uncertainties, and boundary conditions required for cross-study findings, mechanisms, convergence, and conflict in human dignity, recognition, and autonomy in contemporary work systems.

Table 2. Convergences, tensions, and dignity-relevant mechanisms across contemporary work systems

Work-system issue	Dignity-relevant mechanism	Pattern of convergence	Central tension or contradiction	What cannot be inferred	Integrative interpretation
Meaningful contribution	Significance and beneficial contribution	Valued, understandable contribution supports positive experience	Meaning can coexist with insecurity or exploitation	Meaningful work does not establish dignified work	Contribution matters alongside agency and respect
Digital autonomy	Discretion under technological coordination	Technology redistributes discretion	Flexibility may coexist with algorithmic control	Formal flexibility does not establish autonomy	Assess control, contestability, and dependence together
Self-management	Redistribution of authority and responsibility	Decentralization can widen discretion	Responsibility may shift downward while hierarchy persists	Self-management does not prove non-domination	Authority and accountability should be examined jointly
Recognition systems	Social acknowledgement and standing	Workers value socially significant treatment	Recognition may be symbolic or instrumental	Praise, awards, or visibility do not establish respect	Consequential standing matters more than attention
Low-status work	Worker-created meaning and recognition	Workers can preserve dignity under constraints	Agency can coexist with structural disadvantage	Coping does not prove a dignifying system	Recognize agency without legitimizing poor work
Inequality and unfairness	Dehumanization and diminished status	Unequal treatment is compatible with dignity threats	Perceptions may reflect wider structural inequalities	Individual reports do not establish organizational causality	Connect treatment with structural conditions
Workplace monitoring	Visibility, privacy, and control	Monitoring changes worker-organization information relations	Coordination benefits may coexist with reduced agency	Monitoring intensity alone establishes neither harm nor legitimacy	Examine purpose, proportionality, influence, and redress
Organizational responsibility	Authority, risk, and corrective capacity	Design shapes meaningful agency	Participatory practices can create new burdens	Good intent does not establish good consequences	Examine benefits and displaced costs

Table note. Convergence denotes recurring conceptual patterns, not pooled statistical agreement. Tensions are retained because identical practices may have different dignity implications across contexts.

Organizational responsibility

A dignity-centered account cannot place the burden of dignified work solely on individual coping, job crafting, interpersonal civility, or employee resilience. Organizations select technologies, allocate authority, define employment conditions, design monitoring systems, and decide which risks are transferred to workers. Workplace privacy illustrates this responsibility directly. Privacy is an organizational governance issue involving employee agency, stakeholder interests, rights, and asymmetric power rather than merely an individual preference [23, 24]. A rights-based due-diligence approach makes organizational responsibility visible, while the broader privacy literature shows that workers, managers, organizations, and other stakeholders may have competing interests. Neither source establishes one universally effective privacy regime, but together they challenge the assumption that notice or formal consent alone settles questions of worker agency.

Responsibility also extends to the purposes against which organizational practices are evaluated. Critical work on sustainable human resource management argues for moving beyond firm-centered performance toward common-good considerations [25]. Yet benevolent labels cannot be treated as evidence of benevolent consequences. Sustainable-HRM theory identifies ways practices intended to benefit organizations, society, or employees may generate role conflict, additional demands, or unsustainable worker outcomes [26]. This tension is especially important for dignity because organizations can frame

intensified responsibility as empowerment or purpose. A worker may receive discretion while absorbing uncertainty, coordination work, reputational risk, or accountability that the organization retains power to define.

Organizational responsibility is therefore treated here as a governance condition rather than another employee attitude. It concerns whether the organization preserves meaningful agency, establishes defensible limits on monitoring and control, retains accountability for system design, and creates credible routes for challenge and correction. Participation must be distinguished from risk transfer, consultation from consequential influence, and decentralized authority from organizational abdication. Employee resilience cannot substitute for organizational accountability, and adaptability cannot establish that the underlying allocation of authority is legitimate. The reviewed literature supports treating responsibility allocation as analytically important but does not identify one universally effective governance structure across occupations, technologies, ownership arrangements, or institutional settings.

Proposed dignity-centered work-system framework

Work-design research establishes that jobs and work systems are organizationally malleable and can be shaped through multiple actors and pathways [27, 28]. This insight provides the architectural premise for integrating evidence that otherwise resides in separate literatures on meaningful work, autonomy, recognition, privacy, control, and organizational responsibility. **Figure 2** presents the original conceptual synthesis for dignity-centered work-system framework, showing how the article's principal constructs, mechanisms, uncertainties, and decision boundaries are connected.

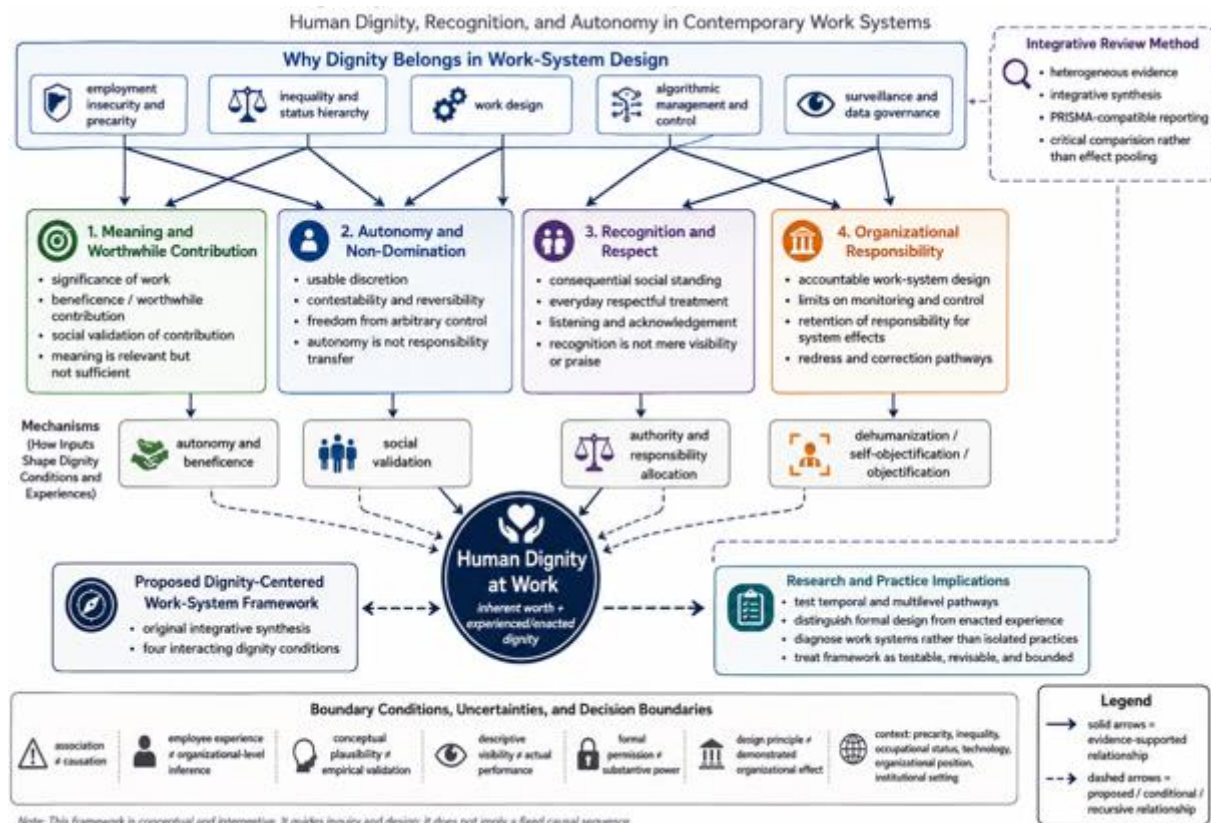


Figure 2. Dignity-Centered Work-System Framework

The framework places human dignity at the center while separating four conditions that should not be collapsed: meaning and worthwhile contribution, autonomy and non-domination, recognition and respect, and organizational responsibility. Work-system inputs include job design, employment security, HR practices, algorithmic management, and surveillance or data governance. These inputs may operate through mechanisms such as autonomy, beneficence, social validation, responsibility allocation, dehumanization, and objectification. Quantitative evidence indicates that perceived unequal or unfair workplaces are associated with lower dignity through organizational dehumanization and worker self-objectification [29]. Review evidence on workplace objectification similarly identifies instrumental treatment and diminished agency as recurring concerns across organizational settings [30]. These findings make objectification a plausible dignity-threat pathway, but neither establishes a universal causal sequence.

The framework's central contribution is integrative rather than predictive. Meaning becomes dignity-relevant when contribution can be experienced as worthwhile without organizationally imposed meaning legitimizing excessive sacrifice.

Autonomy becomes dignity-relevant when discretion is accompanied by protection against arbitrary control and inappropriate responsibility transfer. Recognition becomes dignity-relevant when social standing is substantive rather than symbolic. Organizational responsibility concerns whether conditions enabling meaning, autonomy, and recognition are institutionally supported rather than delegated to workers as personal responsibilities.

The proposed relationships are deliberately bounded. Gender, inequality, employment insecurity, occupational status, platform dependence, technology configuration, organizational position, national institutions, and level of analysis may alter them. Employee perceptions therefore cannot automatically establish organization-level dignity, and formal design features cannot establish enacted practice. Conceptual coherence likewise does not establish empirical validation.

Table 3 organizes the evidence, constructs, relationships, uncertainties, and boundary conditions required for evidence limitations, unresolved questions, and future research priorities.

Table 3. Boundary conditions, unresolved propositions, and research priorities for a dignity-centered work-system framework

Framework component	Key boundary condition	Unresolved proposition	Competing explanation	Evidence needed for stronger inference	Implication for framework refinement
Meaning and worthwhile contribution	Identity, insecurity, social value	Contribution may support dignity only without coerced sacrifice	Positive affect or occupational selection	Longitudinal studies separating meaning, sacrifice, security, dignity	Model contribution as conditional
Autonomy	Dependence, managerial discretion, technological control	Discretion may support dignity only when consequential decisions can be challenged	Flexible task choice may mimic autonomy	Designs measuring formal and practical decision power	Separate autonomy from non-domination
Non-domination	Contestability, reversibility, information asymmetry	Arbitrary control may threaten dignity despite formal choice	Control may be accepted for expertise or efficiency	Comparisons of challenge rights, appeals, and dependence	Separate legitimacy from amount of control
Recognition and respect	Status, identity, hierarchy	Recognition may support dignity only when acknowledgement changes standing	Praise may improve affect without status change	Process studies linking recognition to treatment and influence	Distinguish symbolic and consequential recognition
Organizational responsibility	Accountability and risk transfer	Participation may harm dignity if responsibility moves without authority	Burdens may be temporary transition costs	Longitudinal multilevel tracking of authority and accountability	Test responsibility symmetry
Digital monitoring and algorithmic management	Purpose, transparency, dependence, review	Visibility without explanation or contestability may threaten dignity	Surveillance may improve safety or consistency	Field comparisons linking systems, experience, and decisions	Treat technology as a conditional input
Structural inequality and precarity	Gender, race, migration, occupation, institutions	Dignity conditions may differ where exit or bargaining power is weak	Selection may explain some variation	Comparative and intersectional longitudinal studies	Add structural dependence explicitly
Multilevel inference	Employee, team, organization, institution	Individual experiences may aggregate only under shared conditions	Local supervisors may drive attributed effects	Multilevel links among formal systems, practice, and experience	Prevent automatic level shifts
Integrated framework	Interaction among four conditions	Dignity may depend on configurations rather than additive effects	One condition may dominate in some settings	Configurational, longitudinal, mixed-method, intervention research	Keep framework falsifiable

Table note. Propositions and refinement implications are original integrative synthesis, not validated causal mechanisms, universal rules, thresholds, or demonstrated effects.

Research and practice implications

Research should move beyond asking whether a single workplace practice is positively associated with dignity and instead examine how systems configure authority, visibility, contribution, and recognition over time. Connected-workplace surveillance research shows that datification, sensors, and artificial intelligence can reorganize monitoring and its social consequences [31]. Research on the Scandinavian gig economy likewise shows that platform mediation can complicate recognition by reducing conventional workplace socialization and affective ties [32]. These findings support studying technology as part of a relational work system rather than an isolated tool. Useful designs would compare monitoring

capability with perceived legitimacy, contestability, actual worker influence, and responsibility retention while distinguishing individual reactions from team- or organization-level conditions.

Future research must also preserve structural differences among workers. Qualitative evidence from Latina farmworkers shows active efforts to maintain dignity under oppressive workplace conditions, cautioning against models that portray workers only as passive recipients of managerial dignity [33]. A critical framework on precarity similarly locates vulnerability in structural insecurity and uncertainty rather than solely in individual adaptability [34]. Accordingly, future studies should examine whether the proposed conditions operate differently by employment security, occupation, gendered and racialized status, migration position, institutional regime, and dependence on platform or organizational intermediaries. Mechanisms identified in relatively secure professional work should not be assumed to transfer unchanged into contingent, low-status, or highly dependent employment.

Testing the framework requires designs capable of challenging rather than merely illustrating it. Longitudinal and cross-lagged studies can examine temporal ordering; multilevel studies can distinguish formal policies from enacted supervisory practice and individual experience; qualitative process studies can trace recognition struggles and responsibility transfer; and quasi-experimental work-system changes can examine whether alterations to authority or monitoring change dignity-relevant experiences. Measurement research should establish discriminant validity among dignity, meaningfulness, autonomy, respect, inclusion, status, and satisfaction.

Practice implications are best framed as diagnostic questions rather than validated prescriptions. Organizations can examine whether workers can understand their contribution as worthwhile, exercise usable discretion, challenge consequential decisions, receive respectful recognition, and avoid bearing risks created by systems they do not control. They can also examine whether formal voice produces consequential influence and whether monitoring capacity is matched by legitimate limits and redress. These questions may guide diagnosis, but current evidence provides neither universal thresholds nor guarantees that a specific intervention will improve dignity.

Conclusion

Human dignity provides a demanding lens on contemporary work because it asks not only whether work is efficient, satisfying, flexible, or meaningful, but whether workers are treated as persons with worth, agency, social standing, and legitimate claims over the conditions governing their activity. The integrative synthesis developed here shows why meaning and worthwhile contribution, autonomy and non-domination, recognition and respect, and organizational responsibility should be examined together without collapsing them into one construct.

The proposed dignity-centered work-system framework organizes these domains while retaining critical boundaries. Meaning may coexist with exploitation; autonomy may conceal responsibility transfer; recognition may become symbolic or instrumental; and organizational initiatives framed as beneficial may create new burdens. Technology, inequality, precarity, occupational status, organizational position, and institutional context further condition interpretation. Workers also remain agents capable of contesting, interpreting, and reshaping organizational conditions.

The synthesis therefore emphasizes configuration rather than isolated practices: a work arrangement may support one dignity condition while weakening another, and the balance may change over time or across groups. This makes contradiction analytically important rather than a defect to be averaged away.

The framework is therefore a research architecture rather than a validated causal model or implementation standard. Its value depends on future studies capable of testing temporal pathways, separating levels of analysis, examining structural inequalities, identifying unintended effects, and determining when changes in work systems genuinely alter workers' capacity for worthwhile contribution, non-dominated agency, respectful recognition, and institutionally supported dignity.

Acknowledgments: None

Conflict of interest: None

Financial support: None

Ethics statement: None

References

1. Gibson C, Thomason B, Margolis J, Groves K, Gibson S, Franczak J. Dignity inherent and earned: The experience of dignity at work. *Acad Manag Ann.* 2023;17(1):218-67. doi:10.5465/annals.2021.0059

2. Lucas K, Manikas AS, Mattingly ES, Crider CJ. Engaging and misbehaving: How dignity affects employee work behaviors. *Organ Stud.* 2017;38(11):1505-27. doi:10.1177/0170840616677634
3. Allan BA, Blustein DL. Precarious work and workplace dignity during COVID-19: A longitudinal study. *J Vocat Behav.* 2022;136:103739. doi:10.1016/j.jvb.2022.103739
4. Roscigno VJ, Yavorsky JE, Quadlin N. Gendered dignity at work. *Am J Sociol.* 2021;127(2):562-620. doi:10.1086/717448
5. Parker SK, Grote G. Automation, algorithms, and beyond: Why work design matters more than ever in a digital world. *Appl Psychol.* 2022;71(4):1171-204. doi:10.1111/apps.12241
6. Kellogg KC, Valentine MA, Christin A. Algorithms at work: The new contested terrain of control. *Acad Manag Ann.* 2020;14(1):366-410. doi:10.5465/annals.2018.0174
7. Snyder H. Literature review as a research methodology: An overview and guidelines. *J Bus Res.* 2019;104:333-9. doi:10.1016/j.jbusres.2019.07.039
8. Elsbach KD, van Knippenberg D. Creating high-impact literature reviews: An argument for 'integrative reviews'. *J Manag Stud.* 2020;57(6):1277-89. doi:10.1111/joms.12581
9. Cronin MA, George E. The why and how of the integrative review. *Organ Res Methods.* 2023;26(1):168-92. doi:10.1177/1094428120935507
10. Page MJ, McKenzie JE, Bossuyt PM, Boutron I, Hoffmann TC, Mulrow CD, et al. The PRISMA 2020 statement: An updated guideline for reporting systematic reviews. *BMJ.* 2021;372. doi:10.1136/bmj.n71
11. Allan BA, Batz-Barbarich C, Sterling HM, Tay L. Outcomes of meaningful work: A meta-analysis. *J Manag Stud.* 2019;56(3):500-28. doi:10.1111/joms.12406
12. Martela F, Gómez M, Unanue W, Araya S, Bravo D, Espejo A. What makes work meaningful? Longitudinal evidence for the importance of autonomy and beneficence for meaningful work. *J Vocat Behav.* 2021;131:103631. doi:10.1016/j.jvb.2021.103631
13. Bailey C, Madden A, Lips-Wiersma M. Experiencing meaningful work through worthwhile contributions: A critical discourse analysis. *Hum Relat.* 2025;78(5):550-78. doi:10.1177/00187267241255581
14. Laaser K, Bolton SC. Absolute autonomy, respectful recognition and derived dignity: Towards a typology of meaningful work. *Int J Manag Rev.* 2022;24(3):373-93. doi:10.1111/ijmr.12282
15. Wood AJ, Graham M, Lehdonvirta V, Hjorth I. Good gig, bad gig: Autonomy and algorithmic control in the global gig economy. *Work Employ Soc.* 2019;33(1):56-75. doi:10.1177/0950017018785616
16. Meijerink J, Bondarouk T. The duality of algorithmic management: Toward a research agenda on HRM algorithms, autonomy and value creation. *Hum Resour Manag Rev.* 2023;33(1):100876. doi:10.1016/j.hrmr.2021.100876
17. Koistinen J, Vuori J. Asymmetries of responsibility in self-managing organization: Authoring shared and hierarchical control. *Leadership.* 2024;20(4):207-31. doi:10.1177/17427150241264050
18. Thaning MS, Gersel J, Pedersen M. Concrete freedom at work: Hegel's normative conception of freedom and its relevance to organization studies. *Organ Stud.* 2024;45(9):1277-99. doi:10.1177/01708406241252929
19. Thomas B, Lucas K. Development and validation of the Workplace Dignity Scale. *Group Organ Manag.* 2019;44(1):72-111. doi:10.1177/1059601118807784
20. Hancock P. Employee recognition programmes: An immanent critique. *Organization.* 2024;31(2):381-401. doi:10.1177/13505084221098244
21. Mao J, Xue YA. Salvaging adulthood at youth work: Dignity, social disrespect, and the micro-politics of recognition in a polarized world. *Organization.* 2022;29(6):1056-80. doi:10.1177/1350508420973335
22. Rostain M, Clarke J. Meaningful work through craft: How workers in low-skilled roles engage in anomalous craft to gain autonomy and receive recognition. *Organ Stud.* 2025;46(1):7-34. doi:10.1177/01708406241295504
23. Ebert I, Wildhaber I, Adams-Prassl J. Big data in the workplace: Privacy due diligence as a human rights-based approach to employee privacy protection. *Big Data Soc.* 2021;8(1):20539517211013051. doi:10.1177/20539517211013051
24. Bhavé DP, Teo LH, Dalal RS. Privacy at work: A review and a research agenda for a contested terrain. *J Manag.* 2020;46(1):127-64. doi:10.1177/0149206319878254
25. Cooke FL. From strategic HRM to sustainable HRM? Exploring a common good approach through a critical reflection on existing literature. *Hum Resour Manage.* 2025;64(5):1381-99. doi:10.1002/hrm.22318
26. Bush JT. Win-win-lose? Sustainable HRM and the promotion of unsustainable employee outcomes. *Hum Resour Manag Rev.* 2020;30(3):100676. doi:10.1016/j.hrmr.2018.11.004
27. Parker SK, Morgeson FP, Johns G. One hundred years of work design research: Looking back and looking forward. *J Appl Psychol.* 2017;102(3):403-20. doi:10.1037/apl0000106
28. Parker SK, Jorritsma K. Good work design for all: Multiple pathways to making a difference. *Eur J Work Organ Psychol.* 2021;30(3):456-68. doi:10.1080/1359432X.2020.1860121

29. Sainz M, Moreno-Bella E, Torres-Vega LC. Perceived unequal and unfair workplaces trigger lower job satisfaction and lower workers' dignity via organizational dehumanization and workers' self-objectification. *Eur J Soc Psychol.* 2023;53(5):921-38. doi:10.1002/ejsp.2944
30. Zhang B, Wisse B, Lord RG. Workplace objectification: A review, synthesis, and research agenda. *Hum Resour Manag Rev.* 2025;35(4):101104. doi:10.1016/j.hrmr.2025.101104
31. Mettler T. The connected workplace: Characteristics and social consequences of work surveillance in the age of datification, sensorization, and artificial intelligence. *J Inf Technol.* 2024;39(3):547-67. doi:10.1177/02683962231202535
32. Newlands G. Anthropolitropism: Searching for recognition in the Scandinavian gig economy. *Sociology.* 2022;56(5):821-38. doi:10.1177/00380385211063362
33. Areguin MA, Stewart AJ. Latina farmworkers' experiences: Maintaining dignity in an oppressive workplace. *Gend Work Organ.* 2022;29(4):988-1007. doi:10.1111/gwao.12788
34. Blustein DL, Grzanka PR, Gordon M, Smith CM, Allan BA. The psychology of precarity: A critical framework. *Am Psychol.* 2025;80(5):757-70. doi:10.1037/amp0001361