Antecedents And Consequences Of Career Calling

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Abstract*:*
Career calling is perceived as originating from an external power, relating to careers that help others and give personal meaning. The purpose of this study is to explore prior literature to identify the antecedents and consequences of career calling. The study explores the variables that influence an individual's sense of calling in their profession. This study elucidates various psychological, social, and environmental aspects that shape the development of career calling as well as its effects on various outcomes. It shows that understanding the antecedents and consequences of career calling may help in designing effective career development strategies and enhanced workplace outcomes. The results of the existing studies are diverse, emphasizing the importance of more research to elucidate the relationship between career calling and its antecedents and consequences. The study helps individuals align their careers with their values and goals by exploring the role of their calling— whether as a precursor or outcome in relation to various variables, therefore helping individuals toward the right career path. The study enhances the current understanding of career calling by looking at its relationships with several variables, which are important for organizational practices, educational institutions, policymakers, and career development.
Keywords: *Career calling, Antecedents, Consequences, Meaningful work, Motivation*

I.   Introduction

The term "calling" originates from Western culture, specifically from religious contexts, signifying it as "the call of God" (Wang & Dai, 2017a). The notion of career calling has a long association in Western culture. Initial conceptualizations regarded it as a distinct divine call for an individual to execute a certain activity or role (Colozzi & Colozzi, 2000). Over the years, it has transitioned from a sacred to a secular concept, now influencing various fields, including religious studies, sociology, and organizational behavior (Hunter et al., 2010). Subsequently, the construct was transformed and altered to prioritize the active pursuit of personal and professional growth (Hall & Chandler, 2005; Weiss et al., 2003). At present, religious calling predominantly pertains to missions that focus on serving others (Dalton, 2001; Hernandez et al., 2011), conversely, traditional, non-secular definitions highlight that calling may originate from any identifiable external source, such as God or inherited culture (Dik & Duffy, 2009a) or may stem from an uncertain drive directing one to the "right place" (Bunderson & Thompson, 2009, p. 38). Many viewpoints indicate that calling is pro-social and altruistic (Dik & Duffy, 2009a; Hunter et al., 2010), and which shows a sense of meaning and purpose (Dik & Duffy, 2009). Calling involves maximizing one's abilities, interests, talents, and opportunities, which encompass the application of socially relevant values and objectives that promote well-being (Bunderson & Thompson, 2009a; Hagmaier & Abele, 2012; Hunter et al., 2010; Steger et al., 2010). Career calling is perceived as originating from the individual (Hall & Chandler, 2005; Rosso et al., 2010; Wrzesniewski et al., 2009) and is fundamental to one's identity and distinctive abilities (Hall & Chandler, 2005). This viewpoint acknowledges individuals' efforts to attain a sense of personal and self-relevant value (Dobrow et al., 2023; Zhang et al., 2024). It applies to individuals of any belief system or none and may signify a desire to make an impact on society in some manner (Dobrow, 2004; Elangovan et al., 2010; Steger et al., 2010).

Individuals may perceive their calling as an intense passion for a particular field, which may cause a profound sense of urgency, enduring commitment, and domain-specific skills (Dobrow, 2004; Dobrow & Tosti-Kharas, 2011). Calling is a personal mission, or a pursuit of self-actualization and enjoyment (Dobrow, 2004; Hall & Chandler, 2005), or a work orientation wherein work is viewed as essential to one's life (Wrzesniewski et al., 1997). This paradigm must acknowledge both self and other-oriented purposes and meanings drawn from one's calling, recognizing that such calling may emerge internally (from abilities and values) or externally (from opportunities, family, or destiny) (Praskova et al., 2015). Career calling denotes an individual's profound sense of purpose, significance, and enthusiasm in their professional role (Dik & Duffy, 2009). The importance of career calling is underscored by the growing prevalence of burnout, disengagement, and turnover, necessitating institutional strategies that foster meaningful work (Dik & Duffy, 2009; Hall & Chandler, 2005). The researchers have examined the concept of work as calling to gain a deeper understanding of the nature and attributes of

profoundly meaningful work (Bunderson & Thompson, 2009a). Empirical studies on career calling indicate that when work allows individuals to fulfill their career calling, they perceive their work as more important due to its happiness and societal influence (Rosso et al., 2010).

Most research has been conducted in Western, independent societies, which makes it hard to apply the results to socialist or non-Western settings, where people might see their work as calling in a very different manner (Thompson & Bunderson, 2018; Xie et al., 2016a). Research indicates that the concept of career calling requires studying its evolution and its implications (Rosa et al., 2024; Van der Heijden et al., 2024). This study addresses the gaps by exploring how career calling develops in individuals and examining its impact on their professional and personal lives (Hall & Chandler, 2005). Much of the existing literature has focused on the various outcomes of career calling. This study aims to fill the gaps by combining key concepts of calling with findings from previous studies.

II. Literature Review

The notion of career calling emphasizes that a person's source of meaning may come from helping themselves, their community, or society as a whole, but research on religious calling usually shows that career calling enriches the community or others (Dobrow, 2004). An individual who finds their purpose through discernment, which entails learning and practicing to recognize their own voice clearly and enhances one's capacity to act, is typically someone whose calling comes from an affinity with God or a higher power (Weiss et al., 2003). Religious calling believes that they are operating in accordance with and deriving significance from a higher power's larger plan for their existence (Hall & Chandler, 2005). Calling aligns with those who urge for a broader, more generic concept that transcends religious implications (Hall & Chandler, 2005). Career calling may arise from a distinct set of principles that influence an individual's self-perception and sense of meaningfulness (Hall & Chandler, 2005). There are three representative conceptions of "calling" that exist within Western society, which are classical, modern, and neoclassical (Wang & Dai, 2017b). The evolution of the career calling concept from classical to modern perspectives, incorporating both spiritual and self-determined motivation (Dik & Shimizu, 2019a).

The classical perspective is derived from the Judeo-Christian tradition, which has a significant religious influence. This perspective underscores personal duty and destiny (Wang & Dai, 2017). Davidson and Caddell (1994) refer to calling as adherence to divine will, whereas Ponton et al. (2014) describe it as personal salvation, summoned by God to achieve the common good. Bunderson and Thompson (2009b) characterized it as a tangible realm within the workplace and a destiny to be fulfilled, due to the abilities and opportunities provided by a higher power. Individuals are focusing on the significance of their work and independence in their career selection processes (Wang & Dai, 2017).

The modern perspective emphasizes the intrinsic motivation for self-actualization and happiness in career choices (Wang & Dai, 2017b). Dobrow and Tosti-Kharas defined the calling as "a subjective and intrinsic mental structure, is a strong and meaningful passion of individual experience in specific areas at work so that they put a lot of energy in the work, cannot even imagine themselves to do other work" (2011, p. 1003). Hall and Chandler defined calling as "a person's intention to do the work, which is regarded as the purpose of his or her life (2005, p. 160)". The modern viewpoint emphasizes individuals' quest for intrinsic meaning in their career choices (Wang & Dai, 2017b).

In contrast to modern views, the neoclassical perspective on calling emphasizes both the individual's internal voice and external choices, aligning more closely with the original concept of "calling." This perspective underscores the significance of personal value realization while also highlighting the necessity of meeting societal needs (Wang & Dai, 2017b). Elangovan et al. (2010) described career calling as a sequence of acts characterized by pro-social tendencies, mainly expressed in the synthesis and coherence of an individual's desires, obligations, and actual behaviors.

These three perspectives differ in their approach to career calling (Wang & Dai, 2017b). The classical approach posits that the sense of career calling originates only from God. The modern viewpoint asserts that the sense of career calling originates with the individual himself. The neoclassical perspective posits that the concept of career calling encompasses both the individual and external factors, asserting that the purpose of work is to actualize personal self-worth while also contributing to societal welfare and the common good. From the neoclassical perspective, the term serves to integrate "personal importance" and "social importance "(Wang & Dai, 2017b). The study is influenced by two fundamental frameworks: career construction theory (CCT) and work as a calling theory (WCT).

Career construction theory: It states that individuals actively shape their careers by engaging with contextual and personal factors (Savickas, 2005). This perspective emphasizes the role of adaptability, cognitive flexibility, and self-concept in career development. It highlights the interaction between human adaptability and external factors that form vocational identity and meaning (Savickas, 2005; Ulfa et al., 2021).

Work as Calling Theory: It conceptualizes calling as both a sense and a process—from perceiving a calling to living it (Duffy et al., 2018). It introduces variables such as external summons, personal purpose, and pro- social motivation as core components. Combining these theories allows for an integrated understanding of how career calling arises and manifests in their work contexts, considering both personal and environmental influences.

The conceptualization and measurement of career calling vary among studies, with some highlighting an ethical or religious aspect, while others focus on meaning or prosocial motivation, which leads to operational definitions and outcomes (Dik & Duffy, 2009a; Elangovan et al., 2010). Career calling is recognized as a form of work that is profoundly significant on a personal level, prosocial in nature, and frequently emerges from an internal or external impulse (Dik & Duffy, 2009a; Duffy & Dik, 2013). Research indicates that certain conceptions of career calling are deeply linked to religion or spirituality (Dik & Duffy, 2009a). However, career calling is not only linked to religion or spirituality; it has also been characterized as a vocation that describes an individual's life purpose (Hall & Chandler, 2005) and a profession aimed at benefiting the greater good (Wrzesniewski et al., 1997). Dik and Duffy (2009, p. 427) defined calling as "a transcendent summons, experienced as originating beyond the self, to approach a particular life role in a manner oriented toward demonstrating or deriving a sense of purpose or meaningfulness and that holds other-oriented values and goals as primary sources of motivation". They suggested that career calling is perceived as deriving from an external impetus, relevant to professions that help others and provide personal meaning. Numerous studies found that the perception of one's career as a calling is consistently correlated with well-being, work meaning, career commitment, life meaning, career maturity, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and life satisfaction (Duffy & Dik, 2013; Thompson & Bunderson, 2018). Therefore, career calling has been looked at in different ways (like categorical, unidimensional, and multidimensional) with various definitions of what it means (Duffy et al., 2015). The disparities in measuring and conceptualizing career calling have been a source of confusion in this emerging research field (Dobrow & Tosti- Kharas, 2012; Duffy & Dik, 2013a; Hagmaier & Abele, 2012). Currently, this study has expanded to encompass several interpretations and is frequently used in reference to both religious and non-religious career paths (Dik & Duffy, 2009a).

III.   Antecedents Of Career Calling

Career calling is described as a profound sense of purpose or meaning in one's professional life, which has led to increased interest in various professions (Duffy & Dik, 2013). A growing body of literature outlines several psychological and social factors that affect the development of career calling (Afsar et al., 2016). Early life experiences, encompassing personal values, role models, and engagement in meaningful work during growing up, play an essential role in calling (Hunter et al., 2010). From a social-contextual viewpoint, organizational support, mentoring, and workplace autonomy are associated with the development of career calling, especially when individuals perceive their work as consistent with their beliefs and contributing to a larger social impact (Elangovan et al., 2010; Wrzesniewski et al., 1997). Collectively, these factors highlight the relationship between the individual and environmental factors in the development of career calling (Duffy et al., 2012; Hirschi, 2011). Hirschi (2011) notes that career calling in such contexts involves vocational identity achievement, engagement, and alignment between work and self-concept. In this light, career calling becomes both a motivational and identity-driven construct. The following are several antecedents that have been identified in previous research that contribute to the emergence of career calling to gain a more comprehensive understanding of its roots.

Mentoring: Mentors act as role models and guides, helping students in recognizing career trajectories that correspond with their values and strengths. Mentoring has been found to significantly influence career calling among academicians, particularly in the early stages of their careers (Ensher & Ehrhardt, 2022). Mentors act as role models and help mentees align their professional aspirations with personal values. This relational support contributes to clearer vocational identity and fosters a sense of meaning in their academic roles.

Insight experiences: At significant career transitions, educators frequently refer to insight experiences, or transformative moments that elucidate one's professional trajectory (Ensher & Ehrhardt, 2022). Such experiences provide clarity and reinforce the intrinsic motivations behind pursuing a particular career. Significant life events that clarify one's professional purpose have been identified as catalysts for career calling. These "career-defining moments" are often cited by academics during transitions or pivotal teaching experiences (Ensher & Ehrhardt, 2022; Haney-Loehlein et al., 2015).

Job crafting: Employees who engage in proactive job crafting are more likely to perceive their work as a calling (Ulfa et al., 2021). These behaviors are relevant where autonomy is high and self-directed change is possible. Individuals may restructure their work experiences to enhance meaningfulness to reinforce their sense

of work as calling (Riasnugrahani et al., 2019). Research suggests that job crafting helps individuals to integrate their abilities and ambitions into their roles, thus enhancing the view of work as a calling (Tims et al., 2013).

Career pursuit and transitions: The concept of calling motivates career transitions and focused learning, which aligns one's work with a sense of purpose, which has been emphasized in analyses of calling and career transition (Mauno et al., 2025; Thompson & Bunderson, 2018). Pursuing meaningful career paths allows individuals to integrate their talents, values, and motivations with their professional life, therefore strengthening their likelihood of viewing work as a calling (Dik & Shimizu, 2019b; Dobrow & Tosti-Kharas, 2011b).

Person-environment fit: Person-environment fit has been identified as a foundational factor in developing a sense of career calling (Xu et al., 2023). When individuals perceive a significant relationship between their personal attributes and their work environment, they are more inclined to view their roles as a calling, since such congruence provides a sense of identity, purpose, and fulfillment (Edwards & Shipp, 2007; Xie et al., 2016a).

Personal values and motivation: Calling generally arises from a combination of values and motivations; prosocial (other-oriented) and pro-self (self-actualization) value orientations impact the experience and development of calling (Hart & Hart, 2023). Personal values, including prosocial orientation, altruism, and intrinsic work values, play an important role in impacting the experience of career calling, as they create a moral and motivational framework that leads individuals toward meaningful work (Duffy & Dik, 2013; Elangovan et al., 2010).

Future work self: A clear, concrete idea of an individual's future career forecasts dedication to workplace learning and mentoring, which subsequently predicts the development of a career calling (Liu & Hou, 2025). Future work self allows individuals to view their existing profession as part of a bigger life purpose, thus strengthening the sense of career calling (Strauss et al., 2012).

Meaningfulness: Individuals who view their work as meaningful are more inclined to perceive their work as a calling, as meaningfulness gives a foundation for finding purpose and direction in one's career (Duffy et al., 2012; Wrzesniewski, 2003). Research shows that meaningful work develops an intrinsic motivation and a profound sense of purpose, hence increasing the emergence of a calling (Duffy et al., 2013b).

IV. Consequences Of Career Calling

The concept of career calling has been related to numerous positive benefits for both individuals and organizations. People who perceive their work as calling often show higher levels of job satisfaction, work engagement, and organizational commitment (Duffy, Allan, et al., 2011). Furthermore, career calling is positively associated with psychological well-being, as it imparts a sense of purpose, coherence, and fulfillment in life (Steger et al., 2012). Research shows that persons with a pronounced sense of career calling are more inclined to exhibit career commitment and engage in proactive career behaviors, including seeking feedback and participating in professional development (Dobrow & Tosti-Kharas, 2011). Career calling is crucial as it enhances work effectiveness, develops engagement, and supports resilience against burnout (Hirschi, 2012). Moreover, research indicates that career calling enhances social well-being, as individuals are more likely to engage with their communities and develop significant relationships through work (Elangovan et al., 2010). With these outcomes, several researchers suggest that career calling may result in dedication or workaholism, particularly when individuals have a moral obligation to their work, which could adversely affect work-life balance (Bunderson & Thompson, 2009a). In summary, career calling significantly influences personal satisfaction and professional efficacy. The following consequences of career calling have been identified by several studies based on previous research.

Work commitment: Individuals who perceive their work as a calling report higher levels of resilience and commitment to their work (Duffy et al., 2013a; Duffy & Dik, 2013; Rothmann & Hamukang'andu, 2013). Work commitment, which indicates the psychological attachment and passion an individual feels toward their profession, has been recognized as a key role in career calling, as higher commitment enhances engagement with work roles (Duffy, Dik, et al., 2011a; Meyer & Herscovitch, 2001).

Psychological capital: It encompasses self-efficacy, hope, optimism, and resilience, which are significant predictors of career calling (Jaffery & Abid, 2020). Individuals with high psychological capital are more likely to interpret challenges as opportunities and persist in meaningful work pursuits. Psychological capital, as an individual resource, helps individuals in managing work-related stress and minimizing burnout (Hobfoll, 2001; Zhao et al., 2022).

Psychological well-being: Career calling is positively associated with psychological well-being, including life satisfaction and purpose (Steger et al., 2012). Individuals with greater psychological well-being show a stronger ability to perceive work as a calling since their sense of autonomy, environmental mastery, and purpose support the integration of personal meaning with professional roles (Keyes et al., 2002).

Social well-being: Individuals who perceive a career calling may regard work as an opportunity to make a positive impact on society, thereby increasing social well-being (Allan & Duffy, 2014). An individual's view of motivation might affect their job satisfaction within the organization, thereby enhancing their well-being (Presbitero & Teng-Calleja, 2020). A sense of purpose is associated with increased social well-being, as individuals perceive their work as contributing to a greater good, therefore develop a sense of belonging and societal contribution (Duffy et al., 2013). Social well-being, such as collegiality and contribution to the social community (Hirschi, 2011a).

Happiness: Happiness is usually referred to as a state of well-being, regarded as an essential component of positive organizational behavior (Higgs & Dulewicz, 2014). Calling provides a profound sense of meaning and purpose to individuals in their career pursuits, enabling them to make a positive impact on society. This results in higher levels of happiness (Hagmaier & Abele, 2012; Huta & Waterman, 2014). When individuals feel a profound sense of purpose, they build a stronger connection to their work and exhibit an intrinsic motivation to do well, resulting in increased happiness (Erum et al., 2020).

Creativity: Dobrow and Heller (2015) says that calling is typically motivated by internal motivation rather than extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation fosters interest in individuals, encouraging them to engage in tasks and obtain beneficial experiences from them (Amabile et al., 1996). According to the broaden-and-build model of positive emotion (Fredrickson, 1998), these positive emotions enhance individuals' cognitive and psychological resources, enabling them to develop novel concepts. We believe that intrinsic motivation, a fundamental aspect of calling, stimulates individual creativity. Previous research indicates a positive correlation between creativity and intrinsic motivation (Leung et al., 2014). A previous study examined the association between individuals' profound sense of calling and its beneficial impact on their creativity (Lv et al., 2021).

Job satisfaction: It is referred to as an individual's cognitive and emotional evaluation or attitude regarding their occupation (Weiss, 2002). Previous research shows a positive correlation between calling and job satisfaction (Li et al., 2021). Previous studies have shown that people who perceive their work as a calling find it inseparable from their identity. It provides individuals with fulfillment, leading to increased job satisfaction (Douglass et al., 2016). Prior research shows that elevated levels of career calling increase the positive effect of job resources and decrease the negative effects of job demands on job satisfaction (Huang et al., 2022).

Career satisfaction: Individuals who perceive calling in their profession are motivated not only by external factors but also by the inherent importance of their work; they regard their work as important, giving a sense of fulfillment that enhances their life commitment (Wu et al., 2024). Moreover, we expect that persons with a sense of calling possess an "internal compass" (Hall and Chandler, 2005), which is likely to improve career satisfaction. Prior research has examined the positive correlation between calling and career satisfaction (Xie et al., 2016a).

Reduced turnover intentions: Living one's calling reduces intentions to leave the organization or profession (Duffy et al., 2013). This is particularly important in retaining passionate, high-performing educators and researchers. Those who identify their work as calling are less likely to be absent or consider leaving their institution, as their work aligns with intrinsic motivations and values (Duffy & Dik, 2013; Wrzesniewski et al., 1997).

Engagement: Career calling predicts higher engagement, which subsequently leads to enhanced innovative work behavior in organizational studies (Zhou et al., 2025). Studies suggest that engagement is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption. Individuals who are highly engaged are more likely to perceive their work as intrinsically meaningful and in accordance with their sense of purpose (Hirschi, 2011b; Schaufeli et al., 2006).

V.   Theoretical And Practical Implications

The most common view in the research is that career calling has positive effects in general, as well as helps in professional growth (Duffy, Allan, et al., 2011; Duffy & Sedlacek, 2007; Wrzesniewski et al., 1997). This study compiles the existing literature on career calling and its relationship with various variables. This study enhances the understanding of career calling by integrating the literature on its antecedents, consequences, and related theories in a single study. The study synthesizes many research strands to establish an understanding

that enables researchers to explore the influence of personal, organizational, and environmental factors on calling, as well as the effects of calling on individual and various outcomes. It enables future researchers to efficiently access and explore related topics within the domain of calling, thus promoting investigations and theoretical development. It also provides a reference for future researchers to investigate the dynamics of calling and its significance in related studies.

This study offers practical implications for society, organizations, managers, and employees. The concept of career calling is linked to various career-related outcomes that may provide valuable insights for career counselors and their clients during the career decision-making process. It provides significant insights for employees, enabling them to make more informed decisions regarding their professional and personal lives. Employees could find greater significance and purpose in their work, potentially resulting in enhanced career outcomes. Organizations may develop jobs that allow people to realize their career goals while enhancing the positive aspects of work. It may provide opportunities for people to engage in significant work and pursue their passions. It is essential to attain a balance between a fulfilling career and healthy work-life integration to sustain overall satisfaction and well-being. This may comprise promoting education, resources related to work orientation and career orientation, in addition to motivating individuals to pursue mentors and support associations. In summary, the focus on career calling orientation is quite significant. The concept of career calling is associated with higher degrees of positive career aspects, resulting in enhanced engagement, satisfaction, and overall well-being.

VI. Limitations And Future Research Directions

This paper has numerous limitations. The study basically consolidates and organizes the antecedents, consequences, and associated theories of career calling in a single place. The review is based on previous research that explores calling and its associations with various variables, without including statistical analysis. This limitation is a substantial constraint, as the relationship of career calling with different variables is solely based on a descriptive analysis. The paper represents researchers with a unified overview of the literature, integrating different outcomes into a single place that might form the foundation for future empirical studies. This paper is mainly descriptive in nature; future research may expand upon this foundation using advanced review and analysis. Specifically, meta-analyses and bibliometric reviews may provide a deep understanding of the patterns, trends, and interconnections within the career-calling literature. Future research should investigate the impact of organizational cultures on individuals' sense of career calling. Identifying these shortcomings will enhance theoretical frameworks and their practical applications in career development and organizational behavior.

VII. Conclusion

Career calling is a powerful construct that enriches work engagement, well-being, and organizational outcomes—a construct influenced by individual, relational, and organizational factors. Career calling is associated with various positive outcomes, such as job satisfaction, work engagement, organizational dedication, and a greater sense of life purpose (Duffy & Dik, 2013; Steger et al., 2010). The origins of career calling are simultaneously influenced by a dynamic mix of psychological qualities, social surroundings, and contextual factors, including organizational support and autonomy (Elangovan, 2010; Wrzesniewski et al., 1997). This review paper synthesizes insights from previous studies to offer a comprehensive overview of career calling and its correlation with various variables. By concentrating on pertinent theories associated with the concept of calling, the research has developed its theoretical foundation. The growing research on career calling highlights its critical importance for affecting individuals' professional identity, motivation, and well-being. The paper consolidates key antecedents, such as meaningfulness, job crafting, person-environment fit, personal values, and motivation, along with consequences like work commitment, engagement, PsyCap, and job satisfaction, highlighting their impact on individual and organizational outcomes. This paper is descriptive in nature, provides theoretical clarity, and establishes a basis for future empirical investigation. By integrating antecedents and outcomes within a unified place, the study provides a way for further exploration of the significance of calling in today's era.

Acknowledgments

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