

TEACHERS' LIFE SATISFACTION: THE ROLE OF CALLING AND JOB CHARACTERISTICS

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Abstract

In order to live a calling at work a person should be intrinsically motivated for it. Whether living a calling would lead to greater life satisfaction may depend on various external circumstances including work potential to satisfy basic conditions such as salary and job security as well as opportunities for professional growth.

The aims of the study were to assess: a) the mediating role of living a calling in the relationship between calling motivation and life satisfaction; b) the moderating role of job characteristics in the relationship between living a calling and life satisfaction.

Four hundred primary school teachers (96% female) from Croatia participated in this study. Their teaching experience ranged from 0-43 years, 20 years on average. The following self-report measures were used: the Calling Motivation Scale (Duffy et al., 2015), the Living a Calling Scale (Duffy et al., 2012), the Job Satisfaction Scale (Hackman & Oldman, 1975), the Satisfaction with Life Scale (Diener et al., 1985).

In line with the hypotheses, the findings revealed that calling motivation was positively related to living a calling ($b = .66, p < .001$). Living a calling then led to life satisfaction to a higher extent when conditions for professional growth were provided ($b = .19, SE = .09, 95\% CI [.02, .37]$). Calling motivation showed no direct effect which means that living a calling completely mediated the relationship between calling motivation and life satisfaction ($b = .51, 95\% CI [.35, .70]$).

It can be concluded that stimulating work environment providing for professional growth is important factor for teachers' life satisfaction who are living their calling at work.

Keywords: *Calling motivation, job characteristics, life satisfaction, living a calling, teachers.*

1. Introduction

Teachers' well-being has various positive outcomes both for them as well for their students. Teachers with higher well-being less frequently leave their profession and are more satisfied with their job and their life (Kern et al., 2014). Further, their students have better academic performance (Klusmann et al., 2016), higher motivation for learning (Sutton & Wheatley, 2003) and higher final grades (Caprara et al., 2006). Given the importance of these positive outcomes, understanding the well-being of teachers is a highly important goal. Recently, within the framework of Work as a Calling Theory (WCT; Duffy et al., 2018) perceiving and living a calling have been recognized as important antecedents of well-being.

Definitions of calling include a sense of purpose, meaning, personal fulfillment, the desire to help others and contribute to the greater good (Dik et al., 2009; Steger & Dik, 2010). Individuals with a calling find their work rewarding and fulfilling. Work represents one of the central domains of their lives and they invest much in their professional identity. The positive link between perceiving a calling and life satisfaction has been established across many professions including teacher population (Jurčec, 2019; Jurčec & Rijavec, 2015; Song et al., 2016).

However, having a calling is not the same as living a calling. Although people can view their work as a calling that does not necessarily imply that their calling has been fulfilled and that they are actually living it. Both having a calling and living a calling are positively related to well-being outcomes, however a growing number of research shows that living a calling is consistently correlating more strongly with these outcomes (Duffy et al. 2017).

In order to live a calling at work a person should be intrinsically motivated and willing to invest a great amount of effort to pursue his or her calling (Duffy, Autin et al., 2015). This motivation may lead to living a calling and consequently to higher well-being. However, whether living a calling would actually lead to higher well-being may depend on various external circumstances. These circumstances

include work conditions and resources such as salary and job security as well as opportunities for professional growth. Individuals who experience job insecurity or barriers for their professional growth at work may report different relations of living a calling to well-being outcomes.

Based on the above-mentioned research, we assume that teachers with higher motivation to live their calling are more prone to actually live a calling, which in turn, increases their life satisfaction. Further, we assume that the link between living a calling and life satisfaction is moderated by job characteristics including satisfaction with salary and job security as well as by opportunities for professional growth. In other words, living a calling lead to life satisfaction to a higher extent if good work conditions and opportunities are provided.

2. Objectives

The central aim of this study is to examine the relationship between motivation for calling, living a calling, job characteristics and well-being in primary school teachers. The first aim of the study was to asses the mediating role of living a calling in the relationship between calling motivation and life satisfaction; the second one aimed to test the moderating role of job characteristics in the relationship between living a calling and life satisfaction.

3. Method

3.1. Participants and procedure

The sample consisted of 400 primary school teachers teaching students from the 1st to 4th grade (96% female) from all regions of Croatia, out of whom 96% were female. An average length of service was 20 years. Online questionnaires were administered by email. The teachers participated voluntarily and anonymously.

3.2. Instruments

Calling Motivation Scale (CMS; Duffy, Bott et al., 2015) is a 3-item measure of the degree to which participants feel motivated to pursue a calling in their career (e.g., *No matter how difficult, I will try to achieve my career calling*). Participants rated items on a 5-point scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The total score is calculated as the mean of the scale items. Higher scores indicate a higher pursuit of a calling. Cronbach's alpha reliability was .88.

Living a Calling Scale (LCS; Duffy et al., 2012) is a 6-item measure used to assess the degree to which participants perceive that they currently live their calling (e.g., *I am currently working in a job that closely aligns with my calling*). Participants rated items on a 5-point scale, ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). The total score is calculated as the mean of the scale items. Higher scores indicate a stronger living of a calling. Cronbach's alpha reliability was .94.

The Job Diagnostic Survey (JDS; Hackman & Oldman, 1975) is a 14-item measure used to assess affective reactions to the job comprised of facet-specific measurements such as security (e.g., *How satisfied are you with the amount of job security you have*), salary (e.g., *How satisfied are you with the amount of pay and fringe benefits you receive*), social (e.g., *How satisfied are you with the chance to get to know other people while on the job*), supervision (e.g., *How satisfied are you with the degree of respect and fair treatment you receive from your supervisor*), and growth (e.g., *How satisfied are you with the feeling of worthwhile accomplishments you get from doing your job*). Participants rated items on a 5-point scale, ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Scores for five specific satisfactions are calculated as the means of the sub-scale items. Higher scores indicate higher job satisfaction. Mean inter-item correlations of two-item subscales were .34 (security) and .83 (salary). Cronbach's alpha of three-item subscales were .63 (social) and .74 (supervision), and of four-item scale was .76 (growth).

The Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS; Diener et al., 1985) is a 5-item measure of the degree to which participants generally feel satisfied with their life (e.g., *The conditions of my life are excellent*). Participants rated items on a 7-point scale, ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). The total score is calculated as the mean of the scale items. Higher scores indicate higher life satisfaction. Cronbach's alpha of this scale was .88.

4. Results

4.1. Descriptive statistics and correlations

The descriptive statistics and intercorrelations of all measured variables are presented in Table 1. Descriptive data showed that all variables, except salary satisfaction, were rated above theoretical average

point of the scale, with the highest ratings for calling motivation and living a calling. All correlations were in the predicted positive directions.

Table 1. The descriptive statistics and intercorrelations of calling motivation, living a calling, specific job satisfactions and life satisfaction.

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.
1. Calling motivation	-	.77**	.27**	.27**	.38**	.31**	.46**	.32**	.03
2. Living a calling			.38**	.33**	.44**	.39**	.54**	.41**	.10*
3. Security satisfaction				.30**	.43**	.46**	.54**	.35**	.32**
4. Salary satisfaction					.39**	.42**	.52**	.34**	-.10*
5. Social satisfaction						.61**	.73**	.38**	-.09
6. Supervision satisfaction							.61**	.37**	-.09
7. Growth satisfaction								.45**	.00
8. Life satisfaction									-.09
9. Work experience									-
Mean	4.39	4.32	3.65	3.08	3.94	3.83	3.95	5.28	20.10
Std. Deviation	0.73	0.73	0.94	1.12	0.60	0.78	0.62	1.12	11.05

Note * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

4.2. Mediation model

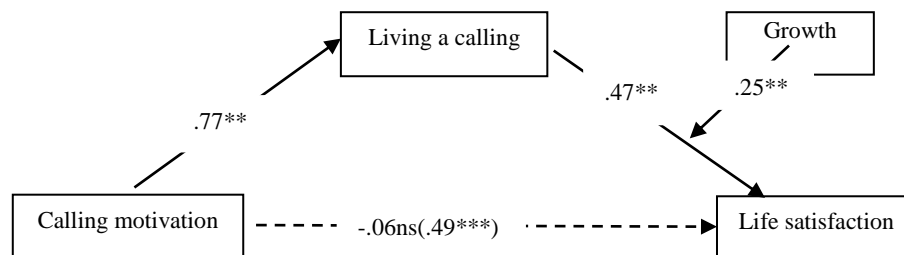
The hypothesized regression models were tested using PROCESS macro for SPSS (Hayes, 2018). Monte-Carlo (bootstrapping) approximation was obtained with 5000 bootstrap resamples (the 95% confidence).

Mediation analysis was performed to examine proposed role of living a calling. Calling motivation positively predicted living a calling ($b = .66, SE = .11, p < .001, 95\% CI [.44, .87]$), and living a calling positively predicted life satisfaction ($b = .77, SE = .03, p < .001, 95\% CI [.71, .84]$). Results indicated that whilst the total effect of calling motivation on life satisfaction was significant ($b = .49, SE = .07, p < .001, 95\% CI [.35, .64]$), the direct effect was not ($b = -.01, SE = .11, p > .05, 95\% CI [-.23, .20]$). Living a calling fully mediated the relationship between calling motivation and life satisfaction (Indirect effect $b = .51, SE = .09, 95\% CI [.35, .70]$). Work experience served as a covariate ($b = -.01, SE = .00, p < .01, 95\% CI [-.02, -.01]$). The model explained 19% of the variance in life satisfaction ($R^2 = .19, F_{3,396} = 29.94, p < .001$).

4.3. Moderated mediation model

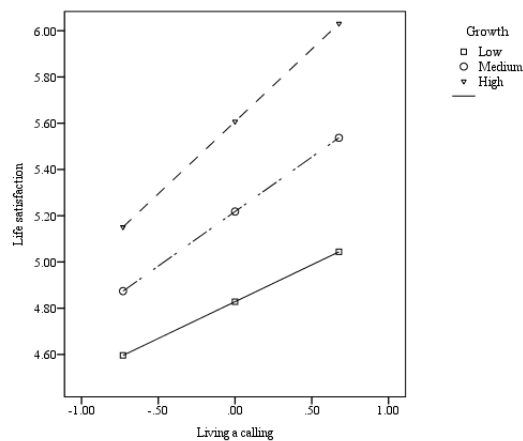
Five moderated mediation models were examined to test the moderated effect of each specific aspects of job satisfactions on the mediation model. In sum, although results indicated significant main effects of living a calling ($b = .47, SE = .11, p < .001, 95\% CI [.25, .69]$), job security ($b = .36, SE = .06, p < .001, [.24, .48]$), salary ($b = .22, SE = .05, p < .001, [.12, .31]$), social ($b = .48, SE = .09, p < .001, [.29, .66]$), supervision ($b = .32, SE = .07, p < .001, [.18, .46]$), and growth ($b = .63, SE = .09, p < .001, [.45, .82]$) on life satisfaction, interaction effects occurred merely between living a calling and security ($b = .15, SE = .06, p < .05, [.07, .28]$) and between calling and growth ($b = .25, SE = .09, p < .01, [.08, .42]$). Only for model containing growth as moderator index of moderated mediation was significant ($b = .19, SE = .09, [.02, .37]$). Final model is presented in Figure 1. Tests of the indirect effect at -1SD ($b = .25, SE = .10, [.05, .45]$), the mean ($b = .36, SE = .09, [.19, .55]$), and +1SD ($b = .48, SE = .11, [.27, .70]$) of the moderating variable were significantly different from zero. In Figure 2, the slopes of interaction showed that the indirect effect was stronger at higher levels of growth. The proposed moderated mediation model explained 27% of the variance in life satisfaction ($R^2 = .27, F_{5,394} = 29.53, p < .001$).

Figure 1. Moderated Mediation of Calling Motivation on Life Satisfaction.



Note. Work experience served as covariate. Growth as interaction term growth x living a calling. Numerical values represent unstandardized path coefficients (b). Total effects in parenthesis. P-values: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

Figure 2. Interaction Effect of Living a Calling and Growth on Life Satisfaction.



5. Discussion

This study proposed a model linking calling motivation with well-being. We hypothesized that living a calling operates as a mediator between calling motivation and life satisfaction. The results confirmed the hypothesis showing that living a calling completely mediated the relationship between calling motivation and life satisfaction.

Further, it was proposed that job characteristics moderate the relationship between living a calling and life satisfaction. Only growth satisfaction in job was significant moderator. Results support the conclusion that the indirect effect of calling motivation on life satisfaction through living a calling depends on conditions for professional growth.

The model including calling motivation and living a calling as mediator explained 19% of satisfaction in life, while the model including also the growth as moderator of the link between living a calling and life satisfaction explained 27% of satisfaction with life. The results empirically confirmed the WCT theory (Duffy et al., 2018) in the context of teacher profession, and the amount of the variance explained suggested the important role of the variables in the models, especially the role of living a calling for the theoretical understanding of job motivation. Namely, although perceiving a calling for being a teacher is a theoretical precondition for investing efforts into teacher profession, i.e., for having a calling motivation, and calling motivation facilitates living a calling, only living a calling will lead person to have higher satisfaction with life, and especially in the context of high professional accomplishments.

The fact that the aspects of job satisfaction, i.e., job security, satisfaction with salary, satisfaction with social contacts in relation to job, the degree of respect and fair treatment received from supervisor, and opportunities for professional growth, were all related to higher life satisfaction, is in line with the spillover model of job and life satisfaction which suggests that satisfaction in one life domain spills over into other domains (Loscocco & Roschelle, 1992). However, this research showed that only growth satisfaction in job moderated the effect of living a calling suggested the key role of this variable for satisfaction with life. Teachers with higher level of living of calling, i.e., those who have professional identity and their job responds with their calling, should be supported by their organizations for additional opportunities for education, growth in career and professional accomplishments.

As per the relationship between job satisfaction and life satisfaction, our model relies on the causal relationship between the two variables in terms that job satisfaction has impact on the life satisfaction (e. g., Rice et al., 1985). However, there is also a perspective that life satisfaction influences job satisfaction (e.g., Judge & Watanabe, 1993), or that the relationship between job satisfaction and life satisfaction is spurious, resulting from common influences from environmental or personality variables (Judge et al., 1998).

This study has some limitations. First, the study is correlational and no causal inferences can be made, and further longitudinal studies are needed. Second, future studies should include core evaluations of personality and self-esteem in the model in order to examine the role of calling motivation and especially living a calling in a broader context of personality differences. Similar studies could be conducted using other samples and different contexts, in order to get broader picture.

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