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Calling: A Literature Review and Prospect

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Abstract

The word "calling" comes from the west culture, originated from religion—means "The call of God", while with the development of the times, has experienced a changing process from the sacred to the secular, becomes a concept across subjects of religious studies, sociology & organizational behavior. Especially in Chinese culture, its connotation has many features of its own. In this paper, this paper first systematically sorted out the existing research on calling, examining its concept and definition, measurement methods, antecedent variables and outcome variables. Then it analyzed its current problems and indicated the direction for future research.

Keywords

Calling, Engagement, Happiness, Work Performance

1. Introduction

With the rapid development of social economy, life and working environment has made an enormous change, people work are not limited to survive, for every individual, there are new meanings for occupation. There are such a part of the people, they feel it's their destiny to engage in the profession now, this kind of idea has made them put more energy in the work, more motivated, and fell more happiness. Both individuals and organizations have benefits from this positive concept, so the study of "calling" is born at the right moment. The paper present detailed connotation and origin of calling in Section 2 and describes 8 detailed measurement methods in Section 3. In Section 4, the paper mainly presents the influencing factors & influence effect of calling. In view of the above, the direction of the future research is pointed out in Section 5.

2. The Connotation of Calling

1) Western scholar's definition of "calling"

From the evolution of the concept of calling, the word "calling" comes from the

west culture, originated from religion—means "The call of God", while with the development of the times, have experienced a changing process from the sacred to the secular, becomes a concept across subjects of religious studies, sociology & organizational behavior. There are three representative perspectives of "calling" in the western academic circles now.

The first perspective is the classical perspective. This perspective inherited the Judaism-Christian tradition which has strong religious color. The classical perspective emphasize personal duty and destiny, Davidson & Caddell define the calling as "Follow God's will" in 1994 [1], Ponton, *et al.* define the "calling" as "personal salvation which called by the god to realize the common good" in 2014 [2]. Bunderson & Thompson described it as "A place exists in reality in the world of work and destiny to be realized because of the talent and opportunity given by god" [3].

As people paying more attention to the meaning of the work and the autonomy in the process of career choice, the second perspective—modern perspective appears in the scene. Modern perspective emphasizes the inner drive of self-realization or happiness during career choice. Dobrow, Tosti-Khars, Hall & Chandler are there representative scholars. Dobrow & Tosti-Kharas define the "calling" as "A subjective and intrinsic mental structure, is a strong and meaningful passion individual experience in specific areas at work so that they put a lot of energy in the work, can't even imagine themselves to do other work" (p.1003) [4]. Hall & Chandler (2005) define the "calling" as "A person's intention to do the work, which is regarded as the purpose of his or her life (p.160) [5]". The modern perspective seize people's inner meaning pursuit during career choose, while neglected the work's contribution and value to the society.

Compared to the modern perspective, the third kind of view for "calling" neoclassical perspective focus on both the individual internal voice and the individual outside choice, and more in line with the original intention of "calling". This perspective emphasizes on the importance of personal value realization, meanwhile emphasis on the importance of meeting the needs of society. The representative scholars have Dik, Duffy, Bunderson and Thompson. Dik & Duffy define the "calling" as "A detached mission from self and beyond themselves experience, its purpose is to reflect or obtain a sense of purpose or meaning of the way to practice a certain life role, and other oriented values and goals as the main motive" (p.427) [6]. Elangovan, Pinder & McLean define the calling as "There are a series of actions with Pro social tendency, which is mainly embodied in the integration and unity of the individual for what he wants to do, what he should do and what he actually do" [7].

From the point of view of the sense of calling, there are some differences among the three perspectives. The classical perspective believes that the sense of calling is only from god. The modern perspective believes that the sense of calling is from the individual himself. Neoclassical Perspective believes that the sense of calling includes both himself and the outside, that is, the function of the work is to realize individual self value, and fulfill the function to the public wel-

fare and social contribution. From the point of view of dialectical materialism, the definition from the Neoclassical Perspective has the function of combine "personal importance" and "social importance".

2) The definition of calling of Chinese scholars

In recent years, with the domestic scholars pay more attention to the occupation calling, different scholars have tried to define calling in Chinese culture, there have been some review and empirical research, while the related research is still less, the definition of calling is still not formed a unified opinion. The related researches can be observed in Table 1.

3. The Structure and Measurement of Calling

Due to the calling is a new concept, and the connotation of calling has not formed a unified opinion yet. So the dimensions of calling (single or multi dimension) and point field (general field: the orientation of individual attention or

Table 1. A study of chinese scholars' translation and relevance of calling.

Scholar	Definition
Zhao, H.X., Wu, X.M.(2013)	A psychological state in which a person experiences a sense of meaning, sense of responsibility and passion. The sense of meaning comes from the relationship between the work and the promotion of the social interests of others or higher level, as well as the realization of individual self-worth. Sense of responsibility is mainly manifested in the positive input to the work [8].
Yu, C.J. (2014)	People experience the passion and strong power to a particular occupation area, hoping to engage in a particular occupation and a sense of meaning, sense of responsibility and passion in the realization of personal value [9].

Data sources: according to relevant literature.

Table 2. Study on structure and measurement of calling.

Scholar	Measuring Tool	Dimension	Point Field
Wrzesniewski (1997)	Calling Orientation Scale [10]	Single Dimension	General Field
Bunderson & Thompson (2009)	Neoclassical Calling Scale [3]	Single Dimension	Specific Areas: Zoo Keeper
Dobrow & Tosti-Kharas (2011)	12-Calling Scale [4]	Single Dimension	Specific Areas
Dik, Sargent & Steger (2008)	Brief Calling Scale [11]	Single Dimension	General Field
Dik, Eldridge, Steger & Dufffy (2012)	Calling and Vocation Questionnaire [6]	3 Dimension: Transcendent Summon, Purposeful Work & Prosocial Orientation	General Field
Hagmaier & Abele (2012)	Multidimensional Calling Measure [12]	3 Dimension: P-E-Fit, MCM-TGF & MCM-SMVB	General Field
Praskova, Creed &Hood (2015)	Career Calling Scale [13] [14]	3 Dimension: Other-Oriented Meaning, Personal Meaning & Active Engagement	General Field
Zhang, C.Y. (2015)	Chinese Calling Scale [15]	3 Dimension: Guiding Force, Meaning and Value & Altruistic Contribution	General Field

is engaged in specific occupation, such as "my future occupation to benefit others"; specific areas: the orientation specific occupation of the mission, such as "I am willing to become a teacher sacrifice everything") big differences remain. According to the relevant literature review and collation, there are 8 types measurement tools have been developed as showed in Table 2.

Table 3. Summary of influencing factors of calling.

Influencing Factors	Main Viewpoint	Representative Research
Group Category	Calling has a religious background, people with calling are likely to be religious [16]	Religious Personage
	College students also have a strong calling, which may be due to the modern understanding of the calling is rarely involved in the concept of religion, while as "it is intended to do a career" [17] [18]	College Group
	People of all ages, socioeconomic status, professional nature, and salary standards will view their work as calling [3] [18]	General Occupational Groups
Individual Characteristics	Self is an important factor in the discovery of calling, only when people in accordance with their wishes to live truly, in order to clearly understand their own future, can clarify what is their own calling [18]	Self-Clarity
	Calling is positively correlated with Core Self-Evaluation [6] [19]	Core Self-Evaluation

Table 4. Summary of influencing effect of calling.

Influencing Effects	Main Viewpoint
Work/Life Satisfaction	The correlation coefficient between calling and employee job satisfaction is 0.54 [20]; people who have a strong sense of Calling, even in the face of occupational discrimination, they also showed a high degree of job satisfaction [21]; Calling has a positive impact on job satisfaction by improving the professional commitment of knowledge workers [22]; Nearly half of the students are sure to have more happiness when sense of calling [17] [18]
Organizational Attachment	The stronger the calling, the higher the level of affective commitment, the lower the turnover intention [6] [9]
Job Involvement	There is a significant positive correlation between calling and employee job involvement [4] [23] [24] [25]
Job Performance	People who have a strong sense of Calling have stronger adaptability, willing to pay more efforts at work, which can achieve better performance [5]; people who have a strong sense of Calling are not only willing to work harder, but also have a higher tolerance for setbacks and risks, so they can achieve better performance [7]
Mental Health	People who view work as the calling, the level of their mental health will be better, and less absenteeism [10]; Calling is closely related to individual's mental health and physical health [26] [27]
Career Development	Calling is related to career decision making and career clarity [18]; Calling is related to job expectation, job efficiency and job motivation [6] [11];
Engagement	Calling is positively correlated with employee engagement [9] [28]
Happiness	Individuals with calling have a higher sense of happiness and a more positive attitude [15]

4. Empirical Research on Calling

1) Study on Influencing Factors of Calling

The influencing factors of calling are related to the source of calling. The existing research on antecedent variables of calling is still less, and more focused on the calling group. It's summarized in Table 3.

2) Study on the Effect of Calling

Compared to the influencing factors of Calling, there are more researches on the impact effects. The research has been carried out by college students and employees. The results show that Calling can significantly affect the satisfaction of individual work and life, the degree of organizational attachment and job involvement. The detailed research is summarized in Table 4.

5. Prospect for Future Research

1) The Connotation and Measurement of Calling has not formed a unified understanding yet.

Although the existing theories have defined the connotation of calling according to their own research, there is lack a consensus definition of calling yet. In future research, as to understand the true meaning of calling and its impact on individuals and organizations more accurately, we should extraction and verification the connotation of calling according to different cultural characteristics and differences subjects. Meanwhile, consider the influence of occupation, gender, age and region on the effectiveness of the tool more fully, develop new appropriate tools for the specific subjects.

2) There is a lack of a more perfect and widely accepted Calling Theoretical Model.

The existing research focuses on the influencing factors and the effects of calling, some scholars have also studied the influence mechanism, but overall, lack a more perfect and widely accepted theoretical model of calling. This is also a development direction of future research.

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