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Exploring Career Calling in Slovakia: A Qualitative Investigation into its Meaning and Development

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Abstract

The quest for a meaningful life remains a profound concern for many (Frankl, 1966; 1985), given that people spend a considerable portion of their time at work, it is no surprise that the concept of calling has raised significant interest. Career calling represents a perception of a passion (modern approach) and a transcendent force (neoclassical approach) for involvement in a job that is not only personally fulfilling and purposeful but also serves a broader social function. The concept of calling has never been studied in Slovakia, limiting its empirical exploration within this cultural context. Furthermore, a reflection on how people develop a sense of calling remains understudied, with existing theories and empirical evidence mainly focusing on its outcomes.

To address these gaps, semi-structured qualitative interviews with ten Slovak workers across diverse fields have been conducted. The interviews focused on participants' perception of their work as a calling, followed by event-based theory exploration of its development. Thematic analysis was conducted with the additional support from ChatGPT in order to explore the potential of AI in qualitative research. Our findings suggest that (1) the concept of calling is relevant for Slovak workers; (2) their definitions integrate both modern and neoclassical components; (3) its development is shaped by personal and event-based factors such as feedback, social environment or personal growth and it is a gradual process that comes only after living out the calling. This study has some limits. Participants were selected based on their type of work orientation, the sample size is small and results might be biased by memory effects and potential self-serving biases. With the results of our study, we provide the first contribution to the understanding of calling in the Slovak context and enrich the discussion about the development of career calling.

Keywords: career calling, Slovakia, interview, ChatGPT, event system theory

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1. CAREER CALLING

1.1 Introduction

Our society is in a never-ending quest for change. Yet the search for a meaningful life remains a central concern for many individuals. As Viktor Frankl, a renowned psychiatrist and Holocaust survivor argues: ”Man’s search for meaning is the primary motivation in his life and not a ‘secondary rationalization’ of instinctual drives” (Frankl, 1963, p. 99). Frankl's theory moreover suggests that finding a sense of purpose is essential for psychological well-being (Schulenberg et al., 2008).

One of the most significant areas in which individuals seek meaning is the workplace. Given that the average person spends approximately one-third of their life at work (Gettysburg College, 2022), the nature of our work and the sense of purpose it provides are critical factors in our overall sense of fulfillment. In fact, research suggests that a big part of employees believe their jobs define a significant portion of their identity (Dobrow & Tosti-Kharas, 2011). This highlights the importance of aligning one's work with their values and passions, often referred to as having a "calling."

When individuals perceive their work as a calling, they are more likely to experience higher job satisfaction, increased resilience in the face of challenges, and a greater overall sense of well-being (Dobrow et al., 2023; Steger et al., 2012). Thus, understanding and nurturing this connection between work and meaning is not only essential for individual fulfillment but also for organizational success.

1.2 Defining calling

1.2.1 Neoclassical approach

Perhaps the first association with the term of calling is the work of priests and people sacrificing their life to devote themselves to a mission. As we will talk about later in this chapter, now we know that calling is much more (Dik, 2023), however it is not surprising that this association is very present. Calling has its roots in religion and spirituality. In their paper, Weiss et al. (2004) have mentioned the extraordinary lives of Mohandas Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr.. Their path to discovering their calling was non-linear and complex. They needed to undergo a deep self-reflection and spiritual growth in order to find their unique purpose and listen to their higher calling. Out of all, it is the Christian tradition where the idea that work can be perceived and lived as a calling has its roots in. Some people had believed to be called by God, to more “religious life”. In fact, the religious roots of the concept of "calling" are deeply embedded in Christian theology, where it originally referred to a divine summons to serve God, often associated with specific religious roles or vocations. Over time, this idea evolved to include secular professions, where the sense of calling extended beyond religious duties to any work that individuals feel divinely guided to pursue (Dik, 2023).

In the scientific literature, the approach to calling definitions that align more closely to this religious concept is referred to as the *neoclassical view*. The main characteristics of this view, described by Bunderson & Thompson (2009), are that a) there is a domain of work that is right for each individual and b) it is the person's duty to seek and embrace their calling and, c) finding one’s calling is a process of self-discovery that includes evaluation of one’s talents, passions and life opportunities.

Another quality present in neoclassical approach is a *transcendence summons,* implying that calling goes beyond self (Dik & Duffy, 2009), and having a calling is seen as a gift from God, but may also be from other external sources such as social duty (Dik & Duffy, 2012).

1.2.2 Modern approach

The concept of work as a calling has been on a rise since the 1950s (Bunderson & Thompson, 2009). However, it was only in the 1990s when work as a calling started to be a topic in social science research (Dik, 2023), getting popular between 2005 and 2010 with huge increase after 2011 (Bunderson & Thompson, 2019). The current research, emerging mainly from North American and Western Europe, has expanded and a more cross-cultural approach has been initiated (Dik, 2023).

The *modern view* of calling is deriving from the inner world of a person. Central to this view are passions and interests which are being pursued for the enjoyment and fulfillment they bring to a person. Therefore, the biggest difference from the neoclassical view is that the work is not being done for the obligation one has towards God and society but for the pleasure it brings to the person itself. Calling is a form of personal choice and expression rather than something being destined by God and needs a process of self-reflection and growth in order to discover it. Central to the modern view is self-expression and self-fulfillment (Bunderson & Thompson, 2009).

1.2.3 Integrated approach

There are many definitions of calling, from the neoclassical definition: “that place in the occupational division of labor in society that one feels destined to fulfill by virtue of particular gifts, talents, and/or idiosyncratic life opportunities.” (Bunderson & Thompson,

2009. pp. 38) to modern one: “a consuming, meaningful passion toward a domain.“ (Dobrow & Tosti-Kharas, 2011, pp. 1001).

An integrated definition, including several dimensions of calling has been provided by Vianello et al. (2018) as “the perception that an individual’s own job or involvement in a study domain is key to defining who they are; a source of purpose in life; something for which they could sacrifice other areas of their lives and toward which they feel summoned by something greater or beyond themselves; and a job that engulfs their consciousness, that is useful to others or the society as a whole, and for which they feel a strong passion” (Vianello et al., 2018, pp. 408).

1.3 Dimensions

As seen in the previous chapter, there is no unified definition of calling and this partially stems from many different components of calling which are still being debated (Dalla Rosa et al., 2024). They differ mainly based on the approach of calling, two principal views being the neoclassical and the modern one (Vianello et al., 2018). However, in their paper, Vianello and colleagues (2018) aimed to create a comprehensive model of calling, where they included seven elements both from neoclassical and modern approaches. *Identification* refers to the fact that people see their work and involvement in their work domain as central to their identity (Dobrow & Tosti-Kharas, 2011). *Pervasiveness* is characterized by the persistent thoughts about one’s work even if they are not doing any work related task, as the work is always on their minds (Vianello et al., 2020).

Purposefulness is the personal meaning people derive from their work, which can be applied to any religious beliefs and often this purpose is linked to contribution to community or society as a whole (Praskova et al., 2015). *Transcendent summons* can be understood as an inner voice or some sort of guiding force, giving people the sense of “walking on the right path”

(Hagmaier & Abele, 2012). *Prosocial orientation* refers to the fact that one's work does not only have personal significance but also general societal meaningfulness, and the work is seen as a moral duty (Wrzesniewski et al., 2009). *Sacrifice* of personal time, energy and/or money in order to pursue one's calling (Vianello, 2018). *Passion* as a profound sense of satisfaction and enjoyment in one's work (Dobrow & Tosti-Kharas, 2011).

1.4 Theoretical Models of Calling

1.4.1. Work as a Calling

Perhaps the first comprehensive model that explores the concept of career calling was developed by Duffy and colleagues in 2018 called Work as Calling Theory (WCT). The model examines how individuals come to perceive and live out their callings and offers a framework for understanding the predictors and outcomes of living a calling.

The first key point in their model is that perception of calling does not necessarily imply that one is currently living out their calling. In other words, one may recognize that a certain type of work aligns with their deeper purpose and they find meaning in it, but it may be that they are not doing this type of work and therefore are not living out their calling (Duffy et al., 2018).

This model further defines several key predictors of living out a calling. One such predictor is both real and perceived *access to opportunity*, which directly influences the extent to which individuals can enact their calling. Another critical factor includes *work meaning* and *career commitment*, which share a reciprocal relationship with living out a calling, meaning that individuals who perceive their work as meaningful or who are strongly committed to their career are more likely to live out their calling. *Person-environment fit* (P–E fit) also emerges as a predictor. When the work environment aligns with an individual's values and

characteristics, it increases the likelihood of living out a calling. The concept of *calling motivation* is introduced as well, referring to the extent to which individuals act on a perceived calling, which is influenced by their level of intrinsic motivation. In this model, a practical mechanism for facilitating the realization of one's calling is introduced and defined as *job crafting*. It involves individuals proactively modifying aspects of their job to better align with their calling. This process strengthens the link between the perception of calling and P–E fit. Finally, individuals who perceive higher levels of *organizational support* are more likely to experience a work environment that aligns with their personal attributes, thereby enhancing the likelihood of living out their calling (Duffy et al., 2018).

1.4.2 The Good Life Model

Another influential model is the Good Life Model proposed by Dobrow and colleagues (2023). This model stems from eudaimonic and hedonic aspects of well-being and proposes two types of calling.

Firstly, an *internally focused calling* driven by passion, enjoyment and personal meaning of work and secondly, *externally focused calling* characterized by duty or obligation to do work that addresses an important need in society and fulfillment of one's duty and destiny.

Dobrow and colleagues (2023) argue that both of these callings are associated with positive work and life outcomes, however they differ in how they manifest. The internally focused calling has been found out to be linked to the hedonic outcomes, resulting in job satisfaction and subjective well being overall. The externally focused calling on the other hand, is linked to eudaimonic outcomes manifesting as work meaningfulness and psychological well being such as having purpose in life.

This model shows us how one engages with a calling (internally or externally) shapes the nature of its benefits. It also defines calling not as just an ideal but as actual measurable contributor to career development.

1.5 Development of Calling

The idea that calling is a stable construct that does not change has been diminished as there are studies demonstrating its dynamicity and changes over time (Dobrow 2013; Vianello et al., 2020; Hirschi and Herrmann 2013).

However, there is still no clarity on the exact trajectory of its development. In the literature, there are two hypotheses present about the possible development of career calling: the *posteriori* and the *a priori* hypothesis (Dalla Rosa et al., 2019). They stem from the before mentioned difference between living and perceiving a calling (Duffy et al., 2018).

The posteriori hypothesis argues that the perception of calling comes only after living it out and in engaging in one's work. The a priori hypothesis, on the other hand, says that one must first perceive calling in order to live it out (Dalla Rosa et al., 2019).

1.6 Career Calling in Slovak Culture

1.6.1 Cross-cultural approach on calling

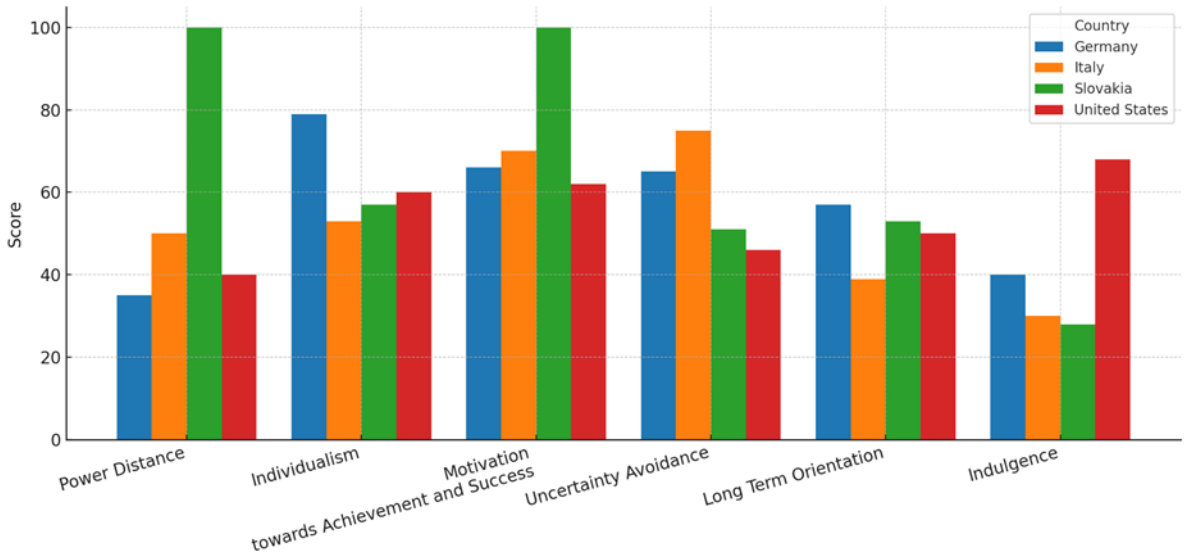
In one of his papers, Dik (2023) informs, that the research on work as a calling has been promptly increasing, dating more than 80% of empirical research published since the year 2011. The current research, emerging mainly from North American and Western Europe, has expanded and a more cross-cultural approach has been initiated (Dik, 2023). However, there is a scarcity of research exploring this topic in Central Europe, particularly in the context of Slovakia.

1.6.2 Slovak cultural background

Slovakia is a Central European country, predominantly industrial with a Catholic religious heritage and a communist past (Kozák, 2020). Its work culture and ethic are deeply rooted in its complex historical path, from its socialist period under Czechoslovakia, and then transition to independence after the Velvet Revolution in 1989 (Bátorová, 2025). This transformation impacted the country's values such as strong hierarchy, collectivism and motivation towards achievement and success which remain visible in workplaces today (Hofstede Insights, n.d.). Overall, the work ethic is quite strong, generally increasing since the 1990s and the post-communist legacy is still present, influencing the idea of one's work as a duty to the nation or collectivistic duty (Kozák, 2020).

As we can see in the Figure 1., Slovakia differs notably in cultural dimensions by Hofstede (Hofstede Insights, n.d.) from other cultural contexts in which career calling has been extensively examined, such as the United States, Germany or Italy (Dalla Rosa et al., 2019; Hirschi, 2011; Duffy et al., 2011). Specifically, dimensions such as Power Distance and Motivation Towards Achievement and Success position Slovakia as a novel and interesting context for career calling exploration (Hofstede Insights, n.d.).

Figure 1.: Cultural Dimension by Country (Hofstede Model)



1.6.3 “Poslanie”

The term *poslanie* is an equivalent translation to the term *career calling*. Its etymology can be traced back to the verb "poslať", meaning "to send", indicating we are sent to pursue a specific work in life. Historically, this term denotes a mission, special task, or purpose assigned by a higher authority or by fate (Ringier Slovakia Media & Andraščík, 2008–2022), linking it to the notion of being sent to fulfil a particular role, often using this term for priests and their calling from God.

1.7 Event System Theory

The development of career calling is still an evolving area of research. It has been gaining more scholarly attention (Dobrow 2013; Vianello et al., 2020; Hirschi and Herrmann 2013), but the research on this topic remains divided. Some studies suggest that having a sense of calling acts as a motivator and therefore predicts engagement in career development (Duffy et al., 2014, Praskova et al., 2014), others argue that the emergence of a calling is often an outcome, developing through accumulated work experiences rather than being an inherent trait (Dalla Rosa et al., 2019). What has been found is that career calling is a dynamic process shaped by a series of significant events, both internal (e.g., personal reflections) and external (e.g., career transitions) (Dobrow 2013). According to Event System Theory, significant events shape individuals' career trajectories over time, influencing their decisions and transitions (Morgeson et al., 2015).

Event System Theory (EST), founded by Morgenson and colleagues (2015), explains how events shape and alter organizational behavior and individual employees’ actions over time. The theory defines events as *novel* (the extent to which the event is unexpected or unique),

disruptive (the degree to which the event interrupts existing processes or routines) and *critical* (the importance or urgency of the event to organizational goals).

These events may manifest at any level (individual, team, organizational) and propagate upward, downward or across these levels. They may change in strength and in the meaning over time as well (Morgeson et al., 2015).

There are several key points of EST (Morgeson et al., 2015):

- stronger events, those high in novelty, disruptiveness, and criticality have greater influence,

- events originating from higher levels (e.g., top management) are more likely to influence lower levels than vice versa,

- event strength and impact can change over time depending on timing, frequency, and context.

Hence, by utilizing Event System Theory, we can investigate how specific events in people's careers act as stimulus for the development of their calling, aligning with the idea that calling evolves over time in response to these triggering events. Therefore, we are going to discover closer the trajectory of calling development and contribute to this non fully understood area of calling.

1.8 Research aim

As discussed in this chapter, there is a research gap in the literature on career calling, particularly in relation to culture as well as the development of career calling.

Therefore, the first aim of this study is to investigate the concept of career calling among Slovak workers. With this contribution to cross-cultural literature, we believe that we will get a more complex view of this phenomena and get outside of the Western view on calling, as this concept has been an oft-cited goal among scholars in Western cultures (Hunter et al., 2010).

Hence, the one of the aims of this study is to explore how people in Slovakia define and experience the concept of career calling.

Two research questions this project aims to address are:

R1: "How is career calling perceived among Slovak workers?"

R2: "Is the perception of the term career calling among Slovak workers similar to the western conceptualization of the term?"

Another gap in the literature on calling, as discussed above, is in relation to the development of career calling. Thus, the second aim of the current research is to understand how the experience of calling develops over time, using Systemic Event Theory as a guiding framework (Morgeson et al., 2015).

Three research questions will guide the project.

R3: "What events contribute to the development of career calling?"

R4: "What is the trajectory of the development of career calling?"

R5: "How does it feel to have developed a career calling?"

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. Methodological aim

Several papers support the use of artificial intelligence, more specifically ChatGPT, as a second coder during a thematic analysis (Turobov et al., 2024; Zambrano et al., 2023). After researching its potential, it has been found that ChatGPT is able to perform every step of the thematic analysis, interpret shared data sets (Şen et al., 2023), be reflective and explain its own decisions, as well as capture a variety of language structures (Zambrano et al., 2023), which is of relevant importance for our data, which originally came in Slovak language.

Therefore, our methodological aim for this study is to explore the advantages and disadvantages of AI in qualitative research by using ChatGPT - GPT-4 model as a second coder and developing effective prompts to generate codes, categories, and themes from data.

2.2. Procedure

The study employed a qualitative methodology and semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions were conducted. Participants were interviewed in-person, with the length ranging from 7 to 25 minutes. At the very beginning of the interview, participants were explained and administered an informed consent. At the end of the interviews, in order to quantitatively measure the concept of calling, participants were administered a paper version of the UMCS-Unified multidimensional calling scale of calling (Vianello et al., 2018).

The scale integrates both classical and modern perspectives on calling and was designed to be valid across different cultural and occupational contexts and with its multifaceted view of career calling it captures emotional, social, spiritual, and identity-related components (Vianello et al., 2018).

The UMCS, originally in English language, underwent a forward backward translation process in order to be adapted into Slovak language. The chosen scale measures 7 facets of calling: Passion, Sacrifice, Transcendent Summons, Prosocial Orientation, Pervasiveness, Purposefulness, and Identity; and is overall composed of 28 statements. The participants provided their level of agreeing or disagreeing through Likert scale, where numbers corresponded followingly: 1 = strongly disagree; 2 = mostly disagree; 3 = slightly disagree; 4 = neither agree nor disagree; 5 = slightly agree; 6 = mostly agree; 7 = strongly agree.

Recordings of the interviews were then transcribed and used for the data analysis. Transcripts were later translated from the original Slovak language into English. Participants were kept in anonymity, therefore any identifying information had been removed or changed during transcription, and their names had been changed into ID codes to preserve confidentiality. Full interview transcripts and supplementary materials can be found in the OSF (Open Science Framework) page of this work. See Appendix C for the link to the page.

2.2.1 Interview protocol

The interview itself was performed and additionally audio recorded (with participants' permissions). The interview was composed of 3 parts. Part 1 was made up of two ice-breaking questions, part 2 included questions about career calling, with the goal of the section being to explore the concept of calling and how it is perceived by Slovak workers, and lastly, part 3 covered questions about specific events that have led them to their career calling.

The protocol of the interview (see Appendix A) included type A and type B scenarios. The type A script was intended for participants identifying with the "calling" profile- Mr. C and perceiving it, and type B script was written in case of participants that a) throughout the

interview did not identify with the word ‘calling’ (and therefore the concept had to be approached by different words) or, b) claimed to not perceive calling in their work.

2.3. Participants

We solicited participation through personal communication. In order to interview workers, who have a sense of calling, a pre-selection was made using the University of Pennsylvania Work–Life Questionnaire (Wrzesniewski et al., 1997) that was sent through email.

This instrument assesses individuals' orientation toward their work and categorizes their attitudes into three types: *job* - *career* - *calling*. Participants were asked to choose one of three brief descriptions that best reflects how they perceive their work. A *job* orientation reflects viewing work primarily as a means of financial gain with minimal personal engagement. A *career* orientation reflects a focus on advancement, success, and achievement within an occupational hierarchy. A *calling* orientation captures a perception of work as personally meaningful, socially valuable, and central to one's identity (Wrzesniewski et al., 1997). The brief descriptions mentioned in Table 1. were translated into Slovak language, however in the *calling* description sentence “He tends to take his work home with him and on vacations, too.” was eliminated as it may be negatively associated with being workaholic and therefore the participants would refuse this scenario despite having a calling. This choice was based more on cultural reasoning.

Table 1.: Paragraphs Describing Job, Career, and Calling (Wrzesniewski et al., 1997)

Job Mr. A works primarily to earn enough money to support his life outside of his job. If he was financially secure, he would no longer continue with his current line of work, but would really rather do something else instead. Mr. A's job is basically a necessity of life, a lot like breathing or sleeping. He often wishes the time would pass more quickly at work. He greatly anticipates weekends and vacations. If Mr. A lived his life over again, he probably would not go into the same line of work. He would not encourage his friends and children to enter his line of work. Mr. A is very eager to retire.
Career Mr. B basically enjoys his work, but does not expect to be in his current job five years from now. Instead, he plans to move on to a better, higher level job. He has several goals for his future pertaining to the positions he would eventually like to hold. Sometimes his work seems a waste of time, but he knows that he must do sufficiently well in his current position in order to move on. Mr. B can't wait to get a promotion. For him, a promotion means recognition of his good work, and is a sign of his success in competition with his coworkers.
Calling Mr. C's work is one of the most important parts of his life. He is very pleased that he is in this line of work. Because what he does for a living is a vital part of who he is, it is one of the first things he tells people about himself. He tends to take his work home with him and

on vacations, too. The majority of his friends are from his place of employment, and he belongs to several organizations and clubs relating to his work. Mr. C feels good about his work because he loves it, and because he thinks it makes the world a better place. He would encourage his friends and children to enter his line of work. Mr. C would be pretty upset if he were forced to stop working, and he is not particularly looking for ward to retirement.

The criteria for inclusion to the research was the answer 'scenario C', resulting in identification with the *calling* work orientation. The final sample consisted of 10 participants, with diverse areas of work as well as different lengths of careers, which are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Work domains and duration of career of participants

Work domain	**Current position duration**
personal trainer	7 years
high school principal	6 years
high school teacher	4 years
administration/assistant (healthcare company)	3 years
customer services	7 years
business developer (healthcare company)	2 years
taxi driver	8 years
real estate agency manager	8 years

store branch manager	15 years
school psychologist	2 years

2.4 Analytical approach

2.4.1 Thematic analysis

The data were analyzed using a thematic analysis approach. In the initial phase, an exploratory reading and re-reading of the interview transcripts was conducted to ensure familiarity with the dataset (Gibbs, 2012). During this process, initial patterns began to emerge. Notably, several transcripts included references to transcendental forces and a sense of duty to society, while also reflecting modern approach of career calling, such as the emphasis on personal fulfillment.

To ensure a structured analysis, each transcript was divided into two parts: The first part included parts of transcript with responses related to participants' conceptualizations of career calling, while the second part focused on events potentially influencing the development of a calling. The analysis was conducted sequentially, beginning with the first part across all interviews, followed by an analysis of the second part.

The next phase involved open coding, during which descriptive codes were generated (Gibbs, 2012). Atlas.ti software was used to support this process. Two separate projects were created: one containing the data relevant to the conceptualization of calling, and the other focused on the developmental aspects. Each transcript was examined line by line, and key phrases, words, and recurring patterns were coded. An overview of this process is presented in Table 3. All codes were exported into an Excel spreadsheet.

To establish reliability, a second researcher coded the same material. The two resulting code lists were then compared and consolidated into a final, merged code list. Based on this final set, codes were grouped into categories according to their conceptual similarity. This process is aimed at having a clear set of categories that will help develop themes (Khokhar et al., 2020). Categorization process was also independently conducted by a second researcher and subsequently discussed and unified.

In the final phase, themes were developed with reference to the relevant literature and theoretical frameworks, ensuring that the interpretation remained grounded in both the data and the broader academic context.

Table 3.: Illustrative examples of coding

Code	**Representative data**
Helping others	"But as for calling, if I had to put it, I try to help people by creating these surgical sets, which simplify the healthcare staff's work." K.J.
Transcendence	"…but I'd say it's just a part of me, like something given to me by the universe." V.S.
P-E fit	"And since I'm not really a fan of formal schooling, it suits me that you can learn everything here in practice. I mean, I learn through doing, and that's a big plus for me, a huge help, and it all just feels so comfortable to me; everything here fits. Nothing ever feels uncomfortable for me." V.S.

Realizing calling through actual work	"But now that I'm working here and see the meaning in helping." M.B.

2.4.2 ChatGPT as a second coder

In our study a specific model of ChatGPT 4 was used, called Supported Thematic Analysis AIxGEO. It had been specifically designed for initial coding in qualitative thematic analysis by Turobov and colleagues (2024). This AI driven tool showed benefits for researchers when it comes to time and effort, significantly enhancing the efficiency of data processing. However, this model comes with certain limitations, which we had to be aware of, in order to navigate its use efficiently. Some of the limitations are the tendency of the tool to be more descriptive rather than interpretative with responses, occasional errors in outputs, such as not accurately extracting specific quotes, and possible lack of systematic coding framework (Turobov et al., 2024).

2.4.2.1 Prompts

A specific input (prompt) for the AI model was created for every step of the thematic analysis process. The prompt for creating codes was adapted from Turobov et al. (2024) and Sen et al. (2023). The prompt instructed ChatGPT to perform initial (open) coding of interview transcripts as well as to generate detailed, descriptive codes linked to specific text segments and ensure that each code could be illustrated with example quotes. We additionally modified the prompt, instructing ChatGPT not to code the interviewer's questions (labeled as 'K'), but

to use the participants' responses to generate codes, and we added a reminder for ChatGPT to maintain objectivity.

Following the first prompt we then invented prompts to use for creating categories as well as creation of themes. Regarding categorising, the instructions were to cluster previously generated codes into groups based on semantic similarity and thematic relatedness. At this stage, the task focused on forming detailed code groups rather than developing higher-order themes.

In the prompt for themes, we added: "These themes should be relevant for the research of career calling, using the event system theory, to simulate the fact that the creation of themes should be based on precedent knowledge of literature and theories of the researcher" (Khokhar et al., 2020). All the prompts for each step of the thematic analysis can be found in the Appendix B.

2.4.2.2 Validity and Reliability

To validate the coding of ChatGPT, we assessed inter-rater reliability by looking at the percentage of agreement between a human coder and ChatGPT. This was done through assessing a part of the interview, both in the exploration of calling in Slovakia, as well as the development of calling. The percentage agreement for the first part of the interview, with questions about perception of career calling was 71% (Table 4) and for the second part, with questions about events was 75% (Table 5).

Table 4. Inter-rater agreement for the part exploration of calling in Slovakia

Extract from interview	Original codes	ChatGPT codes
"It's mainly the attitude towards the work, that I predominantly feel positive emotions about it. I hardly ever experience something like disgust or mental fatigue or that I go to work with reluctance. I genuinely look forward to it. I'm happy there, and everything about the work genuinely makes me enjoy it. I don't have… the work truly fulfills and excites me. Mhm."	positivity, no bad emotions, excitement, happiness, joy, fulfillment	positive emotional connection to work, absence of negative emotions, anticipation and excitement for work, happiness at work, sense of fulfillment

Table 5. Inter-rater agreement for the part development of calling

Extract from interview	Original codes	ChatGPT codes
"Well, often, I get a good feeling from the work, like even after various training sessions or conversations with people, from feedback and so on, I see it has meaning. And I also live off that—seeing that it has meaning for people, that it helps them, and I also see the meaning of it. And I understood it probably because, well I simply enjoyed it, but when I started seeing that it had meaning for people, it made me even more passionate about doing it."	positive emotions, feedback, seeing meaning (2x), meaningful to others (2x), helping others, enjoy work	intrinsic satisfaction, external feedback, seeing work's impact, benefits others, enjoy work, deepening passion due to meaningfulness to others

2.4.2.3 Merging Codes and Categories

Codes

During the process of merging codes, specific criteria were established to determine which codes should be retained, modified, or eliminated. First, a code was removed if it was irrelevant to the study. For example, if a code reflected a concept outside the scope of career calling or its development, it was deemed unnecessary. Second, ChatGPT's approach to coding was highly detailed but did not account for previously coded transcripts, leading to inconsistencies in how codes were applied across interviews. If a code was not consistently used for similar responses, it was reconsidered. Finally, some instances of irrelevant coding were identified, although relatively rare, where ChatGPT assigned codes to introductory or background information (e.g., job title and duration) or coded a part of the researcher questions. In these cases, codes such as “persistence in leadership roles” were given undue significance and were subsequently removed. Overall, the initial codes created by human coders tended to be broader, whereas ChatGPT's codes were often overly specific or detailed in ways that were not always relevant. Therefore, during the final merging process, theoretically irrelevant codes (such as duration of career) from ChatGPT were eliminated, while our own codes were enriched by incorporating the relevant details from ChatGPT’s coding.

A notable pattern emerged in ChatGPT’s coding of emotions. It tended to generalize positive emotions under a broad code “experiencing fulfillment” without distinguishing between different emotional states such as happiness, satisfaction, or feeling good. The exception seems to be made for enjoyment, as this was recurring code that ChatGPT defined. On the other hand, ChatGPT was particularly detailed in identifying sources of emotions and behaviors. For example, it differentiated between enjoyment derived from internal motivation, learning and growth, or external relationships. Similarly, it provided more specificity when coding feedback, identifying its type, source, and nature. These details were lacking in our

initial coding. Consequently, the final codes merged our human coders' original structure with the specificity that ChatGPT provided.

Categories

When developing categories, ChatGPT's descriptions were often more detailed but lacked the ability to group all related codes under appropriate thematic categories. As a result, some categories were incomplete or missing entirely.

In cases where categories were clearly defined, such as "feedback" or "enjoyment", both our categorization and ChatGPT's were closely aligned, containing the same sets of codes. However, a key difference was that ChatGPT tended to create broad, overarching categories that grouped diverse codes together, whereas our categorization was more specific, with distinct conceptual distinctions. For instance, ChatGPT created a single category labeled "Emotional and Intrinsic Fulfillment in Work," whereas our approach divided this into more nuanced categories such as "meaningfulness of one's work," "positive emotions and satisfaction related to calling," "positive emotions and satisfaction from job," and "fulfillment." Similarly, ChatGPT inserted several codes such as "extra role behaviors", "being proactive" into category "Passion, Enthusiasm and Motivation", and we on the other hand separated them and created a specific category "Extra role behaviors", being more specific and reflecting on more theoretical concepts related to calling.

Additionally, some of ChatGPT's category assignments were inconsistent with theoretical definitions. For example, it included the code "seeing benefits of extra-role behavior" within the category "Passion and Enjoyment as Key Drivers of Calling," yet did not include other related extra-role behavior codes. This misclassification likely resulted from ChatGPT's limited semantic understanding of the code definitions. To mitigate this issue, codes were revised to be as specific and self-explanatory as possible. Similarly, while ChatGPT

generated a distinct category for “Proactivity, Extra-Role Behavior, and Commitment to Calling,” it failed to include the relevant code “seeing benefits of extra-role behavior” within this category.

After a thorough comparison, certain categories were merged based on ChatGPT’s suggestions. For instance, the categories “learning and growing thanks to job” and “feeling of comfort and competence in job” were consolidated into a broader category, “Adaptation, Growth, and Competence in Job,” to better reflect the underlying themes, often keeping the name of category suggested by ChatGPT, as they were more descriptive.

3. RESULTS

UMCS scale

Descriptive statistics were calculated for the seven dimensions of the UMCS Scale (Vianello et al., 2018) providing insight into which aspects were most and least endorsed by participants. Among the seven measured dimensions, *prosocial orientation* (M = 4.2, SD = 0.44) and *identity* (M = 4.2, SD = 0.73) showed the highest average scores among our participants. In contrast, *pervasiveness* dimension (M = 3.1, SD = 1.05) received the lowest average score, suggesting it was comparatively less endorsed. The remaining dimensions are reported in Table 1 for reference.

Although the questions in the semi-structured interviews were not specifically designed to uncover all dimensions of calling (Vianello et al., 2018), mentions of each dimension were observed in the transcripts as can be seen in Table 2.

Table 1.: Summary of Descriptive Results for the UMCS scale

Dimension	**M**	**SD**	**N**
Passion	3.9	0.40	10
Sacrifice	3.7	0.60	10
Transcendent summons	3.6	0.92	10

Prosocial orientation	4.2	0.44	10
Pervasiveness	3.1	1.05	10
Purposefulness	3.9	0.54	10
Identity	4.2	0.73	10

Table 2.: Representative Quotes for Dimensions

Identification	*"I feel it in my personal life too. I don't know if this comes from my family, maybe my parents, but I'd say it's just a part of me."* (V.S., customer service)
Pervasiveness	*"It tells me to keep going, to continue, maybe even outside of school, doing side work—not for money, but as a volunteer. I even really wanted work during the summer holiday."* (M.B., school psychologist)
Purposefulness	*"But as for calling, if I had to put it, I try to help people by creating these surgical sets, which simplify the healthcare staff's work. "* (K.J., business development manager)
Transcendent summons	*"Like something given to me by the universe. "* (V.S., customer service)

Prosocial orientation	*"Our job is a calling since it's healthcare and it literally save lives or help people live better, healthier lives."* (B.B., operation specialist)
Sacrifice	*"And I think I do more than what's required of me. I sacrifice a lot of my personal time and abilities for this job. "* (B.B., operation specialist)
Passion	*"I genuinely look forward to it. I'm happy there, and everything about the work genuinely makes me enjoy it. "* (S.L., personal trainer)

Thematic analysis

Thematic analysis produced eight themes, from which first three related to the perception of calling: 1) Work Beyond Self, 2) Intrinsic Motives Related to Calling, 3) Social Context as an Influence of Calling, and other five related to the development of calling: 4) Driving Forces of Calling, 5) Stimulation, Growth and Challenges at Work, 6) Calling as Gradual, Dynamic and Evolving Process, 7) Intrinsic Motivation and Voluntary Engagement, 8) Positive emotions, Enjoyment and Emotional Fulfillment are achieved when developing a calling.

Theme 1: Work Beyond Self

Analyzing the interviews and looking for themes, we saw that our participants consider career calling as something deeper than just work and it extends beyond themselves. A theme Work Beyond Self was developed (see Table 3 for representative quotations).

A central element emerging in the concept of career calling is the meaningfulness of work. Meaningfulness is so deeply embedded in the construct of calling that several definitions

explicitly center on it, such as "a consuming, meaningful passion people experience toward a domain" (Dobrow & Tosti-Kharas, 2011, p. 1005) and "a mostly self-set, salient, higher order career goal, which generates meaning and purpose for the individual" (Praskova, Creed, & Hood, 2015, p. 93).

It is noteworthy that two participants spontaneously described their work as a calling even before the term was introduced during the interviews. J.K. (taxi driver) for instance mentioned how “I don’t see it as just work. I see it as a calling, like being a paramedic or a nurse.” And M.B. (school psychologist) also expressed they “simply see it as a calling, not just my job.”

A second important element within this theme is transcendence. Several participants expressed the belief that they were destined for the work they are doing, as illustrated by reflection of V.S. (customer service): “so that, I think, is my calling, that I was born for this—like ‘to serve.”

Others perceived their work as a mission assigned to them in life. S.L. (personal trainer) said that some people around them “see it as a mission; it’s not about money but about genuinely helping people.”

The perception of calling for our participants often meant adding extra value to their work, being proactive, going beyond the formal duties of their work and overall dedicating themselves to it. Organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) and dedication to work therefore result as our next findings.

It may vary and can be in the form of adapting to the client's needs. This was the case of E.P. (real estate) who expressed how “the main added value for us is to do our maximum to accommodate the client, which means that if they have a condition to meet in the evening or

early morning, we don't look at working hours from-to, but we try to adapt—even on weekends." Or it can reflect on the relations created:

"I think most of our teachers perceive it this way, and it shows in how they care about the students, their personalities, difficulties, and feelings. They don't just focus on learning and academic results, but often the students turn to them with personal problems or for advice. They have long conversations with them." (K.P., teacher-principal)

Although discussing *career* calling, participants often described how their sense of calling extends beyond work, influencing their life more broadly. Some participants reported having an additional strong calling outside their career, such as *being a mother* (K.P., teacher-principal), or, as V.S. (customer service) noted, that their calling towards work also manifests in their life outside of the workplace: "Well I do, I have a huge sense of calling. This need to serve people, it's not only at work."

The last category present in this theme is the pro-social aspect of calling, in other words Calling as Service to Others and Society. Work beyond Self may also include a service to society which is found helpful. When our participants perceived how through their work they in any way help others, it was perceived as their calling.

Table 3.: Representative Quotes for Work Beyond Self

Work Beyond Self	
Sense of Calling and Meaning	*"That you see something like a mission behind the work, deeper than just it bringing you money."* (S.L., personal trainer)

Transcendence	*"...but I'd say it's just a part of me, like something given to me by the universe."* (V.S., customer service)
OCB and Dedication to Work	*"Maybe in that I don't just do the things that are formally required, but I also do extra things related to knowing those people and creating the right conditions for them."* (K.P., teacher-principal)
Calling Extends Beyond Work	*"And this shows up at home as well, in how our relationship is."* (M.B., school psychologist)
Calling as Service to Others and Society	*"So, I see the calling as simplifying life, whether for healthcare professionals or ultimately for the people themselves."* (K.J., business development manager)

Theme 2: Intrinsic Motives Related to Calling

In addition to the previously mentioned theme, which reflects the more transcendental and external aspects of calling, we identified another significant dimension in the perception of calling among Slovak workers: Intrinsic Motives (see Table 4 for representative quotations). Participants described experiencing their work as a calling largely due to the strong presence of joy. They expressed enthusiasm for going to work and reported deriving both joy and energy from their professional activities.

Another element that participants associated with their experience of calling was the presence of fulfillment and passion. In other words our participants, who reported a sense of calling, also described feeling fulfilled and passionate about their work.

The final aspect within the theme of intrinsic motivation was learning and personal development. Participants perceived personal growth as an integral part of their calling, emphasizing that their work provides continuous opportunities for growth and that their engagement in lifelong education signals a sense of calling.

Table 4.: Representative Quotes for Intrinsic motives related to calling

Intrinsic motives related to calling	
Enjoyment of Work	*"And… and also that I personally enjoy it. Even without the customer aspect, I just like it because I enjoy doing manual work (.) like this, in services."* (V.S., customer service)
Fulfillment, passion and positive emotions from work	*"The work truly fulfills and excites me"* (S.L., personal trainer)
Learning and Personal Development	*"And mainly, they have a motivation to educate themselves throughout life. It's not like, okay, this is my profession, but I don't have to do anything more"* (N.P., high school teacher)

Theme 3: Social Context as an Influence of Calling

Continuing to analyze our data, curious aspects of calling emerged from our interviews related to a social context, therefore a theme Social Context as an Influence of Calling was developed (see Table 5, for a sample of representative quotations).

Firstly, we found that the perception of calling is influenced by social relationships. Many participants reported experiencing their work as a calling due to the presence of a supportive team or the social bonds they were able to establish through their work.

Secondly, the perception of calling is shaped by societal narratives. Certain professions are often deemed by society as vocations, such as teaching, and individuals in these roles are typically viewed as having a calling. Contrary, in our interviews we additionally identified that societal narratives influence perceptions of work through the notion that work is merely a means to earn money and engage in life, but not something that can be considered a calling or a life's purpose. Similarly, society's classification of certain professions as "callings" while excluding others may inhibit individuals from fully embracing their own calling and dedicating themselves to their work, especially if their occupation is not culturally recognized as a calling, as one of our participants expressed:

"...well, because that's how they take it, they take it the way they've been taught from their surroundings, like why them, why should I just give 100% of myself when the employer doesn't care either way, I'm replaceable anyway and they'll say things like that. That's like they're not doing it for the good of either those customers or for the other side or neither for themselves. ." (V.S., customer service)

The final concept that emerged as relevant for the perception of calling was person-environment fit (P–E fit). Our findings suggest that individuals may perceive their job as their calling partly due to the environment in which they work. This could be attributed to a specific

company, as illustrated by B.B. (operations specialist) who would “definitely recommend [the job] to other people, and especially this company."

Alternatively, it may stem from the nature of the field itself, where the demands of the work align with the individual's personal preferences. M.B. (school psychologist) expressed they like their job "maybe because there are few people I can have deep conversations with. And... this is part of it."

Table 5.: Representative Quotes for Social context as an influence of calling

Social context as an influence of calling	
Social Relationships and Support at Work	*“But he still sees it as a calling because people like him, and he likes people..”* (J.K., taxi driver)
Societal and Cultural Narratives about Work	*“I think it’s also because society pushes this narrative that it’s simply a job, work, work, work, and just the word “job” is stigmatized. At work, you’re supposed to suffer, or I don’t know—most people seem to me like they just don’t want to go to work; they go just to make a living, basically. ”* (V.S., customer service) *”What does it mean to me? Well (..) I also think that my profession is essentially a calling”* (N.P., high school teacher)

Person-Environment Fit	*"That's what I like most about my job—that I don't do the same thing all the time, but that it changes."* (B.B., operation specialist)

Theme 4: Driving Forces of Calling

Throughout the process of data analysis, specific themes emerged and events described by our participants suggest that there are several occurrences that started or made them realize that work is their calling. We call them Driving Forces of Calling (see Table 6 for a sample of representative quotations).

Perhaps the biggest event present throughout the whole process and in almost every interview was feedback. For instance for M.B. (school psychologist) it came in the form of seeing one's results of work, specifically when "we prevented a student from stalking his classmate. We intervened and stopped it very decisively." On the other hand, for K.J. (business development manager) it was rather an external feedback, because "I had to hear it not through someone else but directly from the people who work with it."

Overall it is notable that feedback played a crucial part for our participants in realizing their calling. The external feedback could be in a simple form of trust from others, how K.P. (teacher-principal) stated "maybe I realized it through the fact that people are willing to confide in me." Or it could be in a form of employer satisfaction, as for instance for B.B. (operations specialist) the driving force of her calling was also the fact that "I know that at work they are satisfied with me since I do it how I do it."

Another driving force we identified was the role of positive work relations. What we observed was how a supportive environment in the workplace can influence individuals to perceive their work as meaningful. An example of this impact is the experience of V.S. (customer service): “Another thing is I’ve always been lucky with colleagues and workplaces, which has confirmed that this is the right path for me.”.

The meaningfulness of work was reported as present also independently of a positive workplace environment and therefore perception of work as meaningful was identified as one of our driving forces. As it was pointed out by S.L. (personal trainer) who “live off that—seeing that it has meaning for people, that it helps them, and I also see the meaning of it.”

Table 6.: Representative Quotes for Driving Forces of Calling

Driving Forces of Calling	
Feedback and Results as Validation of Calling	*“How did I realize... maybe through the students and the feedback, especially from the students.”* (M.B., school psychologist)
	“It’s also like with working with kids—they’re happy when they learn something. I see that they’re enjoying movement. I create a connection for them to make movement

	something enjoyable rather than something they hate." (S.L., personal trainer)
The Role of Positive Work Relations;	*"Another thing is I've always been lucky with colleagues and workplaces, which has confirmed that this is the right path for me."* (V.S., customer services)
Meaningfulness of Work	*"I've already said that for me, it's when we create something for healthcare professionals, something that makes sense and makes their work easier."* (K.J., business development manager)
P-E fit	*"But taxi driving fulfills me the most because I really see the real world here. You don't have to pretend. In an office, you have to wear a uniform, speak formally, no swearing. And it's not like I need swearing in life, but in an office, it's not appropriate, even in a personal interaction."* (J.K., taxi driver)

Theme 5: Stimulation, Growth and Challenges at Work

Another theme defined highlights the importance of learning and growth within one's job. Stimulation, Growth and Challenges at Work (see Table 7 for a sample of representative quotations) emphasizes that when work presents appropriate levels of challenge, it fosters a stimulating environment which requires adaptation and continuous learning. This, in turn, contributes to personal and professional development. When individuals are situated in such environments, successfully overcoming challenges and developing one's competencies contribute to their personal growth, which in turn fosters a sense of career calling. As expressed by B.B., an operations specialist:

> *"But then, a lot of things started changing in the company, and we had to adapt. That's what started to excite me—that I had to learn new things, that it pushed me, and that I had to adapt and things were changing. And so I always like (...) I always knew somehow to adapt and manage things and I still enjoyed it. And that's what happened."*

Moreover, such challenges often lead individuals to recognize and affirm their own competence. Experiencing oneself as capable and effective in response to work demands can reinforce the sense of being called to a particular job or role. As one participant (V.S.) reflected, the experience involved a mix of uncertainty and self-assurance:

"There was a bit of uncertainty, like, 'What if they ask me to do things I don't know how to do?' But I reminded myself I can always learn. I have always learnt everything so far. So there was this uncertainty, but only partially, really…And I also realized…maybe it was an awareness that I'm intelligent, and capable, that I know how to do other things."

Table 7.: Representative Quotes for Stimulation, Growth and Challenges at Work

Stimulation, Growth and Challenges at Work	
Adaptation, Growth and Competence in Job	*"So maybe that's why I see it as a calling because I know I'm good at my job"* (B.B., operations specialist) *"And I also realized…maybe it was an awareness that I'm intelligent, and capable, that I know how to do other things"* V.S., customer services)
Work is Stimulating and Challenging	*"But taxi driving fulfills me the most because I really see the real world here."* (J.K., taxi driver)

Theme 6: Calling as Gradual, Dynamic, Evolving Process

Analyzing answers about a trajectory of calling development we found that even though specific events may act as "starting fuel", the development of career calling is a rather natural process. As different aspects of this process emerged, we grouped them into a theme: Gradual, Dynamic and Evolving process (see Table 8 for a sample of representative quotes).

One of the major findings evolving from this theme is the fact that, as several of our participants stated, the awareness of their sense of calling came after actually working in the job, implying how a person must first live out the calling in order to perceive it.

Another phenomena identified was the impact of long-term commitment to calling, as J.K. (taxi driver) stated: “So being a taxi driver, I don’t say that I would never do anything else in my life, but I would like to do it primarily for the rest of my life, because I have a vision and am somehow arranged.”

This suggests that dedication within a professional role can strengthen one’s sense of calling. Long-term engagement in one’s occupation may thus serve as both an indicator and a facilitator of calling.

Another possible facilitator for the development of calling is, perhaps simple, comparison with others. As it emerged in our research, participants started realizing that their work is a bit more than a career through contrasting their approach to work to other people. E.P. (real estate) saw that “when I compare myself with some colleagues—not those I’m in direct contact with, but from the sector I work in—who do it somewhat superficially, their results are a bit different.”

Table 8.: Representative Quotes for Calling as a Gradual, Dynamic, Evolving Process

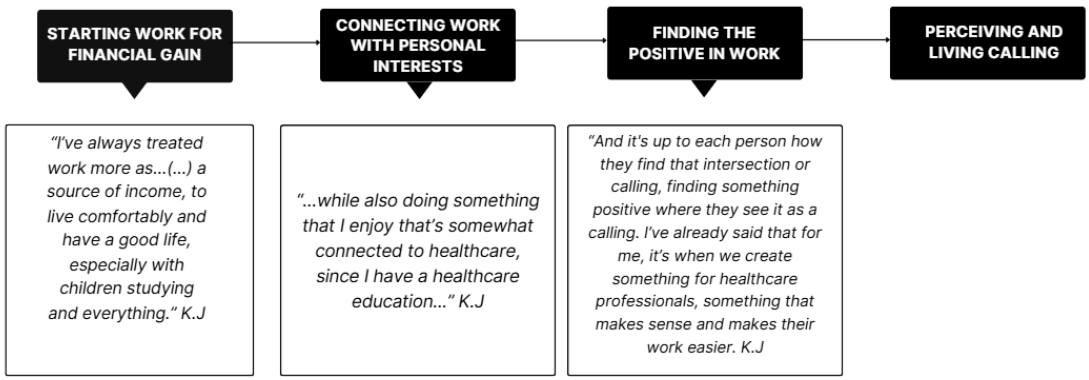
Calling as a Gradual, Dynamic, Evolving Process	
Developing Calling is Gradual Process After Living it;	*“Also, when I actually got into the job, I felt fulfilled, and that it’s the way I imagined it..”* (N.P., high school teacher)

Perceiving Calling in Life in General	*"I would put it this way, I would not divide this work from the others I did, I saw it in every work with people."* (J.K., taxi driver)
Realizing Calling Through Comparison with Others	*"Because I see a lot of the opposite around me, and I wouldn't want to be in a situation where I spend 6 to 8 hours a day or more feeling predominantly negative emotions or chronic stress."* (S.L., personal trainer)
Early Aspirations and Long-Term Commitment to Calling	*"Well, probably mainly because the profession I do was something I wanted since I was little."* (N.P., high school teacher) *"Otherwise, I wouldn't still be here after three years. With the high turnover in our company, my colleagues and I are the three longest-standing employees. Everyone else has changed."* (B.B., operations specialist)

Specific trajectories were analyzed, which represents the findings in this theme. An example of development of calling as an evolving process can be the story of K.J. (see Figure 1 for visual representation of the trajectory). This participant initially entered their work with the main goal being the salary. Only then K.J. started to connect the job role and the industry with their own interests, which could be considered as P-E fit. Another important point in their

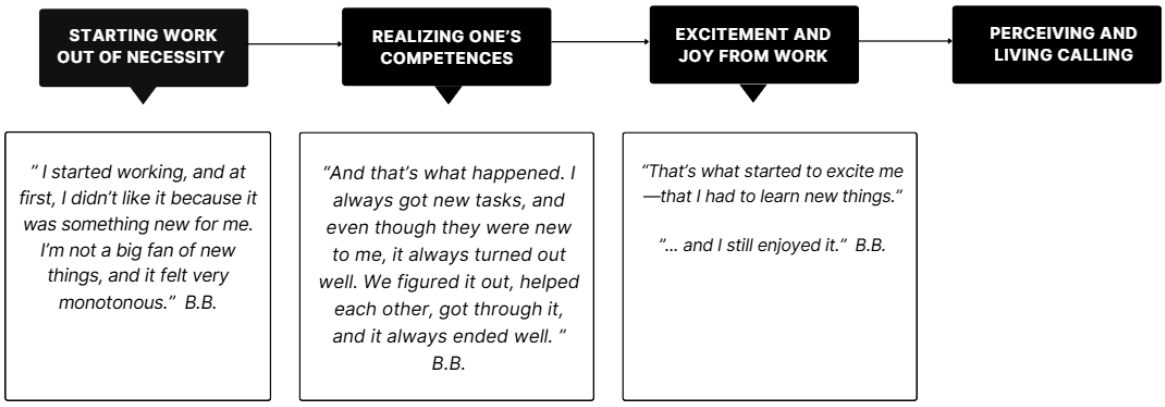
trajectory was the focus on positive aspects of the work and finding meaning within them. All this led to the perception of calling. Therefore, living a calling and experiencing P-E fit and meaningfulness of work led to perception of calling.

Figure 1.: An individual trajectory of development of calling - K.J. (business development manager)



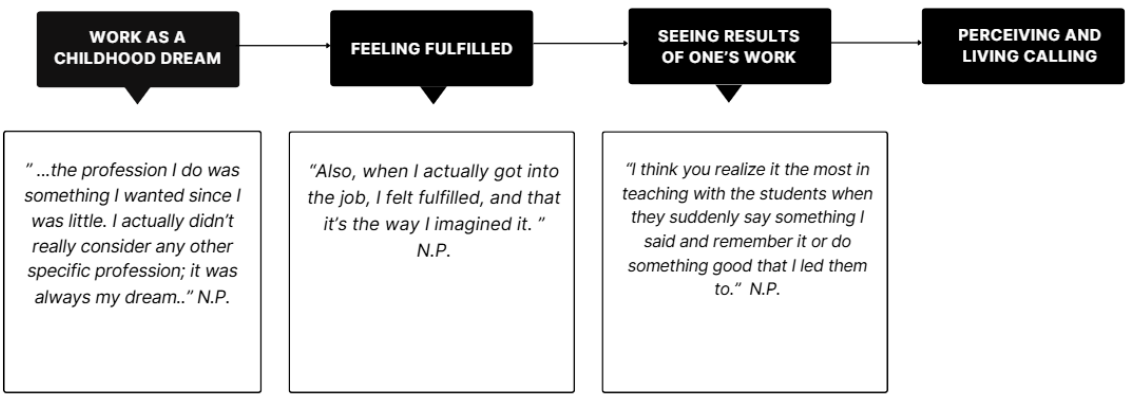
Another trajectory, the one of B.B. (see Figure 2 for visual representation of trajectory), shows similarly a gradual process, with slightly different events shaping the trajectory. B.B. starts working, not perceiving the job as calling, finding it rather monotonous. An important point in their trajectory is a constant flow of new tasks and challenges, creating space for learning and realising one's competences. After this, B.B. perceives themselves as good at their job, additionally the stimulation and challenges making them excited about their job. After these experiences, there is a perception of calling, which came after living it out.

Figure 2.: An individual trajectory of development of calling - B.B. (operations specialist)



Slightly different was the trajectory of N.P. (see Figure 3 for visual representation of trajectory), as they entered their role with clear intent, having considered it their dream work since childhood. What is notable about this trajectory is that, even though there was an idea of this job present since long time, there were other contributions such as actually feeling fulfilled from the job and seeing the results of their work that initiated a development of calling, once again implying that firstly they had to live out the calling in order to perceive it.

Figure 3.: An individual trajectory of development of calling - N.P. (high school teacher)



Theme 7: Intrinsic Motivation and Voluntary Engagement

Another theme relevant to the trajectory of development is Intrinsic Motivation and Voluntary Engagement (see Table 9 for a sample of representative quotations). It reveals key internal mechanisms that guide the development of calling over time. Participants describe voluntary engagement, moral vs financial drivers, and intrinsic motivation, which are essential forces that sustain the trajectory of calling.

Participants choose to invest in work, follow their inner values, and persist, even in the absence of external rewards. M.B. (school psychologist) expressed how *"*it [perceiving work as calling] tells me to keep going, to continue, maybe even outside of school, doing side work—not for money." This aligns with Systemic Event Theory, where personal agency shapes career development (Morgeson et al., 2015).

Table 9.: Representative Quotes for Intrinsic Motivation and Voluntary Engagement in Calling

Intrinsic Motivation and Voluntary Engagement in Calling	
Financial vs Moral and Intrinsic Motivation in Calling;	*"That's why I say that this job, okay you do it for money, like every work, but the money is not the priority"* (J.K., taxi driver)

Organizational Citizenship Behavior	*"The fact that someone from the company didn't just pass the product along without caring was a big plus for them."* (K.J., business development manager)

Theme 8: Positive Emotions, Enjoyment and Emotional Fulfillment are achieved when developing a calling

From the interview excerpts describing feelings associated with the development of a calling, a theme emerged: Positive Emotions, Enjoyment, and Emotional Fulfillment (see Table 10 for a sample of representative quotations). As the name of the theme explains, there was undoubtedly a prevalence of positive emotions for our participants when realizing a calling.

Perhaps the first, or one of the clearest signs that one has developed a calling, is an enjoyment of their work. This was how S.L. (personal trainer) understood it: "probably because, well I simply enjoyed it."

Another sign that one is living their calling is feeling fulfilled by their work, as also V.S. (customer service) stated: "My first real job, when I was 19, was in a restaurant, and I was surprised by how much it fulfilled me."

Table 10.: Representative Quotes for Positive emotions, Enjoyment and Emotional Fulfillment are achieved when developing a calling

Positive emotions, Enjoyment and Emotional Fulfillment are achieved when developing a calling	
Positive Emotions and Satisfaction Related to Calling	*"A sense of satisfaction with my work"* (K.P., teacher-principal)
Enjoyment of Work	*"Because I enjoy it and really it doesn't cost me energy."* (S.L., personal trainer)
Work Experiences and Interaction as Source of Fulfillment of Calling	*"My first real job, when I was 19, was in a restaurant, and I was surprised by how much it fulfilled me."* (V.S., customer service)
Effortless Engagement in Job as a Result of Perceiving Calling	*"Yes, that's one of the realizations—that this work doesn't drain me much, so I can do a lot of it"* (S.L., personal trainer)

4. DISCUSSION

4.1 Research aim

This study set out to investigate how people in Slovakia define and experience the concept of career calling and to understand how the experience of calling develops over time, using Systemic Event Theory (Morgeson et al., 2015) as a guiding framework.

Five research questions were formulated. The first two questions aim to discover the perception of career calling:

R1: "How is career calling perceived among Slovak workers?"

R2: "Is the perception of the term career calling among Slovak workers similar to the western conceptualization of the term?"

And the other three questions were designed to explore the development of career calling:

R3: "What events contribute to the development of career calling?"

R4: "What is the trajectory of the development of career calling?"

R5: "How does it feel to have developed a career calling?"

The thematic analysis revealed eight themes. The first three reflected participants' perceptions of calling: 1) Work Beyond Self, 2) Intrinsic Motives Related to Calling, and 3) Social Context as an Influence of Calling. The remaining five themes captured aspects of calling development: 4) Driving Forces of Calling, 5) Stimulation, Growth, and Challenges at

Work, 6) Calling as a Gradual, Dynamic, and Evolving Process, 7) Intrinsic Motivation and Voluntary Engagement, and 8) Positive Emotions, Enjoyment, and Emotional Fulfillment in the Development of a Calling. The discussion is organized as follows: the research questions are answered one by one with the theme analyzed and the results are connected to the current literature.

Perception of career calling

Our first aim of the study was to explore the term career calling in the context of Slovak workers and discover whether it differs from Western conception established on career calling.

To answer the research question: how is career calling perceived among Slovak workers, based on the themes emerged in our analysis we can state that career calling in Slovakia is perceived as work beyond Self while also fulfilling one's personal intrinsic motives and is influenced by the social environment.

The theme Work Beyond Self represents an unsurprising finding as its components (e.g. meaningfulness, transcendence, pro-sociality) have a well established relationship to calling in the current scientific literature (Dobrow & Tosti-Kharas, 2011; Thompson & Bunderson, 2019).

For instance, the perception of calling and work meaningfulness has been found to have a reciprocal relationship (Duffy et al., 2018). Therefore, participants who experience a sense of calling also perceive their work as meaningful.

Also, it has been established that transcendence is a central part of the calling experience. Thomposon and Bunderson (2019) explain that feeling "called" often means

sensing a summons from a source beyond the self, supporting our findings that transcendence is foundational in the perception of career calling.

The theme may also be linked to results obtained by Duffy et al. (2014), where they argue that career callings are linked with personal growth and a broader sense of life meaning, suggesting that they are not just about work but tied to overall life purpose. Furthermore, a study by Marsh and Dik (2024) demonstrates that feeling a calling enhances both eudaimonic (meaning-focused) and hedonic (happiness-focused) well-being, again proposing idea that it has wide-reaching effects beyond the workplace, supporting our findings that many people experience calling as a core part of how they find meaning in life, not just in their careers.

The Work Beyond Self theme incorporates pro-sociality. Prosocial orientation is one of the major subcomponents of calling (alongside transcendent summons and purposeful work) (Marsh and Dik, 2024), supporting the presence of this category in our research. Career calling, described also as “a belief that one's career is a central part of a broader sense of purpose and meaning in life and is used to help others or advance the greater good in some fashion” (Duffy & Dik, 2013, p. 4290) or “a course of action in pursuit of prosocial intentions” (Elangovan et al., 2010, p.430) often naturally incorporates a desire to help others, and act in prosocial way, making it aligned with the perception of our participants.

Therefore we can state that, whether in the form of OCB, pro-sociality, transcendence or meaningfulness, the notion of something beyond ordinary career motivations appears to be a defining feature of how our participants conceptualize calling.

Pure personal enjoyment of work was often a persistent statement among our participants suggesting that the enjoyment of work is a key component in the perception of career calling. This finding is consistent with Wrzesniewski et al. (1997), who noted that

individuals who perceive their work as a calling, rather than merely a job or career, tend to prioritize enjoyment and fulfillment over career advancement or financial necessity.

In fact, fulfillment and passion were also consistently highlighted as important aspects in the experience of career calling among the participants. These data are aligning with existing literature where passion frequently appears as a key component in definitions of calling (Wrzesniewski et al., 1997; Dobrow & Tosti-Kharas, 2011; Praskova et al., 2015). Additionally, it has been proved that engaging in activities related to one's calling is often linked to feelings of satisfaction and fulfillment (Vianello et al., 2018), which reflects in our findings as the participants in our study identified as having a calling and in the interviews mentioned feelings of fulfillment when engaging in their job. Moreover, this mirrors findings by Chen et al. (2018), who demonstrated that individuals with a strong sense of calling experience higher career satisfaction even in challenging environments. This suggests that calling may serve as a stable source of career fulfillment.

The last aspect of intrinsic motivation was personal growth. Participants regarded personal growth as a central dimension of their calling, noting that their work offers ongoing opportunities for development and that their commitment to lifelong learning reflects and reinforces this sense of calling. This finding is consistent with Yuliawati and Teonata (2022), who found that efforts toward personal growth are closely linked to the perception of career calling. Additionally, the presence of learning as a factor is supported by Dalla Rosa et al. (2019), who demonstrated that active learning and clarity about professional goals predict the development of a sense of calling over time. These studies thus support our findings, indicating that the active pursuit of personal development and engagement in learning environments significantly enhance the perception and realization of career calling.

As stated above, career calling in the context of Slovak workers is perceived as work that extends beyond the Self and it also includes intrinsic motives such as enjoyment and fulfillment from work. However, we found out that the perception is also being influenced by the social context.

The perception of one's work as their calling may be due to the supportive team and positive bonds with their coworkers, as it has been the case for some of our participants. Existing research on career calling suggests that supportive workplace relationships facilitate individuals' ability to live out their perceived calling (Walsh et al., 2020; Ehrhardt & Ensher, 2020). Our findings indicate that participants strongly associate their sense of calling with the quality of social connections at work, likely because a positive environment enables them to better enact their calling. Overall, we can conclude that strong, supportive workplace relationships, effective teamwork, and positive client interactions significantly enhance individuals' perception and realization of their career calling.

Social narratives were also found to play a formative part in the stories of our participants. More specifically, individuals in careers that society commonly perceives as callings are often regarded as embodying a calling. However, it was also found that social narratives may influence the perception of career calling in a negative way, presenting some works as merely means to earn money with no possibility to classify them as callings. Lemke's (2021) study further supports these findings, demonstrating that socio-cultural factors play a significant role in shaping individuals' lived experiences of calling. It highlights that societal narratives and cultural contexts deeply influence how career callings are perceived by shaping

values, expectations, emotional responses, and the very meaning attached to work and this was reflected in our findings as well.

The proof of importance of the context was highlighted in the category of person-environment fit. In other words, our participants perceived their job as their calling due to the environment where they worked or due to the demands of the work and the fact that these aspects of the job aligned with the personal preferences of our participants. This observation aligns with the established understanding that when the environment (E) is compatible with an individual's personal characteristics (P), positive work experiences are more likely to occur (Pervin, 1968). Furthermore, within the framework of Work as a Calling Theory, P–E fit has been identified as a factor that facilitates individuals' ability to live out their perceived calling (Duffy et al., 2018). Thus, our findings suggest that participants' recognition of P–E, similarly to positive workplace relationships, reflects its role in enabling the realization of their calling.

Comparison to the international literature

To address our second research question, whether the perception of career calling among Slovak workers is similar to the Western conceptualization of the term, our findings suggest a strong alignment, particularly in the themes of Work Beyond Self and Intrinsic Motives.

First, our interviews revealed both the internal and external focus of calling, consistent with the descriptions provided by Dobrow et al. (2023). Specifically, we observed that when asked about their calling, participants reflected on aspects such as personal development, as well as the joy and fulfillment derived from their work (internal focus).

To add, fulfillment was acknowledged as part of a calling as well as pro-sociality of it, aligning with the classical study of Wrzesniewski et al. (1997) that distinguishes calling as work that is fulfilling, socially valuable end in itself.

In addition, we examined all seven dimensions of calling (Vianello et al., 2018) within our interviews, confirming that Slovak workers' perceptions of career calling align with the Western conceptualization of the construct.

Events contributing to the development of career calling

The second main aim of our study was to explore the development of career calling and we wanted to look specifically on what events contribute to the development of calling. Rather than specific moments we identified several occurrences which made our participants conscious about their calling, represented as Driving Forces in our study.

The most prevalent event that contributed to the development of calling for our participants was the role of feedback, whether it was spoken through employers or customers or in the form of results of one's work. Regardless of the type of feedback, it seemed to act as a validation mechanism, helping individuals recognize the impact of their work and, in turn, deepening their sense of purpose and calling. In fact, this role of feedback was demonstrated by Gerdel (2024), where in her Development Theory of Calling feedback serves as a form of social and professional input that reinforces individuals' perception of meaning in their work. In other words, feedback and results function as a validation mechanism by affirming that workers' contributions matter, which strengthens their alignment between personal values and work.

Another influential driving force when it comes to developing a calling was the role of positive work relations and person-environment fit. Both are compatible with the Work as Calling Theory by Duffy and colleagues (2018) establishing them as one of the predictors of calling.

A supportive environment can influence individuals to see their work as meaningful. If a group or team collectively values meaningful work, individuals are more likely to develop a calling themselves (Chen et al., 2023). Additionally, such support is expected to moderate the relationship between perceiving a calling and person–environment fit; employees who feel a calling and receive high organizational support are more likely to report that their work environment aligns well with their personal values and needs (Duffy et al., 2018). These findings therefore reinforce our results that work relationships and person–environment fit are key drivers in the experience of a career calling.

The last influential driving force for the development of calling was perception of meaningfulness of work. As WCT (Work as a Calling Theory) states, it is expected to have a rather reciprocal relationship- over time, individuals who perceive a calling are likely to experience greater work meaning, which subsequently enhances their sense of truly living out that calling (Duffy et al., 2018). Despite the reciprocal relationship, we could clearly analyze the meaningfulness of work as a starting point for developing a calling. The findings align with the work of Duffy and colleagues (2009), where they argue that even in the absence of an initial sense of calling, individuals may begin to cultivate one by actively identifying and fostering sources of meaning within their work context.

Therefore, our results suggest that facilitating individuals' understanding of what renders their work meaningful, such as their core values, passions, or a sense of purpose can serve as a pathway to discovering or developing a career calling.

Trajectory of the development of calling

Another research question we posed to ourselves was the trajectory of the development of calling. In our study the development of a sense of calling was more of a natural process. Rather than having one point in life when one realized their calling, the journey was more of a gradual, dynamic and evolving process.

From analyzing the experiences of our participants, it is clear that the realization of calling came only after actually working and living out that calling, implying that in order to perceive a calling one must first live it. Therefore, our study supports the idea of calling's a posteriori development, which was researched by Dalla Rosa and colleagues (2019). The findings of their study demonstrate that active engagement and involvement in activities related to one's calling contribute to its development over time.

Similarly, Duffy and colleagues (2011) demonstrated that career commitment mediates the relationship between calling and positive work outcomes. In our study we saw that long term commitment to the work was one of the signs for the participants that it is their calling, therefore having an effect on its development. This suggests that dedication within a professional role can strengthen one's sense of calling. Long-term engagement in one's occupation may thus serve as both an indicator and a facilitator of calling.

Feelings correlated with a sense of calling

The last research question in our study was: How does it feel to have developed a career calling. All of our participants experienced very positive emotions when realizing they developed and lived their calling.

Emotions such as satisfaction, enjoyment of work, fulfillment and feeling such as one is not even working, but rather doing a ‘paid hobby’ were among our answers. In fact, perceiving joy and fulfillment in one's work is not a novel finding. Previous research has shown that individuals who perceive their work as a calling tend to prioritize fulfillment and enjoyment over financial rewards or status (Wrzesniewski et al., 1997), with overall enjoyment of work being a central component of calling (Dobrow et al., 2023). Moreover, individuals who pursued career changes to follow their calling reported significantly more fulfillment in both work and life (Ahn et al., 2017). Furthermore, job satisfaction has been identified as a positive outcome of perceiving a calling (Duffy et al., 2018), additionally supporting our current findings.

This whole theme (Positive Emotions, Enjoyment and Emotional Fulfillment are achieved when developing a calling) reflects the modern view on calling where callings are expressions of one’s inner passions and interests, pursued for the sense of enjoyment and personal fulfillment they provide (Thompson & Bunderson, 2019) and, similarly, reflects calling that is characterized by an internal focus, emphasizing individuals' pursuit of self-realization and fulfillment through their work (Dobrow et al., 2023).

4.2 Methodological aim

In our study a methodological aim was set out, which was to explore the advantages and disadvantages of AI in qualitative research by using ChatGPT - GPT-4 model as a second

coder. Throughout our research ChatGPT was shown to be a valid and reliable tool with the percentage agreement being 71% and 75% for two different parts of the interviews.

We found ChatGPT to be advantageous for our cross-cultural research, since ChatGPT was able to switch between languages effortlessly, making it possible to insert transcript in one language and request codes in English with english citations. Another valuable aspect was more detailed and self-explanatory codes created by ChaGPT as opposed to the broad coding from human coders.

There were as well some features to be careful about, as ChatGPT sometimes coded irrelevant part of the interviews such as ice breaking questions, and perhaps the biggest setback may be that ChatGPT was not able to use the same code for the same concept but always slightly changed the name, making it impossible to have one code including several citations.

5. PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

Based on our findings, we now know how important role engagement and exploration is in order to perceive calling, therefore practices at work, such as job rotation should be encouraged. This may allow individuals without career calling perception to explore different work, engage in it and possibly develop a calling.

Similarly, learning about the driving forces establishing career calling, feedback culture and positive social environment should always be encouraged at the workplace. As found in our study, as well as backed up by Developmental Theory of a Calling (Gerdel, 2024), feedback is a very prevalent validation mechanism, helping workers recognize their abilities and impact and therefore deepen their sense of calling. Fostering and maintaining a strong feedback culture within organizations may therefore facilitate employees' realization of their potential and, in turn, support the development of a deeper sense of calling in their roles. Equivalently, if organisations foster a positive team climate it may result in workers experiencing positive interactions in work, making their work more meaningful for them, a critical component of career calling (Dobrow et al., 2019).

Another possible place to apply our findings about role engagement are universities, or in general educational institutions. Our study implies the need to place particular emphasis on internships and practical experiences for students since we know the importance of living one's calling before perceiving it. The significance of hands-on experiences was highlighted in the study of Dalla Rosa et al. (2019), where they argue that these types of experiences can help students appreciate the practical relevance and personal significance of what they have learned.

ChatGPT as a second coder

The use of ChatGPT as a second coder in our thematic analysis has been shown advantageous and we would support its practical use in research. However, in order to imply it, we would advise to be as concrete as possible when giving a prompt, strictly use the same prompt throughout, and perhaps even remind ChatGPT to remain objective.

Additionally, for our research it was proven better to give ChatGPT the transcripts of interviews one by one, repeating the prompts instead of putting all the transcripts together for one prompt.

6. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

One of the limitations of this study is a small and specific sample. Since the participants were Slovak workers, the cultural context limits generalization.

For future research it is advised a larger sample as well as quantitative studies researching the development of calling to accompany the qualitative and longitudinal studies.

Last but not least, we would recommend researching the perception of career calling and its development in more non-Western cultures to gather more data and gain a deeper understanding of this phenomenon.

7. CONCLUSION

In summary, Slovak individuals define and experience career calling in ways that align with the international literature, but also reflect local and social influences. Their perceptions include a neoclassical view, looking at work as something that goes beyond Self, as well as the modern view and that is perception of intrinsic motives related to calling.

Furthermore, the development of calling is not static, rather it is a process shaped over time by both personal meaning-making and contextual events (e.g., receiving feedback), implying that the perception of calling comes after living it out.

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APPENDIX A

Semi-structured Interview Protocol

Screening

Screening individuals in order to interview only participants perceiving a calling. We are using 3 scenarios, which will be sent to the participants by email, and they will be asked to choose one, with whom they identify the most. This process will happen before the interview, preferably some days before, in order for participants to not fully remember the scenarios and not be influenced by it.

the email:

"Dear [name of participant],

I am Katarina Podolanova, a psychology student at the UNIPD. You are invited to participate in a research project I am conducting, under the supervision of Anna Dalla Rosa, PhD., that investigates the concept of work and how people approach it. I would like you to read three different stories and reply to this email, indicating the story with which you identify the most, responding one of the following: Mr/s. A, Mr/s. B or Mr/s, C.

Thank you for the participation."

[adjust the text based on the participant's gender]

Job

Mr. A works primary to earn enough money to support his life outside of his job. If he was financially secure, he would no longer continue with his current line of work, but would really rather do something else instead. Mr. A's job is basically a necessity of life, a lot like breathing or sleeping. He often wishes the time would pass more quickly at work. He greatly anticipates weekends and vacations.

If Mr. A lived his life over again, he probably would not go into the same line of work. He would not encourage his friends and children to enter his line of work. Mr. A is very eager to retire.

Career

Mr. B basically enjoys his work, but does not expect to be in his current job five years from now. Instead, he plans to move on to a better, higher level job. He has several goals for his future pertaining to the positions he would eventually like to hold. Sometimes his work seems a waste of time, but he knows that he must do sufficiently well in his current position in order to move on. Mr. B can't wait to get a promotion. For him, a promotion means recognition of his good work, and is a sign of his success in competition with his coworkers.

Calling

Mr. C's work is one of the most important parts of his life. He is very pleased that he is in this line of work. Because what he does for a living is a vital part of who he is, it is one of the first things he tells people about himself. The majority of his friends are from his place of employment, and he belongs to several organizations and clubs relating to his work. Mr. C feels good about his work because he loves it, and because he thinks it makes the world a better place. He would encourage his friends and children to enter his line of work. Mr. C would be pretty upset if he were forced to stop working, and he is not particularly looking forward to retirement.

Non-expert Interview

This semi-structured interview will be administered to a small sample of workers (n=10) in Slovakia, all in different work positions. Our goals are as follows:

- *Part 1: Ice-breaking questions, to make them feel comfortable and to not start with demanding questions*
- *Part 2: Questions about career calling*
- *Part 3: Questions about specific events that has led them to their career calling*

***Protocol A**= the script is intended for participants identifying with the "calling" profile (its Slovak translation) - Mr. C and perceiving it*

***Protocol B**=the script is intended for participants that:*

- *throughout the interview do not identify with the word 'calling' (and therefore the concept has to be approached by different word) or*
- *claim to not perceive calling in their work*

Introduction

Good morning,

I am *[Katarina Podolanova, a student in the UNIPD, CSI]*. You are invited to participate in a research project I am conducting, under the supervision of Anna Dalla Rosa, PhD., that investigates the concept of work and how people approach it. In this phase we are conducting interviews in Slovakia, to gather people's opinions and experiences and plan future research activities.

I will ask you a few questions, asking you to answer openly and honestly. Please note that there are no "right" or "wrong" answers, but that our goal is to gather as much information, comments, and opinions as you can provide.

The interviews are completely confidential. You will be given an ID number and only me and in case of need my supervisor will have access to information that connects that number to you. In addition, please note that you do not have to answer any question that you do not feel comfortable answering and you can stop doing the interview at any time. I would like to tape record the interview. Digital recordings and transcripts of the interview will not have your name on them and all the gathered data will be used solely for the purpose of this research.

If you agree, I ask you to express your consent to participate in the interview.

Do you have any questions?

[Signature of informed consent]

We thank you in advance for your kind cooperation.

Let's start with the first question.

Part 1

Ice-breaking questions

1. "First, I would like to get to know your working situation a bit more. Can you please tell me the name of your position and briefly describe your job?"

2. "How long have you been doing this job?"

Part 2

The goal of the section is to explore the concept of calling and how it is perceived by Slovak workers; whether they perceive calling themselves and if so, how does it manifest.

Career Calling questions

Protocol A

1. "You previously identified yourself with Mr. C. Can you tell me the most similar thing you have in common with Mr. C?"

[to understand the strongest dimension in them]

2. "What does it mean for you to perceive your work as a calling?"

a. *if they refuse the label 'calling' adjust this question using the word the person had indicated previously*
b. *if they have a calling for another domain instead of work, continue with the interview, and replace work with the other activity only if one of the domain is: voluntary work, study domain, structured hobby; if not then go ahead with the option c)*
c. *if they really do not have a calling →skip this question and ask directly question no. 4*

3. *[Only ask if previous answer was not complete]* "How does perceiving your work as a calling manifest for you?"

[if this was mostly answered in the question n.1; acknowledge this and reformulate the question]

**think, feel, behave-> do not ask explicitly like this, but keep in mind that the answer should have this components*

alternative question: "Okay, so you already told me what having a calling means to you. Could you make a summary of how does it manifest when you perceive work as a calling?

4. "Do you know someone who perceive their work as a calling? How does perceiving a calling manifest in them?"

5. “Do you think calling can apply to areas other than work?”
    a. *here in case they are refusing the label ‘calling’ change it to appropriate word indicated by the person*
    b. *if they have a calling for another domain instead of work (voluntary work, study domain, structured hobby) ask them → “What is so special about [...] that it is your calling?”*
    c. *if they really do not have a calling → ask them to What would be needed in your work to perceive it as calling?*

Protocol B

1. “You previously identified yourself with Mr. C. Can you tell me the most similar thing you have in common with Mr. C?”

2. “What does it mean for you to perceive your work as a calling?”

3. “How does perceiving your work as a calling manifest for you?”

[if this was mostly answered in the question n.1; acknowledge this as reformulate the question]

alternative question: “Okay, so you already told me what having a calling means to you. Could you make a summary of how does it manifest when you perceive work as a calling?

[think, feel, behave-> do not ask explicitly like this, but keep in mind that the answer should have this components]

a) *if they refuse the label 'calling' adjust this question using the word the person had indicated previously*

b) *if they have a calling for another domain instead of work, continue with the interview, and replace work with the other activity only if one of the domain is: voluntary work, study domain, structured hobby; if not then go ahead with the option c)*

c) *if they really do not have a calling →skip this question and ask directly question no. 4*

4. "Do you know someone who also perceive their work as a calling? How does perceiving a calling manifest in them?"

5. "Do you think calling can apply to areas other than work?"

a) *here in case they are refusing the label 'calling' change it to appropriate word indicated by the person*

b) *if they have a calling for another domain instead of work (voluntary work, study domain, structured hobby) ask them →*

"What is so special about [...] that it is your calling?"

c) *if they really do not have a calling → ask them what would be needed in your work to perceive it as calling?*

Part 3

The goal of the section is to get an insight of events in the life of participants that have led them to perceive a calling, how these events came to have an impact across space and time of the participant and how they get/made the meaning out of them.

note: during the answers, try to understand the novelty, disruption and criticality of the event

Events questions

Protocol A

1. "How did you understand that your job was a calling?"

Optional probe: [*if the participant is not able to respond]* "Or how did you understand that job was your place in the world of work; was the right job for you?"

Probe: "What were some possible signs and indicators of your work as a calling?"

note: in case the answer is very vague ("I always knew!"/ "I always felt it.") slightly try to push a little bit to define a moment in time, activity, or a choice linked to the awareness of a calling

2. "What happened?" Can you please give me a brief description of that?"

(description of the event/moment/specific activity)

[in case of event description in previous q.-> skip]

3. "How did you feel?"

4. "Why was that [event/experience/… *choose the word they used in the previous answers*] important to understand that that work was your calling?

Probes "What is the meaning you made out of this [event, sign,....]?"

"Why is that important to you?" ex. when they say "It made me happy."

"Do you think something or someone has helped you to make a meaning out of that []?"

(ex. when they say "I just felt good."-> What does that mean? Can you please give me an example? Can you please elaborate on that?, "Can you go deeper?")

[if they mention more events, cycle the questions for each]

"Is there something you have not said so far but would like to express it? Also, if you have any questions, feel free to ask me anything. Now I'll ask you to answer some additional questions. In this case you have to indicate your degree of agreement/disagreement with some statements regarding your approach to your work."

Protocol B (for people in condition (a) they refuse the label and (b) they have a calling for a non-work domain)

1. a) "How did you understand that your work was a ~~calling~~ [...]? "

   b)"How did you understand that your ~~work~~ was a calling [...]? "

Optional probe: [*if the participant is not able to respond]* "Or how did you understand that job was your place in the world of work; was the right job for you?"

Probe: "What were some possible signs and indicators of your work as a calling?"

note: in case the answer is very vague ("I always knew!"/ "I always felt it.") slightly try to push a little bit to define a moment in time, activity, or a choice linked to the awareness of a calling

2. "What happened? Can you please give me a brief description of that?"

   (description of the event/moment/specific activity)

   [in case of event description in previous q.-> skip]

3. "How did you feel?"

4. a) "Why was that [event/experience/… *choose the word they used in the previous answers*] important to understand that that work was your ~~calling~~ [...]?

   b) "Why was that [event/experience/… *choose the word they used in the previous answers*] important to understand that that ~~work~~ was your calling [...]?

Probes "What is the meaning you made out of this [event, sign,....]?"

"Why was that important to you?" ex. when they say "It made me happy."

"Do you think something or someone has helped you to make a meaning out of that []?"

(ex. when they say "I just felt good."-> What does that mean? Can you please give me an example? Can you please elaborate on that?, "Can you go deeper?")

Protocol B (for people in condition (c)-people who do not have a calling

1. "How did you realize that your current work wasn't aligned with a sense of calling? (or how did you first recognize that your job might not be the right fit for you?)

note: in case the answer is very vague ("I always knew!"/ "I always felt it.") slightly try to push a little bit to define a moment in time, activity, or a choice linked to the awareness of this work not being able to bring calling

Probe: "What were some possible signs and indicators of your work as not a calling?"

2. "What happened? Can you please give me a brief description of that?"

optional probe: "Please provide details about events, experiences, or thoughts that contributed to your understanding"

3. "How did you feel?"

4. "Why was this [event/experience/realization… *choose the word they used in the previous answers*] significant to you in understanding that your work might not be your calling?"

1. "In your view, what would need to happen for you to perceive your work as a calling?"

2. “Could you describe to me a bit more in detail this [event/experience/… *choose the word they used in the previous answers*]?”

3. “How would you feel?”

   probe: “What type of emotions you would feel?”

4. “Why do you believe this [event/experience/… *choose the word they used in the previous answers*] would be important to understand that that work is your calling?”

   Probes “What is the meaning you would make out of this [event, sign,....]?”

   “Why was that important to you?” ex. when they say “It made me happy.”

   “Do you think something or someone would also help you to make a meaning out of that []?”

“Is there something you have not said so far but would like to express it? Also, if you have any questions, feel free to ask me anything. Now I’ll ask you to answer some additional questions. In this case you have to indicate your degree of agreement/disagreement with some statements regarding your approach to your work.”

Questionnaire

Participants will be administered with the UMCS scoring (paper based).

When handing them the UMCS, inform them they can can ask questions, makes notes, or express any kind of observations.

Closing points

Give them space to ask questions or add something.

APPENDIX B

Prompts for ChatGPT

For coding:

"I conducted an explorative research on career calling in Slovakia and now I need your help. You are a researcher. I will now upload an interview transcript, and you will do what is called qualitative coding-specifically, initial coding also known as open coding. The text is an interview transcript, I do not want you to code the questions asked by the interviewer, which are under the 'K', but consider the answers coming from this question in order to create the codes; I want the codes to be detailed and descriptive. I want you to apply codes to sentences or parts of sentences, and later when you develop a list of codes, I want you to be able to tell me what sentences or parts of sentences these codes were applied to. In other words, when I ask you to provide me with example quotes for the codes that you create, I would like you to be able to do it. Read and comprehend the user's uploaded text. Then generate codes — labels that assign summative...attributes/ meanings to text data... A code should be sufficiently well-defined and demarcated...Be sure to identify and define each such code in the text. Maintain objectivity. Here is the text to be coded:"

For creating categories:

"Now you are still being a qualitative research expert, doing thematic analysis, being in the step of creating groups from codes. Keeping in mind the interviews you coded before and

most importantly the semantic meaning of the codes, I want you to Group up (via clustering) the generated codes into clusters based on similarity and thematic relatedness. Keep in mind that groups created form codes are still pretty detailed and numerous and only after them themes are created (which you do not do now); here are the codes I want you to make groups from:"

For creating themes:

"You are still being a thematic analysis expert, working on the same study, using the transcripts, codes and categories clustered before, now I want you to identify overarching themes which integrate groups into broader conceptual categories. These themes should be relevant for the research of career calling, using the event system theory. Here are the categories, from which I want you to create themes:"

APPENDIX C

Open Science Framework

To support transparency and allow further exploration of the research process, supplementary materials have been made publicly available on the Open Science Framework (OSF). All files can be accessed via the project's OSF page: https://osf.io/9bkys/.