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**Dark side of calling across
cultures: an empirical
investigation**

Relatore

Prof. Michelangelo Vianello

Laureando:

Alessio Pasto

Matricola: 2082980

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Introduction

*“I hear a call
Now will I answer
Forsake my all
To serve another
Though darkness falls
Stay a believer
I hear a call
Now will I answer”*

"I Hear a Call" by Emmylou Harris

I opted for the course in “Psicologia Sociale, del Lavoro e della Comunicazione” two years ago because of its deep relevance for human beings. Work takes up a third of a person's life (at least for 50 years) and it is not only a way of providing for oneself but also has other functions (Jahoda, 1981). Work, indeed, helps to structure and organize time with fixed schedules, enabling daily planning and enforced activity. It also allows individuals to achieve their goals, be helpful to others, and improve their social relationships. Moreover, work creates a role and social identity in which individuals can shape and understand themselves. Therefore, I was interested in exploring the concepts that influence the selection of a specific profession and the various factors related to it. The term "calling" first came to my attention in a professor's office on the fourth floor of my university campus, who later became my mentor for my thesis. I initially thought it had something to do with the religious world (which, as I later learned, was not completely wrong even in the context of work and organizations) and the idea of being summoned by something bigger. It was by reading the works of Duffy and colleagues, Bunderson & Thompson (2008), and during my internship, where I heard the daily conversations of Prof. Vianello and researcher Dalla Rosa, that I got a better grasp of this concept: career calling is a passion for work that becomes a core part of one's identity, going beyond personal interests and giving work meaning and usefulness to society (Dalla Rosa et al., 2015; Vianello et al., 2018; Vianello et al., 2020). This

fascinated me, and I keep wanting to learn more about it. Someone smart once said, "Choose a job you love, and you will never have to work a day in your life," but is this true? Is loving what one does most in the world enough to protect oneself from work-related stress, burnout, and excessive workload? Some research suggests that it is; career calling acts as a shield and makes even the most stressful work environments easier to cope with. However, in recent years, a dark side has also emerged. Calling can become a threat for those who have it, possibly leading to more exploitation, longer working hours, and compromises that would not otherwise be made to keep the job they love. This thesis seeks to explore this issue more deeply by using a cross-cultural approach. Do Italy and Japan, two countries we might think of as very different in terms of traditions and culture, experience the same effect of calling? And if so, is it positive or negative? These are the questions we want to answer.

The first chapter will provide an overview of the origin of calling, its development, and its current definition, aiming to help readers better understand this concept and its long-term evolution. The second chapter will present the theoretical model and hypotheses, outlining the conceptual framework underlying our study. The third chapter will analyze previous studies where calling has been used as a moderating variable, highlighting the originality of our research. The fourth chapter will present the empirical study, including data analysis, results, discussion, limitations, and future research directions.

CHAPTER 1

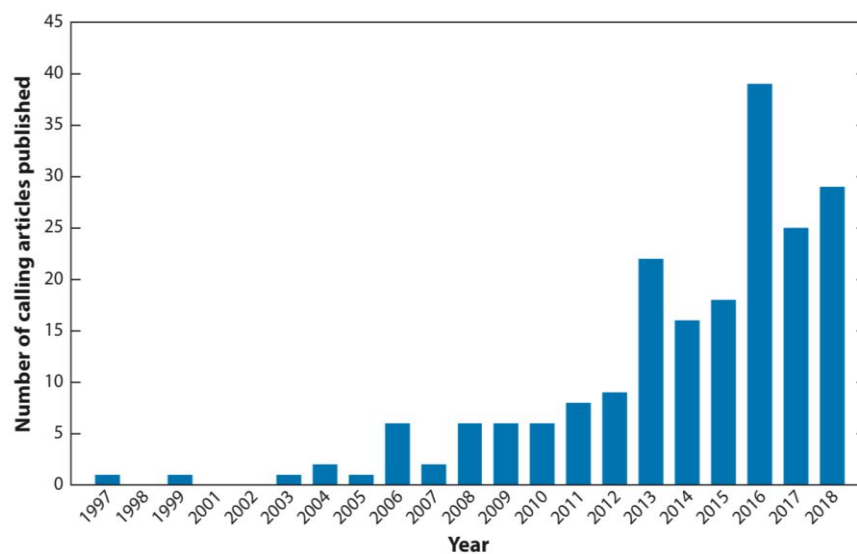
Origin and Development of the Concept of Calling

The perception of work as a positive aspect of human life is a relatively recent construct. Indeed, in the Greek tradition, work was viewed as a misfortune, a punishment sent by the gods. Bunderson and Thompson, in 2019, published an article tracing the evolution of the concept of calling from the Protestant Reformation to the present day. In their paper, they elucidated how the notion that work can be seen as a calling or vocation emerged in the 16th century with the Protestant Reformation, where Luther reacted to the religious notion that every earthly profession is sinful and degrading to the human soul by revaluing earthly occupations. Subsequently, Calvin further extended the vocational role of work by asserting that through work, humans utilize the talents bestowed upon them by God (Hardy, 1990). Additionally, Max Weber (1930) described the Protestant anxiety for salvation as the driving force towards a life dedicated to asceticism and a rigorous work ethic. Rosso and colleagues, in a review published in 2010, further highlight this shift in values. In Christian doctrine, the term "calling" was predominantly used to refer to taking vows and embarking on an ecclesiastical career. However, with the Protestant Reformation, work itself acquired spiritual significance. Additionally, Luther and Calvin suggest that God bestows upon each individual a specific calling or talent that they must pursue to fulfill God's will. However, despite the concept of work as a calling being rooted in ideas from several centuries, it has garnered scholarly interest only in recent times. Indeed, Bunderson and Thompson have observed that the number of articles focusing on the theme of career calling has exponentially increased from the 2000s onwards (Figure 1, Bunderson & Thompson, 2019). The recent scholarly interest in the construct, coupled with its ambiguous and elusive nature, has posed challenges in providing a comprehensive definition of career calling. Bunderson & Thompson (2019) likened it to the "elephant in the room" within the calling literature, prompting scholars to either dissect existing literature to find a satisfactory definition or formulate their own. However, despite its elusive definition, scholars have conceptualized it through two approaches (Bunderson & Thompson, Duffy & Dik., 2013; 2019; Praskova et al., 2014): a neoclassical approach

emphasizing religious derivation, destiny, and prosocial duty, and a modern approach emphasizing an internal drive toward fulfillment and satisfaction.

Figure 1

Increase in Articles on Calling Over the Years



Neoclassical approach

The neoclassical perspective on calling, as its name implies, is deeply rooted in the classical, religious origins of the concept, which can be traced back to the Protestant Reformation in Christian Europe. The theologians of this period argued that every individual has a divine mandate to discover, embrace, and diligently fulfill their calling (Thompson & Bunderson, 2019). Key elements of this classical view include the belief in a predetermined domain of work for each individual, the duty to find and embrace this calling as a means of serving God and humanity, and the process of self-discovery based on personal talents, passions, and life opportunities.

While some still find personal relevance in the classical conception of calling as a divine mandate, a secularized version has become prevalent in modern society. Max Weber (1930) famously observed this secularization, noting that the idea of duty in

one's calling persists in contemporary society, albeit divorced from its religious roots. This secularization retains the core elements of destiny, duty, and discovery but does not necessitate an explicit belief in a divine entity.

Various scholars have offered interpretations of calling that align with this neoclassical perspective. Bellah and colleagues (1985) view calling as a contribution to the common good, while Bunderson & Thompson (2009) suggest that certain career paths feel "destined" because they align perfectly with one's interests and capabilities, contributing to society.

Dik & Duffy (2009) describe calling as a transcendent summons motivating effort through other-oriented values, and Coulson and colleagues (2012) see it as fulfilling a specific life role for the greater good. Elangovan and colleagues (2010) characterize calling as a prosocial course of action that embodies personal desires and societal obligations.

Modern approach

In contrast to neoclassical interpretations, contemporary conceptualizations of work as a calling suggest a significant departure from its classical origins, aligning more closely with present-day values and sensibilities. While classical perspectives emphasized destiny, duty, and discovery, modern views reflect an emphasis on self-expression and self-fulfillment, mirroring our contemporary focus on individual expression. From this perspective, callings are seen as manifestations of internal passions and interests, pursued for personal enjoyment and fulfillment rather than societal duty or obligation. A calling is deemed meaningful when it holds personal significance, rather than solely benefiting society.

For example, Bellah and colleagues (1985) define a calling as work pursued for intrinsic enjoyment and fulfillment, while Wrzesniewski and colleagues (1997) suggest that "individuals with a calling work for personal fulfillment rather than financial gain or career advancement". Berg and colleagues (2010) characterize a calling as an occupation that individuals "feel drawn to pursue, expect to find intrinsically enjoyable and meaningful, and see as a central part of their identity". Dobrow & Tosti-Kharas (2011) define a calling as "a consuming, meaningful passion experienced toward a

domain". Although some references to societal benefit are present in these definitions, they are often ancillary rather than central to the concept.

Integration

While the differentiation between neoclassical and modern conceptualizations of work as a calling serves to delineate various definitions in the literature, it is crucial to recognize that most conceptualizations do not fall strictly into either category. Instead, calling conceptualizations can be seen as lying on a continuum between neoclassical and modern ideal types, with some emphasizing duty and destiny, and others highlighting self-expression and self-fulfillment (Bunderson & Thompson, 2019). Abraham Maslow also discusses this distinction in his analysis of self-actualized individuals, noting the importance of both "inner requiredness" and "outer requiredness" in defining a sense of calling (Maslow, 1967). Maslow suggests that while modern views emphasize inner passions and interests, neoclassical views focus on external obligations and responsibilities. However, Maslow argues that the most powerful experience of a personal calling occurs when both inner and outer requiredness are high, resulting in a sense of harmony or destiny. This transcendent calling goes beyond mere self-actualization and involves a conviction that a particular domain of work aligns with one's gifts and passions in service of a cause beyond self-interest. Therefore, it may be more useful to view inner and outer requiredness as orthogonal dimensions along which calling conceptualizations vary. This perspective suggests that calling experiences marked by a sense of destiny result from a balanced integration of inner and outer requiredness.

In line with integrated approach, Vianello and colleagues (Vianello et al., 2018; Dalla Rosa et al., 2015; Dalla Rosa et al., 2019) proposed that a calling is perceived when individuals feel a strong passion for their job, which becomes central to their identity, pervasive, and worth sacrificing other areas of life, and which transcends themselves and makes them feel that they have a purpose in life and that they are useful to society or the greater good (Vianello et al., 2020; Dalla Rosa et al., 2015; Vianello et al., 2018; Dalla Rosa et al., 2019).

The question of differentiation

A point highlighted by Bunderson & Thompson (2019) is how the impact of research on calling within the Organizational Psychology/Organizational Behavior (OP/OB) literature has been hindered by the question of differentiation, concerning how the concept of calling differs from and contributes unique value to related constructs in the broader literature. Highhouse and colleagues (2017) and Morrow (1983) critique the field for construct redundancy, whereby multiple constructs address closely related aspects of the same phenomenon. Differentiation is achieved by clarifying conceptually related constructs and conducting formal analyses of discriminant and incremental predictive validity. Unfortunately, research on work as a calling has not adequately addressed these issues, impeding claims of novelty.

Dik & Duffy (2009) initiated addressing construct redundancy by distinguishing the calling construct from related concepts in counseling psychology. However, further exploration is needed to identify constructs with clear theoretical relationships to calling. For example, some concepts focus on internal motivation (e.g., passion, intrinsic interest), such as work importance (Dubin, 1956) and job involvement (Lodahl & Kejner, 1965), while others focus on external motivation (e.g., duty, obligation), like the Protestant work ethic (Mirels & Garrett, 1971) and duty orientation (Moon, 2001). These concepts need careful theoretical comparisons to clarify how calling relates to them. The conceptual novelty of calling emerges when conceptualized as a perceived match between inner and outer requiredness, leading to a sense of destiny. This perspective underscores calling as a unique form of person-job fit, distinct from traditional notions of fit. Additionally, research would benefit from examining discriminant validity through systematic analyses using exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses (Dik et al., 2012; Dobrow & Tosti-Kharas, 2011). Moreover, only a few studies have controlled for theoretically related variables when examining the effects of calling on work outcomes. While initial studies show promising results, further research is necessary to robustly establish calling's distinctiveness and its ability to explain variance in constructs of interest in the field. More studies should address the discriminant validity and incremental predictive validity of calling, alongside controlling for theoretically related variables, to advance understanding of its unique

contribution to OP/OB literature (Dobrow & Tosti-Kharas, 2012; Dobrow Riza & Heller, 2015; Hirschi & Herrmann, 2012).

The question of generalizability

The impact of research on work as a calling is constrained by the question of generalizability, which pertains to whether calling is relevant for workers in diverse settings (Bunderson & Thompson, 2019). This concern arises from several insights. Firstly, scholars such as Weber (1930) argue that the notion of work as a calling stems from the Protestant Reformation, predominantly influencing Western societies with Christian backgrounds. This raises doubts about its resonance in non-Western or non-Christian societies. Secondly, research on callings often focuses on work settings termed "economically marginal but symbolically significant," leading to questions about whether callings are observed solely in such settings or are sustainable in environments dominated by economic pressures (Bellah et al., 1985). Thirdly, in many parts of the world, work primarily serves as a means of survival rather than as a source of self-expression (Inglehart & Welzel, 2005) suggesting that the concept of work as a calling may be elitist and less relevant outside privileged contexts. In contrast with these speculations, it has been observed that residents of poor nations have a greater sense of meaning in life than residents of wealthy nations (Oishi & Diener, 2014). In summary, it is still unclear whether the concept of work as a calling is present across cultural, occupational, and socioeconomic boundaries. Subsequent sections explore the arguments for and against generalizability across these diverse boundaries.

The question of relevance

Bunderson & Thompson (2019) emphasize how the impact of research on work as a calling is influenced by its relevance, particularly regarding its implications for key behavioral outcomes essential to managers and practitioners. This inquiry extends to whether the perception of work as a calling influences various aspects of work performance, creativity, decision-making, turnover rates, and career progression.

Unfortunately, existing literature on work as a calling falls short in providing comprehensive answers to these critical questions. In fact, most empirical studies primarily focus on attitudinal outcomes, with a smaller subset examining behaviors, career choices, and performance-related outcomes. Notably, the latter category predominantly relies on self-reported measures, lacking objective assessments of work performance (Dobrow & Tosti-Kharas, 2012; Bunderson & Thompson, 2009). Preliminary evidence suggests that a transcendent sense of calling correlates with increased willingness to make sacrifices, creative problem-solving in work-related challenges, and a critical perspective towards management (Schabram & Maitlis, 2017; Hirschi & Herrmann, 2013; Bunderson & Thompson, 2009). Furthermore, the focus of calling research should extend beyond outcomes to encompass antecedents, exploring the processes through which a sense of calling emerges and is discovered. Presently, there is limited scholarly attention on the behavioral antecedents of calling, leaving practitioners with insufficient guidance on fostering a sense of calling among workers. Longitudinal studies tracking individuals' experiences with callings over time, such as the work by Dobrow Riza & Heller (2015), Duffy et al. (2011; 2014), and Praskova et al. (2014), offer valuable insights into understanding the predictors of calling and its developmental trajectory.

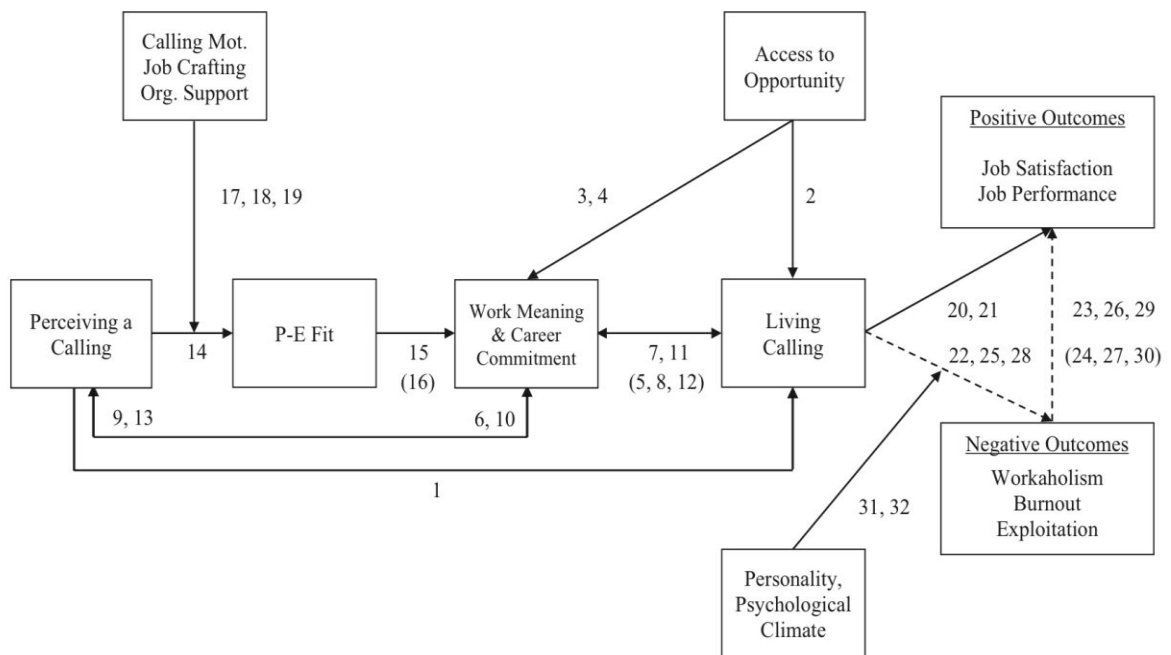
Work as a calling: a theoretical model

Establishing a theoretical framework that elucidates the relationship between perceiving and living a calling, as well as its impact on positive and negative work-related outcomes, is essential for advancing both research and practice in this area. Therefore, Duffy & Dik et al. (2018) proposed the *Work as a Calling Theory* (WCT) that integrates existing research findings and provides a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing the transition from perceiving to living a calling (figure 2). Unlike previous models, the WCT considers both positive and negative outcomes of living a calling and emphasizes the importance of understanding how various predictors contribute to this process. Furthermore, the model acknowledges that callings can extend beyond paid employment but focuses specifically on the experiences within the work domain. The Work as a Calling Theory (WCT) distinguishes itself from previous

literature reviews and empirical models in three keyways. Firstly, unlike prior empirical tests that examined isolated sections of the proposed model, the WCT portrays all hypothesized paths to living a calling as functioning theoretically as a whole, offering a comprehensive perspective on how perceived calling leads to lived calling and its outcomes (Dik & Duffy, 2015; Duffy & Dik, 2013; Wrzesniewski, 2012). Secondly, while previous studies positioned perceiving a calling as a direct predictor of workplace experiences, the WCT views living calling as the desired outcome of work experiences, shaping the direction of future research (Duffy et al., 2014; Duffy et al., 2016). Thirdly, the WCT incorporates both positive and negative outcomes of living a calling, addressing the "dark side" often overlooked in previous research and speculating on factors contributing to negative outcomes (Dik & Duffy, 2015; Duffy & Dik, 2013). The WCT aims to serve as a guiding framework for future research endeavors, offering insights into the complexities of work as a calling and its implications for individuals and organizations alike.

Figure 2

Work as a calling theory (WCT)



Predictors

The Work as Calling Theory (WCT) centers around the notion of perceiving and living out a calling in one's career. Perceiving a calling involves feeling summoned to a particular vocation that aligns with one's life purpose and contributes to the greater good (Duffy, Bott, Allan, Torrey, & Dik, 2012). However, merely perceiving a calling does not guarantee the opportunity to live it out (Duffy & Dik, 2013). Living a calling, the central variable in the theory, is crucial for experiencing the benefits associated with work satisfaction and performance. Research indicates that perceiving and living a calling are distinct yet interconnected concepts (Duffy, Allan, Autin, & Bott, 2013).

While perceiving a calling is a prerequisite for living it, the latter correlates more strongly with positive outcomes such as work and life satisfaction (Duffy, Douglass, Autin, & Allan, 2016). Access to opportunity, including factors like education, income, employment status, and work volition, plays a pivotal role in bridging the gap between perceiving and living a calling (Duffy, Diemer, Perry, Laurenzi, & Torrey, 2012). Studies reveal disparities in how social class affects individuals' ability to live out their callings. Higher education, income, and employment status are associated with a greater likelihood of realizing one's calling (Duffy, Allan, et al., 2013). Moreover, the perception of having the capacity to make career choices, known as work volition, significantly influences the pursuit of a calling (Duffy & Autin, 2013). Overall, the WCT proposes that both perceived and real access to opportunity directly predicts living a calling (Duffy, Bott, Allan, & Autin, 2015). While socioeconomic factors may impact the likelihood of living out a calling, the theory suggests that individuals across various backgrounds can find ways to fulfill their vocational aspirations (Duffy & England, 2017).

Mediators and Moderators Between Perceiving a Calling and Experiencing a Calling

The Work as Calling Theory (WCT) distinguishes between perceiving a calling and living it out, highlighting the significance of understanding the mechanisms linking these constructs (Duffy & Dik, 2013). Workplace experiences play a crucial role in bridging the gap between perceiving and living a calling, with work meaning and career commitment identified as critical connectors (Duffy et al., 2015). Access to opportunity, including education and employment status, influences the perception of work as meaningful and fosters commitment to one's career (Allan, Autin, & Duffy, 2014). Greater access to opportunity enables individuals to select work aligned with their calling, enhancing their sense of meaning and commitment (Duffy et al., 2015). Work meaning, characterized by a sense of purpose and significance in one's career, is strongly associated with perceiving and living a calling (Douglass et al., 2016; Duffy et al., 2014). Research suggests that perceiving a calling predicts work meaning, which in turn predicts living a calling (Duffy et al., 2014; Duffy et al., 2016). Career commitment, reflecting dedication to one's occupation or career field, is another

outcome of perceiving and living a calling (Duffy et al., 2016). Studies indicate that perceiving a calling predicts career commitment, which further enhances the sense of living a calling (Duffy et al., 2016). Person-environment (P-E) fit serves as a mediator, facilitating the alignment of perceived calling with work meaning and career commitment (Duffy et al., 2015). Individuals motivated by their calling are more likely to seek environments conducive to their aspirations, thereby enhancing P-E fit (Duffy et al., 2017). Job crafting allows individuals to modify their work environment to better align with their perceived calling, thereby strengthening P-E fit (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). Organizational support further enhances the relationship between perceiving a calling and P-E fit, facilitating positive work outcomes (Eisenberger et al., 1986). In summary, perceiving a calling predicts living it out, with work meaning and career commitment mediating this relationship. P-E fit, calling motivation, job crafting, and organizational support serve as moderators and mediators, shaping the extent to which individuals can translate their perceived calling into meaningful career experiences (Duffy et al., 2015)

Positive Outcomes

Living a calling often results in positive outcomes within one's work life, notably in terms of job satisfaction and job performance. Extensive research has consistently demonstrated a robust correlation between living a calling and higher levels of job satisfaction across diverse samples of working adults (Chen et al., 2016; Duffy et al., 2012, 2014; Allan et al., 2015; Douglass et al., 2016; Kim et al., 2016; Lazar et al., 2016; Xie et al., 2016). This association implies that the fulfillment of a compelling career, imbued with meaning and contributing to the greater good, enhances satisfaction with one's work over time. Consequently, it is hypothesized that living a calling predicts higher levels of job satisfaction. Moreover, individuals who are living their calling often exhibit higher levels of job performance. Studies conducted with salespersons and organizational employees have consistently shown significant correlations between living a calling and various measures of job performance, such as total commissions and task performance (Park et al., 2016; Lee, Chen, & Chang, 2016). Qualitative research further supports this notion, indicating that individuals who are living their calling tend

to be high performers in their respective workplaces (Bunderson & Thompson, 2009; Duffy et al., 2012). Therefore, it is proposed that those who are living their calling demonstrate greater job performance compared to those who are not

Negative Outcomes

Despite the predominantly positive associations, living a calling may also entail negative consequences, one of which is workaholism. Workaholism, characterized by an addiction to work and an excessive devotion to one's job, is often observed among individuals who perceive a calling (Ng et al., 2007). Studies have consistently found links between perceiving a calling and workaholism, with individuals sacrificing personal time for work and demonstrating high levels of investment in their job (Duffy, Douglass, & Autin, 2015; Bunderson & Thompson, 2009; Clinton, Conway, & Sturges, 2017; Keller et al., 2016). This overinvestment may lead to negative outcomes, such as neglecting personal relationships and experiencing burnout (Duffy et al., 2012). Therefore, it is proposed that living a calling may be associated with increased workaholism in some individuals, as the pursuit of meaningful work may lead to an excessive focus on work to the detriment of other life domains.

CHAPTER 2

A theoretical model linking calling, workaholism, exploitation and turnover intentions

In the previous chapter, we explored the historical evolution and theoretical underpinnings of the concept of calling. Building on this foundation, we introduce a comprehensive theoretical model that examines the intricate relationships between career calling, workaholism, perceived exploitation, and turnover intentions. The primary goal of this thesis is to investigate the impact of career calling on workaholism, perceived exploitation, and turnover intentions in the contexts of Italy and Japan. Specifically, this research examines whether possessing a career calling acts as a beneficial factor in moderating the adverse effects of workaholism and perceived exploitation on turnover intentions. This chapter introduces a comprehensive theoretical model that integrates the constructs of workaholism, perceived exploitation, and turnover intentions, and explores how career calling may moderate these relationships. The chapter is structured to first define and explore each key construct individually -workaholism, perceived exploitation, and turnover intentions- providing a clear understanding of their implications. Following this, the chapter presents the theoretical model and develops hypotheses based on the integration of these constructs. It is noteworthy that there will be no specific hypothesis formulated for Italy and Japan. However, any potential differences, if present, will be addressed and discussed in the results section.

Definitions of Constructs

Workaholism

Workaholism is frequently conceptualized as an uncontrollable need to work incessantly, driven by internal pressures and characterized by persistent thoughts about work even during non-working hours (Clark et al., 2016). Clark and colleagues (2016) define workaholism as "an addiction to work that involves feeling compelled or driven

to work because of internal pressures, having persistent and frequent thoughts about work when not working, and working beyond what is reasonably expected" (p. 1840). This definition highlights the compulsive and pervasive nature of workaholism, differentiating it from mere high engagement or dedication. In this study, workaholism is measured using the two-dimensional scale proposed by Schaufeli and colleagues (2008). This scale captures two critical components of workaholism: working excessively (WE) and working compulsively (WC). The WE dimension pertains to the behavioral aspect of workaholism, reflecting the tendency to work beyond what is reasonably expected. The WC dimension addresses the cognitive aspect, involving constant thoughts about work even when not actively working.

Workaholism can lead to severe physical and mental health issues. Physically, workaholics often neglect basic health needs such as adequate sleep, proper nutrition, and regular exercise, leading to chronic fatigue and a weakened immune system (Kubota et al., 2010). Studies have linked workaholism to cardiovascular diseases, musculoskeletal problems, and gastrointestinal disorders (Shimazu et al., 2013). The stress associated with excessive work can elevate cortisol levels, contributing to hypertension and other stress-related conditions (Taris, Schaufeli, & Verhoeven, 2005). Mentally, workaholics are at a higher risk for developing anxiety, depression, and burnout. The constant pressure to perform and the inability to detach from work lead to chronic stress and emotional exhaustion (Clark et al., 2016). Research indicates that workaholics experience higher levels of psychological distress compared to their non-workaholic counterparts, often resulting in decreased life satisfaction and overall well-being (Ng et al., 2007).

Additionally, workaholism can significantly impact personal relationships. The excessive time and mental energy devoted to work often come at the expense of family and social interactions, leading to conflicts and lower family satisfaction (Bakker, Demerouti, & Burke, 2009). The inability to participate in social and recreational activities further isolates workaholics, exacerbating feelings of loneliness and social withdrawal (Robinson, 2000).

Perceived Exploitation

Perceived exploitation refers to employees' subjective interpretations of being unfairly treated or exploited by their employer. Livne-Ofer and colleagues (2019) defined perceived exploitation as "employees' perceptions that they have been purposefully taken advantage of in their relationship with the organization to the benefit of the organization itself" (p. 1992). This definition emphasizes both the intentionality of organizational actions and the negative evaluation of the organization by the employee. Perceived exploitation can result from violations of the psychological contract, which is the unspoken, informal understanding between an employee and their employer regarding mutual expectations (Rousseau, 1995). When employees believe that their organization has not fulfilled its promises or obligations, they may feel exploited. This perception can lead to negative emotions, reduced trust in the organization, decreased job satisfaction, and increased turnover intentions (Robinson & Rousseau, 1994).

Several factors can contribute to perceived exploitation, including organizational culture, leadership style, and socio-economic conditions (Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001). Organizations must strive to foster a culture of fairness, transparency, and equity to mitigate the risk of perceived exploitation and emotional exhaustion among employees (Cropanzano et al., 2017). This may involve implementing policies that promote work-life balance, providing opportunities for employee voice and participation in decision-making processes, and ensuring equitable distribution of rewards and recognition within the workplace (Van den Bos & Lind, 2013).

Despite the recent surge in research on exploitation, there remains a dearth of understanding regarding the subsequent behaviors exhibited by exploited employees. Some studies have suggested a positive correlation between exploitation and depressive moods (Cheng et al., 2023) and turnover intentions (Livne-Ofer et al., 2019), but research in this area remains limited.

Turnover Intentions

Turnover intention is defined as "the extent to which an employee plans to leave the organization" (Lacity et al., 2008, p. 228). This construct serves as a pivotal focal point in understanding the dynamics of employee retention and organizational stability. Turnover intentions often precede actual turnover behavior (Mobley, 1977) and are considered a reliable predictor of it (Takase, 2010). Furthermore, turnover intentions are intricately linked to various antecedents and consequences within the organizational context. Antecedents include factors such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, perceived opportunities for career advancement, and the consideration of perceived alternatives (Griffeth et al., 2000; Hom et al., 2012; Schneider, 1976). For example, job dissatisfaction can trigger thoughts of quitting, prompting individuals to explore alternative options and ultimately influencing their decision to stay or leave (Mobley, 1977). The consequences of turnover intentions extend beyond organizational outcomes to personal ramifications. Employees experiencing high turnover intentions may suffer from increased stress, anxiety, and job-related burnout (Griffeth et al., 2000). Additionally, turnover intentions can have detrimental effects on individuals' career trajectories, leading to feelings of uncertainty, instability, and a compromised sense of professional identity (Hom et al., 2012). Understanding turnover intentions is crucial for organizations aiming to enhance employee retention.

How Workaholism Can Make Employees Feel Used and Driven to Leave

Although research on the relationship between workaholism and exploitation is scarce (only Duffy et al. in 2016 connected the two constructs with a coefficient of .26), it is reasonable to expect that workaholism increases the feeling of being exploited. Indeed, workaholics often work more than necessary and more than required of them (Scott et al., 1997). Furthermore, work becomes an obsessive and compulsive thought leading to a fracture in both personal and relational life overall (Ng et al., 2007). Therefore, it is likely that workers driven by these conditions may feel more used by their organizations. Thus, we expect that:

H1a. Working excessively is positively associated with perceived exploitation.

H1b. Working compulsively is positively associated with perceived exploitation.

Gillet and colleagues (2017) found that individuals with high levels of workaholism also had high levels of turnover intentions. This can be explained by the role that work addiction plays in individuals' lives: depriving them of job satisfaction (Burke et al., 1999; Burke, 2001), a healthy family life (Robinson & Post, 1995), and good physical and mental health (Buelens & Poelman, 2004). Therefore, the consequences of workaholism may lead to employee resignations. Consequently, we expect that:

H2a. Working excessively is positively associated with turnover intentions.

H2b. Working compulsively is positively associated with turnover intentions.

Turnover intention represents the final component of our model. Certain conditions can prompt employees to seek alternative job opportunities. It has been observed that there is a positive association between perceived exploitation and turnover intentions (Livne-Ofer et al., 2019). Researchers argue that employees who feel exploited are more inclined to leave their current organization. It is reasonable to assume that feeling exploited diminishes commitment, as employees may feel betrayed by their organization, thereby undermining the very essence of commitment, defined by Porter and colleagues (1974) as the degree of attachment and dedication of employees to their organization. Moreover, feeling exploited may also lead to lower work engagement, as it reduces the job resources and support that employees rely on to tackle daily challenges (Van De Broeck et al., 2008). For these reasons, we believe that perceived exploitation can contribute to turnover.

H3. Perceived exploitation is positively associated with turnover intentions.

There is a broad consensus that working hard and sacrificing personal well-being are necessary ingredients for a successful career (Ng et al., 2007). Some organizations

foster competitive and overwork climates, which are embraced by individual oriented toward achievement and career success, leading to both workaholic behaviors and professional success (Gomes et al., 2023). Therefore, it is plausible that workaholism may not directly affect turnover intentions. However, if employees also perceive exploitation, they may begin contemplating changing organizations.

Thus, we hypothesize that perceived exploitation partially mediates the relationship between workaholism and turnover intentions, suggesting that the effects of working excessively and compulsively on turnover are partially explained by the perception of exploitation.

H4a. Perceived exploitation mediates the relationship between working excessively and turnover intentions.

H4b. Perceived exploitation mediates the relationship between working compulsively and turnover intentions.

Career Calling as Moderator

Loving one's work and feeling a calling to one's profession can alter the dynamics explained by our model earlier. A sense of calling is positively associated with workaholism (Hirschi et al., 2019; Keller et al., 2016), as individuals with a strong sense of calling are consumed by their work and make it the centerpiece of their lives. Those who perceive a calling also exhibit higher levels of meaning in life (Duffy & Dik, 2013; Duffy et al., 2016), as their work takes on deeper significance: a mission to be pursued. Workers who view their work as a calling are willing to sacrifice much for their dream job (Bunderson & Thompson, 2009). Workers with a high sense of calling often report higher job satisfaction and resilience against stressors, suggesting they are less likely to perceive exploitation negatively (Wrzesniewski et al., 1997). This buffering effect of calling can be critical in moderating the impact of workaholism and perceived exploitation on turnover intentions. Therefore, we hypothesize that workaholic workers with high levels of calling are less likely to feel exploited.

H5a. Career calling moderates the relationship between working excessively and perceived exploitation, such that the relationship is weaker when calling is high.

H5b. Career calling moderates the relationship between working compulsively and perceived exploitation, such that the relationship is weaker when calling is high.

A recent study among nurses in China identified a negative relationship between calling and turnover intentions (Xu et al., 2020): specifically, a higher sense of calling was associated with a lower inclination to leave. At first glance, this may appear surprising; indeed, in this specific context, the excessive workload of healthcare professionals is well-documented, as are the conditions and risks of workaholism within the healthcare system (Jenaabadi et al., 2017; Nonnis et al., 2018). However, even under such circumstances, workers with high levels of calling exhibit a reluctance to quit, a phenomenon potentially extendable beyond the healthcare domain to the broader work landscape (Esteves & Lopes, 2017). This can be explained by the profound role that professional calling plays in these individuals' lives. Work represents their mission, their purpose in life, their identity and they are willing to confront any challenge to maintain it. Therefore, we hypothesize that workaholic individuals are less inclined to leave if they have a high level of calling. In other words, we expect that:

H6a. Career calling moderates the relationship between working excessively and turnover intentions, such that the relationship is weaker when calling is high.

H6b. Career calling moderates the relationship between working compulsively and turnover intentions, such that the relationship is weaker when calling is high.

As previously mentioned, we expect that workers who perceive their work situations as exploitative are more inclined to leave their jobs. However, this may significantly differ for workers with a calling. Indeed, several studies indicate that workers with a calling are less prone to turnover intention (Cardador et al., 2011; Esteves & Lopes, 2017). This is attributed to the fact that workers with a calling view their work as an inseparable part of their identity and carry out their tasks with passion

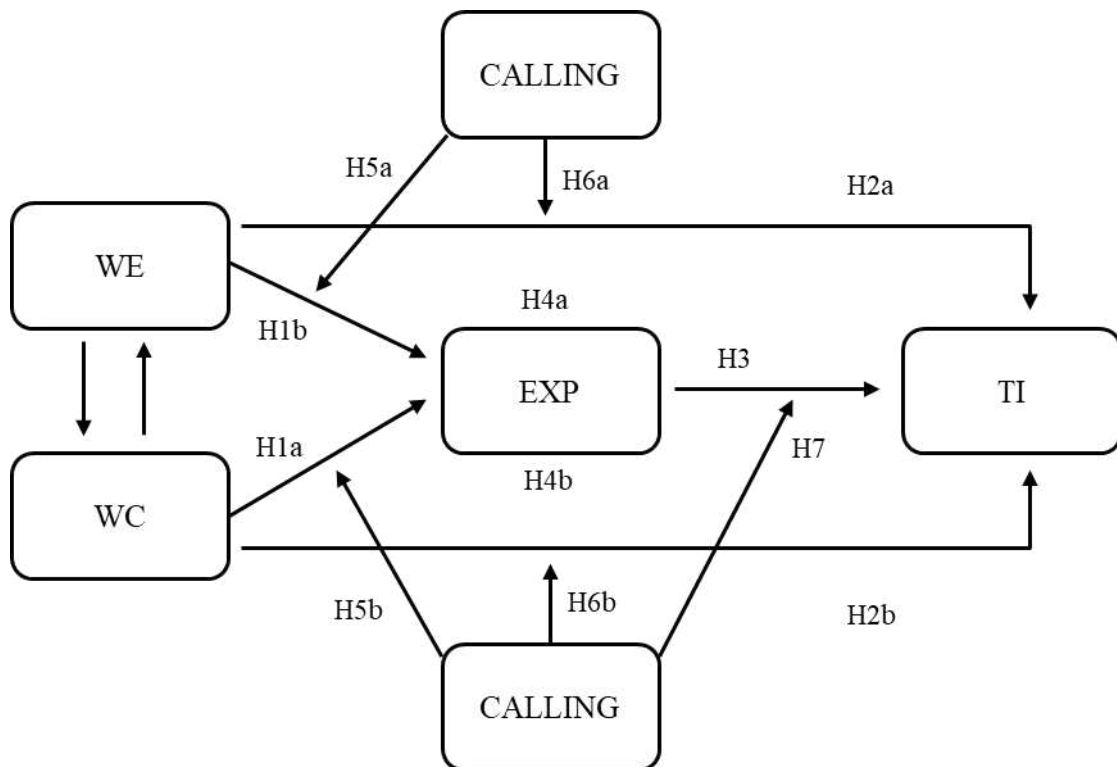
and a greater purpose, being willing to sacrifice all areas of their life to continue their job. Regardless of how much the organization may benefit from them, regardless of the workhours or regardless of the sacrifices they may have to make, the only thing that truly matters is that they can pursue their dream job (Bunderson & Thompson, 2009). Therefore, it does not seem irrational to hypothesize that workers with a calling, even if exploited, may not want to leave their positions. Thus, we expect that:

H7. Career calling moderates the relationship between perceived exploitation and turnover intentions, such that the relationship is weaker when calling is high.

In Figure 1, the model and hypotheses can be observed.

Figure 1

Theoretical model and hypothesis



Note. The presence of two calling is for aesthetic and symmetry reasons and should not be attributed to methodological considerations.

CHAPTER 3

Cross-cultural research on calling as a moderator

In the previous chapter, we provided a theoretical background of our study and outlined the hypotheses we will investigate. This chapter will explore previous studies that have used career calling as a moderating variable. No studies identical to ours, with the same variables, exist, which underscores the originality of our research. However, several studies have employed calling as a moderator. We have categorized the studies into those where the effect of calling is positive and those where the effect is negative. Both types of studies often encompass elements from the organizational domain and work outcomes. Therefore, they can be useful in broadly contextualizing the role of calling within organizations. Additionally, given the cross-cultural nature of our study, we will also examine papers that are usually beyond the Western context.

Studies that investigated the bright side of calling

Afsar and colleagues (2019) investigated the interaction between perceiving and living a calling on career commitment, organizational commitment, organizational citizenship behavior (OCB), workplace deviant behavior, and turnover intentions. The moderating role of calling is crucial because it highlights that the positive effects of calling on career commitment and subsequently on other work outcomes are significantly enhanced when individuals feel that they are living their calling. The study found that nurses who live out their calling, are highly committed and show organizational citizenship behavior (OCB), and lower workplace deviant behavior and turnover intentions. Conversely, when nurses feel they are not living their calling, the positive effects of calling on career commitment and other outcomes are diminished. Additionally, a strong sense of calling can mitigate the negative effects of job stress, thereby reducing turnover intentions. This is important because it would demonstrate how having a calling can reduce the likelihood of turnover in the face of organizational stress.

Furthermore, Hong and colleagues (2023) explored the role of calling as a moderator in

the context of emotional labor, with a specific focus on surface acting. Surface acting involves employees altering their outward emotional expressions to conform to organizational expectations, often without changing their internal feelings (Theodosius et al., 2021). This practice can create emotional dissonance, leading to negative outcomes such as stress, burnout, job dissatisfaction, and increased turnover (Lee & Madera, 2019; Wang et al., 2023; Zhang et al., 2018). The hypothesis of the study was that employees with a strong sense of calling may experience less emotional dissonance and stress when engaging in surface acting because their internal motivations are more aligned with their job roles. The results highlighted that employees who perceive their work as a calling are likely to experience less emotional dissonance during surface acting. This is because their internal values and motivations are more congruent with their outward behaviors, reducing the psychological strain of maintaining expressions that do not match their true feelings (Hong et al., 2023). Moreover, employees with a strong sense of calling are less likely to experience the chronic stress and exhaustion typically associated with surface acting, as they find greater personal fulfillment in their work. Furthermore, the study highlights that employees with a strong sense of calling are less likely to have turnover intentions. When employees find their work meaningful and aligned with their personal values, they are more committed to their organization and less likely to seek employment elsewhere. This reduced turnover is beneficial for organizations as it leads to lower recruitment and training costs, and it helps maintain organizational knowledge and stability. Thus, in this paper appeared that perceiving a sense of calling is beneficial for employees, serving as a protective mechanism against organizational challenges.

Ugwu and Onyishi (2018) examined the role of calling as a moderator in the relationship between perceived organizational frustration and work engagement. The research focused on teachers in Southeast Nigeria, a profession often beset by challenges such as low pay, delayed salaries, and limited professional development opportunities. These adverse conditions can lead to significant organizational frustration, which refers to the negative emotional state experienced by employees when they perceive that their efforts to achieve work-related goals are being blocked by various obstacles within the organization (Spector, 1978). The study demonstrated that a high sense of calling can buffer the negative effects of organizational frustration on

work engagement. Teachers with a strong sense of calling were found to maintain higher levels of work engagement despite experiencing high levels of organizational frustration compared to those with a low sense of calling. In this study, individuals who perceive their work as a calling tend to be more resilient which allows them to remain engaged and motivated even in challenging and frustrating work environments. This suggests that calling can serve as a personal resource that mitigates the detrimental effects of stressors like organizational frustration. The study suggests that calling leads to a deeper sense of purpose and commitment to one's work. This deep commitment is associated with greater work engagement, meaning that employees are more likely to stay committed and perform well even under frustrating conditions (Ugwu & Onyishi, 2018). We have discussed this study because the definition of perceived organizational frustration is very similar to the feeling of perceived exploitation, which is included in our study. Thus, it becomes evident that a sense of calling serves as a protective tool and could, therefore, also offer protection in situations where individuals feel exploited.

Huang and colleagues (2022) explored career calling as both a mediating and moderating variable in the relationship between job demands, job resources, and job satisfaction among health professionals. Career calling is found to have a dual moderating effect. Firstly, it positively moderates the relationship between job resources and job satisfaction. This means that when health workers have a strong sense of career calling, the positive impact of job resources (such as social support, performance feedback, and working conditions) on their job satisfaction is amplified. In other words, health workers who feel a strong calling are better able to leverage available job resources to enhance their job satisfaction. Secondly, career calling negatively moderates the relationship between job demands and job satisfaction. This indicates that when health workers experience high job demands (such as work-family conflict and emotional demands of the job), those with a strong sense of career calling are less negatively affected in terms of their job satisfaction. Essentially, a strong career calling can buffer the detrimental effects of high job demands, reducing the impact of these demands on job dissatisfaction. This highlights the protective nature of career calling. For health professionals, a strong sense of career calling not only enhances the positive effects of job resources but also mitigates the negative effects of job demands on job satisfaction.

These studies highlight the positive aspects of possessing and living out a career calling. These papers are made even more compelling as they explore the implications of having a calling in relation to organizational stressors, turnover intentions, commitment, and satisfaction. All of these insights contribute to providing a clearer understanding for our research.

Studies that investigated the dark side of calling

Jo and colleagues (2018) explored how a sense of calling influences the relationship between burnout and PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder) symptoms among firefighters. Firefighting is recognized as one of the most dangerous professions, often leading to high levels of stress and exposure to traumatic events (Shin et al., 2015). The research aimed to understand whether a strong sense of calling to the profession could buffer or exacerbate the effects of burnout on PTSD symptoms. The study confirmed that burnout is a significant predictor of PTSD symptoms. Firefighters experiencing higher levels of burnout also reported more severe PTSD symptoms, highlighting the detrimental impact of chronic job stress on mental health. The researchers hypothesized that a sense of calling would moderate the relationship between burnout and PTSD symptoms, expecting that a strong sense of calling would buffer the negative effects of burnout. Contrary to their hypothesis, the findings revealed that a high sense of calling actually exacerbated the relationship between burnout and PTSD symptoms. Firefighters with a strong sense of calling experienced a more pronounced increase in PTSD symptoms as their burnout levels increased, compared to those with a lower sense of calling. The data showed that firefighters who felt a strong sense of calling to their work were more affected by burnout. When these individuals experienced burnout, the negative impact on their mental health was more severe, leading to higher PTSD symptoms. This suggests that the psychological investment in their work makes the adverse effects of burnout more intense. Conversely, firefighters with a lower sense of calling showed a less pronounced relationship between burnout and PTSD symptoms. Their PTSD symptoms did not increase as sharply with higher levels of burnout, indicating that a lower emotional and psychological investment in the job might provide some resilience against the mental health impacts of burnout.

This study is highly significant because it highlights that all that glitters is not gold. While previous studies have demonstrated that a sense of calling can be a tool of resilience, this research reveals that calling can also have a dark side. Furthermore, burnout is positively associated with turnover intentions (Scanlan & Still, 2013). Keller and colleagues (2016) explored how a competitive climate at work interacts with individual factors like career calling to influence workaholism. The authors hypothesized that career calling would moderate the relationship between competitive climate and workaholism. Specifically, employees with a strong sense of calling would be more susceptible to workaholism in a competitive climate. The study supported this hypothesis, revealing that the relationship between competitive climate and workaholism was stronger for individuals with a high presence of calling. These employees are more likely to work compulsively and excessively in competitive environments. Individuals with a strong sense of calling are deeply committed to their work and motivated to achieve their professional goals. In a competitive climate, this commitment can drive them to work harder and longer to secure the positions and tasks that allow them to live out their calling. (Keller et al., 2016). Furthermore, A competitive climate can be perceived as a threat to the ability to live one's calling. Employees who feel that their calling is at risk may experience heightened stress and uncertainty, driving them to overwork as a coping mechanism and they are motivated to obtain and maintain the jobs and positions that enable them to live out their calling. In competitive climates, this motivation can result in excessive work behavior to outperform peers and secure desired roles. (Keller et al., 2016). In subsequent studies, calling operates in a gray area, being both positive and negative under certain conditions.

Afsar and colleagues (2018) investigated the concept of calling as a moderating variable that influences the relationship between career commitment and various work outcomes among nurses. The study specifically investigates how perceiving and living a calling affects nurses' organizational commitment, organizational citizenship behavior, and job stress (The following study demonstrates a dual function of callings, which can be either positive or negative, depending on whether individuals are living their calling or not). The research findings indicate that the positive effects of calling on career outcomes are significantly enhanced when nurses feel they are living out their calling. This

moderating effect is particularly evident in three key areas: nurses who perceive their job as a calling show higher level of organizational commitment. This means they are more likely to be dedicated and loyal to their organization. The study found that the relationship between calling and organizational commitment is stronger when nurses feel they are actively living out their calling in their daily work. Nurses who live their calling are more likely to engage in Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB), such as helping colleagues and going beyond their job requirements. Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB) refers to voluntary, extra-role behaviors that contribute to the organization's effectiveness (Smith et al.,1983). This suggests that living a calling motivates nurses to contribute positively to their work environment. The study found that living a calling can mitigate job stress. Nurses who perceive their work as aligned with their calling experience lower levels of job stress, even in demanding and challenging environments. This contrasts with those who have a calling but are unable to live it out in their work, who may experience higher levels of stress. The results concerning job stress are of particular interest to us. They demonstrate that a calling can simultaneously serve as a mechanism to reduce stress as well as a factor that can increase it. Additionally, job stress is positively correlated with both workaholism (Jenaabadi et al., 2017) and turnover (Arshadi & Damiri, 2017), which are essential elements of our model. The study also highlights the importance of examining calling in different cultural contexts. Given that the research was conducted among Pakistani nurses, it provides insights into how collectivist cultural values may influence the perception and impact of calling. In collectivist societies, where the emphasis is on group harmony and social welfare, the prosocial aspects of calling may be more pronounced (Duffy & Autin, 2013).

In another study, which illustrates the dual nature of calling, Wu and colleagues (2019) explored career calling as a moderating variable to understand its impact on the relationships between role stress, job burnout, and job performance. Specifically, the research examines how career calling influences these relationships in the context of construction project managers (CPMs). The results are interesting and once again highlight the gray area in which calling operates. Career calling negatively moderates the relationship between role ambiguity and job burnout. This suggests that individuals with a strong sense of career calling are less likely to experience job burnout even when

they face high levels of role ambiguity. The sense of purpose and commitment that comes with career calling helps these individuals manage the stress associated with unclear job roles, reducing the likelihood of burnout (Wu et al., 2019). The study found that career calling positively moderates the relationship between role conflict and job performance. This means that CPMs with a strong career calling are better able to handle conflicts in their roles and maintain high performance. The intrinsic motivation and clarity of purpose provided by a strong career calling enable these managers to navigate conflicts more effectively, leading to better performance outcomes.

Interestingly, career calling also positively moderates the relationship between role conflict and job burnout. This indicates that while career calling can enhance job performance in the face of role conflict, it can also exacerbate burnout. This dual effect highlights the complex nature of career calling, where the same sense of purpose and drive can lead to both positive and negative outcomes depending on the context. The findings underscore the dual nature of career calling. On one hand, it acts as a protective factor, helping individuals manage role ambiguity and maintain job performance despite role conflicts. On the other hand, an excessive sense of career calling can lead to increased job burnout, particularly when role conflicts are high. Thus, once again, we have results that highlight the dual nature of career calling.

Creed and colleagues (2014) examined how career calling functions as a moderator in the relationship between environmental demands (academic stress, hours worked, and concern about debt) and burnout among junior doctors. The authors said that career calling significantly buffers the adverse effects of academic stress on burnout. Junior doctors with a strong sense of calling experience less burnout in the face of high academic stress compared to those with a weaker sense of calling. However, the authors' interpretation that career calling is beneficial may be reconsidered. According to their data, junior doctors with high levels of career calling, in high-stress environments, tend to have more burnout compared to those with a low sense of calling, which indicates a potential downside to having a strong sense of calling. This suggests that possessing a career calling may lead to more detrimental health consequences and subsequently result in the deterioration of overall well-being.

Brief summary

This chapter has provided a review of previous studies that have explored career calling as a moderating variable (see table 1 and 2). The reviewed literature demonstrates the multifaceted role of career calling in various organizational contexts, offering valuable insights into how it can influence work outcomes such as commitment, burnout, and performance. The studies discussed indicate that career calling often acts as a protective factor, enhancing positive work behaviors and mitigating negative outcomes like job stress and burnout. For instance, Afsar et al. (2019) revealed that nurses with a strong sense of calling showed higher organizational commitment and lower turnover intentions, while Hong et al. (2023) found that employees with a strong calling experienced less emotional dissonance and stress during surface acting. Similarly, Ugwu and Onyishi (2018) demonstrated that a strong sense of calling can buffer the negative effects of organizational frustration on work engagement among teachers. However, the chapter also highlights the dual nature of career calling. Studies like those by Jo et al. (2018) and Wu et al. (2019) indicate that while career calling can enhance job performance and commitment, it can also exacerbate stress and burnout under certain conditions. This complexity is further illustrated by Keller et al. (2016), who found that a strong sense of calling could lead to workaholism in competitive climates, showing that the intrinsic motivation provided by a calling can sometimes drive excessive work behaviors. The cross-cultural aspects of career calling are particularly relevant to our study, which compares its impact between Italy and Japan. By examining studies conducted in various cultural contexts, we gain a broader understanding of how calling interacts with different organizational and societal factors. This cross-cultural perspective is essential for contextualizing our findings and understanding the universal and culture-specific aspects of career calling. In conclusion, this chapter has established a solid theoretical foundation by reviewing diverse studies on the moderating role of career calling. The insights gained here will inform the subsequent empirical analysis, helping to elucidate the complex and multifaceted impact of career calling on workaholism, perceived exploitation, and turnover intentions in different cultural contexts.

Table 1*Studies where calling has a positive role*

Authors	Country	Measure of calling	Relationship moderated	Effect size (std beta)
Afsar and colleagues (2019)	Pakistan	Calling and Vocation Questionnaire (CVQ, Dik et al., 2012); Living a Calling Scale (LCS, Duffy et al., 2012)	Perceiving a calling and career commitment (1), organizational commitment (2), organizational citizenship behavior (3), workplace deviant behavior (4), turnover intention (5)	.39*** (1); .24** (2); .23*** (3); -.17* (4); -.27* (5)
Hong and colleagues (2023)	China	Chinese version of Career Calling Scale (Chen et al., 2016)	surface acting and emotional exhaustion	-0.21***
Ugwu & Onyishi (2018)	Nigeria	The Work–Life Questionnaire (WLQ; Wrzesniewski et al., 1997)	perceived organizational frustration and work engagement	.39***
Huang and colleagues (2022)	China	Career Calling Scale (CQ12, Dobrow & Tosti-Kharas, 2011)	job resources and job satisfaction (1), job demands and job satisfaction (2)	.53*** (1); -.21** (2)

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$. In Afsar et al., (2019) the relationship is moderated by the possibility to live out one's calling.

Table 2*Studies where calling has a negative role*

Authors	Country	Measure of calling	Relationship moderated	Effect size (std beta)
Afsar and colleagues (2018)	Pakistan	Calling and Vocation Questionnaire (CVQ, Dik et al., 2012)	Perceiving a calling and job stress	.21***
Creed and colleagues (2014)	Australia	Brief Calling Scale (Dik et al., 2012)	academic stress and burnout	.19***
Jo and colleagues (2017)	South Korea	Sense of Calling Subscale of Professionalism Scale (Hall, 1968)	Burnout and PTSD symptoms	.42***
Wu and colleagues (2019)	China	Career Calling Scale (Dobrow & Tosti-Kharas, 2011)	role ambiguity and job burnout (1), role conflict and job burnout (2), role conflict and job performance (3)	-.18* (1); .19* (2); .20* (3)
Keller and colleagues (2016)	Germany	Brief Calling Scale (BCS, Dik et al., 2012)	competitive climate and workaholism	.08*

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.; In Afsar et al., (2018) the relationship is moderated by the inability to live out one's calling.

CHAPTER 4

The empirical study

Sample and Procedure

All data were collected in a cross-sectional study using online surveys.

Participants were not compensated for completing the questionnaire, and they were provided with informed consent summarizing the study, their rights, and a guarantee of anonymity. The platform used for questionnaire administration was Qualtrics.

Regarding recruitment, the questionnaire was disseminated via the snowball sampling method (Goodman, 1961). This technique leverages researchers' social connections, who identify individuals suitable for the questionnaire, and those individuals further distribute it, creating a chain effect.

The current study comprises both a Japanese and an Italian sample. For the Japanese sample, we used public data (N=151, 47% male, mean age=36.21, SD=12.14) available here: <https://osf.io/gtey7/>. The criteria for responding to the questionnaire were: being at least 18 years old, currently residing in Japan, and being employed (regardless of contract type). Most respondents were regular employees (62.9%), while the remainder consisted of part-time employees (12.6%), managers (15.2%), senior staff (6.6%), and freelancers (4%). The respondents had an average seniority of 7.96 years (SD= 8.74). Additionally, participants were asked to indicate their contractual weekly hours (mean= 33.27, SD=13.85), actual weekly working hours (mean= 44.91, SD=16.71), and one-way commute time (mean= 1.13, SD=2.85).

The Italian sample was composed of 246 students (41% male, mean age=38.06, SD=13.7). The criteria for responding to the questionnaire were: being at least 18 years old, residing in Italy, and being employed. The participants had an average seniority of 5.86 years (SD=8.32). Additionally, they were asked to indicate their contracted weekly hours (mean=33.65, SD=9.01), the number of actual weekly working hours (mean= 38.05, SD= 11.29), and the nature of their employment contracts.

Measures

The questionnaires were administered in either Italian or Japanese, depending on the sample.

Workaholism was assessed using the Italian and Japanese versions of the Dutch Workaholism Scale (DUWAS), developed by Balducci et al. (2015) and Schaufeli et al. (2009), respectively. This scale encompasses both the behavioral (working excessively) and cognitive (working compulsively) aspects of workaholism. The scale comprises 10 items, such as "I spend more time working than on socializing with friends, on hobbies, or on leisure activities" for working excessively (WE) and "It is important to me to work hard even when I do not enjoy what I am doing" for working compulsively (WC). The items were rated on a 4-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree). The internal consistency of the Japanese scale, as measured by Schaufeli (2009), was $\alpha = .73$ for WE and $\alpha = .68$ for WC, while for the Italian scale, measurements by Balducci et al. (2015) reported $\alpha = .74$ for both WC and WE. In the current study, the reliability for the Japanese subscales was .65 (WE) and .71 (WC), respectively, and for the Italian subscales, it was .67 (WE) and .78 (WC).

Perceived exploitation was measured using four items from the Perceived Exploitative Employee-Organization Relationship Scale (PERS) developed by Livne-Ofer et al. (2019). The four items that showed higher loadings in Moody (2022) were selected. For example, one item is "my organization doesn't care if it harms me, as long as it benefits from my work." The items were rated on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The scale demonstrated a reliability of $\alpha = .96$ in the validation study and $\alpha = .89$ for Italy and $\alpha = .70$ for Japan in the current study.

Turnover intention was measured using a 3-item scale developed by Mobley et al. (1978). An example item is "I think a lot about leaving the organization." Responses were rated on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). This scale exhibited good consistency in previous studies (Carmeli & Gefen, 2005: $\alpha = .90$) and demonstrated internal consistency of $\alpha = .90$ in Italy and $\alpha = .81$ in Japan in our study.

Career calling was assessed using the shortened 7-item version of the Unified Multidimensional Calling Scale (UMCS-7) (Gerdel et al., 2022), a scale based on the

22-item version of the UMCS developed by Vianello et al. (2018). Responses were rated on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). In Gerdel et al.'s (2022) study, the alpha was .87, and in Vianello et al. (2018) study, it was .93. In the present study, the alpha was .83 for Italy and .80 for Japan.

RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics

We computed means, standard deviations, internal consistencies (Cronbach's alpha), and correlations for all the measures in our model (see Table 1 and 2) for both Italy and Japan. All relationships between variables are in the expected direction.

However, in both countries, not all relationships appeared to be significant.

In the Italian sample, it is surprising to observe the absence of a correlation ($r=.04$, $p=.623$) between working excessively and turnover intentions. In this case, only the cognitive component (WC) seems to play a primary role in the relationship between workaholism and turnover intentions ($r=.27$, $p<.01$). In Japan, both components had a small but not significant effect on turnover intention ($r=.11$, $p=.201$ for WE and $r=.11$, $p=.177$ for WC).

The relationship between workaholism and perceived exploitation is opposite in the two countries. In Italy, the behavioral component (WE) has a significant relationship ($r=.25$, $p<.01$) with perceived exploitation, while in Japan, it is the cognitive component ($r=.27$, $p<.01$). Both samples show a significant and positive relationship between perceived exploitation and turnover intentions ($r=.41$, $p<.01$ for the Italian sample and $r=.38$, $p<.01$ for the Japanese sample). In the Italian sample, the career calling seems to have no significant impact only on working compulsively ($r=.05$, $p=.424$) and perceived exploitation ($r=-.08$, $p=.268$), while in the Japanese sample, there is no relationship between calling and perceived exploitation ($r=0$, $p=.992$).

The internal consistency of the measures meets the minimum criteria of .70 for Cronbach's alpha (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994), except for working excessively (for both countries), which is slightly below the value.

Table 1

Mean, Standard Deviation, Internal consistency (Cronbach's Alpha on the Diagonal) and Correlations of all Study Variables for the Italian Sample

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1. Working excessively	2.41	0.55	(.67)	-	-	-	-
2. Working compulsively	2.22	0.67	.49**	(.78)	-	-	-
3. Perceived exploitation	3.11	1.56	.25**	.14	(.89)	-	-
4. Turnover intention	2.61	1.30	.04	.27**	.41**	(.90)	-
5. Career calling	3.07	0.88	.24**	.05	-.08	-.47**	(.83)

Note. *p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001.

Table 2

Mean, Standard Deviation, Internal consistency (Cronbach's Alpha on the Diagonal) and Correlations of all Study Variables for the Japanese Sample

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1. Working excessively	2.14	0.62	(.65)	-	-	-	-
2. Working compulsively	2.01	0.67	.64**	(.71)	-	-	-
3. Perceived exploitation	2.87	1.06	.15	.27**	(.70)	-	-
4. Turnover intention	2.52	1.01	.11	.11	.38**	(.81)	-
5. Career calling	3.39	0.73	.29**	.22**	.00	-.19*	(.80)

Note. *p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001.

Model Testing

Main direct effects

Research hypotheses were tested using structural equation modeling (SEM) (Bryne, 2013; Klyne, 2016), and the lavaan package (Rosseel, 2012) in R (see figure 1). Composite z-scores representing each variable were used as indicators in the model.

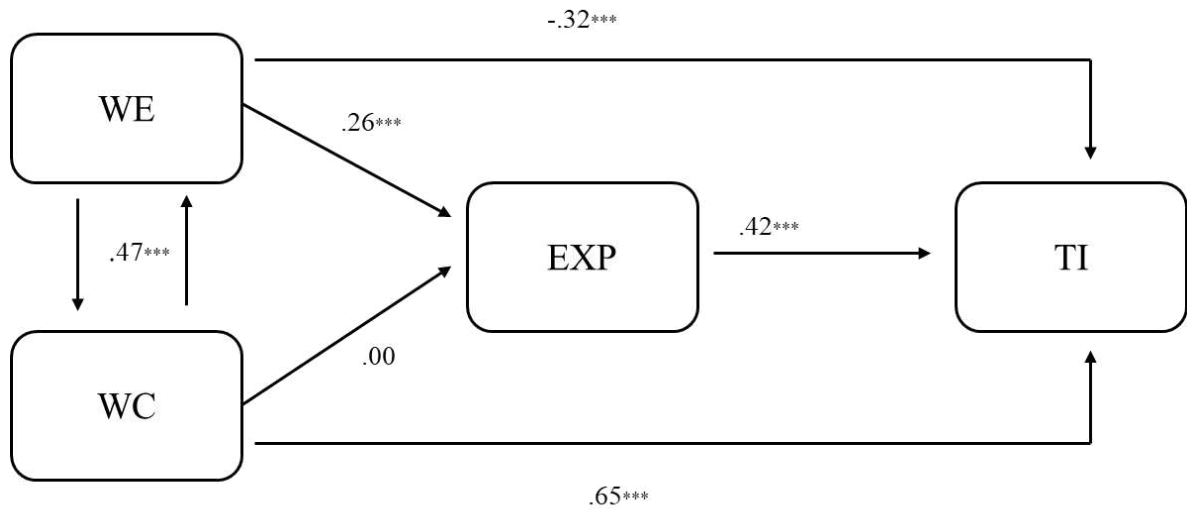
In Italy, working excessively, but not working compulsively, is related to exploitation (H1a supported; $\beta=.26, p<.001$), which is in turn related to turnover (H3 supported; $\beta=.42, p= <.001$). The indirect effect is $\beta=.26, p= <.001$.

In Japan, working compulsively, but not working excessively, is related to exploitation ((H1b supported; $\beta=.26, p<.05$), which is in turn related to turnover (H3 supported; $\beta=.37, p<.001$). The indirect effect is $\beta=.14, p= <.01$.

Regarding the link between workaholism and turnover intentions, in Italy working excessively is negatively related to turnover (H2a not supported; $\beta= -.32, p= <.001$.), instead, working compulsively is positively related to turnover (H2b supported; $\beta= .65, p= <.001$.). In Japan working excessively is not significantly related to turnover (H2a not supported; $\beta= .10, p= .459$.), instead, working compulsively is positively related to turnover (H2b supported; $\beta= .12, p= <.01$.). In Italy, perceived exploitation partially mediates the relationship between working excessively and turnover intentions (H4a supported; $\beta=.19, p<.001, CI= [.05, .32]$), but not mediating the relationship between working compulsively and turnover intentions (H4b not supported; $\beta=.02, p>.05, CI= [-.08, .12]$). Instead, in Japan, the opposite occurs, with perceived exploitation mediating totally the relationship between working compulsively and turnover (H4b supported; $\beta=.17, p<.01, CI= [.03, .30]$), and not the relationship between working excessively and turnover (H4a not supported; $\beta=-.02, p>.05, CI= [-.15, .11]$).

Figure 1

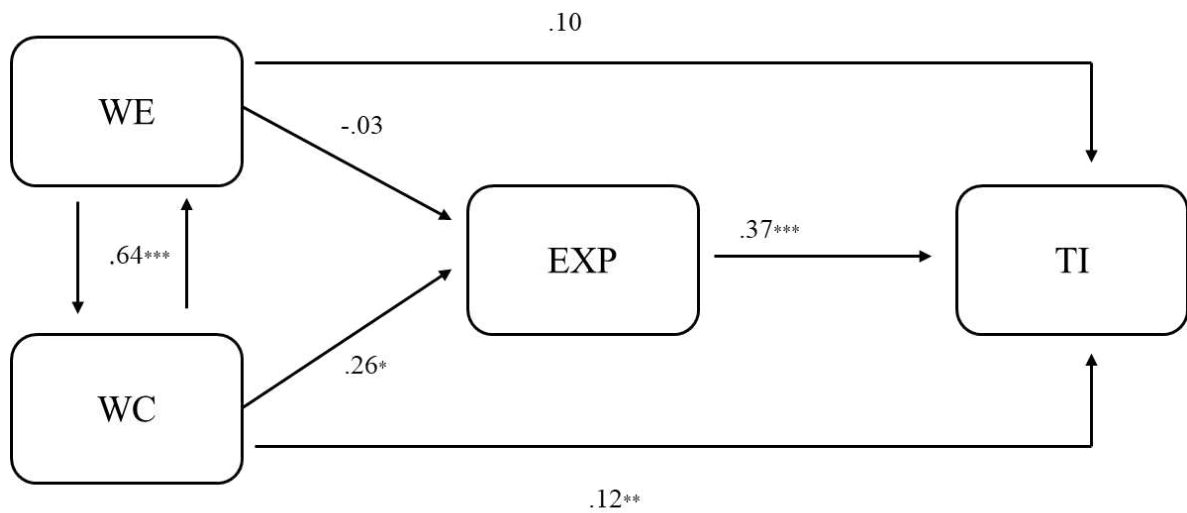
Path diagram of the model (Italian sample)



Note. *p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001; We have considered the total effect

Figure 2

Path diagram of the model (Japanese sample)



Note. *p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001; We have considered the total effect

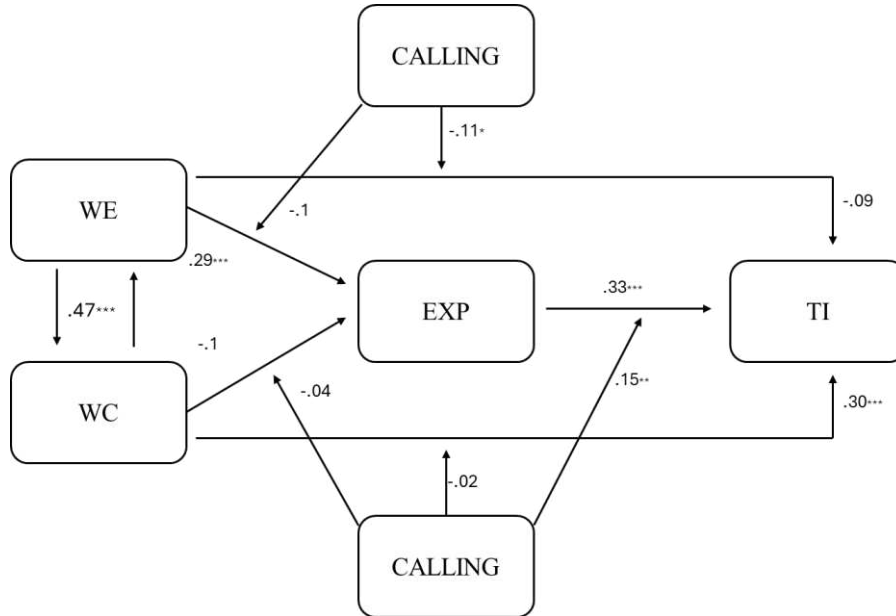
The role of Career Calling as a Moderator

Finally, we tested hypotheses H5 to H7 by including career calling as a moderator (figure 3). In our model, career calling does not moderate the relationship between workaholism and perceived exploitation, and thus H5 is not supported. Instead, H6a is (at least partially) supported in the Italian sample because calling moderates the direct effect of working excessively on turnover intentions ($\beta = -.11, p = <.05$).

Furthermore, we observed a moderating effect of career calling on the relationship between perceived exploitation and turnover intentions ($\beta = .15, p < .01$, H7 supported; in the Italian sample and $\beta = -.18, p < .05$, H7 not supported; in the Japanese sample). Figure 4 provides a nuanced description of the shape of this moderation effect.

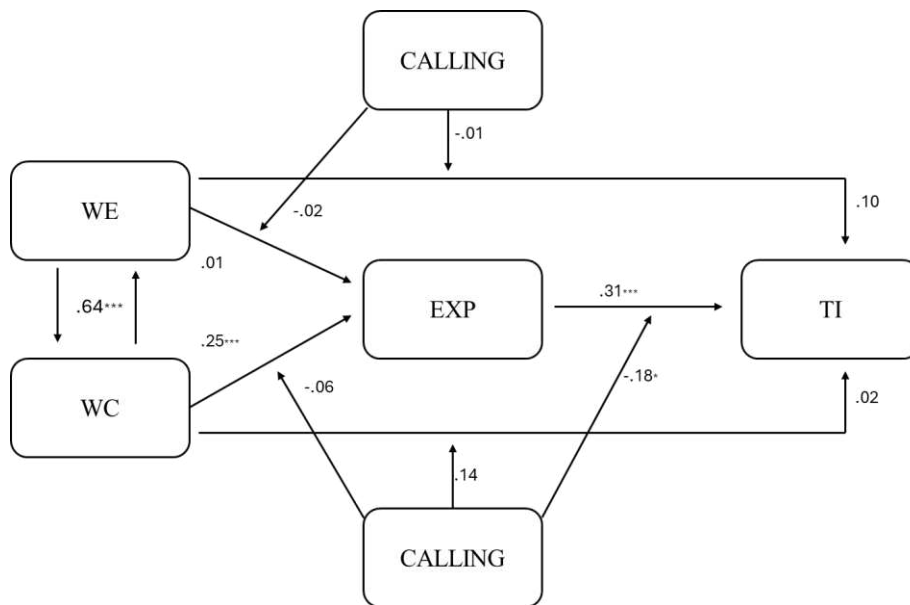
Figure 3

Path diagram of the model with career calling as a moderator (Italy)



Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

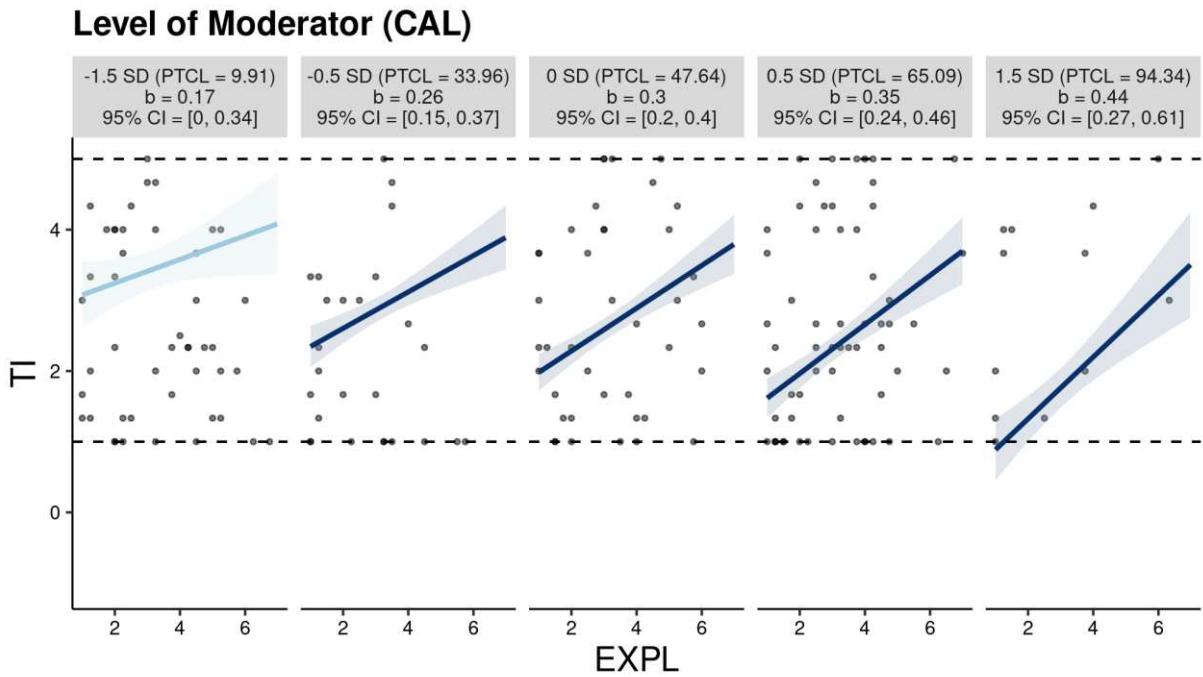
Path diagram of the model with career calling as a moderator (Japan)



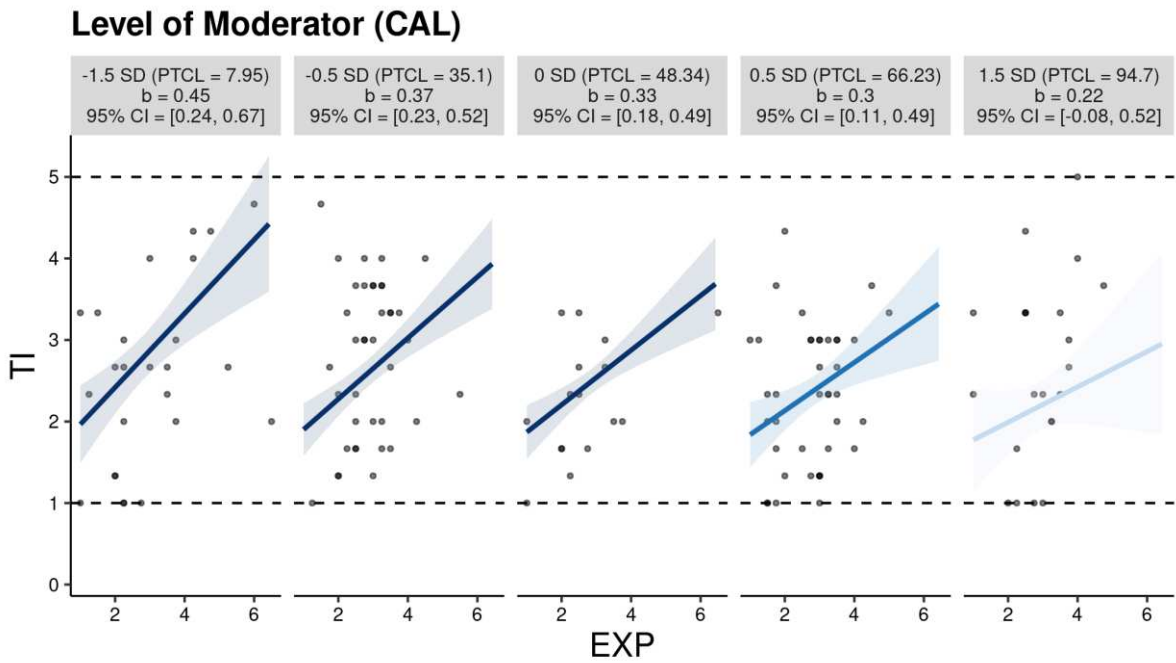
Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Figure 4

Effect of calling between EXP and TI in the Italian sample



Effect of calling between EXP and TI in the Japanese sample



DISCUSSION

The present study aims, for the first time, to investigate the role of career calling in both Italy and Japan within contexts where workaholism and perceived exploitation may lead to turnover intentions.

We found cross-cultural differences in the relations under investigation. Although workaholism is positively linked to perceived exploitation in both contexts (consistently with Duffy et al., 2016), the cognitive and behavioral components exhibit distinct impacts across the two countries. In Italy, the behavioral component (WE) shows a positive association with perceived exploitation. Conversely, in Japan, the cognitive component (WC) plays a pivotal role in the association with perceived exploitation. These differences may be attributed to the divergent nature of work cultures in Italy and Japan. Japanese employees often work longer hours compared to their Western counterparts (Ogura, 2009), potentially normalizing excessive work situations and mitigating perceptions of exploitation. On the other hand, Italians are more individualistic (Načinović Braje et al., 2019) and may internalize the cognitive component as a personal issue rather than a consequence of organizational pressure. In addition, workaholism appears to be related to turnover intentions in Italy. In fact, in Japan, where there is a culture of overwork (Yamauchi et al., 2017), thoughts of leaving employment and seeking alternatives due to excessive workload and excessive preoccupation with work are not acted upon, because this approach to work is considered normative. Then, in Italy the relationship between working excessively and turnover intention is negative. This finding could be attributed to the fact that workaholic individuals engage in excessive work due to feelings of guilt and anxiety when not working. Consequently, this drives them to abstain from turnover intentions and instead, to persist in their work endeavors within the organization (Ng et al., 2007). As in previous studies (Gillet et al., 2017), working compulsively leads to turnover in the Italian sample. People who can't stop thinking about work may want to quit to escape this situation. Also, in both Italy and Japan, turnover intentions are higher when people feel exploited, in line with previous results (Livne-Ofer, 2019). Feeling exploited and undervalued makes people look for other options. Career calling does not moderate

any effects except how perceived exploitation affects turnover intention. This finding is particularly intriguing given the disparate effects observed in Italy and Japan. While the positive relationship between perceived exploitation and turnover intention persists in both contexts, the influence of career calling varies significantly. Specifically, in Italy, the presence of a career calling substantially increases the inclination to leave an exploitative organization. This phenomenon can be explained by the perception of work as a source of meaning and identity for individuals with a strong career calling (Duffy et al., 2016; Vianello et al., 2018), motivating them to seek optimal expression of their calling free from exploitation. Conversely, in Japan, the presence of a career calling significantly reduces the propensity to leave an organization even when facing exploitation. This finding aligns with Bunderson and Thompson's proposition (2009) that individuals with a strong career calling endure challenges, including exploitation, to continue engaging in work they love.

Our study reveals cross-cultural differences in individuals' experiences of a calling and its impact on their work life, highlighting the dual nature of the concept of calling (Bunderson & Thompson, 2009). On one hand, it acts as a protective mechanism, prompting consideration of leaving stressful and exploitative environments, while on the other hand, for some people in some situations, it might help justifying the organization and as a consequence it could be a threat to well-being. Additionally, in the Italian context, the calling moderates the relationship between working excessively and turnover intention, rendering it non-significant at high levels of calling. Consequently, individuals with a strong calling who engage in excessive work do not entertain thoughts of turnover. This finding aligns with existing literature, suggesting that individuals called to a specific line of work are so passionate about it that they are willing to prioritize it over other aspects of life (Dobrow & Tosti-Kharas, 2011). Hence, it is reasonable to infer that individuals with high levels of calling may also engage in more work because it aligns with their passion.

Being called: a blessing or a curse?

Our research shed light on the multifaceted nature of the concept of calling, revealing two distinct yet interconnected dimensions: a positive one and a negative one.

Delving into the positive aspect, calling serves as a protective shield for employees, guarding them against the danger of overwork and exploitation within their professional domains. Conversely, the negative dimension of calling manifests when individuals find themselves entrenched in jobs characterized by heightened levels of workaholism and exploitation: yet remain unwilling to leave their positions. Hence, at first glance, understanding what calling entails may seem elusive; however, the truth is that both aspects belong to the construct of calling.

Our study aligns with existing literature in this regard. On the affirmative side, calling has been demonstrated to significantly contribute to overall well-being (Dobrow et al., 2022), fostering a greater propensity for experiencing positive outcomes within the realm of work (Hirschi, 2012), and cultivating a more optimistic outlook on life in general (Steger et al., 2010). Furthermore, possessing a sense of calling has been linked to various advantageous work-related outcomes, including but not limited to, facilitating more informed and strategic career decision-making processes (Dobrow et al., 2022), enhancing levels of job satisfaction and overall life satisfaction (Gerdel et al., 2022), boosting job performance (Vianello et al., 2022), and a perception of one's work as meaningful (Dobrow et al., 2022). Moreover, individuals who perceive a calling exhibit a heightened capacity for resilience in the face of workplace challenges (Koamesah et al., 2022), as their sense of calling propels them forward, enabling them to surmount obstacles and pursue their career aspirations with unwavering determination (Creed et al., 2020). Conversely, despite the limited extant literature on this subject, empirical evidence suggests that individuals who perceive a calling are more likely to work to the point of exhaustion (Duffy et al., 2016; Keller et al., 2016). Our study might be the very first indication that in some situations, calling can lead to exploitation, as predicted by the Work Calling Theory (Duffy et al., 2016). Furthermore, those individuals may unwittingly subject themselves to exploitation within their organizational contexts (Bunderson & Thompson, 2009), driven by an unwavering commitment to preserving the job they perceive as their calling. Indeed, calling has been noted as an exacerbator of negative organizational outcomes such as burnout and exploitation (Duffy et al., 2016). Hence, in delineating the construct of calling, it becomes imperative to encompass both its positive and negative dimensions, acknowledging the potential for it to exert both beneficial and detrimental effects within organizational contexts.

Italy and Japan: Where do the differences come from?

The differences observed in our model between Italy and Japan may stem from divergent approaches to the world of work in the two countries. Unlike in Italy, we observed that workaholism is not directly linked to turnover intentions in Japan. This discrepancy can be attributed to a variety of factors. According to various international reports, a significant proportion of Japanese workers engage in work for more than 50 hours per week, a statistic substantially higher than that of European countries (Messenger et al., 2007; Ono, 2018). Consequently, it can be inferred that in Japan, working long hours is socially accepted, with significant implications for our model. This blurs the threshold at which a Japanese worker might consider themselves to be working excessively, thereby complicating the inclination towards turnover, as they may perceive their workload as within acceptable limits. Moreover, the type of employment relationship differs significantly between the two contexts. In Japan, there is a predominance of membership-based employment, characterized by an employee's lifelong commitment to the organization (Moriguchi et al., 2006). In contrast, Western countries predominantly adopt a job-based employment model, where individuals tend to view their employment as a means to an end rather than a lifelong commitment. Consequently, Japanese workers perceive their organization as an integral part of their identity and tend to perform a wide range of tasks within the company without specializing (Ono, 2018). Conversely, in the West, emphasis is placed on acquiring specific skills and expertise, leading individuals to "work for" rather than "belong to" an organization, resulting in more frequent job changes.

The preference for lifetime employment in Japan fosters a strong sense of loyalty towards the organization, making turnover intentions less prevalent despite compulsive work behavior (Ono, 2010). In Italy, there is consensus with the literature and working compulsively tends to result in negative conditions for the worker, consequently leading to turnover intentions (Gillet et al., 2017; Clark et al., 2016). However, the relationship between working compulsively and turnover intentions in Japan changes when perceived exploitation is considered. In this scenario, the relationship becomes positive and significant. Further research in this area is warranted, but we believe it is plausible

that this shift is influenced by the nature of the relationship between workers and organizations. Japanese workers often commit to a lifelong career with a single company and are willing to make significant sacrifices for their employer. However, if they begin to feel exploited by the same organization, they have devoted themselves to, they may feel betrayed, leading to turnover intentions.

Moreover, differences in working practices underlie the contrasting results between the two countries regarding the relationship between dimensions of workaholism and perceived exploitation. The variance in the number of hours worked leads to differing social thresholds for feeling exploited by the organization, with a lower threshold in Italy where working excessively leads to perceived exploitation (Lee, 2004). In Japan, however, it is the cognitive component of workaholism that triggers feelings of exploitation.

Regarding the concept of calling and the disparities observed across countries, what has been previously mentioned applies here as well. The different world of work and the varying experiences of organizational life can lead to different outcomes of calling. Moreover, cultural factors cannot be overlooked. Japan is a collectivist country (Hofstede, 2001), and in such societies, conformity to group norms (in our case, for example, the numerous hours worked and considering one's employment as a lifelong commitment) is crucial as it serves to assess one's self-worth (Kim & Markus, 1999). Concurrently, future studies will need to conduct a more thorough examination of the nomological definition of calling in Japan. Indeed, we mentioned, in the first chapter, how the history of calling is closely intertwined with the Catholic religious tradition, a development that could not have occurred in Japan due to its different religious background. Hence, this construct is still relatively underexplored, and if it is further clarified, it could provide a valuable foundation for investigating cross-cultural differences among countries.

Implications for research, limitations and future directions

This study provides a framework for investigating the dual facets of calling and how it manifests in scenarios of workaholism, perceived exploitation, and turnover intentions. Our results offer valuable insights into how individuals experiencing

workaholism may contemplate changing their employment situation when faced with perceived exploitation. Moreover, our investigation into cultural diversity sheds light on the varying dynamics among these constructs across different cultural contexts.

By uncovering significant disparities in the impact of workaholism and its components on turnover intentions and perceived exploitation, our study underscores the importance of considering cultural nuances in research and practice. Expanding our model to encompass additional Western and non-Western countries holds promise for further elucidating the nuanced implications across diverse cultural landscapes. Furthermore, our examination of calling as a moderator within this framework reveals contrasting manifestations of calling and its consequences between Italy and Japan. In Italy, calling emerges as a protective factor that partially buffers the effects of exploitation, leading individuals to contemplate turnover. This finding resonates with existing literature that associates vocational calling with positive individual outcomes (Erum et al., 2020; Hirschi, 2012; Ziedelis, 2019). Conversely, in Japan, the darker side of calling (Bunderson & Thompson, 2009; Duffy et al., 2016) is evident, wherein individuals, who are highly exploited, demonstrate a reduced willingness to leave their current employment, if they are also high in calling.

Further exploration into the role of calling in the country and its implications for individual well-being and organizational dynamics is essential to better understand its role in organizational context, as well as investigate the specific cultural characteristics underlying this effect, which should be isolated for a more comprehensive understanding. Future research should delve into additional organizational factors beyond perceived exploitation that contribute to turnover. Additionally, expanding cross-cultural investigations into calling and its impact on individuals' lives could yield valuable insights into fostering positive work environments worldwide. By deepening our understanding of these constructs and their complex interactions across diverse cultural contexts, we can develop evidence-based interventions to enhance workplace satisfaction, productivity, and overall employee well-being.

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