

Chapter #13

CALLING AND WELL-BEING OF TEACHERS: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF JOB CRAFTING AND WORK MEANINGFULNESS

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ABSTRACT

People who consider their work as a calling find it fulfilling, purposeful, and socially useful, thus leading to higher levels of well-being. For them work is a central part of the identity and represents one of the most important domains of their lives, we assume that they are more prone to craft their job. They tend to make the physical and cognitive changes in the task or relational boundaries of their work to make it more meaningful. Both experiencing work as a calling and job crafting are found to be associated with psychological well-being, and sense of meaning. This study adds to literature by exploring a serial mediation model with job crafting and work meaningfulness mediating the relationship between teacher calling orientation and teacher flourishing. The sample consisted of 349 primary school teachers from public schools in Croatia. Self-report measures of calling orientation, job crafting, work meaning, and flourishing were used. The findings revealed that the job crafting via increasing structural job resources mediated the relationship between calling orientation and work meaningfulness. Furthermore, results of serial mediation showed that increased structural job resources and work meaningfulness foster teachers' well-being. Based on these findings, several practical implications can be noted.

Keywords: calling, flourishing, job crafting, teachers, well-being, work meaningfulness.

1. INTRODUCTION

Numerous studies documented the positive relationship between well-being and success at work (for review see Walsh, Boehm, & Lyubomirsky, 2018). In other words, happy workers are successful workers. In the context of teaching profession there is also evidence that wellbeing may be significant contributor to teacher effectiveness. For example, it was found that teachers happiness (Briner & Dewberry, 2007) and life satisfaction (Duckworth, Quinn, & Seligman, 2009) are related to their students' academic achievement. Teachers job satisfaction also has many important implications. There is evidence that job satisfaction is positively related to students achievement (Opdenakker & Van Damme, 2006) and satisfaction (Collie, Shapka, & Perry, 2012; Spilt, Koomen, & Thijs, 2011), higher instructional quality and better learning support for students (Klusmann, Kunter, Trautwein, Lüdtke, & Baumert, 2008; Kunter et al., 2013), stronger job commitment and less proneness to leave the teaching profession (Blömeke, Houang, Hsieh, & Wang, 2017; Klassen & Chiu, 2011). With this relationship in mind, it would be worth finding out the antecedents of teachers' job satisfaction and well-being.

2. BACKGROUND

Research suggests that people tend to frame their relationship to work in different ways: as job, career, and calling (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler & Tipton, 2008; Wrzesniewski, 2003). For some employees' work is "just a job", a source of financial security and is not a central part of their identity. Some see their work as career and are focused on advancement and achievement of professional goals (Bellah et al., 2008; Wrzesniewski, 2003). They invest more in their professional identity than those with a job orientation. Finally, employees with a calling orientation view their work as a fulfilling and intrinsically rewarding, purposeful, and socially useful. Therefore, work is a central part of their identity and represents one of the most important domains of their lives (Bellah et al., 2008; Wrzesniewski, 2003; Wrzesniewski, McCauley, Rozin, & Schwartz, 1997). Although, all abovementioned work orientations were researched, majority of studies focused on the calling orientation (e.g. Harzer & Ruch, 2012; Peterson & Park, 2006; Peterson, Park, Hall & Seligman, 2009). It is generally believed that teachers tend to experience their work as a calling more often than employees in other professions (e.g., Hagmaier & Abele, 2012). Previous studies revealed that it is a rather frequent phenomenon, the percentage of teachers with calling orientation varying from 45% in United Kingdom to 83% in Croatia (e.g., Bullough & Hall-Kenyon, 2012; Dinham & Scott, 2000; Rijavec, Pečjak, Jurčec, & Gradišek, 2016)

The relationship between calling orientation and various positive outcomes including well-being is well established. Calling orientation has been found to be positively related to life and job satisfaction, work and life meaning and enthusiasm (e.g., Dobrow & Tosti-Kharas, 2011; Duffy & Dik, 2013; Duffy, England, Douglass, Autin, & Allan, 2017). Several studies confirmed strong links of calling orientation and perception of meaningful work (e.g., Bunderson & Thompson, 2009; Rothmann & Hamukang'andu, 2013; Willemsen & Deacon, 2015). However, according to Work as Calling Theory (for review see Duffy, Dik, Douglass, England, & Velez, 2018; Duffy, Douglass, Autin, England, & Dik, 2016) calling and meaningful work each affect each other over time, meaning that perceiving a calling will lead to experience increased work meaning, which in turn will lead to an increased sense of living a calling and consequently to a positive outcome such as well-being. In calling theory both personal and contextual factors are highly relevant and if incongruence occur, person might promote the work meaningfulness through job crafting (Berg, Dutton, Wrzesniewski, 2013).

The term *job crafting* was introduced by Wrzesniewski and Dutton to describe "... the physical and cognitive changes people make in the task or relational boundaries of their work" (2001, p. 179). These changes include three different types of crafting: formal task crafting (how work is conceptualized and carried out), relational job crafting (how often and with whom they interact at work), and cognitive crafting (how they cognitively ascribe meaning and significance to their work). In other words, they define it as a process of self-initiated redefining and reimagining relational, behavioral, and cognitive work engagements in personally meaningful ways. More recently Bakker and Demerouti (2014) used the job demands-resources (JD-R) (Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, & Schaufeli, 2001) theory to describe job crafting behaviors. This theory assumes that, job characteristics can be classified into two categories: job demands and job resources. Job demands refer to job aspects that require sustained physical or cognitive effort from the employee and are associated with certain costs (e.g. burnout). Job resources are aspects of the job that help employees achieve work related goals, learn new skills, stimulate personal development and deal with job demands (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Demerouti et al.,

2001). Within the framework of JD-R model four job crafting dimensions were defined: increasing job resources (e.g., autonomy and variety), increasing challenging job demands (e.g., new projects), increasing social job resources (e.g., social support and feedback), and decreasing hindering job demands (e.g., fewer cognitive demands) (Tims, Bakker, & Derks, 2012). Employees engage in job crafting behaviours when there is imbalance between job demands and job resources in order to take control and introduce changes as proactive form of behavior (Parker & Collins, 2010; Seibert, Kraimer & Crant, 2001), and take initiative to improve or change the circumstances (Crant, 1995).

Job crafting activities are found to be important also in teachers. Studies of job crafting in early childhood educators found that collaborative crafting (teachers together collectively redesign their jobs) was positively related to both positive individual job outcomes and organizational outcomes (Leana, Appelbaum & Shevchuk, 2009), parallel to research founding that those teachers who crafted their work by increasing their job resources experienced higher levels of work engagement (Bakker & Bal, 2010). Research in South African school teachers (Peral & Geldenhuys, 2016) also found that job crafting in terms of increasing structural resources and challenging job demands was positively associated with work engagement. On the other hand, crafting through increasing social job resources was found to have no effect on work engagement and psychological meaningfulness amongst teachers (Ingusci, Callea, Chirumbolo, & Urbini, 2016). Similarly, decreasing hindering job demands also had no effect on teachers' level of work engagement (Peral & Geldenhuys, 2016). The research of Peral & Geldenhuys (2016) found empirical support for the mediated role of meaningfulness in the relationship between job crafting and work engagement. The other more recent research (Ingusci et al., 2016) found that perceived organizational support fully mediated the relationship between job crafting and job satisfaction. There is evidence that employee job crafting has a positive impact on well-being (Bakker, Tims & Derks, 2012; Schaufeli, Bakker & Van Rhenen, 2009; Tims et al., 2012). However, it is yet not clear which components of job crafting are most relevant for increasing work meaningfulness which is an important factor in living a calling. In addition, there is no study researching the role of job crafting and meaningfulness as mediators in the relationship between calling and well-being. Based on the above-mentioned research, we assume that teachers with calling orientation are more prone to craft their job thus making it more meaningful, which in turn, increase teacher's well-being.

3. OBJECTIVES AND METHODS

3.1. Objectives

The central aim of this study is to examine the relationship between perceiving work as a calling, job crafting, work meaningfulness and well-being in primary school teachers.

First, we aimed to investigate what job crafting dimensions mediate in the relationship between calling orientation and work meaningfulness.

Second, we aimed to test whether job crafting and work meaningfulness mediates between calling orientation and flourishing.

3.2. Method

3.2.1. Participants and procedure

The sample consisted of 349 primary school teachers (95% female) from public schools in northern western region of Croatia. An average length of service was 22 years (ranged from 0-43 years of teaching experience). Considerations about the sample are presented later in the text.

Questionnaires were administered during the primary teachers' professional meetings at the county level and lasted approximately 20 minutes. Participants were informed about the aim of the research, assured that all collected data would remain confidential, and used for research purposes only.

3.2.2. Instruments

Work-Life Questionnaire (Wrzesniewski et al., 1997) is a 3-item questionnaire measuring the attitude towards work. The questionnaire includes three brief scenarios, which describe individuals who approach work as a Job, a Career, and Calling. Each scenario is rated on a 4-point Likert scale to indicate their likeness to how similar they are to the person described (from 1 - *not at all like me*, through 4 - *very much like me*). In this study only the Calling scenario was used. Extract from the scenario (p. 24):

Person's work is one of the most important parts of his life. He is very pleased that he is in this line of work. He tends to take his work home with him and on vacations, too. He is very satisfied with his work and feels good about his work because he loves it, and because he thinks it makes the world a better place.

The job crafting scale (Tims et al., 2012) was used for assessing job crafting scale. The scale measures four dimensions of job crafting using 21 items. The four scales are *increasing structural job resources* (e.g., "I make sure that I use my capacities to the fullest"), *increasing social job resources* (e.g., "I ask others for feedback on my job performance") *increasing challenging job demands* (e.g. "If there are new developments, I am one of the first to learn about them and try them out"), and *decreasing hindering job demands* (e.g., "I try to ensure that my work is emotionally less intense"). Respondents indicate how often they engaged in each of the behaviors on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*very often*).

Work Meaningfulness scale (Bunderson & Thompson, 2009) measures perceived meaning at work with the five-item scale (e.g., "I have a meaningful job"). Individuals respond to each item on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*not at all through*) to 5 (*completely*). Higher overall (average) score indicates greater work meaningfulness.

Flourishing Scale (Diener et al., 2009) is an eight-item measure of positive human functioning. Items assess perceived success in important areas such as competence, engagement with daily activities meaning and purpose in life, positive relationships, and optimism (e.g. "I am competent and capable in the activities that are important to me"). Participants rated items on a 7-point scale, ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). The scale calculated as the mean item score represents eudemonic dimensions of well-being.

All scales were used previous in Croatian samples and shown adequate psychometric characteristics (Miljković, Jurčec, & Rijavec, 2016; Rijavec et al., 2016; Vid, Glavaš, & Rijavec, 2019).

4. RESULTS

4.1. Descriptive statistics and correlations

The descriptive statistics and intercorrelations of all measured variables are presented in Table 1. Croatian teachers mostly perceive their work as a calling. They often can craft their job through increasing structural job resources, regularly through increasing challenging job demands and decreasing hindering job demands and somewhat rarely through increasing social job resources. They perceive their work as highly meaningful and rate their eudemonic well-being as relatively high.

The results of the correlational analysis (Table 1) indicates that there was a significant positive correlation between work as calling and work meaningfulness. Similarly, there was a significant positive correlation between work as calling and flourishing, as well as between work meaningfulness and flourishing. Only two out of four job crafting dimensions - increasing structural job resources and challenging job demands positively correlated with calling orientation and work meaningfulness. Flourishing was positively correlated with three job crafting dimensions - increasing structural job resources, social job resources and challenging job demands.

Table 1.

The descriptive statistics and intercorrelations of calling work orientation, job crafting, work meaningfulness and flourishing.

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.
1. Calling		.19**	.23**	-.09	.07	.40**	.28**
2. Increasing structural job resources			.59**	.27**	.19**	.28**	.46**
3. Increasing challenging job demands				.18**	.33**	.16**	.31**
4. Decreasing hindering job demands					.01	-.08	.05
5. Increasing social job resources						.07	.16**
6. Work meaningfulness							.33**
7. Flourishing							-
Min - max	1.00-4.00	2.80-5.00	1.00-5.00	1.60-5.00	1.00-5.00	3.00-5.00	2.50-7.00
Cronbach's alpha	n.a.	.86	.88	.73	.84	.80	.90
M	3.42	4.28	3.35	3.16	2.83	4.71	5.83
SD	0.75	0.54	0.78	0.64	0.73	0.37	0.77

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

4.2. Mediating role of job crafting dimensions in the relationship between calling orientation and work meaningfulness

Parallel mediation analyses with four mediators using the PROCESS macro for SPSS were performed to test the hypothesized mediation role of job crafting dimensions in the relation between calling orientations and work meaningfulness. A Monte-Carlo (bootstrapping) approximation was obtained with 2000 bootstrap resamples (the 95%

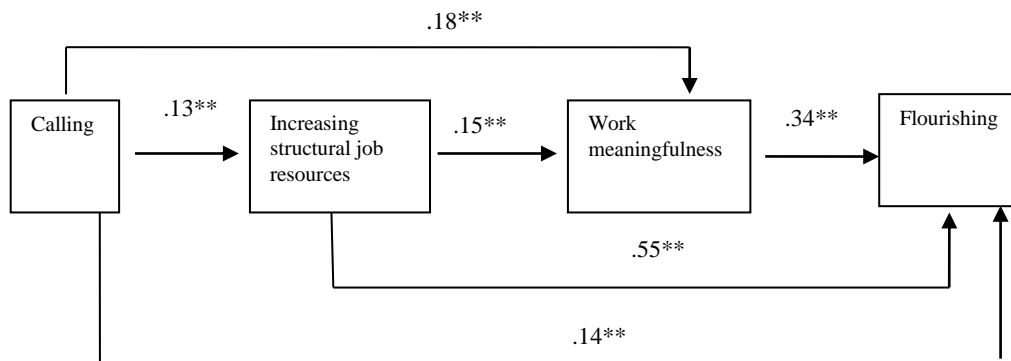
confidence). The models tested job crafting dimensions as mediators between calling and work meaningfulness. Results showed there is no mediation role of increasing challenging job demands, decreasing hindering job demands, and increasing social resources (95% CI). Results confirmed only the mediating role of increasing structural job resources ($CI = .11$ to $.28$) The mediation effect was partial since the direct effect between calling orientation and meaningful work remained significant.

4.3. Mediating role of increasing structural job resources and work meaningfulness in the relationship between calling orientation and flourishing

To assess more comprehensively the mediating role of both job crafting and work meaningfulness in the relationship between calling orientation and flourishing, we aimed to perform the serial mediation model. Since only crafting by increasing structural job resources was found to mediate between calling orientation and work meaningfulness, we assessed the serial mediation of increasing structural job resources and work meaningfulness in the relationship between calling orientation and flourishing. Results confirmed the serial mediation ($CI = .00$ to $.02$) (Figure 1). Teachers' who see their job as a calling tend to increase structural job resources, which brings more meaning into their work. Higher work meaningfulness, in turn, increase teachers' well-being.

Figure 1.

Increasing structural job resources and work meaningfulness as mediators between calling orientation and flourishing.



Note. Numerical values represent standardized path coefficients (β). P-values: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

5. DISCUSSION/CONCLUSION

This study proposed a model linking calling orientation with well-being. We hypothesized that both job crafting and work meaningfulness operate as mediators in the relationship between calling orientation and well-being. More specifically, it was proposed that perceiving work as a calling would lead to higher levels of job crafting, which in turn, would lead to the higher work meaningfulness and consequently higher flourishing.

Present study confirmed significant relationship between calling orientation and meaningful work as was expected by the previous studies (e.g., Bunderson & Thompson, 2009; Duffy, Allan, Autin, & Bott, 2013; Rothmann & Hamukang'andu, 2013; Willemse & Deacon, 2015). The results of parallel mediation analyses revealed that job crafting via increasing structural job resource partially mediated the relationship between calling orientation and work meaningfulness. Furthermore, results showed that increased structural job resources and work meaningfulness foster teachers' well-being. Findings suggest that a sense of calling leads teachers to craft their jobs by increasing structural job resources through creating opportunities for professional development (e.g., skills, talents, competencies) and autonomy which in turn fulfill their work with meaning and purpose. This finding is consistent with studies finding that job crafting (Tims et al. 2012; Slemp & Vella-Brodick, 2014) and meaningful work (Blake, Batz-Barbarich, Sterling, & Tay, 2019; Miljkovic, et al., 2016) predicted well-being.

Recent research has found that key mechanisms in transferring ones' calling into job crafting behavior are career commitment, occupational self-efficacy, and job autonomy (Chang, Rui, & Lee, 2020). Individuals who perceive their work as a calling are more aware of their goals and mission to achieve (Fried, Grant, Levi, Hadani, & Slowik, 2007) and motivated to gain responsibility for their own career development (Hall & Chandler, 2005) thus crafting their work to fit their capacities. This study found that increasing structural job resources, i.e., increasing one own capacity is the component of job crafting which leads to work meaningfulness which in turn transfers to higher wellbeing. On the other hand, increasing challenging job demands and social job resources were associated with higher flourishing, but these relationships were not mediated through work meaningfulness. Thus, these proactive work behaviors, as found in present study, directly and indirectly through making job more meaningful promote teachers flourishing. One possible explanation for increasing job resources being the only mediating variable between calling and work meaningfulness are sources of work meaning in teachers' profession. Several studies found that teachers most frequently find meaning through having a positive impact on their students learning and life in general (Fourie & Deacon, 2015). They achieve that by using their pedagogical knowledge for applying, changing, and inventing new methods and strategies. This is also the part of their work that allows them the greatest autonomy in crafting their work.

It is worth noting that decreasing hindering job demands was proactive behavior which was not related to teachers' wellbeing measured as flourishing. That is, teachers who attempted to craft their work by decreasing their hindering job demands experienced no increase in their levels of flourishing. Further studies may investigate whether this component of proactive behavior is more related to lower level of work stress and burnout. Further, analysis of the descriptive statistics revealed that teachers in this sample used increasing structural job demands most frequently, which provide a possible explanation for aforementioned relationships.

Based on these findings, teachers should be encouraged to cultivate job crafting, especially structural job resources, as it is an important path to meaningfulness in work context and overall psychological well-being.

6. FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

The study was conducted on the sample of primary school teachers from one region and should be replicated with samples of teachers from other parts of Croatia and with samples of teachers in secondary schools. This study had a large female sample (95%) reflecting the actual ratio of female and male primary school teachers in Croatia. Future

studies should include samples in higher grades and secondary schools with higher proportion of male teachers.

Besides corroborating the findings of this study, future studies may further investigate the role of teachers age, work experience or organizational climate in school as possible moderating factors in the relationship between calling, job crafting behaviors and teachers' wellbeing. With regard to the cross-sectional nature of the study longitudinal research study should be carried out to determine the existence of a possible causal relationship between variables in the model. Finally, given that only increasing structural job resources had impact on teachers' well-being, the potential reasons behind this matter should be explored. Qualitative or mixed-method research approach may be useful for investigating this issue.

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