



Using goal facilitation theory to explain the relationships between calling and organization-directed citizenship behavior and job satisfaction☆



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ABSTRACT

Despite an increase in research on calling, few studies have examined how calling influences overt workplace behaviors and job satisfaction. Drawing on goal facilitation theory we examined the psychological mechanisms underlying the effects of calling on organization-directed citizenship behavior (OCBO) and job satisfaction in a sample of 322 Chinese employees. The results showed that calling (employee-reported at time 1) was positively related to OCBO (supervisor-reported at time 2) and job satisfaction (employee-reported at time 2), and organizational instrumentality (employee-reported at time 2) provided an explanatory mechanism for these relations. The theoretical and practical implications of the findings are discussed.

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Over the last decade, there has been increasing recognition that work can be a calling, and there has been an increase in research on calling in the fields of vocational psychology and management. There is a substantial body of evidence demonstrating that having a calling not only benefits college students' career development (Bott & Duffy, 2015; Douglass & Duffy, 2015; Duffy & Dik, 2013; Praskova, Hood, & Creed, 2014) but is also associated with a large number of positive work outcomes at employee level. Generally, individuals with a calling report greater job satisfaction (Duffy, Autin, Allan, & Douglass, 2015; Greene & Robbins, 2015; Peterson, Park, Hall, & Seligman, 2009), organizational attachment (Cardador, Dane, & Pratt, 2011; Duffy, Dik, & Steger, 2011; Pei & Zhao, 2015), work engagement (Dobrow & Tosti-Kharas, 2011; Hirschi, 2012; Horvath, 2015; Xie et al., 2016), occupational self-efficacy (Hirschi, 2012; Park, Sohn, & Ha, 2016; Praskova, Creed, & Hood, 2015), and well-being (Conway, Clinton, Sturges, & Budjanovcanin, 2015; Praskova et al., 2015).

After a decade of research, researchers have accumulated some knowledge about the effects of calling on employees' work-related attitudes. However, few studies to date have examined how calling is related to overt behaviors. In a recent literature review, Duffy and Dik (2013) called for research that examines whether and how calling is related to overt behaviors such as prosocial behaviors in the workplace. In addition, although the positive relation between calling and job satisfaction is well-established (e.g., Duffy, Allan, Bott, & Dik, 2014; Duffy, Bott, Allan, Torrey, & Dik, 2012; Duffy et al., 2015; Greene & Robbins,

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2015; Peterson et al., 2009), the underlying psychological mechanism is not fully understood. Mathieu, DeShon, and Bergh (2008) stated that the task of scientific research is not only to examine the links between phenomena but also to investigate how and when they appear. Another weakness of research to date is that the majority of studies have been inductive, with scholars explaining patterns of relations without a clearly overarching theoretical framework. Theories are needed to explain how calling is related to career or work-related outcomes (Duffy & Dik, 2013). In the extant literature, although an overarching theoretical framework has been adopted to examine how calling relates to career choice attitudes (Kaminsky & Behrend, 2015), organizational identification and turnover intention (Cardador et al., 2011), work engagement and career satisfaction (Xie et al., 2016), life satisfaction (Hagmaier & Abele, 2015), and well-being (Conway et al., 2015), no studies to date have examined how calling is related to overt behaviors and satisfaction with jobs.

In this study we address these issues by extending prior research in several ways. First, we examine the relation between calling and organization-directed citizenship behavior (OCBO). Second, we attempt to uncover the psychological mechanism underlying the relation between calling and job satisfaction. Third, we draw on goal facilitation theory to provide a comprehensive, theoretically informed explanation of how calling is related to OCBO and job satisfaction.

1. Theoretical background

1.1. Conceptualization of calling

The extant literature offers three perspectives on calling: the classical, modern, and neoclassical perspectives (Dobrow & Tosti-Kharas, 2011; Ponton et al., 2014). Various scholars have recently noted that the neoclassical perspective offers the best account of calling (Conway et al., 2015; Duffy et al., 2015; Ponton et al., 2014). Accordingly, we followed the neoclassical perspective and defined calling as “transcendent summons, experienced as originating beyond the self, to approach a particular life-role in a manner oriented toward demonstrating or deriving a sense of purpose or meaningfulness and that holds other-oriented values and goals as primary sources of motivation” (Dik & Duffy, 2009, p. 427). As the present study is situated in China, it is worth noting that the neoclassical approach to calling has been supported in both a qualitative study (Zhang, Dik, Wei, & Zhang, 2015a) and a measurement study (Zhang, Herrmann, Hirschi, Wei, & Zhang, 2015b) with Chinese college students.

1.2. Goal facilitation theory

The goal facilitation theory suggests that people are in constant pursuit of personal meaningful goals, and that many of their day-to-day attitudes and behaviors are shaped by personal goals (Fitzsimons & Shah, 2008). Specifically, goal facilitation theory states that individuals often look to social environments (significant others, jobs, organizations, etc.) that can advance important goals. Hence, social environments are often considered instrumental to goal achievement. When the important and meaningful goals are advanced in social environments, individuals will generate positive attitudes and behaviors relative to their goals. The hypotheses of goal facilitation theory are supported by some empirical studies. For example, experimental studies by Labroo and Kim (2009) showed that individuals with active goals would approach instrumental others more readily. Experimental studies by Fitzsimons and Shah (2008) showed that when individuals made progress toward their goals, they evaluated instrumental environments more positively. Another study by Doest, Maes, Gebhardt, and Koelewijn (2006) found that the personal goal facilitation through work accounted for a substantial proportion of variance in job satisfaction and well-being, even after controlling for job characteristics. An individual with a calling has a clear goal (Dik & Duffy, 2009; Elangovan, Pinder, & McLean, 2010). Applying this theorizing, we posit that individuals with a calling will actively seek to overcome barriers to enter a social environment that would be conducive to fulfilling their calling. Thus, goal facilitation theory can serve as a clearly articulated overarching theoretical framework for explaining how calling is related to work-related attitudes and behaviors.

1.3. Hypothesis development

Based on goal facilitation theory, we hypothesized that: (a) calling positively predicts OCBO and job satisfaction, and (b) organizational instrumentality mediates the relations between calling and OCBO and job satisfaction. The proposed research model is shown in Fig. 1.

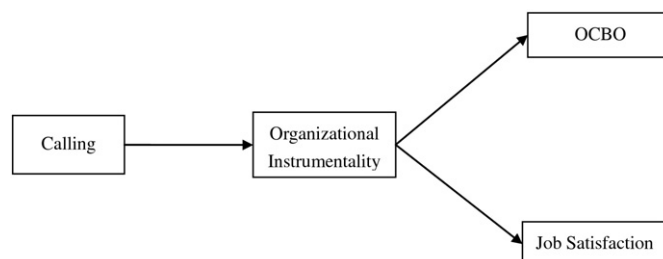


Fig. 1. The proposed model.

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