

**PSYCHOLOGY OF EMOTIONS, MOTIVATIONS AND ACTIONS**

**PSYCHOLOGY OF BURNOUT**  
**NEW RESEARCH**

**BENJAMIN R. DOOLITTLE, M.D., M.DIV.**  
**EDITOR**

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*Chapter 2*

## CALLING AND BURNOUT: INTEGRATING CAREER RESEARCH WITH OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH PSYCHOLOGY

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### ABSTRACT

People are increasingly in search for meaning in their work and private life. They want to increase their self-awareness and reach personal fulfillment. People who are not able to cope with life's challenges often suffer from burnout, anxiety and depression. Consequently, the construct of calling becomes more and more important in the occupational context because of its positive consequences regarding numerous work (e.g. organizational commitment) and non-work-related outcomes (e.g. depression, life satisfaction) for individuals as well as for organizations. Building on first promising findings, the aim of the following chapter is to investigate the association of experiencing a calling in one's job and burnout (here defined as psychological phenomenon of prolonged exhaustion and disengagement at work, cf., Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001).

Our findings suggest that experiencing one's work as a calling is negatively related to burnout. Especially with regard to the sub-dimension of disengagement, experiencing a calling turned out to be a protective factor. Further, the burnout sub-dimension of disengagement mediated the relationship between the experience of a calling and job satisfaction. Implications for further research and health-related preventive strategies are discussed.

**Keywords:** Calling, burnout, disengagement, exhaustion

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## INTRODUCTION

In today's work environments change seems to be the only stable aspect. Globalization of economies and the rapid advances in technology have changed (work) life and pose a series of new questions and challenges to the workforce. Nowadays, employees themselves are responsible for their career development and work-life-balance (e.g. Duarte, 2004). Employability, functionality, adaptability, and flexibility are some of the necessary requirements an employee in the 21st century has to deal with (cf. Arthur & Rousseau, 1996; Sullivan, 1999; Volmer & Spurk, 2011). People who are not able to cope with these new challenges are more likely to suffer from burnout, defined as a psychological phenomenon of prolonged exhaustion and disengagement at work (Maslach et al., 2001). Burnout has become a very important issue both in research and practice due to its negative consequences for individuals such as depression, decreased job performance, drops in self-esteem, substance abuse, and increased health problems (cf. Maslach et al., 2001; Melamed, Shirom, Toker, Berliner, & Shapira, 2006) as well as its negative consequences for organizations, such as high absenteeism rates, increased health related costs, and impaired productivity. Being confronted with so many challenges in today's work environment, one might ask if it is possible to pursue a career without an impaired well-being? Or positively formulated: What factors foster a "healthy" career and work life?

Reviewing the past 20 years of calling literature, we found that the experience of a calling towards a particular kind of work is associated with numerous positive work and non-work-related outcomes for organizations as well as for individuals. Hereby, the term "calling" describes the subjective experience of determination towards one's work (Hagmaier & Abele, 2012), or the kind of work a person understands as his or her purpose in life (Hall & Chandler, 2005). In correspondence with these definitions studies revealed for example, that experiencing one's work as a calling is positively related to life satisfaction (Wrzesniewski, McCauley, Rozin & Schwartz, 1997; Peterson, Park, Hall & Seligman, 2009), job satisfaction (Dik & Duffy, 2009; Hagmaier & Abele, 2012; Peterson et al., 2009; Wrzesniewski et al., 1997), less depression (Treadgold, 1999), less days of absence at work (Wrzesniewski et al., 1997), good coping strategies concerning tensions and conflicts (Oates, Hall, & Anderson, 2005), positive affect (Peterson et al., 2009) as well as less turnover intentions (Duffy, Dik, & Steger, 2011). Building on these results, the aim of the present chapter is to extend recent findings by investigating the relationship between the experience of calling and health-related symptoms and attitudes (i.e., burnout and job satisfaction).

## CALLED TO WORK?

Most adults spend at least one-third of their time a day at work. Hereby, professionals differ considerably in the way they think and feel about their work life. Researchers found that there are three distinct work orientations people may have (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton, 1985; Wrzesniewski et al., 1997). First, people, experiencing work as a job are interested in the material benefits of their work in order to pay their livings and enjoy leisure time. For such people, work is necessary to earn one's living. In comparison, people who have a career orientation put a lot of effort in their work because of their interest in

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career advancement, monetary gain, social status and power. Third, for people who experience a calling towards a particular kind of work neither material benefits nor career advancement are central, but rather the fulfillment they experience while they are performing their work. Such persons love their work and do not only focus on themselves, but through their work they are linked to a “larger community, a whole in which the calling of each is a contribution to the good of all” (Bellah et al., 1985, p. 66). In recent years researchers have become more and more interested in the construct of calling and its positive consequences for individuals as well as for organizations. Studies revealed for example, that experiencing one’s work as a calling is positively related to subjective well-being (e.g. life and job satisfaction, positive affect; cf. Peterson et al., 2009; Wrzesniewski et al., 1997), health (e.g. less depression, less days of absence at work; cf. Treadgold, 1999; Wrzesniewski et al., 1997), and work-related variables (e.g. less turnover intentions, more organizational commitment; Duffy, Dik, & Steger, 2010).

Due to such positive consequences scientists agree that the construct of calling is highly relevant in contemporary society and salient for a substantial proportion of the population (Duffy & Selacek, 2007; Peterson et al., 2009). However, defining elements of a modern understanding of the construct of calling was a difficult task to undertake: The roots of the construct of calling can be found in the religious context in which it describes the process by which God calls a person to do a work that fits his or her talents and life circumstances (Calvin, 1574; Luther, 1883). Early secular conceptualizations (Novak, 1996) see “calling” as the subjective experience of determination towards one’s work, or the kind of “work a person understands as his or her purpose in life” (Hall & Chandler, 2005, p. 160). Other authors stress the social component of calling, i.e., the work called people fulfill is considered to be of social value and does not aim at material benefits or an upward career (Wrzesniewski et al., 1997). In the last few years researchers have begun to integrate these different aspects of the construct of calling and came up with more multifaceted conceptualizations. Dobrow (2004) for instance distinguishes between seven components of calling: (1) compassion, which refers to deep satisfaction and joy from engaging in one’s work, (2) identity, which describes the degree to which people are able to identify with their work, (3) urgency to fulfill one’s work, which refers to a sense of destiny and the need to fulfill a particular work, (4) longevity, which means that calling is a long-term matter, (5) engulfing one’s consciousness, which refers to the fact that for people, who experience a calling their work domain is always present in their consciousness, (6) experiencing meaning, which means that people with a calling towards a particular kind of work often experience their actions as full of meaning and purpose, and (7) domain specific self-esteem, which describes people’s perception of their own abilities regarding the work domain.

More recently, other authors have suggested a distinction between the following facets of calling: (1) the perception of a transcendent guiding force, which means that a person experiences a transcendent summons or inner voice that guides him/her on her career path, (2) the identification with one’s work and Person-Environment (P-E-Fit), which means that a fit between the interests and abilities of the person and the requirements of the job are given and thus the person is able to identify with his work, (3) the experience of sense and meaning, which describes that people with a calling often experience their work as highly purpose- or meaningful, and (4) value-driven prosocial behavior, which refers to the fact that people with a calling often hold other-oriented values and act prosocially (cf. Dik, Eldridge, Steger, & Duffy, 2012; Elangovan, Pinder, & McLean, 2010; Hagmaier & Abele, 2012; Hunter, Dik, &

Banning, 2010). Hereby, it is important to note that the experience of a calling is not limited to some specific occupations. Rather, within any career domain it is possible to find people who experience their work as their calling and others who do not (cf. Hall & Chandler, 2005; Wrzesniewski et al., 1997). However, empirical results reveal that higher education facilitates the experience of work as a calling (Davidson & Caddell, 1994; Peterson et al., 2009; Wrzesniewski et al., 1997). Further, Davidson and Caddell (1994) found that people with many social interactions at work report more often about experiencing a calling. These occupations include teachers (Serow, 1994), physicians, lawyers, and CEOs (Peterson et al., 2009). Correspondingly, Hagmaier and Abele (2012) found that especially people, who work in the health and education sector experience their work as their calling. As in these two sectors the number of people suffering from burnout is also very high (Shimizu et al., 2003; Maslach et al., 2001) the question, if there is a connection between experiencing one's work as a calling and burnout raised.

## **BURNOUT: CONCEPTUALIZATION AND MEASUREMENT ISSUES**

Maslach and Jackson (1986) first described burnout as occupational stress that often occurs in human service professionals due to demanding and emotionally charged relationships between caregivers and recipients. They conducted studies using samples of employees in the health sector and found that they often experience fatigue and a loss of idealism. In order to measure burnout, Maslach and Jackson (1986) developed the Maslach Burnout Inventory Human Services Survey (MBI-HSS; Maslach & Jackson, 1981) with the three subscales emotional exhaustion, reduced personal accomplishment, and depersonalization. Exhaustion refers to negative affect, a lack of energy, and the feeling that one's emotional resources have been depleted by one's contact with other people (Maslach et al., 2001). Reduced personal accomplishment describes a decline in one's feelings of competence and perceived professional efficacy. Here, people often believe that they are not able to reach their work-related goals or show the performance, which they perceive as adequate. Depersonalization is characterized by callous or uncaring responses towards others and distancing oneself from the others in order to cope with the perceived work stress.

Subsequently, researchers recognized that burnout is not limited to human service jobs (Fusilier & Manning, 2005) and developed burnout measures that are not context-based, for example the Maslach Burnout Inventory General Survey (MBI-GS, Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996) and the Oldenburg Burnout Inventory (OLBI; Demerouti, Bakker, Vardakou, & Kantas, 2003). Due to the fact that all items in the MBI-GS were framed in the same direction, Demerouti and colleagues (2003) developed the OLBI, which overcomes this psychometric shortcoming. Thus, the Oldenburg Burnout Inventory (OLBI) – includes both positively and negatively framed items - and assesses the two core dimensions of burnout, i.e., exhaustion and disengagement. Hereby, depersonalization, which was a third dimension of burnout in the MBI, is seen as one form of disengagement, and also the other two burnout dimensions are conceptualized slightly differently. Exhaustion is defined as a consequence of intense physical, affective and cognitive strain, i.e. as a long-term consequence of prolonged exposure to high job demands (Demerouti & Bakker, 2007). Disengagement describes the relationship between employees and their job, especially with regard to the willingness to

perform this job and identification with one's work. More specifically, it measures if a person distances him- or herself from work in general, the work content (e.g. boring, uninteresting, not challenging), and the work object (Demerouti & Bakker, 2007).

In contrast to calling, burnout has been identified as an inhibitor of many well-being and work-related outcomes. Studies revealed for example that burnout is negatively related to organizational commitment (cf. Maslach & Schaufeli, 1993; Lee & Ashforth, 1996) and positively to turnover intentions (Ducharme, Knudsen, & Roman, 2008). Further, a negative relationship between burnout and job satisfaction - defined here as feelings a person has about his/her job experiences and expectations - was found (cf. Koustelios & Tsigilis, 2005; Maslach & Schaufeli, 1993). In a longitudinal study, Wolpin, Burke, and Greenglass (1991) even showed that burnout can be a cause of reduced job satisfaction.

## **CALLED AND BURNED OUT?**

Based on the fact that disengagement is an essential component of burnout, yet people with a calling are extremely engaged in their job, we believe that there might be a negative relationship between calling and burnout. Recent studies revealed for example that people, who experience their work as their calling, were able to adaptively deal with tensions and role-conflicts (Oates et al., 2005) and suffer less stress and depression (Treadgold, 1999). Treadgold (1999) also found that people with a calling towards a particular kind of work are more likely to use problem-focused coping styles rather than emotion-focused (avoidance) coping styles. As problem-focused coping styles are positively related to well-being and health related variables (cf. Leiter, 1991; Sears, Urizar, & Evans, 2000), we believe that experiencing one's work as a calling might also be a protective factor against burnout.

A theory that might support this assumption is Harrison's (1978) Person-Environment (P-E) Fit theory (overview Edwards, 1998). In short, this theory assumes that an incongruence between a person's abilities and the requirements of the environment (here: the job or occupational context) may cause physical, psychological and biological strains (cf. Edwards, 1996). As identification with one's work and P-E-Fit are essential aspects of experiencing one's work as a calling, we believe that the realization of one's calling may lead to less strain and in turn to less burnout.

Taken together, the first aim of the present chapter is to investigate if there exists a negative relationship between the experience of a calling and burnout.

## **PRESENT RESEARCH**

Reviewing the existing literature and empirical studies on calling and burnout, findings point to the fact that experiencing a calling is associated with rather positive consequences, whereas burnout was found to be rather negatively correlated with work and non-work related outcome variables. However, there exists no quantitative study yet, which examines the relationship between calling and burnout. Based on recent studies and Harrison's (1978) Person-Environment (P-E) Fit theory we believe that people who are able to realize their calling in the world of employment will not suffer from burnout due to the fact that they are

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able to fulfill their own career aspirations at work (Radziewicz, 2001). Thus, we assume that there exists a negative relationship between the realization of one's calling and burnout (Hypothesis 1).

Moreover, empirical findings revealed that both calling and burnout are related to job satisfaction. Given the fact that we find a negative relationship between calling and burnout, the second aim of this study is to investigate if the positive relationship between calling and job satisfaction is mediated by the burnout facets disengagement and exhaustion (Hypothesis 2).

## METHOD

### Overview

In order to test our assumptions we conducted an online survey in 2011 and asked a sample of professionals from various occupations to answer measures of calling, burnout and job satisfaction. We analyzed the influence of calling on burnout by means of correlation and hierarchical regression analyses. Further, we developed a multiple mediation model in order to test the indirect effect of calling on job satisfaction mediated by the burnout dimensions exhaustion and disengagement.

### Participants and Procedure

The sample consisted of 107 employees living in the U.S. (71 female, 36 male; mean age  $M = 36.6$ ,  $SD = 13.52$ ; 55% holding a university degree; most of the participants were White/European Americans ( $N = 98$ ; 91.6%), five were Black/African Americans (4.7%), two were Hispanic Americans (1.9%), one participant was a Native American (0.9%), and one an Asian American (0.9%). They worked in a wide range of occupations (e.g. teachers, managers, mechanics, pastors) and worked on average 41.79 hours per week ( $SD = 12.16$ ). We invited 190 participants via e-mail to take part in our online survey (response rate: 56.3%).

### Measures

*Calling.* We assessed calling using the English version of the Multidimensional Calling measure from Hagmaier and Abele (2012). This measure consists of three subscales: (a) transcendent guiding force (TGF; sample item: "I follow an inner call that guides me on my career path."), (b) identification and P-E-Fit (IP; sample item: "Doing my job I can realize my full potential."), and (c) sense and meaning and value-driven behavior (SMVB; sample item: "My job helps to make the world a better place."). The response scale ranged from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 6 = *strongly agree*. The reliabilities were good, (Cronbach's  $\alpha$ : MCM-TGF  $\alpha = .83$ , MCM-SMVB  $\alpha = .85$ , MCM-IP  $\alpha = .88$ ).

*Burnout.* Burnout was measured with the English version of the Oldenburg Burnout Inventory (Demerouti et al., 2003). It consists of the two subscales called disengagement and exhaustion. A sample item of the disengagement scale is: “Lately, I tend to think less at work and do my job almost mechanically.” A sample item of the exhaustion scale is: “After my work, I usually feel worn out and weary.” The response scale ranged from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 6 = *strongly agree*. The internal consistencies of the scales were good (disengagement:  $\alpha = .81$ , and exhaustion:  $\alpha = .80$ ).

*Job Satisfaction.* Job satisfaction was assessed using a Kunin-scale from Baillo and Semmer (1994). The scale consist of one item, namely: “Regarding the last 6 months how satisfied were you overall with your work?” Participants indicated their response on a 7-point rating scale (1 = *very dissatisfied* to 7 = *very satisfied*). Meta-analytic work demonstrated that overall job satisfaction correlates highly with multiple-item measures (corrected  $R = .67$ ), thus providing an efficient alternative to more comprehensive facet measures of job satisfaction (Wanous, Reichers, & Hudy, 1997). Moreover, another meta-analysis showed that the Kunin scale is very well suited to capture both employees’ affective and cognitive reactions to work (Kaplan, Warren, Barsky, & Thoresen, 2009).

*Socio-demographic data.* To reduce the influence of confounding variables, we entered participants’ gender (1 = *male*, 2 = *female*), education (1 = *participants without university degree*, 2 = *university graduate* [Bachelor’s or Master’s degree]), age, ethnicity and weekly work load (open ended questions) as control variables.

## RESULTS

### Descriptive Analyses

Table 1 shows the means, standard deviations, and zero-order correlations among all measured variables. As can be seen, the calling facet SMVB was endorsed most and the TGF calling facet was endorsed least, all  $t_s > 3.90$ ,  $p_s < .001$ ,  $d_s > 0.76$ . Between the endorsement in the burnout dimensions exhaustion and disengagement no differences occurred,  $t(106) = 0.45$ ,  $p = .65$ .

### Test of Hypotheses

Concerning our first hypothesis, which assumes a negative correlation between the experience of a calling and burnout, we found significant negative correlations between all measured calling facets and the burnout dimension disengagement (see Table 1). Further, all calling facets were negatively related to the burnout dimension exhaustion. Yet, the correlation between the calling facet SMVB and exhaustion failed significance (see Table 1).

Further, we compared the correlation coefficients of the relationships between the calling facets and disengagement with the coefficients of the relationships between the calling facets and exhaustion and found that for all three tested calling facets the correlation coefficients were higher concerning disengagement than regarding exhaustion,  $z_s > 1.87$ ,  $p_s < .06$ . Due to the fact that the correlation between the calling facet MCM-IP and disengagement was very

high,  $r(107) = -.50, p < .001$ , we ran a confirmatory factor analysis to make sure that these constructs are distinct from each other. Results revealed that a two-factor solution with the MCM-IP and disengagement items loading on two different factors fit the data much better than a one-factor solution, assuming that the MCM-IP items and disengagement items load on the same factor,  $\Delta\chi^2 = 245.366, df = 1$ . Thus, we conclude that the MCM-IP and disengagement items measure distinct constructs.

In order to test the influence of the calling facets on burnout beyond control variables we also conducted hierarchical regression analyses. We first entered the control variables (gender, education, age, and workload) and in a second step we entered the three calling subscales.

In the first hierarchical regression model disengagement served as the dependent variable (see Table 2). Results revealed that the calling facets explained 22% of variance in disengagement beyond our control variables (gender, education, age, and workload). Hereby, the calling facets IP and TGF turned out to be significant predictors of disengagement. Regarding the burnout dimension exhaustion we performed the same analyses. Yet, the calling facets explained only 6% of variance beyond our control variables (gender, education, age, and workload) and none of the calling facets turned out to be a significant predictor (see Table 2).

Taken together, all calling facets were negatively correlated to burnout (cf. Table 1). Further, results from regression analyses revealed that the calling facet IP was the best predictor concerning disengagement after entering the control variables, followed by the calling facet TGF. However, the calling facet SMVB turned out to be no significant predictor concerning the burnout dimension disengagement. Regarding the burnout aspect exhaustion, none of the calling facets turned out to have significant beta values.

In order to test our second hypothesis, in which we assumed that burnout mediates the relationship between calling and job satisfaction, we first followed the steps suggested by Baron and Kenny (1986) to make sure that all conditions for performing mediation analyses are met. We first tested whether calling as a whole (sum score) is directly related to job satisfaction. Results revealed a significant positive relationship between the experience of a calling and job satisfaction,  $r(107) = .44, p < .001$ . Second, we tested whether calling is related to our supposed mediators. We found that calling was negatively related to exhaustion and disengagement,  $r(107) = -.23, p < .05$  and  $r(107) = -.53, p < .001$ . Finally, we tested if our mediators were also related to our dependent variable. Results revealed significant negative correlations between our mediators exhaustion and disengagement and job satisfaction,  $r(107) = -.45$  and  $r(107) = -.60, ps < .001$ .

Thus, these correlational results allow the test of mediation analyses. Our mediation hypotheses were tested using the multiple mediation SPSS macro developed by Preacher and Hayes (2008). We used this method because it computes coefficients for direct and indirect paths at the same time and allows testing for several mediators simultaneously.

Figure 1 shows that calling had a significant direct path to job satisfaction ( $\beta = .61, p < .001$ ). Moreover, calling had significant direct paths to our two mediator variables exhaustion ( $\beta = -.18, p < .05$ ), and disengagement ( $\beta = -.36, p < .001$ ). Moreover, for exhaustion ( $\beta = -.40, p < .001$ ) and disengagement ( $\beta = -.83, p < .001$ ), we found significant direct paths to job satisfaction. In support of our mediation hypothesis, we also found a significant indirect path from calling to job satisfaction mediated by disengagement ( $\beta = -.30, p < .001$ ).

**Table 1. Descriptive statistics and correlation matrix**

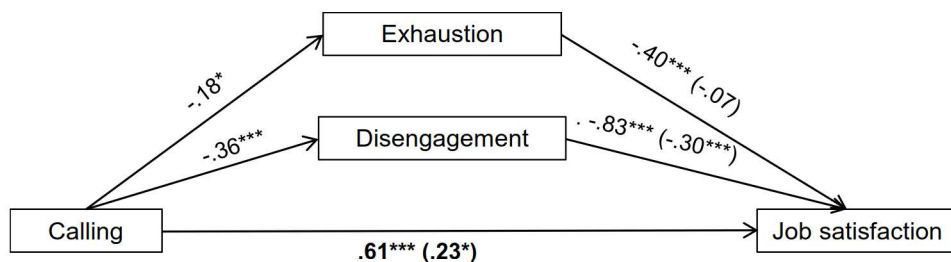
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5
1. TGF	3.34	1.36					
2. IP	3.96	1.34	.53***				
3. SMVB	4.40	1.32	.46***	.63***			
4. Disengagement	3.27	0.76	-.44***	-.50***	-.39***		
5. Exhaustion	3.30	0.88	-.21*	-.24**	-.12	.43***	
6. Job Satisfaction	5.17	1.53	.31***	.44***	.36***	-.60***	-.45***

Note. *N* = 107. \*\*\*  $p < .001$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*  $p < .05$ ; TGF: calling subscale transcendent guiding force, IP: calling subscale identification and P-E-Fit, SMVB: calling subscale: sense and meaning and value-driven behavior.

**Table 2. Hierarchical regression analyses testing the influence of the calling facets on burnout**

	Variable	Disengagement		Exhaustion	
		$\Delta R^2$	$\beta$	$\Delta R^2$	$\beta$
Step 1	Control variables	.17**		.08	
	Gender <sup>A</sup>		-.08		.07
	Education <sup>B</sup>		-.12		.02
	Age		-.25**		-.26**
	Work Load		.02		.09
Step 2	Calling Facets	.22***		.06	
	TGF		-.23**		-.12
	SMVB		.03		.14
	IP		-.33***		-.22 <sup>+</sup>
Total R <sup>2</sup>		.39***		.14	

Note. *N* = 107; All beta values are taken from the second step; \*\*\*  $p < .001$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; +  $p = .08$ ; <sup>A</sup>: 1 = male, 2 = female; <sup>B</sup>: 1 participants without university degree, 2 = participants with university degree; TGF: calling subscale transcendent guiding force, SMVB: calling subscale: sense and meaning and value-driven behavior, IP: calling subscale identification and P-E-Fit.



Note. In parentheses are the indirect effects for the mediator variables and the direct effect of calling on job satisfaction after accounting for mediator variables; \*\*\*  $p < .001$ , \*  $p < .05$ .

Figure 1. Multiple mediation model examining the direct and indirect effects of calling on job satisfaction mediated by the burnout aspects exhaustion and disengagement.



However, the indirect path from calling to job satisfaction mediated by exhaustion failed to reach the conventional level of significance, but was marginally significant ( $\beta = -.07$ ,  $p = .06$ ).

After accounting for the significant mediator disengagement, the size of the direct path from calling to job satisfaction was diminished, but remained significant indicating a partial mediation ( $\beta = .23$ ,  $p < .05$ , see value in parentheses in Figure 1). The total model was highly significant,  $F(3,103) = 25.35$ ,  $p < .001$ , and accounted for 48% of variance in job satisfaction beyond the control variables (sex, age, education, work load). As recommended by Preacher and Hayes (2008) and Shrout and Bolger (2002) the significance of indirect effects in models with multiple mediators as well as a small sample size should also be tested using bootstrapping in order to get more precise estimates. Using Preacher's and Hayes's (2008) multiple mediation macro, we created 5,000 bootstrap samples and computed the mean estimated indirect effects, the standard errors as well as the 95% confidence intervals for each mediational path.

The indirect effect remains significant, if zero lies outside the computed confidence intervals. Results show that the indirect path between calling and job satisfaction mediated by the burnout dimension disengagement ( $SE = .10$ ,  $CI = .13-.55$ ) remains significant. However, the indirect path between calling and job satisfaction mediated by the burnout dimension exhaustion failed significance ( $SE = .04$ ,  $CI = -.01-.18$ ).

## DISCUSSION

The present study extends prior research on calling by investigating the relationship between calling and burnout. In line with our expectations, our results show that all calling facets (i.e., TGF, IP, and SMVB) were negatively correlated with the two burnout dimensions. Results of hierarchical regression analyses paint a more differentiated picture by showing that the facets IP and TGF significantly predicted the burnout dimension disengagement whereas the calling facet SMVB had no significant influence on this burnout dimension. Concerning the burnout dimension exhaustion, none of the calling facets turned out to be a significant predictor. Taken together, the findings of the present study suggest that people who experience their work as a calling suffer less burnout. Being able to identify with their job, undergoing a supporting transcendent force and deriving sense and meaning from one's actions seems to protect against disengagement. Yet, it does not have an influence concerning the burnout dimension exhaustion. It might be possible that people with a calling are so engaged in the realization of their calling that in the long run they might suffer from exhaustion.

Especially, if they are experiencing a calling, but are not able to realize it in the world of employment, dissatisfaction and exhaustion may occur (cf. Berg, Grant, & Johnson, 2010). This argumentation corresponds with Bunderson and Thompson (2009) who showed that people, who experience a calling are also more likely to view their work as moral obligation and are willing to sacrifice (e.g. personal time, extra pay, and comfort of their work). Thus, it is important to keep in mind that too much of a good thing – like experiencing one's work as a calling – may also have negative consequences, especially if the realization of one's calling is impossible or troublesome.

Therefore, also for people with a calling it seems very important to carefully use their resources in order to stay healthy and productive at work.

The second aim of our study was to make a contribution to the calling research by investigating a possible mechanism underlying the relationship between calling and job satisfaction. Results revealed that the relationship between calling and job satisfaction was partially mediated by the burnout dimension disengagement. This means that people with a calling are very engaged in their work (cf. Hirschi, 2012), and that engagement in meaningful work (or here less disengagement) leads to job satisfaction.

Taken together, our results point to the fact that due to their high engagement people with a calling seem to be a) less likely to suffer from burnout and b) more satisfied with their job in general.

## Limitations and Further Research

Like with any study, there are some limitations to consider. First, the cross-sectional design limits conclusions regarding causality. Future research should therefore replicate findings with more than one measurement point. Second, in order to compare the role of calling for various jobs, future research should use more homogenous samples, and compare findings between different occupations. It might be for instance, that calling is more advantageous for professions with many social interactions compared to administrative jobs.

Moreover, future research should broaden the scope of outcome variable e.g. by investigating the influence of calling on ailments or other health-related variables. Further, it might be interesting to study the mechanisms underlying the relationship between the experience of a calling and burnout. Potential mediators might be for instance occupational self-efficiency and self-discrepancy. Moreover, it would be interesting to test whether people, who are not able to fulfill their calling in the world of employment, are more likely to suffer from burnout than those, who can realize it.

Regarding well-being measures, also other constructs of positive flourishing such as thriving (Spreitzer, Sutcliffe, Dutton, Sonenshein, & Grant, 2005), work engagement (Bakker & Leiter, 2010), and flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997) should receive attention in future research in order to study their impact on burnout and other health-related variables.

## CONCLUSION

The present study showed that the experience of a calling is negatively related to burnout. Thus, the experience of a calling might function as a kind of “health-protective strategy”, which increases a person’s engagement at work and job satisfaction. However, one should keep in mind, that there might also be the danger of too much of a good thing, incorporating the risk of depleting rather than replenishing resources. We hope that our study stimulates further research on this promising area of research.

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