

Calling protects from workaholism.

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Contribution

Having a calling is a pervasive and profound passion experienced as a transcendent driving force to engage in a work that defines individuals' identity and life purpose, for which individuals are willing to sacrifice time and energy and that is perceived to benefit others.

It has been suggested that calling may increase the likelihood of developing workaholism, a tendency to work excessively and being obsessed with work. This idea is reasonable, but it is also in stark contrast with the positive valence of having a calling.

Understanding the implications of perceiving a calling can provide useful insights for employees and employers who cares about well-being at work and has relevant theoretical implications. In this study, we argue that the positive effect of calling on workaholism that has been observed in previous studies is due to obsessive passion rather than calling, which actually protects obsessively passionate individuals from developing workaholism.

Theory

The Work as Calling Theory (Duffy, Dik, Douglass, England, & Velez, 2018) states that a calling may have negative consequences, such as workaholism, for some individuals in some conditions.

Although the presence of a career calling might lead individuals to sacrifice personal time and work for long hours, excessive time spent working does not necessary imply an addiction to

work. Furthermore, individuals who are high in calling are more likely to benefit from their work rather than experiencing negative consequences such as those that occur in workaholics.

We hypothesized that the relation between calling and workaholism is due to obsessive passion for work, an uncontrolled compulsion that leads people to engage in the work they love despite negative consequences (H1). In addition, we hypothesize that calling moderates the relation between obsessive passion and workaholism, such that individuals with high levels of calling will show less workaholism (H2).

Method

A cross-sectional study among Italian workers was conducted (N = 235). Hypotheses were tested with a three-step OLS hierarchical regression analysis with workaholism as the dependent variable. Calling, obsessive passion and the product term of obsessive passion and calling were included hierarchically in the first, second and third step of the regression analysis, respectively.

Results

We found that calling is not related with workaholism when controlling for obsessive passion and that calling moderates the effect of obsessive passion on workaholism. The relation between obsessive passion and workaholism is positive and stronger for lower levels of calling, and it is close to zero for higher levels of calling.

According to our results, calling has a beneficial effect and serves as a protective factor for individuals who are more likely to develop an addiction to work because of their obsessive passion. Our results shed a new light on the relation between calling and workaholism, and suggest that more empirical evidence are needed on the hypothesized dark side of calling.