

WORK ENGAGEMENT: A CALLING OR CAREER?



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ABSTRACT

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The primary objective of this research was to examine the functional relationship of employee engagement of the present occupational choice as a career or calling. In accordance, the career or calling attributes and UWES work engagement were applied to a sample respondents of N=200 divided into two from different occupational groups and industry sectors. Results revealed a mean of 3.85 for calling and 2.68 for career while UWES with a mean of 5.81 and 5.77. The results proved that respondents with a calling or career are consistently insignificantly related to their level of work engagement with -0.10462 and -0.58674 (LOW CORRELATION). It is evident that while career and calling attributes may be present among respondents, it was not proven to have strong relationship to employee work engagement in their present occupations.

Contribution/ Originality: The study contributes to employee engagement in a different context which is conventional and more personal, calling and career. Responses were taken from subjects presently connected with their jobs coming from different industry types. Descriptive correlation was used and revealed calling and career were not significantly correlated to work engagement.

1. INTRODUCTION

Management recognizes that human capital is the most important resource that makes a successful business. There is a big question poses on this important resource and that is how can employees be engaged in an environment with multi diverse workforce coming from different cultures and with different personalities? An issue which researchers have been trying to resolve in many studies. Engagement was emanated from psychological concepts such as contagion or cross over and self determination theory. In a contagion, according to Salanova “ people who work in the same group may share similar beliefs and affective experiences. They also manifest same motivational and behavioural patterns.” (Salanova, 2005). Also, a positive or negative transference of experiences will take place from one person to another (Bakker, 2011). Another concept is the SDT or the self-determination theory, Meyer and Gagne (2008) which states that “ employees who are engaged experience greater physical and psychological well being”. Employees who have worked hard and committed to their jobs are usually promoted to higher positions and are getting regular wage increases. The engagement shows invested

time, effort, loyalty and dedication to work which results to a persistent, positive affective-motivational state of fulfilment (Schaufeli and Bakker, 2004). In a management perspective, low employee turn over rate, may result in increase productivity and financial gains. In effect, engagement offers both economic and social benefits to employees and employers.

But what is work engagement? Numerous definitions have been formulated by experts in understanding the term. According to Bakker, it is a “persistent, positive, affective-motivational state characterized by energy, dedication and absorption” (Schaufeli and Bakker, 2004). While Kahn referred engagement as the “workers’ positive attitude at their workplace”. A “self-in-role” where workers are attentive, connected, integrated and focused in their work environment (Kahn, 1990). Another interesting research which serves as the starting point in conducting this paper is the study conducted by Dik et al which says that “an individual who is dissatisfied with his or her career would want to experience a calling or vocation rather than getting high wages. Dik’s mentioned calling which consists of three dimensions are “ (a). A transcendent summons, experienced as originating beyond the self. (b) an approach a particular life role in a manner oriented toward demonstrating or deriving a sense of purpose or meaningfulness (c) and holds other oriented values and goals as primary sources of motivation “ (Dik, 2009). The paper described the dimensions which researchers of this study found them very useful in understanding calling and vocation relevant to engagement. With many literature and studies relating to employee engagement, researchers of this study are into investigating the employee engagement using other concept that is more personal and conventional which is calling and career. The authors were inspired by John Clark in his book “The Money is the Gravy” which mentioned about calling and career and its significant roles in the success or failure of an individual and the organization. The concept of calling and career have been used to identify engagement in an occupational context. A calling is described by John Clark as having the following attributes of bliss, internally driven, engaged, holistic while career is angst, externally driven, enervated, compartmentalized and busy (John, 2003). Whether a calling or career, employees manifest engagement which vary across occupations from different industries (Kular, 2008). It is for this purpose that researchers wish to find other drivers of engagement that will contribute to the understanding of engagement in different context. The hypothesis is to prove that there is a significant relationship of calling and career to employee work engagement.

2. METHOD

2.1. Participants

Participants were a total of n= 200 across Bulacan, Philippines. On examining the data drawn from purposive sampling, all of the participants were working and came from different occupational groups and industry sectors. Others are overseas worker who also participated in the survey. There were 94 male or 47% and 106 or 53% were female for a total of 100%. Employees length of stay in a company were identified ranging from, 1 to 5 years, 6-10, 11-to 15 and 16 yrs above.

Table-1. Profile of Respondents

Industry Type	Occupation	(N=Years)					TOTAL
		1-5 yrs	6-10yrs	11-15 yrs	16 yrs above	21 yrs above	
Manufacturing	Producn Supv	9	12	13	7	5	46
Banking/Finance	Cashiers/	4	8	12	13	3	40
Sales/Marketing	Sales Specialist	5	10	9	8	6	38
Academe	Teachers/Admin	6	8	7	5	5	31
Tourism/Hospitality	Acct Executives	2	14	6	1	2	25
Health/Medical	Doctors/Chief Nurse	1	2	3	1	3	11
Others		1	2	0	1	4	9
TOTAL		28	56	51	36	28	200

Survey conducted with respondents coming from different industries

2.2. Procedure

The tools used were an existing instrument adapted and modified to further suit the objectives of this study. The questionnaire is made up of 3 parts. The first part was to gather the profile of the respondents in terms of age, sex, civil status, occupations and length of service. The second part was the calling and career attributes by John Clark using a 5point likert scale, Third is the UWES instrument or the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale that is widely used in measuring engagement. The test was administered to $n=200$. Researchers used descriptive correlation to identify the significant relationship between calling and career and work engagement in different occupations. Also researchers conducted interviews to validate the responses.

LEGEND FOR INTERPRETATIONS

SCALE

1.00-1.50	Never or Almost Never
1.51-2.50	Occasionally
2.51-3.50	Applies to me about as often as not
3.51-4.50	Usually
4.51-5.00	Always or Almost Always

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results revealed the responses of the first group consists of 80 respondents while 120 respondents were the second group who chose the career. The *Calling* attributes are assigned with letter A and a corresponding number. A1 (Bliss) A2 (Internally Driven) A3 (Holistic) A4 (Integrated) A5 (Growing) A6 (Renewing) A7 (Engaged) A8 (Energized) A9 (Vital) A10 (Life-Affirming) A11 (Difficult).

John Clark identified the following attributes with its description. The following were rated by the respondents using the 5pt likert scale. *Bliss* which means having complete happiness. *Internally Driven* as having a response to a call from within. *Holistic* which engages your person, body and soul. *Integrated* which means your work is an expression of your essential self. *Growing* as calling which takes you inevitably on a journey of self discovery. *Renewing* means you are a different person tomorrow from today. *Engaged* which means heavy workload that revitalizes you. *Energized* as living a life that is in tune with your nature. *Vital* as a way out of your reach if you are imprisoned in a career. *Life affirming* is having the self that you truly are and *Difficult* which means difficult to find and follow your calling (John, 2003). The mean scores received by each attribute were shown on table 2.

Table-2. Mean Scores of Calling

A1	3.74	Usually
A2	4.33	Usually
A3	4.35	Usually
A4	4.33	Usually
A5	4.21	Usually
A6	3.95	Usually
A7	4.21	Usually
A8	2.48	Applies to me as often as not
A9	3.85	Usually
A10	2.20	Applies to me as often as not
A11	2.88	Applies to me as often as not
Over all mean	3.68	Usually

Source: Computed mean results from Group1 (80 respondents)

Most of the answers fall under *usually* and only attributes A8, A10, A11 or Energized, Life affirming and Difficult received low mean scores. But, overall mean for calling is 3.68 with verbal interpretation of *usually*. It

means that respondents recognized the attributes under calling, they experienced bliss in their work, internally driven, growing, though with a little difficulty in finding the real calling in their work.

While the *Career* and its attributes were given an assigned letter and corresponding number such as B1, B2 up to B11. On the attributes of Career which were chosen by 120 respondents, consists of the following attributes such as *Angst (B1)* as having a strong feeling of being worried or nervous. *Externally driven (B2)* is a desire for external satisfaction such as money approval and status. *Fragmented (B3)* is a feeling of incompleteness. *Compartmentalized (B4)* means activities to be accomplished were mere fragments of your being. *Shrivelling (B5)* is being helpless or becoming inefficient. *Recycling (B6)* is an experience in the job is five times over. Promotions and job changes provide some new experiences. *Busy (B7)* means you are under pressure of the time given. *Enervated (B8)* is lacking physical, mental or moral vigor. *Stale (B9)* means boring or unoriginal. *Life Denying (B10)* is denying the things that are potentially the nobles aspects of your being. Last on the Career attribute is *Easy (B11)*. The results of mean scores per attribute were shown on table 3.

Table-3. Mean Scores of Career

	MEAN	INTERPRETATION
Total Respondents (120)		
B1	2.88	Applies to me as often as not
B2	2.96	Applies to me as often as not
B3	2.76	Applies to me as often as not
B4	3.05	Applies to me as often as not
B5	2.50	Occasionally
B6	3.05	Applies to me as often as not
B7	2.92	Applies to me as often as not
B8	2.82	Applies to me as often as not
B9	2.63	Applies to me as often as not
B10	2.83	Applies to me as often as not
B11	2.93	Applies to me as often as not
Overall Mean	2.85	Applies to me as often as not

Source: Computed mean results from Group 2 (120 respondents)

Results revealed that career attributes received almost the same verbal interpretation of *applies to me about as often as not* and only one attribute which is B5 or the shrivelling attribute received the *occasionally* interpretation. This only proves that majority of the respondents have shown only the desire for money in their work. The feeling of worry or nervousness is present due to non stability of work that the tendency is to change their jobs from one to another. Respondents also manifest boredom and lack of physical and mental vigor in their jobs which lead to restlessness and non fulfilment of duties.

For the UWES instrument, using a 5pt likert scale revealed the following mean scores of an overall of 3.44 as very important for Calling and UWES. While Career and UWES received an overall mean score of 3.77. This means that both groups, calling and career have shown their regard to work engagement in their occupational choice.

The results showed an overall mean of 3.44 which received a verbal interpretation of *applies to me as often as not* for the calling group which revealed vigour, dedication and absorption to their present work, however, there are responses which are usually and occasionally for items in the UWES such as Q 1-4 and Q 8-12 which referred to energy at work, meaning and purpose. While Q8- 12 pertains to how happy they are at work, proud and immersed.

Table-4. Calling vs. UWES

UWES	Mean	Verbal Interpretation
1	3.90	Usually
2	3.61	Usually
3	3.59	Usually
4	3.11	Usually
5	3.21	Applies to me as often as not
6	3.88	Usually
7	3.39	Applies to me as often as not
8	3.96	Usually
9	3.70	Usually
10	3.71	Usually
11	3.90	Usually
12	3.91	Usually
13	2.50	Occasionally
14	3.17	Applies to me as often as not
15	3.50	Applies to me as often as not
16	3.00	Applies to me as often as not
17	2.45	Occasionally
Overall mean	3.44	Applies to me as often as not

Source: Computed UWES mean results from Group 1

Table-5. Career vs. UWES

UWES	Mean	Verbal Interpretation
1	3.89	Usually
2	3.73	Usually
3	3.75	Usually
4	3.69	Usually
5	3.01	Applies to me as often as not
6	3.85	Usually
7	3.89	Usually
8	3.78	Usually
9	3.65	Usually
10	3.70	Usually
11	3.21	Applies to me as often as not
12	3.00	Applies to me as often as not
13	2.75	Applies to me as often as not
14	2.45	Occasionally
15	3.00	Applies to me as often as not
16	3.50	Applies to me as often as not
17	2.50	Occasionally
Over all mean	3.37	Applies to me as often as not

Source: Computed UWES mean results from Group 2

Similar to Table 4, Table 5 also receive the same verbal interpretation of applies to me as often as not. With usually and occasionally responses on items such as energy, meaning and purpose. Responses were taken from items referring to how happy the respondents are at work, fulfilled, challenged and persevered when work does not go well. Generally, the responses of the groups are nearly the same. The 17 statements were rated as to how respondents feel at work in terms of vigour, dedication and absorption.

The results revealed an overall mean scores of 3.44 and 3.37 which means applies as often as not for the 2 groups which means that the two groups of respondents regard their work and have shown their vigour, dedication and absorption despite they are calling or career group. Work is regarded as very important as it is a reflection of their status in life, source of everyday living and just an enjoyable experience.

Table 6 presents the computed values using Pearson correlation with the following 0.617 for UWES –Calling and 0.222564 for UWES- Career. While the breakdown results for the two groups were -0.10462 and -0.58674 correlation.

Table-6. Correlation of UWES Calling and Career

80 UWES /CALLING	-0.104662	NEGLIGIBLE
120 UWES/CAREER	-0.58674	MODERATE

Source: Computed values of UWES/career/calling

The UWES VS CALLING with $N=80$ has a value of -0.104662 which means Negligible or no Significant correlation. Whereas the UWES VS.CAREER with $N=120$ has a value of -0.58674 and suggest a moderate correlation. It only proves that the higher the UWES Level, the lower the career because it shows an inverse correlation.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1.The N respondents consists of 47% male and 53% female. The respondents were divided into 2 groups. First is the calling group with a total of 80 respondents and career group which consist of 120 respondents. They came from different industry types and occupational groups. The length of service of the respondents were from 1 year up to 21 years.

2. The calling group consists of 11 attributes such as bliss, internally driven, holistic, integrated, growing, renewing, engaged, energized, vital, life affirming and difficult. While the Career is angst, externally driven, fragmented, compartmentalized, shrivelling, recycling, busy, enervated, stale, life denying and easy. Results revealed that out of 200 respondents, 80 of them chose the Calling attributes and 120 of the respondents chose the Career attributes. Calling and Career were rated using the 5 point Likert Scale. The overall mean score of Calling is 3.68 with an interpretation of Usually while Career received only an overall mean score of 2.85 which means applies to me about as often as not.

3.The Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) was used to measure how the employees feel about their jobs with vigour, absorption and dedication as indicators. It consist of 17 questions and rated using the 5 point Likert Scale. The calling group received an overall mean scores of 3.44 and career with 3.37 with an interpretation of applies to me about as often as not.

4. The correlation results shows the following values of -0.10462 for UWES vs. Calling and -0.58674 for UWES vs. Career. The UWES vs CALLING with $N=80$ has a value of -0.104662 means Negligible or no Significant correlation. Whereas the UWES vs CAREER is with $N=120$ received a value of -0.58674 and suggest a moderate correlation. It only proves that the higher the UWES Level, the lower the career because it shows an inverse correlation.

5. Findings indicated that Work Engagement is very important between the two groups of respondents however, the attributes for calling and career may be present but not necessarily mean engagement in their work. Further investigation should be conducted employing a bigger population together with their companies and to encourage other researchers to develop strategies to improve work engagement in the local setting.

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