CAREER CALLING AND WELL-BEING AMONG SOUTH KOREAN ADULT WORKERS: LIVING A CALLING AND WORK VOLITION AS MEDIATORS

Jina AHN¹, Hye-weon KIM², and Jee-yon LEE³

¹Department of Psychology, Kyungnam University, South Korea
²Graduate School of Education, Gongju National University of Education, South Korea
³Department of Creative Human Resource Development, Incheon National University, South Korea

This study examined how a sense of calling is linked with job and with life satisfaction among 209 Korean working adults. Using structural equation modeling, the mediating effects of living a calling and work volition were tested in the link between perceiving a calling and job-and life satisfaction. Living a calling was found to be a significant mediator only in the link between perceiving a calling and job satisfaction. Interestingly, work volition mediated the link between perceiving a calling and both job- and life satisfaction. Inconsistent with previous research suggesting that work volition was an antecedent of living a calling, this study showed that work volition directly linked to job and life satisfaction. Furthermore, the mediating effects of work volition were stronger than living a calling for job- and life satisfaction among South Koreans. Implications for future research and clinical work are discussed.

Key words: calling, work volition, job satisfaction, life satisfaction

As increasing attention has been given on the concept of “well-being,” researchers have suggested a variety of factors that predict greater career and life satisfaction such as person-environment fit, career decision self-efficacy, emotional stability, and organizational supports (Allan, Autin, & Duffy, 2014; Duffy & Lent, 2009; Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994; Spector, 1997). More recently, Dik and Duffy (2009) found that viewing one’s work as a calling is beneficially linked to both career and life satisfaction. According to Dik and Duffy (2009), calling is defined as a belief that individuals are driven externally (e.g., by a higher power, God, heritage, or the needs of society) into a certain career, and that this career is not only an essential source of purpose in life for the individual, but also used to serve the greater good for the society.

Benefits of Viewing Work as a Calling

Calling literature has consistently showed that calling is positively associated with vocational and well-being outcomes. For example, with a sample of 370 university employees in the U.S., Duffy, Allan, and Dik (2011) found that perceiving a calling was positively related to career commitment, organizational commitment, and negatively correlated to intentions to leave the job. Similarly, perceiving a calling was linked to zest of life and greater life satisfaction among U.S. adult employees (Peterson, Park, Hall, &
Although there is increasingly more focus and empirical evidence on the benefits of perceiving a calling, the vast majority of calling research has been conducted among North Americans who are predominately White and employed (Duffy & Dik, 2013). Little is known about how a sense of calling is understood and associated with well-being among Eastern cultural groups. The notion of calling puts greater emphasis on internal work rewards such as meaningfulness, helping others, or self-expression through work (Dik & Duffy, 2012). Therefore, the function of calling may differ across cultures depending on which work values are preferred in a certain cultural context. For example, Ahn and Dik (2014) found that the prosocial component of a calling accounted the most for life satisfaction among their sample of U.S. employees, whereas for a Korean sample, the meaning/purpose component of a calling was the strongest factor explaining the variance of life satisfaction. These results suggested that a sense of calling is a construct that can be applied across cultures; however, the underlying mechanism of why a sense of calling functions in beneficial ways may differ across cultures. For this reason, this current study considered the work culture of South Korea, and examined what may account for the link between perceiving a calling and job- and life satisfaction among South Korean employees.

**Work Culture in South Korea and Work Volition**

Recently, South Korea has struggled with a scarcity of jobs and pervasive unemployment issues. Youth unemployment and employment instability have been a serious social problem in South Korea (Cho & Jeon, 2015). Past studies with samples of Korean college students found that one’s level of ego-resilience significantly predicted job-seeking efficacy and emotional well-being during the job seeking period (Bae, 2009; Han & Suh, 2015). Another study with Korean college students found that career adaptability—readiness to cope with vocational tasks (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012)—significantly predicted job searching intensity and their level of career preparation (Kang, Choi, & Kim, 2015). Based on these findings, it appeared that one’s perceived career decision capacity to deal with potential career barriers is particularly important for South Korean graduates during their job seeking period. Similarly, Straussner (2001) noted that South Korea has a work culture that highly values conscientiousness, patience, self-discipline, and endurance—all traits that may help to overcome these vocational challenges.

Recently, Duffy and Autin (2013) proposed the construct of work volition, which is defined as a belief that an individual is able to make a desirable career decision despite constraints (Duffy, Diemer, & Jadidian, 2012). Individuals with high levels of work volition are likely to perceive no constraints in their ability to make career decisions and pursue the best careers that fit well with their values, interests, and skills. Work volition has been related to career decision self-efficacy, academic satisfaction (Jadidian & Duffy, 2012), work hope (Brown, 2015), and job satisfaction (Duffy, Bott, Torrey, & Webster, 2013).

When considering South Korea’s salient work values such as making persistent efforts despite hardships (Kim & Park, 2003; Leong, Huang, & Mak, 2014), it seems that work volition may be highly correlated to positive outcome variables. According to Kim (2015),
work volition linked to career satisfaction among South Korean undergraduate students. An attempt to examine how work volition relates to well-being among adult workers is absent in the current literature. For working adult groups, the role of work volition would be more salient since most adults are likely to select possible careers within their perceived volition level (Duffy, Bott, et al., 2013). Therefore, we examined how work volition related to career and life satisfaction among South Korean adult workers.

The Relationship between Calling and Work Volition

Regarding the relation between a sense of calling and work volition, calling researchers have made an important distinction between perceiving a calling and living a calling. Perceiving a calling can be defined that an individual recognizes a sense of calling into a certain career, whereas living a calling refers that an individual is currently actualizing or performing the calling in daily life. Perceiving a calling does not necessarily guarantee the state of living out that calling (Duffy, Allan, & Bott, 2012; Duffy, Dik, Douglass, England, & Velez, 2018). These two constructs capture the difference between recognition and action. Duffy, Autin, and Douglass (2016) distinguished that perceiving a calling as the state of possessing a car, and living a calling as actually driving that car. The distinction between perceiving a calling and living a calling was empirically supported by previous studies. Specifically, living a calling was more strongly correlated to career commitment \((r = .68 \text{ vs. } .33)\), job satisfaction \((r = .52 \text{ vs. } .23)\), or life satisfaction \((r = .48 \text{ vs. } .17)\) than perceiving a calling among adult employees (Duffy, Bott, Allan, Torrey, & Dik, 2012; Duffy & Dik, 2013). Duffy, Douglass, Autin, England, and Dik (2016) also found that the link between perceiving a calling and life satisfaction was negative when the calling is not actually lived out.

Based on the distinction, there was an attempt to identify what connects to the link between perceiving a calling and living a calling. Duffy and Autin (2013) found that work volition—one’s perceived capacity to freely make career decisions despite constraints—mediated the relationship between perceiving a calling and living a calling. In the study from Duffy and Autin (2013), participants who perceived a calling were more likely to live out their calling through increased work volition (See Fig. 1). However, previous research suggested that individuals who strongly feel called into a certain career, they were more likely to deal with work related hardships in more efficient and adaptive ways (Dik & Duffy, 2009; Oates, Hall, & Anderson, 2005; Sellers, Thomas, Batts, & Ostman, 2005; Serow, 1994; Treadgold, 1999). These results imply that an individual who strongly perceives a calling may also have higher levels of work volition to actualize the calling. The greater volition might directly link to greater satisfaction at work and in life. Actually, as empirical evidence supporting the direct links between work volition and life and job satisfaction (Duffy, Bott, et al., 2013; Duffy, Douglass, Autin, & Allan, 2016), we hypothesized that work volition might directly mediate the link between perceiving a calling and job and life satisfaction (Fig. 2). In sum, we proposed two structural models and explored which model better explained the connection between a sense of calling and well-being variables among South Korean adult workers. Additionally, previous studies conducted in the U.S. found that income and educational level were positively correlated
to living a calling and work volition (Duffy & Autin, 2013; Duffy, Autin, et al., 2016). Based on that, we examined whether our hypothesized models are significant after income and educational level are controlled for.

**The Present Study**

To extend our knowledge within the vocational literature, the current study had two main purposes. First, we explored how a sense of calling is associated with job and with life satisfaction among South Korean adult workers. We hypothesized that perceiving a calling would be positively associated with career and with life satisfaction, and that the link would be mediated by the level of living a calling (Hypothesis 1). The second purpose of this study was to identify the relationship between perceiving a calling and work volition. To date, there is a lack of research examining how work volition functions on the link between calling and well-being outcome variables. To address this goal, we first confirmed a previous finding that work volition was a predictor of living a calling (Duffy & Autin, 2013; Fig. 1). As depicted by Fig. 2, we also proposed another model that work volition directly mediated the link between perceiving a calling and job and life satisfaction (Hypothesis 2). Structural equation modeling (SEM) was used to examine these hypotheses.

**METHOD**

**Participants**

A total of 209 adult workers from Seoul and the Kyunggi province of South Korea participated in the study. About two-thirds ($n = 138, 66\%$) were women and 34% ($n = 71$) were men, together reporting a mean
age of 37.13 ($SD = 8.94$, range of 23 to 64). The reported annual income of participants was as follows (in thousands of U.S. dollars): less than $24 (n = 39, 18.7\%),$25-$36 (n = 84, 40.2\%),$37-$60 (n = 71, 34\%),$61+ (n = 10.4, 4.8\%). The reported educational attainment was as follows: 6 (2.9\%) completed high school, 28 (13.4\%) completed some college, 123 (58.9\%) completed a bachelor’s degree, 43 (20.6\%) completed a master’s degree and 7 (3.3\%) completed a doctoral degree. There was a wide range of occupations including sales jobs (n = 6, 3.0\%), professionals (n = 100, 47.8\%), office jobs (n = 33, 15.8\%), administrative work (n = 36, 17.2\%), and technical work (n = 22, 10.5\%).

**Instrument**

The following culturally cross-validated Korean versions were used for the study: perceiving a calling (Shim & Yoo, 2012), living a calling (Jang & Lee, 2014), job satisfaction (Jang & Lee, 2014), and life satisfaction (Lim, 2012). The work volition scale has not been previously translated into Korean. The research team translated the work volition scale into Korean and then back into English to check for linguistic equivalence across translations. (This process is further described below).

**Calling and Vocation Questionnaire (CVQ).** The current study assessed the level of perceiving a calling using the 12-item CVQ-Presence scale from the Calling and Vocation Questionnaire-Korean version (CVQ-K; Shim & Yoo, 2012). The CVQ is a multidimensional calling scale developed by Dik, Eldridge, Steger, and Duffy (2012). Example items are “I do not believe that a force beyond myself has helped guide me to my career (reverse scored),” and “I see my career as a path to purpose in life.” CVQ items are rated on a 4-point Likert scale from 1 (not at all true of me) to 4 (absolutely true of me). In prior research, the CVQ showed high internal consistency ($\alpha = .85$; Shim & Yoo, 2012). Internal consistency for CVQ scores was .86 for the present sample.

**Living Calling Scale (LCS).** The participant’s perception that they were currently living out their calling was measured with the six-item LCS (Duffy, Allan, et al., 2012). The LCS is a 7-point scale ranging on a continuum from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Participants who did not perceive a calling were asked to check 8 (Not applicable—I don’t have a calling). Example items are “I am consistently living out my calling,” and “I am working in the job to which I feel called.” According to prior research, the LCS had adequate internal consistency reliability ($\alpha = .94$ in Duffy & Autin, 2013; $\alpha = .94$ in Jang & Lee, 2014). In this study, the internal consistency of the LCS was .96.

**Work Volition Scale (WVS).** The level of one’s perceived ability to make career decisions despite constraints was measured by the WVS (Duffy, Diemer, et al., 2012). This scale consists of thirteen items and participants answered on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The instrument consists of three subscales: Volition (total of four items; sample item: “I feel total control over my job choices”), Structural Constraints (total of four items, reverse coded; sample item: “I feel that outside forces have really limited my work and career options”), and Financial Constraints (five items, reverse scored; sample item: “When looking for work, I’ll take whatever I can get”). Duffy and Autin (2013) reported good internal consistency for the scale ($\alpha = .91$). In the current study, the internal consistency of the scale was $\alpha = .84$.

**Job Satisfaction.** The level of one’s job satisfaction was measured with five items developed by Judge, Locke, Durham, and Kluger (1998) on a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 0 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). The Korean version of the job satisfaction scale was translated by Jang & Lee (2014). Example items were “I feel fairly well satisfied with my present job,” and “Most days I am enthusiastic about my work.” Judge et al. (1998) found good internal consistency reliability ($\alpha = .88$) with a sample of 222 university employees. Previous research completed with a Korean teacher group demonstrated an internal consistency reliability of .66 for the scale (Jang & Lee, 2014). In the current study, the internal consistency of the scale was .70.

**Life Satisfaction.** The level of an individual’s satisfaction with life was measured by the Satisfaction with Life Scale-Korean version (SWLS-K; Lim, 2012). The scale was originally developed by Diener, Emmons, Larsen, and Griffin (1985). The SWLS consists of five items with a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Example items are “The conditions of my life are excellent” and “In most ways my life is close to my ideal.” Higher scores indicate higher levels of life satisfaction. The instrument development study reported good internal consistency ($\alpha = .87$; Diener et al., 1985). Previous studies with Korean samples also supported adequate internal consistency ranging from .84 to .91 (Jang & Lee, 2014; Lim, 2012). In the current study, the internal consistency of this scale score was .70.
Procedure

The research team officially contacted, via email, the department chairs of several companies and organizations to recruit participants. These department chairs were then asked to forward a research participant flier to the workers. For employees who agreed to voluntarily participate in the study, paper questionnaires were distributed by post, including an informed consent form. The informed consent form documented that participants were able to withdraw from the study at any time and that personally identifiable information would be kept confidential. For the purpose of taking an anonymous survey, all individuals were informed to seal their survey in an unmarked envelope after completion. Participants were asked to return the survey packet by mail within three weeks. The initial sample consisted of 237 participants; data from 12 participants was removed because their survey packets were incomplete. Based on previous studies using the LCS (Duffy, Allan, Autin, & Bott, 2013; Duffy & Autin, 2013), we also removed 16 participants (7%) who answered, “Not applicable—I don’t have a calling” on any of the LCS items. As a result, the final total of participants involved in the study was 209.

Data Analysis

Statistical analyses were conducted with SPSS WIN 18.0, AMOS 18.0, and Mplus version 6. Prior to examining the main hypotheses, we conducted a normality test of the core variables. We also computed each variable’s mean and standardized deviation, and explored correlations among the core variables (see Table 1).

The mediation effects of work volition and living a calling were tested using SEM. As suggested by Anderson and Gerbing (1988), we tested the measurement model first to ensure that measurement variables estimated latent variables at a statistically acceptable level, and then the structural models were tested using maximum likelihood estimation. To evaluate the measurement and structural models, several fit indices were calculated including: chi-square, the comparative fit index (CFI), the Tucker-Lewis index (TLI), the root-mean-square error of approximation (RMSEA), and the standardized root mean square residual (SRMR). Values equal to or greater than .90 of the CFI and TLI represent an adequate fitting model (Hu & Bentler, 1999). Values equal to or less than .08 of RMSEA and SRMR suggest adequate fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999; Kline, 2005). Regarding model selection, Akaike’s Information Criterion (AIC) values were used. When the difference in two AIC values is more than 10 points, the model with smaller AIC values is considered to have a better fit for the data (Raftery, 1995). Lastly, the bootstrapping approach was used to test the significance of

Table 1. Descriptive statistics and correlations of study variables

|                        | 1   | 2   | 3   | 4   | 5   | 6   | 7   |
|------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 1. Perceiving a calling |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| 2. Living a calling    | .74** |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| 3. Work volition       | .33** | .43** |     |     |     |     |     |
| 4. Job satisfaction    | .44** | .57** | .61** |     |     |     |     |
| 5. Life satisfaction   | .48** | .56** | .58** | .57** |     |     |     |
| 6. Education           | .15* | .23** | .28** | .25** | .24** |     |     |
| 7. Income              | .00 | .09 | .06 | .08 | .12 | .30** |     |
| Mean                   | 33.75 | 29.60 | 62.33 | 20.93 | 22.30 | 4.1 | 2.3 |
| Standard deviation     | 6.05 | 7.58 | 13.34 | 4.09 | 6.68 | .77 | .82 |
| Skewness               | .11 | -.37 | .00 | -.56 | -.15 | -.06 | .04 |
| Kurtosis               | .00 | -.38 | -.80 | .90 | -.41 | .84 | -.68 |

** p < .01
any indirect effects (Shrout & Bolger, 2002). A total of 10,000 bootstrap samples with a 95% confidence interval (CI) were generated to test each mediation effect. If CIs do not contain zero, the mediation effect of the variable is considered as significant at the α level of .05 (Shrout & Bolger, 2002).

RESULTS

Preliminary Analyses

First, previous studies using the LCS examined whether or not one’s income level was related one’s responses—specifically, participants who answered, “I don’t have a calling” were compared to participants who did not indicate that (Duffy, Allan, et al., 2013; Duffy & Autin, 2013). We also followed the same procedure and found no significant difference between these two groups. Based on these results, we concluded that these two groups did not significantly differ in terms of socioeconomic status.

Second, a normality test of the core variables was conducted by examining for potential skewness and kurtosis. Variables with skewness and kurtosis values between—2.0 and 2.0 are considered as normally distributed (Lewis-Beck, Bryman, & Liao, 2004). Since all variables had acceptable skewness and kurtosis values (see Table 1), we assumed that our data did not violate the assumption of normality. Table 1 displays each variable’s mean, standard deviation, skewness, and kurtosis value.

Lastly, correlations among all study variables were examined. As indicated in Table 1, perceiving a calling was significantly and strongly correlated with living a calling \( (r = .74) \). Since CVQ(perceiving a calling) and LCS(living a calling) were highly correlated, we computed Variance Inflation Factors (VIF) to detect multicollinearity (Marsh, Dowson, Pietsch, & Walker, 2004). If the VIF values above 10, it might have problems with multicollinearity (Kutner, Nachtsheim, Neter, & Li, 2005). We set life satisfaction as a dependent variable, and checked VIF indices of the other variables. The result indicated that all VIF indices fell 1.61~2.63 that did not exceed 10. Therefore, we considered that our data has no problems with multicollinearity. Moreover, according to a recent study in South Korea (Ahn & Shin, 2018), LCS significantly accounted for career commitment, burnout, and life satisfaction after controlling the effect of CVQ. Thus, we considered that CVQ and LCS are partially overlapping in that measuring the concept of a calling, but distinct measurements each other.

Above this, perceiving a calling was significantly and moderately correlated to work volition \( (r = .33) \), job satisfaction \( (r = .44) \), and life satisfaction \( (r = .48) \). All study variables also positively correlated with one another.

Mediation

Measurement model. We tested the measurement model to examine how well the measurement variables represented the corresponding latent variables. Five latent constructs were created with the observed indicators. For work volition and perceiving a calling, the subscales from these instruments were used as the observed indicators. For living a calling and life satisfaction, all scale items each were used as observed indicators. However, for job satisfaction, the result of exploratory factor analysis showed that the
factor loading of one scale item—“Each day at work seems like it will never end (reverse scored)”- was - .06 which is less than the acceptable value of .30 (Hair, Tatham, Anderson, & Black, 1998). Therefore, the item was removed and the rest of the scale items were used as the observed indicators for job satisfaction.

The results showed that all relationships among the five latent variables were significant, and the measurement model also demonstrated an acceptable fit for the data ($\chi^2(179, N = 209) = 381.77, p < .001; \text{CFI} = .94; \text{TLI} = .93; \text{SRMR} = .06; \text{RMSEA} = .07; AIC = 527.77$). All factor loadings of the observed indicators were also significant at the less than .001 level. Factor loadings for the items ranged from .63 to .80 for perceiving a calling, .78 to .93 for living a calling, .60 to .73 for work volition, .55 to .87 for job satisfaction, and .80 to .92 for life satisfaction. These results suggested that all latent variables were adequately measured by their corresponding indicators.

**Structural model.** Before testing the structural models, we considered the correlation results about income and educational level. According to the results, income was not significantly correlated to all core variables. However, educational level was significantly correlated with all core variables. In order to control possible confounding effects, we decided to examine structural models after controlling educational level.

First, we tested the proposed model in which work volition functions as a predictor for living a calling (see Fig. 1). The proposed model was a poor fit for the data ($\chi^2(200, N = 209) = 543.88, p < .001; \text{CFI} = .90; \text{TLI} = .89; \text{SRMR} = .09; \text{RMSEA} = .09; AIC = 693.88$). For the model, the path from living a calling to life satisfaction was not significant ($\beta = .11, p = .23$). Regarding the result of control variable, the path from educational level to work volition was only significant ($\beta = .27, p < .05$).

We then examined the alternative model in which it was hypothesized that work volition would function as a mediator between perceiving a calling and job-and life satisfaction. The alternative model had better fit indicators compared to the proposed model ($\chi^2(197, N = 209) = 412.02, p < .001; \text{CFI} = .94; \text{TLI} = .93; \text{SRMR} = .06; \text{RMSEA} = .07; AIC = 568.02$). Additionally, work volition was found to be a significant mediator in the link between perceiving a calling to job-and life satisfaction. Regarding the result of control variable, the path from educational level to work volition was only significant ($\beta = .20, p < .05$). However, the path from work volition to living a calling ($\beta = .10, p = .21$), the path from living a calling to life satisfaction ($\beta = .11, p = .19$), and the path from career satisfaction to life satisfaction ($\beta = .24, p = .08$) were not significant in the alternative model. Thus, we removed these non-significant paths from this model and tested the revised alternative model. The revised alternative model was also an acceptable fit to the data ($\chi^2(203, N = 209) = 422.61, p < .001; \text{CFI} = .94; \text{TLI} = .93; \text{SRMR} = .06; \text{RMSEA} = .07; AIC = 566.61$). We conducted chi-squared test to check whether there is a significant difference between two models (i.e., alternative model vs. revised alternative model removing non-significant paths). Since there was no significant difference between these models ($\Delta\chi^2(6, N = 209) = 10.59, ns$), and the revised alternative model was more parsimonious, we used it to test the indirect effects. In total, the predictor variables explained 75%, and 70% of the variance in job-and life satisfaction in the revised alternative model.
Indirect effects. The bootstrap procedure was conducted to examine the mediation effects of work volition and living a calling in the revised alternative model (Chan, 2007; Efron & Tibshirani, 1993). We created 10,000 bootstrap samples using Mplus version 6, and calculated indirect effects for each of the mediation paths from these 10,000 randomly generated models. If the 95% CIs for the indirect effect does not include zero, the indirect effect considers as significant ($p < .05$; Chan, 2007). Consistent with our hypotheses, the indirect effect of work volition was found to be significant in the links between perceiving a calling with job satisfaction ($c' = .22$, SE = .06, 95% CI [.14, .35]), and with life satisfaction ($c' = .46$, SE = .08, 95% CI [.32, .63]). The indirect effects of living a calling partially supported our hypotheses. Living a calling had a significant indirect effect only in the link between perceiving a calling to job satisfaction ($c' = .19$, SE = .05, 95% CI [.10, .30]).

Discussion

The current study was aimed to explore (a) how a sense of calling relates to job and life satisfaction among South Korean employees and (b) which variables mediate the link between calling and outcome variables.

According to these results, perceiving a calling was positively associated with job- and life satisfaction among South Korean workers. This result supported previous studies that found positive correlations between a sense of calling and job- and life satisfaction among North American participants (Davidson & Caddell, 1994; Duffy et al., 2011; Hagmaier & Abele, 2012; Peterson et al., 2009). After we found that approaching work as a calling can be beneficially applied to South Koreans as well, we moved to the next step to understand how a sense of calling may link to job- and life satisfaction. We hypothesized that living a calling and work volition would mediate the relationships between perceiving a calling and job- and life satisfaction. Our hypothesis was partially supported by the data. The results indicated that perceiving a calling was associated with higher levels of job satisfaction, and the relationship was mediated by living a calling. This result was consistent with previous research that the benefits of a calling were more significant when individuals were living out that calling (Duffy, Allan, Bott, & Dik 2014; Duffy & Dik, 2013).

However, unlike previous research conducted with American working adults (Duffy, Allan, et al., 2013), living a calling was not a significant mediator in the link between perceiving a calling and life satisfaction in our study. This is consistent with findings from a sample of 196 Korean teachers that the mediating role of living a calling on the perceiving a calling and life satisfaction relationship was not significant (Jang & Lee, 2014). These authors suggested that a sense of calling would be indirectly associated with general well-being through mediators such as work meaning and life meaning at least among South Koreans. Similarly, living a calling is a work-related domain, so the benefits of viewing work as a calling could be more significant on work related outcomes. Indeed, Duffy, Allan, et al. (2012) also found that the link of perceiving a calling to life satisfaction was
fully mediated by life meaning and academic satisfaction. Based on these studies, it appears important to keep investigating potential mediators that explain how a sense of calling relates to life satisfaction.

In terms of the role of work volition, our results did not support previous results (Duffy & Autin, 2013) that work volition functioned as a predictor for living a calling, and mediated the link between perceiving a calling and living a calling (see Fig. 1). Rather, our study indicated that the model fit better with the data when work volition functioned as a mediator in the relationship between perceiving a calling and outcome variables (see Fig. 2). This finding indicated that those who strongly endorsed a sense of calling were more likely to feel that they had choices in pursuing their career, leading to a sense of greater satisfaction at work and in life.

With regard to these results, various interpretations are possible. First, this may imply a new benefit of viewing work as a calling. Previous studies found that a sense of calling moderately to strongly correlated with career decision self-efficacy, zest, work engagement, and career commitment (Dik & Duffy, 2012; Domene, 2012; Hirschi, 2012; Wrzesniewski et al., 1997). These studies suggest that individuals who have a greater sense of a calling tend to be motivated to pursue their calling-infused career with proactive work attitudes (Willemse & Deacon, 2015). Indeed, with a sample of 270 Chinese college students, the link of a calling to professional competence was stronger among students who perceived they were under a poor learning environment (Guo, et al., 2014). In other words, for those who perceive external obstacles, a career calling was more likely to link to increased professional competence. These results imply that a strong sense of calling plays a positive role in continuously pursuing a desirable career in spite of barriers which in turn facilitates a greater sense of satisfaction. Although more research is needed to fully understand the relationship between a calling and work volition, the results from this study may shed important light on understanding another benefit of perceiving a calling.

Second, we found that the mediating effect of work volition was even stronger than the mediating effect of living a calling between perceiving a calling and outcome variables. We suspect that once work volition was included in the model, the strength of living a calling as a mediator was diminished to some degree. As discussed by Duffy, Douglass, Autin, & Allan (2016), work volition implies a general sense of control. Previous studies have found a robust correlation between a sense of control and well-being (Blustein, 2006; DeNeve & Cooper, 1998). Individuals with an internal locus of control believe that the situation is under his or her control, and it is linked to academic success (Gifford, Briceño-Pe rriott, & Mianzo, 2006), greater ability dealing with stress (Brandstädter & Baltens-Gotz, 1990), and psychological adaptation (Thompson, Sobolew-Shubin, Galbraith, Schwankovsky, & Cruzen, 1993).

Lastly, another possible explanation is that the salient role of work volition in this study might be due to South Korea’s specific work culture. Under the conditions of job scarcity and employment insecurity, perceived freedom of work choice might play a prominent role in predicting well-being among South Koreans. Conceptually, perceived freedom of work choice has been known to predict positive career-related outcomes such as experiencing a fulfilling work and a greater sense of meaning at work (Ali, 2013; Allan...
et al., 2014). Additionally, South Korea has a work culture that highly values an individual’s willingness to overcome hardships and finally achieve a goal (Kim & Park, 2003; Leong et al., 2014). This study found that work volition was a more robust mediator than living a calling, for both job and life satisfaction in our South Korean sample. These findings might suggest that feelings of volition in career choice is a preferred work attitude in South Korea, which ultimately links to more positive outcome variables.

Recently, work volition is known to be closely related to social class such as income or educational attainment (Duffy, Autin, et al., 2016). In our study, work volition was correlated to educational level, but not related to income. Based on our mixed results, work volition seems to more capture “subjective feelings of volition” and it does not necessarily relate to objective vocational privilege. Duffy, Douglass, Autin, England, & Dik (2016) also conceptualized work volition as “perceived vocational privilege.” Since cross-cultural research on the concept of work volition has been limited, further research needs to be done with more diverse cultural groups to better understand the function of work volition and its relationship with social class.

Practical Implications

This study may provide practical implications for counselors who are dealing with clients facing vocational tasks. Consistent with previous studies, the results showed that approaching work with a sense of calling is associated with greater career and life satisfaction. Counselors may provide an opportunity for clients to consider a sense of calling during their career decision making process. For those who perceive a sense of calling, counselors may discuss ways of living that out in their daily lives. Calling research repeatedly suggested that the benefits of perceiving a calling can be maximized when it is lived out (Duffy, Bott, Allan, Torrey, & Dik, 2012; Duffy & Dik, 2013). Therefore, when clients are not able to follow their calling in the present, counselors may help the client think about different ways to actualize the calling in non-work domains or, other ways of aligning with their calling within the current job.

Second, the results from the current study suggest that feeling a sense of control in career choice can foster greater satisfaction at work and in life. It may be beneficial for counselors to assess a client’s level of work volition, and discuss ways of increasing work volition. As Duffy, Douglass, Autin, & Allan (2016) posited, counselors may start this by assessing barriers that limit a client’s possible career options. Based on the assessment, counselors may focus on developing coping strategies toward realistic and potential career barriers. In particular, when working with clients with low levels of work volition, it is recommended to develop realistic strategies to overcome these barriers (Duffy, Bott, et al., 2013; Duffy, Douglass, Autin, & Allan, 2016).

Limitations and Future Directions

Our study extends previous calling literature by empirically testing the relationship between a sense of calling and work volition, as well as its effect on job and life satisfaction. However, the results of the current study should be considered in light of several limitations. First, our study is a cross-sectional research, thus it is impossible to know if there is a
causational relationship among the study constructs. In order to explore the directions of the study constructs, future research should be conducted with longitudinal data.

Second, although we recruited participants from several companies to represent various working experiences, we did not track if there were possible group differences across companies. Further researchers should gather representative samples, and at the same time strive to eliminate potential confounding factors that may influence on study results. Our study’s sample also consisted of South Korean adult workers, limiting the generalization of results to diverse populations. This study was the first attempt to explore the relationship between calling and work volition with an Asian group. Therefore, it is unclear whether our results, which diverged from previous studies, reflect cultural differences or add new points of discussion to calling literature. Future research needs to be replicated with diverse participants with regard to racial/ethnic, and occupation.

Third, participations of this study consisted of only full-time employees. Individuals who were unemployed or involved in a part-time position were excluded from this study. Work volition will be more important for individuals who are actually struggling with career decision making process. Also, understanding the full scope of calling would be possible by including unemployed individuals or employees under various employment statuses (Duffy & Autin, 2013). Therefore, future studies should recruit individuals with various types of employment status.

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