

# VOCATION AS CALLING AND RESILIENCE IN THE WORKPLACE: A CORRELATIONAL STUDY

RONALD R. ROJAS

**SUMMARY:** *Traditionally, adversity has been viewed as an undesirable construct while resilience is regarded as a professional attribute. This study explores the relationship between resilience as a reaction to adversity and vocation as calling in the workplace. The study redefines adversity as a positive concept and suggests opportunities for further discovery and maturation of a person's vocation as calling within a theological context.*

## BACKGROUND

**A**s a dominant activity of human and social endeavor, work is recognized as a significant locus of personal identity<sup>1</sup>. Characteristically, there are an abundance of workplace situations that constantly challenge an individual's uniqueness and personal maturation. The selection of a job is largely predicated on the fundamentals of individual distinctiveness<sup>2</sup>, while an individual's sense of self is molded and shaped by work habits and practices<sup>3</sup>. The type, form, intensity, and frequency of interpersonal relationships among workers have a constant effect on a person's character<sup>4</sup>. The influence of workplace role models<sup>5</sup> and the choices made in respect of managing work-family balance<sup>6</sup> impose pressure on the self-image. Another stress upon an individual's identity occurs when deciding the degree to which the cultural values, mission, and vision of one's workplace are compatible with one's own personal views and aspirations<sup>7</sup>. The skills and abilities developed in the workplace may even prompt discoveries of one's own latent talents<sup>8</sup>. In many ways, the exercise of planning career progression or contemplating career changes prompt deeper reflection upon a person's capabilities and potential<sup>9</sup>. Even leadership development has a direct impact on identity formation, as leading others presumes the ability to

<sup>1</sup> M. DOHERTY. *When the working day is through: The end of work as identity?* Work, Employment & Society, 2009, 23(1), 84-101.

<sup>2</sup> E. B. LUCAS. *College Career Planning and Placement Centers: Finding Their Identity.* Journal of Career Development, 1986, 13(1), 9-17.

<sup>3</sup> C. M. LEITCH, R. T. HARRISON. *Identity, identity formation and identity work in entrepreneurship: Conceptual developments and empirical applications.* Entrepreneurship and Regional Development, 2016, 8(3-4), 177-190.

<sup>4</sup> D. M. SLUSS, B .E. ASHFORTH. *Relational identity and identification: Defining ourselves through work relationships.* Academy of Management Review, 2007, 32(1), 9-32.

<sup>5</sup> R. SEALY, V. SINGH. *Role models, work identity, and senior women's career progression. Why are role models important?* Academy Of Management Annual Meeting Proceedings, 2016, E1-E6.

<sup>6</sup> M. ANNAVARJULA, D.DAS., *Toward a fine balance: Cross-cultural comparison of work-family identities.* Journal of Asia - Pacific Business, 2013, 14(1), 40.

<sup>7</sup> R. JOHNSON, E. JACKSON. *Appeal of organizational values is in the eye of the beholder: the moderating role of employee identity.* Journal Of Occupational & Organizational Psychology, 2009, 82(4), 915-933.

<sup>8</sup> L. B. VAN HAL, A. MEERSHOEK, A. DE RIJK, F. NIJHUIS. *Going beyond vocational rehabilitation as a training of skills: Return-to-work as an identity issue.* Disability & Society, 2012, 27(1), 81-93.

<sup>9</sup> H. JO, Y. RA, J. LEE, W.H. KIM. *Impact of Dysfunctional Career Thoughts on Career Decision Self-Efficacy and Vocational Identity.* Career Development Quarterly, 2016, 64(4), 333-344.

lead oneself<sup>1</sup>. Finally—and of special interest to the present study—adversities at work can challenge a person's vocation and calling<sup>2</sup>. The workplace is a setting in which a person both exercises and discovers their vocation and calling.

Although economic and social changes over the past decade may have led to values inconsistent with discerning one's vocation and calling<sup>3</sup>, interest in finding deeper meanings in work seems to be increasing<sup>4</sup>. Consequently, a deeper sense of work is becoming more relevant within the context of career development processes<sup>5</sup>, a trend that favors studies of vocation and calling.

However, within this emerging trend, both vocation and calling seem to be used interchangeably; a situation that warrants clarification.

It is understandable for vocation and calling to be used synonymously, since the word vocation is derived from the Latin <<vocare>> meaning "to call"<sup>6</sup>. Fortunately, some business related literature addresses the differences between vocation and calling, a distinction that is helpful in framing the present research's objectives. For instance, R. J. Andrisani, P. J. Andrisani, R. C. Miljus<sup>7</sup> note that vocation is associated with extrinsic rewards, whereas calling is characterized by intrinsic rewards. In a subsequent comparison<sup>8</sup>, B. J. Dik and R. D. Duffy state that calling is more associated with motivation from an external source (e.g., divine), whereas vocation depends more on social objectives rooted in internal personal reasons. In a more recent study, D. M. Haney-Loehlein and others<sup>9</sup> posit that vocation and calling are essentially the same if divine summoning is removed from the definition of vocation.

For the purposes of this study, B. J. Dik and R. J. Duffy's definition of calling is most suitable. They contend: "[a calling is] a transcendent summons, experienced as originating beyond the self, to approach a particular life role in a manner oriented toward demonstrating or deriving a sense of purpose or meaningfulness and that holds other-oriented values and goals as

<sup>1</sup> R. P. WARHURST. *Leadership development as identity formation: Middle managers' leadership learning from MBA study*. Human Resource Development International, 2012, 15(4), 471.

<sup>2</sup> C. L. KEYES. *Authentic purpose: The spiritual infrastructure of life*. Journal of Management, Spirituality & Religion, 2011, 8(4), 281-297.

<sup>3</sup> L. HARDY. *The fabric of this world: Inquiries into calling, career choice, and the design of human work*. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, MI, 1990.

<sup>4</sup> D. P. BLOCH. *Complexity, chaos, and nonlinear dynamics: A new perspective on career development theory*. The Career Development Quarterly, 2005, 53, 194–207.

<sup>5</sup> E. A. COLOZZI, L. C. COLOZZI. *College students' callings and careers: An integrated values-oriented perspective*. In D. A. LUZZO (Ed.), *Career counseling of college students: An empirical guide to strategies that work*. American Psychological Association, Washington, DC, 2000, 63–9; A. WRZESNIEWSKI. *Finding positive meaning in work*. In K. S. CAMERON, J. E. DUTTON, R. E. QUINN (Eds.), *Positive organizational scholarship: Foundations of a new discipline*. Berrett-Koehler, San Francisco, CA, 2003, 327–347; D. T. HALL, D.E. CHANDLER. *Psychological success: When the career is a calling*. Journal of Organizational Behavior, 2005, 26, 155–176; M. F. STEGER, N. K. PICKERING, J. Y. SHIN, B. J. DIK. *Calling in Work: Secular or Sacred?* Journal of Career Assessment, 2010, 18(1), 82-96.

<sup>6</sup> D. T. HANSEN. *Teaching and the sense of vocation*. Educational Theory, 1994, 44(3), 259-275.

<sup>7</sup> R. J. ANDRISANI, P. J. ANDRISANI, R. C. MILJUS, R. C. *Individual differences in preferences for intrinsic versus extrinsic aspects of work*. Journal of Vocational Behavior, 1997, 11, 14-30.

<sup>8</sup> B. J. DIK, R. D. DUFFY. *Calling and vocation at work: Definitions and prospects for research and practice*. The Counseling Psychologist, 2009, 37(3), 424-450.

<sup>9</sup> D. M. HANEY-LOEHLEIN, R. B. MCKENNA, C. ROBIE, K. AUSTIN, D.ECKER. *The Power of Perceived Experience: Events That Shape Work as a Calling*. Career Development Quarterly, 2015, 63(1), 16-30.

primary sources of motivation"<sup>1</sup>. This definition is useful because it presents three distinct components relating to the workplace: (a) a motivation with a transcendent origin; (b) a spiritual context for work; and (c) an undertaking of service towards others. The first component of this definition facilitates transposing the findings from other disciplines (e.g., sociology, psychology, and theology) into the workplace setting<sup>2</sup>. The second component inserts the nature of work into the domain of spiritual values<sup>3</sup> and allows the connection of calling with the emerging discipline of Spirituality in the Workplace<sup>4</sup>. The third component makes actionable the transcending summons and spiritual meaning of work, and facing adversity in the process of carrying out this "mission" is expected.

In preferring the term "vocation as calling", the present research (a) recognizes a transcendent summons that builds upon the emerging findings of vocation as career, which (b) suggests another research topic for Spirit at Work, and (c) allows the findings of other disciplines—particularly theology and a rich history of spiritual traditions—to enter gracefully into work environment research. In the current study, "vocation as calling" refers to progressive growth from a primarily secular view of fittingness for a particular career or occupation to a broader sense of purpose inspired and guided by a transcendent summons.

Regrettably, many of the business literature's definitions of calling and vocation have a workplace focus that discounts spiritual connotations; therefore, finding studies addressing the relationship between calling and resilience is somewhat challenging. In many ways, this gap in the literature motivates the current study. However, the literature on reactions to adversity and resilience in the workplace are more readily available.

The few studies available on the topic of vocation and calling recognize the value of resilience as a response to adversity and the importance of emphasizing this topic within the workplace. On the one hand, resilience—or the ability to overcome and move forward despite adversity<sup>5</sup>—is recognized as a necessity for business organizations<sup>6</sup> and is a significant factor in employee response to organizational change<sup>7</sup>. Resilience has been associated with organizational commitment<sup>8</sup>, used as a predictor of organizational change effectiveness<sup>9</sup>, and considered a mod-

<sup>1</sup> DIK, DUFFY. *Calling and vocation*, 427.

<sup>2</sup> M. ROTMAN. *Vocation in Theology and Psychology: Conflicting Approaches?* Christian Higher Education, 2017, 16(1/2), 23-32.

<sup>3</sup> T. MADDEN. *Journeys of Purpose: A Review of Literature about Work and Spirituality*. International Journal Of Religion & Spirituality In Society, 2015, 5(4), 69-76.

<sup>4</sup> J. D. HOUGHTON, C. P. NECK, S. KRISHNAKUMAR. *The what, why, and how of spirituality in the workplace revisited: a 14-year update and extension*. Journal of Management, Spirituality & Religion, 2016, 13(3), 177-205.

<sup>5</sup> D. JACKSON, A. FIRTKO, M. EDENBOROUGH. *Personal resilience as a strategy for surviving and thriving in the face of workplace adversity: A literature review*. Journal of Advanced Nursing, 2007, 60(1), 1-9.

<sup>6</sup> D. D. KING, A. NEWMAN, F. LUTHANS. *Not if, but when we need resilience in the workplace*. Journal of Organizational Behavior, 2016, 37(5), 782-786.

<sup>7</sup> L. GRUNBERG, S. MOORE, E. S. GREENBERG, P. SIKORA. *The Changing Workplace And Its Effects. A Longitudinal Examination Of Employee Responses At A Large Company*. Journal Of Applied Behavioral Science, 2008, 44(2), 214-236; D. J. O'CONNELL, E. MCNEELY, D. T. HALL, D. T. *Unpacking personal adaptability at work*. Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies, 2008, 14(3), 248-259.

<sup>8</sup> H. PAUL, U. K. BAMEL, P. GARG. *Employee Resilience and OCB: Mediating Effects of Organizational Commitment*. Vikalpa: The Journal For Decision Makers, 2016, 41(4), 308-324.

<sup>9</sup> C. R. WANBERG, J. T. BANAS. *Predictors and outcomes of openness to changes in a reorganizing workplace*. Journal of Applied Psychology, 2000, 85(1), 132.

moderator of employee stress<sup>1</sup>. Further studies suggest that resilience has a positive influence when making risky decisions<sup>2</sup>, on promoting self-efficacy<sup>3</sup>, and as a factor that reduces absenteeism<sup>4</sup>; it is also relevant to leadership dynamics, particularly in crisis situations<sup>5</sup>. In summary, a resilient person has been described as one capable of identifying what is stressful, assessing the most appropriate response, and solving the issue effectively<sup>6</sup>.

On the other hand, spirituality in the workplace has emerged in the literature as another factor relevant to the development and competitiveness of business organizations. In 2010, F. Karakas<sup>7</sup> reviewed 140 studies of spirituality in the workplace and observed three major contributions to organizational performance: improving employee well-being; providing a sense of purpose and meaning at work; and offering a sense of connectedness and community. All three of these contributions to organizational performance relate to the definition of calling used in the current study.

Despite some controversy regarding definitions and instruments<sup>8</sup>, spirituality studies in business organizations have found that spiritual values positively impact work productivity<sup>9</sup> and foster a sense of creativity, trust, and respect that favor healthy team dynamics<sup>10</sup>. A more obvious and therefore well documented contribution of spirituality in the workplace is its effects in preventing unethical behaviors<sup>11</sup> and providing a basis for understanding the dynamics of organiza-

<sup>1</sup> G. KINMAN, L. GRANT. *Exploring stress resilience in trainee social workers: The role of emotional and social competencies*. British Journal of Social Work, 2011, 41(2), 261-275.

<sup>2</sup> G. F. DONOVAN. *The role of psychological resilience and positive affect in risky decision-making*. International Journal Of Psychology, 2013, 48(5), 935-943.

<sup>3</sup> S. MACHE, K. VITZTHUM, E. WANKE, A. DAVID, B. F. KLAPP, G. DANZER. *Exploring the impact of resilience, self-efficacy, optimism and organizational resources on work engagement*. Work, 2014, 47(4), 491-500.

<sup>4</sup> J. COURTNEY. *Can improving "personal resilience" reduce absence due to stress*. Occupational Health, 2015, 67(6), 10.

<sup>5</sup> T. LIN MOE. *Aiming for resilience and adaptation in managing environment: an emerging environmental and emergency leadership in the twenty-first century*. International Journal of Disaster Resilience in the Built Environment, 2012, 3(1), 42-51.

<sup>6</sup> J. H. BLOCK, J. BLOCK. *The role of ego-control and ego-resiliency in the organization of behavior*. In Development of cognition, affect, and social relations: The Minnesota symposia on child psychology, 1980, 13, 39-101; W. R. BEARDSLEE. *The role of self-understanding in resilient individuals: The development of a perspective*. American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 1989, 59(2), 266; G. CAPLAN. *Loss, stress, and mental health*. Community Mental Health Journal, 1990, 26(1), 27-48.

<sup>7</sup> F. KARAKAS. *Spirituality and performance in organizations: A literature review*. Journal of Business Ethics, 2010, 94(1), 89-106.

<sup>8</sup> D. W. MILLER, T. EWEST. *The Present State of Workplace Spirituality: A literature review considering context, theory, and measurement/assessment*. Journal of Religious & Theological Information, 2013, 12(1-2), 29-54.

<sup>9</sup> J. C. GARCIA-ZAMOR. *Workplace spirituality and organizational performance*. Public Administration Review, 2003, 63(3), 355-363.

<sup>10</sup> J. LUIS-DANIEL. *The effect of workplace spirituality on team effectiveness*. Journal of Management Development, 2010, 29(5), 442-456.

<sup>11</sup> C. McLAUGHLIN. *Spirituality and ethics in business*. European Business review, 2005, 17(1), 94. H. BURKHARDT. *Spirituality and Ethics*. European Journal of Theology, 2010, 19(1), 45-49. L. ZSOLNAI. *Ethics needs spirituality*. In Spirituality and Business, Springer, Berlin-Heidelberg, 2010, 87-90.

tional conscience<sup>1</sup>. However, as in the case of resilience presented earlier, spirituality is also related to commitment<sup>2</sup>, stress<sup>3</sup>, decision making<sup>4</sup>, self-efficacy<sup>5</sup>, and leadership<sup>6</sup>.

In reviewing these studies, it becomes somewhat evident that both resilience as a reaction to adversity and spiritual values share some degree of effect upon the same employee and organizational variables. Numerous studies describing the relationship between these two factors are available in the literature, but primarily originating from disciplines other than business. For example, Walsh<sup>7</sup> found spirituality and resilience to be significant factors in family healing processes. Likewise, G. B. Angell, B. Dennis and L. Dumain<sup>8</sup> identify both spirituality and resilience to be key attributes in reconfiguring one's life following the trauma of parental death. S. Vanistendael<sup>9</sup> demonstrates the value of resilience and spirituality in elevating the quality of life of patients and their families in confronting life-threatening illness. In yet another study, M. M. Banerjee and L. Pyles<sup>10</sup> discovered spirituality to be a vital source of resilience in African American women. M. N. Womble, E. E. Labbé and C. R. Cochran<sup>11</sup> found evidence to support the argument that spirituality promotes resilience. I. V. Vahia and fellow researchers<sup>12</sup> conclude there is a clear role for spirituality in promoting resilience to manage stressors. A regression analysis of women with abusive partners showed that women who score higher on spirituality also report greater resilient characteristics<sup>13</sup>. In several studies, spirituality is specifically recognized as a pathway to resilience<sup>14</sup>. A principal implication of these studies—albeit from other

<sup>1</sup> R. R. ROJAS. *Diversity and workplace spirituality*. In C. Aquino and R. Robertson (Eds.), *Diversity and inclusion in the workplace: Aligning initiatives with strategic business goals*. Palgrave, London, 2017, 77-100.

<sup>2</sup> A. REGO, M. PINA ECUNHA. *Workplace spirituality and organizational commitment: An empirical study*. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, 2008, 21(1), 53-75.

<sup>3</sup> S. LEE. *Spirituality and stress responses in small industry employees*. *Journal of Korean Academy of Psychiatric and Mental Health Nursing*, 2010, 19(2), 220-229.

<sup>4</sup> K. A. PHIPPS. *Spirituality and strategic leadership: The influence of spiritual beliefs on strategic decision making*. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 2012, 106(2), 177-189.

<sup>5</sup> W. DUGGLEBY, D. COOPER, K. PENZ. *Hope, self-efficacy, spiritual well-being and job satisfaction*. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 2009, 65(11), 2376-2385.

<sup>6</sup> N. KORAC-KAKABADSE, A. KOUZMIN, A. KAKABADSE. *Spirituality and leadership praxis*. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 2002, 17(3), 165-182.

<sup>7</sup> F. WALSH. *Beliefs, spirituality, and transcendence: Keys to family resilience*. In M. McGoldrick, (Ed). (1998). *Re-visioning family therapy: Race, culture, and gender in clinical practice*. Guilford Press, New York, 1998, 62-77; F. WALSH. *Religion and spirituality: Wellsprings for healing and resilience*. Guilford Press, New York, 1999.

<sup>8</sup> G. B. ANGELL, B. DENNIS, L. DUMAIN. *Spirituality, resilience, and narrative: Coping with parental death*. *Families in Society: The Journal of Contemporary Social Services*, 1998, 79(6), 615-630.

<sup>9</sup> S. VANISTENDAEL. *Resilience and spirituality*. *Resilience in Palliative Care: Achievement in Adversity*, 2007, 115-135.

<sup>10</sup> M. M. BANERJEE, L. PYLES. *Spirituality: A Source of Resilience for African American in the Era of Welfare Reform*. *Journal of Ethnic & Cultural Diversity In Social Work*, 2004, 13(2), 45-70.

<sup>11</sup> M. N. WOMBLE, E. E. LABBÉ, C. R. COCHRAN. *Spirituality and personality: Understanding their relationship to health resilience*. *Psychological Reports*, 2013, 112(3), 706-715.

<sup>12</sup> I. V. VAHIA, C. A. DEPP, B. W. PALMER, I. FELLOWS, S. GOLSHAN, W. THOMPSON, W., ... , D. V. JESTE. *Correlates of spirituality in older women*. *Aging & Mental Health*, 2011, 15(1), 97-102.

<sup>13</sup> I. A. DE LA ROSA, T. BARNETT-QUEEN, M. MESSICK, M. GURROLA. *Spirituality and Resilience Among Mexican American IPV Survivors*. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 2016, 31(20), 3332-3351.

<sup>14</sup> T. ALAWIYAH, H. BELL, L. PYLES, R. C. RUNNELS. *Spirituality and faith-based interventions: Pathways to disaster resilience for African American Hurricane Katrina survivors*. *Journal of Religion & Spirituality in Social Work: Social Thought*, 2011, 30(3), 294-319; C. A. FAIGIN, K. I. PARGAMENT. *Strengthened by the spirit: Religion,*

disciplines—is that spirituality is a source of resilience. Studies in the business disciplines characterizing resilience as a source of spirituality or offering evidence of the relationship of the two were extremely scarce, despite searches in multiple aggregate databases.

Although some scholars have framed calling in terms of personal fulfillment at work<sup>1</sup>, this study defines calling as a spiritual value<sup>2</sup>; it is, therefore, best characterized within a theological framework. In the modern context, calling is both a sacred and secular term, but the idea that work can be associated with calling as a spiritual value originated within Judeo-Christian traditions<sup>3</sup>. Within this perspective, a number of theologians and mystics—as well as numerous other scholars—have advocated the “transcendent summons” as an essential characteristic of vocation as calling<sup>4</sup>. Rather than just a one-time beckoning, this divine summons is more of a lifetime discovery process<sup>5</sup> that requires constant discerning though life (Ellis and Henry 2012) or, better yet and as R. J. Pemberton states, vocation as calling is an evolving and dynamic that is “story-shaped”<sup>6</sup>. Since the transcendent aspect of vocation as calling is also such an integral part of individual identity, various theological reflections and explorations—such as the “theology of the person”<sup>7</sup>—are best suited to offer clarity and direction to the unfolding of the human-divine relationships in general, and their dynamics in the workplace<sup>8</sup> in particular.

While scholars recognize the existence of forms of calling common to all people, calling is also personal in epitomizing the nature of one’s existence: a personal uniqueness designed for a specific purpose in time and place<sup>9</sup>. This unique personal calling points to a task for a community or society<sup>10</sup>, is also simultaneously expressing an ontological foundation of personal identi-

*spirituality, and resilience through adulthood and aging*. In *Resilience in Aging*, Springer, New York, 2011, 163-180; S. KIM, G. B. ESQUIVEL. *Adolescent spirituality and resilience: Theory, research, and educational practices*. *Psychology In The Schools*, 2011, 48(7), 755-765; M. RAFTOPOULOS, G. BATES. *It's that knowing that you are not alone: the role of spirituality in adolescent resilience*. *International Journal Of Children's Spirituality*, 2011, 16(2), 151-167; I. HESKETH, J. IVY, J. SMITH. *Keeping the Peelian spirit: resilience and spirituality in policing*. *The Police Journal*, 2014, 87(3), 154-166.

<sup>1</sup> M. F. STEGER, N. K. PICKERING, J. Y. SHIN, B. J. DIK. *Calling in Work: Secular or Sacred?* *Journal Of Career Assessment*, 2010, 18(1), 82-96.

<sup>2</sup> M. Rehm. *Vocation as personal calling: A question for education*. *The Journal of Educational Thought (JET)/Revue de la Pensée Éducative*, 1990, 114-125.

<sup>3</sup> B., J. DIK, R.D. DUFFY, M.F. STEGER. *Enhancing social justice by promoting prosocial values in career development interventions*. *Counseling and Values*, 2012, 57(1), 31-37.

<sup>4</sup> L. M. ABRAMI. *The Concept of a Personal Calling: In the Works of Several Psychoanalysts and Philosophers*. *Journal of Spirituality in Mental Health*, 2011, 13(3), 207-219.

<sup>5</sup> R. P. STEVENS. *Aging Matters: Finding Your Calling for the Rest of Your Life*. Wm. B. Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 2016.

<sup>6</sup> R. J. PEMBERTON. *Follow the caller not the calling: What we forgot about vocation*. *Christianity Today*, 2015, 59(7), 62-66.

<sup>7</sup> J. RATZINGER. *Concerning the notion of person in theology*. *Communio*, 1990, 17, 439-454; H. U. VON BALTHASAR. *On the concept of person*. *Zeitschrift für Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 52. 1961, 50, 39; G. A. MCCOOL. *The philosophy of the human person in Karl Rahner's theology*. *Theological Studies*, 1961, 22(4), 537-562.

<sup>8</sup> M. D. CHENU. *The theology of work: An exploration*. H. Regnery Company, Chicago, 1966; M. VOLF. *Work in the spirit: Toward a theology of work*. Wipf and Stock Publishers, Oregon, 2001.

<sup>9</sup> D. D. KING, A. NEWMAN, F. LUTHANS. *Not if, but when we need resilience in the workplace*. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 2016. 37(5), 782-786.

<sup>10</sup> R. D. DUFFY, B. J. DIK, M. F. STEGER. *Calling and work-related outcomes: Career commitment as a mediator*. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 2011, 78(2), 210-218; A. J. GITTINS. *A sacred voice is calling: personal vocation and social conscience*. *New Theology Review*, 2007, 20(4), 87-8

ty<sup>1</sup>, which may partly explain why the terms calling and vocation are used interchangeably<sup>2</sup>. Terms used to describe the calling–vocation concept are the “personal ideal”<sup>3</sup>, “ego-ideal”<sup>4</sup>, and “ontological name”<sup>5</sup>. G. Bogart calls it “a central facet of the narrative that a person constructs to make sense of his or her personal history”<sup>6</sup>, while I. Progoff calls it “a single directive principle unifying one’s inward and outward life”<sup>7</sup>.

The development or maturation of calling, as a spiritual value, occurs throughout the course of adult life<sup>8</sup>. More specifically, longitudinal studies have shown that negative life events are associated with spiritual growth in adulthood<sup>9</sup>. To this effect, K. Stokes<sup>10</sup> notes that growth occurs more frequently during periods of transition and crisis than during times of stability. Within this spiritual maturation process, values—such as calling—are considered a significant influence in building a positive reaction to adversity<sup>11</sup>. Essentially, calling presumes adversity and adversity challenges the response to calling.

Since the workplace occupies such a central part of adult life, adverse and nurturing situations at work can contribute to the evolving “story-shaping” activities of a person’s vocation and calling. Yet, rather than focusing on the type and intensity of a variety of possible adverse situations in the workplace (e.g., relational, task, structural, environmental, and work–family), this study focuses specifically on the relationship between calling and resilience as a measure of reaction to adversity. Scholars already recognize calling as a source of resilience for various reasons. First, the transcendent summons in calling offers a solution to human insufficiency<sup>12</sup> and a meaning-making framework for positively interpreting adversity<sup>13</sup>. Calling also has a sacrificial,

<sup>1</sup> A. HIRSCHI, A. HERRMANN. (2012). *Vocational identity achievement as a mediator of presence of calling and life satisfaction*. Journal of Career Assessment, 2012, 20(3), 309-321.

<sup>2</sup> P. A. BAXLEY. *Vocation: Discerning our callings in life*. Perspectives In Religious Studies, 2007, 34(2), 259-264.

<sup>3</sup> M.A. REED. *Composing dialogues to express self-differentiation and Burke’s rhetoric: A way to comprehend multilevel inner growth*. Roeper Review, 2000, 23, 10-17.

<sup>4</sup> O. F. KERNBERG. *Psychoanalytic perspectives on the religious experience*. American Journal of Psychotherapy, 2000, 54, 452-476.

<sup>5</sup> R. R. ROJAS. *The challenges of pastoral leadership: Concepts and practice*. Authorhouse, Bloomington, IN, 2012.

<sup>6</sup> G. BOGART. *Finding life’s calling*. Journal of Humanistic Psychology, 1994, 34, 10.

<sup>7</sup> I. PROGOFF. (1986). *The dynamics of hope*. Dialogue House Library, New York, NY, 1986, 78.

<sup>8</sup> C. N. ALEXANDER, J. L. DAVIES, C. A. DIXON, M. C. DILLBECK, S. M. DRUKER, R. M. OETZEL, J. M. MUEHLMAN, D. W. ORMEJOHNSON, D. *Growth of higher stages of consciousness: Maharishi’s Vedic psychology of human development*. In C. Alexander & E. Langer (Eds.), Higher stages of human development: Perspectives on adult growth. Oxford University Press, New York, 1990, 286-341; J. SINNOTT. *Development and yearning: Cognitive aspects of spiritual development*. Journal of Adult Development, 1994, 1, 91–99.

<sup>9</sup> P. WINK, M. DILLON. *Spiritual development across the adult life course: Findings from a longitudinal study*. Journal of Adult Development, 2004, 9(1), 79-94.

<sup>10</sup> K. STOKES. *Faith development in the adult life cycle*. Journal of Religious Gerontology, 1990, 7, 167–184.

<sup>11</sup> M. A. ANDRADE -VINUEZA. *The role of spirituality in building up the resilience of migrant children in Central America: bridging the gap between needs and responses*. International Journal of Children’s Spirituality, 2017, 22(1), 84-101.

<sup>12</sup> C. A. FAIGIN, K. L. PARGAMENT. *Strengthened by the spirit: Religion, spirituality, and resilience through adulthood and aging*. Resilience in Aging, Springer, New York, 2011, 163-180.

<sup>13</sup> S. VANISTENDAEL. *Resilience and spirituality*. In B. Monroe and D. Oliviere (Eds) Resilience in Palliative Care: Achievement in Adversity, Oxford Press, UK, 2007, 115-135

self-giving component that compels an altruistic disposition<sup>1</sup>. In asserting that calling is a source of resilience (i.e., resistance to adversity), one can assert—at least theoretically—that better appreciation of one's calling would also result in higher levels of resilience.

This study's objective is to evaluate the relationship between resilience and spirituality. The sample comprises data collected over a four-year period from 516 business graduate students undertaking an online business research class. Students completed a resilience scale and a spirituality assessment scale at the beginning of the course using an online data collection platform, which would identify each participant only by session ID and date-time stamp. To encourage participation and protect anonymity, no other demographic data were collected. The data were used for this study and for illustration purposes later in the students' research course.

## METHODOLOGY

Data were collected from 516 business graduate (MBA) students, representing a variety of workplaces, using two instruments: a resilience instrument and a spirituality assessment tool. The participants completed online assessments for resilience and calling as a spiritual value. The psychometric properties of both instruments were reviewed and also validated with the data of the present study. A subset of items from the spirituality assessment tool was identified as directly related to calling and was also tested for internal validity. The data from the calling subset and resilience were subjected to a Pearson correlation to test the strength of the relationship between these two variables.

Originally developed and validated by G. Wagnild and H. Young<sup>2</sup>, the Resilience Scale (RS-25) comprises 25 items. In their original study, the instrument showed a coefficient alpha of 0.91 and item-to-total correlations between 0.37 and 0.75, with the majority falling between 0.50 and 0.70 using a sample of 810 adults. All inter-correlation of items were significant at  $p \leq 0.001$ . For the current study, with a sample of 516 business graduate students, the RS-25 showed a coefficient alpha of 0.89 with similar inter-item correlations at  $p \leq 0.001$ , with a skewness of  $-0.274$  and kurtosis of  $-0.301$ .

For spirituality, the Relational Spirituality Scale<sup>3</sup> or RSS-30 (formerly known as the Independent Spirituality Assessment Scale) was used, comprising 30 items that measure spirituality as a relational construct (i.e., relationship with self, others, and the divine). The RSS-30 was originally developed in 2003 and has been used in various published studies. For a large sample of 1,527 responses generated throughout studies using this scale, the instrument exhibited an internal consistency (Cronbach alpha) of 0.94 with adequate normality statistics (skewness =  $-0.048$ , kurtosis =  $-0.459$ ). The RSS-30 results for the current study of business graduate students ( $n=516$ ) showed a Cronbach alpha of 0.92, with a skewness of 0.23 and kurtosis of  $-0.572$ . Notably, values for skewness and kurtosis between  $-2$  and  $+2$  are considered acceptable to show normal distribution<sup>4</sup>, a key assumption when using correlation.

<sup>1</sup> F. PÁLFI, E. NYAKAS, M. ZRÍNYI. *Service, self-sacrifice, vocation? The threats of burnout among nurses*. Nursing Research, 2003, 16(6).

<sup>2</sup> G. WAGNILD, H. YOUNG. *Development and psychometric evaluation of the resilience scale*. Journal of Nursing Measurement, 1993, 1(2), 165-178.

<sup>3</sup> R. R. ROJAS. *Spirituality in Management and Leadership: A relational-ideopraxis approach*. Authorhouse, Bloomington, IN, 2005.

<sup>4</sup> A. FIELD. *Discovering statistics using spss for windows*. Sage publications, London-Thousand Oaks- New Delh, 2000; W. M. TROCHIM, J. P. DONNELLY (2006). *The research methods knowledge base* (3rd ed.). Cincinnati, OH:



From the RSS-30, a series of nine statements that directly relate to “calling” were grouped to represent a single variable named CALLING. These nine statements were verified against the extant literature and tested for internal validity with the graduate students ( $\alpha = 0.793$ , skewness =  $-0.093$ , kurtosis =  $-0.455$ ). The selected RSS-30 statements representing CALLING and the verifying sources are presented in Table 1.

S#	Narrative from the RSS-30	Source
S1	Everything I am in my private life, I am also in my public life.	<u>Markow</u> and <u>Klenke</u> (2005).
S7	I spend time each day reflecting on the results of my daily activities as a way to adjust my life-style.	Hall, D. T., & Chandler, D. E. (2005).
S10	I can easily cope with adverse situations that are beyond my personal control	<u>Vinje</u> , H. F. (2007).
S14	I am living according to my personal calling in life.	Duffy, R. D., <u>Allan</u> , B. A., <u>Autin</u> , K. L., & <u>Bott</u> , E. M. (2013).
S17	I am continuously trying to discover more about myself.	Benner, D. G., & Pennington, M. B. (2015).
S18	I am intentionally growing towards the full use of my abilities.	Hall, D. T., & Chandler, D. E. (2005).
S25	Finding more about "Who I am" is a high priority in my life.	Benner, D. G., & Pennington, M. B. (2015).
S27	I spend time reflecting on ways to become a better person.	Hall, D. T., & Chandler, D. E. (2005).
S37	I adapt well, even in the face of severe adversity.	<u>Vinje</u> , H. F. (2007).

Table 1, Validation of statements extracted from the RSS-30 relating to CALLING

Satisfied with the psychometric properties of the Resilience Scale (RS-25) and the sub-grouped variable CALLING from the RSS-30, the next step was to calculate the strength of the relationship between resilience and calling using a Pearson correlation. In doing so, the resulting correlation factor ( $n=516$ ) using SPSS was  $r=0.58$ , significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

As with any form of research, there are limitations and constraints that are necessary to present in order to properly frame the value of the outcomes. First of all, the literature acknowledges a variety of theories and difficulties in measuring resilience, spirituality, and calling and therefore the selection of instruments used in the present study provide a first look of strength among these variables. Although the present study is intended to illustrate the dynamics of these variables in the workplace setting, the study is unable to neither determine different forms of commitment to calling in the workplace nor determine the effects of adverse events that fall outside the workplace and their effects at work. Likewise, the study is unable to establish whether

the participants hold a healthy or biased sense of a transcendent summons or identify the belief system used by each participant to interpret the summons. Although demographics were not collected, it is fair to assume that participants have a professional sense of their vocation and calling since they are business graduate students, and consequently, the research outcomes may apply just to a professional population. Finally, this study is affected by the strengths and weaknesses of a typical empirical research, which recognizes that not all human phenomena can be quantitatively measured. Despite these constraints, this exploratory study into the relationship between resilience and vocation as calling has some value in addressing a gap in the literature and also serves as an invitation to explore the relationship among these variables using alternative research methods.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study's purpose was to investigate the relationship between resilience as a reaction to adversity and vocation as calling in the workplace. The results show a positive and moderate relationship between these variables, supporting the argument that increasing appreciation of a transcendent summons also increases resilience. Additionally, the direction of the relationship was positive, meaning that these variables tend to increase together. The magnitude—or strength—of the association was moderate ( $r=0.58$ ) but somewhat stronger than the results between the RSS-30 (Spirituality) and the RS-25 (Resilience) overall scores, which yielded an  $r=0.50$ . This suggests that calling is a better indicator of resilience than spirituality as measured by this instrument. Even taking the scores of items 14 (“*I am living according to my personal calling in life*”) and 37 (“*I adapt well, even in the face of severe adversity*”) from the RSS-30 together, they present a moderate correlation with resilience ( $r=0.55$ ).

These findings indicate that calling in the workplace generates resilience as a reaction to adversity, although causality remains uncertain because facing adversity could also serve to deepen commitment to calling. Some literature points to spirituality—and calling as a spiritual value—as the source of resistance to adversity<sup>1</sup>, but studies explaining the effects of resilience upon calling in the workplace are scarce. Without question, the intertwining of resilience as a reaction to adversity and vocation as calling impedes the study of causality. Calling can provide a source to face adversity, whereas adversity can challenge behaviors related to calling. Yet living a calling is by no means a guarantee for dealing effectively with adversity<sup>2</sup>. Either way, the study of spiritual values such as calling may not be fully understood through quantitative methods alone.

From the workplace perspective, this moderate relationship provides the foundation for an otherwise difficult skill to develop as a standalone value. Resilience is rarely promoted in isolation as a salient organizational value<sup>3</sup> and is a difficult behavioral skill to develop over a short

<sup>1</sup> BANERJEE, *Spirituality a source of resilience* 45-70; L. K. MANNING. *Navigating Hardships in Old Age: Exploring the Relationship Between Spirituality and Resilience in Later Life*. *Qualitative Health Research*, 2013, 23(4), 568-575; DE LA ROSA, *Spirituality and resilience*, 3332-3351.

<sup>2</sup> M. T. Cardador, B. B. Caza. *Relational and identity perspectives on healthy versus unhealthy pursuit of callings*. *Journal of Career Assessment*, 2012, 20(3), 338-353

<sup>3</sup> E. A. BARDOEL, T. M. PETTIT, H. DE CIERI, L. MCMILLAN. *Employee resilience: An emerging challenge for HRM*. *Asia Pacific Journal of Human Resources*, 2014, 52(3), 279-297.

period of time, especially when facing an impending crisis<sup>1</sup>. Unfortunately, in business settings, management interest in resilience tends to be more frequent when the organization is exposed to high risk events, such as reorganization, layoffs, and changes in job descriptions<sup>2</sup>. Yet if the moderate relationship holds true, calling in the workplace provides a “reservoir” of resilience as an alternative to an “on-demand” need for resilience.

Aside from helping to prepare for organizational crises, resilience is also known to be a significant factor in alleviating employee stress. The literature on resilience recognizes specific intrapersonal dynamics related to stress, such as a belief system that provides existential meaning, a cohesive life narrative, and an appreciation of one’s uniqueness<sup>3</sup>. Yet belief systems<sup>4</sup>, meaning making<sup>5</sup>, cohesive life<sup>6</sup>, and the recognition of personal uniqueness<sup>7</sup> are also considered erud attributes of a calling. Essentially, vocation as calling carries these attributes and results in better coping of stress in the workplace.

It is remarkable to observe over the past decades how business journals seem to be indirectly “reaching out” to the theology disciplines for perspectives supportive of the workplace spirituality movement. To illustrate, the business literature has already shown interest in researching topics such as the meaning of work<sup>8</sup>, faith at work<sup>9</sup>, prayer in the workplace<sup>10</sup>, forgiveness<sup>11</sup>, healing<sup>12</sup>, spiritual formation<sup>13</sup>, and morality<sup>14</sup> for which theology already has rich content and proven traditions. Peter Vaill advocates for this interdisciplinary “reaching out” with a broader question affecting the worker as well as the workplace: “Can there be a divinely grounded organizational behavior—that is, a serious study in which organizational events are assumed to be codetermined by human and divine action?”<sup>15</sup>. Without doubt—as in the case of

<sup>1</sup> I. T. ROBERTSON, C. L. COOPER, M. SARKAR, T. CURRAN. *Resilience training in the workplace from 2003 to 2014: A systematic review*. Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology, 2015, 88(3), 533-562.

<sup>2</sup> H. L. AALBERS, W. DOLFSMA. *Innovation resilience despite corporate downsizing: Positioning in the formal and informal network*. In Academy of Management Proceedings, 2013,1,13933).

<sup>3</sup> K. TUSAIE, J. DYER. *Resilience: A historical review of the construct*. Holistic Nursing Practice, 2004, 18(1), 3-10.

<sup>4</sup> C. DELGADO. *A discussion of the concept of spirituality*. Nursing Science Quarterly, 2005, 18(2), 157-162.

<sup>5</sup> M. LIPS-WIERSMA. *The influence of spiritual “meaning-making” on career behavior*. Journal of Management Development, 2002, 21(7), 497-520.

<sup>6</sup> R. SAWATZKY, P. A. RATNER, L. CHIU. *A meta-analysis of the relationship between spirituality and quality of life*. Social Indicators Research, 2005, 72(2), 153-188.

<sup>7</sup> R. A. EMMONS, C. CHEUNG, K. TEHRANI. *Assessing spirituality through personal goals: Implications for research on religion and subjective well-being*. Social Indicators Research, 1998, 45(1-3), 391-422.

<sup>8</sup> C. T. TACKNEY. *Authenticity in employment relations: A theology of the workplace analysis*. In Academy of Management Proceedings, 2014, 1, 10782.

<sup>9</sup> M. L. LYNN, M. J. NAUGHTON, S. VANDERVEEN. *Faith at work scale (FWS): Justification, development, and validation of a measure of Judaeo-Christian religion in the workplace*. Journal of Business Ethics, 2009, 85(2), 227-243.

<sup>10</sup> W. B. MCCARTY. *Prayer in the workplace: Risks and strategies to manage them*. Business Renaissance Quarterly, 2007, 2(1), 97.

<sup>11</sup> M. J. KURZYNSKI. *The virtue of forgiveness as a human resource management strategy*. Journal of Business Ethics, 1998, 17(1), 77-85.

<sup>12</sup> W. LUNDIN, *The healing manager*, 1993.

<sup>13</sup> W. D. THOMPSON. *Can you train people to be spiritual?* Training & Development, 2000, 54(12), 18.

<sup>14</sup> R. CROPANZANO, *Deontic Justice*, 1019-1024.

<sup>15</sup> P. Vaill, P. (1998). *Spirited leading and learning: Process wisdom for a new age*. Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, CA, 172

vocation as calling—theology can become a major contributor to these discussions and yet there seem to be few interdisciplinary initiatives attempting to reduce this divide

The current study raises questions for further exploration. Admittedly, one can have a vocation without the benefit of calling, but—within the business setting—how does one discover and develop a calling within the workplace setting, starting from a well-defined professional vocation and effectively transition to a “higher purpose” inspired by the transcendent? Is this the role of Human Resources or a chaplain? Could calling be eventually considered a hiring criteria for certain jobs? What are the devices used to discover and promote calling at work religion specific? Are there ethical implications? What particular theological lines of inquiry or initiatives are appropriate in closing the interdisciplinary gap and further vocation as calling within the evolving spirituality at work movement? Are there empirical discoveries in workplace research that benefit theological discourse? Other than at personal level, is there also a comparable calling at organizational level within a business that gives it a more transcendent sense of meaning and direction? Evidently, the concept of vocation as calling presents research opportunities for a better defined role of the theology disciplines in workplace research.

Work is a dominant activity of human and social endeavor, and a significant locus of personal identity. Typically, there are an abundance of workplace situations that constantly challenge an individual’s calling. Having a calling by no means guarantees being able to deal with adversity; yet adversity in the workplace has been determined to contribute to the evolving, “story-shaping” activities of a person’s vocation and calling. This study’s results show a positive and moderate relationship between calling and resilience, supporting the argument that increasing appreciation of a transcendent summons also increases resilience. Very few studies are available on the effects of these variables in the workplace, and extensive further investigation is still required to better appreciate the value of vocation as calling in the workplace.

#### ABSTRACT

*Among the settings that constantly challenge an individual’s uniqueness is the workplace. Within the workplace, adversity—and resilience as its purported remedy— plays a key role in molding the self-image. Traditionally, adversity has been viewed as an undesirable construct, while resilience is regarded as a professional attribute. This study redefines adversity as a positive concept and an opportunity for further discovery and maturation of a person’s calling within a theological context. For this study, 516 business graduate students from a variety of workplace settings completed online assessments on resilience and calling as a spiritual value. The study explores the relationship between resilience as a reaction to adversity and vocation as calling in the workplace.*