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# Perception of calling and turnover intention: the moderating role of perceived mobility

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## Abstract

This research aimed to analyze the existence of positive, negative, direct, and indirect relationships (via job satisfaction and self-efficacy) between perceiving a calling and turnover intention, as well as the moderating role of perceived mobility. We used a quantitative approach and data collection from 230 employees. The analysis was conducted using structural equation modeling. The results show a direct and negative effect between perceiving a calling and turnover intention, and between job satisfaction and turnover intention. We identified a direct and positive effect between perceiving a calling and job satisfaction and between perceiving a calling and self-efficacy. Job satisfaction partially mediates the relationship between perceiving a calling and turnover intention. There is no significant effect between self-efficacy and turnover intention in the analyzed sample. The moderating effect of perceived mobility on the relationship between job satisfaction and self-efficacy with turnover intention was not significant.

**Keywords:** Occupational calling. Turnover intention. Perceived mobility.

## *Percepção de chamado e a intenção de deixar o emprego: papel moderador da mobilidade de emprego*

### Resumo

Esta pesquisa teve como objetivo analisar a existência de relações positivas, negativas, diretas e indiretas (via satisfação no trabalho e autoeficácia) entre perceber um chamado e a intenção de deixar um emprego, assim como o papel moderador da percepção de mobilidade de emprego. Utilizou-se uma abordagem quantitativa, descritiva, com corte transversal e coleta de dados primários junto a 230 funcionários. Para analisar os dados, adotou-se a modelagem de equações estruturais. Os resultados apontam que há um efeito direto e negativo entre perceber um chamado e intenção de deixar o emprego, bem como entre satisfação no trabalho e a intenção de deixar o emprego. Identificou-se o efeito direto e positivo entre perceber um chamado e satisfação no trabalho e entre perceber um chamado e a autoeficácia. A satisfação no trabalho media parcialmente a relação entre perceber um chamado e a intenção de deixar o emprego. Não há efeito significativo entre autoeficácia e a intenção de deixar o emprego na amostra analisada. O efeito moderador da mobilidade de emprego nas relações entre satisfação do trabalho e autoeficácia com intenção de deixar o emprego não foram significativas.

**Palavras-chave:** Perceber um chamado. Intenção de deixar o emprego. Mobilidade de emprego.

## *Percepción vocacional e intención de dejar el empleo: papel moderador de la movilidad laboral*

### Resumen

Esta investigación tuvo como objetivo analizar la existencia de relaciones positivas, negativas, directas e indirectas (a través de la satisfacción laboral y la autoeficacia) entre la percepción de una vocación profesional y la intención de dejar el empleo, así como el papel moderador de la percepción de la movilidad laboral. Se utilizó un enfoque cuantitativo, descriptivo, con corte transversal y recopilación de datos primarios de 230 empleados. Para analizar los datos se adoptó un modelo de ecuaciones estructurales. Los resultados muestran que existe un efecto directo y negativo entre la percepción de una vocación y la intención de dejar el empleo, así como entre la satisfacción laboral y la intención de dejar el empleo. Se identificó el efecto directo y positivo entre percibir una vocación y la satisfacción laboral y entre percibir una vocación y autoeficacia. La satisfacción laboral media parcialmente la relación entre percibir una vocación y la intención de dejar el empleo. No existe un efecto significativo entre la autoeficacia y la intención de dejar el empleo en la muestra analizada. El efecto moderador de la movilidad laboral sobre la relación entre la satisfacción laboral y la autoeficacia con la intención de dejar el empleo no fue significativo.

**Palabras clave:** Percepción de una vocación. Intención de dejar el empleo. Movilidad laboral.

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## INTRODUCTION

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In contemporary discourses about work, the concern of individuals to develop a career based on a calling is increasingly present (Lysova, Allan, Dik, Duffy, & Steger, 2019; A. F. M. Silva, Felix, & Mainardes, 2021). Generally speaking, the calling can be conceptualized as an intrinsically pleasing occupation, which assumes a central role in an individual's identity, and which is perceived as a meaningful and consuming passion or even a purpose in life (Dobrow & Tosti-Kharas, 2011). This calling can be only perceived or also lived (Duffy, Douglass, Gensmer, England, & H. K. Kim, 2019). In this way, perceiving a calling refers to the degree to which an individual believes they have been called to a particular type of work (Duffy & Autin, 2013). On the other hand, living a calling refers to the degree to which the individual is involved in activities that suit that calling (Duffy & Autin, 2013).

Thus, studies have explored different effects of calling. Specifically, perceiving work as a calling is positively related to life satisfaction (Peterson, Park, N. Hall & Seligman, 2009), work engagement (May, Gilson, & Harter, 2004), job satisfaction (Nunes & Felix, 2019; Wrzesniewski, McCauley, Rozin, & Schwartz, 1997), proactivity (Dobrow & Tosti-Kharas, 2011) and career commitment (Duffy, Bott, Allan, Torrey, & Dik, 2012). Because of these benefits, common sense suggests perceiving a calling would be negatively associated with turnover intention, which is the deliberate and conscious willingness of an employee to withdraw from the organization (Abid & Butt, 2017). Cardador, Dane, and Pratt (2011) identified that perceiving a calling is negatively associated with turnover intention. In turn, Tran, Baruch, and Bui (2019) suggest that perceiving a calling also acts as an attraction factor for job opportunities with higher levels of autonomy, which would lead to a higher turnover intention. This rationale could explain a counter intuitive positive relationship between perceiving a calling and turnover intentions.

In view of these mixed results, this relationship between calling and turnover intention is not so obvious. In this context, Esteves and Lopes (2017) propose that further studies be carried out to explore these possible relationships between calling and turnover intention. In order to fill this literature gap, this research aims to analyse the existence of positive, negative, direct and indirect associations (via job satisfaction and self-efficacy) between perceiving a calling and turnover intention, as well as the moderating role of the perceived mobility in such relationships.

This study offers relevant contributions to the literature of occupational callings. Theoretically, it is justified for advancing research on the direct and indirect relationship between calling and turnover intention, given that the literature on this topic is still scarce (Esteves & Lopes, 2017) and it still does so through the inclusion of the moderating role of perceived mobility, something not yet proposed in the literature. From a practical point of view, it highlights the risks of the widely spread discourse that searching for a calling would generate employee retention. In this sense, the study helps managers to develop more assertive turnover reduction policies that consider the effect of perceiving a calling in the decision to leave the company.

## CALLING AND PERCEIVING A CALLING

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In general, business practice has regarded the calling as something that confers greater engagement at work (May et al., 2004), greater perception of psychological success (D. T. Hall & Chandler, 2005), greater proactivity in the career (Dobrow & Tosti-Kharas, 2011) and greater satisfaction at work and with life in general (Peterson et al., 2009). With this, people increasingly expect that their occupations provide the realization of personal values, meaning and purpose (Berg, Grant, & Johnson, 2010). Likewise, organizations recognize the importance of promoting intrinsically pleasing work to engage their employees in the company (Mansur & Felix, 2021; Lysova et al., 2019).

Faced with so many beneficial expectations regarding the idea of perceiving work as a calling, would it be plausible to suggest that stimulus policies aiming at the creation of subjective values in relation to work could also have negative consequences? Recent studies provide evidence that yes. Berg et al. (2010) highlight that several circumstances can make it impossible to search for a calling. In some cases, for example, individuals are tied to occupations that are firmly integrated into their lives, which makes a transition difficult or impossible; others do not have the necessary skills or opportunities to succeed on their

callings (Twenge, 2006). Moreover, other individuals may give up their calling in exchange for less satisfying but financially desirable jobs (Iyengar, R. E. Wells, & Schwartz, 2006).

In these circumstances, the calling can also become a potential source of psychological discomfort, frustration, disappointment, and regret, which can impair job performance. In addition, people with strong calling are more subject to exploitation by management (Dobrow & Tosti-Kharas, 2011). In this study, we argue that callings cause, simultaneously, positive, and negative effects for individuals and organizations. In this sense, the relationship between occupational callings and turnover intention is analysed.

## Calling and turnover intention

In the literature, turnover intention is understood as a set of psychological, cognitive, and behavioural aspects that reflect the employee's subjective tendency to leave the organization at some point in the future (Abid & Butt, 2017). Turnover intention, or the intention to turnover, is not to be confused with turnover. Meanwhile, turnover intention corresponds to the employee's propensity to voluntarily leave the organization in which they exercise their functions (Esteves & Lopes, 2017), turnover consists of the real separation between the individual and the organization, that is, it consists of leaving the company at the initiative of the employee or the organization (J. E. Wells & Peachey, 2011).

The relationship between calling and turnover intention was recently analysed in a study of nurses in China (Xu, Tao, Huang, Little, & Huang, 2020). The results of this research indicated that there is a negative relationship between calling and turnover intention. This means that individuals who interpret work as a calling would be less willing to leave their organizations. This research, in addition to analysing a specific professional class, adopted a scale based on indicators of perceiving and living a calling (Xu et al., 2020). This is because the positive effects of having a calling depend significantly on the individual's ability to experience it (Duffy, Allan, & Bott, 2012; Duffy et al., 2012). Therefore, it is necessary to distinguish the intention of turnover between those individuals who perceive and those who experience a calling (Duffy & Autin, 2013). This study will focus on the "perceiving a calling" construct.

In this sense, we found that these previous studies pointed to both a possible negative (Esteves & Lopes, 2017) and positive relationship (M. J. Kim & S. H. Kim, 2016) between perceiving a calling and turnover intention, a consensus has not yet been identified. Thus, in this study, we hypothesized that individuals with greater perception of a calling have greater intention to leave their job, as they tend to have more possibilities of finding meaning at work in a different occupation (M. J. Kim & S. H. Kim, 2016). Therefore, we suggest that:

H1: Perceiving a calling positively influences turnover intention.

## The negative indirect effect via job satisfaction

Studies suggest that work can be a source of pain, boredom, joy, energy, satisfaction, or a complex mixture of these elements depending on the dynamic that exists between the individual, the organization, and the work itself (Wrzesniewski, 2003). When it comes to job satisfaction, it refers to a general orientation by individuals regarding the roles they are currently occupying in an organization (Kalleberg, 1977). Satisfaction is considered a desired outcome in the Organizational Behaviour field, which justified the carrying out of several researches on this subject (Peterson et al., 2009).

Researches that related perceiving a calling with job satisfaction showed mixed results (Duffy, Boot, Allan, Torrey, & Dik, 2012; Gazica & Spector, 2015; Peterson et al., 2009; Xu et al., 2020). On the one hand, because of practical limitations, many individuals are unable to experience the calling and thus experience less job satisfaction than those who have no perceived a calling or those who experience occupational calling (Gazica & Spector, 2015). On the other hand, several researchers have associated the calling with higher levels of job satisfaction (Duffy et al., 2012; Duffy, Dik, & Steger, 2010; Xu et al., 2020). These higher levels of job satisfaction occur because individuals oriented towards a calling have a more optimistic and enthusiastic view of life (Peterson et al., 2009), which is reflected in a more positive attitude at work as well.

Other research suggests that even when individuals cannot live their callings, they can adopt coping strategies (Felix & Cavazotte, 2019) that allow them to remain linked to the company they work for without experiencing intense feelings of frustration that makes them want to leave their organization (Berg et al., 2010; Wrzesniewski, 2003). In line with previous research (Duffy et al., 2012), in the present work, we hypothesize that perceiving work as a calling makes individuals more optimistic and willing to see positive aspects of a job (Xu et al., 2020).

H2: Perceiving a calling positively influences job satisfaction.

Employee turnover is an organizational result with costly effects for organizations and sometimes for individuals (Ben-Bakr, Al-Shammari, Jefri, & Prasad, 1994). In this context, much research was developed to identify the causes of this phenomenon, with dissatisfaction at work being described as one of the main predictors of turnover intention (Abid & Butt, 2017). Therefore, when the worker is dissatisfied with their work, the greater tend to be the chances that they will choose to leave their job.

In the same sense, in a research carried out with nurses, it was found that individuals who are dissatisfied with their work are more likely to intend to leave their jobs than nurses who are satisfied, with the probability of having the intention to leave decreasing as job satisfaction increases (Shields & Ward, 2001). This is because job satisfaction is the result of the employee's affective orientation in relation to their activity, and that depends not only on the nature of the work, but also on the expectations that individuals have about what the work should provide (Li et al., 2018; Lu, While, & Barriball, 2005; Niskala et al., 2020). Thus, individuals satisfied at work maintain a greater affective bond with their organizations, therefore, we expect there to be a direct negative relationship between job satisfaction and turnover intention:

H3: Job satisfaction negatively influences turnover intention.

Although many researches have addressed the relationship between job satisfaction and turnover intention (Abid & Butt, 2017), there is a need to investigate the calling and turnover intention relationship and how job satisfaction affects this relationship. In one of the few researches that assesses the interaction between these three constructs (perceiving a calling, turnover intention and job satisfaction), in addition to identifying a direct and negative relationship between turnover intention and job satisfaction, it became clear that job satisfaction can also mediate the relationship between perceiving a calling and turnover intention (Xu et al., 2020). In line with these results, and in view of the enthusiastic outlook on life typical of individuals who have a calling (Peterson et al., 2009), and the affective bond that individuals satisfied at work maintain with their organizations (Lu et al., 2005), we expect that there is an indirect negative relationship, via job satisfaction, between perceiving a calling and turnover intention.

H4: Job satisfaction mediates the relationship between perceiving a calling and turnover intention.

## The positive indirect effect via self-efficacy

Self-efficacy concerns people's beliefs in their abilities to take control over the events of their lives (Wood & Bandura, 1989). Individuals with higher levels of self-efficacy prepare themselves educationally for different occupational activities and consider more career options (Wood & Bandura, 1989). In addition, research suggests that self-efficacy is positively related to task performance (Locke, Frederick, Lee, & Bobko, 1984) and successfully searching for new jobs (Kanfer & Hulin, 1985).

Individuals with a high perception of a calling tend to employ higher levels of effort at work, greater emotional regulation, and a more proactive attitude towards their career (Dobrow & Tosti-Kharas, 2011; Praskova, Creed, & Hood, 2015). They also usually show higher levels of proactive professional development (Felix & Papaleo, 2021; Lysova et al., 2018). Thus, we suggest that when perceiving an occupational calling, the individual employs greater levels of effort at work and in their training, which would lead to greater levels of self-efficacy. Therefore, we propose that:

H5: Perceiving a calling positively influences self-efficacy.

The relationship between self-efficacy and turnover intention has been analysed by previous research that showed mixed results that sometimes confirmed a positive relationship (Mone, 1994), sometimes a negative relationship (De Neve & Devos, 2016), or did not identify a significant effect between the constructs (O'Neill & Mone, 1998). However, no research has been identified that evaluates this relationship from a sample in developing countries, where the scarcity of job opportunities can affect this relationship (Sousa-Poza & Henneberger, 2004).

We hypothesize that individuals with greater self-efficacy have greater courage and confidence to make proactive decisions, facing better job opportunities (Gupta, Bhattacharya, Sheorey, & Coelho, 2018). Thus, because they feel more able to assume new roles, move up in their careers and seek challenges in new job opportunities (Troutman, Burke, & Beeler, 2000), we suggest that individuals who have higher levels of self-efficacy are more likely to have an intention to leave. Therefore, we propose that:

H6: Self-efficacy positively influences turnover intention.

In view of the attraction that the calling exerts for individuals to seek greater self-management and career self-direction (Tran et al., 2019), we propose that individuals with higher levels of self-efficacy will feel more capable of seeking and taking on jobs with higher levels of autonomy, although outside the current organization and thus are more likely to leave the organization (Gupta et al., 2018). Therefore, we argue that self-efficacy mediates the relationship between perceiving a calling and turnover intention.

H7: Self-efficacy mediates the relationship between perceiving a calling and turnover intention.

### The moderating role of perceived mobility

Perceived mobility is a construct that concerns the assessment that an employee makes about their chances of getting a new job (Meglich, Valentine, & Eesley, 2019) or “the extent to which employees feel they have attractive employment alternatives” (Tepper, 2000, p.179). Perceived mobility can significantly affect the intention to leave employment, as even if employees do not perceive a mismatch with the organization, they just opt for the exit, if they believe that a better fit will be achieved by working in another organization (Morley, Wheeler, Gallagher, Brouer, & Sablinski, 2007). Otherwise, even if they assess that there is a misfit with the organization, employees deal with the mismatch until an opportunity to leave the organization arises (Follmer, Talbot, Kristof-Brown, Astrove, & Billsberry, 2018).

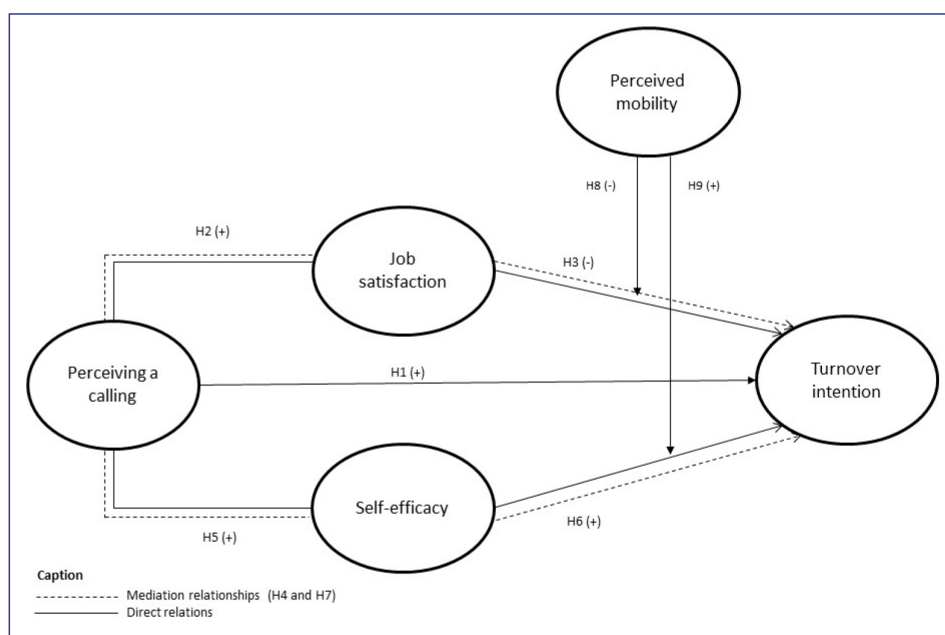
We suggested that higher levels of job satisfaction reduce turnover intention, because, when satisfied, individuals usually interpret that they have an interesting psychological contract with the organization that they work for (Lu et al., 2005; Shields & Ward, 2001). However, when individuals have a perception that they have attractive employment alternatives (Tepper, 2000), it makes them think not only if their current job is good enough for them, but also if they could be more satisfied somewhere else (Cornelißen, 2006). Thus, we propose that the perceived mobility moderates the direct negative relationship that exists between satisfaction and turnover intention. So, we propose that:

H8: Perceived mobility moderates the negative relationship between job satisfaction and turnover intention, in such a way that it makes this relationship weaker.

Likewise, we suggest that perceived mobility also moderates the relationship between self-efficacy and turnover intention. We argue that a greater willingness to take on challenges and make proactive decisions provided by self-efficacy is enhanced, if the individual identifies many alternative employment opportunities (Van der Vaart, Linde, Beer, & Cockeran, 2015). Therefore, these individuals would have more disposition for turnover intention. Thus, we assume that a high perceived mobility will intensify the direct relationship that exists between self-efficacy and turnover intention. In view of this, we propose that:

H9: Perceived mobility moderates the relationship that exists between self-efficacy and turnover intention, such that it makes this relationship stronger.

**Figure 1**  
**Theoretical model**



Source: Elaborated by the authors.

## METHOD

We adopted a research with a quantitative approach, descriptive with cross-section and primary data collection and a non-probabilistic convenience sampling. The target population of this study was composed of individuals who work with some kind of employment relationship (Consolidation of the Labour Laws) and/or statutory (public service) in different sectors of the Brazilian economy, such as: health, education, security, banking, agribusiness and among others.

For data collection, we developed a structured questionnaire that was created in Google Forms. The questionnaire was composed of three parts. In the first part, we inserted a text introducing the research and the following question for population control purposes: "What is the nature of the bond of your current occupation?" With this question we aimed to exclude eventual respondents who did not fit the profile of the target population. Therefore, those who answered the option unemployed, self-employed and/or entrepreneur to this question were excluded from the database. In the second part, we present the five constructs already validated that make up the proposed model, being: (i) Perceived calling (Dik, Eldridge, Steger, & Duffy, 2012) composed of four items, with a Likert scale, with an intensity of 1 (totally false for me) to 5 (totally true); (ii) Job satisfaction (Macdonald & MacIntyre, 1997) composed of ten items; (iii) Perceived mobility (Tepper, 2000) composed of 3 items; (iv) Self-efficacy (Chen, Gully, & Eden, 2001) with seven items; (v) Turnover intention (Shore & Martin, 1989) composed of four items, with a Likert scale of 1 (I will definitely stay in the organization) to 5 (I will definitely leave the organization). Constructs ii and iii were measured with a 5-point Likert scale (1: I totally disagree; 5: I totally agree). The third and last part of the questionnaire included questions about the profile of respondents, such as: age, gender, education, income, length of employment, region in which one works, nature of employment relationship (public or private) and sector of activity for the purposes of socio-demographic control. All five scales used in this research were translated from English to Portuguese by a professional translator.

To validate the questionnaire, we submitted it to a pre-test, through the online platform Google Forms, with 10 respondents with a profile consistent with the required sample of the research, in order to clarify doubts and correct possible mistakes in the translation or construction of sentences. During the pre-test, some improvements were suggested, and the necessary changes were made. Next, we started the data collection process electronically, via LinkedIn, WhatsApp, and e-mail. 289 responses were collected from July to November 2020. Of these collected responses, 59 respondents that declared themselves

to be entrepreneurs, self-employed or unemployed were excluded, as they did not meet the requirements of the target population defined for this study. Also, to verify the adequacy of the sample size, we used the software G\*Power 3.1.9 and we adopted the test force criteria (Power =  $1 - \beta$  error prob. II) of 0.80;  $\alpha$  err prob 0.05; and effect size ( $f^2$ ) of 0.15, as proposed by Ringle, D. Silva, and Bido (2014). The analysis showed that the minimum sample size a priori should be 77 valid responses. In this study, 230 valid responses were obtained, which indicates that the number of responses obtained was adequate.

To analyse the data, we adopted structural equation modelling (SEM) using partial least squares (Bido & D. Silva, 2019; Hair, Risher, Sarstedt, & Ringle, 2019). Thus, first, we used the confirmatory composite analysis (CCA) to evaluate and validate the measurement model. Secondly, we carried out the evaluation of the structural model, in order to test the proposed hypotheses. To analyse the data, we use the SmartPLS 3.0 software.

## RESULTS

### Measurement model

We started data analysis through confirmatory composite analysis (CCA). The values of the factor loadings were evaluated, we considered as ideal the variables of the constructs that have factor loadings greater than 0.708 (Hair et al., 2019), however, those with values greater than 0.50 are also admitted, provided that the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) of the construct was greater than 0.50 and the Composite Reliability (CR) greater than 0.70 (Bido & D. Silva, 2019). Thus, they did not meet these requirements and, therefore, we excluded the following variables: PC3, PC4, JS1, JS7, SE6 and SE7. All other factor loadings of the variables were between 0.633 and 0.951, being accepted as adequate (see Table 1).

Next, we analyse the AVE, the average of the variance extracted. For this, such indices must be equal to or greater than 0.50 (Hair et al., 2019). In our data, the indices obtained ranged between 0.529 and 0.892. To analyse the internal consistency of the constructs, we used Cronbach's Alpha (CA) and Composite Reliability (CR). We also verified the Spearman's correlation (Rho\_A), responsible for indicating the intensity of the relationship between the variables and that usually presents a value between the Cronbach's Alpha (CA) and Composite Reliability (CR) (Hair et al., 2019). The values obtained in the three indexes ranged from 0.70 to 0.90, being, therefore, considered satisfactory (Hair et al., 2019). As shown in Table 1.

**Table 1**  
**Convergent Validity and Internal consistency**

| Construct            | Code | Indicators                                                                                                                        | Cross Loadings    | AVE   | AC    | Rho_A | CR    |
|----------------------|------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Perceiving a calling | PC1  | I have a calling to a particular kind of work.                                                                                    | 0.951             | 0.892 | 0.880 | 0.887 | 0.943 |
|                      | PC2  | I have a good understanding of my calling as it applies to my career.                                                             | 0.938             |       |       |       |       |
|                      | PC3  | I am trying to figure out my calling in my career.                                                                                | Variable excluded |       |       |       |       |
|                      | PC4  | I am searching for my calling as it applies to my career.                                                                         | Variable excluded |       |       |       |       |
| Turnover intention   | TI1  | Which of the following statements most clearly reflects your feelings about your future with this organizations in the next year? | 0.777             | 0.665 | 0.834 | 0.855 | 0.888 |
|                      | TI2  | How do you fell about leaving this organization?                                                                                  | 0.827             |       |       |       |       |
|                      | TI3  | If you were completely free to choose, would you prefer or not prefer to continue working for this organization?                  | 0.858             |       |       |       |       |
|                      | TI4  | How important is it to you personally that you spend your career in this organization rather than some other organization?        | 0.797             |       |       |       |       |

Continuation

| Construct          | Code | Indicators                                                                                                                 | Cross Loadings    | AVE   | AC    | Rho_A | CR    |
|--------------------|------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Perceived mobility | PM1  | If I were to quit my job, I could find another job that is just as good.                                                   | 0.767             | 0.725 | 0.813 | 0.850 | 0.887 |
|                    | PM2  | I would have no problem finding an acceptable job if I quit my current job.                                                | 0.897             |       |       |       |       |
|                    | PM3  | If it weren't possible to continue working where I work, I would be able to relocate myself in the Market in a short time. | 0.884             |       |       |       |       |
| Job Satisfaction   | JS1  | I receive recognitions for a job well done.                                                                                | Variable excluded | 0.544 | 0.878 | 0.898 | 0.904 |
|                    | JS2  | I feel close to the people at work.                                                                                        | 0.643             |       |       |       |       |
|                    | JS3  | I feel good about working at this company.                                                                                 | 0.878             |       |       |       |       |
|                    | JS4  | I feel secure about my job.                                                                                                | 0.651             |       |       |       |       |
|                    | JS5  | I believe management is concerned about me.                                                                                | 0.752             |       |       |       |       |
|                    | JS6  | Oh the whole, I believe work is good for my physical health.                                                               | 0.737             |       |       |       |       |
|                    | JS7  | My wages are good.                                                                                                         | Variable excluded |       |       |       |       |
|                    | JS8  | All my talents and skills are used at work.                                                                                | 0.639             |       |       |       |       |
|                    | JS9  | I get along with my supervisors.                                                                                           | 0.673             |       |       |       |       |
|                    | JS10 | I feel good about my job.                                                                                                  | 0.882             |       |       |       |       |
| Self-efficacy      | SE1  | I will be able to achieve most of the goals that I have set for myself.                                                    | 0.739             | 0.529 | 0.785 | 0.812 | 0.848 |
|                    | SE2  | When facing difficult tasks, I am certain that I will accomplish them.                                                     | 0.765             |       |       |       |       |
|                    | SE3  | I believe I can succeed at most any endeavor to which I set my mind.                                                       | 0.770             |       |       |       |       |
|                    | SE4  | I will be able to successfully overcome many challenges.                                                                   | 0.723             |       |       |       |       |
|                    | SE5  | I am confident that I can perform effectively on many different tasks.                                                     | 0.633             |       |       |       |       |
|                    | SE6  | Compared to other people, I can do most tasks very well.                                                                   | Variable excluded |       |       |       |       |
|                    | SE7  | Even when things are tough, I can perform quite well.                                                                      | Variable excluded |       |       |       |       |

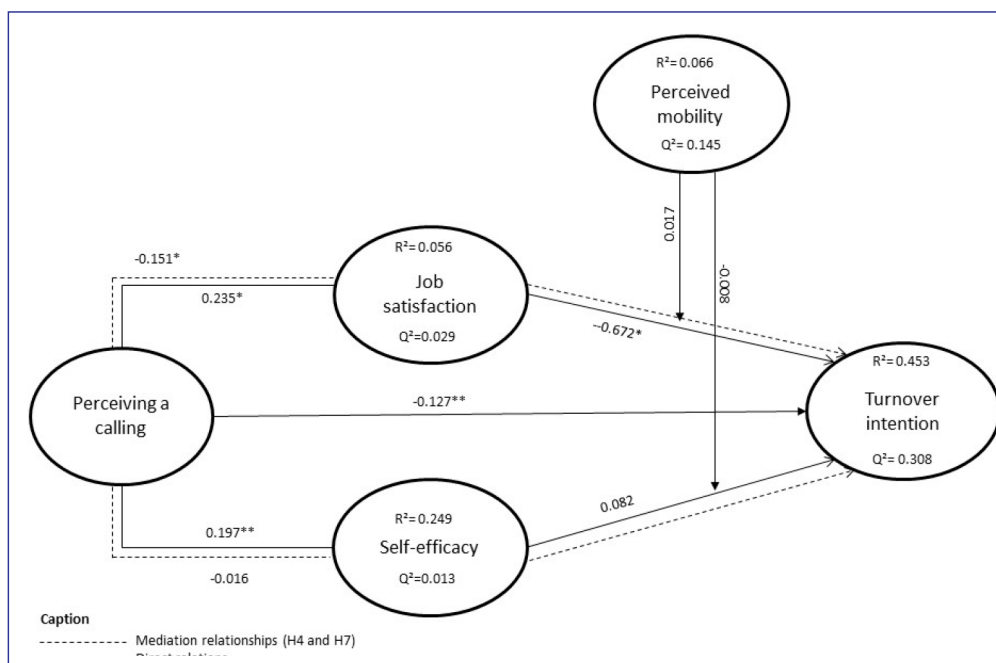
Source: Research data.

Then, we analysed the discriminant validity, that is, the extent to which a construct is distinct from the other constructs. Initially, we check the cross-loading, in order to verify if any variable had a higher factor loading in another construct of the model. We found that all items had the highest factor loading in their respective constructs, which confirms the discriminant validity (Bido & D. Silva, 2019). Next, following the criterion by Fornell and Larcker (1981), which proposes that there will be discriminant validity when the square root of the AVE of each construct is greater than the correlation with the other constructs of the model. The data met the criteria by Fornell and Larcker (1981). Also, as the last step in the analysis we used the HTMT (Heterotrait-monotrait ratio) ratio analysis. In this part of the analysis, we verified the reason for the correlations, with values below 0.85 being accepted as appropriate; or 0.90, when constructs are conceptually close (Hair et al., 2019). We found that the research data met this criterion, as all values are below 0.85.

## Structural model

After validating the measurement model, we evaluated the fit or the Coefficients of determination ( $R^2$ ) responsible for indicating the explanatory capacity of the model (Fávero & Belfiore, 2021). According to Bido and D. Silva (2019), values of  $R^2$  of 0.02, 0.13 and 0.26 can be described, respectively, as weak, moderate, and substantial. In the structural model (see Figure 2), the endogenous constructs presented the following values: a) job satisfaction ( $R^2=0.056$ , weak), b) self-efficacy ( $R^2=0.249$ , moderate), c) turnover intention ( $R^2=0.453$ , substantial), d) perceived mobility ( $R^2=0.145$ , weak).

**Figure 2**  
**Structural model (hypothesis testing)**



Note: \*p-value <0.01 (significant at 1%); \*\*p-value <0.05 (significant at 5%).

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

Then, we proceeded to evaluate the results of the hypothesis tests, being supported the hypotheses H2; H3; H4; and H5. The hypotheses H1; H6; H7; H8; and H9 were not supported (see Figure 2; Table 2 and Table 3).

**Table 2**  
**Direct, Indirect and Mediation Effects**

|                       | Effects                                                        | Hypotheses | Coef.  | P-value | f <sup>2</sup> | f <sup>2</sup>             |
|-----------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|------------|--------|---------|----------------|----------------------------|
| Direct                | Perceiving a calling-> Turnover intention                      | H1         | -0.127 | 0.011** | 0.029          | NS                         |
|                       | Perceiving a calling -> Job satisfaction                       | H2         | 0.235  | 0.000*  | 0.058          | S                          |
|                       | Job satisfaction -> Turnover intention                         | H3         | -0.672 | 0.000*  | 0.744          | S                          |
|                       | Perceiving a calling -> Self-efficacy                          | H5         | 0.197  | 0.011** | 0.04           | S                          |
|                       | Self-efficacy-> Turnover intention                             | H6         | 0.082  | 0.242   | 0.011          | NS                         |
| Indirect/<br>mediator | Perceiving a calling -> Job satisfaction -> Turnover intention | H4         | -0.151 | 0.000*  | -              | PS (partial mediation)     |
|                       | Perceiving a calling-> Self-efficacy-> Turnover intention      | H7         | -0.016 | 0.351   | -              | NS (there is no mediation) |

Note: \*p-value <0.01 (significant at 1%); \*\*p-value <0.05 (significant at 5%).

Caption: S (supported) NS (Not supported) PS (Partially supported).

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

Hypotheses 8 and 9, responsible for evaluating the moderating effect of perceived mobility. The two hypotheses were rejected as they did not present a statistically relevant relationship (p-value>0.05), as detailed in Table 3.

**Table 3**  
**Moderating Effects Test**

| Structural Relationship                                     | Hypotheses | Gardner, Harris, Li, Kirkman, and Mathieu (2017, p. 614) | f <sup>2</sup> | Coef.  | p-value | Result |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|------------|----------------------------------------------------------|----------------|--------|---------|--------|
| Moderating effect 1-> Job satisfaction-> Turnover intention | H8         | XZ                                                       | 0.01           | 0.017  | 0.718   | NS     |
| Job satisfaction-> Turnover intention                       |            | X                                                        |                |        |         |        |
| Perceived mobility-> Turnover intention                     |            | Z                                                        |                |        |         |        |
| Moderating effect 2-> Self-efficacy-> Turnover intention    | H9         | XZ                                                       | 0              | -0.008 | 0.883   | NS     |
| Self-efficacy-> Turnover intention                          |            | X                                                        |                |        |         |        |
| Perceived mobility-> Turnover intention                     |            | Z                                                        |                |        |         |        |

Caption: S (supported) NS (Not supported) PS (Partially supported).

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

## DISCUSSION

Regarding the analysis of the results of hypothesis H1, which tested the direct relationship between calling and turnover intention, we found that the hypothesized direct and positive relationship was not supported, which means that individuals with greater awareness of a calling have no greater turnover intention. This result contrasts with the literature, suggesting that perceiving a calling creates inner voices that encourage individuals to disengage from their organizations in search of independent work as a means of ensuring the pursuit of the occupation that gives them a sense of purpose (Tran et al., 2019). However, although this research has not proposed this hypothesis, the results indicated a statistically significant negative relationship. This suggests that individuals with greater awareness of a calling are less likely to leave their jobs. This result is in line with the findings of a research conducted with nurses in China (Xu et al., 2020), which also indicated that there is a negative and significant relationship between calling and turnover intention. This is possibly explained by the fact that some individuals live their calling in the current job (e.g., through job crafting) and, therefore, does not want to leave it (Felix & Cavazotte, 2019).

Hypothesis H2, which tested the direct and positive relationship between perceiving a calling and job satisfaction, was supported. This result is in agreement with the literature (Duffy et al., 2010; Duffy et al., 2012; Xu et al., 2020), which suggests that individuals with greater awareness of a calling have a more optimistic and enthusiastic view of life (Peterson et al., 2009), and that reflects in a more positive attitude at work as well. This result suggests that the perception of a calling, by itself, is potentially advantageous for the individual, because employees perceiving a calling, even if they do not experience it, they may experience psychological benefits associated with higher levels of job satisfaction.

As for hypothesis H3, which tested the direct and negative relationship between job satisfaction and turnover intention, was supported. This result is in line with several previous researches that related job satisfaction and turnover intention (Abid & Butt, 2017). This indicates that more satisfied employees tend to have lower levels of turnover intention. Thus, investing in policies that promote job satisfaction can be a good strategy for managers to reduce turnover, responsible for costly effects for the company (Abid & Butt, 2017; Ben-Bakr et al., 1994; Holmes & Tholen, 2013).

Hypothesis H4, which tested the indirect and negative relationship between perceiving a calling and turnover intention, via job satisfaction, was partially supported. Mediation was considered partial, as the direct and positive relationship between perceiving a calling and turnover intention was not supported. This result indicates that the relationship between perceiving a calling and turnover intention is not simple and can be mediated by other constructs, such as job satisfaction. In this research, we evidenced that job satisfaction mediates this relationship, which is in accordance with the results obtained in a research conducted with Chinese nurses (Xu et al., 2020). This points out that the employee perceiving work as a calling can increase job satisfaction and reduce turnover intention. It also suggests that these employees are satisfied in their respective jobs, given that the direct and positive relationship between perceiving a calling and turnover intention was not significant.

Hypothesis H5, which tested the direct and positive relationship between perceiving a calling and self-efficacy, was supported. According to the literature, individuals with a high perception of calling employ higher levels of effort at work and have a more proactive attitude towards their career (Dobrow & Tosti-Kharas, 2011; Praskova et al., 2015). Therefore, it was expected that individuals with a greater perception of a calling would feel more capable of taking control over their lives, that is, they would have higher levels of self-efficacy (Wood & Bandura, 1989). This conclusion drawn from the literature was confirmed by the data from this research.

Hypotheses H6 and H7 evaluated, respectively, the direct relationship between self-efficacy and turnover intention and the indirect relationship between perceiving a calling and turnover intention via self-efficacy. Both hypotheses (H6 and H7) were based on the assumption that individuals with greater self-efficacy would have greater courage and confidence to make proactive career decisions, facing a better job opportunity (Gupta et al., 2018) thus, they would present higher levels of turnover intention. This assumption, at least in light of the data from this research, was not corroborated. Thus, the direct and positive relationship hypothesized between self-efficacy and turnover intention (H6) was not supported. This means that, for the individuals in the sample, the perception of being self-effective, does not increase or decrease turnover intention. The relationship between self-efficacy and the intention to leave the employee has been analysed by previous research that showed mixed results, sometimes confirmed a positive relationship (Mone, 1994), sometimes a negative relationship (De Neve & Devos, 2016), sometimes they did not identify a significant effect between the constructs (O'Neill & Mone, 1998).

The hypothesized mediation relationship between perceiving a calling and turnover intention via self-efficacy (H7) was not supported. This means that for the employees in the sample, having the perception of being self-effective does not increase or decrease the effect of perceiving a calling on turnover intention. This may be due to the fact that one does not intend to leave their job.

Regarding the hypotheses H8 and H9, responsible for evaluating the moderating effect of perceived mobility on the relationships between job satisfaction and turnover intention, and self-efficacy and turnover intention, they were not supported. In this case, these results indicate that there is no evidence that perceived mobility makes the relationship between job satisfaction and turnover intention weaker, and between self-efficacy and turnover intention stronger. This result compares with previous research that has already identified that perceived mobility moderates the relationship between job satisfaction and turnover intention (Morley et al., 2007). A possible justification for this result stems, again, from the characteristics of the sample, mostly composed of public servants (51.30%). As already suggested by Felix and Blum (2020), who evaluated the perception of a calling in public servants in Brazil, a possible explanation is that the stability of public servants associated with the recurrent financial crises in Brazil, and scarcity of opportunities can make public servants see themselves in a privileged situation. This perception of privilege can reduce the intention of these individuals to leave their public office, even though they identify other opportunities. In addition, data were collected during the pandemic period, a period with high unemployment rates, which possibly made employees more cautious about leaving their jobs.

## THEORETICAL AND MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

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As a theoretical contribution, this research proposed that there would be a direct and positive relationship between perceiving a calling and turnover intention, which was not supported for this sample. However, we evidenced that there is a negative and significant relationship between perceiving a calling and turnover intention, which expands the understanding of the relationship between perception of a calling and turnover intention in order to fill the gaps identified in the literature regarding the mixed effects of this relationship (Cardador et al., 2011; Esteves & Lopes, 2017; Tran et al., 2019). Another contribution was to test whether there is a direct and positive relationship between perceiving a calling and self-efficacy, something not yet proposed by previous studies. In addition, the research tested the relationship between self-efficacy and turnover intention in a developing country, in a context of scarcity of available places and with high unemployment rates and therefore, different from that of previous research identified on the subject, carried out mostly in developed countries. Still, among the theoretical contributions, another novelty was the inclusion of the moderating role of perceived mobility, something not yet proposed in the literature. In addition, we highlight the use of a heterogeneous sample, while most previous studies on calling focus on homogeneous samples of groups linked to the health or education area.

As a practical contribution, the results identified can be useful for coaches, mentors, and career advisors, as they confirm that the employee who perceives work as a calling tends to increase self-efficacy and job satisfaction. Moreover, for organizational managers, the results provide insights to be considered in the recruitment and selection processes, being possible to verify if potential candidates for the open position tend to perceive that work aligned with their calling, as this can reduce turnover intention and, consequently, turnover. In addition, companies may consider providing employees with tasks that are more in line with their callings, in order to retain potential talent or even create incentives for employees to experience the calling during leisure time.

## LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

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This research has limitations, such as the use of non-probabilistic convenience sampling. Thus, we suggest carrying out a research with a probabilistic approach. The research sample is not representative of the Brazilian working population. The individuals in the sample, on average, have high levels of remuneration (55.4% of the sample has a monthly income above six minimum wages, a value significantly higher than that received by most of the Brazilian population) and high qualification (92.7% of the sample has at least completed higher education). In addition, 51.30% of the sample holds public positions, which indicates that these individuals have a higher level of job stability. These peculiar characteristics of the sample suggest the need for future research to explore samples with a different socioeconomic profile.

Another limitation is related to the fact that the investigation was carried out with a cross-section. There is, therefore, a need for more caution regarding the causal inferences of the proposed relationships. As for data collection, a limitation was that the data were collected during the COVID-19 pandemic period, in which the scarcity of employment opportunities, typical of developing countries, became even more evident, which may have affected the perception of mobility and the propensity of individuals to take risks in search of new jobs, that is, with the intention of leaving the job. Thus, we also suggest replicating the research by carrying out a new data collection after the pandemic.

In addition, other constructs may help to better explain the relationship between perceiving a calling and turnover intention, so for future research, we propose the inclusion of new constructs in the theoretical model that make it possible to assess other direct relations and aspects that mediate or moderate the relationship between the perception of a calling and turnover intention, such as, for example: the inclusion of the construct living a calling, as a moderator, because literature reinforces that in addition to perceiving a calling it is important to experience it; and career commitment as a potential mediator of the relationship between perceiving a calling and turnover intention. Furthermore, the research was limited to Brazilian employees, which allows replicating this model in other countries. Finally, we suggest adding control variables to the proposed model.

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