# ENHANCING HIGHER VOCATIONAL STUDENTS' CAREER CALLING THROUGH MINDFULNESS TRAINING COMBINED WITH CORE SELF-EVALUATION AND MEANING IN LIFE: A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO EDUCATION MANAGEMENT

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#### Abstract

This study delves into the concept of a career calling and posits that mindfulness training, core self-evaluation, and meaning in life, when synergistically combined, have the potential to elevate higher vocational education career development. The theoretical foundations of professional calling, core self-evaluation, and mindfulness training are intricately discussed, emphasizing their relevance to vocational growth. A key focal point is placed on recognizing one's self-concept and values in making career selections, fostering a profound meaning in life and fulfillment. Employing a methodology grounded in the analysis of peer-reviewed literature, the study scrutinizes the intricacies of a "career calling" and its profound impact on career choices and fulfillment.

The study underscores the imperative to align job choices with personal beliefs and meaning in life, highlighting the crucial interplay between individual convictions and professional pursuits. Furthermore, it delves into the holistic approach of education management, accentuating the significance of self-identity, self-awareness, and imbuing meaning into the educational journey. Within this context, the study asserts that mindfulness training, core self-evaluation, and exploration of meaning in life collectively contribute to an enhanced perception of a career calling. In conclusion, this paper underscores the significance of mindfulness training and targeted educational countermeasures in shaping career calling and enhancing higher vocational education. It specifically advocates for the deliberate integration of mindfulness training, core self-evaluation, and the meaning in life into educational curricula. By emphasizing the role of mindfulness training and proposing targeted educational countermeasures, the paper contends that students can not only discover purpose and satisfaction in their careers but also develop the necessary skills to make informed employment decisions. Ultimately, the study fosters happiness and well-being among students, paving the way for a more meaningful and fulfilling professional journey.



Key words: Career calling, Mindfulness training, Core self-evaluation, Meaning in life, and Holistic approach

#### Introduction

In the dynamic landscape of education and professional development, the pursuit of a clear purpose, meaningful employment, and a profound career calling stands as a shared aspiration (Steger, O'Donnell & Morse, 2021). For higher vocational students, navigating the path to a meaningful career can be a challenging and ambiguous endeavour (Tims & Akkermans, 2020). This challenge has spurred scholars and educators to innovate and devise strategies aimed at assisting students in discovering their career calling and enhancing their career development. A holistic and promising education management strategy emerges through the integration of mindfulness training, core self-evaluation, and meaning in life (MacPherson & Rockman, 2023). Rooted in the concept introduced by Dik et al. (2019), a career calling signifies that one's chosen

vocation should authentically reflect their true self and values, fostering a profound meaning in life and contentment. This calling, extending beyond a mere career, aligns with one's values and passions (Di Fabio & Palazzeschi, 2020). Core self-evaluation, as highlighted by Di Fabio and Palazzeschi (2020), forms the bedrock of self-concept, where factors such as self-esteem, generalized self-efficacy, locus of control, and emotional stability significantly impact career satisfaction and performance (Zhu et al., 2021).

Mindfulness, drawn from Buddhist philosophy and widely embraced in contemporary psychology, emerges as a transformative tool that enhances well-being, reduces stress, and fosters self-awareness (Kazanjian, 2022). Acknowledged by Henriksen, Richardson, and Shack (2020) as a valuable professional development strategy, mindfulness cultivates mental health and resilience. Its reflective nature aids individuals in clarifying their values and aligning them with their career goals (Surya, Wibowo & Mulawarman, 2023).

Professional choices, according to Arthur et al. (2021), are profoundly influenced by the pursuit of meaningful living. The quest for meaning directs individuals toward careers that resonate with their values and purpose (Wissing et al., 2021). Thus, a comprehensive education management approach necessitates the infusion of meaning into the fabric of professional growth.

This study embarks on an exploration into how mindfulness training, core self-evaluation, and the meaning in life converge to enhance the sense of a career calling among higher vocational students. The theoretical foundations of these concepts and their synergistic potential in education management take centre stage in this inquiry. While empirical data analysis is not within the scope of this study, the aim is to unravel the interconnectedness of these factors and comprehend how they collectively have the potential to revolutionize career development in higher vocational education through a secondary study approach.

Through this exploration, the aspiration is to shed light on the prospects of a new education management paradigm-one that not only nurtures vocational calling but also empowers students to make career choices aligned with their authentic selves, providing them with a profound meaning in life and purpose in their professional journeys.



### Literature Review Conceptualizing Career Calling

A "career calling" is a fundamental and important aspect of an individual's interaction with their work life (Pitacho & Cordeiro, 2023). It goes beyond the usual view of work as just a job to symbolize a deeper relationship between one's basic identity and the occupational path they choose. A job calling includes a deep meaning in life, which is frequently coupled with a higher mission or personal vocation (Hart & Hart, 2023). It is a notion that has received a lot of attention in the field of vocational psychology and career counselling because of its potential to increase job satisfaction, engagement, and overall fulfilment in one's chosen career (Dik, Steger, & Autin, 2020).

A career calling is intrinsically tied to an individual's basic values, interests, and passions at its core (Burland, Bennett, & López-iguez, 2022). It demonstrates a fundamental congruence between what one does professionally and who they are (Shimizu, Dik, & Conner, 2019). This alignment is more than just a transaction; it represents a profound resonance between one's work and their genuine self. In essence, it indicates that one's professional route reflects their fundamental values and beliefs, and that the job they produce reflects who they are (Newburgh, 2019). This innate link elevates labour from a commonplace responsibility to a genuinely meaningful endeavour.

According to Duffy et al. (2019), the Theory of professional Calling provides a solid theoretical framework for understanding and assessing the concept of professional calling. This theory identifies three crucial components that characterize what it means to have a career calling (Dik, Steger, & Autin, 2020). For starters, it entails believing that one's labour has a bigger purpose or value beyond one's immediate tasks and obligations. This viewpoint transfers the emphasis from mundane professional responsibilities to the larger societal and personal relevance of one's efforts (Saraf, & Murthy, 2020). Second, a professional calling is the sensation of being called or drawn to a particular vocation or profession. It implies a nearly magnetic attraction to a specific field of work, propelled by a sense of destiny or a higher calling (Thompson & Bunderson, 2019). Finally, this theory highlights the existence of a deeper connection between an individual's identity and their function in the world of labour. It suggests that one's professional identity is an intrinsic element of who they are as persons, rather than a separate aspect of their existence (Lightfoot & Frost, 2019).

## Core Self-Evaluation and Its Relevance to Career Calling

Core self-evaluation encompasses numerous key characteristics of an individual's self-concept (Di Fabio & Palazzeschi, 2020). These include self-esteem, generalized self-efficacy, locus of control, and emotional stability (Zhu et al., 2021). Each of these components shapes one's self-evaluation, including their abilities, life control, and emotional resilience (Chon & Sitkin, 2021).

Self-esteem is crucial to core self-evaluation (Zhu et al., 2021). It symbolizes self-worth and acceptance (Kaya et al., 2022). High self-esteem makes people think positively about themselves and more likely to succeed in their chosen fields (Orth, & Robins, 2022). High self-esteem gives



people the courage to follow their dreams and convictions, thus they are more likely to pursue careers that match their true selves (Carnemolla, & Galea, 2021).

Generalised self-efficacy is the conviction that one can complete tasks and overcome obstacles in many settings (Green, 2022). Strong generalized self-efficacy leads to ambitious professional objectives, perseverance, and choosing careers that match their beliefs and interests (Ellison, Kern & Killian, 2022). Their career choices and job satisfaction depend on their confidence in their power to control their fate.

Locus of control is crucial to core self-evaluation. Individuals with internal and external locus of control are distinguished. External locus of control-people feels their lives are mostly impacted by external forces, while internal locus of control people believe they can control their lives (Wang & Lv, 2020; Green, 2022). Those with an internal locus of control feel empowered to make career decisions that reflect their true selves, which fosters career calling (Surdick, Bockes & Wong, 2021).

Emotional stability means staying calm in difficult conditions (Saccardi & Masthoff, 2023). Emotionally stable people can handle career challenges and make better job decisions (Judge & Bono, 2001). This endurance to emotional upheaval helps people pursue their careers with a clear and concentrated mind (Jiang, et al., 2019).

The influence of self-esteem, generalized self-efficacy, locus of control, and emotional stability emphasizes core self-evaluation in vocational calling. High-core self-evaluation individuals are more likely to seek careers that match their true selves, values, and interests, and lead to increased job satisfaction (Cinches, Chavez & Russell, 2021). Understanding core self-evaluation and its function in professional development stresses the importance of self-concept and vocational calling (Fitzpatrick & Queenan, 2020).

## Mindfulness Training as a Tool for Career Development

Mindfulness, drawn from Buddhist philosophy and widely embraced in contemporary psychology, emerges as a transformative tool that enhances well-being, reduces stress, and fosters self-awareness (Kazanjian, 2022). It provides a powerful way to improving career development, allowing individuals to navigate their career routes with clarity and authenticity (Surya, Wibowo, & Mulawarman, 2023).

Mindfulness training entails developing present-moment awareness, nonjudgmental observation, and self-reflection (Hilert & Tirado, 2019). This technique promotes people to be fully present with their thoughts, feelings, and sensations in the "here and now." Individuals can obtain significant insights into their genuine selves and objectives by cultivating a non-reactive and receptive attitude toward their inner thoughts and external events.

Applying mindfulness to career growth is a life-changing experience. Mindfulness training enables people to examine their career goals with greater clarity and honesty (Kazanjian, 2022). Galles et al. (2019) revealed that mindfulness can serve as a guiding light in job decisions. Individuals can get a greater level of self-awareness by practicing mindfulness, helping them to discover their



essential values, interests, and passions (Backstrom, 2023). This self-discovery is critical in selecting professional choices that reflect their true identities.

Furthermore, the influence of mindfulness goes beyond simple self-awareness. Mindfulness techniques, according to research, have the potential to lower stress and anxiety while also developing a higher feeling of well-being and resilience (Birchinall, Spendlove, & Buck, 2019). This stress reduction is very beneficial in terms of job advancement. Making sound career decisions can be riddled with uncertainty and anxiety. Mindfulness provides individuals with the capabilities they need to manage these difficulties, thereby improving their ability to navigate their job pathways confidently (Aránega, Nez, & Sánchez, 2020).

Mindfulness has also been related to better decision-making abilities. Individuals who practice mindfulness likely to have improved cognitive flexibility and problem-solving ability (Zou et al., 2020). These characteristics are extremely important in the context of career development, as individuals are frequently confronted with difficult choices and ambiguous situations. The cognitive benefits of mindfulness considerably increase the ability to make educated and adaptive employment decisions (Dong et al., 2021).

## The Meaning in Life and Its Influence on Career Decision-Making

The meaning in life, as articulated by Steger, O'Donnell and Morse (2021), has a tremendous impact on professional decisions. Individuals in this setting begin on a quest to not only secure a source of income, but also to find a vocation that resonates with their meaning in life and personal values (Arthur et al., 2021). This inherent link between the meaning in life and career choices is a critical part of occupational development (Wissing et al., 2021).

According to Steger, O'Donnell, and Morse (2021), when people are motivated by a meaning in life and purpose, they are more inclined to pursue jobs that reflect these deep-seated values. The meaning in life becomes a driving force, leading people toward job paths that provide both instant gratification and long-term fulfilment. Individuals desire occupations that are not only professionally fulfilling but also personally satisfying by integrating the meaning in life with vocational objectives (Wissing et al., 2021).

This link between the meaning in life and work choice does not exist in isolation. Dik et al. (2019) go into detail on how pursuing a meaningful career result in a surprising cascade of benefits. Individuals who match their employment choices with their meaning in life see an increase in job satisfaction, a feeling that is inextricably related to finding meaningful work. Individuals find themselves not only pleased in their professional responsibilities, but also with an increased sense of general life fulfilment when job satisfaction rises (Akosile & Ekemen, 2022).

Furthermore, the concept of meaning in life has an impact that extends beyond the bounds of one's profession. A meaningful employment decision affects many aspects of a person's life, supporting well-being, resilience, and a deeper sense of fulfilment in personal relationships and activities outside of work (Blustein et al, 2019). The interaction between career calling and meaning in life strengthens the notion that vocational decisions are not separate decisions, but rather vital components of a complete and meaningful life path (Harris, 2021).



### The Holistic Approach to Education Management

The holistic approach to school management recognizes that professional development goes beyond technical and academic skills. Its theory comes from Falloon (2020), who studied human conduct and self-identity in many ways. Education is considered as a dynamic, transforming activity that should engage students more fully (Cottafava, Cavaglià & Corazza, 2019). It promotes holistic growth rather than information transfer (Dameri & Demartini, 2020).

Schermer (2020) and Kiang, Malin, and Sandoz (2020) argue that career development is closely linked to self-identity and purpose. It advocates that education should be a voyage of self-discovery and self-awareness, allowing students to examine their inherent drives and values as well as their technical domains. This perspective recognizes that a strong meaning in life helps people make good professional choices.

The holistic method, guided by Corriveau (2020), promotes self-awareness and self-efficacy in education. It advises encouraging students to evaluate their skills, shortcomings, values, and goals. Doing so helps them recognize their strengths and weaknesses, which is crucial for career decision-making (Cole, Cox & Stavros, 2019).

The holistic approach emphasises mindfulness, self-evaluation, and the meaning in life in education (Waters & Loton, 2019). Surya, Wibowo and Mulawarman (2023) explain that mindfulness helps increase self-awareness and self-regulation. It helps one be present, examine feelings and thoughts, and improve well-being. Mindfulness training helps students make professional decisions with clarity and honesty (Kazanjian, 2022). It helps one discover their passions and principles, leading to more purposeful job choices (Kazanjian, 2022).

According to Cristofaro and Giardino (2020), integrating self-evaluation within the educational framework helps students identify their self-esteem, self-efficacy, locus of control, and emotional stability. Recognition is essential for choosing a career that matches one's ideals and self. Self-awareness helps people avoid career options that don't match their values, which boosts job happiness (Mutanga, Piyose & Ndovela, 2023).

Finally, Steger, O'Donnell, and Morse (2021) argue that the comprehensive approach to school administration includes the meaning in life. When employment choices match inner purpose and life values, people are more likely to find fulfilling careers. This emphasis on meaning in life helps students connect more deeply and intimately with their vocations.

## Methodology

The method employed in this study aimed to enhance career calling among higher vocational students through the incorporation of mindfulness training, core self-evaluation, and the exploration of meaning in life. The study's approach involved a comprehensive search of peer-reviewed literature within the realms of vocational education, career development, mindfulness, core self-evaluation, and life purpose. The databases such as PubMed, Google Scholar, JSTOR, and various academic journals were utilized for the research endeavours.



The investigation focused on different central themes including, "career calling," "mindfulness training," "core self-evaluation," and "meaning in life." These themes directly addressed their impact on higher vocational education and were explored extensively in existing publications.

The selection of publications adhered to specific criteria, necessitating peer-reviewed status, substantial relevance to the research topic, and publication within the time frame of 2019 to 2023 to ensure the inclusion of the most recent and pertinent data. The analysis encompassed the examination of how mindfulness training, core self-evaluation, and meaning in life influence the vocational calling of students. Consequently, conference papers, non-peer-reviewed sources, and materials published prior to 2019 were excluded from this study.

To expedite the selection process, a screening of publication titles and abstracts was initiated, eventually leading to a comprehensive examination of full-text papers in preparation for the literature review. These chosen publications served to elucidate the concepts of mindfulness training, core self-evaluation, the meaning in life, and their collective impact on the vocational calling of students.

The study's data was systematically organized to emphasize critical findings, methodologies, and underlying hypotheses. A creative mediation approach was employed to synthesize this data into a cohesive narrative, offering insights into the role of mindfulness training and core self-evaluation in shaping career callings.

In addition, specific topics or subtopics were assigned to selected studies to clarify the intricate connections within the literature. The study explored the effects of mindfulness training on career development, the influence of core self-evaluation in vocational education, and the role of meaning in life in shaping students' professional aspirations. These issues were comprehensively examined to highlight the intricate interrelationships within the existing body of literature.

## **Results and Discussion**

The concept of a "career calling" based on Hart and Hart (2023), encompasses a deep and complex part of an individual's professional path that goes beyond the traditional idea of a job. The term "calling" refers to a strong connection between one's personal identity and their chosen job path (Hart & Hart, 2023). This connection is rooted in a deep meaning in life and importance, typically linked to a larger mission or purpose (Shimizu, Dik, & Conner, 2019). The investigation of professional callings has been a central focus in vocational psychology because of their exceptional ability to augment work happiness and life contentment (Dik, Steger & Autin, 2020). A career calling represents the alignment between one's professional ambitions and their true self, which is influenced by their beliefs, interests, and passions (Shimizu, Dik, & Conner, 2019). This statement emphasises that choosing a profession is a reflection of one's own beliefs, transforming employment from a simple job into a meaningful pursuit (Newburgh, 2019).

The Theory of professional Calling, as proposed by Duffy et al. (2019), provides a thorough comprehension of this phenomena by delineating three essential components that together provide a feeling of professional calling (Dik, Steger & Autin, 2020). One must have a conviction in the fundamental purpose of their profession that goes beyond mundane activities (Saraf & Murthy,



2020). A professional calling is characterised by a strong feeling of being irresistibly attracted to a certain profession, as if driven by a predetermined destiny (Thompson & Bunderson, 2019). This highlights a robust correlation between one's personal identity and their professional endeavours (Lightfoot & Frost, 2019).

Core self-evaluation, as defined by Di Fabio and Palazzeschi (2020), includes characteristics such as self-esteem, generalised self-efficacy, locus of control, and emotional stability (Zhu et al., 2021). Individuals with high self-esteem are more likely to have a strong sense of self-worth and confidence, which motivates them to seek jobs that match with their true identity (Carnemolla & Galea, 2021). Generalised self-efficacy promotes the development of high professional aspirations, perseverance, and the pursuit of professions that align with one's own beliefs and interests (Ellison, Kern, & Killian, 2022). Having an internal locus of control enables people to make authentic work decisions (Surdick, Bockes, & Wong, 2021), whereas emotional stability supports clear and focused professional choices (Jiang et al., 2019).

Mindfulness, derived from Buddhist philosophy, is increasingly acknowledged as a valuable technique in modern psychology for fostering a feeling of vocational purpose (Kazanjian, 2022). The practise entails being in the present moment, actively observing without passing judgement, and promoting introspection (Hilert & Tirado, 2019). Mindfulness empowers people by allowing them to honestly and openly evaluate their job objectives, so supporting the investigation of their genuine values and interests (Backstrom, 2023).

Furthermore, research has shown that practising mindfulness may reduce the impact of stress and anxiety, leading to improved overall well-being and increased ability to cope with challenges (Birchinall, Spendlove, & Buck, 2019). Enhanced decision-making abilities further help people in making well-informed and flexible job decisions (Dong et al., 2021). The quest for existential significance significantly impacts employment choices, with occupations that accord with one's values resulting in long-lasting contentment (Arthur et al., 2021). The alignment mentioned not only increases work happiness but also enhances general life satisfaction (Dik et al., 2019), promoting well-being, resilience, and life fulfilment outside the professional sphere (Blustein et al., 2019).

Falloon (2020) suggests that adopting a holistic approach in education goes beyond traditional technical instruction by fostering self-identity, self-awareness, and self-efficacy (Cottafava, Cavaglià & Corazza, 2019). The educational approach described as transformational focuses on self-discovery and personal development (Dameri & Demartini, 2020). It allows students to understand their own strengths and flaws (Cole, Cox, & Stavros, 2019). The use of mindfulness and self-assessment in this technique effectively amplifies self-awareness and genuineness (Kazanjian, 2022). By engaging in self-evaluation and matching their professional choices with their authentic selves, students are empowered to embrace a profound sense of vocational purpose (Mutanga, Piyose & Ndovela, 2023). Harris (2021) emphasises that living a meaningful life is crucial for making informed job decisions and turning schooling into a transformative journey that nurtures self-identity and professional aspirations.



### **Implications for Future Research**

The exhaustive investigation of the concept of "career calling" and its multifaceted implications reveals an abundance of prospective avenues for future research. It is of the utmost significance to comprehend the effect of career callings on job satisfaction and overall satisfaction. Future research could delve deeper into the intricate mechanisms underlying workplace attitudes, performance, and well-being in general. Exploring the potential for specialized interventions or training programs to facilitate the discovery and development of individuals' vocations is a promising area of research. This may involve evaluating the efficacy of mindfulness-based programs and self-evaluation techniques in establishing and enhancing vocations.

Future research efforts may concentrate on the development of interventions designed to improve critical self-evaluation characteristics, such as self-esteem, generalized self-efficacy, locus of control, and emotional stability. The identification of practicable methods for enhancing these characteristics and the investigation of how they influence the career decisions and subsequent satisfaction of individuals hold great promise. In addition, investigating how the effects of these interventions may vary based on age, gender, or cultural influences can provide a more complete understanding of the role of core self-evaluation in career development.

Mindfulness in career development is mainly understudied, presenting a vast opportunity for future research. Subsequent research could investigate particular mindfulness techniques, their duration, and their efficacy in promoting self-awareness, emotional control, and career clarity. To determine the lasting impact of mindfulness-based career development interventions on individuals' job satisfaction and well-being, longitudinal studies are required.

The connection between the meaning in life and career decisions presents an opportunity to investigate the broader implications of purpose-driven work in greater depth. Future research could investigate the intricate connections between a meaningful career, mental health, physical wellbeing, and interpersonal relationships, casting light on the holistic benefits of aligning one's professional trajectory with their meaning in life.

The holistic approach to educational administration presents an innovative and compelling path for future educational research. The formulation and implementation of educational programs that integrate mindfulness and self-evaluation to enhance students' self-identity and nurture the professional calling merits additional research. Assessing the efficacy of these programs across diverse educational levels and disciplines of study can provide valuable insight into their potential impact on students' career decisions and overall educational experiences.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the exploration of a "career calling" reveals its profound impact on job satisfaction and life fulfilment. This concept, rooted in the alignment between personal identity and chosen career path, emphasizes values, interests, and passions as crucial elements. The Theory of Career Calling provides a comprehensive framework, highlighting the belief in the inherent purpose of work, a compelling sense of destiny, and a strong connection between personal identity and occupational pursuits.



Core self-evaluation, encompassing self-esteem, generalized self-efficacy, locus of control, and emotional stability, plays a pivotal role. High self-esteem nurtures confidence, generalized self-efficacy fosters ambitious career goals, internal locus of control empowers genuine decision-making, and emotional stability facilitates clear career choices.

Mindfulness, as a tool rooted in Buddhist philosophy, emerges as a powerful means to nurture career calling concept. By promoting self-reflection and transparent assessment of career goals, mindfulness facilitates alignment with true values and passions. It not only mitigates stress and anxiety but also enhances decision-making skills, contributing to informed and adaptable career choices.

The holistic educational approach advocated by Falloon goes beyond technical education, emphasizing self-identity, self-awareness, and self-efficacy. Integrating mindfulness and selfassessment enhances self-awareness, allowing students to recognize their true selves and align their careers accordingly. This transformative approach empowers students to embrace a career calling, reinforcing the idea that a purposeful life forms the foundation for strengthened career choices. Ultimately, the journey towards career calling enriches both career and overall life satisfaction, fostering well-being, resilience, and fulfilment beyond the professional domain.

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