



## Article

# Why Do People Work? An Empirical Test of Hybrid Work Orientations

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**Abstract:** The present study analyzed whether one's work orientation can be organized into work orientation profiles beyond the three pure orientations of job, career, and calling. We tested the existence of these hybrid work orientations in a sample of 959 adults aged from 18 to 71 years old ( $M = 40.61$ ,  $SD = 9.54$ ). A cluster analysis showed that the best result consisted of four profiles: "Career-Calling", "Career-Job", "Pure Job", and "Indifference". Theoretical and practical implications of profile approach to the study of work orientations are discussed at the end.

**Keywords:** work orientation; profiles; calling; cluster analysis



**Citation:** Pitacho, Liliana, Patrícia Jardim da Palma, Pedro Correia, and Miguel Pereira Lopes. 2021. Why Do People Work? An Empirical Test of Hybrid Work Orientations. *Social Sciences* 10: 284. <https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci10080284>

Academic Editor: Tor Eriksson

Received: 28 April 2021

Accepted: 19 July 2021

Published: 26 July 2021

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## 1. Introduction

Work orientations embrace the different purposes that work serves for individuals and includes the different meanings that they attribute to paid work (Bellah et al. 1985). Studies about the meaning of work are not new but remain relevant. Many researchers have found that the meaning that a person attributes to work is very important, and it has several consequences both to individuals and organizations (e.g., Fossen and Vredenburg 2014; Wrzesniewski et al. 1997). Work orientation is one of the theories that approaches the study of the meaning that people attribute to work. Many authors argue that the work orientation theory provides a useful framework to understand individual's behavior in a working context (e.g., Peterson et al. 2009). This theory was initially proposed by Bellah et al. (1985), who argued that there are three work-orientation dimensions: calling, career, and job. Each one of these dimensions represents one different meaning that people attribute to work.

Despite being a widely studied theory, researchers have focused on individuals who manifest a calling (Duffy and Dik 2013). Especially for this reason, this paper presents something new. We propose to return to the study of work orientation focusing on the three dimensions equally and not just the calling.

As such, the purpose of the present study was to analyze the possibility that one's work orientation can be organized into hybrid profiles. By hybrid profile we understand an individual simultaneous experience of more than one of the three dimensions of the work orientation model. This seems a relevant goal given that, to the best of our knowledge, in the literature these three work orientation styles have been studied as pure, although some studies have raised questions in this regard and suggest the existence of hybrid profiles (e.g., Cardador 2008; Fossen and Vredenburg 2014). Evidence that the work orientation has been investigated as pure is provided by the numerous studies on the concept of work as a calling. These studies use only calling scales for data collection, so it has been impossible to assess the existence of hybrid orientations (e.g., Autin et al. 2016; Esteves and Lopes 2016).

Additionally, there are some gaps in the literature especially regarding understanding and explaining individual behaviors and the ambiguity of calling's outcomes. These

results showed that seeing one's work as a calling has a positive consequence for both individuals and organizations. Living work as a calling has a significant positive relation with well-being, life and work satisfaction, affective and normative commitment, work engagement, hope, life meaning, career decidedness, and vocational identity achievement (e.g., [Allan and Duffy 2013](#); [Hirschi and Herrman 2012](#); [Duffy et al. 2011](#); [Sawhney et al. 2019](#); [Torrey and Duffy 2012](#); [Zhang et al. 2015](#)). Despite that, some studies showed that living work as a calling can have a negative impact on, for example, permanent dissatisfaction, exploitation risk, work–life conflict, burnout, workaholism, and resistance to career counseling (e.g., [Bunderson and Thompson 2009](#); [Dobrow and Tosti-Kharas 2012](#); [Duffy et al. 2016](#); [Elangovan et al. 2010](#); [Keller et al. 2016](#)). We assume this as a call for further research on the topic of work orientations as a whole and not just of work as a calling. For example, one explanation for the ambiguity on calling results could be the existence of hybrid profiles as proposed in this paper. The positive and negative results of living work as a calling can be explained by the experience of different profiles that contain the calling orientation.

With this in mind, the present study allows us to deepen our knowledge about work-orientations, contributing to this literature and facilitating the understanding of employee behavior, and also discussing important reflections on the role of human resource management practices.

In the next sections of this manuscript, we first discuss the arguments that led us to carry out this study. Later, we present and discuss the hypotheses tested in the study. We end by discussing the results and proposing implications and future research directions.

### *1.1. Work Orientation*

In capitalist societies, work is configured as the element of excellence through which individuals structure their daily time ([Jahoda 1987](#)), but also through which they establish their interpersonal relationships ([Blanch 2003](#)). That is, work can be consolidated as a crucial activity for the creation of a personal identity but also a central and instrumental activity that generates an ideal state to access the challenges of capitalism ([Rodrigues et al. 2018](#)).

Work plays a central role in most people's lives and, as such, the choice of a professional activity is increasingly not only about the economic rewards, but also about the gratification and personal and social significance that may arise from it. Although work plays a significant role in the lives of most individuals, the psychological meaning attributed to it varies among individuals ([Fossen and Vredenburg 2014](#)). According to [Ortiz and Jaimes-Osma \(2012\)](#), there are three areas of life from which it is easier to extract meaning: confrontation with an adverse destiny and suffering, love, and work. In addition, about a third of an adult's life is spent working ([Sharabi 2017](#)), and it is easy to understand that work is then one of the areas of human action from which people most extract meaning.

The meaning of work has been a construct studied at least from the 1930s to the present day, mainly due to its dynamic and changeable character. The meaning of work is subjective and a construct in constant transformation. It is intrinsically linked to the historical, social, psychological, and economic logic of the context ([Caraballo 2017](#)). In part, the meaning of work is a social construction of reality ([Quintanilla et al. 1991](#)). So, this fact makes it important contextualize, in historical, social, and economic contexts, the meaning or psychological meaning that people attribute to their work.

The meaning of work refers, then, to the function that paid work serves people. One of the theories that commits the meaning of work is the theory of work orientation. Work orientation explains the relationship that people establish with work and from which they develop and extract meaning ([Pratt and Ashforth 2003](#)). That is, the work orientation captures the different variations of the meanings that are attributed to the work ([Fossen and Vredenburg 2014](#)). That said, we can consider that this construct deals with the subjective experience or experience of work, characterizing the main types of meanings

that people attribute to their professional activity. Briefly, it concerns the role that paid professional activity plays in an individual's overall life (Rosso et al. 2010).

Fossen and Vredenburg (2014) defined work orientation as the fundamental purpose that paid work takes on in everyone's life and that reflects the way each individual finds meaning in the work context. The authors also argue that the psychological meaning that is attributed to the work seems to present implications for both one's own and for the organization, so their study is extremely relevant for understanding the attitudes and behaviors of work.

Bellah et al. (1985) presented in their book, *Habits of the Heart*, a theoretical proposal of a tripartite model of work orientation, conceptualizing the existence of three possible orientations: job, career, and calling. Subsequently, Wrzesniewski et al. (1997) tested and empirically proved the existence of these three work orientations. These three categories, or dimensions represent three distinct work orientations, which guide individuals to their basic goals helping to understand individuals' beliefs about the role of work in their lives and reflect their feelings and behaviors in relation to the organizational context (Wrzesniewski 2003). Thus, work orientation mirrors the different meanings attributed by individuals to work, which varies between a more intrinsic focus and a more instrumental or extrinsic focus.

People who see their work as a job focus on material benefits and see their work as a purely instrumental activity. Their work is not an end itself but is a means or an instrument to acquire financial resources that allow them to enjoy their leisure time, including hobbies, other interests, and activities (Rosso et al. 2010; Wrzesniewski 2003; Wrzesniewski et al. 1997). Job orientation, in this case, is clearly guided by extrinsic motivations, namely by financial reward.

On the other side, people who see their work as a career focus on career advancement. Progress in the organizational structure is associated with increased pay, prestige, and status. For those who see their work as a career, such advancement provides increased power, higher social status, and higher self-esteem (Bellah et al. 1985; Wrzesniewski 2003). As with job orientation, career orientation is also motivated extrinsically, but by prestige, status, career development, and advancement.

Contrary to the experience of those with the first two work orientations, those who see their work as a calling do not work for career advancement or financial reward but for personal fulfillment through work. Those who see their work as a calling are essentially guided by intrinsic motivations. To illustrate this perspective, Wrzesniewski et al. (1997) argued that people who perceive their work as a calling consider it as inseparable from their life, and more important than financial gain or recognition; they work for the self-fulfillment that comes from their service to the community or humanity at large. Their work is viewed as an end in itself, is perceived as deeply meaningful, and is usually associated with the belief that work contributes to the greater good and makes the world a better place (Rosso et al. 2010; Wrzesniewski et al. 1997). Moreover, Bunderson and Thompson (2009) argue that a calling orientation means seeing work as a life mission for which someone was destined, with which he or she identifies him or herself, and for which he or she is willing to make personal and financial sacrifices. Furthermore, Dobrow (2013) argues that people who see their work as a calling seek to pursue from it a consuming and meaningful passion. This view argues that people with a calling orientation to work are more oriented towards the self, emphasizing the existence of internal forces from which they derive happiness and a sense of self-fulfillment (Duffy and Dik 2013).

Although several authors consider that work orientation may be a relevant variable for understanding the attitudes and behaviors of individuals in the organizational context (e.g., Cardador 2008; Fossen and Vredenburg 2014; Wrzesniewski et al. 1997), studies have mainly focused on only one of the dimensions of work orientation, the calling orientation (Duffy and Dik 2013), which has brought consequences for the evolution of orientation measures for work but also for the development of knowledge about this construct as a whole and about the impact of other dimensions (career and job) on the behavior of

individuals. In addition, the fact that the investigation on calling has so far produced some incongruous results.

One of the issues that has been unclear since the beginning of the research on work orientation is the work orientation statement or configuration. This fact has not prevented researchers from treating dimensions as pure, especially in the study of calling. This means that most studies on work orientation, including studies dedicated exclusively to calling, assume that each individual has only one orientation, thus portraying a pure orientation perspective. However, some studies seem to indicate the possibility of everyone having multiple work orientations simultaneously and the possibility of a person being able to attribute multiple purposes to work. [Wrzesniewski et al. \(1997\)](#) found that some participants in their study chose more than one working orientation and, although they excluded these participants, they recognized the possibility of work orientations being organized into profiles. The same possibility was notified by [Cardador \(2008\)](#) when the author developed a study with police officers and found that they identified themselves not only with career orientation but also with the calling or with job orientation at the same time. Additionally, [Pitacho et al. \(2019b\)](#) presented an internal model that demonstrates that there is a positive relationship between the calling and the career orientations but also a positive relationship between the job and the career orientations. In turn, [Fossen and Vredenburg \(2014\)](#) also assume the possibility of individuals having more than one orientation, always referring to their work on the primary orientation of the participants. For these authors, the work orientation is a stable disposition based on values. As with Schwartz's theory of values, work orientation can also be organized through a priority system.

### 1.2. The Present Study

The purpose of the present study was to analyze the possibility that one's work-orientation can be organized into hybrid profiles. The existence of hybrid profiles is consistent with [Cardador's \(2008\)](#) findings, who found that police officers identified with more than one orientation. This finding is also in line with [Wrzesniewski et al. \(1997\)](#) who admitted having eliminated from the study the participants who indicated that they had more than one orientation. The organization of work orientation into profiles can explain the finding of these authors. This idea was previously advanced by some authors, such as [Cardador \(2008\)](#), [Dekas and Tosti-Kharas \(2008\)](#), and later by [Fossen and Vredenburg \(2014\)](#).

By work orientation profiles, we understand that the individuals have more than one work orientation simultaneously. That is, everyone can attribute to their work more than one psychological meaning. Each person can have one work orientation or a work orientation profile. When the person has a single orientation, represented by just one work orientation dimension, we assume that this person has a pure work orientation. However, when a person attributes more than one psychological meaning to their work, we assume that this person has a hybrid profile. In that case, that hybrid profile is composed of two different work orientations. The person can have a primary orientation and a secondary orientation.

Based on the literature review already presented we propose that:

**Hypothesis 1 (H1).** *Work orientations can be pure or organized into hybrid profiles.*

We assume that the existence of pure work orientation may also be possible, that is, although we adopt the possibility of there being hybrid profiles, we do not exclude the hypothesis that sometimes natural ways of seeing work may be present, assuming a single psychological meaning. Thus, we propose that the three pure work orientations, calling, career, and job, can exist independently of one another; that is, they may constitute pure work orientations. As such:

**Hypothesis 2 (H2).** *There are three pure work orientations—calling, career, and job.*

Hypotheses 1 and 2 should not be seen as antagonistic but as complementary. When we assume that work orientations are organized into profiles, we propose that the individuals can have hybrid profiles with more than one work orientation. However, the possibility that pure profiles exist is not entirely excluded. That is, everyone can simultaneously assign more than one meaning to the work. Starting from this idea, we argue that there are two combined profiles, one of which combines calling with career orientation, whereas the second hybrid profile combines job orientation with career orientation.

**Hypothesis 3 (H3).** *There is a hybrid profile composed by calling and career orientation.*

**Hypothesis 4 (H4).** *There is a hybrid profile composed by job orientation and career orientation.*

This proposal puts into account the results presented by the previous literature regarding the relationship between the three dimensions of work orientations. For example, [Wrzesniewski et al. \(1997\)](#) and [Fossen and Vredenburg \(2014\)](#) showed results that demonstrate that there is a significant negative relationship between calling and job orientation. This negative relationship was later also verified by [Pitacho et al. \(2019b\)](#). These data led us to exclude the possibility of a profile that simultaneously addresses calling and job orientation. On the other hand, there are several results that point to the possibility of being able to simultaneously experience career orientation and calling. By example, [Pitacho et al. \(2019b\)](#), showed that calling and career orientation have a significant positive relationship. In the same study, the authors also demonstrated that the career and job orientations have a significant positive relationship, too. Additionally, [Cardador \(2008\)](#) concluded that the police officers present a mix orientation, namely, calling and career orientation simultaneously. However, the police officers also present job and career orientation simultaneously. As there are few studies that portray the possibility of mixed work orientation profiles, the data verified by [Cardador \(2008\)](#) and the correlational data presented by several investigations ([Fossen and Vredenburg 2014](#); [Pitacho et al. 2019b](#); [Wrzesniewski et al. 1997](#)) are essential support for the formulation of Hypotheses 3 and 4, as previously presented.

## 2. Materials and Methods

### 2.1. Participants

Participants were 959 adults, 59.7% of whom identified themselves as female. The mean age for this sample was 40.61 years old (SD = 9.54 years), and the mean of professional seniority was 14.87 years (SD = 10.00 years). Regarding the education levels, 3 participants completed elementary school (0.3%), 28 participants completed middle school (2.9%), 230 completed high school (24%), 691 had some university coursework (72%), and 7 did not answer this question. Additionally, 34.9% of participants held a leadership position, 63.4% held a non-leadership position, and 1.7% did not answer this question.

Concerning the sector of activity, it was verified that 31.2% of the participants worked in the public sector ( $n = 299$ ), 56.2% in the private sector ( $n = 539$ ), 10.7% in the social institutions ( $n = 103$ ), and 18 did not answer this question. Concerning the activity area, only 11 participants worked in agriculture, livestock, and fishing (1.1%); 104 participants worked in industry (10.8%); 83 individuals worked in commerce (8.7%); 736 participants worked in services, and only 25 participants did not answer this question. Finally, in respect to organizational dimension, 57.3% of these participants worked in small and medium enterprises, and 40.5% of participants worked in big or multinational enterprises.

The only requirement to participate in this study was to be professionally active at the time to answering the questionnaire. Retired and unemployment people were excluded from study. Additionally, the data for this study was collected using an online survey.

## 2.2. Measures

Work Orientation was measured by a Work Orientation Questionnaire that was composed of three independent scales: calling, job, and career (Pitacho et al. 2019a).

The calling scale had fifteen items, which included “I’m in love with my job,” “I would sacrifice anything for my work,” “This job fills me at 100%,” and “My job helps make the world a better place.” The job scale was composed of fourteen items, which included “I refuse to be emotionally involved with my work,” and “If I did not depend economically on my work, I would never do it again.” Finally, the career scale was composed of nine items, including “My happiness depends on my professional success,” and “I struggle to be recognized”. All Items were scored on a ten-point Likert scale ranging from 0 (“not at all true of me”) to 10 (“totally true of me”).

In the current study, Cronbach’s alpha for calling was 0.87, for job orientation, it was 0.84, and for career orientation, it was 0.77. Additionally, Rho’s Dillon Goldstein for calling was 0.89, for job orientation, it was 0.87, and finally, for the career orientation, Rho’s Dillon Goldstein was 0.83. These results demonstrate an adequate level of reliability of the scales.

## 3. Results

To accomplish the goal of this study, we use a cluster analysis. This analysis is an exploratory technique of multivariate data analysis that allows to cluster individuals into homogeneous groups for certain characteristics. Each observation inside in one group or cluster is similar to all others belonging to that cluster and different from the observations belonging to other clusters (Hair et al. 2019).

We began our analysis by hierarchical cluster analysis with the Ward method and used the quadratic euclidean distance as a measure of dissimilarity. Additionally, we used an  $R^2$  as a decision criterion about the number of clusters that we retained. Next, we refined the classification of each subjects on retained clusters with the non-hierarchical process, the k-means. In the next stage, to identify the dimensions of work orientation that have more importance on retained clusters, we proceeded with the Univariate Variance Analysis.

Then, analyzing results of the Ward method, we assumed that the best solution is four clusters. We support our option not only based in the distance between clusters, but by the  $R^2$  (Table 1). The solution of four cluster retains a significant percentage of the total variability (62%). This solution explains 10% more than the three-cluster (52%) solution and only 4% less than the five-cluster solution (66%). The difference of percentage of total variability between the four- and five-cluster solution is too small to be considerate. In addition, to obtain the one percentage more than 70%, the solution is not simple to interpret, and the difference between clusters is smaller and therefore not recommended.

**Table 1.** Cluster analysis and explained variance of each of the solutions.

Number of Clusters	$R^2$	Variance Explained
3	0.518708591	52%
4	0.615582331	62%
5	0.660256702	66%

Table 2 shows the values of the centroid of each cluster for the three dimensions of work orientation. The clusters are significantly differentiated ( $p$ -value  $\leq 0.001$ ) in the variables under analysis, and the dimension that has the greatest discriminative power is the job dimension.

**Table 2.** Cluster analysis and explained variance of each of the solutions.

	Cluster			
	1 (Indifference)	2 (Career-Calling)	3 (Career-Job)	4 (Pure Job)
Calling	5.50	7.19	5.50	3.45
Career	5.83	7.80	7.33	4.84
Job	3.68	3.12	5.56	6.26

Following the values of the centroids of each of the clusters presented, designations were assigned. For example, cluster four was called “Pure Job”. In this cluster, the centroid on the job variable is the highest (above the average point of the scale) and also above the sample mean, unlike the centroids of the remaining variables. The individuals who integrate this cluster manifest the job orientation as their primary and unique orientation. This is the smallest cluster in the sample and is represented by 113 subjects (13.3%).

By opposition, cluster two, called Career-Calling, is the most represented in the sample. This cluster consists of 296 of the participants (34.8%). This cluster stands out with the high values of career orientation and calling orientation, which are superior not only to the midpoint of the scale, but also to the average of the sample, while the value of job is below average and far below the midpoint of the scale. The Career-Calling cluster is considered a hybrid profile that includes in its subjects the clear presence of the manifestation of two orientations, career and calling. That is, we can find in these subjects the ambition of career progression, professional success, and prestige but also a sense of mission and passion for their work.

In turn, two hundred and seven of the participants (24.4%) belong to cluster three. This cluster is also a hybrid profile. The career orientation is the primary orientation in this profile. Career orientation presents a value well above the average value of the scale and a value above the sample average. The Job orientation is the secondary orientation in this profile. Despite the fact that the value of job orientation does not deviate much from the average value of the scale, it is clearly and significantly above the sample average. This profile has been called Career-Job.

Finally, the second cluster with the highest representation in the sample is cluster one and consists of two hundred and thirty-four subjects (27.5%). This cluster is clearly the least expected, since its centroids can represent a non-orientation because they present in all cases values below the sample average and only the career variable has a value that, despite being low, is above the average value of the scale. After this, and by the low values in all variables under study, this profile was designated Indifference.

With these results, we consider that hypothesis H1 (Work orientations are organized into profiles) was validated. We can accept that some work orientations are organized into hybrid profiles. The H2 hypothesis (There are three simple or pure profiles with only one orientation: calling, career and job) was partially corroborated. In the study sample there are no three pure orientation profiles, only job orientation configuring the pure profile (cluster four). Additionally, hypotheses H3 (There is one profile composed of calling and career orientation) and H4 (there is one profile composed of job orientation and career orientation) were corroborated, even verifying the two hybrid profiles proposed from the outset, namely, Career-calling (cluster two) and Career-Job (cluster three). Unexpectedly, the data showed that in our sample, a profile appears that demonstrates the absence of a work orientation, defined as Indifference (cluster one), and it is now necessary to reflect on its meaning.

#### *Further Analyses*

It is the first time that these work orientation profiles are presented, so to better understand these four profiles, we have characterized them with regard to the demographic and professional variables. We started this characterization by the distribution of the gender

variable, having determined that this is relatively similar in the four profiles ( $\chi^2(3) = 2.821$ ,  $p = 0.420$ ). Accepting the null hypothesis assumes that this variable is not differentiating in the different profiles concerned, so the differences that arise between profiles are not significant. In the same sense, the variable areas of activity and the dimension of the organization are not differentiating from the work orientation profiles. The data show us that for both variables we must reject the null hypothesis,  $\chi^2(9) = 13.161$ ,  $p = 0.152$ , referring to the area of activity and  $\chi^2(9) = 13.284$ ,  $p = 0.150$ , belonging to the organizational dimension. In addition, regarding the variable of seniority, no significant differences were found,  $F(3, 801) = 1.372$ ,  $p = 0.250$ , accepting the null hypothesis, too.

In turn, regarding schooling, the null hypothesis is rejected,  $\chi^2(9) = 28.676$ ,  $p = 0.001$ . It is accepted that the differences between profiles are significant and are not due to chance. In a more detailed analysis, there is, then, a significantly higher proportion of participants in the Pure Job Profile with secondary education (39.1%) and subjects of the Career-Calling profile with higher education (80.7%).

In addition, the variable Position of Leadership is differentiating from the profiles, and there was also a rejection of the null hypothesis,  $\chi^2(3) = 62.098$ ,  $p = 0.000$ . To perform leadership functions, we found a significantly higher proportion of participants with the Career-Calling profile (50.9%) while the subjects of the Pure Job profile are predominantly represented in subordinate functions (90.1%).

Furthermore, the contract type is a differentiating variable in terms of work orientation profiles,  $\chi^2(15) = 29.000$ ,  $p = 0.001$ . The analysis of distribution by contract type is significantly higher than expected in the Career-Calling profile of self-employed workers (17.3%).

Thus, in the activity sector, we found that the null hypothesis is also rejected here, and this is also a differentiating variable for profiles,  $\chi^2(6) = 29.701$ ,  $p = 0.001$ . We verified the existence of higher proportions than expected of participants with the Indifference profile in the Public Sector (37%) but also in the Social sector (14.3%). Additionally, there are proportions higher than expected of participants with the Career-Job profile in the private sector (70.1%). The Profiles Pure Job and Career-Calling have a uniform or homogeneous distribution by the three sectors of activity.

The profiles were also characterized regarding sociological generations (Baby Boomers, Generation X, Generation Y/Millennials, and Generation Z). In this analysis, we verified that marginal significant proportion higher than expected of Millennials (48.9%) was found in the Career-Job cluster.

#### 4. Discussion

The goal of the present study was to analyze the existence of work orientation profiles. The analysis of the data found that the objective has been fulfilled and that we empirically evidenced the existence of work orientation hybrid profiles.

These data consist of a relevant contribution to the literature of work orientation because previous research has treated the different orientations as pure, as is commonly the case with studies on the calling, not considering that, in addition to the primary work orientation, participants showed the influence of a secondary work orientation. That is, the data meet the proposal of [Fossen and Vredenburg \(2014\)](#) when the authors consider that the work orientation can be organized in a system of priorities such as the value model proposed by [Schwartz \(1994\)](#).

In addition, the existence of hybrid profiles was demonstrated, and, as proposed, the hybrid profiles correspond to the two profiles found by [Cardador \(2008\)](#) in the study with police officers as well as the positive relationships existing between the different dimensions of orientation for work. That is, we found that one of the profiles combines career (primary orientation) and calling (secondary orientation), while the other combines career (primary orientation) and job (secondary orientation). In addition to these, and contrary to what is foreseen, we only check for a pure profile, namely pure job profile. Therefore, it was found that there are two profiles dominated by the career dimension and only one pure profile,

that of the job orientation. Additionally, we do not detect the existence of a pure calling orientation. These results provide further and important information for studies that have treated work as a calling as a pure orientation.

We propose that the context in which the data was collected may influence the overvaluation of aspects associated with the career dimension. Data were collected during the post-economic and financial crisis between 2008 and 2012. During this period, workers saw their wages cut and frozen opportunities for progression. This may have led participants to look for what they have lost and consequently to further appreciate the concerns associated with career orientation. If this situation is placed, this overvaluation of the career may be conditioning the absence of the pure calling profile. This contextualization can be important because, as we assume in the introduction, the psychological meaning of work can be affected or molded by historical, social, and economic contexts (Quintanilla et al. 1991).

Despite this, the data make evident the possibility of having hybrid profiles that combine calling and career, so the values of the career orientation that accompany the calling orientation may result in the differences found in the outputs of experiencing a calling and may even constitute a mediator factor between the calling and its “black” side, several times described in the literature (e.g., Duffy and Dik 2013; Keller et al. 2016). These data are relevant to the literature on calling, presenting a possibility of interpretation of the ambiguous results that have emerged from these investigations.

Perhaps more importantly, we found a profile that was not initially foreseen in the hypotheses, the indifference profile. This is the second profile most represented in the sample and is composed of participants who do not seem to have a tendency for any orientation, and the values of the three dimensions are below the sample mean, which is why we called the profile Indifference. What does this profile mean? Is it a “non-orientation” to work? That is, does the meaning attributed to the work not go through any of these known categories, but through a fourth dimension not yet explored or a total absence of meaning? The hypothesis that there is a dimension not contemplated by the three-dimensional models is supported by Willner et al.’s (2020) results. The authors argue that there are more than three types of work orientations and presented a work orientation model with five dimensions of work orientation. On the other side, given the context of data collection, the Indifference profile is interesting. It can capture how, with macro work context shifts, the work orientation profiles can look different. Especially when work context changes are negative, such contextual demands can manifest in an ‘Indifference’ of sorts. It is also noteworthy that this profile cannot be ignored as it represents more than a fourth of the workforce (27.5%). Additionally, it is verified that this profile has a higher incidence in public sector employees, along with the social sector. These two activity sectors were strongly affected by the economic and financial crisis. The public sector suffered from cuts, layoffs, and career freezes. On the other hand, the economic and financial crisis has become a serious social crisis, and this fact has clearly increased the work demands of social sector workers, especially at the emotional level.

Additionally, the Pure Job profile has a higher prevalence in individuals that completed high school and are in non-leadership positions. Apparently, the data show that the primary focus on the material reward that the work provides seems to be characteristic of people with high school education and who hold positions of non-leadership. That is, it is more likely that individuals in this situation present this profile, with extremely low career and calling values.

Finally, the most represented profile of the sample, which corresponds to more than one-third of the workforce under study, is the Career-Calling profile. This profile is transversal to all sectors of activity but presents a higher prevalence of individuals with university education and individuals in positions as managers or independent workers. These two dimensions make up a hybrid profile that arises associated with self-employed workers. Can this profile constitute an entrepreneurial profile? On the other hand, can the association with leadership and management positions mean it represents a leader profile? These data meet the results obtained by some studies on the entrepreneurial

mindset. For example, [Longenecker et al. \(2007\)](#) highlight the entrepreneurial motivation, evidencing that the main reason to enterprise is the desire to contribute to the community and achieve its personal fulfillment. This motivation refers to the calling orientation and to the search for intrinsic gratification through entrepreneurial activity. On the other side, [Degen \(2009\)](#) states that more than receiving financial rewards necessary for their livelihood, entrepreneurs seek to develop an activity that provides them with recognition and benefits. These objectives or motivations seem to be associated with the motivations of career orientation and the search for the recognition and status that characterizes this orientation. However, future studies should contribute to better understanding these individual profiles.

#### *4.1. Implications*

The main implications of the present results focus primarily on the literature of work orientation. First, the results show that the work orientation is organized into hybrid profiles, and therefore it will be necessary to analyze the motivations of employees not only considering their main orientation, but also their secondary orientation. Additionally, the results show that there may not be a pure calling orientation. At least under certain contextual situations this profile does not appear because individuals replace these motivations for more emerging issues in their life. This result is very important to the calling studies. Traditionally, calling orientation has been studied as a pure orientation. Maybe the ambiguous results that exist in the literature can be explained precisely by the existence of another primary or secondary orientation that is not contemplated when using as the sole instrument a questionnaire that measures only the level of individual calling.

Moreover, the results showed the existence of a profile characterized by the absence of any of the orientations known (calling, career, and job). We name this profile as indifference assuming the low score in the three orientations. However, this finding may mean that there is a fourth orientation that is not yet known and that, because it is not present in the instrument used, was not captured by the investigation. This fact demonstrates that is necessary for more studies and more qualitative studies that capture the individual perceptions of work and assess the possibility that there are work orientations still unknown. The possibility of more guidance beyond the three dimensions already known is also congruent with previous studies (e.g., [Pitacho et al. 2019b](#)).

#### *4.2. Limitations and Future Directions*

The main limitations of the present study are essentially related to the characteristics of the sample. Some of these characteristics that can affect the results obtained are, for example, the youth of the sample and their high level of education. Another limitation, as mentioned above, may be the socioeconomic context in which the data were collected. Additionally, the proper measure used a work orientation questionnaire. Despite presenting adequate values of internal consistency, this is only the second time it is used after its validation, which still does not allow comparisons to be made.

Another relevant limitation of this study which should be considered in future investigations concerns the use of the sociodemographic variables. These variables were only used to characterize the profiles, but in the future, the causality between these variables and the different work orientation profiles should be studied.

On the other hand, it will also be relevant, in future investigations to better understand the Career-Calling profile and to understand whether this career orientation combined with the calling may be an explanatory factor of the different results obtained in the literature on the experience of the calling, particularly with regard to its dark side. Still on this profile, it will be important to understand if it is a profile that has a clear relationship with leadership or with an entrepreneurial profile, or both.

In the same sense, it would be very important to conduct a qualitative study that deepens the characteristics of the indifference profile, putting into effect the real motivations of people who have this orientation. Can there be a fourth orientation that has not yet been

covered in the previous literature and is not captured by used questionnaire? Finally, it would also be important to carry out longitudinal studies that focus on the work orientation profiles in order to clarify the dynamics of these profiles. Longitudinal Studies regarding work orientation are scarce and only focus on calling (e.g., Vianello et al. 2020). This fact underlines the necessity to understand the career and job dynamics and, additionally, to understand the dynamics of work orientation profiles.

It would be very useful to reproduce the present study in other countries and/or in a different socioeconomic context. This would allow studying the dynamics of profiles focusing on their variations according to context but also to culture.

## 5. Conclusions

This research has enabled a number of important issues of reflection and future research. The discussion presented made clear the contribution of this study to the literature of psychological meaning of the work and to the literature of work orientation. This study made it clear that the behavior of employees may be influenced by more than a pure orientation, so denying the existence of these hybrid profiles may reduce the explanatory character of the investigations.

As mentioned above, in addition to the theoretical contributions, the results of this study open doors to new lines of research. Highlighting the need to study the behavior of employees in the light of these profiles, only with these advances will it be possible to add practical contributions to theoretical knowledge already gathered.

**Author Contributions:** Conceptualization, L.P. and P.J.d.P.; methodology, L.P., P.J.d.P., P.C. and M.P.L.; software, L.P. and P.C.; validation, L.P., P.J.d.P., P.C. and M.P.L.; formal analysis, L.P. and P.C.; investigation, L.P., P.J.d.P., P.C. and M.P.L.; resources, L.P., P.J.d.P., P.C. and M.P.L.; data curation, L.P., P.J.d.P., P.C. and M.P.L.; writing—original draft preparation, L.P.; writing—review and editing, L.P., P.J.d.P., P.C. and M.P.L.; visualization, L.P., P.J.d.P., P.C. and M.P.L.; supervision, L.P., P.J.d.P., P.C. and M.P.L.; project administration, L.P.; funding acquisition, L.P. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

**Funding:** This research was funded by University of Lisbon.

**Informed Consent Statement:** Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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