Calling and Work Engagement in Priests: The Moderating Role of Social Support

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Abstract: The priest has many jobs and responsibilities to fulfill the vision and missions of the church. This study examines the moderating role of social support from spouses and presbyters in the relationship between calling and work engagement in the priest. Using purposive sampling, we collected 121 priests that had married and worked at least one year as a priest. The age range of respondents was 28-61 years old, and more than half were male. This research data was gathered with the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale, Presbyters Support Scale, Spousal Support Scale, and Calling and Vocation Questionnaire-presence Scale. The reliability coefficient of each scale is .94, .89, .92 and .78. With regression technique – Model 2 from Hayes' PROCESS – we found that the relationship between calling and work engagement in priests is moderated only by presbyters' support. The results show that emotional and instrumental support from presbyters can increase work engagement in a priest who has a weak calling. However, when analyzing social support by its basic functions, informational support from spouses acts as a moderator in the relationship between calling and work engagement. Implications for theory and practice are discussed.

1 INTRODUCTION

Work engagement refers to positive conditions and a fulfilling, affective-motivational state of work related to well-being (Bakker, Schaufeli, Leiter & Taris, 2008). Engagement is characterized by a high level of vigor and strong identification with one's work (Bakker & Leiter, 2010). Employees who have work engagement will appear enthusiastic, energized and seem to be "immersed" in their work, so they will have a better work performance (Bakker & Albrecht, 2018). Work engagement has a reciprocal relationship with an employee's mental health and job satisfaction (Simbula & Guglielmi, 2013). Work engagement is not only beneficial for individuals, but also for teams and organizations.

Previous studies on work engagement have shown that there are differing levels of work engagement between individuals which are influenced by factors such as working conditions, personal characteristics and behavioral strategies (Bakker & Albrecht, 2018). The combination of personal resources and job

characteristics is considered to be an important source of work engagement (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). Personal resources are the affective and cognitive aspects of personality, in the form of positive belief systems about oneself and the world, which motivate individuals to achieve goals and overcome obstacles and challenges (Van den Heuvel, Demerouti, Bakker & Schaufeli, 2010). Job resources are aspects of the job that can help individuals to achieve goals, reduce job demands, and stimulate personal growth and development (Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner & Schaufeli, 2001).

Job resources can be represented in the form of physical, psychological, social or organizational aspects of the job, including equipment, participation in decision making, flexible working time and support from colleagues. Personal resources that are considered to influence work engagement include psychological capital or PsyCap (hope, efficacy, resilience, optimism), self-regulation and meaning making (Van den Heuvel et al, 2010). These factors have been shown to have an influence on increasing

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work engagement among employees. Employees who have adequate personal and job resources will show high levels of work involvement and satisfying work performance.

Although there have been many studies on work engagement, currently further research is still needed to understand the factors that influence work engagement in certain demographic groups, across industrial sectors (private, public, non-profit) and in various jobs (Bakker & Albrecht, 2018). One of the unique demographic groups in the non-profit sector consists of the priests of churches. A church is a faith-based organization (FBO), meaning that it is a non-profit organization that incorporates religious identity and expression in its activities (Bielefeld & Cleveland, 2013). The identification of work demands and resources that are unique to this group will help practitioners in determining appropriate and effective interventions to increase priests' work engagement.

In order to develop work engagement, the priest must have both personal resources and job resources. One of the personal resources that is considered important for a priest is meaning making, which is the ability to understand why an event occurs and what impact it has on oneself (Van den Heuvel et al, 2010). Meaning making is a cognitive-affective resource that can be developed and affects attitudes towards change as well as the motivation to stay involved in work (Van den Heuvel et al, 2010).

One form of meaning making that is done while working is perceiving one's work as a calling. Individuals with a calling will perceive their job as purposeful, meaningful, and having an impact on many people. Individuals with a calling even feel they are "called" to carry out the job (Dik & Duffy, 2009). Individuals with a strong calling will perceive meaningfulness, have a full of sense dedication, and feel a personal involvement in their work (Dobrow & Tosti-Kaharas, 2011). Individuals with a strong calling will show work engagement when experiencing both high and low frustration (Ugwu & Onyishi, 2018).

Priesthood is regarded as one of the professions which requires a calling. Being a priest is often thought of as a "calling" from God. This belief prompts a priest to offer his or her life to serve the community, be involved, and dedicate him or herself to work above personal desires (Christopherson, 1994). Even though a priest discerns his or her profession as a calling, sometimes in doing his or her job the priest experiences obstacles. The extent of perceived barriers in the workplace makes it difficult for individuals to derive meaning or purpose from the

work context (Blustein, 2006) and even prompts individuals to question the calling they already have (Elangovan, Pinder & McLean, 2010). Doubt about a calling can weaken the priest's work engagement (Kolodinsky, Ritchie & Kuna, 2017). However, according to Erum, Abid and Toreas (2020), a calling as a "psychological driver" only explains 30% of the variance in work engagement, which indicates that other factors can affect the relationship.

Social support, especially leader support, was found to increase the relationship between calling and work engagement, and further research on the influence of co-worker support is needed (Kolodinsky, Ritchie & Kuna, 2017). Therefore, in this study, we examine presbyters' support as a priest's co-workers. The support of presbyters becomes a job resource for the priest and acts as a moderator on the direct relationship between calling and work engagement.

The presence of presbyters as co-workers is strongly felt within churches that adhere to a presbyteral polity (*presbyterial sinodal*) system, which has three special characteristics, namely: (a) organizational control, seen from the source of funding, strength in the organization, and the decision-making process; (b) religious expression, seen through organizational identity, people's religiosity, and organizational outcome measures; and (c) program implementation, seen through the services provided, religious elements involved in service delivery, and voluntary participation in religious activities (Bielefeld & Cleveland, 2013).

The organizational control of churches that adhere to a *presbyterial sinodal* system comes from the leadership that is held collectively by the presbyters, and the highest level of decision can only be made through the presbyterial session that is held by the presbytery. Each member of the church council has the same position and duties. The expression of diversity can be seen from the vision and mission of the organization, which develops the spirituality of the church and carries out missionary tasks in the community. The church also performs religious services for both the congregation and the community, which are carried out by the priest together with the church council (Bielefeld & Cleveland, 2013). These special circumstances indicate that in carrying out their duties, the priests also need the support of their fellow co-workers, namely the presbyters.

Apart from co-workers' support, the Book of Order also mentions that the priest's spouse is expected to support the priest's job by attending to the priest's work while also serving the congregation

through religious services in the church. Although a priest's spouse is allowed to have other activities or jobs, it is expected that the spouse's profession will not become an obstacle to the priest's ministry. Seeing the unique demands not only of priests, but also of the priests' spouses, we argue that apart from job resources and personal resources, priests also need other resources, such as support from family, especially spouses.

According to the work-family enrichment theory by Greenhaus and Powell (2006), family-to-work enrichment is a resource that can improve work performance. Family support is non-work-related social support, and as a role resource, it can activate employees' work engagement (Karatepe, 2015). Family support for individuals was found to affect individual work engagement in conditions of both high and low job demands (Lu, Siu, Chen & Wang, 2011). On the other hand, work-family conflict reduces individual work engagement (Opie & Henn, 2013). Based on these understandings, we maintain that it is important to include family factors, especially spousal support, to be able to describe the dynamics of work engagement more comprehensively. Presbyters and spousal support will be operationalized as a priest's social support.

Social support is the comfort, care, appreciation, or assistance available to someone from another person or group (Sarafino, 2011). Priests who perceive and recognize the social support from those around them will believe that they are loved, valued and are a part of the community. The four basic functions of social support are emotional or self-esteem support, tangible or instrumental support, informational support and companionship support.

Emotional or self-esteem support involves empathy, care, concern, positive outlook, and encouragement for the priest. It provides comfort and serenity with a sense of belonging and being loved in stressful situations. Tangible or instrumental support includes direct assistance, such as when the spouse or the presbyters provide material support or assist with assignments when the priest is in a stressful situation or needs help. Informational support includes providing input, suggestions, or feedback on what the priest is doing. Companionship support incorporates the willingness of the spouse or presbyters to spend time with the priest so that the priest can feel like he or she is part of a group that shares the same interests and social activities.

Based on the discussion above, we assume that the *calling* that a priest feels toward his or her job can be affected by the extent of social support that he or she receives. Presumably, priests who get various resources from both co-workers and spouses while carrying out their job will increasingly discern their job as a calling and be more involved with their work. Conversely, if a priest feels less support, it can decrease work engagement even if the priest has perceived his or her calling. The lack of social support can cause hindrances for priests who undergo their job as calling. Thus, the purpose of this study was to determine the moderating role of presbyteral and spousal support on the relationship between calling and work engagement.

2 METHODS (AND MATERIALS)

The study was initiated by asking the synod for permission to conduct the research. After obtaining approval, a personal approach was made to each priest to ask about his or her willingness to become a participant. The research population in this study was a group of priests at churches that adhere to the presbyteral polity (*presbyterial sinodal*) system, who had been married and worked for at least one year. A total of 121 priests were willing to participate in this study. The study variables of social support (from presbyters and spouse), calling, and work engagement would be measured using questionnaires with good reliability (Cronbach's α = .78–.94).

The work engagement questionnaire was modified from the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Seppälä et. al., 2009), which is comprised of 30 items with seven answer choices (α = .94). The social support questionnaire was adapted based on social support theory by Cutrona and Gardner (2004) as well as Sarafino (2011). This questionnaire consisted of 20 items with four answer choices and measured social support from spouse (α = .92) and presbyters (α = .89). The calling questionnaire was adapted by employing the "Presence of Calling" dimension from the Calling and Vocation Questionnaire (CVQ-presence; Dik et al., 2012). The calling questionnaire consisted of 12 items with six answer choices (α = .78). Furthermore, data collection was done using an online questionnaire.

Data was analyzed using the regression technique; specifically, we employed the second model of SPSS PROCESS Macro (Hayes, 2018). Through this analysis, we would like to investigate the moderating effect of spousal and presbyteral support on the relationship between calling and work engagement.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics and Intercorrelations of the Study Variable.

Variable	Descriptive		Correlation							
	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	9
1. Age	44.15	8.5								
2. Gender	-	-	.02							
3. Age of Marriage	14.37	8.63	.88**							
4. Education	-	-	.38**	-.12	.35**					
5. Tenure	10.34	7.26	.22*	.08	.18	.13				
6. Calling	5.47	0.49	.27**	.14	.29**	.19*	.02			
7. Spouse Support	3.47	0.41	.00	.06	.03	.05	-.06	.18*		
8. Presbyteral Support	3.25	0.47	-.09	.04	-.07	-.05	.10	.23*	.32**	
9. Work Engagement	5.99	0.54	.25**	.05	.25**	.13	–.05	.61*	.30**	.28**

Note: $N = 121$, age, age of marriage and tenure in years, minimum education bachelor
**$P < 0.01$ level (2-tailed); *$p < 0.05$ level (2-tailed)

3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Results

3.1.1 Descriptive Statistics

A total of 121 priests who had been working for one year were willing to participate in this study. Participants' age range was from 28 to 61 years old ($M = 44.15$, $SD = 8.50$), and 79.3% were male. The tenure range was from 1 to 35 years ($M = 15.10$, $SD = 8.69$). More than half of the participants hold a bachelor's degree (55.4%), and 71.9% of the participants' spouses also hold a bachelor's degree. Additionally, 52% of the participants had a spouse who worked (Table 1).

3.1.2 Results of Classical Assumption Test

The results of classical assumption tests showed that our data satisfied the assumptions of normality, homoscedasticity, and absence of multicollinearity. The results of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov asymptotic test (sig. 2-tailed) were nonsignificant for both work engagement ($D = .835$, $p > .05$) and calling ($D = .052$, $p > .05$), meaning that both scores were normally distributed. Furthermore, the collinearity test indicated that multicollinearity was not a concern (Tolerance = 0.899, VIF = 1.11).

3.1.3 Results of Hypothesis Testing

Based on the results of the hypothesis testing, it was found that calling and the interaction terms of calling

with spousal support as well as calling with presbyteral support explained 45% of variances in work engagement scores (Table 2). Table 3 shows that there is a significant effect of the relationship between calling and the priest's work engagement (B = 2.2, $p < .01$), and only presbyteral support moderates the relationship between calling and work engagement (B = -0.35, $p < .05$). This negative value indicates that presbyteral support can increase a priest's work engagement only if the priest has a weak calling. Spousal support did not significantly moderate the effect of calling on work engagement (B = –.14, $p > .05$). The visualization of the overall model can be seen in Figure 1. We also analyzed social support by its basic functions. Informational support from spouses acts as a moderator in the relationship between calling and work engagement (B = –.35, $p < .05$) (Table 3). The basic functions of presbyteral support that have noticeable influences are emotional (B = –.43, $p < .01$) and instrumental support (B = –.43, $p < .01$).
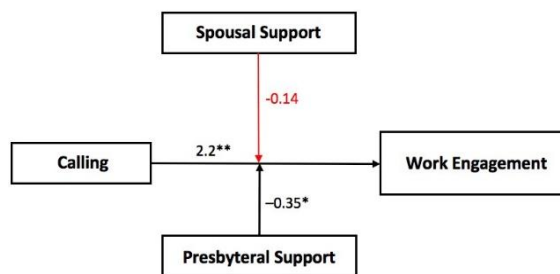

Figure 1: A Moderated Model.

Table 2: Model Summary.

R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
.67	.45	.17	18.81	5.00	115.00	.00

Table 3: Results from Moderation Analysis of Spousal Support and Presbyteral Support on the Relationship between Calling and Work Engagement.

	B	se	t	p-value	95%CI
Calling	2.2	.74	2.98	.00	.74; 3.66
Spousal Support	1.00	1.16	0.86	.39	−1.29; 3.29
a. Emotional support	.56	.90	.62	.53	−1.22; 2.35
b. Instrumental support	−1.17	.85	−1.38	.17	−2.85; .51
c. Informational support	2.15	.93	2.31	.02	.31; 4.00
d. Companionship support	.93	.74	1.26	.21	−.53; 2.38
Interaction_1 (Calling*Spousal Support)	−.14	.21	−.68	.50	−.56; 27
a. Interaction 1a	−.07	.17	−.42	.67	−.40; 26
b. Interaction 1b	.23	.15	1.48	.14	−.08; 53
c. Interaction 1c	−.35	.17	−2.11	.04	−.69; −.02
d. Interaction 1d	−.16	.13	−1.16	.25	−.42; .11
Presbyteral Support	2.01	.88	2.28	.02	.26; 3.77
a. Emotional support	2.50	.80	3.12	.00	.91; 4.09
b. Instrumental support	2.44	.73	3.35	.00	1.00; 3.88
c. Informational support	.97	.82	1.19	.24	−.65; 2.59
d. Companionship support	.86	.69	1.25	.22	−.51; 2.23
Interaction_2 (Calling*Presbyteral Support)	−.35	.16	−2.17	.03	−.66; −.03
a. Interaction 2a	−.43	.14	−2.98	.00	−.72; −.14
b. Interaction 2b	−.43	.13	−3.27	.00	−.69; −.17
c. Interaction 2c	−.15	.15	−.99	.32	−.44; .15
d. Interaction 2d	−.15	.13	−1.18	.24	−.40; .10

Note: $N = 121$. CI = Confidence Interval. Dependent variable = work engagement.

3.2 Discussion

Based on the results, calling has a significant effect on priests' work engagement. This shows that in carrying out their work, priests have a very strong sense of a calling to serve their congregation. Priests believe that their work is God's calling, meaningful, and contributes positively to the congregation, so they carry out their duties and responsibilities seriously.

When working, priests give most of their energy, put forth their best effort, do not give up easily, and persevere when faced with difficulties. Priests also show enthusiasm and a strong identification with their work such that they carry out tasks with totality and feel happiness when they successfully complete their assignments. Often priests feel absorbed in their activities such that time seems to pass quickly as they complete all services.

In carrying out their duties, priests also need support from the presbyters. In this study, it was revealed that the support of the presbyters was more effective in increasing the priests' work engagement if the priests had a weak calling to their work. This means that a priest with a strong calling will easily feel engaged in his or her duties, even without the support of the presbyters. This is in line with previous studies which found that social support from colleagues and superiors is an important predictor of work engagement (Halbesleben, 2010). If an individual has a lot of resources (in the form of social support), he or she will feel more engaged with his or her job, even in conditions with a lot of work demands

(Bakker, Hakanen, Demerouti & Xanthopoulou, 2007).

The basic functions of presbyteral support that have noticeable influences are emotional and instrumental support. Therefore, priests with a weak sense of calling need support in the form of empathy, care, attention, and encouragement from the presbyters to provide comfort and calmness in stressful situations (e.g., doing service). Our results are consistent with Madjar (2008) that the effectiveness of support also depends on the source. Emotional and instrumental support from co-workers had a stronger impact than support from non-work-related sources (i.e., spouse). The reason is that emotional support from colleagues is directly related to how new decisions or ideas are received by those associated with them. Moreover, emotional support from co-workers is more effective because it is most needed when problems arise and more helpful in coping with job-related stress.

Priests with a weak calling also need presbyters' instrumental support to carry out their duties and deal with strenuous situations. Supporting facilities from colleagues related to domain-relevant knowledge and expertise assist the priest in finding a solution to problems faced (Madjar, 2008).

The presbyters' support is less effective for priests who already have a strong calling. This could be related to the priest's internal factors as a recipient of the support. The internal factors of those who receive support also determine whether a person will get social support or not (Sarafino, 2011). If a person believes that he or she must be able to independently fulfill job responsibilities, then the person may not be assertive in asking for help. Additionally, a person may feel reluctant to ask for help if the person finds that sources of support are also in a state of stress and need help. Priests with a strong calling may think that the presbyters' support is not necessary because they believe that they must carry out their responsibilities with totality while being fully independent. Therefore, they are reluctant to ask the presbyters for help because they perceive that the presbyters already have their own responsibilities and difficulties in carrying out their duties in the church.

On the other hand, priests are church leaders who have attended special education programs, both theoretically and practically through services in the church, and thus they have more adequate knowledge and skills to complete theological ministry than presbyters. As church leaders, priests also have a higher status socially. As someone who has higher competence and social status, seeking help can be considered a weakness, lower social status (Nadler,

2015), or show dependence and inability. Consequently, it is possible that priests feel better about solving problems alone and avoid seeking help (Nadler & Chernyak-Hai, 2014).

The act of receiving help can also reduce self-esteem (Deelstra et al., 2003) and task-specific self-efficacy (belief in being able to do specific tasks) in individuals. Accepting assistance may make someone feel incapable of solving work problems independently (Chou & Chang, 2016) or restricted from free choice (Deelstra et al., 2003). Consequently, for priests, asking for help with church services may seem like a threat to self-esteem and reduce their self-confidence in doing specific tasks. This perception may have influenced the priests' preference to complete their duties individually and not rely on the presbyters. In short, reaction to receiving support also depends on the need for support (Deelstra et al., 2003).

In this study, we also found interesting data patterns related to spousal support. When analyzing social support by its basic functions, we found that informational support from spouses acts as a moderator in the relationship between calling and work engagement. This finding is in line with Madjar (2008) that informational support from non-work-related sources is more impactful than that from work-related sources because it provides cognitive stimulation. People who are not directly related to the problem sometimes give a unique perspective. This result also shows that informational support from spouses is more acceptable than informational support from presbyters. Feedback or advice from co-workers is sometimes received as critical social support, namely social support that directly leads to feeling insulted, criticized, or attacked (Gray et al., 2019).

4 CONCLUSIONS

Based on the above discussion, it can be concluded that:

1. Calling increases work engagement among priests.
2. Presbyters' emotional and instrumental support is effective in promoting priests' work engagement, especially when addressed to priests with a weak calling.
3. Spousal support, specifically informational support, can enhance work engagement among priests with a weak calling.

Suggestions that can be made based on the results of this study are:

1. Presbyters and priests can jointly develop more open communication such that they can better understand each other's needs, thereby enabling them to help each other according to their respective needs.

2. Presbyters are expected to provide support to priests, especially those who have a weak calling, so that they can fully engage in their ministerial duties.

3. To retain their calling, priests can proactively develop their abilities and skills in carrying out their ministerial tasks and seek constructive feedback from people who can provide inspiration for self-development.

4. The priest's spouse is expected to provide input, suggestions, or feedback on what the priest is doing, but constructively.

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