An exploratory assessment of callings: the importance of specialization

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Abstract

Purpose – This study sought to understand how having a calling influenced engagement, work–life balance and career satisfaction for Professional Golfers Association of America (PGA) and Golf Course Superintendent of America (GCSA) professionals.

Design/methodology/approach – A conceptual model was used to examine callings among golf course supervisors and its impact on their engagement, work–life balance and career satisfaction. This study also explored the moderation effect of employees' generalized or specialized role on the calling–engagement relationship. Surveys were collected from a single golf management company and partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) was used for data analysis.

Findings – The results revealed significant relationships among all of the variables, with the exception of the impact of having a calling on work–life balance. Additionally, the more having a calling increased, the more important it was for supervisors to have specialized roles to increase their engagement.

Originality/value – This study identifies important differences in factors that promote career satisfaction for golf course supervisors and extends current understanding of role theory.

Keywords Engagement, Work-life balance, Career satisfaction, Managerial group differences

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

The golf industry, like many segments of the hospitality and tourism industry, comprises myriad independently owned operations as well as thousands of operations that are overseen by management companies. In fact, the five largest golf course management companies (i.e. Troon Golf, ClubCorp, Pacific Golf Management, Accordia Golf Co., Ltd., and Billy Casper Golf) operate approximately 945 golf courses worldwide (Statista, 2017). These golf course

operation companies not only specialize in golf course management but they also offer expertise in other areas of golf operations including, but not limited to, course and property maintenance, food and beverage, marketing and public relations, special events, financial management and staffing and training.

Many of these golf course management organizations require or prefer specific credentials in order for applicants to qualify for certain positions across their various properties. Two such credentials are memberships within the Professional Golfers Association of America (PGA) and the Golf Course Superintendent Association of America (GCSAA). Both associations require a robust educational program that involves both a commitment to seminar-based instruction with assessment and work experience. To be a member in good standing of these organizations, continuing education, dues and employment within the field are required (GCSAA, 2020; PGA, 2020).

Because golf course management organizations either manage the properties or facilitate the properties with managers, or both, understanding how the managers in these organizations view their careers and the impact that their views have on employee engagement as well as personal and work lives are of importance. When an employee feels called to their work, there is evidence that they are more likely to be engaged, which suggests that they help to create their own work–life balance through the vigor, dedication and absorption they experience from their work (Rothbard, 2001). This engagement has been shown to increase employees' satisfaction with their life and their work (Wrzesniewski, 2012), which may ultimately support greater career satisfaction among employees. Career satisfaction has proven to result in increased employee work productivity, among other positive organizational outcomes. Thus, it behooves the organization to understand how these personal and organizational antecedents (having a calling, engagement and work–life balance) impact employees' career satisfaction (Cain et al., 2018).

Since an individual's role in the organization and whether or not they have a specialized role that is (or is not) aligned with their beliefs may impact their career satisfaction, there is a need to understand the potential moderating role of the role characteristics of the department (e.g. generalized and specialized) in which an employee works with employee engagement. Moreover, this satisfies a gap in the extant literature explaining how a specialized versus generalized role influences clarity of occupational identity for employees in higher level positions of the organization. Accordingly, this exploratory study seeks to examine the relationships between currently employed golf course managers' having a calling and their employee engagement, work–life balance and career satisfaction. Additionally, the moderator effect of employees' department (generalized versus specialized) on the calling–engagement relationship was also tested (see Figure 1).

Literature review
Role theory and the service encounter
Role theory explains that individuals assume various work and societal roles and, much like actors, learn how best to behaviorally play their parts in their respective lines of work (Graham et al., 2004; Jang and Zippay, 2011; Solomon et al., 1985). The formal roles adopted by people in their workplaces are shown to mediate daily life (Ashforth et al., 2000). Thus, the roles that individuals assume as employees dictate various personal and organizational outcomes that may positively or negatively impact the employee and the organization in which they are working, depending upon the employee's ability to appropriately "play the role".

As role theory seeks to explain "real-life behavior as it is displayed in genuine, on-going social situations," scholars have used the theory to highlight "processes and phases of socialization, interdependences among individuals, the characteristics and organization of
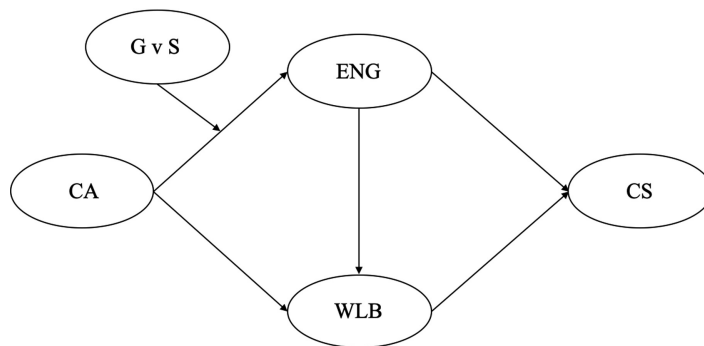
Figure 1.
Conceptual model

Note(s): CA= Calling; GvS = Generalized versus specialized;
ENG = Engagement; WLB = Work-Life balance; CS = Career Satisfaction

social positions, processes of conformity and sanctioning, specialization of performance and the division of labor, and many others" (Biddle and Thomas, 1966, p. 17). In the context of a business enterprise like a golf course or country club, the roles employees play are defined by the positions they hold and encompass the aptitudes or skills necessary for the position (e.g. PGA, GCSAA certification), the classifications of the position (e.g. general manager, head professional, head golf professional, golf instructor, superintendent, etc.) and the behaviors of people who occupy those positions (Biddle and Thomas, 1966).

Role theory scholars have pointed to the need of role or occupational identity in order to flesh out the alignment between an individual's understanding of that role and how that alignment influences various organizational outcomes (Hirschi, 2012). Role identity has been previously defined as "the clear perception of occupational interests, abilities, goals and values and the structure of meanings that link these self-perceptions to career roles (Hirschi, 2012, p. 480). The benefits of role identity include the ability of the employee to find work that reflects personal strengths and facilitates greater abilities to cope when negative workplace situations transpire (Skorikov and Vondracek, 2011). While the general manager role is a vital leadership role that may be aligned with an individual's career aspirations and may have clearly defined obligations, identifying how this managerial role, when compared to a more specialized and similarly high-ranking role that may be more "aligned" with an individual's self-perceptions, is of particular interest.

Callings
Finding meaning through one's work and how this positively impacts both individuals and organizations is at the core of calling literature (Dik and Duffy, 2009; Dobrow and Totsi-Kharas, 2011; Wrzesniewski, 2012). Through a secular lens, work as a calling has three components: an external call to the line of work, an effort to be prosocial and the belief that the work is meaningful (Wrzesniewski, 2012). These three factors serve to enable the individual to express their values and beliefs through their work. Additionally, scholars have noted that when work is viewed as a calling, the identity of the worker and the job become inseparable due to the meaning that the work inherently provides through making a prosocial difference (Berg *et al.,* 2010; Grant, 2007). The result of viewing work as a calling, and part of the reason that work as a calling has garnered so much attention, is due to the positive work attitudes, motivations and higher levels of performance that result (Cain *et al.,* 2018; Dobrow and Totsi-Kharas, 2011).

Specifically, individuals who demonstrated having a calling were shown to work longer hours and displayed greater levels of satisfaction with their work and life roles (Lee, 2016).

Calling and employee engagement

Extant literature has identified a strong link between having a calling and an employee's engagement with their work (Bunderson and Thompson, 2009). Characterized by an employee's vigor, dedication and absorption, employee engagement represents a physical, emotional and cognitive expression of oneself in their work (Schaufeli and Bakker, 2010; Schaufeli *et al.*, 2006; Schaufeli *et al.*, 2002; Kahn, 1990). The idea of employee engagement is underpinned by the idea that employees engage and disengage from their respective work roles at varied rates and times (Goffman, 1961). Not only does engagement imply focus, but it also captures one's presence in their work role (Rothbard and Patil, 2012.) While the concept of engagement shares similar characteristics to the concept of having a calling in terms of expression of oneself through work, it differs in that it does not capture the essence of viewing the work as meaningful or of a higher purpose (Dobrow and Totsi-Kharas, 2011). Previous studies have demonstrated that viewing work as a calling is a predictor of employee engagement (Cain *et al.*, 2018; May *et al.*, 1994; Xie *et al.*, 2016). Therefore, the following hypothesis was formed:

H1. Having a calling significantly and positively influences employee engagement.

Generalized versus specialized role as a moderator for calling and engagement

There is a growing body of literature across several specialized labor fields (e.g. nursing, technology) wherein there has been a call to examine the merits of a more generalized work experience versus a more specialized work experience. Certain studies have demonstrated that a more specialized work experience offers tangible benefits to workers' careers (Hsu *et al.*, 2009; Mezey *et al.*, 2000) in the forms of making a more attractive candidate for hire (Autor, 2001) or promotion (Zuckerman, 2005). Yet, more diversified and generalized work experiences have also been touted as meritorious in offering career growth (Custódio *et al.*, 2013; Murphy and Zabojnik, 2004).

However, the vast majority of studies examining specialization and generalization are examining their merits through a lens for career trajectory (Autor, 2001; Custódio *et al.*, 2013; Hsu *et al.*, 2009; Murphy and Zabojnik, 2004; Zuckerman, 2005) or for providing a more specialized skillset to benefit both the employee and the consumer (Mezey *et al.*, 2000). What the studies do not examine is how the specialized verses generalized role influences clarity of occupational identity in the form of professional and vocational role clarity (Hirshi, 2012) for employees who have reached the higher levels of the organization. The theoretical implications for clarity over more general roles have been shown to facilitate work that reflects and individual's goals, strengths, interests and preferences (Skorikov and Vondracek, 2011). In fact, empirical research has demonstrated that when professional identification with the role was high, employees displayed higher levels of engagement (Luyckx *et al.*, 2010).

The question that is begged is how generalization versus specialization impacts the employee who is at the top of the career trajectory? The general manager at a golf course facility oversees all areas of the operation, while a superintendent is responsible more specifically on the maintenance of the course, but both represent the height of the career trajectory in golf course and country club management. Is the relationship between having a calling and employee engagement influenced more by a distinct and specialized role (e.g. superintendent) or more generalized and higher-level role (e.g. general manager)?

H2. Significant differences exist in having a calling and employee engagement between general managers (generalized) and superintendents (specialized).

Callings and work–life balance

A large undertaking among calling and positive organizational behavior scholars is to elucidate how individuals derive meaning from their work and life spheres (Dobrow and Totsi-Kharas, 2011) and how the presence of a calling may or may not contribute to work–life balance (Duffy *et al.*, 2011; Duffy *et al.*, 2015). Existing literature has shown that employees who viewed their work as a calling also reported higher levels of career satisfaction (Bunderson and Thompson, 2009; Cain *et al.*, 2018; Wrzesniewski *et al.*, 1997). Among executive chefs, having a calling significantly and positively led to greater levels of work–life balance (Cain *et al.*, 2018). These findings imply that working individuals who view their work as a calling may experience greater balance across both work and life domains. Thus, the following hypothesis was formed:

H3. Having a calling significantly and positively influences work–life balance.

Employee engagement and work–life balance

Creating a meaningful work experience requires the development and integration of implementable work projects and assignments that engage employees (Munn, 2013). These engaging initiatives subsequently have the potential to foster a meaningful work environment which in turn has been shown to assist employees attain work–life balance (Munn, 2013). Engaged employees exhibit positive work behaviors including enthusiasm for the job, persistence and flexibility in the face of adversity, and extra energy and effort toward work duties (Rothmann and Baumann, 2014; Schaufeli and Bakker, 2010). These positive organizational outcomes are facilitated by the physical and psychological stimulation that an employee attains with immersion or absorption in the work experience (Ashforth *et al.*, 2000).

The essence of engagement captures employees' vigor (energy and stimulation), dedication (meaningfulness) and absorption (interest and involvement) in the workplace, the result of which is self-established positive feedback (Bakker and Oerlmans, 2012; Rothbard and Patil, 2012). This positive feedback results in a spillover of positive emotions from the work sphere to the home sphere, thus facilitating greater work–life balance (Cain *et al.*, 2018; Rothmann and Baumann, 2014). The influence of employee engagement and work–life balance has been shown to be reciprocal; the more the employee is engaged, the more positive emotions spill into the home domain resulting in work–life balance, which in turn supports greater engagement in the workplace (Bakker and Oerlmans, 2012; Rothmann and Baumann, 2014). Because of the positive relationship demonstrated between engagement and work–life balance, the following hypothesis was posited:

H4. Employee engagement significantly and positively influences work–life balance.

Employee engagement and career satisfaction

Identifying the antecedents of career satisfaction has been prioritized among hospitality scholars due to the positive organizational outcomes that result from this phenomenon, including enhanced job performance (Lu *et al.*, 2016). Locke (1969, p. 316) defined career satisfaction as "the pleasurable emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job as achieving or facilitating the achievement of one's job values." Research revealed that highly engaged employees demonstrated higher levels of job satisfaction compared to disengaged employees (Radosevich *et al.*, 2008) and were more apt to display positive workplace behaviors (Saks, 2006). Overall, there has been agreement across the literature demonstrating that employee engagement is a key antecedent to career satisfaction (Karatepe, 2013; Lu *et al.*, 2016; Radosevich *et al.*, 2008). Thus, the following hypothesis was proposed:

H5. Employee engagement significantly and positively influences career satisfaction.

Work–life balance and career satisfaction

Work–life balance scholars and industry practitioners have espoused the importance of this variable for employees across the organizational hierarchy (Deery and Jago, 2015). While the majority of the extant hospitality literature highlights issues that arise when imbalance occurs (Chiang *et al.*, 2010; Deery and Jago, 2009; Karatepe, 2013; Lawson *et al.*, 2013; Lewis, 2010), a shift in focus to the positive outcomes that occur when balance is achieved has demonstrated that career satisfaction, a primary impediment to turnover intention, is one such outcome (Cegarra-Leiva *et al.*, 2012; Deery and Jago, 2015). Thus, the following hypothesis was postulated:

H6. Work–life balance significantly and positively influences career satisfaction.

Methodology

Sample

The sample consisted of PGA and GCSA professionals working full-time at the supervisory level of a singular golf management company, employing roughly 400 professionals at golf courses across the US. The survey was distributed via an email link to 237 general managers/superintendents across the company. In total, 81 respondents from seven regions/categories of the company (Central; Mid-Atlantic; Midwest; Northeast; Signature (Private); Southeast; West) completed and returned the survey. Of the 81 responses, 79 were useable, representing a 33.33% response rate.

Data collection

A link to a survey questionnaire was distributed through email by the golf company's human resource manager. The survey was distributed to 237 golf course leaders (e.g. general managers, superintendents) from June 18–30, 2018, all of whom are or who previous were PGA of America or GSCAA members in good standing. The human resources manager sent one follow-up email a week into the survey distribution to encourage a greater level of participation. The respondents were asked to answer questions to the best of their ability, with no negative consequences for not participating or for stopping participation at any time. The survey link was distributed to general managers and superintendents who worked in the organization who were 18 years old or older and in good standing.

Measurement of variables

All measures were either adapted or adopted from previous studies and measured using seven-point Likert scales (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree). Callings were adapted from the Dobrow and Tosti-Kharas (2011) 12-item scale. For example, the question, "I am passionate about playing my instrument/singing/engaging in my artistic specialty/business/being a manager" (Dobrow and Tosti-Kharas, 2011) was adapted to "I am passionate about being an PGA professional." The six-item work–life balance measure was adopted verbatim (Carlson *et al.*, 2009). The nine-item employee engagement scale (Schaufeli *et al.*, 2006) was adopted verbatim and employed three items representing each of the dimensions of vigor, dedication and absorption. Finally, the career satisfaction scale was adopted verbatim from Spurk *et al.* (2011). Demographic information including gender, ethnicity, age, years employed, department in the company and region was also collected.

Data analysis and common method bias
A conceptual model (see Figure 1) was developed based on a thorough review of the extant literature. The use of partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) was deemed appropriate due to the exploratory nature and complexity of the model being studied (Hair *et al.*, 2016). Additionally, PLS-SEM is touted for its robustness to small sample sizes and was thus more appropriate than using other types of structural equation modeling for this study (Hair *et al.*, 2016). Item parceling was also used to reflect single primary factor dimensions or latent constructs. The use of item parcels as indicators of the latent constructs has been shown to be beneficial in structural equation modeling in order to address issues of large sample size requirements in addition to unreliability and nonnormal item-level data (e.g. Marsh, 1994; West *et al.*, 1995).

Using SmartPLS 3.0. software, PLS-SEM was employed to test the direct relationships between variables, as well as the moderation effect of department (generalized vs specialized) on the relationship between having a calling and employee engagement. First, the outer model was assessed to determine the measurement adequacy followed by an assessment of the inner model and then a test of the indirect effects proposed in the conceptual model (see Figure 1). The descriptive analysis, Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability, correlation analysis and average variance extracted (AVE) were also undertaken.

Because the data were collected using an online survey at only one point in time, common method bias (CMB) could be a concern. Thus, several procedural and statistical approaches were used to manage this type of bias. When collecting the data, participants were informed in the consent that there were no right or wrong answers to the questions being asked and their confidentiality would be strictly kept. Protecting the anonymity of the respondents and reducing their apprehension toward evaluation of the questions has been suggested as a viable means for reducing CMB (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2003). Additionally, the researchers also carried out a full collinearity test. As the variance inflation factors (VIFs) ranged between 1.00 and 1.3, CMB in this study was not a serious concern because the variance inflation factors did not exceed the recommended cut-off criterion of 3.3 (Kock, 2015).

Results
Demographics
The overwhelming majority of respondents were male (96.25%), with one individual preferring not to identify their gender, and Caucasian (90%). There was an equal representation of individuals from the Millennial generation, from 25 to 39 years old (38.5%) and Generation X from 40 to 54 years old (38.5%), with the remainder of respondents representing Baby Boomers, 55 years old and older. The majority of respondents worked in general management roles (57.5%) followed by superintendent roles (32.5%). The largest group of workers had been employed with the company, over 25 years (31.25%), and the Southeastern region represented nearly a quarter of all respondents (24.05%) followed by the Mid-Atlantic region (21.25%). The demographics are displayed in Table 1.

Outer model results
The outer model was assessed first to determine the measurement adequacy as suggested by Hair *et al.*'s (2016) (Table 2). The outer loadings ranged from 0.827 to 0.980 and were above the 0.70 cutoff value (Hair *et al.*, 2016). The reliability was held as the composite reliability of all constructs ranged from 0.917 to 0.978, Cronbach's alpha ranged from 0.865 to 0.966 and Rho A ranged from 0.892 to 0.967. All constructs achieved reasonable construct validity by showing an AVE above the cutoff value of 0.50. Additionally, the Fornell–Larcker criterion and Heterotrait–Monotrait (HTMT) ratios were examined to determine discriminant validity (Table 3). The square root of the construct AVE was greater than any correlation coefficient among the constructs (Fornell and Larcker, 1981), HTMT ratios were lower than the

Demographic	n	%	Demographic	n	%
Gender	*80*		*Employment history*	*80*	
Male	77	96.25	Less than a year	5	6.25
Female	2	2.50	1–3 years	17	21.25
No response	1	1.25	4–6 years	18	22.50
Ethnicity	*80*		7–9 years	15	18.75
Caucasian/White	72	90.00	10+ years	25	31.25
African American	3	3.75	*Region*	*79*	
Latino/a or Hispanic	0	0.00	Mid-Atlantic	17	21.52
Asian or Pacific Islander	2	2.50	Northeast	14	17.72
Others	0	0.00	Central	9	11.40
Prefer not to disclose	3	3.75	Southeast	19	24.05
Generation/Age	*78*		Midwest	14	17.72
Millennials: 25–39	30	38.50	West	4	5.06
Gen X: 40–54	30	38.50	Signature (Private)	2	2.53
Baby Boomers: 55+	18	23.00			
Department	*80*				
General manager	46	57.50			
Superintendent	26	32.50			
Other	8	10.00			

Table 1.
Demographic
characteristics

Construct/ indicators	Loading	Weight	*t*-statistics	Crobach's α	Rho A	Composite reliability	AVE
Calling							
CA1	0.929	0.317	31.973***	0.932	0.939	0.956	0.880
CA2	0.939	0.371	63.993***				
CA3	0.946	0.378	57.461***				
Career satisfaction							
CS1	0.943	0.451	68.818***	0.903	0.961	0.939	0.837
CS2	0.948	0.343	47.665***				
CS3	0.849	0.293	16.436***				
Engagement							
ENGAB	0.827	0.372	16.795***	0.865	0.892	0.917	0.787
ENGDE	0.925	0.429	72.529***				
ENGVI	0.907	0.326	40.743***				
Work–life balance							
WLB1	0.980	0.395	148.291***	0.966	0.967	0.978	0.936
WLB2	0.963	0.325	76.705***				
WLB3	0.959	0.393	84.819***				

Note(s): AVE refers to average variance extracted
***$p < 0.001$
CA = Calling; CS = Career satisfaction; ENGAB = Engagement-absorption; ENGDE = Engagement-dedication; ENGVI = Engagement-vigor; WLB = Work–life Balance

Table 2.
Measurement model
assessment at first- and
second-order model

conservative cut-off value of 0.85 (Henseler *et al.*, 2015) and the confidence interval did not include 1, thus confirming discriminant validity.

Inner model results
The inner model was evaluated after the outer model. The inner VIF values ranged from 1.00 to 1.31 indicating multicollinearity was not a concern in the model. The path coefficients are

shown in Figure 2. All paths were significant except the path from calling to work–life balance ($\beta = -0.192$, $t = 1.343$, $p = 0.179$), thus failing to support H3. According to the results, calling positively predicted engagement ($\beta = 0.489$, $p < 0.000$), supporting H1. This positive relationship is moderated with the type of department (generalized versus specialized) in which the employee worked ($\beta = -0.221$, $p < 0.017$), supporting H2. Engagement positively influenced work–life balance ($\beta = 0.370$, $p < 0.002$) and career satisfaction ($\beta = 0.361$, $p < 0.003$), supporting H4 and H5. Finally, work–life balance positively influenced career satisfaction ($\beta = 0.290$, $p < 0.017$), supporting H6.

Indirect effects

Calling through engagement to career satisfaction was found to be significant ($\beta = -0.176$, $p < 0.013$). Calling through engagement to work–life balance was also found to be significant ($\beta = 0.181$, $p < 0.012$), see Table 4. Additionally, the moderation effect of the generalized versus specialized role was analyzed. Results revealed that for both general managers and superintendents, employee engagement was lower when having a calling was lower. However, as the level of having a calling increased, employee engagement (dedication, vigor, and absorption in work) became greater for those employees who were superintendents than it did for those who were general managers (see Figure 3).

Multi-group analysis results

For the multi-group analysis (MGA), the generalized population was represented by general managers ($n = 46$) who oversee all areas of the golf course operation. The specialized

	CA	CS	ENG	WLB
1. CA	*0.938*	0.117	0.536	0.032
2. CS	0.101	*0.915*	0.469	0.411
2. ENG	0.485	0.442	*0.887*	0.288
3. WLB	0.013	0.390	0.277	*0.967*

Note(s): CA = Calling; CS = Career satisfaction; ENG = Engagement; WLB = Work–life balance
Values of square root of AVE are in italic on the diagonal, the bivariate correlation coefficients are in the lower triangular and the heterotrait–monotrait (HTMT) ratio of correlations are in the upper triangular
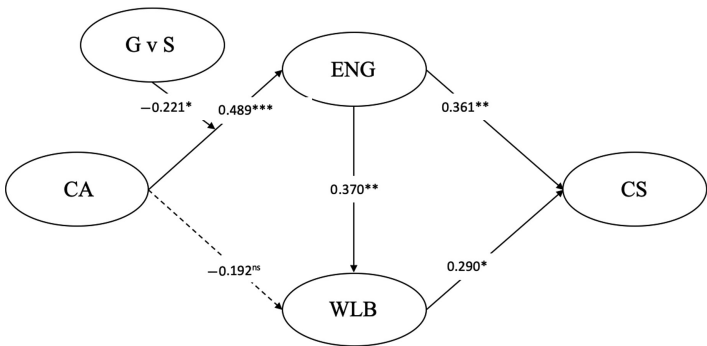
Table 3.
Discriminant validity

Note(s): CA= Calling; GvS = Generalized versus specialized;
ENG = Engagement; WLB = Work-Life balance; CS = Career Satisfaction
***$p < 0.000$, **$p < 0.01$, *$p < 0.05$, ns = not significant

Figure 2.
SEM results

population was represented by the superintendents ($n = 26$) who oversee more specifically the maintenance of the course. There were eight respondents who listed "other" as their classification without further explanation, so they were excluded from the moderation analysis. MGA was applied to detect the potential differences between generalized managers and specialized managers. MGA does not require equal sample size in the groups, but measurement invariance is required (Hair *et al.*, 2016). Thus, the measurement invariance of the composite model (MICOM) procedure was used to access measurement invariance (Hair *et al.*, 2016). The MICOM applies to both reflective and formative measurements (Henseler *et al.*, 2015). The results showed that configure invariance, compositional invariance, equality of composite variance and composite mean values were established in all measurements across the two groups.

The MGA results are presented in Table 5. The data from both general managers (generalized) and superintendents (specialized) established satisfactory measurement reliability and validity. The results showed that the path from calling to engagement ($p = 0.09$) was significantly different across both groups. Calling positively predicted

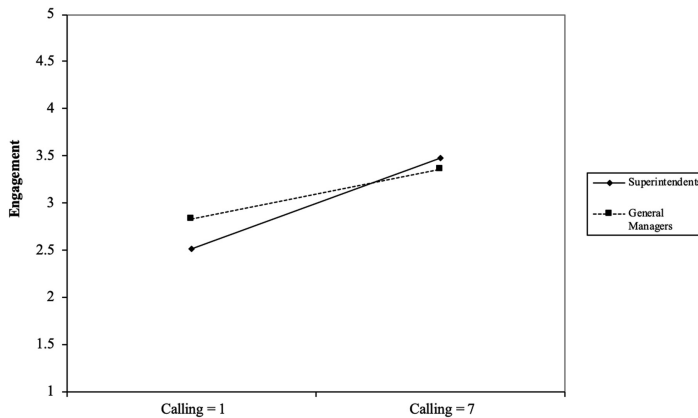|	Indirect path coefficient	SD	t	P
CA → ENG → CS	0.176	0.071	2.48	0.013
CA → ENG → WLB	0.181	0.072	2.51	0.012
Note(s): CA = Calling; ENG = Engagement; WLB = Work–life balance; CS = Career satisfaction				

Table 4.
Significant Indirect effects

Figure 3.
Moderation effect for general managers versus superintendents

	$\beta_{(Generalized)}$	$\beta_{(Specialized)}$	MGA p
CA → ENG	0.31*	0.74***	0.09
CA → WLB	−0.04[ns]	−0.48[ns]	0.28
ENG → CS	0.46*	0.43*	0.94
ENG → WLB	0.48**	0.39[ns]	0.78
WLB → CS	0.19[ns]	0.40**	0.43
Note(s): CA = Calling; ENG = Employee Engagement; WLB = Work–life balance; CS = Career satisfaction			
*$p < 0.05$, **$p < 0.01$ and ***$p < 0.000$			

Table 5.
MGA results

employee engagement for both general managers ($\beta = 0.31$, $p < 0.037$) and superintendents ($\beta = 0.74$, $p < 0.000$). Callings did not significantly predict work-life balance for either group. Engagement positively predicted career satisfaction for both general managers ($\beta = 0.46$, $p < 0.037$) and superintendents ($\beta = 0.43$, $p < 0.011$). Engagement significantly predicted work-life balance for general managers ($\beta = -0.48$, $p < 0.003$) but not for superintendents ($\beta = 0.39$, $p = 0.151$). Conversely, work-life balance positively increased career satisfaction significantly for superintendents ($\beta = 0.40$, $p < 0.010$), but did not significantly predict career satisfaction for general managers ($\beta = 0.19$, $p = 0.359$).

Discussion and implications

This exploratory study confirmed the findings of previous literature and identified callings as a positive predictor of employee engagement (Bunderson and Thompson, 2009; Cain *et al.*, 2018). Additionally, this study found a positive link between employee engagement and work–life balance, which is in keeping with prior research (Cain *et al.*, 2018; Duffy *et al.*, 2011, 2015). Employee engagement was shown to positively promote career satisfaction (Karatepe, 2013; Lu *et al.*, 2016; Radosevich *et al.*, 2008), and the results that demonstrated work–life balance positively influenced career satisfaction also supports recent research (Cegarra-Leiva *et al.*, 2012; Deery and Jago, 2015).

Where this study diverges and adds to the literature is in the findings that calling did not significantly influence work–life balance. This fails to support the findings surrounding callings and work–life balance among other high-level professionals in an organization like executive chefs (Cain *et al.*, 2018). One possible explanation for this finding is that the concept of calling has been suggested to have a "dark side". It could be that the lack of relationship between having a calling and work–life balance is explained by that fact that, while these professionals may have a calling, they may not be living their calling through the line of work they are pursuing, or they may have additional callings that have gone unrecognized (Berg *et al.*, 2010; Duffy *et al.*, 2016).

Further, the respondents represented a multigenerational workforce, with Baby Boomers (23% of sample) in the minority. The literature suggests that Baby Boomers specifically "live to work" while the Gen X group (38.5% of sample) conversely "work to live" (Gursoy *et al.*, 2008). These differences with perspectives on work could lead to differences in their meaning for work or, as defined earlier, their calling, as well as how they perceived work–life balance.

Because the indirect relationship between calling and work–life balance was found to be significant when employee engagement was introduced, another plausible explanation is that the professionals who have a calling may be experiencing workaholism, which may result in strained or neglected personal relationships and a lack of work–life balance (Cardador and Caza, 2012; Duffy *et al.*, 2016). This workaholism that results from excessive role immersion may also explain why the indirect relationship between having a calling and career satisfaction was negative when employee engagement was introduced.

Perhaps the most interesting finding of this exploratory study is in the moderation of the specialization (general manager versus superintendent) between calling and employee engagement. To the researchers' knowledge, no extant studies have sought to understand how specialization in a field when compared to generalization influenced the relationship between an employee's having a calling (finding meaning through work) and their engagement (the physical, emotional and cognitive expression of oneself in their work) (Schaufeli and Bakker, 2010; Schaufeli *et al.*, 2002, 2006; Kahn, 1990). This builds on extant role theory literature in that it provides evidence for the importance of having a specialization and its positive impact on employee engagement, which is of

benefit to the organization through increased employee performance (Davies *et al.*, 2004).

Practical implications
As having a career calling and employee engagement are thought to be of benefit to the employee and the organization, what this study has shown is the importance of specialization over generalization for managerial employees, which ultimately influences their work–life balance and career satisfaction.

Because the study found that managers in the golf course industry with a strong sense of calling were more engaged when they were in a specialized segment of management, it is suggested that professional organizations like the PGA of America and other educational bodies that offer golf course management education provide specialized programs, tracks and certifications to help individuals who have been called to this line of work to find their niche within the industry, even after they have attained a managerial or higher position in the company.

Moreover, general manager positions for PGA members are a relatively new role, meaning that those individuals who have filled these positions may have had a calling to be a golf professional (more specialized position), but due to environmental conditions (e.g. a need to reduce expenses) they may have had to assume the general manager role and the accompanying increased responsibilities to keep their jobs. It is possible that these individuals may have never had a calling to be a general manager, but is now a golf professional serving in this capacity. As a PGA membership has now become a targeted credential to ascend to the general manager role, PGA curriculum is now being offered to attract individuals with a calling toward this career path earlier in their career, which may shift the influence of this moderating effect in the future.

While there will always be a need for general managers, which is by definition a generalized role, identifying which higher-level employees have been called to this line of work in order to help them find a specialization within the industry will lead to greater engagement in the work and result in more balanced and satisfied management, which has been linked to positive organizational outcomes like increased performance and lower rates of burnout. In this fashion, the organization will help to foster and harness those high levels of callings among the employees and further encourage their employees' engagement in the workplace, thus mitigating negative personal and professional outcomes. In so doing, this is likely to lead to increased work–life balance and career satisfaction among these higher-level employees.

Similarly, those individuals who move up the organizational ranks, as a result of being highly engaged and satisfied with their career, often assume more administrative responsibilities, as when they become general managers. This shift often reduces the role clarity and specialization of focus and instead adopts a broader lens on the internal operations of the organization. Their influence is measured by their ability to motivate and get their followers to perform at high levels in order to meet organizational goals. That being said, the findings of this study suggest that a leader in the organization should be facilitating talent acquisition and development that align with specialize roles to enable each follower within the organization the opportunity for increased engagement and career satisfaction. In so doing, it would allow the general manager to focus more specifically on developing the skills of others in a more specialized manner and help mitigate the overwhelming broad responsibilities that are inherent in the general manager role.

Limitations and future research
While this research offers a lens into how having a calling and engagement impact organizational outcomes and employee well-being, it is not without its limitations. Due to the

small sample size and the fact that the data were gathered from a singular organization, the generalizability of this information is limited. Future research could employ similarly purposeful sampling to investigate the extent to which generalized versus specialized roles influences other organizational outcomes. Similarly, future research could seek to identify ways in which greater role clarity and identification may be brought to a generalized role, like that of the general manager. It may be beneficial to identify whether or not an emphasis on talent acquisition and development would in turn benefit the individual who is focusing on these activities. Moreover, this investigation examined career specialization through the lens of golf's two major employment-based associations, the PGA of America and the GCSAA. The use of these two major associations was representative of the two specializations from which the organization largely employs. Future investigations should examine organizations that have larger representation of samples of individuals from different specialized groups like the Club Managers Association of America (CMAA).

Additionally, this sample consisted solely of managers. It would be interesting to explore thee relationships across the hierarchical levels of the organization and identify if and where a shift from a specialized focus to a more generalized focus occurs and how this influences engagement. Moreover, it may be interesting to see how managers in the industry employ job crafting, specifically the relationship component of job crafting, in relation to variables like callings, unanswered callings, engagement, work–life balance and career satisfaction. Because these work experiences emerge in different situations, occupations and organizational cultures, future research should be conducted across various companies in the golf industry to further support the findings of this study. Finally, examining the multigenerational workforce through the lens as a potential moderator to employee engagement and examining how other demographic variables influence engagement, work–life balance and career satisfaction would be worthwhile.

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