

## **Connecting to a Calling - A Mixed Methods Investigation into Work Orientations in Mental Health Care Professionals**

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**Objective:** Having a calling orientation toward one's work has been associated with lower stress and burnout in various professions, but these relationships have not yet been examined in mental healthcare professionals. The primary objective of this study is to use an explanatory sequential mixed methods design to characterize work orientation in mental healthcare professionals and examine relationships between work orientation and adverse outcomes over time.

**Methods:** Participants were 78 mental healthcare professionals from a large children's hospital. Quantitative measures of work orientation, burnout, emotional exhaustion, stress, and openness to evidence-based practice were administered at three timepoints over four months. Pearson correlations and path analysis were used to examine the relationship of work orientation to study variables. Semi-structured interviews were completed with nine participants and analyzed using a rapid qualitative approach.

**Results:** 30.77% of the sample exhibited a calling orientation at baseline, and stability of orientation across timepoints was low. Strong, negative correlations were observed between calling orientation and burnout and emotional exhaustion. When controlling for overall stress, calling orientation at baseline predicted lower burnout and emotional exhaustion across timepoints. Qualitative results revealed patterns of facilitators and barriers to connecting with a calling orientation.

**Conclusions:** Calling orientation is associated with lower levels of burnout and emotional exhaustion. Further research should refine the construct of calling orientation and determine its relationship to additional workplace factors. Future studies should also explore strategies to promote calling orientation as a means of reducing burnout and emotional exhaustion in mental healthcare professionals.