

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WORKAHOLISM AND WORK-FAMILY CONFLICT

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the study is to determine the relationship between workaholism and work-family conflict. Previous studies concluded the possible relationship between workaholism and work-family conflict, in which workaholics experience higher conflict in their personal lives. The study was conducted among the workers in the Republic of North Macedonia. 80 workers from different sectors participated in the survey. 42 of them were male and 38 were female. Participants were mostly between 18-25 years old (with the total number of 41). 10 of the participants were between 26-35 years old while 16 of the total participants were between 36-45 years old. Only 13 of the participants were 45 years old or above. In the survey, Multidimensional Workaholism Scale (MWS) and Work and Family Conflict Scale (WAFCS) was used. According to the results, there is a positive and significant relationship between workaholism and work to family conflict. Also, according to the results there is a positive and significant relationship between workaholism and family to work conflict. However, while workaholism and work to family is strongly correlated, workaholism and family to work conflict is moderately correlated.

KEYWORDS

workaholism, work-family conflict, MWS, WAFCS

JEL CLASSIFICATION CODES

I31, Z00

1. INTRODUCTION

In the book ‘Confessions of a Workaholic’, Oates (1971) invented the word ‘workaholism’ and defined the concept that it is similar to alcoholism, substance use, gambling, and other addictions. Due to this approach, workaholism was defined as an addiction to work or the workplace (Weissmann, 2013). Workaholism was also accepted by some clinicians as an addiction because it accompanies the same thinking patterns as alcoholics and drug addicts such as constantly thinking about failure, thinking about bad events, and other negative thoughts (Robinson, 2017). However, workaholism is socially accepted, thus, there have always been arguments if workaholism really is an addiction or just a personality trait. According to the American Psychiatric Association, workaholism is defined as a symptom of obsessive-compulsive personality disorder and according to some Great Britain psychological clinics, workaholism was described as journalists’ one of the most favorite topics to discuss (Weissmann, 2013; Robinson, 2017). Moreover, for forty years, the concept has been studied more, has been added to the dictionaries as a word, and workplaces started to be concerned about workaholism.

To determine the core dimensions of workaholism, Ng et al., (2007), used the deductive approach and took

‘addiction’ as a core characteristic of workaholism. Due to this, it is accepted that workaholism has three core dimensions: affective or emotional, cognitive, and behavioral. In the study, it was claimed that these dimensions are building blocks of the construct of workaholism. For all that, recent research proposes that workaholism has another core dimension which is known as the motivational dimension (Clark et al., 2020).

As it was mentioned in Spence and Robins (1992), workaholics find the working place enjoyable, pleasurable, or ‘fun’, because workaholics are satisfied by being involved in the work. So, the affective (emotional) dimension of workaholism refers to positive emotions that a worker feels toward the workplace (Malinowska and Tokarz, 2014). According to Ng et al., (2007), workaholics experience negative emotions when they are not working because workaholics are goal-oriented and competitive people.

The cognitive dimension of workaholism is the mental practice that pushes a workaholic to work extremely. Obsession with working is the core element of the cognitive dimension because it does not just mean working excessively, but also being obsessed with working activities (Smith and Seymour, 2004). Workaholics think about their work even when they are at their home, and they have an uncontrollable need to work. This might happen because of the emotional addiction and obsession to control and power, so they feel irrationally committed and attached to their workplace (Killinger, 2011).

The behavioral dimension is the main part of the characteristics of workaholism. This dimension explains the real extreme involvement in work. It contains two sub-constituents: working long hours and implicating work in personal life (Ng et al., 2007).

Lastly, according to Clark et al. (2020), workaholism is linked with the motivational dimension because of inner pressure and/or compulsion of work that workaholics experience. As it is mentioned in self-determination theory, people tend to fulfill their basic psychological needs by using their goal-directed behavior (Gagné and Deci, 2005).

On the other hand, in the modern industry, it is expected workers to meet demands, and participate in more than one workload. This can create workers to find it difficult to balance their work and family life. This phenomenon is also known as *work-family conflict* (Obrenovic et al., 2020). Work-family conflict might appear in several situations such as:

- When workers cannot have sufficient time to fulfill all the required roles (time-based)
- When workers cannot maintain in more than one role due to the strain of the previous one (strain-based)
- When workers cannot fulfill the requirement of one role due to the particular behavior which is required by another role (behavior-based) (Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985).

Work-family conflicts can arise when *work interferes with family (WIF)*: Work interference with family (work-to-family conflict) is known as unavailability to maintain family obligations because of the work obligations (Weer and Greenhaus, 2014). The possible outcomes of this variable to workers might be: withdrawal from family, marital dissatisfaction, marital anger, and other outcomes (MacEwen and Barling, 1994).

It can also occur when *family members interfere with work (FIW)*: Family interference with work (family-to-work conflict) is defined as workers who think their family roles are more important than their roles that are required by the workplace (Lapierre et al., 2012). The possible outcomes of family interference with work might be less job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Moreover, it is also positively correlated with burnout and stress (Stepanek and Paul, 2022).

It should be noted that the conflict between work and family in society is growing more and more because it has important consequences for work, non-work, and certain related issues such as productivity, development, family well-being, health, and stress. Work-family conflict refers to the critical issues of employment, family, and real life. These include:

- work issues (job satisfaction, organizational commitment, turnover, organizational citizenship behavior, work related stress, and other outcomes),
- family issues (closeness and family satisfaction, life satisfaction, and other outcomes),
- certain physical health issues (physical symptoms, dietary activities, exercise, depression, anxiety, and other outcomes) (Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985; Amstad et al., 2011; MacEwen and Barling, 1994).

1.1. Workaholism and Work-Family Conflict

According to Brady et al. (2008), workaholism scores are significant predictors of work-family conflict, with the direction of the relationship being dependent on the type of workaholism assets. Also, according to Torp et al. (2018), workaholism is positively connected with work-family conflict, and if workaholism is not prevented it might negatively affect workers physical health, social interaction (family & friendship), as well as the workplace. Another relevant study that was conducted by Aziz and Tahir (2019), concluded that there is a positive relationship between workaholism and work-family conflict, and workaholism might be a prediction for poorer mental well-being.

Due to this, this study also aims to find a positive correlation between workaholism and work and family conflict. Also, work and family conflict will be measured in two ways: work-to-family conflict (work interferes with family) and family-to-work conflict (family interferes with work).

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. Participants and Procedure

The study was conducted in 2022, among workers in the Republic of North Macedonia. The survey was shared through Google Forms (online). The survey conducted three parts; first part included demographic questions, second part included the Multidimensional Workaholism scale, and the last part included Work and Family Conflict Scale. The collected data was analyzed in SPSS 20 version.

Participants were collected randomly. Total of 80 participants from different sectors participated in the survey. 42 of the participants were male (52.5%), and 38 of them were female (47.5%). 41 of the participants were between 18-25 ages (51.3%). Secondly, 10 of them were between 26-35 age (12.5%). 16 of the participants were between 36-45 years old (20.0%) and lastly, 13 of the participants were 45 years old and above (16.3%). The demographic data is given in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic Data

		<i>Number</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Standard Deviation</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
<i>Gen der</i>	Male	42	1.48	.503	52.5
	Female	38			47.5
<i>Age</i>	18-25	41	2.01	1.175	51.3
	26-35	10			12.5
	36-45	16			20.0
	45 and above	13			16.3

2.2. Instrument

The Multidimensional Workaholism Scale (MWS) is developed by Clark et al. (2020). The scale includes sixteen statements that measure motivational, emotional, behavioral, and cognitive dimensions of workaholism. The scale is divided into four parts, and each part includes four statements that are related to the dimensions. The scale involves no reverse coding in any statement (question). The scale is a Likert type, and participants are required to answer from 1 (never true) to 5 (always true) which has five possible answer options. The rating of the scale is 1= never true, 2= seldom true, 3= sometimes true, 4= often true and 5= always true.

The Work and Family Conflict Scale (WAFCS) is designed to measure the impact of work and family role conflicts on individuals' well-being, job satisfaction, and overall work-life balance. The scale was developed by Haslam et al. (2015). It has 10 items with a Likert scale from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). The rating scale of the instrument is 1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neither agree nor disagree, 4 = Agree,

5 =Strongly agree. The items that are from 1 to 5 are designed to measure work to family conflict, moreover, the items that are from 6 to 10 are designed to measure family to work conflict. Reliability test for both scales is given in Table 2.

Table 2. Reliability Test for the Scales

Scale	Cronbach's Alpha	Number of Items
<i>Multidimensional Workaholism Scale</i>	.960	16
<i>Work and Family Conflict Scale</i>	.929	10

As it is illustrated in Table 2, according to the results, both Multidimensional Workaholism Scale ($\alpha=.960$) and Work and Family Conflict Scale ($\alpha=.929$) are reliable.

3. RESULTS

Table 3. Bivariate correlation between workaholism and work to family conflict

Variable	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	1	2
Workaholism	80	16.04	5.590	-	
Work to Family Conflict	80	51.38	16.588	.72**	-

**p < 0.01

According to the results that are shown in Table 3., there is a significant, positive and strong relationship ($r=.72$, $p<0.01$) between workaholism and work to family conflict.

Table 4. Bivariate correlation between workaholism and family to work conflict

Variable	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	1	2
Workaholism	80	13.81	6.216	-	
Family to Work Conflict	80	51.38	16.588	.65**	-

**p < 0.01

According to the results that are illustrated in Table 4., there is a positive, significant and moderate relationship ($r=.65$, $p<0.01$) between workaholism and family to work conflict.

4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The purpose of the present study was to investigate the relationship between workaholism and work-family conflict, based on previous research that investigated the detrimental effects of workaholism on various aspects of individuals' lives. Findings contribute to the growing literature examining the negative consequences of workaholism, particularly in the context of work-family dynamics. The research methods used in this study have been explained in the methodology section in detail and based on the results obtained as a result of this research, it can be said that there is a relationship between these two variables.

To understand the relationship between these two variables, Bivariate correlation was used. Moreover, to obtain a deeper understanding of the relationship between workaholism and work-to-family conflict, as well as workaholism and family-to-work conflict, both of them are measured separately. According to the findings, it can be said that there is a positive relationship between workaholism and work and family conflict. This result

supports the previous findings by Brady et al. (2008), Torp et al. (2018), and Aziz and Tahir (2019).

However, more in depth, workaholism is significantly and strongly correlated with work-to-family conflict. This can be interpreted as workaholics experiencing more conflict when their work demands interfere with the family roles due to their compulsory need for working. Since they feel compelled to work; they might work for longer hours, they might have disrupted social lives, they might wish to work even during the weekend which later might give them family dissatisfaction.

Moreover, workaholism is significantly and moderately correlated with family-to-work conflict. The interpretation of this result might be that family roles might have specific requirements from individuals that they might find it difficult to fulfill. Thus, this might lead them falling behind in their work duties, and at the end they might feel more forced to work in order to sustain with the demands of the nowadays challenged industries. This behavior might lead individuals to experience higher conflict in their families.

A potential weakness of this research may be language bias. If the study is conducted exclusively in English as in this research or focuses predominantly on English-speaking populations, it can be said to limit the generalizability of the findings to non-English-speaking individuals or cultures where English is not the primary language, as in this research. Thus, in other words led to a distorted understanding of the relationship, overlooking important cultural and linguistic factors that can influence workaholism and work-family conflict.

Another weakness of this research might be the focus. The study was conducted among workers in the Republic of North Macedonia, from every kind of industry. Future studies might focus on a specific industry, especially higher demandable industries (such as banking, health, and other sectors) to determine these two variables' possible relationship.

Nevertheless, this study gives a picture to understand one of the most detrimental relationships of workaholism with work-family conflict. Since both of the variables are very important for job and live satisfaction, it should be a significant topic among managers.

Lastly, the practical aspect might be developed in the field. Managers and HR developers should consider workaholism in which they can propose seminars given by healthcare professionals where workers can gain knowledge and insights about the situation and how detrimental workaholism can become. Also, there might be counseling centers built focused on workers mental well-being regarding issues such as work-family conflict.

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APPENDIX

Demographic Questions

1. What is your gender?
 - Male
 - Female
2. How old are you?
 - 18-25
 - 26-35
 - 36-45
 - 45 and above

Multidimensional Workaholism Scale

Dimension	Item	Rating scale: 1(Strongly disagree) 2 (Disagree) 3 (Neither agree nor disagree) 4 (Agree) 5 (Strongly agree)				
Motivational	I always have an inner pressure inside of me that drives me to work	1	2	3	4	5
Motivational	I work because there is a part inside of me that feels compelled to work.	1	2	3	4	5
Motivational	I have a strong inner desire to work all of the time.	1	2	3	4	5
Motivational	There is a pressure inside of me that drives me to work.	1	2	3	4	5
Cognitive	I feel like I cannot stop myself from thinking about working	1	2	3	4	5
Cognitive	In general, I spend my free time thinking about work	1	2	3	4	5
Cognitive	At any given time, the majority of my thoughts are work related.	1	2	3	4	5
Cognitive	It is difficult for me to stop thinking about work when I stop working.	1	2	3	4	5
Emotional	I feel upset if I have to miss a day of work for any reason.	1	2	3	4	5
Emotional	I am almost always frustrated when I am not able to work	1	2	3	4	5
Emotional	I feel upset if I cannot continue to work.	1	2	3	4	5
Emotional	When something prevents me from working, I usually get agitated.	1	2	3	4	5
Behavioral	When most of my coworkers will take breaks, I keep working.	1	2	3	4	5
Behavioral	I work more than what is expected of me.	1	2	3	4	5
Behavioral	I tend to work longer hours than most of my coworkers.	1	2	3	4	5
Behavioral	I tend to work beyond my job's requirements	1	2	3	4	5

Work and Family Conflict Scale

Item	Rating Scale: 1 (Very strongly disagree) 2 (Strongly disagree) 3 (Disagree) 4 (Neither agree nor disagree) 5 (Agree) 6 (Strongly agree) 7 (Very strongly agree)						
1. My work prevents me spending sufficient quality time with my family	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. There is no time left at the end of the day to do the things I'd like at home (e.g., chores and leisure activities)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. My family misses out because of my work commitments	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. My work has a negative impact on my family life	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. Working often makes me irritable or short tempered at home	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6. My work performance suffers because of my personal and family commitments	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. Family related concerns or responsibilities often distract me at work	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. If I did not have a family I'd be a better employee	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9. My family has a negative impact on my day to day work duties	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10. It is difficult to concentrate at work because I am so exhausted by family responsibilities	1	2	3	4	5	6	7