

Short Communication: Workaholism among Norwegian journalists: antecedents and consequences

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Summary

This study examined correlates of workaholism among 211 Norwegian journalists. Three workaholism types were considered (work enthusiasts, work addicts, enthusiastic addicts) using measures developed by Spence and Robbins (1992). Correlates included a number of personal demographic and work situation characteristics, measures of positive and negative affect, burnout components and absenteeism. Although the three workaholism types were similar on personal and work situation characteristics, work enthusiasts indicated significantly more positive affect and significantly less negative affect, exhaustion and cynicism than one or both of the other workaholism types. The workaholism types did not differ on professional efficacy or absenteeism however. The three workaholism types worked similar hours per week ruling this out as a possible explanation of the findings. Copyright © 2004 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

Key Words

workaholism; work satisfaction; health

Introduction

Although workaholism is a common topic in the popular press (Garfield, 1987; Kiechel, 1989a, 1989b; Klaf & Kleiner, 1988; Spruel, 1987; Waddell, 1993), scientific understanding of it is still quite limited. Most of the early writing, while useful, has been anecdotal and clinical (Fassel, 1990; Killinger, 1991; Oates, 1971; Schaeff & Fassel, 1988). The past decade however, has

shown increased empirical research interest in the topic.

Conclusions about workaholism are frequently contradictory reflecting the scarcity of solid research findings. Some writers believe workaholism to be positive from the organizations' perspective (Korn, Pratt, & Lambrou, 1987; Machlowitz, 1980; Sprankle & Ebel, 1987). Others believe that workaholism always has negative connotations (Killinger, 1991; Oates, 1971; Schaeff & Fassel, 1988). These writers view workaholics as obsessive and unhappy individuals who are not performing well in their jobs and having difficulties with their work colleagues. The first group would likely encourage workaholism whereas the second group would likely discourage it.

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Workaholism cannot have both positive and negative consequences. To address this dilemma, some writers (e.g. Naughton, 1987; Scott, Moore, & Miceli, 1997; Spence & Robbins, 1992) have suggested the existence of different types of workaholic behavior patterns with each having potentially different antecedents and relationships with work, health and family outcomes. Naughton (1987), for example, proposes four types of workaholics based on the dimensions of career commitment and obsession-compulsion: job-involved workaholics, compulsive workaholics, non-workaholics and compulsive non-workaholics. Job-involved workaholics are likely to perform well in their jobs and be highly satisfied at work. Compulsive workaholics are likely to be poor performers. Non-workaholics spend more time in off-the-job activities. Compulsive non-workaholics compulsively spend time in non-work activities.

Scott, Moore, and Miceli (1997) propose three types of workaholic behavior patterns: compulsive-dependent, perfectionist and achievement-oriented. They suggest that compulsive-dependent workaholism will be positively related to levels of anxiety, stress, physical and psychological problems and negatively related to job performance and job and life satisfaction. Perfectionist workaholism will be positively related to levels of stress, physical and psychological problems, hostile interpersonal relationships, low job satisfaction and performance and voluntary turnover and absenteeism. Finally, achievement-oriented workaholism will be positively related to physical and psychological health, job and life satisfaction, job performance, low voluntary turnover and pro-social behaviors.

Spence and Robbins (1992) identified three workaholism components based on an extensive review of the literature: work involvement, feeling driven to work and work enjoyment. Profile analysis of scores on these components indicated three workaholic types. Work addicts score high on work involvement and feeling driven to work and low on work enjoyment. Work enthusiasts score high on work involvement and work enjoyment and low on feeling driven to work. Enthusiastic work addicts score high on all three components. They then offer a number of hypotheses as to how these three workaholic patterns might differ from each other. Thus, work addicts would be more perfectionistic, would experience greater stress and report more physi-

cal health symptoms. The existence of different types of workaholic patterns might help reconcile conflicting observations and conclusions cited earlier. Most writers view workaholism as a stable individual characteristic (Scott, Moore, & Miceli, 1997; Spence & Robbins, 1992).

A compelling case could be made for devoting more research attention to workaholism (Burke, 2000a; McMillan, O'Driscoll, & Burke, 2003). The concept has received considerable attention in the popular press. There has also been suggestions that workaholism may be increasing in North America (Fassel, 1990; Schor, 1991). In addition it is not clear whether workaholism has positive or negative organizational consequences (Killinger, 1991; Machlowitz, 1980). There is also debate on the association of workaholic behaviors with a variety of personal well-being indicators such as psychological and physical health and self-esteem. Finally, different types of workaholic behavior patterns likely exist, each having unique antecedents and outcomes. The question of whether workaholism can, or should be reduced, had also been raised (Killinger, 1991; Porter, 1996; Seybold & Salomone, 1994).

A number of antecedents of workaholism have been examined in previous investigations (see Burke, 2000a; McMillan, O'Driscoll, & Burke, 2003, for reviews). These include personal demographic characteristics (Burke, 1999a; Spence & Robbins, 1992), work situation characteristics (Burke, 1999a; Spence & Robbins, 1992), feelings of inadequacy and needs to prove oneself (Burke, 1999b; Robinson, 1998), and workplace values (Burke, 2001a; Schaeff & Fassel, 1988). Personal demographic and work situation characteristics have generally shown no relationship with the three workaholism types.

There has been considerable speculation and some research findings on the relationship of workaholism to work experiences and satisfactions. It has been suggested that workaholics are more perfectionistic, have greater difficulty in delegating job responsibilities and relying on others and experience more job stress (Killinger, 1991; Porter, 1996; Scott, Moore, & Miceli, 1997; Spence & Robbins, 1992). It is not clear, however, how levels of workaholism relate to job and career satisfaction and progress. Some (e.g. Machlowitz, 1980) report that workaholics are highly satisfied with work and career; others (e.g. Burke, 2001b; Killinger, 1991; McMillan, Brady, O'Driscoll, & Marsh, 2002; Porter, 1996; Schaeff & Fassel, 1988) offer a more negative picture.

Finally, there is some agreement that workaholism is likely to be associated with adverse health consequences (Burke, 2000b; Killinger, 1991; Robinson, 1998; Spence & Robbins, 1992) and less satisfaction with family and other relationships (Killinger, 1991; Robinson, 1998).

This study adds to our understanding of workaholism in organizations by both replicating previous work and including new outcome measures. The replication considers the association of personal demographic and work situation characteristics with the workaholism types. The extension examines the relationship of workaholism type with measures of affect at work, burnout and absenteeism. It has been shown that work addicts report less job satisfaction and more job stress when compared with work enthusiasts and enthusiastic addicts (Burke, 1999a; Spence & Robbins, 1992). It was therefore expected that work addicts would experience more negative and less positive affect and greater burnout than the other workaholic types. There has been no strong or consistent relationship between workaholic types and absenteeism (see Burke, 2001b; Kanai, Wakabayashi, & Fling, 1996).

Method

Respondents

Data were collected from 211 journalists working in the city of Bergen, Norway. Table I shows the demographic characteristics of the sample. Two thirds of the sample were male (67 per cent), most were married (70.4 per cent), worked in permanent jobs (89.4 per cent), were under 40 years of age (65.1 per cent), worked between 31 and 40 hours per week (55.0 per cent), had relatively low levels of job and organizational tenure (42.1 per cent had 4 years or less organizational tenure and 46.2 per cent had 2 years or less job tenure) and most had no supervisory responsibilities (74 per cent).

Procedure

Data were collected from 211 journalists in Bergen, Norway using anonymously completed questionnaires, representing 44 per cent. Four hundred and eighty-two questionnaires were mailed to potential respondents by the journalists union and returned to a university address.

Measures originally appearing in English (e.g. PANAS) were translated into Norwegian by members of the research team; other measures (e.g. the Maslach Burnout Inventory) had already been translated into Norwegian from English and had been used in previous research projects.

Measures

Workaholism components. Spence and Robbins (1992) derive three workaholism components on the basis of an extensive literature review: work involvement, feeling driven to work and work enjoyment. Their measures were used in this study:

Work involvement ($\alpha = 0.67$) had eight items (e.g. 'I get bored and restless on vacations when I haven't anything productive to do').

Feeling driven to work ($\alpha = 0.80$) had seven items (e.g. 'I often feel that there's something inside me that drives me to work hard').

Joy in work ($\alpha = 0.88$) had 10 items (e.g. 'My job is more like fun than work').

These scales are combined, to produce six workaholism types: work enthusiasts (WEs), work addicts (WAs), enthusiastic addicts (EAs), unengaged workers (UWs), relaxed workers (RWs) and disenchanting workers (DWs). The three workaholism triad measures were divided into high and low groups using median scores on each. Spence and Robbins (1992) used cluster analysis in their study and identified these same groups to exist, verifying the typology. Others (Elder & Spence, unpublished manuscript; Kanai, Wakabayashi, & Fling, 1996; Robbins, 1993) have also provided support for these workaholism types.

Affect. Positive and negative affect were measured using the PANAS scales (Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988). Positive and negative affect ($\alpha_s = 0.89$ and 0.83 , respectively) were each measured by 10 words that describe different feelings and emotions. Respondents indicated the extent to which each word described their feelings on a five point scale (1 = very slightly or not at all, 3 = moderately, 5 = extremely).

Burnout. Three burnout components were measured by the Maslach Burnout Inventory-General Survey (MBI-GS) developed by Schaufeli, Leiter, Maslach, and Jackson (1996). Exhaustion

Table I. Demographic characteristics of sample.

Demographic characteristics	Sample size (N)	Percentage (%)	Demographic characteristics	Sample size (N)	Percentage (%)
<i>Age</i>			<i>Organizational tenure</i>		
29 or less	42	20.1	1-2 years	47	22.5
30-39	94	45.0	3-4 years	41	19.6
40-49	38	18.2	5-10 years	65	31.1
50-59	31	14.8	Over 10 years	56	26.8
60 or over	4	1.9	<i>Journalism tenure</i>		
<i>Gender</i>			1-3 years	28	13.5
Male	138	67.0	4-10 years	95	45.7
Female	68	33.0	10-20 years	53	25.5
<i>Marital status</i>			Over 20 years	32	15.4
Single	47	22.8	<i>Organization size</i>		
Married	145	70.4	1-15	22	10.8
Separated/divorced	13	6.3	16-100	31	15.2
Widowed	1	0.5	101-150	44	21.6
<i>Children at home</i>			151 and over	107	52.4
Yes	95	45.7	<i>Unit size</i>		
No	113	54.3	1-15	81	39.3
<i>Education beyond primary school</i>			16-100	62	30.1
0-3	27	13.0	101-150	57	27.7
3-6	83	39.9	151 and over	6	2.9
6 or more	98	47.1	<i>Job tenure</i>		
<i>Title</i>			Less than 1	30	14.6
Journalist	178	85.2	1-2	65	31.6
Layout designer	14	6.7	2-4	48	23.3
Photographer	15	7.2	5-8	36	17.5
<i>Work status</i>			9 and over	27	13.1
Permanent	185	89.4	<i>Income</i>		
Temporary	16	7.7	275 000 or less	42	20.4
Freelance	6	2.9	275 000-350 000	65	31.6
<i>Leadership responsibility</i>			351 000-450 000	64	31.1
Yes	54	26.0	451 000-800 000	35	17.0
No	134	74.0	<i>Hours worked</i>		
<i>Hours worked</i>			30 or less	14	6.8
30 or less	14	6.8	31-40	114	55.0
31-40	114	55.0	41-50	75	36.3
41-50	75	36.3	51 and above	4	1.9
51 and above	4	1.9			

(five items, $\alpha = 0.90$) assesses fatigue, cynicism (five items, $\alpha = 0.81$) reflects indifference or a distant attitude towards work, and professional efficacy (six items, $\alpha = 0.83$) includes both social and non-social aspects of occupational accomplishments. Respondents indicated how frequently they experienced each item on a seven point frequency scale (0 = never, 6 = always).

Absenteeism. Respondents indicated the number of days they had been absent from work in the previous year as a result of their own sick-

ness, for family reasons and because of work stress.

Results

Prevalence of workaholism types

Table II shows the number and percentage of journalists falling into each of the six workaholism and non-workaholism types. The method of creating these types using median splits allo-

cates about half the respondents to the three workaholism types and the remainder into the three non-workaholic types.

Workaholism types and demographic characteristics

Table III presents the comparisons of the six workaholism types on a number of personal demographic and work situation characteristics using one-way ANOVA; when the overall F value was significant ($p < 0.05$), all possible pairwise comparisons were undertaken. The following comments are offered in summary. First, significant overall workaholism type effects were present on only two of these measures (gender, income). Second, significant type differences appeared on only one of these measures income—WEs reported significantly higher income than DWs. The absence of workaholism type differences on personal demographic and work situation characteristic is consistent with previously

reported findings (Burke, 1999a; Spence & Robbins, 1992) among others. This conclusion is critical in that the presence of workaholism type differences on other measures is not the result of pre-existing demographic and work situation differences.

Workaholism types and well-being

Table IV shows the comparisons of the workaholism types on three aspects of well-being: affect, burnout and absenteeism from work. The following comments are offered in summary. First, significant workaholism type differences were present on the two measures of affect. WEs reported significantly higher positive affect than both WAs and DWs; EAs reported greater positive affect than did DWs; and RWs reported greater positive affect than did DWs. WAs, EAs and DWs reported greater negative affect than did WEs; WAs and EAs reported greater negative affect than both UWs and RWs.

There was a similar pattern of findings on two of three burnout components. Thus DWs, WAs and EAs indicated higher levels of exhaustion than did WEs and RWs; DWs also indicated more exhaustion than did UWs. In addition, DWs, WAs and EAs reported higher levels of cynicism than did WEs and RWs; DWs also reported higher levels of cynicism than did UWs. There were no significant workaholism type effects on the remaining burnout component (professional efficacy) or on three measures of days of absenteeism from work as a result of respondents own sickness, family sickness or work stress.

Table II. Prevalence of workaholic types.

	<i>N</i>	%
Work enthusiasts	23	14.2
Work addicts	20	12.3
Enthusiastic addicts	37	22.8
Unengaged workers	29	17.9
Relaxed workers	25	15.4
Disenchanted workers	28	17.3
	162	
Other	47 (22.5)	

Table III. Workaholism types and demographic characteristics.

Demographic characteristics	WE	WA	EA	UW	RW	DW	<i>p</i> Value
Birth year	62.8	64.0	65.4	63.2	61.9	65.1	NS
Gender	1.1	1.4	1.4	1.3	1.2	1.4	0.05
Marital status	1.8	2.0	1.7	2.0	2.0	1.7	NS
Education level	5.3	6.8	6.3	6.9	6.4	6.4	NS
Profession tenure	12.3	12.5	10.4	11.3	14.0	8.9	NS
Company tenure	10.0	9.9	7.4	6.1	10.3	7.5	NS
Job tenure	4.0	4.2	4.1	3.6	5.6	5.0	NS
Company size	488.6	222.8	449.6	324.7	298.8	406.3	NS
Unit size	61.8	51.7	35.5	64.6	66.1	41.6	NS
Leadership role	1.7	1.8	1.8	1.7	1.8	1.9	NS
Hours worked	43.8	40.2	42.9	39.8	38.8	40.4	NS
Income	414.1 ^a	331.4	351.0	381.3	380.1	326.4 ^a	0.05

NS, not significant.

Table IV. Workaholism types and well-being.

Well-being	WE	WA	EA	UW	RW	DW	<i>p</i> Value
<i>Affect</i>							
Positive	3.7 ^{ab}	3.1 ^a	3.6 ^c	3.3	3.6 ^d	3.0 ^{bcd}	0.001
Negative	1.6 ^{abc}	2.2 ^{ade}	2.3 ^{bfg}	1.7 ^{df}	1.7 ^{eg}	2.1 ^c	0.001
<i>Burnout</i>							
Exhaustion	0.9 ^{abc}	2.5 ^{ad}	2.0 ^{be}	1.7 ^f	1.1 ^{deg}	2.6 ^{cfg}	0.001
Cynicism	0.9 ^{abc}	2.1 ^{ad}	1.7 ^{be}	1.3 ^f	0.9 ^{def}	2.3 ^{cfg}	0.001
Efficacy	4.4	4.1	4.6	4.3	4.6	4.3	NS
<i>Days absent</i>							
Absent—Sick	2.8	16.2	6.0	12.3	3.6	9.0	NS
Absent—Family	1.1	1.9	1.0	0.9	0.8	0.8	NS
Absent—Stress	0.1	0.8	10.7	2.1	0.8	1.7	NS

NS, not significant.

Discussion

This study both replicates and increases our understanding of workaholism in organizations. It uses measures that have been employed in previous research and extends understanding of workaholism by including new measures and a new occupation in another country—Norwegian journalists.

The findings are consistent with previous conclusions on several fronts. First, workaholism types were similar on personal demographic and work situation characteristics (see Table III). Second, WEs reported less exhaustion and cynicism than did WAs and EAs. Third, a non-workaholic type DWs, also appeared to be at risk scoring higher than several other types on both exhaustion and cynicism. All three groups scoring high on exhaustion and cynicism also had high scores on feeling driven to work. Fourth, the findings are consistent with some of the previously published results that show no workaholism type differences on measures of self-reported absenteeism.

The inclusion of measures of affect adds to our understanding of other consequences or correlates of workaholism type (Watson & Clarke, 1984). Similar to the pattern of findings on both exhaustion and cynicism, WAs, EAs and DWs were at greater risk of adverse well-being consequences (more negative and less positive mood). Feeling driven to work and work enjoyment were the critical workaholism components in contributing to this pattern. It is likely that 'striving without joy' has adverse well-being consequences. Work involvement as defined and mea-

sured by the Spence and Robbins instrument appears to play little role in the resulting type differences, a conclusion reported previously by McMillan et al. (2002).

The findings are also useful in considering previous differences in underlying motivations and job behaviors of the three workaholism types and workaholism more generally. Burke (1999b) reported that WAs score significantly higher than both WEs and EAs on a measure of beliefs and fears found previously to predict levels of Type A or coronary-prone behavior. This measure taps the need to prove oneself through material possessions, the existence of a competitive 'dog eat dog' world with too many examples of 'nice guys finishing last'. Robinson (1998) in describing the mind of the workaholic, highlights low self-esteem as a key motivating force.

In addition WAs, when compared with WEs and EAs, describe themselves as more perfectionistic, less able to delegate work to others and experiencing higher levels of job stress (see Burke, 2000a, for a review). Burke summarized this pattern by the phrase 'its not how hard you work but why and how you work hard' that matters.

The present study adds another element to this explanation. WAs experience more negative moods and fewer positive moods in their working lives (Watson & Clark, 1984). The presence of this negative emotional state is, not surprisingly, reflected in similarly heightened levels of exhaustion and cynicism among WAs in comparison with both WEs and EAs.

The three workaholism types were similar on self-reports of professional efficacy indicating

similar levels of accomplishment (success?) in job performance. Some writers (Oates, 1971; Porter, 1996; Robinson, 1998) have proposed that workaholics are likely to perform their jobs at lower levels of effectiveness. Unfortunately there are no studies that have examined this relationship directly. There are indications that the three workaholism types appear similar on objective indicators of career progress and success (e.g. income, organizational level, number of promotions) but differ on subjective indicators of career success (e.g. job satisfaction, career satisfaction). Support for these conclusions is based on Burke (2001b), Spence and Robbins (1992) and Elder and Spence (unpublished manuscript).

Limitations

Some limitations of the study should be noted to place the interpretation of the findings in a broader content. First, all data were obtained from journalist self-reports raising the possibility of response set tendencies. Second, data were collected at only one point in time making it difficult to address questions of causality. Third, future research involving other occupational groups in other countries would be necessary to determine the generalizability of our conclusions.

Acknowledgments

This research was supported in part by the Department of Psychology, University of Bergen and the School of Business, York University. Lisa Fiksenbaum assisted with data analysis. We thank Janet Spence for permission to use her measures.

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