

Workaholism and Its Correlates: A Study of Academicians

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Received 17 August 2011, Accepted 22 October 2011

ABSTRACT: This study examined the relationship of the personality factors (Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism) with each of the three workaholism components i.e. working compulsively, working excessively and combined workaholics. As the study is of exploratory in nature, a sample of 145 academicians was drawn from the two universities of Jammu region (India), namely, Shri Mata Vaishno Devi University, Katra (India) and the University of Jammu, Jammu (India). The internal consistencies of each dimension of Dutch Work Addiction Scale (DUWAS) ranged from 0.883 to 0.837 and Cronbach's α reliability coefficient value of scale- measuring Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism and Openness to experience- ranged from 0.75 to 0.83, which is within the specified limit. Three dependent variables, namely, combined workaholics, working compulsively workaholics and working excessively workaholics were regressed with age, monthly salary, family type, family size, marital status; whereas extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness to experience vary individually. The study has identified neuroticism and conscientiousness as the significant personality traits causing the negative impact on all the three dimensions of workaholics. Whereas, salary is negatively correlated and has a significant impact on the two dimensions of workaholism, namely, combined workaholics and working compulsively workaholics. However, the designation is significant variable and is positively affecting the working compulsively workaholics.

Keywords: Combined workaholism, Working compulsively, Working excessively, Academicians, BFI, Multiple regression

INTRODUCTION

In the midst of the development of modern societies, the working competition has become increasingly severe. The employees face a lot of rapid and complex changes that have marked an entirely new era of business characterized by increasing work pressures, day to day challenges, stretched working hours and so on. The elongated burden of work is leading the employees to work for long hours and it is not surprising that people work harder and longer nowadays to become potential victims of workaholism progressively.

The term workaholism was coined by Oates in 1968. It is akin to addiction to alcohol in excess and refers to people whose needs to work has become so exaggerated that it may constitute a danger to their health, personal happiness, interpersonal relations and social functioning (Oates, 1968). Another definition proposed by Spence and Robbins (1992), stated that

the common element in the discussions of workaholism is that the affected individual is highly committed to work and devotes a good deal of time to it. However, some writers view workaholics as unhappy, obsessive, tragic figures, who are not performing their jobs properly and create difficulties for their co-workers (Oates, 1971; Naughton, 1987) as they have a single aim in mind, i.e. to work more and more and stretch themselves to the point of exhaustion and are constantly worried about meeting deadlines and achieving success (Porter, 1996).

The workaholics possess different types of workaholic behaviour patterns. These are compulsive-dependent, perfectionist and achievement-oriented (Naughton, 1987; Scott et al., 1997). Each of these behavioural patterns has potentially different antecedents (Scott et al. 1997; Burke, 2000; McMillan et al., 2002) which include demographic characteristics,

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work situation characteristics (Spence and Robbins, 1992; Burke, 1999) and personality characteristics (Burke et al., 2006).

Previous Studies on Workaholism and Personality

Very few studies have examined the relationship between the personality and workaholism. The studies conducted by researchers like Burke et al. (2006) made an attempt to look at the relationship between generalized self-efficacy, the big five personality traits (Neuroticism, Extraversion, Conscientiousness, Openness to Experience and Agreeableness) and the three dimensions of workaholism (drive to work, joy in work, and work involvement). They found that neuroticism was related to feeling driven to work, extraversion was related to work involvement and joy in work and generalized self-efficacy was related to all the three dimensions of workaholism. Eysenck (1997) revealed that there would be a casual relationship between personality factors, namely, psychoticism, extraversion and neuroticism and biological factors (genetic factors) which, in turn, produce addictive work behaviour. Andreassen et al. (2010) and Clark et al. (1996) examined personality correlates of workaholism dimensions, namely, work involvement, drive to work and enjoyment of work using Big Five Inventory (BFI) and concluded that conscientiousness was positively related to all the components of workaholism. Negative relation was observed between neuroticism and enjoyment of work and also between agreeableness and drive to work dimension of workaholism. Mudrack (2004) proposed that workaholism may be the by-product of the combination of high job involvement with an obsessive compulsive personality which consisted of six distinct traits, i.e., obstinacy, orderliness, parsimony, perseverance, rigidity and superego. The study indicated that high job involvement coupled with high scores on the obstinacy, orderliness, rigidity and superego traits would lead to high scores on tendencies to engage in non-required work. Burke et al. (2008) specified that workaholics indicate greater perfectionism, find difficulty in delegating tasks and are less satisfied with their jobs. Ng et al. (2007) mentioned that achievement related traits, i.e., Type-A personality, obsessive compulsive personality and need for achievement influence individuals to become addicted to work. Scott et al. (1997) revealed obsessive compulsive personality trait as the dominating factor which

promotes addiction towards work and makes people workaholic. Naughton (1987) suggested that high job involvement coupled with high scores on measures of obsessive-compulsive personality might produce individuals, who are workaholics.

Liang and Chu (2009) indicated that obsessive compulsion, achievement orientation, perfectionism and conscientiousness are the key personality factors which lead an individual towards workaholism. Zhdanova et al. (2006) examined the antecedents and consequences of workaholism and concluded that Type-A personality trait and perfectionism were positively related to workaholism. In another attempt, Schwartz (1982) indicated that individuals with a Type-A personality trait presents a strong example of the obsessive style and is commonly addicted to work. Moving in the same direction, Robinson (1998) found positive relationship between Type-A behaviour and workaholism in individuals. Furthermore, strong link between workaholism and personality types including Type-A behaviour patterns, namely, competitive, achievement-orientated individuals and obsessive-compulsive traits have also been pointed out at different point of time (Naughton, 1987; Byrne and Reinhart, 1989). Chesnut (1990) found that workaholics exhibited nine behavioural patterns i.e. are usually in hurry, have strong need to control, are perfectionists, find difficulty in relationships, binge on work, feel difficulty in relaxing and having fun, impatient and irritable, feel inadequate and are self-neglectful.

The above discussion on literature shows that most of the studies have been conducted about Type-A behaviour and obsessive compulsive behaviour. Though Big Five Inventory can play a potential role in explaining workaholism in organisations (Burke et al., 2006), yet the research in this area has received scant attention.

The present study has been designed specifically to examine the relationship of the personality factors (Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism) with each of the three workaholism components derived by (Schaufeli, 2004) i.e., working compulsively workaholics and working excessively workaholics.

RESEARCH METHOD

The study is based mainly on primary data collected from the academicians of Shri Mata Vaishno Devi University, Katra (India) and University of Jammu,

Jammu (India). As the study is of exploratory in nature, so a sample of 145 employees was drawn from the two universities of Jammu region (India). The choice for the academician is due to the reason that academician acts as a liaison between the student and the outside world. Moreover they work hard to keep themselves updated. Besides, studies of Spence and Robbins (1992) and Narayan et al. (1999) have also found university professors overloaded with the work which, further, reinforces the decision of targeting the academicians working in university for the present study.

The responses of the employees were taken through the pre-tested structured questionnaire during the months of April to July 2010. The correlates relating to personal factors of workaholism amongst the academicians were analyzed. A standardized 4 point scale DUWAS (Dutch Work Addiction Scale) ranging from almost never to almost always comprising of 20 statements developed by (Schaufeli, 2004) has been used to measure the level of workaholism. The scale used is a combination of two constructs, namely, *working compulsively* including seven statements, and *working excessively* with nine statements. Accordingly a respondent, who has scored high on working excessively as well as on working compulsively, categorised as workaholic using the Schaufeli's scoring key (Schaufeli, 2004).

This scale has been preferred over two frequently used workaholism scales, namely, Work Addiction Risk Test (Robinson, 1999) and the Workaholism Battery (Spence and Robbins, 1992) as the Work Addiction Risk Test is misleading because of referring to working hard without any reference to underlying motivation (Libano et al., 2010). Whereas, workaholism battery has failed to confirm three factor model of workaholism that included work involvement, work enjoyment and drive to work (Kanai et al. 1996; McMillan et al., 2002). Both these scales have failed to prove core components of workaholism (Schaufeli et al., 2006).

The personality traits of the employees have been captured using the Big Five Inventory (BFI) model developed by Goldberg (1992). This is comprised of forty four statements measured on five point likert type scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Though there are various limitations to the construct of Big Five model which has observed that it is not theory driven, the five factors are not

independent of each other and are very broad for the applied work (Depue and Collins, 1999), yet the big five remains on the very popular personality model because it gives an accurate and fast way of assessing the main drivers of someone's personality and is a comprehensive scale which covers most of the personality dimensions (Sinclair, 1990).

The Big Five Inventory has been preferred as the valid predictor scale of personality traits (Popkins, 1998). The previous use of Dutch Work Addiction Scale (DUWAS) has shown the internal consistencies of each dimension of scale to be reliable and satisfactory (Metin, 2010; Shimazu, et al. 2010). The Cronbach's α reliability coefficient value of BFI scale measuring Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism and Openness to Experience is higher than the minimum acceptable level (Goldberg, 1992; McCrae and John, 1992). The responses of the focal group for these scales in the present study also indicate that Cronbach's α reliability coefficient value ranges from 0.75 to 0.83 which is above the threshold limit.

Definition of the Variables

The following definitions of the terms are used for the purpose of the study:

- ✓ Working Excessively Workaholics: It is the tendency to work hard and is a behavioural dimension.
- ✓ Working Compulsively Workaholics: It is an obsession with work and is a cognitive dimension.
- ✓ Combined Workaholism: It is the combination of both behavioural and cognitive dimensions.
- ✓ Neuroticism: It indicates instability, stress proneness, insecurity and depression features in an individual.
- ✓ Extraversion: It is associated with sociability, dominance, ambitiousness, and assertiveness characteristics of an individual.
- ✓ Conscientiousness: It is an indication of persistence, dependability and being organized traits of an individual.
- ✓ Agreeableness: It connotes the cooperative, caring and likeable traits in an individual.
- ✓ Openness to experience: It is an indication of sensitivity, intellectual, imaginative, curious, broadminded traits of personality.

Three models were formulated in the study. The three dependent variables used separately in all the three models are, namely, combined workaholics (working compulsively and working excessively), working compulsively workaholics and working excessively workaholics.

The independent variables used in all the three models were age, monthly salary, family type, family size, marital status, extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness to experience. The average score of each respondent was estimated on different dimensions of Big Five Inventory. This average score was used to estimate the Z scores for which each respondent has the same mean (Mean=0) and standard deviation (S. D. =1). A positive value indicates that it is above the norm while a negative value indicates that it is below the norm (Verma and Larson, 2002).

Accordingly respondents with positive value have been specified as employees with more contents of that personality trait whereas those with negative value possess less content of those personality traits. As all the variables were categorical in nature and so were converted into dummy variables to make the data fit for the regression analysis and is presented below.

Conversion of Variables into Dummy Variables

- Age if 30 -40 years. then 1, otherwise 0
- Monthly Salary if less than Rs.35000 then 1, otherwise 0
- Family type if Nuclear then 1, otherwise 0
- Family Size if 3-5 members then 1, otherwise 0
- Marital Status if married then 1, otherwise 0
- Designation if Lecturer then 1, otherwise 0
- Extraversion if high then 1, otherwise 0
- Agreeableness if high then 1, otherwise 0
- Conscientiousness if high then 1, otherwise 0
- Neuroticism if high then 1, otherwise 0
- Openness to Experience if high then 1, otherwise 0

The data was checked for the existence of any problem of multicollinearity. However, the collinearity indices in all the three models indicates VIF<10 and the tolerance value above 0.1. Both these values lie between the limit range and indicates no multicollinearity (Hair et al. 2008). Further the correlation matrix also indicates the presence of low correlation between the independent variables (less than 0.5 in all the cases) (Annexure I) which further suggest that multiple regression may be used as an appropriate tool for analysis. The regression equation for the three models is as under:

$$Y=f(X_1, X_2, X_3, \dots, X_{11})$$

Where Y represents the dependent variables (i.e. Combined Workaholic, Working Compulsively Workaholic and Working Excessively Workaholic)

X₁= Salary, X₂= Designation, X₃= Marital Status, X₄= Openness to Experience X₅= Neuroticism, X₆= Conscientiousness, X₇= Agreeableness X₈= Extraversion, X₉= Age, X₁₀= Family Type, X₁₁= Family Size

The demographic profile of the focal group divulge that the sample is predominantly of males (65%), married (68%), having 3-5 members in the family (60%), lived in nuclear families (59%) and are falling in the 30-40 years of age group (53%). The respondents are mostly lecturers (56%) and maximum respondents (40%) fall in the monthly salary category of INR 25000-35000 out of four categories of salary i.e. salary less than 15000, salary between 15000-25000 and salary above 35000.

Table 1: Hours devoted for work

	Percentage- wise distribution
Job hours	
Strictly 9 to 5	38.0
Normally extends beyond 5	51.0
Quite Flexible, If no work can go home	11.0
Time spent at home for completing official work	
1-2 Hours	56.0
2-4 Hours	22.0
Above 4 Hours	15.0
NA	7.0
Addition of associates results in optimal workload in the organization	
Yes	71.0
No	23.0
May Be	6.0

Source: Primary data

The number of hours devoted by employees for their work (refer table 1) depicts that they normally work beyond 5 (51%) and even spend 1-2 hours at home for completing their official work (56%) and consider addition of associates results into the optimal workload (71%).

The most obvious characteristic of workaholics is that they work beyond what is required (Schaufeli et al., 2006). Consequently, they devote much more time to their work than do others (Scott et al., 1997; Mudarack and Naughton, 2001; Brett and Stroh, 2003; Buelens and Polemans, 2004). It appears that largely the focal group in the study tends to show workaholic characteristics because most of them work beyond the official hours and even spend 1-2 hours at home for completing their official work. Moreover, majority of the people feel overloaded with the work due to the shortage of persons in the organization.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The descriptive statistics for three components of workaholism, namely, combined workaholics, working compulsively workaholics and working excessively workaholics with demographics and personality factors were estimated. The inter correlations among all the independent variables used in the study specifies that five of the ten correlations (50%), namely, extraversion and conscientiousness ($p < 0.01$), agreeableness and conscientiousness ($p < 0.10$), conscientiousness and openness to experience ($p < 0.01$), conscientiousness and neuroticism ($p < 0.01$), and extraversion and openness to experience ($p < 0.01$) are significantly different from zero (refer Annexure I). The nine of the fifteen correlations (60%) of the demographic variables, namely, age and salary ($p < 0.05$), age and marital status ($p < 0.01$), salary and marital status ($p < 0.05$), family type and family size ($p < 0.01$), designation and age ($p < 0.01$), designation and salary ($p < 0.01$), marital status and designation ($p < 0.05$), family type and designation ($p < 0.10$) and family size and designation ($p < 0.10$) are significantly different from zero.

Examination of the correlation matrix (refer Annexure II) reveals that combined workaholics and working compulsively workaholics are negatively correlated with age, salary, marital status, extraversion, conscientiousness, neuroticism and openness to experience. Combined workaholics are positively correlated with the family type, family size, designation and agreeableness whereas, working compulsively

Regression Results

Regression analyses was undertaken in which workaholic behaviour patterns, namely, combined workaholics, working compulsively workaholics and working excessively workaholics were regressed on eleven predictors i.e. age, salary, designation, family type, family size, extraversion, conscientiousness, agreeableness, neuroticism and open to experience.

The table 2 reveals that in case of dependent variables, namely, combined workaholics, working compulsively workaholics and working excessively workaholics, F-ratio is significant at 1 per cent level of significance and the value of adjusted R-square explains 21, 18 and 17 per cent of the total variance, respectively.

The analyses, further, reveal that neuroticism, conscientiousness and salary are found to be significant ($p < 0.05$) and negatively correlated with combined workaholics and working compulsively workaholics. While designation is another significant predictor ($p < 0.05$) which has shown a positive correlation with the working compulsively workaholics whereas neuroticism and conscientiousness are significant ($p < 0.05$), but negatively correlated determinants of working excessively workaholics.

The paper heeds the call to examine how personality and demographic variables are related to the patterns of workaholic behaviour derived by Schaufeli et al. (2004) i.e. combined workaholic, working compulsively, working excessively. The results reveal that salary is negatively correlated with the combined workaholics and working compulsively workaholics. The combined workaholics and working compulsively workaholics possess the characteristics like spending a great deal of time in work activities and inability to detach themselves from work even when they are not working (Oates, 1971; Scott et al. 1997; McMillan et al. 2001; Ng et al., 2007; Taris et al., 2008). The employees with this type of behaviour may fear loss of job if they are earning less (Koretz, 2001) and consequently for them increase in salary may become a motivating factor (Rynes et al., 2004). This inducement for salary may be the probable explanation for spending a great deal of time in work activities. The study by Locke (2007) has also reinforced this and stated that people falling in low salary categories are workaholics. Further, the composition recount that neuroticism is another variable which is found to be significant and negatively correlated with workaholic behaviour patterns, namely, combined

Table 2: Results of regression analysis

Model	Combined workaholics		Working compulsively workaholics		Working excessively workaholics	
	Coefficients	t	Coefficients	t	Coefficients	t
Variables (Constant)		1.730***		1.713***		1.460
Salary	-0.260	-2.390*	-0.332	-2.993*	-0.162	-1.452
Designation	0.136	1.239	0.227	2.034*	0.051	0.453
MS	-0.075	-0.911	-0.124	-1.487	-0.051	-0.601
Openness to Experience	-0.127	-1.522	-0.075	-0.884	-0.127	-1.477
Neuroticism	-0.461	-5.451*	-0.429	-4.966*	-0.434	-5.000*
Conscientiousness	0-283	-3.097*	-0.245	-2.630*	-0.277	-2.952*
Agreeableness	0.109	1.406	0.076	0.964	0.105	1.323
Extraversion	0.057	0.679	-0.013	-0.152	0.091	1.067
Age	-0.123	-1.521	-0.047	-0.570	-0.136	-1.641
Family type	-0.028	-0.321	-0.088	-0.988	0.004	0.048
Family size	-0.012	-0.136	.017	0.184	-0.027	-0.297
F Ratio	4.571**		3.928**		3.730**	
R Square	0.258		0.211		0.244	
Adjusted R Square	0.212		0.181		0.171	

Note: * p<0.05; ** p<0.01, ***p<0.10

workaholics, working compulsively workaholics and working excessively workaholics. As a neurotic personality always experiences excessive worry, instability, lack of confidence and has affinity to experience negative emotions which reduces the possibility of developing positive attitude towards their work and that may be the probable explanation for devoting less time to their work by neurotics (Bozionelos, 2003), either behaviourally or cognitively.

Another important determinant in all the three models is conscientiousness. In the present study, all the three workaholic behaviour patterns, namely, working excessively, working compulsively and combined workaholics (working excessively and working compulsively) are negatively correlated to conscientiousness. This may be because of the reason that the individuals with this type of personality trait are self-disciplined, aim for high achievement and achieve high level of success through purposeful planning and persistence (Bono, 2009), which may forbid them to devote more time to their work. Furthermore, the results reveal that designation is positively correlated with working compulsively workaholics. Working compulsively workaholics find work pleasurable and feel guilty or anxious in non-work activities. Therefore if an individual with this type of work behaviour is promoted, there may be increase in

the probability of an individual's exposure to prolonged working hours which increase the possibility of being addicted to work cognitively. Porter (2001) has also mentioned that people working on higher positions are under more pressure to work for long hours and hence develop workaholic tendencies.

CONCLUSION

The findings of the study will be helpful in formulating preventing and remedial strategies to keep the employees away from prolonged working hours. It is seen that conscientiousness is negatively correlated with all the workaholic behaviour patterns. Employees scored high on conscientiousness personality traits usually have a positive approach towards their life and can do good planning and follow the plan in an organized way. To reinforce this behaviour, organizations can conduct training programmes, seminars and workshops that can lead to the up gradation of organization and management skills. These types of training programmes can help in increasing conscientiousness trait of behaviour in employees (Spears, 2011). Besides, study has identified neuroticism as a variable which is negatively correlated with all the three types of workaholics. To embark upon with these types of employees, organizations can organize counselling sessions or hold seminars that

can help the employees to have better control over their lives and reduce the level of anxiety and instability in their emotions. It has been proved that eighty per cent of the people with emotional instability can be treated through counselling (Hart, 1993).

Moreover, organizations can also organize yoga and meditation classes for such employees. Encouraging yoga and meditation practices can help in reducing anxiety and emotional instability (Singh, 2011). Besides

structuring the salaries of employees corresponding to the job profile can also help in reducing the workaholic tendencies among the employees. However, the findings of the present study are only indicative and not conclusive one. Future studies can be planned to see the moderating effect of various demographic and personality variables on different patterns of workaholic behaviour and its consequences.

Table 3: Inter-correlation matrix (Annexure I)

Variables	Age	Salary	Family type	Family size	Marital status	Extra-version	Agree-ableness	Conscientiousness	Neuroticism	Openness to experience
Designation	0.33***	0.313***	-0.11*	-0.187*	-0.275**	-0.452***	0.014	-0.036	-0.018	-0.214**
Age	-	-0.18**	-0.058	-0.014	0.34***	0.08	0.11*	0.04	0.09	0.08
Salary		-	0.09	-0.04	-0.18**	-0.01	0.11*	0.06	-0.005	0.11*
Family type			-	0.50***	-0.05	0.07	-0.01	-0.09	0.07	-0.00
Family size				-	-0.03	-0.07	-0.11*	-0.01	-0.07	-0.05
Marital status					-	0.02	-0.08	-0.009	0.04	-0.05
Extraversion						-	0.05	0.32***	-0.07	0.34***
Agreeableness							-	0.12*	-0.02	0.05
Conscientiousness								-	-0.42***	0.33***
Neuroticism									-	-0.07
Openness to experience										-

Note: ***p<0.01; **p<0.05; *p<0.01

Table 4: Inter-correlation between the dependent and independent variables (Annexure II)

	Designation	Age	Salary	Family type	Family size	MS	Extraversion	Agreeableness	Conscientiousness	Neuroticism	Openness to experience
Combined work addict	0.104	-0.186**	-0.074	0.000	0.047	-0.144**	-0.023	0.077	-0.131*	-0.316***	-0.195***
Working compulsively	0.045	-0.134*	-0.005	-0.055	0.045	-0.177**	-0.056	0.044	-0.122*	-0.295***	-0.150**
Working excessively	0.117	-0.182**	-0.129*	0.023	0.038	-0.116*	0.001	0.083	-0.113*	-0.301***	-0.179**

Note: ** Significant at 5 per cent level of significance; * Significant at 10 per cent level of significance, *** Significant at 1 per cent level of significance

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