

Building Workaholic Behaviour in Organizations: The Role of Organizational Trust and Psychological Empowerment

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Abstract

The roles of organizational trust and psychological empowerment in building workaholic behaviour in work organization were explored among a sample of 715 employees of commercial banks and pharmaceutical companies in Enugu, South eastern Nigeria. The results show that job position had a statistically significant relationship with workaholism. Junior employees exhibited more workaholic behaviour in comparison to senior employees. Contrary to predictions, both organizational trust and psychological empowerment did not predict workaholic behaviour in organizations. The study's implications for research and practice are discussed, its limitations are identified and suggestions for further research are highlighted.

The understanding of work and its nature has attracted a prodigious amount of literature due to dynamic changes in working patterns, employment uncertainty, and transformations that have taken place in the world of work (Harpez, 1999). Also, the changing nature of careers (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996) characterized by mobility, job insecurity and a greater focus on career self-development encourages people nowadays to work excessively hard in order to make meaningful contributions and aspire to get to the top in a flattened organization (Dewilde, Dewettinck, & De Vos, 2007). Schor (1991), Sparks, Paragher and Cooper (2001) asserted that given these trends, studying the concept of workaholism is important and meaningful, especially as the occurrence of workaholism increases all over the world.

The 1990s workday phrase "8 to 4" has become obsolete and replaced by the new millennium phrase "24/7" - twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week (Robinson, 2007). These trends, according to Robinson, are very strong indication of how work had undulated its way into every hour of our day.

There is no freer hour and vacation days have either evaporated or disappeared as individuals go about or travel for holidays with their offices. Personal computers and internet facilities have become mobile offices and have created no clear-cut distinction between vacation and work periods. Workers could now perform and meet up with their office duties even from remote areas. Advanced technology enable employees to work regardless of time and place to the detriment of clear role expectations (Sullivan, 1999), causing the boundaries between work and personal life to be blurred (Dewilde, Dewettinck, & De Vos, 2007). Worse still, it has been observed that increasing number of workers no longer take vacations at all (Robins on, 2007).

Although the concept of workaholism has continued to attract the attention of researchers (e.g., Fassel, 1990; Garfield, 1987; Kiechel, 1989; Killinger, 1991; Kluft & Kleiner, 1988; Koonce, 1998; Machlowitz, 1980; Wad dell, 1993), few empirical scientific enquires have been conducted to further the understanding of this construct (e.g., Burke, 1999; Dewilde, Dewettinck, & De Vos, 2007; Doerfler & Kammer, Porter, 2001; Robinson & Post, 1995, 1997; Snir & Zohar, 2000; Spence & Robbins, 1992). This paucity of research on workaholism was authenticated by the fact that McMillan, O'Driscoll, Marsh and Brady (2001) undertook a literature search for scientific articles and dissertations published in English on PubMed, the Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI) and Dissertation Abstracts International (OAI), all of which produced only 19 empirical articles, 75 of which pertained to United States-based samples. Recently, Taris and Schaufeli (2007) reported that a literature search using PsychInfo revealed that since the introduction of the concept in the late 1960s and early 1970s (Oates, 1968, 1971) about 184 articles on workaholism have been published though they reported that the publication rate has doubled every five years from 1990 onwards. Evidently today, more studies on the construct have been carried out but most of those studies took place in North American culture (McMillan et al., 2001), which business environment is quite different from Nigeria.

According to Douglas and Morris (2006), why people are motivated to work so hard and whether this workplace behaviour has positive or negative organizational outcomes has continued to attract the attention of researchers. Most scholars agree that the term workaholism first appeared in an article by Oates in 1971. His original essay drew a parallel to alcoholism (drinking to excess) and the term was intended to represent a similar compulsion for working to a detrimental extreme. Machlowitz (1980) further popularized the term workaholic, when she profiled individuals who worked long hours even when they could have chosen not to. Among organizational researchers, some continue to conceptualize workaholism in the tradition of Machlowitz (1980), using the term for anyone who works long hours, with variations in the outcome

and, accordingly, whether or not it is a problem (e.g., Scott, Moore, & Miceli, 1993; Friedman & Lobel, 2003). Although working long hours fits the popular notion of a workaholic, several studies have found that the number of hours worked does not relate definitely with workaholism that includes inner compulsions or feeling driven to work (Burke, 1999; Taris, Schaufeli, & Verhoeven, 2005).

Thus, the concept of workaholism has been variously defined. For example, Moiser (1983) defined workaholics simply as those who work at least 50 hours a week. Robinson (1989) defined workaholism as a progressive disorder of work addiction, which leads to family disintegration and increased inability to manage work habits and life domains. Spence and Robbins (1992) define workaholism based on their notion of a 'workaholic triad,' which consists of three properties; work involvement, a feeling of being compelled to work, and work enjoyment. Seybold and Salomone (1994) define it as over-commitment to work. Snir and Zohar (2000) define workaholism as the individual's steady and considerable allocation of time to work-related activities and thoughts, which does not derive from external necessities. To Ng, Sorenson and Feldman (2007) workaholics are those who enjoy the act of working, who are obsessed with working, and who devote long hours and personal time to work. Also, Schaufeli, Taris and Rhenen (2008) were of the view that workaholics work so hard out of an inner compulsion, need, or drive, and not because of external factors such as financial rewards, career perspectives, organizational culture, or poor marriage. The American Heritage Dictionary (2009) defined a workaholic as someone who has a compulsive and unrelenting need to work. The definition by Snir and Zohar (2000) as steady and considerable allocation of time to work-related activities which does not derive from external necessities seems to lead to a conceptual confusion. The amount of time spent at work could be affected by a variety of external factors such as extrinsic rewards (Brett & Stroh, 2003); work-leisure trade-off (Killingsworth, 1993); social contagion (Brett & Stroh, 2003); organizational culture (Porter, 1996); demands of employers (Maume & Bellas, 2001; Clarkberg & Moen, 2001). Other variables such as holding a professional or managerial position has been found to influence the amount of time spent at work (Jacobs & Gerson, 1997); economic slump (Kanai & Wakabayashi, 2004); economic recovery (Babbar & Aspelin, 1998); labour-market conditions (Alesina, Glaeser, & Sacerdote, 2005) and the pressure of globalization (Blair-Loy & Jacobs, 2003).

Despite all the variations in terms of the definition of the construct, there is a central theme surrounding all the definitions of workaholism - substantial investments of time at work irrespective of whether or not the employee is happy with working. The thrust of the present research is not to inquire about

positive or negative status of workaholism, but to establish whether some organizational variables could predict workaholic behaviours. This study was anchored on Robinson's (1997) definition of workaholism as individual different characteristic referring to over-indulgence in work activities.

Many theories have been advanced to explain the concept of workaholism, but the Operant theory is adopted to explain the impact of trust and psychological empowerment in building workaholic behaviour. According to Abrams (2000), a craving to work longer hours refers to a subjective experience within the workaholic's awareness that reflects retrieval from the memory systems of a strong learned desire to satisfy an actual (e.g., biological) or perceived need. Within operant learning, workaholism would be defined as a relatively durable behaviour that is learned through operant conditioning, a form of learning in which voluntary responses come to be controlled by their consequences because they earn a desired outcome (Skinner, 1974; cited in Weiten, 2001). Operant conditioning implies that workaholism will develop only where working leads to desired outcomes.

Despite the fact that several researchers (e.g., Scott, Moore & Miceli, 1997; Snir & Harpaz, 2004; Spence & Robbins, 1992) found that workaholism is positively related to task variety, training facilities, self-efficacy, job satisfaction, and performance more is certainly needed to be done. There seems to be some obvious grey areas about the features, antecedents and consequences of this employee well-being that needed to be understood, yet many researchers (e.g., Dewilde, Dwettinck & De Vos, 2007; Schaufeli & Salanova, 2007; Schaufeli, Taris, & Rhenen, 2008; Taris, Geurts, Schaufeli, Blonk, & Lagerveld, 2008) have maintained that this construct is distinct from other kinds of employee well-being such as work engagement.

Research findings suggest that individual difference characteristics and organizational factors serve as antecedents of this construct; thus; most studies focus only on the individual characteristics. These include personal demographic characteristics (Burke, 2000; Harpaz & Snir, 2003), family of origin dynamics (Robinson, 1998), personal values (Burke, 2001; Harpaz & Snir, 2003), aspects of personality (Schwartz, 1982; Snir, 1998; Burke, Matthiesen, & Pallesen, 2005). In addition, research evidence has it that the only organizational factors that have proven relationship with workaholism include values supporting work-personal life balance (Burke, 2001) or imbalance (Schaef & Fassel, 1988; Killinger, 1991). More so, Robinson (2007) asserted that researchers have profoundly omitted workaholism in their scientific enquiries when compared to other related variables.

Extensive review of literature shows that most of the few studies on workaholism have primarily focused on personality variables (e.g., Burke, Matthiesen, & Pallesen, 2006). The relationships between organizational characteristics such as trust and psychological empowerment and workaholism have been unfairly ignored. Moreover, there is empirical evidence that trust positively affects other indicators of motivation such as job satisfaction, organizational citizenship behaviour, turnover intentions and organizational commitment (Dirks & Ferrin, 2002). Since workaholism is an indicator of motivation and motivation is instrumental to employee's commitment to their organization and is also closely related to organizational citizenship behaviour (Babcock-Roberson & Strickland, 2010), it is proposed that trust which when instituted in organization is likely to bring motivation could as well buttress workaholic behaviour in organizations. Researchers have equally indicated that psychological empowerment is positively related to some positive job behaviours such as organizational citizenship behaviour (e.g., Onyishi, 2006), job satisfaction (Hechanova, Alampay, & Franco, 2009; Casey, Saunders, & O'Hara, 2010; Chang, Shih, & Lin, 2010), performance (Raquib, 2010), low rate of turnover (Yao & Cui, 2010). Since workaholism is linked with these indicators or positive job outcomes, there is a growing need to examine whether psychological empowerment will also propel workaholism in Nigeria work organizations. Besides the growing interest in workaholism, its prevalence in the workplace and conflicting opinions, observations and conclusions about workaholism and its impact on organizations present a convincing case for directing more research effort towards investigating this phenomenon. Also, previous researches in this area have been dominantly North American (McMillan, O'Driscoll, Marsh, & Brady, 2001); therefore, the understanding of workaholism runs the risk of becoming culturally biased. By conducting this study with Nigerian samples, the researcher addresses this problem.

It is on these above-identified concerns that the relevance of the present study is founded by focusing on organizational trust and perceived psychological empowerment as possible antecedents of workaholism. It is therefore hypothesized that organizational trust will significantly predict workaholic behaviour in Nigeria work organizations. Also, that perceived psychological empowerment will significantly predict workaholic behaviours in Nigeria work organizations.

Method

Participants

A total of 715 employees were sampled from seven Commercial banks and 4 pharmaceutical companies in Enugu metropolis, South-Eastern Nigeria. Five

hundred and fifty six (566) employees were drawn from the banking sector, while 149 were from the production sector. Three hundred and thirty five (335) of the participants were males while 380 were females. Their ages ranged from 21 to 50 years, with a mean age of 36.4 years. The average job tenure was 3.57 years, while average tenure in the organization was 5.39 years. They were predominantly Igbo. The minimum and maximum educational qualifications of the participants were Ordinary National Diploma (OND) and Masters Degree respectively.

Instruments

Organizational Trust Index (OTI): The organizational Trust Index (On) developed by Shockley-Zalabak, Ellis and Cesaria (1999) was used to measure organizational trust. It is a 29-item scale that addresses five dimensions of trust built from Mishra's (1996) model for organizational trust-competence, openness, concern and reliability. Shockley-Zalabak, Ellis and Cesaria (1999) added the fifth dimension - identification as the last of the five faces of organizational trust. It followed a 5-point Likert-type response format that ranged from very little (1) to very great (5). Alpha reliability index of the measure with Nigerian samples is .89 (Ugwu, 2011). Sample items include: "I am highly satisfied with the overall quality of the products and/ or services of the organization" (competence). "I receive adequate information regarding how well I am doing in my job," (openness).

Psychological Empowerment Scale: Spreitzer's (1995) Psychological Empowerment Scale (PES) was used to measure psychological empowerment. It is a 12-item scale that measures the four dimensions of empowerment: meaning, competence, self-determination and impact. The instrument has four sub-scales of three items each and each of the scales measures one dimension. It was designed in a 5-point Likert-type response format that ranged from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). Spreitzer's test-retest reliability analysis yielded a reliability coefficient of .72 for the industrial sample and .62 for the insurance sample used in her study. The reliability alpha with Nigerian samples is .73 (Onyishi, 2006). Sample items include: "The work I do is very important to me" (meaning), "I am confident about my ability to do my job" (competence).

Work Addiction Risk Test: Workaholism was measured with the short version (9-item) overdoing subscale of the 25-item full version of the Work Addiction Risk Test (WART) developed by Robinson (1999). The WART is a five dimensional scale designed to measure workaholism. The scale consists of overdoing, self-worth, self-perfection, intimacy and mental pre-occupation subscales. It is a self-

report questionnaire rated on a 4-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (never true) to a (always true). Taris, Schaufeli and Verhoeven (2005) build a strong case for use of the overdoing subscale made up of 9 items as adequate representative of workaholism. Several other researchers (e.g., Bakker, Demerouti, & Burke, 2008) have used the overdoing subscale as an adequate measure of workaholism in their various studies. Its Cronbach alpha with Nigerian samples is .65 and a test-retest reliability of .73 after three weeks interval (Ugwu, 2011). Sample items include: "I feel guilty when I am not working on something" and "I find myself doing two or three things at one time, such as eating lunch and writing a memo while talking on the telephone."

Procedure

A multistage sampling technique was adopted to select the 11 organizations that were sampled for the study. Such organizations included seven commercial banks and four pharmaceutical companies in Enugu, South-Eastern Nigeria. Eight hundred and nineteen (819) copies of the three instruments used for the study were administered to employees in the 7 organizations selected from the banking sector: United Bank for Africa (UBA) Plc., Zenith Bank Plc., Fidelity Bank Plc., Intercontinental Bank Plc., Oceanic Bank Plc., First Bank of Nigeria Plc., and Bank PHB Plc., while 4 companies: Nemel Pharmaceutical Industry Limited, Ceenek Pharm. Product, Michelle Laboratory Limited and A.C Drugs Limited represented the production sector. Specifically, a total of 653 copies of the questionnaire were administered to all the employees from the banking sector. They constitute those who were available at the time of the study and who indicated interest to participate. Out of this number, 595 were returned representing 91.11% return rate. Twenty nine (29) copies were discarded due to improper completion, leaving a total number of 566 used for the data analysis. On the other hand, a total of 166 copies were distributed in the production sector. Out of this number, only 157 copies were returned, representing a return rate of 94.57. Eight (8) copies were discarded due to improper completion and only 149 were considered for data analysis. In all the 11 organizations sampled, a total of 819 copies of the questionnaire were distributed to all the available employees who also indicated interest to participate, but only 752 were returned, representing 91.81% return rate. Out of this number returned, 37 copies were discarded due to improper completion, leaving a total of 715 that were used for data analysis.

Design/Statistic

The study employed the multigroup cross-sectional survey research design and multiple regression statistics was used to analyze the data.

Result

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Workaholism	20.73	4.68											
2. Org'l trust	88.76	19.38	-.02										
3. Empowerment	43.11	7.66	-.05*	.75**									
4. Gender	1.52	.50	-.03	-.17*	-.17**								
5. Age	31.54	5.39	-.03	.08*	.07*	-.16**	1						
6. Marital status	1.5-	.50	.01	-.00	.10*	-.20**	.13**						
7. Org'l tenure	3.70	2.57	.00	.09*	.11*	-.32**	.28**	.45**					
8. Job tenure	2.78	1.92	-.01	.03	.02	-.36**	.19**	.29**	.77**				
9. Employment status	1.71	.46	-.03	.22*	.33**	-.31**	.09*	.27**	.37**	.34**			
10. Job position	1.39	.49	-.08*	.01	.11*	-.24**	.12*	.21**	.39**	.28**	.36**		
11. Education	1.62	.49	-.04	.38**	.29**	-.28**	.07*	.08*	.17*	.07*	.42**	.45**	

Key: * = $p < .05$; ** = $p < .001$

Note: A total of 715 employees completed the questionnaires. Gender (1 = male, 2 = female); Age (1 = young, 2 = old); Marital status (1 = single, 2 = married); organizational tenure (1 = short, 2 = long); Job tenure (1 = short, 2 = long); employment status (1 = contract, 2 = permanent); Job position (1 = junior staff, 2 = senior); Education (1 = low, 2 = high). Organizational trust and psychological empowerment were coded, such that higher scores indicated higher trust or empowerment.

Table 2: Hierarchical regression results

Variables	Steps		
	1	2	3
Gender	-.06	-.06	-.06
Age	-.04	-.04	-.04
Marital status	.01	.01	.02
Org' l tenure	.07	.08	.08
Job tenure	-.05	-.05	-.06
Employ, status	.02	-.02	-.01
Job position	-.09*	-.09*	-.09*
Education	-.02	-.01	-.02
Org' l Trust		-.02	.04
Empowerment			
R ²	.01	.01	.02
R ² Change	.01	.00	.00
F Change	F(8,706)=1.14	F(1,705) =.28	F(1,704) = 1.82
F value	F(8,708) = 1.14	F(9,705) = 1.04	F(10,704) = 1.12

KEY: * = $p < .05$

The result of the analysis indicated that among all the control and the predictor variables tested in the study, it was only job position that had a statistically significant relationship with workaholism, ($p = -.09, P < .05$). Junior employees exhibited more workaholic behaviour in comparison to senior employees.

Discussion

The results of the study showed that organizational trust did not significantly predict workaholic behaviour among employees. This result failed to confirm the hypothesis that organizational trust will significantly predict workaholic behaviour among employees in Nigerian business organizations. The reason for this finding may be due to the fact that organizational members though try to fulfil their own part of a bargain in a contractual relationship by engaging on in-role job activities that will help their organizations achieve set objectives, but this did not predict workaholic behaviour, which is extra role behaviour.

This finding is inconsistent with some previous studies (e.g., Porter, 1996; Brett & Stroh, 2003) which discovered that external factors, such as extrinsic reward and organizational culture which is highly related to trust influenced workaholism. The finding seems to support earlier studies (e.g., Burke, 1999; Burke, Koyuncu, & Fiksenbuaum, 2006; Burke, Matthiesen, & Pallensen, 2006) that workaholism can only be influenced by internal factors.

The hierarchical regression analysis also showed that psychological empowerment did not significantly predict workaholic behaviour. This result also disagrees with the stated hypothesis that perceived psychological empowerment will significantly predict workaholic behaviour among employees in Nigeria organizations. The reason for this finding may be because workaholism is an internally driven behaviour that has nothing to do with external necessities. Although a component of empowerment; self-determination is perceived as an aspect of intrinsic motivation and somewhat of personality, holistically the concept of psychological empowerment is not personality per se and could not predict workaholism. This present result is in conflict with many previous studies which established that the amount of time spent at work which partly defines workaholism is influenced by variety of external factors such as work-leisure trade off (Killingsworth, 1993); social contagion (Brett & Stroh, 2003); organizational culture (Porter, 1996); demands of employees (Maume & Bellas, 2001; Clarkberg & Moen, 2001); holding a professional or managerial position (Jacobs & Gerson, 1997); economic slump (Kanai & Wakabayashi, 2004); economic recovery (Babbar & Aspelin, 1998); labour-market conditions (Alesina, Glaeser, & Sacerdote, 2005); and the pressures of globalization (Blair-Loy & Jacobs, 2003).

In contrast therefore, the result seems to support the study of Machlowtiz (1980) which observed that motivation for workaholism is not mainly economic or instrumental, but rather intrinsic. This finding also seems to align with the study of Burke, Matthiesen and Pallesen (2006) which found that workaholism has strong affinity with personality disposition. Other researchers (e.g., Burke, 1999; Burke, Koyuncu, & Fiksenbaum, 2006) found that workaholism is best explained as a personality trait that may be activated and supported by experiences and events in one's environment. This result also agrees with previous studies (e.g., Burke, 2000; McMillan et al., 2003) in showing that personal demographic and work situation characteristics are generally independent of workaholism. It is not surprising therefore that organizational characteristics, in this context, organizational trust and psychological empowerment which are based on the event that takes place in organizations could not predict workaholic behaviour.

The findings of the present study have good implications for practice. It has confirmed the previous findings that workaholism is not an organizational determined behaviour but is driven by internal mechanisms. Therefore, if organizations are in need of workaholic individuals that will influence job outcomes positively: such organizations should realize that they cannot inculcate such behaviours in their workers but should look for workaholic individuals or personalities that will put in excessive and total commitment to

work for the good of the organization. Therefore, if organizations are seeking workaholics that shall key into this new millennium phrase of 24/7 and keep high pace performance as demanded by the present day competitive global market, they should pay less attention in organization-based policy formulation and implementation. But rather look for workaholic personalities that will go the extra mile or work excessively to help it realize its set objectives.

Beyond the findings of the present study, there are shortcomings that might question its generalizability. The first among them is linked with the typical weaknesses associated with non-experimental research. The most important of these is its lack of ability to establish causation. Questions of causality could not be addressed in this study since data were collected through cross sectional survey. According to Randall, Cropanzano, Bormann and Birjulin (1999), longitudinal studies are needed to determine causality. However, this does not have much profound implication in this current study, because the aim of the study was not to establish whether organizational trust and psychological empowerment cause an employee to exhibit workaholic behaviour, but rather to assess whether they predict such behaviour.

Another limitation that calls for immediate attention was the potential impact of social desirability bias. Social desirability bias could have led participants to answer questions about social desirable attitudes, states and behaviours (Bowling, 2005), in the positive directions. For instance, people may wish to be seen as workaholics, sociable, prone to nervousness or engaged as the case may be. Thus, the social desirability bias might have artificially inflated workaholism scores. Anonymity promised and assurance to participants that the responses were totally academic may have reduced, but not eliminated this threat.

It is suggested for further studies that since the present study did not establish the issue of causality, forthcoming researchers should embark on longitudinal study to ascertain whether organizational trust and psychological empowerment could cause an employee to exhibit workaholic behaviour. Specifically, this is a call on the experimentalists to ensure that this is achieved because it is only through an experimental study that the issue of causation could be laid to rest. Also, to limit the social desirability bias on the part of the participants who completed the self-rating scales, supervisor rating and co-workers/ colleagues comments could be invited to moderate the workaholism scores of the participants. In spite of these limitations, the present study should be seen as one of the first attempts to analyze whether organizational trust and psychological empowerment could predict workaholism as it concerns Nigerian work organization.

In conclusion therefore, since organizational trust and psychological empowerment could not predict workaholic behaviour, which is a veritable tool in ensuring organizational viability and success, it is therefore submitted that managers should search for those with workaholic personalities because they are likely to boost their respective organizations' chances of competing favourably in the marketplace.

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