Is Enough as good as a Feast? Examining the Relationship between Workaholism and Work-Family (WFC)/Family-Work (FWC) Conflict

Dr. Aysun KANBUR *

Assistant Professor, Faculty of Business and Administrative Sciences, Department of Business Administration, Division of Management & Organization, Kastamonu University, Turkey

Nowadays, people combine work and family roles more than they used to do before. Workaholics spend large amounts of time at work, work excessively hard, and become obsessed with work. Workaholism can be conceptualized as an addiction like alcoholism. But, what happens to workaholics’ family when they live with work not with them? Workaholics will neglect their family life under the works in their mind. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between workaholism and work-family (WFC) / family-work (FWC) conflict. A self-report questionnaire that included measures of the key constructs was completed by a sample of 339 banking employees. Correlation analysis and regression analysis were conducted to test the proposed hypotheses of the study. Whereas, FWC was unrelated to workaholism, WFC showed a positive correlation with workaholism. Furthermore, both work enjoyment and drivenness, on the workaholism facet, showed positive correlations with WFC. However, when all predictors of workaholism were entered in a regression analysis, only drivenness predicted WFC positively.

Keywords: Workaholism, work-family conflict, family-work conflict, Turkey.

INTRODUCTION

With the changes in work and life styles people have to work more than before in today’s busy and complex world. Individuals while trying to fulfill their roles as a parent, wife, husband, spouse, child or as a white or blue collar employee or as an executive, their work and family interferes with each other. Work and family have been seen as competing claims on an employee’s time and energy (Ishwara & Dhananjaya, 2008). However, the question is that what is the right amount in working?

In line with being a part in our everyday spoken language, researchers have paid increasing attention to workaholism in the recent literature. Nearly 40 years after Oates (1971) first used the term workaholism it has just been popular. Workaholics spend large amounts of time for working and are likely to have insufficient time to recover from their excessive efforts (Avanzi et al., 2012). Workaholics work greater then what is fairly expected from them to meet organizational or economical requirements (Taris et al., 2008).
Considering the empirical studies about workaholics' psychological well-being to date, it is difficult to explain workaholism as a positive attribute (Robinson, 2000). Excessive work will create a conflict between work and family.

This study is focusing on examining the relationship between workaholism and WFC/FWC. The key objective of this study is to explicate whether workaholism causes a conflict on work to family or family to work. Within this objective, theoretical view from the literature was addressed at first. Then, based on the ideas from the literature hypotheses of the study were composed. In order to test the hypotheses, an empirical research was conducted and the methodology and findings of this research were specified. At last, findings, limitations and suggestions for future researches were discussed as conclusion.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Workaholism

The term “workaholism” was coined by Oates (1971) and Oates defined workaholism as “the compulsion or the uncontrollable need to work incessantly”. Scholars disagree as to the conceptualization and measurement of workaholism. Workaholism is viewed as an addiction, a behavior pattern, a set of attitudes to work or a syndrome and some of the disagreement stems from the facts that workaholism is a multidimensional structure (Tziner & Tanami, 2013). Therefore, there are several conceptual definitions about workaholism. Schaufeli et al. (2006) have defined workaholism as the tendency to work excessively hard (behavioral) and being obsessed with work (cognitive), in a compulsive way. Workaholism involves working to the point that it interferes significantly with one’s life tasks and because of this workaholism can be conceptualized as an addiction (Shifron & Reysen, 2011). Workaholism was compared to other addictions, such as alcoholism, and attention was focused on negative effects of this compulsion to work and on ways to overcome or reduce workaholism (Johnstone & Johnston, 2005).

Workaholics spend their time mostly with their job-related activities and they are addicted to working (Günbeyi ve Gündoğdu, 2010). Previously, it has been pointed out that workaholics tend to be work in an exceptional amount of time and they work greater then what is fairly expected to meet organizational or economical requirements. Recently, it has been pointed out that workaholics think about work (even when they are not working) insistently and it has been suggested that they feel “obsessed” to working (Libano et al., 2010). Rather than actual time spent at work, workaholism is defined as discretionary investment of considerable time at work (Snir & Zohar, 2008). However, the underlying motivation for working long and hard may differ across persons. Thus, measuring workaholism in the sense of the amount of the time which has been spent on the work becomes inadequate and the definitions of workaholism recently contains the underlying motivation for working hard and long (Taris et al., 2005). Some antecedents of workaholism have been examined in previous investigations and these antecedents include personal demographic characteristics, work situation characteristics, feelings of inadequacy and needs to prove oneself and workplace values (Burke & Matthiesen, 2004). Ng. et al. (2007) suggest that workaholism is largely derived from dispositional traits, socio-cultural experiences and behavioral reinforcements. These different factors are likely to collectively influence whether or not one becomes a workaholic.

On the other side, deciding whether or not workaholism is “good” or “bad” the concepts under the meaning of “working hard” should be distinguished; due to this, workaholism can be identified as “bad” form of working hard while work engagement can be identified as “good” form of working hard (Beek et al., 2012). Schaufeli et al. (2009) stated that workaholism (being intrinsically bad) and work engagement (being intrinsically good) should be discriminated rather than talking about “good” or “bad” forms of workaholism. Moreover, behavioral patterns of workaholism and work engagement are same (working hard beyond normal), but the motivation at the basis of them are different because workaholics go into action by an obsessive inner drive they cannot resist while engaged employees are motivated intrinsically (Schaufeli et al., 2009).
Work-Family Conflict and Family-Work Conflict

Work and family are two of the most central and significant roles of adulthood and there is so much research focused on exploring the interface between work and family (Calvo-Salgueiro et al., 2011). The theoretical approaches to work and family conflict build on role theory (Rupp, 2013; Palmer et al., 2012). According to the role theory, role conflict occurs when individuals engaging in multiple roles (such as work and family roles) face resource constraints in terms of time or energy and have difficulty fulfilling their multiple role responsibilities successfully (Seltzer, 2013). Thus, work and family conflict is derived from a scarcity hypothesis, which posits that individuals have a fixed amount of time and energy. Accordingly, those who try to maintain the competing demands of work and family are most likely to experience conflict (Camgoz, 2014). On the other side, due to the relationship between work and family, the direction of the conflict should be distinguished. According to the bi-directional nature of work and family conflict, work interferes with family versus family interferes with work (Parayitam & Kalra, 2008). Work interfering with family is conceptualized as work-family conflict (known as WFC or WIF in the literature) and family interfering with work is conceptualized as family-work conflict (known as FWC or FWI in the literature).

WFC and FWC are distinct but related forms of interrole conflict (Netemeyer et al., 1996). Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) defined WFC and FWC as, “a form of inter-role conflict in which the role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect” (Netemeyer et al., 1996; Ishwar & Dhananjaya, 2008). In inter-role conflict, the role expectations associated with membership in the work (family) domain are in conflict with expectations stemming from membership in the family (work) domain (Lu et al., 2012). Three types of WFC have been recognized as time-based (i.e., time spent at work hinders the completion of family demands), strain-based (i.e., pressures from work hinder successful performance in the family), and behavior-based (i.e., effective behaviors at work are not compatible with behaviors that are necessary to meet family demands) (Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985; Cho & Allen, 2013; Minnott et al., 2013; Tziner & Sharoni, 2014). WFC and FWC are assumed to have different antecedents and, in some cases, different consequences. For example, long work hours may predict WFC, whereas heavy elder-care demands may predict FWC (Gareis et al., 2009). Work role stressors, work role involvement, work social support, work characteristics and personality are antecedents of WFC; while family role stressors, family social support, family characteristics and personality are antecedents of FWC (Michel et al., 2011). Due to their consequences, WFC may predict poor family relationships and FWC may predict poor job performance (Gareis et al., 2009). Studies about outcomes of the WFC have found that WFC has negative effects on job, family, and life satisfaction while WFC, as a source of stress, has been linked to many negative outcomes in both work and family life (Huang et al., 2004).

Workaholism and Work-Family / Family-Work Conflict

Is workaholism useful or detrimental? Some of the organizations view its positive sides while others view its negative sides (Liang & Chu, 2009). Namely, some writers believe workaholism to be positive from the organizations’ perspective and others believe that workaholism always has negative connotations. Moreover, the first group would likely encourage workaholism whereas the second group would likely discourage it (Burke & Matthiesen, 2004). In the purpose of this study negative outcomes of workaholism get attention. Workaholism is related to a range of negative outcomes and workaholics, their spouses and their companies affected from these outcomes. For instance, workaholism caused more interpersonal conflict at work, low job satisfaction, more work-home interference, poorer social relationships outside the work, low life satisfaction, high levels of job strain and health complaints for the employees who were entitled as workaholic (Beek et al., 2012). Workaholics may be perform poorly and create conflicts with coworkers because of their obsessive and self-centered manner (Liang & Chu, 2009). With workaholic behaviors a person’s work and non-work environments become weaker (Piotrowski & Vodanovich, 2008). In the consideration of this study the main question is that what happens to the workaholics’ family?

404
Workaholism has a host of negative impacts on families. The research on the psychological and familial correlates of workaholism indicates that it is associated with family dysfunction. For example, some findings suggest that wives of workaholics experience greater marital estrangement and less positive feelings than wives of nonworkaholics do (Robinson et al., 2006). Carroll and Robinson (2000) stated that the children of workaholics experience some of the same difficulties as those experienced by children of alcoholics. Workaholism is a major source of marital breakdown. In particular, it leaves no quality time to be physically and emotionally available to the family (Yaniv, 2011).

The apparent face of workaholism is long working hours. High workload seems to drain employee’s energy and lessen the time that should be devoted to family life, thereby increase the prevalence of the conflict between work and family lives (Tayfur & Arslan, 2013). WFC may originate from long working hours, spending less time at home and inflexible working schedule (Erdamar & Demirel, 2014). Thus, workaholism might be expected to increase WFC. On the basis of previous researches and theoretically founded assumptions it has been hypothesized in the current study that:

**Hypothesis 1:** Workaholism will be a positive predictor of work-family conflict (WFC).

On the other side workaholism can be conceptualized as an addiction like alcoholism. Due to being obsessed with work, workaholics may suffer from not being at work because of their family responsibilities. Moreover, workplace conditions such as job authority, job pressures, creative work activities, and schedule control represents demands and resources that have implications for the FWC (Schieman & Young, 2011). According to the research findings of Adkins and Premeaux (2012) work hours have a linear relationship with WFC and a curvilinear relationship with FWC. Thus, workaholism can be found to result in FWC. In this sense, the second hypothesis in the current study was:

**Hypothesis 2:** Workaholism will be a positive predictor of family-work conflict (FWC).

### METHODOLOGY

The methodology followed in this study has been discussed under the main points given below:

#### Data Collection Procedure and Sample

The data of this study were collected through a questionnaire containing a wide range of questions about workaholism, WFC and FWC. Participants who provided the data used in the study were drawn from the banks of a city from Turkey. According to last statistics of The Banks Association of Turkey in 2014 nearly 700 employees were working in the banks of this city. Questionnaires were distributed to employees who work in these banks and they were informed that participation was voluntary. The procedure for completing the questionnaire and the purpose of the study was also explained them. Moreover, all of the participants were assured of the confidentiality of their responses. Then, they completed a hard copy of the questionnaire at work or home and they brought it back to the researcher on the next day. In total, 350 questionnaires were received and 11 questionnaires were excluded because of the substantial missing data. So, in the final sample, after removing the substantial missing data, only 339 completed questionnaires were used in the analyses of the study.

#### Measures

The data for this study were gathered through a self-completion questionnaire composed of two parts. First part was composed of 20 items that measures workaholism of each participant and part two was composed of 10 items in which 5 of them measures WFC and the other five measures FWC. The measures used in this study were adapted from past studies.

*Workaholism* was tapped by means of the 25-item self-report scale employed by Spence and Robbins (1992). In the literature, the Workaholism Battery (WorkBAT; Spence & Robbins, 1992), the Work Addiction Risk Test (WART; Robinson, 1989) and the Dutch Work Addiction Scale (DUWAS; Schaufeli et al., 2008) were three most frequently used workaholism measures according to their validation, their factor structure and the aim of the
studies they were used. In this study Workaholism Battery (WorkBAT) of Spence and Robbins was chosen as a scale due to the studies about workaholism made before in Turkey. Ersoy-Kart (2005) has proved the reliability and validity of the WorkBAT for Turkey. The original of WorkBAT has shown a three factor structure and these factors were named as work involvement (WI), work enjoyment (WE) and drivenness (D) and WorkBAT measures these three dimensions of workaholism (Spence & Robbins, 1992). Work involvement is psychological involvement with work, work enjoyment is the degree of gratification from working and drivenness (work drive) is the internal pressure to work (Aziz et al., 2013). However, lots of studies in the literature have eliminated work involvement (WI) facet and supporting the two-factor structure (Johnstone & Johnston, 2005; Huang et al., 2010; Andreassen et al., 2012; Emhan et al., 2012). After the confirmatory factor analysis Ersoy-Kart (2005) have also found a two factor structure with 9 items in established in the first factor work enjoyment (WE) and 11 in the second factor drivenness (D) and 5 items corresponded with the work involvement (WI) excluded from the original WorkBAT. According to Ersoy-Kart (2005), work involvement (WI) cannot be measured in the Turkish sample and with its two factor structure WorkBAT Turkish Form is a valid and reliable scale to determine workaholic behavior patterns in Turkish people. Thus, this study has also supported the two-factor structure of WorkBAT. Participants indicated the degree to which they believed each item on the scale was descriptive of their workaholism marking their responses on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from one (strongly disagree) to five (strongly agree). Sample items included; “I seem to have an inner compulsion to work hard.” or “Most of the time my work is very pleasurable.”. Cronbach’s alpha coefficient for the work enjoyment factor was 0.75 and for the drivenness factor was 0.86 in the current sample. These factors have acceptable Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0.7 and above.

Work-family conflict (WFC) was assessed using the 5-item scale employed by Netemeyer et al. (1996). The WFC scale measures participants’ perception of the extent to which work is thought to interfere with family (Netemeyer et al., 1996). A sample item is “The amount of time my job takes up makes it difficult to fulfill family responsibilities”. Cronbach’s alpha coefficient for WFC was 0.90 and have an acceptable Cronbach alpha coefficient of 0.7 and above in the current study.

Family-work conflict (FWC) was also assessed using the 5-item scale employed by Netemeyer et al. (1996). The FWC scale measures participants’ perception of the extent to which family is thought to interfere with work (Netemeyer et al., 1996). FWC scale is also frequently used in FWC researches in the literature (Derya, 2008; Çelik & Turunç, 2011; França, 2012). Efeoğlu (2006) determine the reliability and validity of the FWC in Turkey, too. All the items of the scale were acquired on a 5-point Likert-type scale with response categories ranging from one (strongly disagree) to five (strongly agree). Higher scores indicate a higher tendency on FWC. A sample item from the scale is “Things I want to do at work don’t get done because of the demands of my family or spouse/partner.”. In the present study, Cronbach’s alpha coefficient for FWC was 0.89 and has an acceptable Cronbach alpha coefficient.

FINDINGS
The hypotheses proposed in the study were tested using statistical analyses. An alpha level of 0.05 confidence level was used for all statistical significances. The first step of the analysis included determining the correlations between the subscales of workaholism and WFC/FWC. Based on this, correlation analysis was utilized and Table 1 presents the findings of the correlation analysis.

TABLE 1 HERE
As presented in Table 1, being as subscales of workaholism, both work enjoyment and drivenness were positively correlated with the WFC. Contrary to it, both, work enjoyment and drivenness, were not correlated with the FWC. Then, in the second step of the analysis, to better understand how the subscales of workaholism predict the WFC/FWC regression analysis were utilized and Table 2 presents the findings.

**TABLE 2 HERE**

To assess which variables, work enjoyment or drivenness, best predicted WFC stepwise regression analysis was computed and a one step model was composed. The model predicting WFC was significant with its “F” value at p<.05 level. According to the model, being as a significant positive predictor of the WFC, drivenness accounted for 0.022 of the variance in WFC, but, work enjoyment was not contributed any significant additional variance in predicting WFC. In contrast with these findings, the regression model predicting FWC was not significant with its “F” value at p<.05 level. Therefore, work enjoyment and drivenness didn’t contributed any significant variance in predicting FWC. Findings of the regression analysis were also parallel with the findings of the correlation analysis.

In sum, workaholism was not a predictor of FWC while it was significantly related to WFC. Thus, data of the study supported hypothesis 1 but didn’t support hypothesis 2.

**CONCLUSION**

The main purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between workaholism and WFC/FWC. In particular, explicating the role of workaholism in the prediction of WFC and FWC regression analysis was also conducted. As it was pointed in the findings, Hypothesis 1 was supported while Hypothesis 2 was not supported by the data. Findings of the study indicate that workaholism may have different relationships with WFC and FWC. Thus, having positive links with WFC, workaholism has no relation with FWC. More specifically, drivenness was a significant positive predictor of WFC, in contrast, neither work enjoyment nor drivenness and so workaholism, was not a predictor of FWC.

The findings reported in the study support the suggestion proposed by the researches in the literature that workaholism has negative outcomes. Previous studies have consistently demonstrated that long working hours are positively associated with WFC. A large part of the literature also suggests that workaholism is associated with family dysfunction. This study is different from existing literature as it looks at both workaholism and WFC/FWC, together. Based on the review of the literature, this study not only examined the WFC but also FWC by considering their distinct but related structure.

This study has both theoretical and practical implications. The first considerable contribution to the literature is the detailed definition of the relationship among workaholism and WFC/FWC presented in this study. The second important feature is the suggestion of workaholism as an antecedent of WFC but not FWC. Therefore, this study has contributions for the work and family conflict literature. Moreover, the study clearly supports the need for more studies on both examining the FWC and identifying its antecedents. Thus, attempts to examine FWC in its distinct structure may be particularly beneficial for the literature. On the other hand, if all the findings were considered, arranging the right amount of working and creating a balance in the contents of work and family roles should be learned by today’s workforce for reducing WFC under the pressure of workaholism.

Despite its contributions, as with most studies, some limitations are noted for this study. First, the sample of this study limits the findings. Due to this, future efforts with different sampling methods or considering different sectors could provide more explicit and certain connections between workaholism and WFC/FWC. Usage of self-report measures is another limitation. Future studies could use different measurement techniques or different scales for examining the relationship in this study. For broadening the literature, it would be worthwhile replicating this study with different research designs.

In addition to this, enough may be as good as a feast than living in conflict among the work and family because of workaholism.

---

Dr. Aysun KANBUR
Relationships between workaholism and work-family or family-work conflict

REFERENCES


**AUTHOR’S BIOGRAPHY**

Dr. Aysun KANBUR is Assistant Professor at the Faculty of Business and Administrative Sciences, Kastamonu University, Turkey. She was graduated from Business Administration Department of Uludağ University. She holds a master degree from Balıkesir University in Business Administration and a doctorate degree from İnönü University in Management & Organization. Her current research interests lie under the area of organizational behavior.
**APPENDIX**

**Table 1.** Correlations between Workaholism and Work-Family/Family-Work Conflict

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Work Enjoyment</th>
<th>Drivenness</th>
<th>Work-Family Conflict</th>
<th>Family-Work Conflict</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Work Enjoyment</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drivenness</td>
<td>.672** (.000)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work-Family Conflict</td>
<td>.130* (.016)</td>
<td>.150** (.006)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family-Work Conflict</td>
<td>.049 (.373)</td>
<td>-.003 (.952)</td>
<td>.404** (.000)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:**
**"** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**Table 2.** Findings of Regression Analysis for Workaholism and Work-Family Conflict

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>R Square</th>
<th>Adjusted R Square</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>.150</td>
<td>.022</td>
<td>.020</td>
<td>7.735 (Sig.: .006)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variables</th>
<th>Unstandardized Coefficients</th>
<th>Standardized Coefficients</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Constant)</td>
<td>2.447</td>
<td>.226</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Driveness</td>
<td>.187</td>
<td>.067</td>
<td>.150</td>
<td>.006</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Predictors in the model:** (Constant), Driveness
**Excluded Variable:** Work Enjoyment
**Dependent Variable:** Work-Family Conflict