

Three Facets of Employee Wellness:
The Potential Moderating Influences of Exercise, Mindfulness-Based Practices, and Vacation
on Select Worker Characteristics

Brittany N. Meier

Shahnaz Aziz

East Carolina University

Abstract

Current research notes a disconnect between well-being programs offered by organizations and those most valued by employees (Agarwal, Bersin, Lahiri, Schwartz, & Violini, 2018). Thus, the current study attempts to better understand the potential influence of health-driven, leisure activities on three worker characteristics, namely, workaholism, work stress, and work engagement. With a greater understanding, we hope to emphasize the importance of comprehensive well-being programs for both employers and employees who may experience any of the aforementioned characteristics. To best assess potential components of a well-being program, three leisure activities of interest (i.e., exercise, mindfulness-based practices, and vacation) were selected. These specific activities were chosen for their alignment with the recognized domains of individual health: physical, mental, and social (“Constitution of the World Health Organization, 2006), respectively. The potential relationships between these factors will be assessed through three questions. The first two questions explore the corollary relationships that may exist between workaholism, work stress, work engagement, and overall participation in leisure activities. This research posits workaholism will be positively related to work stress (Q1:H1), while work engagement will be negatively related to workaholism (Q1:H2) and work stress (Q1:H3). Considering the relationship between worker characteristics and leisure activities, it is hypothesized that participation in leisure activities will be negatively correlated with workaholism (Q2:H1) and work stress (Q2:H2), but positively correlated with work engagement (Q2:H3). The third question considers the potential moderating influence of each identified leisure activity on the relationship between workaholism and work stress. It is anticipated that participation in exercise (Q3:H1), mindfulness-based practices (Q3:H2), and vacation (Q3:H3) will have moderating influences on the relationship between workaholism and

work stress, such that as participation in each of these activities increases, the relationship between workaholism and work stress will weaken. Surveys will be dispersed through Amazon's Mechanical Turk (MTurk) platform and will include demographic questions and study measures. To assess participation in vacation activities, select questions from de Bloom et al.'s (2011) research will be used. Correlations will be obtained to test the first six hypotheses. To test the final three hypotheses regarding the potential moderating influence of leisure activities, a multiple regression analysis and Hayes' PROCESS (2013) will be used.

Summary

Leisure activities adopt many forms and purposes, though here they are conceptually defined as physically-, mentally-, and/or socially-driven activities (“Constitution of the World Health Organization”, 2006) that provide individuals with opportunities to separate from work (van Wijhe-van Iperen, Schaufeli, & Peeters, 2010). While these pursuits are often practiced outside of work, employers are in a position to encourage participation in leisure activities, either informally or formally through comprehensive well-being programs. Leisure activities offer benefits to employees *and* organizations. For example, employees may be more engaged (Bakker & Leiter, 2010), perform better on the job, and face lower health risks which, in turn, may reduce organizational healthcare costs (Hamar, Coberley, Pope, & Rula, 2015).

Although such benefits could be felt by all employees, three worker characteristics are of interest in the current study, as they have implications for employee health and productivity. Researchers often assert workaholism and work stress as negative worker characteristics, while identifying work engagement more favorably (e.g., van Beek, Taris, & Schaufeli, 2011). Specific support for this claim includes a study by Aziz, Wuensch, & Duffrin (2015) in which a positive relationship was identified between workaholic tendencies and poor health outcomes (e.g., high cholesterol). Similarly, in their meta-analysis, Gerber and Pühse (2009) noted 24 out of 27 studies found a negative relationship between work stress and health. Alternatively, work engagement was related to better physical and mental health for employees (van Beek et al., 2011). With these points in mind, we hope to establish if leisure activities (i.e., exercise, mindfulness-based practices, and vacation) will promote work engagement, while reducing work stress and workaholism. Moreover, we seek to ascertain if participating in these leisure activities may weaken the relationship between workaholism and work stress.

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