

Workaholism and Well-Being:  
Psychological Capital as a Potential Moderator

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## **Abstract**

The aim of the current study is to examine the relationships among workaholism, psychological capital (PsyCap), and well-being. Workaholism is a condition which affects approximately 10% of the U.S. population (Sussman, Lisha, & Griffiths, 2011). Research has found it to be linked to many adverse outcomes, including physical symptoms such as poor overall health (Taris, Schaufeli, & Verhoeven, 2005), as well as psychological symptoms such as work-stress, work-life conflict, and burnout (Clark, Michel, Zhandova, Pui, & Baltes, 2016). In the current research, we are interested in identifying a construct that might ameliorate the negative influence of workaholism on one's well-being. Research regarding the outcomes of employee wellness programs are mostly inconclusive (Semmer, 2011), alluding to a lack of research on constructs that truly impact employees and their quality of work life. If significant results are found in the current study, this research could better inform organizations on ways to reduce work stress and combat negative effects on physical and psychological well-being resulting from workaholism. Thus, we seek to examine the potentially moderating influence of PsyCap on the relationship between workaholism and well-being. Similar to previous studies, we expect workaholism will be negatively related to physical health (H1a), workaholism will be negatively related to psychological well-being (H1b), and workaholism will be positively related to work stress (H1c). Furthermore, we hypothesize PsyCap will be positively related to physical health (H2a), PsyCap will be positively related to psychological well-being (H2b), and PsyCap will be negatively related to work stress (H2c). Finally, as a cognitive tool, it is hypothesized PsyCap will moderate the relationship between workaholism and physical health such that the higher the level of PsyCap, the weaker the relationship between workaholism and physical health (H3a), PsyCap will moderate the relationship between workaholism and psychological well-being, such that the

higher the level of PsyCap, the weaker the relationship between workaholism and psychological well-being (H3b), and PsyCap will moderate the relationship between workaholism and work stress such that the higher the level of PsyCap, the weaker the relationship between workaholism and work stress (H3c). Participants will include full-time faculty and staff members of a large Southeastern university, recruited via an online email distribution service. The hypotheses will be tested using a multiple regression analysis. The interaction effect of workaholism and PsyCap will be assessed. Lastly, a PROCESS Hayes (2014) analysis will be used to examine the potential moderating effect of PsyCap.

## Summary

Presently, it seems we have a workforce that is more stressed than ever before. With more employees telecommuting and keeping up with advancing technology, lines between work life and non-work life are blurred, leading to stressed out employees (Atanasoff & Venable, 2017). Work stress is becoming a more prevalent problem, and thus researchers are interested in studying the ways in which it arises among employees. It is also to the benefit of organizations to research the antecedents and correlates of work stress, one of which being workaholism.

In addition to work stress, workaholism has negative consequences for both the employee and the organization (Clark et al., 2016). Workaholism is associated with unhealthy behaviors such as excessive alcohol, caffeine, and tobacco consumption, as well as overeating (Seybold & Salomon, 1994). Moreover, workaholism correlates with undesirable effects on mental health such as burnout, negative affect, and work stress (Clark et al., 2016; Burke & Matthiesen, 2004). All of these effects can lead to poorer overall well-being for the individual. As workaholism continues to plague employees, it is imperative that researchers uncover ways to alleviate the symptoms of the condition.

The present study aims to examine the relationship between workaholism, psychological capital (PsyCap), and well-being. PsyCap encompasses four components—hope, efficacy, resilience, and optimism, which can be developed in the employee and lead to better performance and well-being. While research has shown that workaholism has a negative relationship with well-being (Clark et al., 2016), PsyCap has been shown to positively correlate with well-being (Youssef & Luthans, 2015). Thus, the current study will examine the relationships among these three components, as well as examine the potentially moderating effects of PsyCap in the workaholism-well-being relationship.

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