Motivational Drivers of Heavy Work Investment: Intercultural Comparison between USA and Middle East

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Abstract

Heavy work investment (HWI) is the framework developed by Snir and Harpaz (2009, 2012, 2015) to differentiate between two overlapping concepts—workaholism and work engagement. While both entail spending considerable time and effort at work, workaholism involves an underlying internal compulsion that is the negative subtype of HWI, while work engagement includes passion and work enjoyment, and thus is the positive subtype of HWI (Clark et al., 2016; Snir & Harpaz, 2009). More focus has been given to outcomes of HWI types rather than their underlying motives (Tanis et al., 2014; van Beeck et al., 2012). Also, the scarcity of random cross-cultural samples is a gap in the current research, challenging the generalization of existing results. Therefore, the primary goal of our study is to investigate the relationships between HWI types and the motivation types presented by Deci and Ryan’s (1985) self-determination theory. Specifically, we examined the potential impact of the influence of cultural dimensions presented by Hofstede (1988) and apply this to the HWI framework. Specifically, data will be driven from two different cultures: the USA representing individualistic, low power distance, and masculine culture, versus Egypt and United Arab Emirates representing contrasting culture. If significant results are found, antecedents of both constructs could be altered to include the influence of culture dimensions on the HWI framework.

Hypotheses

Workaholism has been linked to maladaptive perfectionism (Clark et al., 2016), which is associated with external and introjected regulation (Stoeber, Damian & Madigan, 2017). Furthermore, workaholism is associated with prevention focus whereby workaholics tend to have lower self-esteem and self-efficacy compared to non-workaholics (van Beeck et al., 2014). These are considered introjected behaviors that are motivated by internal rewards of self-esteem or avoidance of pain, guilt, shame, and fear of failure (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Hence, the following hypothesis is proposed: Workaholism is positively related to introjected and identified regulation (H1a). Work engagement involves vigor, dedication, and absorption (Schaufeli et al., 2002), which is related to personal initiatives and harmonious passion (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2010; Vallerand et al., 2003). Given that autonomous and identified regulations involve an internal locus of causality in which one owns a sense of willingness, volition, and choice (Ryan & Deci, 2000), the following hypothesis is proposed: Work engagement is positively related to autonomous and identified regulation (H1b).

Method

Upon study approval by the Institutional Review Board, the study measures will be submitted to the university’s Survey Review and Oversight Committee for review and approval. An email will be sent to the random selection of 1500 staff and 1500 faculty employed full-time at a large southeastern university. The research goals, instructions, study requirements, and estimated time to complete the survey will be explained. Additionally, a Qualtrics link for the actual survey will be provided. The survey will start with a consent form indicating their voluntary participation and assuming the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses. In addition to completing the measures for the study variables, participants will answer demographics questions.

Measures

Multidimensional Workaholism Scale: The 16-item MWIS (Clark et al., 2020) will be used to assess workaholism. It uses a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (never true) to 5 (always true). This four-factor scale items showed statistically significant factor loadings (p values < .01) ranging between .58 and .94 (Clark et al., 2020).

Utrecht Work Engagement Scale: The shorted 9-item UWE9-Sk (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004) will be used to assess work engagement. The UWE9-Sk uses a 7-point frequency range scaling from 0 (never) to 6 (every day). Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) reported a Cronbach’s alpha of .92.

Data Analysis

Using SPSS (Version 28.0), a multiple regression model will be developed to predict workaholism (H1a) and work engagement (H1b) from four cultural dimensions: masculinity/femininity, power distance, uncertainty avoidance, and individualism. Each of these factors is measured through four items. The regression model will be used to predict the workaholism and work engagement (H2). Furthermore, in addition to the main effects, the interactions will be tested to determine if there is an additional effect of the significant moderator variables. In addition, the study will use a hierarchical regression analysis to determine if the variance explained by the cultural dimensions is unique. Finally, a moderated multiple regression analysis was used to investigate the interaction effect of the cultural dimensions and work engagement (H2). A .05 significance level was set for all analyses.