

## **Sustainability in Employment Relations: a Study of Workaholism and Work Engagement Between Private and Public University in Malaysia**

*Fatini Hanim Mohd Taufek, Izzaamirah Ishak, Muhammad Abdul Basit Mhd Nor,  
Noor Amira Ahmad Noor Awanis Muslim and Mohamad Nizam Zainon*

College of Business and Accounting, Universiti Tenaga Nasional, Malaysia

---

**Abstract:** Work engagement and workaholism are probably contributed in sustaining employment relations in public and private university. According to the previous literature, work engagement associated to well-being and workaholism contributed unwell-being. Many agree that to have a sustainable employment relations is important to the employees and employers. It able to contribute to the generation of well-being. Surprisingly, the current findings indicate that both, workaholism and work engagement works contribute to the generation of well-being especially in public and private university.

**Key words:** Sustainable • Work engagement • Workaholism • Well-being

---

### **INTRODUCTION**

**Workaholism:** Workaholic is a topic that is very popular in the past, certain people decide workaholic is a positive thing between work and lifestyle haunts with the objective of achieving career and workaholic then certain people have expressed no desire to lifestyle employee because it will have a negative impact on them. Furthermore, workaholism is an obsessive-compulsive disorder that manifests itself through self-imposed demand, not enough to control the conduct of business and greed in the works for the exclusion of most other life events. With respect to [1], a workaholic to describe someone who increases the need for the work prevents the function of life. Even a workaholic and workers involved may not distinguished by long working hours [2]. We assume that the difference in motivation involved. Therefore, the current study aimed to describe different basic motivation that encourages employee's workaholic and engaged to work too hard throughout his career. In addition, some researchers suggest that the importance of potential gender differences in future studies workaholism [3]. Gender has been considered in several studies workaholism. This means that their thoughts are not foregrounded gender decisions, their authors such as [4] and [5] found that if the relationship does not exist between the sexes and workaholism, it can be weak at

best. Even a workaholic and workers involved may not be differentiated by long working hours [2] we assume that the difference in motivation involved. Therefore, the current study aimed to describe the different basic motivations that encourage workers workaholic and engaged to work too hard throughout his career.

**Work Engagement:** According to his theory, there are several reasons why the involvement of the work will stimulate both individual performances [6]. First, work engagement is accompanied by positive emotions. Positive emotions are associated with a wider scope and attention the ability to build a resource theory; [7]. Second, work engagement has been found predictive of good health (For an overview see [8], it is because those involved may be doing well. However, more specifically, refers to the involvement of employees, fulfilling and work-related state of mind that is characterized by a positive spirit, dedication and absorption [9]. Employee involvement is mostly associated with positive outcomes, such as organizational commitment [10], life satisfaction, mental and physical health [8] and personal initiative. In addition, the employees involved feel satisfied with their work [11] and good performance at work [12] for an overview. Therefore, work engagement can be considered as a type of "good" investment heavy work. According to [13], argues that the way participation is often defined and

conceptualized may actually worsen the negative potential effect. Therefore, they suggest that if the engagement visits as measured by the commitment and organization additional behavioral role [14] this can create unsustainable conditions in which the workers involved are expected working ever longer and harder; and that those who work this is regarded as 'more involved and for him.

**Work Engagement, Workaholism:** Well-being is a positive results that is beneficial either for people or organizations. [15] notes that well-being indicates that people have a quality of life. In Aristotle theory, a quality of life is achieved when there is a happiness within people; happiness as a reflection of well-being. To create happiness is must within an individual. Happiness can be defined as “prosperity combined with excellence; or as independence of life, or as the secure enjoyment of the maximum of pleasure; or as a good condition for property and body, together with the power of guarding one’s property and body and making use of them. That happiness is one or more of these things, pretty well everyone agrees.

From this definition of happiness it follows that its constituent parts are: good birth, plenty of friends, good friends, wealth, good children, plenty of children, a happy old age and also such bodily excellences as health, beauty, strength, large stature, athletic powers, together with fame, honor, good luck and excellence” (Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 1360b, 14-23 as cited in [16].

At workplace consideration, job satisfaction is an important dimension of employee well-being [17]. The satisfaction is achieved when the employees have happiness and excitement in performing the task [18]. These personal resources are related to work engagement [19]. This particular relationship will then affect the well-being [20]. In relation with above discussion, well-being is generated when consider the employee has good health, life satisfaction and job performance. As mentioned above regarding work engagement and workaholism, it clearly shows that work engagement associates with well-being and workaholism associates with unwell-being [20].

This is supported findings from [21] that is employees with workaholism are reported to have poor health, poor life satisfaction and always stress with job performance. For instance, work engagement is positively related to health and this would imply that engaged workers are able to perform well. [22] have found that less

psychosomatic issues is reported by engaged workers as compared to their non-engaged counterparts. [23] note that engaged employees often experience positive emotions and this may contribute to why they are more productive.

They are productive probably due to they are happy. The characteristics of happy employees are helpful to others, sensitive to opportunities at work, easygoing, more confident and optimistic [24]. Besides, [11] reveal that workaholism may contributed to unwell-being (poor quality of life satisfaction and poor health) and well-being (positive work outcomes). Recent findings suggest that workaholism influences employee to become a perfectionist by working for long hours [25]. In sum, [25] are agree that workaholism contributes to well-being only in terms of positive outcome. De La Poza *et al.* [26] suggest that to have a sustainable employment relations is important to many organizations worldwide. To have that, many organizations are battling to handle it with overcome the issues of workaholism and work engagement [27].

Workaholism and work engagement give different impact on job related well-being [11]. For work engagement, employees are expected to have high levels of energy, enthusiastic about their work and often fully committed to their job so that they do not realize the time flies [23, 28, 29]. It indicates that work engagement makes employee more committed to work and loyal to the organization. Meanwhile, workaholism may lead to permanently disturbs health, happiness and relationships due to excessive and uncontrollable need to work [30]. Further, some researchers review workaholism as a contributor to mental instability [30-32].

In contrast, some previous findings reveal that employees treat workaholism as a motivation to work [33-35]. The literature tells that workaholism may contributed either as a positive outcome or otherwise for the organization. Hence, it against with [20] finding where they suggest that work engagement contributes to good well-being whereas workaholism contributes unwell-being. Following above discussion, the current research aims to identify the various perspective of workaholism and work engagement towards well-being and the outcome of having sustainable employment relations in the organization.

#### **Relationship of Work Engagement to Workaholism:**

The terms ‘Workaholic’ and ‘Workaholism’ are familiar terms used in describing people who are addicted to work

[30]. Workaholism is defined as working excessive which will be ended as a potential addicted to work [1, 20]. Some researchers noted that those addiction probably lead the employees only to concern on finishing their task or job but neglect others [3, 20, 36]. Others are refer to employee's ill-health, life satisfaction and job performance. This avoidance (neglect ill-health, life satisfaction and job performance) makes employees unhappy [9, 36]. As mentioned above, workaholism are said giving negative impact on well-being generation.

However, some researchers also note that workaholism able to give positive impact on well-being generation. For example, some researchers see workaholics as hyper-performers [33, 37]. Hyper-performers indicate that the employee is assume to be an energetic and proactive person. Further, workaholism as a job motivator [33-35]. The other factor that contribute to well-being generation is work engagement. Conceptually, work engagement is assumed to produce positive outcomes, both at the individual level (personal growth and development) and organizational level (performance quality) [38]. This is because it comprises of positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication and absorption [14].

Vigor is characterized by high levels of energy and mental resilience while working. Dedication refers to being strongly involved in one's work and experiencing a sense of significance, enthusiasm and challenge. Absorption is characterized by being fully concentrated and happily engrossed in one's work, whereby time passes quickly and one has difficulties with detaching oneself from work [10]. In short, engaged employees have high levels of energy and are enthusiastic about their work. Moreover, they are often fully immersed in their work so that time flies [29]. From the work engagement discussion above, it shows that work engagement is pre behaviour of

workaholism. Over committed in work engagement may allow the employees to feel that to have workaholism is necessary for them. However, recently the scholars argued that workaholism able to initiate aggressive behavior in the workplace that with this aggressive behavior, the employee probably cannot manage their work life balance and lead to unwell-being [20, 39].

### Hypotheses Testing:

H<sub>1</sub>: There is a difference in work engagement between IPTA and IPTS academic staff.

H<sub>2</sub>: There is a difference in workaholism between IPTA and IPTS academic staff.

## DISCUSSION

This study discusses the differences of workaholism and work engagement among academics in higher institutions. Both are giving different impact. As expected, workaholism contributed less impact, when academic more workaholic, they feel more (1) anxious and (2) have lower back hurt. The researchers presume this situation because of the academics sit at one position for long time.

Thus, independent sample t-test being conducted to show the differences between two group. As shown at Table 1, there is a sufficient evidence the work engagement between IPTA and IPTS staff academic are different. Furthermore from Table 2 the researchers can conclude that academic staff at IPTA (mean: 63.32) is significantly engaged with their work as compared to academic staff in IPTS (mean: 60.22).

Besides that, there is an insufficient evidence in workaholism between IPTA and IPTS staff academic are different. Thus, from Table 2 the researchers can classified that academic staff in IPTA more workaholics (mean: 55.19) compared to academic staff in IPTS (mean: 53.26).

Table 1: A Summary of Hypotheses Testing

Hypotheses	Findings	Remarks
Hypothesis 1	Supported	Highly sufficient evidence to conclude that work engagement between IPTA and IPTS academic staff are difference.
Hypothesis 2	Insufficient evidence	Insufficient evidence to conclude that workaholism between IPTA and IPTS academic staff are difference.

Table 2: Mean for Work Engagement and Workaholism

	University	Mean
WorkEngagement	IPTA	63.32
	IPTS	60.22
Workaholism	IPTA	55.19
	IPTS	53.26

**Conclusion and Recommendation:** From the discussion above, the study shows that academic staff in IPTA is more 'bursting with energy' to go to work and more workaholic while working. They work with full of energy and the result from questionnaire show academic staff is more inspired their job. However, there is insufficient evidence to conclude that IPTS academic staff is less energy to go to work. Regardless of workaholism, there is insufficient evidence to conclude the IPTS academic staff is enthusiastic about their job.

In conclusion, work engagement also contributed even workaholism is not strong enough to be as an indicator towards employment relations. This current research findings suggest that workaholism and work engagement less contribute to the success of employment relations. Therefore, the researcher advised to do further study on work engagement among IPTS academic staff to discover which factor is contributing to less engaged while working.

## REFERENCES

1. Bonebright, C.A., D.L. Clay and R.D. Ankenmann, 2000. The relationship of workaholism with work-life conflict, life satisfaction and purpose in life,
2. Schaufeli, W.B., T.W. Taris and A.B. Bakker, 2008a. It takes two to tango. Workaholism is working excessively and working compulsively, in Burke, R.J. and Cooper, C.L. (Eds), *The Long Work Hours Culture. Causes, Consequences and Choices*, Emerald, Bingley, pp: 203-26.
3. Snir, R. and I. Harpaz, 2012. Beyond workaholism: Towards a general model of heavy work investment. *Human Resource Management Review*, 22(3): 232-243.
4. Burgess, Z., R.J. Burke and F. Oberklaid, 2006. Workaholism among Australian psychologists: gender differences', *Equal Opportunity International*
5. Russo, J.A. and L.E. Waters, 2006. Workaholic worker type differences in work-family Conflict: the moderating role of supervisor support and flexible work scheduling/ *career Development International*
6. Bakker, A.B., 2009. Building engagement in the workplace. In C. Cooper & R. Burke (Eds.), *The peak performing organization*. London: Routledge.
7. Frederickson, B.L., 2001. The role of positive emotions in positive psychology: The broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions. *American Psychologist, Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 47: 469-477.
8. Schaufeli, W.B. and M. Salanova, 2007. Work engagement: an emerging psychological concept and its implications for organizations, in Gilliland, S.W., Steiner, D.D. and Skarlicki, D.P. (Eds),
9. Schaufeli, W., M. Salanova, V. Gonzalez-Roma and A.B. Bakker, 2002. The measurement of engagement and burn-out: A two sample confirmatory factor analytic approach.
10. Schaufeli, W.B., T.W. Taris and W. Van Rhenen, 2008. Workaholism, Burnout and Work Engagement: Three of a Kind or Three Different Kinds of Employee Well-being?. *Applied Psychology*, 57(2): 173-203.
11. Schaufeli, W.B. and A.B. Bakker, 2008. Job demands, job resources and their relationship with burnout and engagement: A multi-sample study. *Journal of organizational Behavior*, 25(3): 293-315.
12. Bakker, A.B. and E. Demerouti, 2008. Towards a model of work engagement, *Career Development International*, 13: 209-223.
13. Robertson, I. and C.L. Cooper, 2009. Full engagement: the integration of employee engagement and psychological well-being. *Leadership and Organisation Development Journal*, 31(4): 324-36.
14. Schaufeli, W.B. and A.B. Bakker, 2010. The conceptualization and measurement of work engagement. In: A.B. Bakker and M.P. Leiter (eds) *Work engagement: a handbook of essential theory and research*. New York: Psychology Press. pp: 10-24.
15. Diener, E., 2000. Subjective well-being: The science of happiness and a proposal for a national index. *American Psychologist*, 55(1): 34.
16. Helliwell, J.F., 2003. How's life? Combining individual and national variables to explain subjective wellbeing. *Economic Modelling*, 20: 331-60.
17. Grant, A.M., M.K. Christianson and R.H. Price, 2007. Happiness, health, or relationships? Managerial practices and employee well-being tradeoffs. *The Academy of Management Perspectives*, 21(3): 51-63..
18. Russell, J.A. and J.M. Carroll, 1999. On the bipolarity of positive and negative affect. *Psychological Bulletin*, 125(1): 3.
19. Xanthopoulou, D., A.B. Bakker, E. Demerouti and W.B. Schaufeli, 2009. Reciprocal relationships between job resources, personal resources and work engagement. *J. Vocat Behav.*, 74: 235-44.
20. Shimazu, A., W.B. Schaufeli, K. Kubota and N. Kawakami, 2012. Do workaholism and work engagement predict employee well-being and performance in opposite directions?. *Industrial Health*, 50(4): 316-321.

21. Van Beek, I., T.W. Taris and W.B. Schaufeli, 2011. Workaholic and work engaged employees: dead ringers or worlds apart?. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, 16(4): 468.
22. Schaufeli, W.B., M. Salanova, V. González-Romá and A.B. Bakker, 2002. The measurement of engagement and burnout: A two sample confirmatory factor analytic approach. *Journal of Happiness studies*, 3(1): 71-92.
23. Schaufeli, W.B. and W. Van Rhenen, 2006. Over de rol van positieve en negatieve emoties bij het welbevinden van managers: Een studie met de Job-related Affective Well-being Scale (JAWS)[About the role of positive and negative emotions in managers' well-being: A study using the Job-related Affective Well-being Scale (JAWS)]. *Gedrag&Organisatie*, 19(4): 223-244.
24. Cropanzano, R. and T.A. Wright, 2001. When a "happy" worker is really a "productive" worker: A review and further refinement of the happy-productive worker thesis. *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research*, 53(3): 182.
25. Burke, R.J. and L. Fiksenbaum, 2009. Work motivations, work outcomes and health: Passion versus addiction. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 84(2): 257-263.
26. De la Poza, E., M. Del Libano, I. García, L. Jódar and P. Merello, 2014. Predicting workaholism in Spain: a discrete mathematical model. *International Journal of Computer Mathematics*, 91(2): 233-240.
27. Yüksel, H., 2014. The Concept of Workaholism As The Extreme Point in Work Engagement, Its Individual and Organizational Outcomes. *Journal of Alanya Faculty of Business/ Alanya Isletme Fakültesi Dergisi*, 6(2).
28. Macey, W.H. and B. Schneider, 2008. The meaning of employee engagement. *Industrial and organizational Psychology*, 1(1): 3-30.
29. May, D.R., R.L. Gilson and L.M. Harter, 2004. The psychological conditions of meaningfulness, safety and availability and the engagement of the human spirit at work. *Journal of occupational and Organizational Psychology*, 77(1): 11-37.
30. Oates, W.E., 1971. *Confessions of a workaholic: The facts about work addiction*. New York: World Publishing Company.
31. Killinger, B., 1991. *Workaholics: The Respectable Addicts*, Simon & Schuster, New York, NY.
32. Schaefer, A.W. and D. Fassel, 1988. *The addictive organization*. Harper & Row Publishers.
33. Korn, E.R., G.J. Pratt and P.T. Lambrou, 1987. *Hyper-performance: The A.I.M. Strategy for Releasing your Business Potential*, John Wiley, New York, NY.
34. Machlowitz, M., 1980. *Workaholics: Living with Them, Working with Them*, Addison-Wesley, Reading, MA.
35. Sprankle, J.K. and H. Ebel, 1987. *The workaholic syndrome*. Walker.
36. Robinson, S.L., 1996. Trust and Breach of Psychological Contract. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 41: 574-599.
37. Peiperl, M. and B. Jones, 2001. Workaholics and Overworkers Productivity or Pathology?. *Group & Organization Management*, 26(3): 369-393.
38. Kahn, W.A., 1990. Psychological conditions of personal engagement and disengagement at work, *Academy of Management Journal*, 33: 692-724.
39. Balducci, C., M. Cecchin, F. Fraccaroli and W.B. Schaufeli, 2012. Exploring the relationship between workaholism and workplace aggressive behaviour: The role of job-related emotion. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 53(5): 629-634.