Uncovering a Relationship between Leadership Behaviour and Employees' Workaholism: A Systematic Review

Some of the authors proposed that organisational factors play an important role in the context of employees' workaholism. Therefore, the principal purpose of the paper is to systematically review the scientific literature on the relationship between leadership behaviours and employees' workaholism.

Keywords: leadership, antecedents, workaholism, work addiction.

Tam tikrų autorių pastebėjimais, organizaciniai veiksniai yra svarbūs darbuotojų patiriamo darboholizmo kontekste, todėl pagrindinis straipsnio tikslas yra sistematiškai peržiūrėti mokslinę literatūrą apie vadovavimo elgesio ir darbuotojų patiriamo darboholizmo ryšį.

Raktiniai žodžiai: vadovavimas, veiksniai, darboholizmas, priklausomybė nuo darbo.

Introduction

Work is an important element in one's life. It plays a very critical role in the continuity of life, especially on the basis of meeting the psychological and social needs (Clark et al., 2016). On the other end of the spectrum, employees can become completely engulfed in their work. There are employees so attached to their jobs, so gainfully engaged in their tasks, that they appear to be major assets to their organisations (Taylor, Huml, Dixon, 2019). Organisations undoubtedly appreciate and

often benefit when their employees are fully invested in their work (Burke, 2001). Yet, very high expectations for ourselves (and for others) may, in the end, lead to deleterious results for both employees and organisations.

Scholars have characterised these (over)dedicated employees as workaholics (Spence, Robbins, 1992). The term "workaholism" was coined almost fifty years ago (Oates, 1971). Originally, "workaholism" was a take on working too hard in an alcoholic-like manner and was intended to connote all the problems that

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addiction brings (Oates, 1968). Since then, workaholism has been empirically linked to a wide variety of negative outcomes, such as exhaustion (Kubota et al., 2011), psychological strain and distress (Clark et al., 2016), sleeping difficulties (Gillet et al., 2018), cardiovascular disease (Salanova et al., 2016), elevated systolic blood pressure (Balducci, Avanzi, Fraccaroli, 2018), metabolic syndrome (Ten Brummelhuis, Rothbard, Uhrich, 2017) and greater work–life imbalance (Clark et al., 2016). Workaholics exhibit poor quality social relationship outside work and experience reduced job and life satisfaction (Shimazu et al., 2012). Despite the fact that workaholics work extremely hard and for long hours, they do not seem to be productive employees in the long run. Thus, researchers have begun to take notice of the detrimental impacts of workaholism on the bottom line of the organisation (e.g. decreased business growth (Gorgievski, Moriano, Bakker, 2014).

In line with these trends, there has been a dramatic increase in empirical studies examining the antecedents of employees' workaholism. Some of the authors consider workaholism as mainly driven by the personal factors (e.g. personality traits) (Liang, Chu, 2009). However, the origin of workaholism is not only related to individual characteristics; it can also be driven by external factors. Therefore, employee workaholism should be considered in the context of individuals' life, including the environment in which they live and work. In organisations, much stands on leaders' style to lead the human resource. How much importance the employees are going to attach to work often depends on the perception of authoritative persons (such as

managers) (Morkevičiūtė, Endriulaitienė, Jočienė, 2019). A leader can persuade and motivate employees to create better work culture or can even ruin employees' behaviours, develop negativity and frustration and affect employees in a negative way by exercising unnecessary pressures and unhealthy practices (Parveen, 2018). Therefore, when analysing the phenomenon of employees' workaholism, the ways that managers are behaving have to be discussed.

A wide variety of leadership styles (e. g. transformational leadership (Morkevičiūtė, Endriulaitienė, Jočienė, 2019), ethical leadership (Morkevičiūtė, Endriulaitienė, 2017), destructive leadership (Molino, Cortese, Ghislieri, 2019), spiritual leadership (Fry, Matherly, Vitucci, 2006), laissez-faire leadership, abusive leadership (Andreassen et al., 2019), etc.) are important for the factors related to employees' workaholism (Jočienė, 2015; Genevičiūtė-Janonienė, Endriulaitienė, 2010). However, conclusions about the leadership behaviours inducing workaholism are frequently contradictory and testify to a scarcity of solid research findings. For instance, one of the main antecedents of workaholism is strong working control and pressure to be productive (Choi, 2013). Some of the managers may be characterised by the fact that a part of the responsibilities and powers is given to the employees. Such managers allow subordinates to control certain work processes themselves (Engelbrecht, Heine, Mahembe, 2014). In this way, the employees can choose appropriate ways and conditions of meeting the targets. As a result, the risk of workaholism decreases (Choi, 2013). On the other hand, empowering conditions created by a leader

promote the deep interest and joy of the employees. Employees believe that they act of their own free will (Boamah et al., 2018; Deschamps et al., 2016). E. L. Deci et al. (1994) found that it is the possibility of choice that determines the fact that the employees will spend another free time carrying out work tasks. Thus, when leaders give employees discretionary powers to fulfil their working needs, the employees want to devote more time to work and test their capabilities in such way (Ahmad et al., 2014). Another antecedent of workaholism might be the leader's supporting behaviour. Supportive leaders play a crucial role in developing a psychologically safe organisational context. When working in this kind of environment, employees believe that they will be understood and not judged harshly when making mistakes or failing in performing their duties. As a result, the employees do not face any internal pressure and feel safe about their position in the company. In line with this, the risk of workaholism decreases (Ojha, Acharya, Cooper, 2018; Peplińska et al., 2015). On the other hand, some authors propose that employees tend to be deeply immersed in the work when they perceive that their immediate work context is supportive and therefore the execution of their job tasks will not be disturbed by unnecessary distractions (Tourish, 2014).

Conflicting opinions, observations and conclusions about the key behaviours of a leader that might induce employees' workaholism present a convincing case for channelling more effort into analysing the relationship between the two. However, while research interest in workaholism has mushroomed during the last twenty years, the greatest part of literature

remains dispersed between multiple disciplines and is poorly integrated. The qualitative reviews of the literature have already begun to lay the theoretical framework guiding investigations into employees' work-related behaviour (Andreassen, 2014; Andreassen, Pallesen, 2016; Aziz, Moyer, 2018; Clark et al., 2016; Liang, Chu, 2009; Ng, Sorensen, Feldman, 2007). However, one of the main issues is related to the publication bias of these reviews. Only the most popular and widely cited studies were included in the vast majority of the previous reviews. The results of such analyses are repetitive, with a lack of comprehensive information on the precursors of workaholism in the scientific literature. Another important thing is that very low attention in these reviews has been dedicated to specific organisational variables (such as perceived behaviour of a leader) and the influence they put on the negative type of working hard. The question about the role of the different types of leadership behaviours in predicting employees' workaholism remains unanswered.

Therefore, **the object of the paper** is the phenomenon of employees' workaholism.

The aim of the paper is to systematically review the scientific literature on the relationship between leadership behaviours and employees' workaholism.

Research methods. The purpose of the current study was achieved by performing a systematic search of the scientific literature. To begin, computer-based literature searches were conducted. The relevance of the studies was determined by screening the titles, abstracts, and full texts. We concluded our study with the analysis and the comprehensive discussion of the findings obtained.

Materials and methods

Search strategy

Computer-based literature searches were conducted through September 2020. The following databases were searched for relevant studies: ScienceDirect, MEDLINE, SocINDEX with Full Text, Business Source Complete, Academic Search Complete, and Emerald Insight. In our systematic search, we followed the guidelines and criteria for systematic reviews described by the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-analyses (PRISMA) Statement (Moher et al., 2009). The key terms used in the literature search (with their synonyms and closely related words) were the following: “workaholism” and “leadership”. Our search algorithm was [(“Workahol*” OR “work addict*” OR “addict* to work” OR “heavy work investment” OR “work craving” OR “excessive work”) AND (“Leader*” OR “manage*” OR “supervisor*”). The search terms were applied to all databases (modified to meet the requirements of each database due to different field restrictions). Only peer-reviewed full-text articles presenting empirical research were analysed. Studies published in languages other than English have not been included.

Study selection

First of all, the titles of the papers were revised seeking to evaluate their appropriateness for the present review. Then, to establish whether the articles satisfied the criteria set, their abstracts were revised. Finally, full texts of the papers were

evaluated to ascertain to what extent the information contained therein can be useful in achieving the primary aim of the present review. Figure 1 shows a flow-chart of the literature search. The search generated 7919 citations (682 studies on Business Source Complete, 350 studies on Academic Search Complete, 40 studies on MEDLINE, 86 studies on SocINDEX with Full Text, 5500 studies on Emerald Insight, and 1261 studies on ScienceDirect). By screening titles, abstracts and full-texts 7912 studies were excluded. The extraction form was used to ensure standardisation of data collection (see Table 1).

Inclusion and exclusion criteria were selected to provide a comprehensive, unbiased representation of the literature with explicit parameters to maximize reproducibility. Studies that met the following criteria were considered eligible: research was quantitative; the focus was on the role of leadership styles/behaviours in predicting employees’ workaholism. Studies that failed to meet the inclusion criteria were excluded on account of the following reasons: research is qualitative; the purpose is a narrative review, a systematic review or meta-analysis; the purpose is to psychometrically test the scales; studies not investigating the role of leadership styles/behaviours in predicting employees’ workaholism. Studies that examined the relationship between various types and profiles of workaholics and a particular antecedent variable were also excluded, as these workaholic types were derived from different combinations of scores on multiple scales and varied widely across studies. Furthermore, most of the authors queried the use of work enjoyment when defining workaholism (Aziz, Moyer, 2018). Thus, although the aspect of work enjoyment

Fig. 1. Selection strategy of the studies

has been widely used when defining workaholism, empirical evidence started to accumulate on the more negative side of excessive work investment (Schaufeli, Shimazu, Taris, 2009). Thus, we do not analyze those results of the studies that present a relationship between leadership behaviours and work enjoyment. Finally, although from an external point of view workaholic behaviour might just be seen as hard working or overwork, the excessive amount of time and energy dedicated to work is not justified by the need for money or organisational demands, but motivated by something workaholics feel inside, a compulsion towards work

(Di Stefano, Gaudiino, 2018). Consequently, a simple count of working hours is not an adequate strategy to differentiate workaholics from other workers (Clark, Smith, Haynes, 2020). Therefore, we also excluded studies solely using work hours to represent the phenomenon.

Following the idea that workaholics are encouraged to work because of the internal compulsion to work that is mainly driven by non-demographic factors (Clark et al., 2016), we do not anticipate any relationship between workaholism and demographic characteristics further in this study.

Results

Characteristics of included studies

A systematic review included a total of 7 studies. Most of the studies (71%) were conducted in European countries. The remaining studies (29%) were carried out in Australian, Asian and African countries. All the included studies were based on cross-sectional data. The majority of authors (71%) used the Dutch Work Addiction Scale (Schaufeli, Shimazu, Taris, 2009), 14,5% used the Workaholism questionnaire (Kim et al., 2020) and 14,5% used the Workaholism Battery (Spence, Robbins, 1992) for the assessment of workaholism. Most of the studies were conducted in 2019 (43%).

The results of the relationship between leadership behaviours and employees' workaholism

As the results show (Table 1), workaholism is caused by a diverse range of factors (e.g. personal morality of a leader and orientation to subordinates, recognition, intellectual stimulation, high performance expectations provided by a leader, etc.). In the majority of studies, the authors rely on different leadership theories (e.g. supportive, transformational, ethical or destructive leadership) when explaining the development of employees' workaholism. However, because of a complete lack of studies examining the role of a leader in predicting workaholism, the comparison of the results is rather difficult. There was found only one leadership-related variable that was repeatedly measured across

the studies: the sole feature of social support provided by a leader was examined in more than one study. That is to say, social support was a commonly measured factor (in 57% of all studies) in the context of employees' workaholism. No other leadership-related variable was investigated in more than one study.

The majority of studies (86%) discovered at least one significant link between antecedent variable and workaholism. The variable of support provided by a leader, of course, received the greatest empirical substantiation (significant effects were confirmed in three (43%) studies). One study reported no significant links at all.

When assessing trends in the relationships between significant variables, it was found that the majority of leadership behaviours were confirmed as factors decreasing the risk of employees' workaholism. Leaders' support was found to be related to lower levels of employees' workaholism in most of the studies (75%) examining it. However, there is also some conflicting information concerning the effect that the latter variable has on workaholism. Not all the authors that expected support of a leader to be significant in the context of employees' workaholism actually confirmed such a relationship.

Discussion

Workaholism is a widespread phenomenon with negative consequences for both individuals and organisations (Falco et al., 2020). In terms of prevention and treatment, it is important to investigate the antecedents of employees' workaholism. A number of studies have addressed the issue of workaholism from different

Table 1. Studies examining the role of leadership in predicting workaholism

Author(s)	Country	Study design	Instrument used for the assessment of workaholism	Measured antecedent variables	Significant antecedent variables
R. Snir et al. (2006)	Victoria (a state of Australia)	Cross-sectional study	Workaholism Battery (Spence, Robbins, 1992)	Support provided by a leader.	No significant relationships were found.
G. Caesens, F. Stinglhamber, G. Luypaert (2014)	Belgium	Cross-sectional study	Dutch Work Addiction Scale (Schaufeli, Shimazu, Taris, 2009)	Support provided by a leader.	Support provided by a leader (-).
M. Morkevičiūtė, A. Endriulaitienė (2017)	Lithuania	Cross-sectional study	Dutch Work Addiction Scale (Schaufeli, Shimazu, Taris, 2009)	Ethical leadership style (management skills, personal morality and orientation to subordinates).	Perceived ethical leadership style (-).
É. Sandrin et al. (2019)	France	Cross-sectional study	Dutch Work Addiction Scale (Schaufeli, Shimazu, Taris, 2009)	Recognition provided by a leader.	Recognition provided by a leader (-).
G. Mazzetti et al. (2019)	Italy	Cross-sectional study	Dutch Work Addiction Scale (Schaufeli, Shimazu, Taris, 2009)	Support provided by a leader.	Support provided by a leader (-).
M. Morkevičiūtė, A. Endriulaitienė, E. Jočienė (2019)	Lithuania	Cross-sectional study	Dutch Work Addiction Scale (Schaufeli, Shimazu, Taris, 2009)	The dimensions of transformational leadership (articulating a vision, providing an appropriate model, fostering the acceptance of group goals, communicating high performance expectations, providing individualised support, intellectual stimulation).	High performance expectations (+), individualised support (-).
J. H. Kim et al. (2020)	China, Vietnam, South Africa	Cross-sectional study	Workaholism Questionnaire (Kim et al., 2020)	Argumentum ad hominem (a strategy employed to deny others sense of competence (e. g. fallacious arguments to cause others undue job stress, loss of confidence or emotional exhaustion)).	Argumentum ad hominem (+).

Note: + denotes a positive correlation; - denotes a negative correlation.

perspectives and focused on various factors implicated in its origins (Ng, Sorensen, Feldman, 2007; Liang, Chu, 2009). However, certain organisational factors (such as behaviours of a leader) are poorly examined (Parveen, 2018). The results of studies attempting to encompass the relationship between perceived leadership behaviours and employees' workaholism are neither completely clear nor conclusive. Thus, this study aimed at reviewing scientific literature on the relationship between leadership behaviours and employees' workaholism.

Our findings indicated that the authors rely on different leadership theories (e.g. supportive, transformational, ethical or destructive leadership) when explaining employees' workaholism. Leaders' supporting behaviour received the greatest empirical substantiation. The obtained results indicate that the support of a leader is inversely related to being a workaholic. These findings are in line with the results of D. Ojha, C. Acharya, D. Cooper (2018), and A. Peplińska et al. (2015). The propositions of the previous authors that are presented in the framework of the Conservation of Resources Theory (Hobfoll, 1985) could help to better understand how the support of a leader is related negatively to employees' workaholism. A central tenet of the Conservation of Resources Theory is that people with greater resources are less vulnerable to resource loss and more capable of resource gain. In line with this principle, social support might both help employees to cope with stressful events such as juggling multiple roles (Nicklin, McNall, 2013) and prevent them from resource depletion (Somech, Drach-Zahavy, 2013). Therefore, as an energising resource for employees, social support

help them cope with their tendency to work hard (Caesens, Stinglhamber, Luypaert, 2014).

On the other hand, there was also some conflicting information concerning the effect that the supporting behaviour of a leader has on employees' workaholism. Not all the authors that expected support of a leader to be significant in predicting workaholism actually confirmed such a relationship. According to the authors (Caesens, Stinglhamber, Luypaert, 2014), there is a possibility that work-related social support might have a dark side in certain cases. For instance, findings of the previous studies (Beehr, Bowling, Bennett, 2010) showed that social interactions with the manager increase employees' strains when these interactions serve to underline how stressful the situation is. These previous findings can be used to explain the results of the present review: the positive influence of perceived support of a leader on workaholism could have been cancelled under specific circumstances or for specific individuals (e.g. when employees are not in demand of social support). Therefore, further studies are necessary to shed light on the relationship between leaders' supporting behaviour and employees' workaholism.

Of note, this review that attempted to assess whether a relationship exists between leadership and the negative type of working hard was rather ambitious because of a lack of studies examining the role of a leader in predicting workaholism. Moreover, no such leadership behaviour was found whose negative effect on employees' workaholism was confirmed in more than one study. This may result in doubts as to the role of a leader in predicting workaholism.

However, taking support from literature, first, workaholism is thought to be a system addiction. Second, behavioural reinforcement (which is considered to be the main propulsion of the development of workaholism) is closely related to supervisory practices of the leaders (Shimazu et al., 2011). Thus, although the concept of workaholism is mostly understood from an individual level, yet according to the socio-cultural perspective of workaholism, the drivers of workaholism are found in society or community in which people exist (Parveen, 2018). Therefore, when analysing the employees' workaholism, their perception of their managers' leadership style should be discussed.

Limitations

Several limitations of this study should also be mentioned. The primary limitation concerns publication bias. As to all observational studies, it is possible that the validity of the present review might have been influenced by publication bias due to exclusion of grey literature and unpublished studies. Moreover, one criterion used for the selection of articles was the content of the written abstracts. Relevant articles may have been excluded since abstracts and titles have word limitations and fixed structures dictated by journals. Another limitation includes cross-sectional designs of all the studies in our review. It prevents us from making any inference of causality among the variables discussed. We cannot exclude the possibility that workaholic employees might perceive less support from their

managers than non-workaholic employees. Thus, only a theoretical background can support the assertions about the causality of the links between the leadership behaviours and employees' workaholism. Further, the data were mainly based on self-reported measurements, which exposed the studies to the common method variance effect. These factors must be addressed so that appropriate precautions should be included in the interpretation of the results.

Conclusions

Regardless of its limitations, this review contributes to the literature on the role of leadership in predicting employees' workaholism by integrating current divergent opinions and guiding future research. Our findings indicated that the authors rely on different leadership theories when explaining employees' workaholism. The study revealed that the majority of the authors measured the variable of supportive leadership in the context of health damaging work-related behaviour of the employees. Leaders' supporting behaviour received the greatest empirical substantiation. It was found that perceived supporting behaviour is inversely related to being a workaholic. However, not all the authors that expected the support of a manager to be significant in predicting workaholism actually confirmed such a relationship. On the other hand, given the lack of studies investigating the role of a leader in predicting workaholism, our findings should not be considered conclusive. The studies on a theme need to be further developed.

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RYŠIO TARP VADOVAVIMO ELGESIO IR DARBUOTOJŲ PATIRIAMO DARBOHOLIZMO ATSKLEIDIMAS: SISTEMINĖ LITERATŪROS APŽVALGA

S a n t r a u k a

Darboholizmas yra svarbi problema, kelianti fizinį, psichologinių negalavimų grėsmę, įvairių socialinių rūpesčių, ilgainiui sukelianti neigiamų padarinių organizacijai, kurioje dirba darboholizmu pasižymintis asmuo. Daugiausiai mokslinio pagrindimo yra sulaukęs asmenybės savybių ir darboholizmo tarpusavio ryšys. Tačiau darboholizmo kilmė nėra susijusi tik su individualiomis charakteristikomis. Darboholizmo vystymuisi svarbūs ir tam tikri išoriniai veiksniai. Darboholizmas yra toks reiškiny, kurio vystymesi svarbi ir asmenį supanti aplinka. Kiek reikšmės bus skiriama darbui, dažnai priklauso nuo to, kaip asmuo suvokia ir vertina įvairius organizacinius veiksnys. Čia svarbus vaidmuo atitenka organizacijai vadovaujantiems asmenims. Organizacijos vadovas yra pagrindinis asmuo, turintis įtakos kuriant darbo sąlygas, organizacijos kultūrą, klimatą ir valdant įvairius neigiamus reiškinius. Todėl sutinka, kad jokie kiti organizaciniai veiksniai neturi tokio reikšmingo poveikio darbuotojų su darbu susijusiam elgesiui, kaip jam vadovaujantis žmogus. Vis dėlto, nors autorių susidomėjimas subjektyviai suvokiamo vadovo elgesio ir darbuotojų darboholizmo ryšiu pastaraisiais metais augo, tačiau į kai kuriuos šios srities klausimus vis dar neatsakyta. Atsakyti į tam tikrus klausimus galėtų padėti tyrimų išvadų sujungimas, tačiau kol kas bandymų apibendrinti tyrimuose aprašomus darboholizmo vystymuisi svarbius vadovo elgesio ypatumus nerasta. Todėl pagrindinis straipsnio tikslas buvo sistemaiškai peržiūrėti mokslinę literatūrą apie vadovavimo elgesio ir darbuotojų patiriamo darboholizmo ryšį.

Mokslinių straipsnių paieška atlikta šešiose mokslinėse duomenų bazėse internete (Business Source Complete, Academic Search Complete, MEDLINE, SocINDEX with Full Text, Emerald Insight ir ScienceDirect). Mokslinių publikacijų tinkamumas analizei buvo vertinamas trimis etapais - paėiliui peržiūrint jų pavadinimus, santraukas ir visą tekstą. Į sisteminę analizę įtrauktos publikacijos, atitinkančios du pagrindinius kriterijus: pristatomas empirinis kiekybinis tyrimas; straipsnyje vertinama vadovavimo stiliaus / elgesio reikšmė darbuotojų darboholizmo vystymuisi.

Paieškos metu rasti 7919 straipsniai. Pagal nustatytus atrankos kriterijus į sisteminę analizę įtrauktos 7 publikacijos. Nustatyta, jog aiškindami darbuotojų darboholizmo vystymąsi, autoriai remiasi skirtingomis vadovavimo teorijomis (transformacinio, etinio, palaikančio, destrukttyvaus vadovavimo stiliaus). Dažniausiai publikacijose autoriai nagrinėjo subjektyviai suvokiamo palaikančio vadovo elgesio reikšmę darboholizmo vystymuisi. Neigami ryšiai tarp palaikančio vadovo elgesio ir darboholizmo buvo patvirtinti didžiojoje dalyje tyrimų, kuriuose buvo nagrinėti pastarieji kintamieji. Tai reiškia, jog vadovo pavaldiniais demonstruojamas palaikymas yra pagrindinis darbuotojų darboholizmo vystymosi tikimybę mažinantis veiksnys. Atsižvelgiant į gautus rezultatus galima teigti, jog vien tik individualių darbuotojo charakteristikų vertinimas nėra pakankamas, norint išsamiai suprasti darboholizmo vystymąsi. Vis dėlto svarbu atsižvelgti į tai, jog subjektyviai suvokiamo vadovo elgesio vaidmuo darboholizmo kontekste vis dar tyrinėtas gana negausiai. Šį trūkumą reikėtų spręsti planuojant tolesnius tyrimus darboholizmo tema.