Psihologia Resurselor Umane, **22** (2024), 90–101

https://doi.org/10.24837/pru.v22i2.567

RESEARCH ARTICLE

From Workaholism to Work Performance through Burnout and Self-undermining

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Abstract

Workaholism is a widely spread phenomenon that affects the lives and work performance of thousands of employees. Based on the Job Demands-Resources and Conservation of Resources theories, this study aimed to analyze the serial mediation effect of burnout and self-undermining behaviors on the relationship between workaholism and work performance. We collected data from 175 employees who worked in different areas and tested a serial mediation model. Our results suggest that there is no direct relationship between workaholism and performance, but this relation is fully mediated. Burnout and self-undermining mediated this relationship separately as well as serially. These results show that employees need effective ways of dealing with and preventing workaholism before it can lead to burnout or self-undermining and affect their well-being and their performance at work.

Keywords

workaholism, burnout, self-undermining, performance, serial mediators.

1. Introduction

Workaholism poses a serious risk among employees and can lead to a variety of negative consequences. These consequences can be seen in different areas of a person's life. In the work context, workaholics experience lower levels of job satisfaction and higher levels of job stress and engage more frequently in counterproductive work behaviors (Clark et al., 2016). Regarding the family context, workaholism negatively relates to family satisfaction and family functioning. The focus of this research paper is, however, on the individual level. More specifically, the relationship between workaholism, burnout, and self-undermining and how these affect an employee's work performance. According to the literature, workaholism is positively related to burnout and negatively related to physical health, life satisfaction, and mental health (Clark et al., 2016). Many studies have investigated the relationship between workaholism and work performance in recent years. However, there is no consensus on whether this relationship is positive, or

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Note. This research was financed by APIO through „Horia D. Pitariu"'s grant received by Mădălina Giurgi in 2024

negative, or if there is one. This study adopts the negative view of workaholism and operates on the assumption that there is a direct and negative relationship between the two. Moreover, we analyze the negative indirect relationship between these variables, investigating burnout and self-undermining as serial mediators.

Workaholism is a widespread phenomenon among employees since approximately 14% of them engage in excessive and compulsive work behaviors, according to a recent meta-analysis published by Andersen et al. (2023). Workaholism implies feeling compelled to work due to internal pressures, the existence of persistent and frequent thoughts about work when not working, and working beyond what is expected despite the possibility of suffering negative consequences (Clark et al., 2016). Workaholics view work as something that needs to be done rather than a way of obtaining satisfaction. That's why some of the negative consequences a workaholic person can suffer from are a decrease in work satisfaction, high levels of stress, work-family conflict, increased burnout, decreased physical and psychological health, and decreased satisfaction with life (Clark et al., 2016). Despite the growing interest, there is not a consensus in the literature regarding how workaholism should be conceptualized and measured. For the purposes of this study, we will use a topical approach of workaholism; it is defined as a multidimensional construct consisting of: 1) an internal pressure to work (motivational dimension), 2) persistent and uncontrollable thoughts about work (cognitive dimension), 3) feeling negative emotions when not working or when being prevented from working (emotional dimension) and 4) excessive work, that exceeds what is necessary and expected (behavioral dimension) (Clark et al., 2020).

Recently, the Job Demands-Resources theory (JD-R; Bakker & Demerouti, 2017) has been extended to introduce personal factors beyond contextual factors (job resources and demands). Job demands are defined as those aspects of the job that require sustained effort and are associated with different physiological or psychological costs (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). Job resources represent aspects of the job that aid individuals in achieving objectives, reducing job demands and their associated costs, or aspects that lead to personal growth and development (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). Beyond these contextual factors, personal resources and demands have been included in the model. Introducing these factors was necessary because they influence an individual's way of working. Personal demands are defined as `the requirements that individuals set for their own performance and behavior that force them to invest effort in their work and are therefore associated with physical and psychological costs` (Barbier et al., 2013, p. 751). Workaholism could be considered a personal demand according to the JD-R (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017) theory because it implies an internal pressure to work and uncontrollable thoughts about work, which determines employees to work excessively and compulsively (Vîrgă & Sîrboiu, 2012). In addition, Andreassen, Hetland, and Pallesen (2010) presented workaholism as an aspect developed by employees to satisfy their basic needs. For example, because of the fact that, at present, most of the time is spent at work, one of the basic needs of the employee is to feel competent. Workaholism gives them this possibility because the employee considers the work excessive to be what ensures their success. Thus, workaholism appears as personal demands developed by employees to feel comfortable with themselves but also with the work of those who achieve it.

The JD-R theory (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017) can best explain the complex relationships between workaholism, burnout, and performance. According to this theory, employees' work performance can be stimulated through a motivational process, or it can be inhibited through a health-impairment process. The motivational process describes the way in which job resources lead to an increase in motivation, which leads to an increase in work engagement, which in turn leads to an increase in work performance. On the other hand, the health impairment process implies a relationship between job demands and burnout, leading to a decrease in work performance and employee health.

Regarding workaholism and burnout, the relationship between the two constructs is positive, and has been demonstrated by longitudinal studies. These studies indicate a positive association between weekly job demands and weekly burnout in employees who have high levels of chronic burnout (Bakker et al., 2022). Burnout is an occupational syndrome characterized by emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, which appears in the work context, and it includes four symptoms: exhaustion, mental distance, and cognitive and emotional impairment (Schaufeli et al., 2019). The exhaustion and lack of energy affect an individual's ability to regulate their cognitive and emotional processes, and the mental distance serves as a coping mechanism to reduce exhaustion. This mental distance works as an inefficient mechanism that impairs the employees' ability to distance themselves from work in order to reduce exhaustion (Schaufeli & De Witte, 2023).

The relationship between workaholism and work performance is controversial, since there is no consensus between authors. Currently, there are three different views on workaholism: a positive, negative, and an insignificant one. Depending on the view and definition of the concepts that are adopted by authors, the results can differ. According to a recent meta-analysis, the instruments that were utilized to measure the concepts moderate this relationship (Cheng & Gu, 2022). Specifically, working excessively and working compulsively are both not correlated with task performance, but they are positively correlated with contextual performance (Gorgievski et al., 2010). The present study operates with a different definition of workaholism, which takes into consideration different dimensions of workaholism. Also, performance was conceptualized as in-role performance, which entails completing the tasks that the individual has been assigned (Williams & Anderson, 1991).

The association between burnout and self-undermining is controversial because although the two concepts are associated positively (Bakker & Wang, 2019), the JD-R theory indicates that burnout could lead to maladaptive behaviors (like the ones characteristic of self-undermining) while also supporting the idea that self-undermining is the one that contributes to the increase in the level of burnout. This confusion has been clarified by a recent longitudinal study, which indicates that burnout is the one that leads to the maladaptive behaviors that characterize self-undermining (Bakker et al., 2022). Self-undermining represents those behaviors that 'create obstacles that may undermine performance' (Bakker & Costa, 2014, p. 115). These behaviors could be inefficient communication, making mistakes, and instigating conflicts. All these behaviors can create new obstacles that require an individual's attention and energy. Burned-out employees tend to make more mistakes and communicate inefficiently, which generates work conflicts. This premise lies at the base of our argument that burnout and self-undermining could be the key to explaining the relationship between workaholism and work performance.

The relationship between workaholism and self-undermining has not been studied in recent years. However, based on the Conservation of Resources (COR; Hobfoll, 2001) theory, we can describe the loss cycle created by demands, burnout, and self-undermining. High demands lead to burnout, which leads to self-undermining, which in turn creates more job demands. Bakker, Xanthopoulou, and Demerouti (2022) show that job demands are most strongly associated with self-undermining in individuals with a high level of chronic burnout. This loss cycle, which is based on the COR theory (Hobfoll, 2001), is described in multiple studies (Bakker & Costa, 2014; Bakker et al., 2023). Bakker and Costa (2014) concluded that this cycle is strengthened by chronic burnout. Until now, the loss cycle has been studied through the lens of job demands, but we can also include personal demands in it. Therefore, we expect that workaholism, which represents a personal demand, predicts burnout, which in turn predicts self-undermining, which then creates more demands.

Self-undermining is negatively related to work performance, and it has been demonstrated by Bakker and Wang (2019) based on the JD-R theory. Moreso, Roczniewska and Bakker (2021) used a longitudinal design to analyze the relationship

between self-undermining and performance, and the effect self-regulation has on this relationship. The authors collected data from 81 medical nurses at three moments of the day (before work, while at work, and after work) through daily journals. In doing so, they discovered that the ability to self-regulate before work is negatively associated with self-undermining, and it indirectly predicts daily work performance, but only in individuals with a decreased level of burnout. This study further shows the complex relationships between burnout, self-undermining, and performance that need to be studied.

Although many studies have investigated workaholism in recent years, the relationships between workaholism, burnout, self-undermining, and work performance have yet to be included in one model. The goal of the current study is to explain the complex relationships between these concepts in the parsimonious model and understand the mechanism that links workaholism to performance. In the proposed model, this mechanism is represented by the two serial mediators: burnout and self-undermining. This way, we can establish the direct and indirect relationships between the two variables.

The objective of this study is to analyze the relationships between workaholism, burnout, self-undermining, on the one hand, and work performance, on the other hand. Based on the JD-R and COR theories, we conceptualize and test a model that looks at the complex relationships between all the above-mentioned variables. Additionally, the purpose is to explain the serial mediation roles of burnout and self-undermining in the relationship between the two variables, by testing a model that analyzes direct and indirect relationships. This model stipulates that workaholism positively predicts burnout, which positively predicts self-undermining, which in turn negatively predicts performance.

The present study brings several different contributions to the literature. Firstly, we used a new instrument to measure workaholism (Multidimensional Workaholism Scale ; Clark et al., 2020), considering four dimensions. This measure offers a more nuanced understanding of the phenomenon and allows us to analyze the motivational, cognitive, and emotional dimensions on the one hand, and the behavioral dimension, on the other. Secondly, we use a new instrument to measure burnout (Burnout Assessment Tool; Schaufeli et al., 2019). This instrument introduces a new definition of burnout, based on four distinct dimensions: exhaustion, mental distance, emotional, and cognitive impairment. One of the advantages of this instrument is that it assesses the syndrome itself (through a total score) as well as its core components (dimensions). Thirdly, we analyze burnout and self-undermining, in order to establish an indirect relationship between workaholism and work performance. The two variables could be the key to explaining the relationship between workaholism and work performance. Fourth, this study reveals the mediation role of burnout and/or self-undermining between workaholism and performance, separately and also as serial mediators. These relations are new in the literature, and our study adds value to this field.

Based on the JD-R and COR theories and previous research, the following hypotheses have been proposed:

Hypothesis 1. Workaholism is associated negatively with work performance.

Hypothesis 2. Burnout mediates the relationship between workaholism and work performance.

Hypothesis 3. Self-undermining mediates the relationship between workaholism and work performance.

Hypothesis 4. Burnout and self-undermining both mediate the relationship between workaholism and work performance.

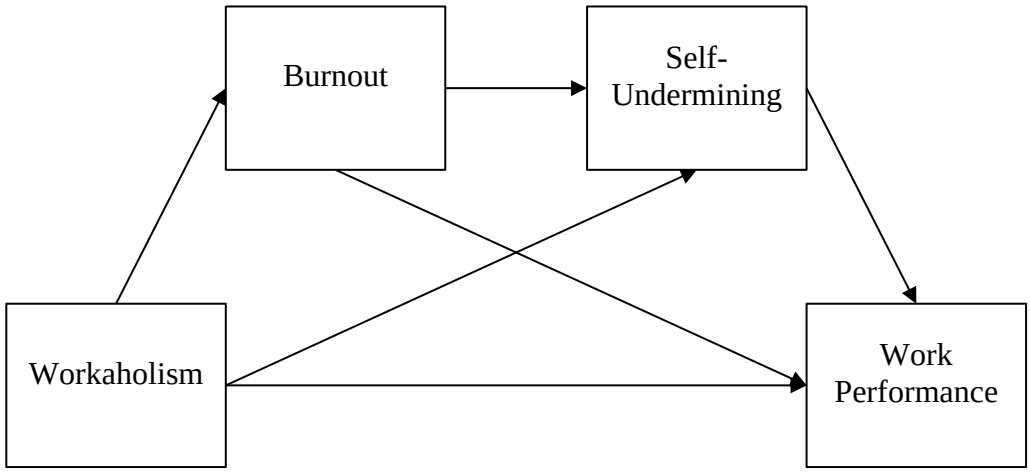

Figure 1. Hypothetical Model

2. Methods

2.1. Design

The present study is correlational. The predictor is workaholism, and the outcome is work performance. The mediating role of burnout and self-undermining was investigated to better understand the relationship between these two variables. A serial mediation model was tested.

2.2. Procedure

Data was collected from employees of different companies who received an online questionnaire and were asked to fill it out. The questionnaire was distributed on social media platforms using the snowball method. All participants were informed about the study's objective and risks and consented to participate. They were also informed that their participation is completely voluntary and they can withdraw at any point. Moreover, they were assured that their anonymity would be protected. To ensure that the participants were reading the items attentively, two control questions were included (for example: „If you are reading this item, select option 2 (disagree).") in two different sections of the questionnaire. To be included in the study, participants needed to be employed, have at least six months of experience on that job, and answer at least one of the two control questions correctly. Gender, age, and job seniority were measured to describe the sample.

2.3. Participants

Data has been collected from 186 participants. After excluding the participants who didn't have at least 6 months of experience on the job and the ones who answered incorrectly on both control questions, the sample consisted of 175 participants. 65.1% of participants were women, while men represented only 34.3% of the participants, and 0.6% identified with a different gender. Looking at the age, the sample consisted of people aged between 20-66 years old (M = 41.86, SD = 13.67). Most participants have a bachelor's degree (50.9%), while 30.3% have completed their studies after finishing university, 13.1% have graduated high school, and 5.7% have completed post-secondary studies. Participants had different experience levels, ranging from 6 months to 43 years (M = 20.5, SD = 13.30). Regarding their current place of employment, people had between 6 months and 42 years of experience (M = 10.78, SD = 10.38). 86.9% of the participants worked full-time, while 73.1% of them worked on-site, 20.6% had a flexible schedule, and 6.3% worked from home.

2.4. Instruments

Workaholism was measured using The Multidimensional Workaholism Scale (MWS; Clark et al., 2020). This scale contains 16 items that are divided into four subscales: motivation, cognition, emotion, and behavior. Participants were instructed to indicate their degree of agreement with every statement on a scale from 1 (*never true*) to 5 (*always true*). Examples of items are: "I work because there is a part inside of me that feels compelled to work." or "When most of my coworkers will take breaks, I keep working.". Cronbach's α for this scale is 0.93, which indicates high fidelity.

Burnout was measured using the short version of the Burnout Assessment Tool (BAT; Schaufeli et al., 2019). This scale contains 12 items that measure four dimensions of burnout: exhaustion, mental distance, cognitive impairment, and emotional impairment. Participants were instructed to indicate their degree of agreement with every statement on a scale from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*always*). A couple of examples include: „At work, I feel mentally exhausted." and „When I'm working, I have trouble concentrating.". The scale presented a high level of fidelity (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.84$).

Self-undermining was measured using the Self-Undermining Scale (SUS; Bakker & Wang, 2019). This scale contains six items that measure dysfunctional behaviors that impede a person's progress at work. Participants were instructed to indicate their degree of agreement with every statement on a scale from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*very often*). Some examples of items are: "I create confusion when I communicate with others at work." and „I admit that I create conflicts.". This scale presented a relatively good level of fidelity (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.68$).

Work performance was measured using the scale developed by Williams and Anderson (1991). The scale contains seven items that measure task performance. Participants were instructed to indicate how well they think they do certain tasks on a scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). A couple of examples include: „I fulfill responsibilities specified in the job description." or "I meet the formal performance requirements of the job." The scale's level of fidelity was slightly above the accepted limit (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.65$). The analysis indicated that there was a problematic item ("I engage in activities that affect my performance assessment directly."). After removing said item, the scale's reliability increased greatly (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.82$).

2.5. Data Analysis

The correlations between the study variables, namely workaholism, burnout, self-undermining, and work performance, were analyzed using Pearson correlation coefficients. Two-tailed correlations were calculated between all the variables of the study. The analysis was performed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) v23 program. The adopted significance level was $p < 0.05$.

To test the serial mediation model, we used the PROCESS macro, which is an extension of SPSS. This meant using a bootstrapping procedure by Hayes (2022), using one predictor (workaholism), two mediators (burnout and self-undermining), and one outcome (work performance). The confidence intervals were calculated at 95% and were based on bias-corrected bootstrap analysis with 5000 repetitions to analyze indirect effects.

3. Results

Table 1 shows the correlation analysis between all variables and descriptive statistics. Workaholism correlated positively with burnout ($r = 0.26$, $p < .05$) and self-undermining ($r = 0.35$, $p < .001$). However, it did not correlate with work performance ($r = -0.03$, $p > .05$). Burnout correlated positively with self-undermining ($r = 0.51$, $p < .001$) and negatively with work performance ($r = -0.30$, $p < .001$). Finally, self-undermining also correlated negatively with work performance ($r = -0.32$, $p < .001$). Overall, medium and strong correlations can be observed among the variables in the model.

Table 1. *Correlations and Descriptive Statistics for the Variables Included in the Study*

Variable	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	***M***	***SD***
1. Workaholism	-				2.41	0.82
2. Burnout	0.26*	-			2.06	0.56
3. Self-undermining	0.35**	0.51**	-		1.83	0.47
4. Work performance	-0.03	-0.30**	-0.32**	-	4.49	0.51

Note: n = 175; $^{*}p < .05$, $^{**}p < .001$

To begin with, the relationship between workaholism and work performance was analyzed. Table 2 shows that our first hypothesis is not supported by the data, specifically workaholism does not negatively correlate with, nor does it predict work performance (b = 0.07, $p > 0.05$). Next, we analyzed burnout as our first mediator for the relationship between workaholism and work performance. Workaholism was significantly related to burnout (b = 0.18, $p < 0.01$), and burnout was, in turn, significantly associated with work performance (b = -0.19, $p < 0.05$). Also, burnout mediated the relationship between workaholism and work performance (b = -0.03, 95% CI [-0.079, -0.003]). The results are in line with our second hypothesis and support this.

Further, we analyzed self-undermining as our second mediator for the aforementioned relationship. Workaholism was significantly related to self-undermining (b = 0.13, $p < 0.001$), and self-undermining was significantly associated with work performance (b = -0.28, $p < 0.01$). Moreover, self-undermining mediated the relationship between the two variables (b = -0.04, 95% CI [-0.084, -0.009]). Thus, the data supports our third hypothesis.

Finally, the total indirect effect was negative. The sequential indirect effect of workaholism on work performance, through burnout and self-undermining, respectively, was significant (b = -0.02, 95% CI [-0.043, -0.004]). Thus, the data support our fourth hypothesis.

Table 2. *Direct and indirect effects of the mediation model (PROCESS)*

Variables	**Coeff.**	**SE**	***p***	**BC Bootstrap 95% CI**	
				LLCI	**ULCI**
The direct effect of:					
MWS->PM	0.07	0.05	0.145	-0.02	0.16
MWS->BAT	0.18	0.05	0.001	0.08	0.28
MWS->SUS	0.13	0.04	0.000	0.06	0.21
BAT->PM	-0.19	0.08	0.016	-0.34	-0.04
BAT->SUS	0.38	0.05	0.000	0.27	0.49
SUS->PM	-0.28	0.09	0.004	-0.46	-0.09
The indirect effect of:					
MWS->BAT->PM	-0.03	0.02		-0.08	-0.00
MWS->SUS->PM	-0.04	0.02		-0.08	-0.01
MWS->BAT->SUS->PM	-0.02	0.01		-0.04	-0.00

Note. n = 175; MWS = workaholism; BAT = burnout; SUS = self-undermining; PM = work performance;

4. Discussion

This study examined the direct and indirect effects of workaholism on work performance. Based on JD-R and COR theories, the indirect effect was investigated by testing the serial mediation effect of burnout and self-undermining on the relationship between workaholism and performance.

Firstly, we found that workaholism does not directly correlate with work performance. This is not surprising, given that the relationship between these two concepts still needs to be clarified. On the one hand, these results do not align with some of the past research that found a negative correlation between the two (Van Beek et al., 2013). On the other hand, some authors have stated this relationship's insignificance (Clark et al., 2016; Balducci et al., 2021). There are two possible alternative explanations for this result. According to Cheng and Gu's meta-analysis (2022), the instrument used to measure these variables moderates the relationship between them. This is especially relevant in this case since we used a new measure of workaholism, which uses a different operationalization of the concept. Another explanation is given by Hockey (1997), who states that work performance might not be affected by stress or high workload because the individual implements compensatory behaviors. For example, even though the individual continues to perform, he feels the consequences of workaholism at a psychological or physical level.

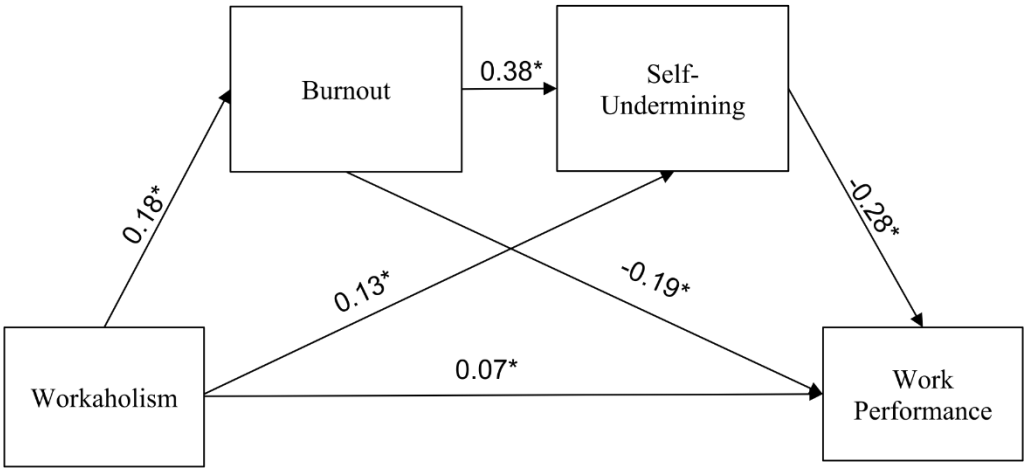

Figure 2. Tested Model

Secondly, burnout mediated the relationship between workaholism and work performance. This means that employees who feel compelled to work because of internal pressures, having persistent and frequent thoughts about work when not working, tend to experience high levels of exhaustion, mental distance, and cognitive and emotional impairment, which lead to a decrease in work performance. So, burnout, as a form of well-being, mediates the relationship between workaholism, as a personal demand, and work performance. During our literature search, we did not find any studies that tested burnout as a mediator in this relationship, and our research added value to the literature and put light on the new role of burnout – as a mediator - in the relationship between workaholism and performance. Moyer and colleagues (2017) revealed that workaholic tendencies are a predictor of burnout. According to the COR theory, stress results when employees experience a loss or threat of a loss. Workaholics invest an excessive amount of time and energy into their work, reduce their participation in recovery activities, and are often left feeling burnt out (Schaufeli et al., 2009). The relationship between burnout and job performance has been demonstrated meta-analytically in time

(Corbeanu et al., 2023; Taris, 2006). According to the authors, there is a relation between all three dimensions of burnout and job performance, but it is moderated by the instrument used to measure burnout. This study uses a different operationalization of burnout, a new approach that includes dimensions such as exhaustion, mental distance, and cognitive and emotional impairment, but the relationship remains significant and negative.

Thirdly, self-undermining mediated the relationship between workaholism and work performance. Hence, employees who tend to excessively work and therefore lack sufficient time and resources to recovery after work also tend to engage in self-undermining behaviors, such as creating confusion and conflicts, which leads to decreased work performance. The mediator role of self-undermining has not been studied before, and although neither has been the negative link between workaholism and self-undermining, our findings are in line with the assumption at the base of the COR theory (Hobfoll, 2001). The theory describes a loss cycle created by high demands. Our results suggest that we could also include personal demands in this cycle. In particular, a personal demand, like workaholism, leads to high levels of burnout, which in turn creates more self-undermining behaviors. Consequently, these behaviors create more demands. The relationship between self-undermining and work performance is negative, as expected, and the results are in line with previous findings (Bakker & Wang, 2019).

Finally, burnout and self-undermining mediated the relationship between workaholism and work performance serially. This serial mediation model has not been studied before. Taking that into consideration, the results are as we expected. Specifically, employees who often continue to work despite potential negative consequences become exhausted and start mentally distancing themselves from their work and can even suffer from cognitive or emotional disorders. Therefore, they start engaging in self-undermining behaviors (such as creating stress and confusion at work), which leads to a decrease in work performance. Based on the JD-R theory, workaholism positively predicted burnout (Bakker et al., 2022), burnout positively predicted self-undermining behaviors (Bakker & Wang, 2019; Bakker et al., 2022), according to the COR theory, which in turn negatively predicted work performance (Bakker & Wang, 2019). This shows that workaholism does, in fact, indirectly predict work performance.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

A study such as this one brings different contributions to the theory and practice of organizational psychologists. The first contribution is to the JD-R theory because this study introduces burnout and self-undermining as simple mediators but also serial mediators in the relationship between workaholism and performance. Thus, it underlines the relationship between a personal demand (workaholism) and a maladaptive strategy (self-undermining), mediated by burnout, confirming the loss cycle according to the COR theory (Hobfoll, 2001). In other words, working excessively and compulsively leads to experiencing symptoms of burnout, which in turn leads to engaging in self-undermining behaviors. Our second contribution to the JD-R theory is the analysis of the relationship between self-undermining and work performance. Self-undermining represents behaviors that may undermine performance, and as it turns out, there is a negative relationship between the two. Specifically, employees who engage in self-undermining behaviors tend to make mistakes, create conflicts at work, and not communicate efficiently. This affects their ability to finish their tasks and to work with others, which in turn leads to a decrease in work performance.

The practical contribution this study brings is in the field of recruitment and selection. Based on the relationships between the variables in the model, measuring workaholism is essential in selection. This can facilitate the identification of those individuals whose behaviors could be damaging to their well-being and their work performance. This underlines the importance of measuring workaholic tendencies in the selection process. In cases where high scores of workaholism can be observed, the candidates

can be eliminated from the selection process. This leads us to our second contribution, which is based on the fact that we used a new workaholism measure developed by Clark and collegues (2020). This instrument would be useful in a selection context, because it uses a multidimensional model that offers a more nuanced approach to workaholism, measuring the motivational, cognitive, emotional, and behavioral components of the construct. The third practical contribution relates to improving employees' well-being and performance. After identifying the relationships between workaholism, burnout, maladaptive behaviors, and performance, we can focus our attention on finding ways to combat the negative effects. This way, companies can collaborate with experts in order to develop workshops with psycho-educational content that focus on recognizing the signs and symptoms of workaholism, burnout, and self-undermining. Once employees learn to recognise the problem, they can focus on solving it. Van Gordon and his colleagues (2017) developed an intervention for workaholics based on awareness, and they observed an improvement in symptomatology, work satisfaction, and work engagement. In addition, they found that the individuals started investing less time in their work without their performance decreasing. Regarding burnout, a meta-analysis looked at the effect four different types of interventions had on a general burnout score, and the three dimensions of the construct – exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment (Maricuțoiu et al., 2014). The results indicated that the interventions had a statistically significant and small effect on the general burnout score and the exhaustion dimension. Moreover, three of the four types of intervention seemed to have a significant effect on exhaustion. Interventions based on relaxation techniques were the most effective, followed by interventions aimed at developing work-related skills and CBT-based interventions (Maricuțoiu et al., 2014). Employers need to identify the people at risk for burnout, and then provide them with resources to help decrease their level of stress. Roczniewska and Bakker (2021) suggest that self-undermining behaviors are a sign to look for when trying to identify individuals at risk. The authors found that the capacity to self-regulate before work is negatively related to self-undermining behaviors and that chronic burnout moderates this relationship. This means that self-regulation strategies might be the key to dealing with self-undermining behaviors at work.

Limits and Suggestions for Future Research

The results of this study should be analyzed while considering several limitations. Most importantly, we cannot draw any causal conclusions in this research because the correlational design does not allow us to make any inferences about which behavior precedes the other. Longitudinal studies need to be conducted in order to shed some more light on the complexity of the relationship between workaholism and performance via burnout and self-undermining. Additionally, since there is no consensus between authors regarding the direct relationship, further research should focus on identifying other potential mediators, as well as establishing the order in which the two appear, in order to clear up some of the confusion.

Another limitation of this study is represented by the fact that the data is self-reported. It is essential for some data to be collected directly from the participants because we are interested in how they perceive themselves. For example, it is helpful to use self-report questionnaires when we're talking about workaholism and burnout. However, when it comes to self-undermining behaviors and work performance, another individual's point of view could prove to be relevant. An individual's colleagues can tell us more about certain self-undermining behaviors that they engage in. Moreover, colleagues or supervisors can offer us more information about an individual's work performance. Future studies could incorporate some more objective measures of the aforementioned variables.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the data supports the model that we analyzed. Specifically, the relationship between workaholism and work performance is serially mediated by burnout and self-undermining. This means that high levels of workaholism predict high levels of burnout, which predicts a high frequency of self-undermining behaviors, which in turn predicts a decrease in in-role work performance. These results suggest that we need effective ways of dealing with the consequences of workaholism before it can negatively affect the individual's physical and psychological health and performance at work.

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