



**Workaholism:
“The Dark Side of Transformational Leadership”.**

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Philosophy

under the supervision of

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CERTIFICATE OF ORIGINAL AUTHORSHIP

I certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirement for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

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ABSTRACT

It has long been recognised that there is a dark side to charismatic/transformational leadership. Such dark-side characteristics are most commonly attributed to undesirable personal motives and behaviours (e.g., narcissism, unethical leadership) of the leader. This research adopts a different perspective by examining if charismatic/transformational leadership might precipitate workaholism among followers, even in the presence of desirable personal characteristics/motives of the leader.

Although many antecedents of workaholism have been examined, including organisational policies and practice, the effects of transformational leadership and its psychological mechanisms (i.e., value congruence, identification) on workaholism among followers has not been considered in previous studies. Drawing on an extensive literature review, particularly the work of Shamir, House and Arthur (1993) in an effort to address identified gaps, a theoretical model was developed. The model proposes that transformational leadership increases value congruence with the leader and the organisation, which then increases identification with the leader and the organisation, which in turn increases work centrality and ultimately leads to workaholism. In addition to the sequential mediation proposed in the model, work centrality was proposed to be another psychological mechanism through which transformational leadership could motivate followers and lead to workaholism.

The research addresses important gaps in the literature on transformational leadership and workaholism by examining whether: (1) transformational leadership is positively related to workaholism among followers; (2) psychological mechanisms (i.e., value congruence, identification) through which transformational leadership operates can result in workaholism among followers; (3) value congruence positively mediates the relationship between transformational leadership and two types of identification (i.e., personal and social); and (4) work centrality positively mediates the relationship between transformational leadership and workaholism.

The research adopted a positivism-based, cross-sectional, quantitative methodology. Data was collected via an online questionnaire. The sample comprised 576 Australian white-collar professionals, a population regarded as representing the 'typical' workaholic.

Sampling adequacy, convergent validity and dimensionality of the items, scale reliability,

and consistency all met minimum requirements, and the measurement model was first tested with Exploratory Factor Analysis using IBM SPSS software. Additionally, the measurement model including internal reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity was tested again by using Partial Least Squared analysis via PLS Smart3 to ensure the data were valid and reliable before testing the structural model. A five-step procedure was then adopted to assess the structural model (i.e., hypotheses testing) as suggested by Hair et al. (2017) using PLS Smart3. Preceding this analysis, several procedural remedies were considered when designing the questionnaire and invitation letter, and statistical remedies were used after the data were collected to mitigate common method bias. All stages of the study were approved by UTS Human Research Ethics Committee (approval number ETH 18-2188).

The results supported the hypothesis that transformational leadership can affect workaholism among followers but only through its psychological mechanism. Specifically, the model extends previous studies, particularly Shamir et al.'s (1993) work, by revealing sequential mediating relationships between transformational leadership and two types of identification, namely personal identification (followers' personal identification with the leader) and social identification (followers' social identification with the organisation), are strongly mediated by value congruence (i.e., follower–leader and follower–organisation value congruence). The findings revealed that the psychological mechanism of value congruence (i.e., followers' value congruence with their leader and organisation) was a key driver through which transformational leadership could reinforce followers identifying with the leader as well as with the organisation.

This study's results draw attention to the importance of the psychological process of value congruence in shaping how followers form identification with their leaders and organisations and, in the process, establishing counter-productive attitudes and behaviours associated with workaholism. Very high levels of value congruence with leaders or organisations — while often perceived favourably in organisational settings — may be early warning signs that followers are susceptible to the potentially negative consequence, workaholism. The study's findings raise questions about organisations' (and leaders') moral responsibilities to ensure that their efforts to create organisational cultures and/or strong associations between their (transformational) leaders and others in the organisation are managed in ways that might prevent or mitigate some of the less desirable outcomes of transformational/charismatic leadership.

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