Why Leader Workaholism is Linked to Subordinate Work Withdrawal? A Moral Licensing Perspective

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Introduction

Significance Workaholism has become more prevalent as it becomes easier for employees to connect to after-hours work-related ICT demands with technologies such as smartphones and laptops (Ng, Sorensen, & Feldman, 2007). Managers are more susceptible to workaholism because of their job and role prescriptions are often unclear (Feldman, 2002). Subordinates may assume that they must emulate the pace of their leader to be evaluated as productive and obtain rewards (Clark, Stevens, Michel, & Zimmerman, 2016). We argue that employees with a leader who shows high workaholism are more likely to engage in work withdrawal. Work withdrawal is harmful to organizations. The visible benefits of boosting productivity by nudging employees to work long hours at price of personal life may not be desirable for organizations.

Research Goals Analyze the relationship between after-hours work-related ICT demanded by a leader who exhibits workaholism and the level of work withdrawal shown by effected subordinates.

Hypothesis

Family identity salience moderates the serial indirect relationship between leader workaholism and subordinates' work withdrawal through subordinate's after-hours ICT demands and psychological entitlement, such that the serial indirect effect is strengthened when the subordinates' family identity salience is high.

Results

Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Leader workaholism	3.39	.93									
2. After-hours work-related ICT demands	2.15	1.08	.25***								
3. Psychological entitlement	2.80	.77	.07*	.16***							
4. Work withdrawal	1.95	.62	.00	.25***	.36***						
5. Family identity salience	4.21	.98	.03	-.08	-.23***						
6. Subordinate's workaholism	3.18	.94	.34***	.33***	.17***	.05	.07				
7. Negative affect	1.72	.86	-.07	.10***	.08**	.47***	-.26***	.17***			
8. Age	39.57	11.59	-.04	-.17***	-.13***	-.29***	.13***	.00	-.21***		
9. Gender	1.57	.55	-.07	.00	-.07	-.01	.08**	.03	.12**	.08	
10. Tenure	9.01	8.97	.09	.15**	-.01	-.02	.12**	.14**	-.07	.32***	.04

*Notes:* Sample size varies between 530 and 775 due to missing values. *p<.05. **p<.01. ***p<.001

Path Analysis Results
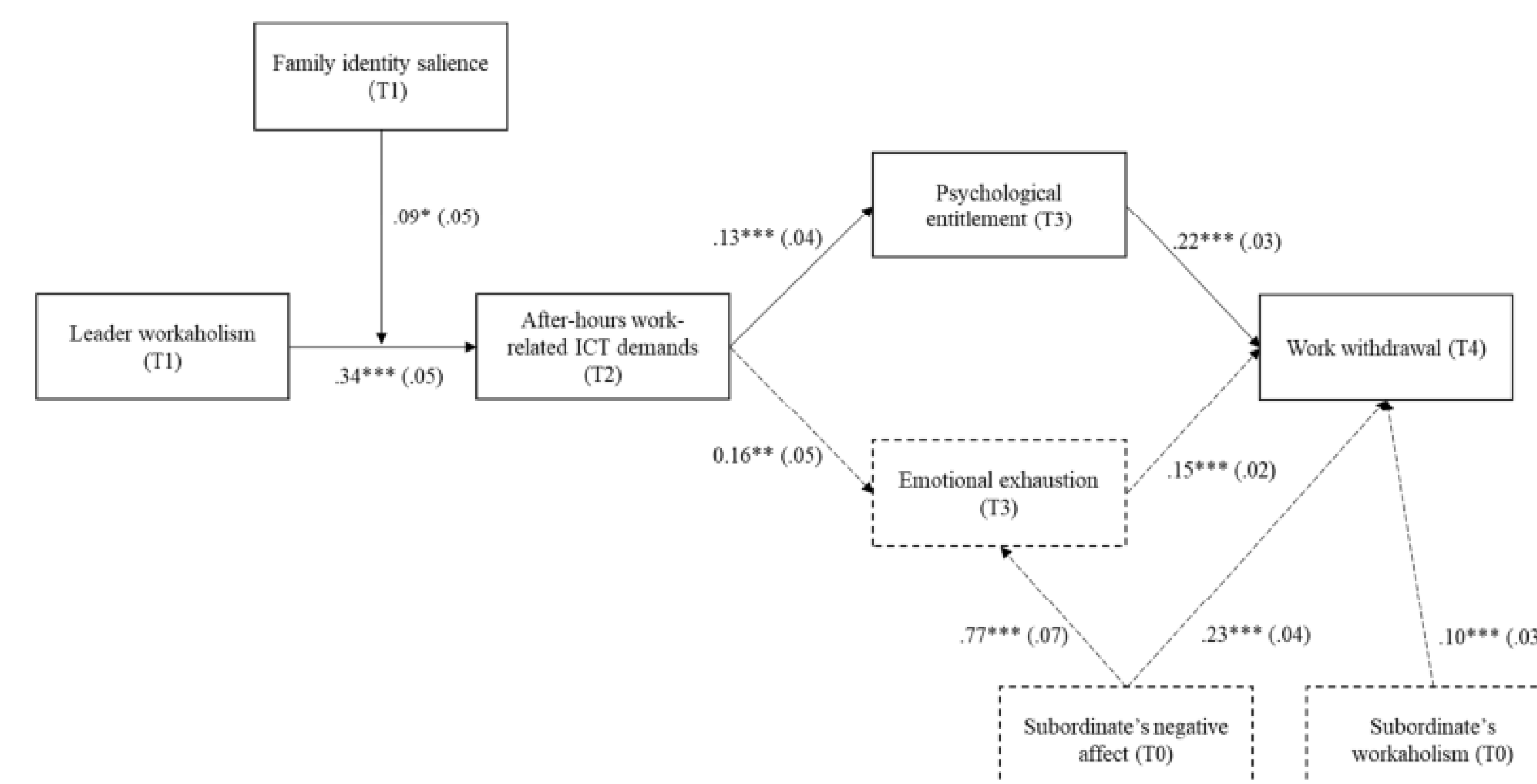
Notes: Unstandardized path estimates are reported in the figure (standard errors in parentheses). Sample size varies between 530 and 775 due to missing values. The dashed lines represent eh alternative mediator and control variables. Leader workaholism and family identity salience were grand mean centered.

Interaction Between Leader Workaholism and Subordinate's Family Identity Salience on After-Hours ICT Demands
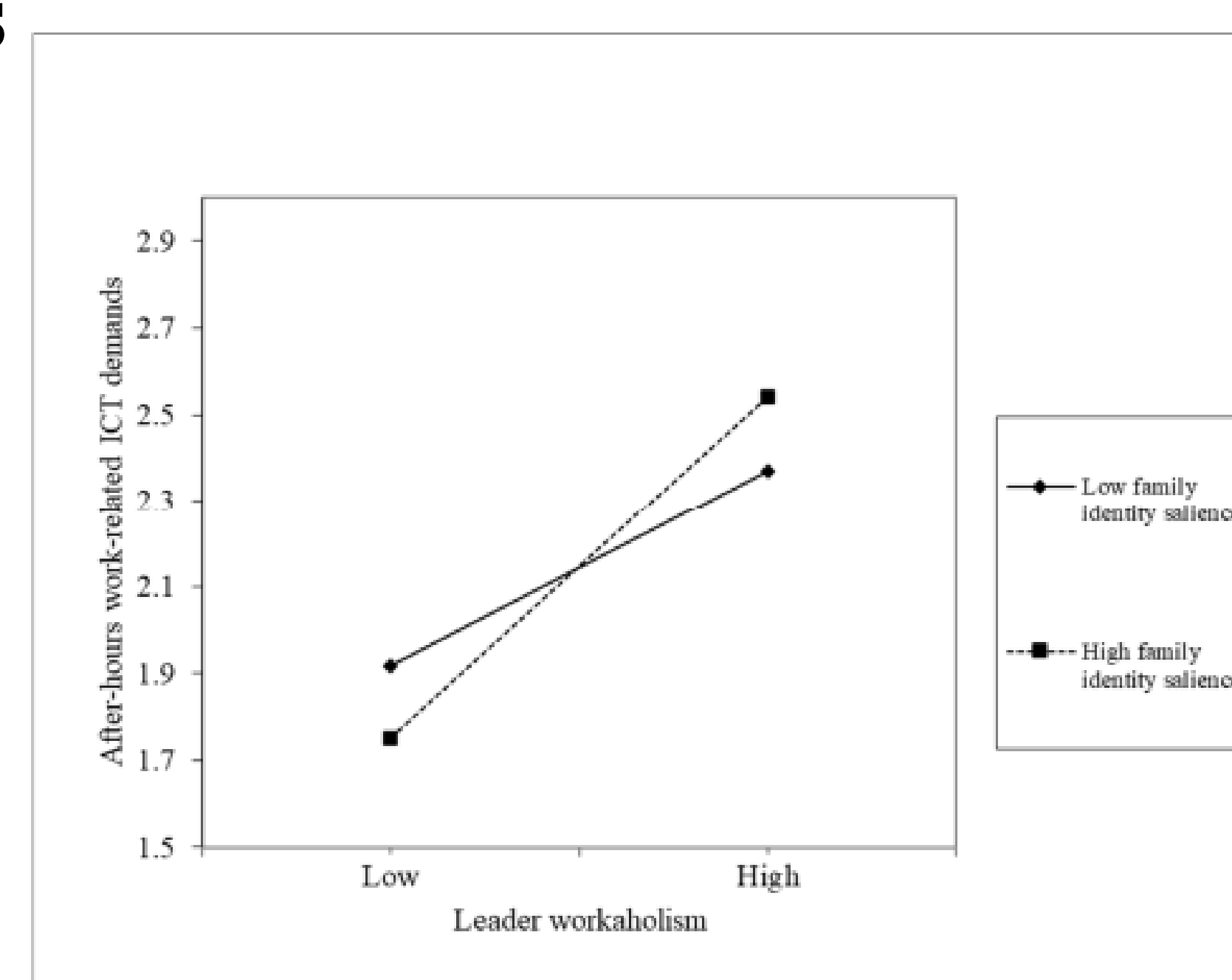
Discussion

Leaders of an organization often think that workaholism is a positive attribute. Contrary to potential short-term gains, the long-term affects on performance are negative. Our research not only replicates previous studies' findings but extends it by demonstrating that leader workaholism causes emotional depletion and work withdrawal. Subordinate's family identity salience was identified as an important dispositional moderator that moderates the relationship between leader workaholism and after-hours ICT demands. Our research has practical implications in today's organizations. The amount of managers and subordinates that are constantly connected is growing (Maurer, 2020). Understanding that this after-hours ICT demand has both an emotional toll and negative performance outcome is necessary by organizations.

Conclusion

We found evidence that subordinate's after-hours ICT demands and psychological entitlements mediate the relationship between leader workaholism and subordinate's workaholism. We also found that subordinate's after-hours ICT demands and emotional exhaustion mediates the relationship between leader workaholism and subordinate's work withdrawal.

References

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