

A Study on the Double-Edged Sword Mechanism of Workaholic Leadership on Team Performance

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Abstract

As industry competitive pressure intensifies, workaholic leadership has become increasingly prevalent in the workplace. However, the effectiveness of workaholic leadership in organizations remains controversial in both practice and academia. Given this, this study, based on social information processing theory, analyzes the double-edged sword mechanism through which workaholic leadership influences team performance. Through a multi-timepoint, multi-source questionnaire survey conducted at a property management service company, the results indicate that: on the one hand, workaholic leadership enhances team work engagement, thereby promoting team performance; on the other hand, workaholic leadership also triggers negative team emotions, undermining team performance. Team task significance can effectively mitigate the negative effects of workaholic leadership on team performance while enhancing its positive effects. These findings contribute to a dialectical understanding of workaholic leadership effectiveness and provide valuable insights for organizations in developing management talent.

Full Text

The Double-edged Sword Effects of Leader Workaholism on Team Performance

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Abstract

As industry competition intensifies, workaholic leaders have become increas-

ingly prevalent in the workplace. However, the effectiveness of workaholic leaders remains controversial in both practice and academia. Addressing this gap, the present study draws on social information processing theory to examine the double-edged sword mechanisms through which workaholic leadership influences team performance. Using multi-timepoint, multi-source survey data from a property management services company, the findings reveal that workaholic leadership enhances team job involvement, thereby promoting team performance, while simultaneously triggering team negative affect that damages performance. Team task significance effectively mitigates the negative effects of workaholic leadership while strengthening its positive effects. These findings contribute to a dialectical understanding of workaholic leadership effectiveness and provide valuable insights for cultivating management talent in organizations.

Keywords: workaholic leadership, team performance, team job involvement, team negative affect, team task significance

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1. Introduction

In today's workplace, fast-paced work styles and high-intensity tasks have made "workaholic leaders" a common phenomenon. Many leaders not only work overtime on weekdays but also continue processing substantial workloads during weekends, sacrificing family life and social activities. Alongside heated debates about the "996" work schedule (9 a.m. to 9 p.m., six days a week), the effectiveness of workaholic leadership has attracted widespread attention from both practitioners and scholars. In practice, two opposing views exist regarding workaholic leadership effectiveness. One perspective argues that workaholic leaders who work overtime with dedication serve as exemplary role models who can guide teams toward progress (Tao, 2014). The opposing view contends that workaholic leaders increase team burden and create management problems (Jiao, 2019). Similarly, academic research has not reached consensus on workaholic leadership effectiveness. Some scholars have found positive effects on subordinate performance (She et al., 2020) and organizational performance (Li et al., 2018), while others have reported negative impacts on entrepreneurial performance (Gorgievski et al., 2014). Given these practical controversies and inconsistent theoretical findings, researchers must move beyond unidimensional perspectives (positive or negative) to examine workaholic leadership effectiveness comprehensively and dialectically, exploring its potential double-edged effects.

Building on existing literature, this study focuses on analyzing the double-edged effects of workaholic leadership on team performance. Team performance is emphasized because a leader's primary responsibility involves coordinating work resources and guiding teams toward organizational goals; thus, a leader's ability to help teams achieve excellent performance represents a crucial standard for measuring leadership effectiveness (Hiller et al., 2011). As an increasing

number of organizations adopt team-based work models, examining the impact of workaholic leadership on team performance becomes essential. According to social information processing theory (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978; Zalesny & Ford, 1990), leaders serve as important sources of social information in team work contexts, transmitting information and perspectives that trigger cognitive and emotional reactions, subsequently shaping team attitudes and behaviors (Peng et al., 2018; Yang et al., 2019). Accordingly, this study seeks to reveal the double-edged effects of workaholic leadership on team performance from both cognitive and emotional dimensions. On the cognitive side, workaholic leaders transmit behavioral information about working hard, prompting teams to similarly focus on work and improve performance. Therefore, this study selects team job involvement to represent the positive effects of workaholic leadership. On the emotional side, workaholic leaders' tireless overwork may also make teams feel tense and anxious, damaging performance. Thus, this study selects team negative affect to represent the negative effects of workaholic leadership.

Given these dual effects, this study also addresses how to enhance the positive influence of workaholic leadership while mitigating its negative impacts. By revealing the boundary conditions of workaholic leadership's double-edged effects, organizations can implement effective interventions in management practice to help workaholic leaders maximize strengths and avoid weaknesses. Social information processing theory posits that individual and team information processing is influenced not only directly by social information sources but also by work or task context characteristics (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978). Environmental features affect how individuals and teams interpret information transmitted by leaders, influencing their behavioral responses. Since the information transmitted by workaholic leaders is closely related to work, this study introduces a context variable closely related to work characteristics—team task significance—to examine its moderating role within the framework of social information processing theory.

Specifically, this study argues that when team task significance is high, teams recognize the overall meaning and value of their work and interpret behavioral information transmitted by workaholic leaders more positively, thereby strengthening the positive effects of workaholic leadership. Conversely, when team task significance is low, teams interpret workaholic leadership more negatively, amplifying its negative effects.

In summary, based on social information processing theory, this study focuses on the double-edged effects of workaholic leadership on team performance, incorporating both cognitive and emotional team responses to workaholic leadership into the analytical framework. It examines the mediating roles of team job involvement and team negative affect, as well as the moderating role of team task significance. Through these investigations, this study aims to clarify the effectiveness of workaholic leadership, reveal the underlying mechanisms and boundary conditions of its double-edged effects, advance research in this domain, and provide insights for identifying appropriate leadership management

approaches in teams.

1.1 Workaholic Leadership

Workaholism refers to a compulsive tendency to work excessively hard (Schaufeli et al., 2009). Workaholic individuals typically exhibit three main characteristics. First, they overinvest in work, devoting far more time and energy than organizational requirements demand. Second, they are driven by internal compulsions rather than external stimuli (such as promotions or bonuses). Third, they constantly think about work-related issues and feel guilty and uneasy during non-work time. Previous research has labeled leaders with these three “workaholic” characteristics as “workaholic leaders” (Li et al., 2018; Clark et al., 2016; Pan, 2018). Therefore, this study uniformly uses “workaholic leadership” to refer to leaders with workaholic characteristics.

Currently, academic research remains divided on the effectiveness of workaholic leadership. Friedman and Lobel (2003) theoretically argued that workaholic leaders can serve as role models for employees, motivating them to complete work more effectively. She et al. (2020) found that workaholic leaders can enhance leadership identification among subordinates with high work centrality, promoting their performance. Pan (2018) discovered that when subordinates experience work-family conflict, workaholic leaders can provide necessary support, prompting subordinates to reciprocate through increased organizational citizenship behavior and reduced withdrawal behavior. Li et al. (2018) found that workaholic CEOs can enhance top management team collective engagement, thereby improving organizational performance. Despite these positive findings, other research has highlighted negative effects. Clark et al. (2016) constructed a crossover transmission theoretical model, arguing that workaholic leaders reduce their own well-being and subsequently transmit this through emotional, cognitive, and behavioral pathways to subordinates, decreasing subordinate well-being. Li and She (2020) proposed based on conservation of resources theory that workaholic leaders inhibit subordinates’ informal learning by inducing work overload. Gorgievski et al. (2014) found that workaholic CEOs lead to lower entrepreneurial performance. This review reveals that existing research has mostly examined either the positive or negative effects of workaholic leadership from a single perspective, ignoring the possibility that workaholic leadership may represent a “double-edged sword” with both positive and negative influences. Moreover, previous workaholic leadership research has primarily focused on individual and organizational levels, with few studies examining its effects on team-level outcomes. Therefore, researchers urgently need to comprehensively and systematically analyze the effects of workaholic leadership and conduct team-level research to deepen understanding of its effectiveness.

1.2 Social Information Processing Theory

To theoretically explain the double-edged effects of workaholic leadership on team performance and their underlying mechanisms, this study introduces so-

cial information processing theory as its theoretical foundation. Social information processing theory posits that people's social environments are filled with abundant social information; for example, in workplaces, leaders, colleagues, customers, and work environments all intentionally or unintentionally transmit social information cues (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978). People process and interpret this social information to form perceptions of their surroundings, thereby shaping their attitudes and behaviors (Zalesny & Ford, 1990). Due to the abundance of social information, people do not parse all information individually but consciously select noteworthy and credible social information sources (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978). Because leaders hold high social status and influence within organizations, subordinates and teams typically view leaders as important information sources, using information transmitted by leaders to understand their expectations and work styles, and adjusting their own behaviors and attitudes accordingly (Xu & Zhu, 2017; Yan et al., 2020; Peng et al., 2018; Yang et al., 2019).

Although most studies have used social information processing theory to analyze the mechanisms through which leader traits and behaviors affect subordinates from a cognitive perspective—such as team psychological safety (Peng et al., 2018) and justice perceptions (Koopman et al., 2019)—scholars have noted that subordinates also experience emotional reactions when interpreting information from leaders, which subsequently influences their behavior, such as moral emotions (Zhang et al., 2018) and relational energy (Wang et al., 2018). Therefore, both cognition and emotion serve as important mechanisms linking leaders to their effects. Furthermore, recent empirical research indicates that social information processing theory can analyze not only how social information influences individual attitudes and behaviors but also explain team-level phenomena and outcomes. This is because teams, as collectives composed of members, process and interpret social information from the external environment. Since team members often face similar external situations, their social information sources are homogeneous. Simultaneously, within teams, members engage in frequent interaction and communication, exchanging perspectives to form relatively consistent understandings of social information. Thus, like individuals, teams process and interpret social information, generating cognitive and emotional changes that influence team-level outcomes (Peng et al., 2018; Yang et al., 2019). In summary, based on social information processing theory, this study attempts to reveal the double-edged effects of workaholic leadership on team performance from both team cognitive and emotional dimensions—the positive path of stimulating team job involvement and the negative path of inducing team negative affect.

1.3 The Mediating Role of Team Job Involvement

This study proposes that workaholic leadership enhances team job involvement, which subsequently positively influences team performance. Team job involvement refers to the degree to which a team focuses on its current work, repre-

senting a shared team cognitive state (Bunderson, 2003). Bunderson (2003) argued that team job involvement emerges primarily because team members can communicate perspectives and share experiences, forming relatively consistent cognitive states through close interpersonal interaction within the team. This study suggests that workaholic leadership positively influences team job involvement in two ways. First, as an important information source, workaholic leaders transmit behavioral information about working hard through role modeling. Workaholic leaders frequently work overtime and undertake workloads far exceeding organizational requirements (Li et al., 2018; Clark et al., 2016). Teams interpret these behavioral cues as expectations that they should also work diligently, thereby increasing their own work dedication and investment. Second, workaholic leaders distance themselves from leisure and recreational activities, always prioritizing work (Friedman & Lobel, 2003). These behavioral patterns signal teams to focus attention on work tasks, thereby enhancing team concentration on work.

When team job involvement is high, teams are more likely to achieve excellent performance. On one hand, high team job involvement means teams maintain intense focus on work (Rotenberry & Moberg, 2007). Under such conditions, teams are more likely to identify solutions to work problems and overcome difficulties and challenges to achieve established goals. On the other hand, when team job involvement is high, team members actively participate in work-related activities, fostering a positive work atmosphere within the team that strengthens internal cooperation and facilitates efficient task completion (Rabinowitz & Hall, 1977). Emery and Barker (2007) found that teams with high job involvement achieve higher output and profits. In summary, this study proposes:

Hypothesis 1: Team job involvement mediates the relationship between workaholic leadership and team performance.

1.4 The Mediating Role of Team Negative Affect

Beyond the positive path represented by team job involvement, workaholic leadership may also trigger team negative affect that hinders performance goal achievement. Team negative affect refers to an unpleasant, negative shared emotional state within a team (Tanghe et al., 2010). Tanghe et al. (2010) argued that when team members experience emotional reactions to external stimuli, they evaluate and interpret each other's emotions, causing emotional contagion within the team that ultimately converges toward a consistent emotional state. This study suggests that workaholic leadership influences team negative affect in two ways. First, workaholic leaders are always busy, even during holidays (Li & She, 2020). The social information conveyed by these behaviors leads teams to believe they must adopt similar work patterns to accommodate the leader. Consequently, teams worry about being unable to sustain such a fast-paced, high-load work style, generating anxiety and other negative emotions. Second, due to their excessive focus on work, workaholic leaders typically maintain strict standards while providing little interpersonal care (Clark et al., 2016). This be-

behavioral pattern leads teams to perceive leaders as caring only about results without considering team members' psychological feelings, triggering feelings of depression and dissatisfaction.

Furthermore, this study argues that team negative affect adversely impacts team performance. First, teams experiencing negative affect struggle to respond to environments and stimuli quickly and concentratedly, reducing their efficiency in processing task information and negatively affecting work progress (Paulsen et al., 2016). Second, team negative affect forces teams to expend additional time and energy regulating their emotional states (Greer & Jehn, 2007), which reduces their motivation to actively engage in work and hinders effective task completion. Cole et al. (2008), using automotive parts production teams as a sample, found that team negative affect was significantly negatively correlated with team performance. Similarly, Chi and Huang (2014), analyzing R&D team samples, found that team negative affect negatively predicted team performance. In summary, this study proposes:

Hypothesis 2: Team negative affect mediates the relationship between workaholic leadership and team performance.

1.5 The Moderating Role of Team Task Significance

Social information processing theory posits that group interpretation of social information is influenced not only directly by information sources (such as leaders) but also by situational contexts (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978). Social contexts can highlight, set off, or mask social information, affecting how groups understand and judge information cues (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978). This study argues that team task significance influences teams' sense of responsibility and importance toward work, thereby altering how they understand and view workaholic leadership behaviors. Team task significance refers to the degree to which a team's current work is important to the organization and others (Campion et al., 1996; Hackman & Oldham, 1975). Campion et al. (1996) noted that because team members typically face similar work tasks, their attitudes and perspectives toward work influence each other and converge to form a shared evaluation of team task significance.

Specifically, this study proposes that team task significance strengthens the positive effect of workaholic leadership on team job involvement while mitigating the negative affect it induces. When team task significance is high, teams believe their current work has important impacts on others and requires serious treatment (Allan et al., 2018; Grant, 2008; Parker, 2014). Against this backdrop, workaholic leaders' tireless work investment is viewed by teams as a concrete manifestation of dedication and professionalism, making teams more inclined to emulate the leader and increase job involvement. Simultaneously, because teams perceive workaholic leaders' intense work investment as creating value and contributing to the organization and team, they are more willing to accept the leader's work style without generating excessive anxiety, aversion, or other

negative emotions.

Conversely, when team task significance is low, teams perceive their work's meaning and created value as minimal, requiring only procedural task completion (Allan et al., 2018; Grant, 2008; Parker, 2014). From these teams' perspective, workaholic leaders' excessive work investment is futile because the work itself does not have critical impacts on others and the organization. Therefore, teams are more likely to resist the leader's work style, unwilling to exert maximum effort, thereby reducing team job involvement. Meanwhile, against a backdrop of low task significance, workaholic leaders' high standards and strict requirements are more likely to be viewed as additional burdens, intensifying team resentment and dissatisfaction and amplifying team negative affect. In summary, this study proposes:

Hypothesis 3a: Team task significance moderates the relationship between workaholic leadership and team job involvement, such that the positive effect of workaholic leadership on team job involvement is stronger when team task significance is higher.

Hypothesis 3b: Team task significance moderates the relationship between workaholic leadership and team negative affect, such that the positive effect of workaholic leadership on team negative affect is weaker when team task significance is higher.

1.6 Moderated Mediation

Based on the above hypotheses, this study further proposes moderated mediation hypotheses, suggesting that the dual pathways through which workaholic leadership influences team performance via team job involvement and team negative affect are moderated by team task significance. When team task significance is high, the mediating effect of team job involvement is strengthened while the mediating effect of team negative affect is attenuated. Accordingly, this study proposes:

Hypothesis 4a: Team task significance moderates the mediating effect of team job involvement in the relationship between workaholic leadership and team performance, such that this mediating effect is stronger when team task significance is higher and weaker when team task significance is lower.

Hypothesis 4b: Team task significance moderates the mediating effect of team negative affect in the relationship between workaholic leadership and team performance, such that this mediating effect is weaker when team task significance is higher and stronger when team task significance is lower.

The theoretical model of this study is presented in Figure 1 [Figure 1: see original paper].

2. Method

2.1 Sample and Data Collection Procedure

This study employed a questionnaire survey design and collected data from a large property management company in Shenzhen. The company's main business includes residential property management, community information services, property electromechanical equipment maintenance, and real estate brokerage, with property management teams distributed across various residential complexes in Shenzhen. To better test the research model, this study limited survey participants to property management teams (regional managers and business supervisors), excluding frontline property employees. Since property management teams jointly manage business operations within their jurisdictions, this study regarded regional managers as team leaders and business supervisors as team members. After obtaining approval from the company's human resources department, researchers obtained a list of voluntary participants. Based on this list, researchers sent emails to team leaders and members explaining survey procedures and stating that results would not be fed back to the company in real-name form. To avoid common method bias, this study adopted a multi-timepoint, multi-source design, conducting surveys at three timepoints with one-month intervals between each.

In Wave 1, researchers invited 152 team leaders from 152 property management teams and 839 corresponding team members to participate. Team leaders rated their own workaholic tendencies, while team members rated team task significance. This wave distributed 152 leader questionnaires, receiving 126 responses (82.9% response rate), and 839 member questionnaires, receiving 677 responses (80.7% response rate). In Wave 2, team members rated team job involvement and team negative affect. This wave distributed 677 member questionnaires, receiving 512 responses (75.6% response rate). Paired-sample t-test analyses indicated no significant differences between participants in both waves and those who dropped out in Wave 2 regarding gender, age, organizational tenure, or education level (Cohen's $d_{\text{gender}} = 0.12$; Cohen's $d_{\text{age}} = 0.08$; Cohen's $d_{\text{tenure}} = 0.05$; Cohen's $d_{\text{education}} = 0.08$; $df = 675$, $p > 0.05$), suggesting random sample attrition. In Wave 3, to more accurately measure the outcome variable—team performance—this study invited team leaders' superiors (district managers) to evaluate each team's performance. Researchers distributed 126 district manager questionnaires, receiving 105 responses (83.3% response rate).

After data matching, the final sample comprised 105 teams, including 105 team leaders and 512 team members. Among the 105 team leaders, 62.86% were male, with an average age of 38.52 years ($SD = 9.03$), average organizational tenure of 6.17 years ($SD = 3.24$), 41.9% holding associate degrees, 47.6% holding bachelor's degrees, and 10.5% holding master's degrees or higher. Among the 512 team members, 58.40% were male, with an average age of 33.25 years ($SD = 4.62$), average organizational tenure of 6.66 years ($SD = 3.63$), 42.6% holding associate

degrees, 46.5% holding bachelor's degrees, and 10.9% holding master's degrees or higher. Average team size was 4.88 members ($SD = 1.10$), and average team tenure was 5.03 years ($SD = 1.94$).

2.2 Measures

This study employed translation-back-translation procedures to ensure accuracy for all English scales. All variables used a six-point Likert scale (1 = "strongly disagree" to 6 = "strongly agree"). Specific measurement items are detailed in Appendix I.

(1) Workaholic Leadership. This study measured workaholic leadership using the scale developed by Schaufeli et al. (2009). The scale contains 10 items, with team leaders providing self-ratings. A sample item is: "I feel guilty when I am not working." The scale's Cronbach's α was 0.95.

(2) Team Job Involvement. This study adapted Kanungo's (1982) scale to measure team job involvement. The scale contains 10 items, with team members providing self-ratings. Team-level scores were computed as the mean of member ratings. A sample item is: "Our team spends most of its time focused on work." The scale's Cronbach's α was 0.91. Aggregation tests showed $Rwg = 0.83$, $ICC(1) = 0.38$ ($p < 0.001$), and $ICC(2) = 0.75$, indicating high within-team agreement and significant between-team variance, justifying aggregation to the team level.

(3) Team Negative Affect. Following previous research (Sy et al., 2005), this study conceptualized team negative affect as a shared emotional experience among team members and applied Chan's (1998) additive form of aggregation model, using the group mean of member ratings as the team-level score. This study adapted Watson et al.'s (1988) scale to measure member negative affect. The scale contains 5 items, with members providing self-ratings. A sample item is: "Working in this team, I feel resistant and annoyed." The scale's Cronbach's α was 0.96. Aggregation tests showed $Rwg = 0.73$, $ICC(1) = 0.43$ ($p < 0.001$), and $ICC(2) = 0.79$, indicating high within-team agreement and significant between-team variance, justifying aggregation to the team level.

(4) Team Task Significance. This study measured team task significance using the scale developed by Morgeson and Humphrey (2006), containing 4 items rated by team members. A sample item is: "The results of our work have a significant impact on others." The team mean represented the shared perception of task significance. The scale's Cronbach's α was 0.91. Aggregation tests showed $Rwg = 0.73$, $ICC(1) = 0.33$ ($p < 0.001$), and $ICC(2) = 0.71$, indicating high within-team agreement and significant between-team variance, justifying aggregation to the team level.

(5) Team Performance. This study measured team performance using the scale developed by Gonzalez-Mulé et al. (2014), containing 4 items rated by district managers evaluating overall property management team performance.

A sample item is: “Overall, this team is very successful.” The scale’s Cronbach’s α was 0.87.

(6) Control Variables. This study controlled for factors that might influence team performance, including leader gender, leader age, leader education level, team size, and team tenure. Since leader age and leader organizational tenure were highly correlated ($\gamma = 0.73$, $p < 0.001$), only leader age was controlled. Additionally, because these property management teams managed different residential complexes with varying characteristics, property attributes were also controlled. Specifically, property complex size (small, medium, large) and grade (ordinary, mid-range, luxury) were included as dummy variables.

2.3 Data Analysis Methods

As this study’s model operates at the team level and team negative affect, team job involvement, and team task significance were rated by individual team members, member ratings were first aggregated to the team level before subsequent statistical analyses. To test hypotheses, this study employed structural equation modeling path analysis (Muthén & Muthén, 2012) using Mplus 7.0. For mediation effect testing (Hypotheses 1 and 2), this study adopted the product coefficient method proposed by Hayes (2013) and estimated mediation effects and their significance using bias-corrected Monte Carlo bootstrapping (Preacher & Selig, 2012). For moderation effect testing (Hypotheses 3a and 3b), this study followed Aiken and West’s (1991) recommendations by centering variables before creating product terms and conducting simple slope analyses. For moderated mediation effect testing (Hypotheses 4a and 4b), this study applied the difference analysis method to test moderated mediation (Edwards & Lambert, 2007) and used bias-corrected Monte Carlo bootstrapping (Preacher & Selig, 2012) to estimate indirect effects at different values of the moderator and their significance.

3. Results

3.1 Reliability and Validity Analysis

Reliability analysis results indicated that all variables had composite reliability (CR) greater than 0.70, corrected item-total correlation (CITC) greater than 0.60, standardized factor loadings greater than 0.60, average variance extracted (AVE) greater than 0.50, and Cronbach’s α values greater than 0.70. Detailed reliability analysis results and corresponding indicators are provided in Appendix I. Validity analysis results (see Table 1) showed that the square root of AVE for each variable exceeded its correlations with other variables, demonstrating adequate discriminant validity. In summary, all variables exhibited good reliability and validity.

3.2 Multilevel Confirmatory Factor Analysis Results

To further examine discriminant validity, this study conducted multilevel confirmatory factor analysis. Specifically, leader-rated workaholic and district manager-rated team performance were specified at the team level (between-group level), while other member-rated variables were specified at the individual level (within-group level). Table 2 shows that the hypothesized five-factor model (workaholic leadership, team task significance, team job involvement, team negative affect, team performance) demonstrated good fit ($\chi^2 = 715.84$; $df = 225$; $\chi^2/df = 3.18$; CFI = 0.92; TLI = 0.91; RMSEA = 0.07; between-group SRMR = 0.06; within-group SRMR = 0.05) and fit significantly better than four alternative models: four-factor model 1 ($\Delta\chi^2 = 157.45$, $\Delta df = 1$, $p < 0.001$), four-factor model 2 ($\Delta\chi^2 = 1083.87$, $\Delta df = 2$, $p < 0.001$), four-factor model 3 ($\Delta\chi^2 = 1090.21$, $\Delta df = 2$, $p < 0.001$), and four-factor model 4 ($\Delta\chi^2 = 2092.23$, $\Delta df = 2$, $p < 0.001$). These results provide strong support for discriminant validity.

3.3 Common Method Bias Test

Although this study adopted a multi-timepoint, multi-source survey design, the data remain essentially cross-sectional, potentially suffering from common method bias. Therefore, this study employed Harman's (1976) single-factor test and the unmeasured common method latent factor approach to assess common method bias (Xiong et al., 2012). Harman's single-factor test results showed that after unrotated exploratory factor analysis of all items, factors with eigenvalues greater than 1 explained 72.91% of total variance, with the first principal component explaining 21.87%—not exceeding 50% or half of total variance explained. Additionally, the unmeasured common method latent factor analysis showed no significant difference in fit indices between the five-factor model ($\chi^2 = 715.84$; $df = 225$; $\chi^2/df = 3.18$; CFI = 0.92; TLI = 0.91; RMSEA = 0.07; within-group SRMR = 0.05; between-group SRMR = 0.06) and the single method latent factor model ($\chi^2 = 751.88$; $df = 199$; $\chi^2/df = 3.78$; CFI = 0.91; TLI = 0.88; RMSEA = 0.08; within-group SRMR = 0.07; between-group SRMR = 0.06) ($\Delta\chi^2 = 36.04$, $\Delta df = 26$, $p = 0.091$). These results indicate that common method bias is not a serious concern in this study.

3.4 Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 presents descriptive statistics and the correlation matrix for study variables. Workaholic leadership was significantly positively correlated with both team job involvement and team negative affect ($\gamma = 0.35$, $p < 0.001$; $\gamma = 0.43$, $p < 0.001$). Team job involvement was significantly positively correlated with team performance ($\gamma = 0.38$, $p < 0.001$), while team negative affect was significantly negatively correlated with team performance ($\gamma = -0.19$, $p = 0.042$). These correlations provide preliminary support for hypothesis testing.

3.5 Hypothesis Testing Results

Table 3 presents structural equation path analysis results without interaction terms. After controlling for variables, workaholic leadership had a significant positive effect on team job involvement ($\beta = 0.31$, $p < 0.001$), and team job involvement had a significant positive effect on team performance ($\beta = 0.33$, $p < 0.001$). Additionally, bias-corrected bootstrapping results showed that the indirect effect of team job involvement between workaholic leadership and team performance was 0.10 (SE = 0.03), with a 95% confidence interval of [0.05, 0.16] that did not include zero. Thus, Hypothesis 1 was supported.

Table 3 also shows that workaholic leadership had a significant positive effect on team negative affect ($\beta = 0.46$, $p < 0.001$), and team negative affect had a significant negative effect on team performance ($\beta = -0.28$, $p = 0.003$). The bias-corrected bootstrapping results indicated that the indirect effect of team negative affect between workaholic leadership and team performance was -0.13 (SE = 0.04), with a 95% confidence interval of [-0.18, -0.05] that did not include zero. Therefore, Hypothesis 2 was supported.

Table 4 presents structural equation path analysis results with interaction terms. Comparing the model without moderators (Table 3, AIC = 655.70, BIC = 636.00) to the model with moderators (Table 4, AIC = 649.60, BIC = 627.87), the latter showed smaller AIC and BIC values, indicating a better-fitting model. Table 4 shows that the interaction between workaholic leadership and team task significance positively influenced team job involvement ($\beta = 0.24$, $p = 0.005$). Following Aiken and West's (1991) method, this study calculated simple slopes at one standard deviation above and below the mean of team task significance, representing "high" and "low" conditions. The moderation effect is illustrated in Figure 2 [Figure 2: see original paper]. Simple slope analysis revealed that when team task significance was high, workaholic leadership's positive effect on team job involvement was stronger ($\beta = 0.58$, $t = 8.20$, $p < 0.001$); when team task significance was low, this effect was non-significant ($\beta = 0.10$, $t = 1.41$, $p = 0.161$). Thus, Hypothesis 3a was supported.

Table 4 also shows that the interaction between workaholic leadership and team task significance negatively influenced team negative affect ($\beta = -0.26$, $p = 0.002$). Again using simple slope analysis at high and low levels of team task significance, Figure 3 [Figure 3: see original paper] illustrates that when team task significance was low, workaholic leadership's positive effect on team negative affect was strengthened ($\beta = 0.69$, $t = 9.76$, $p < 0.001$); when team task significance was high, this effect was attenuated ($\beta = 0.17$, $t = 2.40$, $p = 0.018$). Therefore, Hypothesis 3b was supported.

To test the indirect effects of team job involvement and team negative affect at different levels of team task significance, this study used Edwards and Lambert's (2007) difference analysis method. Monte Carlo bootstrapping results (see Table 5) showed that when team task significance was high (mean + 1 SD), the indirect effect of workaholic leadership on team performance through team job

involvement was significant (indirect effect = 0.20, SE = 0.05, 95% CI = [0.08, 0.27]); when team task significance was low (mean -1 SD), this indirect effect was non-significant (indirect effect = 0.03, SE = 0.03, 95% CI = [-0.12, 0.27]). The difference between high and low groups was also significant (indirect effect difference = 0.17, SE = 0.05, 95% CI = [0.02, 0.18]). Thus, Hypothesis 4a was supported.

Table 5 also shows that when team task significance was high, the indirect effect through team negative affect was non-significant (indirect effect = -0.04, SE = 0.03, 95% CI = [-0.12, 0.03]); when team task significance was low, this indirect effect was significant (indirect effect = -0.20, SE = 0.05, 95% CI = [-0.22, -0.05]). The difference between high and low groups was significant (indirect effect difference = 0.16, SE = 0.04, 95% CI = [0.04, 0.12]). Therefore, Hypothesis 4b was supported.

4. Discussion

4.1 Research Conclusions

Using a sample of 105 team leaders and 512 team members, this study investigated the double-edged effects of workaholic leadership on team performance and their underlying mechanisms and boundary conditions based on social information processing theory. The findings reveal that: (1) workaholic leadership sets an example for teams, increasing team job involvement and thereby enhancing overall team performance; (2) the high standards and strict demands of workaholic leadership also trigger team negative affect, damaging performance; and (3) team task significance moderates these two mediating paths. When team task significance is high, the positive mediating effect of team job involvement is strengthened while the negative mediating effect of team negative affect is weakened; when team task significance is low, the negative mediating effect of team negative affect is strengthened while the positive mediating effect of team job involvement is weakened. These conclusions provide important implications for both theoretical research and management practice related to workaholic leadership.

4.2 Theoretical Implications

This study makes three primary theoretical contributions. First, it deepens understanding of workaholic leadership effectiveness and promotes comprehensive analysis of its effects. Existing research has mostly examined either the positive effects (promoting extra-role behavior, Pan, 2018; enhancing organizational performance, Li et al., 2018) or negative effects (reducing subordinate well-being, Clark et al., 2016; inhibiting informal learning, Li & She, 2020) of workaholic leadership from unidimensional perspectives, lacking comprehensive analysis. Unlike previous studies, this study proposes and confirms, based on social information processing theory, that workaholic leadership represents a “double-edged sword” with both positive and negative effects on team performance. On one

hand, workaholic leadership guides teams to increase work investment and improve performance; on the other hand, it generates negative affect that reduces overall performance. By fully parsing the “benefits” and “costs” of workaholic leadership for teams, this study not only effectively addresses controversies about its effectiveness but also identifies mediating mechanisms explaining the relationship between workaholic leadership and team performance, opening the “black box” of how workaholic leadership influences teams.

Second, this study enriches understanding of the boundary conditions shaping workaholic leadership effects from a work context perspective. Current research has primarily examined moderators from the subordinate perspective, such as subordinate work centrality (She et al., 2020), subordinate core self-evaluation (Li & She, 2020), and top management team leadership identification (Li et al., 2018). However, Dionne et al. (2005) noted that leadership effectiveness depends not only on subordinates but also on situational contexts. Leadership effects vary across different situations. Consistent with this view, this study finds that team task significance, as an important work characteristic, represents a critical boundary condition for workaholic leadership effectiveness. When team task significance is high, teams are more willing to emulate workaholic leaders by investing time and energy in work, while also interpreting the leader’s behavior more positively, preventing excessive negative affect. By validating the moderating role of team task significance, this study reveals how workaholic leadership effectiveness differs across varying levels of task significance, providing useful insights for promoting positive effects and mitigating negative effects.

Finally, this study expands the research level of workaholic leadership studies. Although workaholic leadership has become increasingly common in organizational management practice, theoretical discussion and empirical research on its effectiveness remain limited (Clark et al., 2016; Ng et al., 2007). Among the few empirical studies, outcome variables have concentrated at the individual level (She et al., 2020; Pan, 2018) and organizational level (Li et al., 2018; Gorgievski et al., 2014), with no research examining team-level outcomes. In response, Clark et al. (2016) specifically called for research exploring how workaholic leadership affects teams. This study extends research to the team level, revealing the double-edged effects and boundary conditions of workaholic leadership on team performance. These efforts effectively fill the gap in team-level workaholic leadership research and provide new perspectives for understanding its effects in team work contexts.

4.3 Practical Implications

This study offers several practical implications. First, given the double-edged effects of workaholic leadership on team performance, organizations need to view it dialectically rather than uniformly promoting or resisting it. When appointing team leaders, organizations can match workaholic leaders to positions that are challenging or require “tackling tough problems” to fully leverage their strengths in motivating teams to overcome difficulties. Additionally, or-

organizations must recognize the potential hazards of workaholic leadership and can mitigate work stress for both leaders and their teams through mindfulness training, recreational activities, and other interventions.

Second, team leaders should take measures to minimize the negative consequences of their workaholic tendencies. Particularly when assigning tasks and communicating expectations, leaders must consider team acceptance levels, monitor member emotional reactions, and arrange work tasks reasonably. When team members experience negative emotions at work, leaders should communicate promptly, provide positive feedback, and use encouragement rather than criticism to relieve work pressure and adjust emotions.

Finally, organizations need to consciously enhance teams' sense of task significance in daily work, helping members recognize the meaning and value of their work. For example, organizations can present team members with tangible work outcomes resulting from their efforts—such as product technical improvements, sales trend changes, or positive customer evaluations—enabling them to genuinely feel the value created by their work and its contribution to the organization, thereby fostering authentic recognition of their work.

4.4 Limitations and Future Directions

Due to various objective and subjective constraints, this study has several limitations requiring future improvement. First, despite employing a multi-timepoint, multi-source design, the study remains essentially cross-sectional, precluding causal inferences. Future research could employ experimental designs to test the robustness of these findings. Additionally, qualitative approaches such as case studies could examine interactions between workaholic leaders and teams in specific work contexts to assess leadership effects.

Second, although this study analyzed the mediating roles of team job involvement and team negative affect based on social information processing theory, it did not identify other potential mechanisms. For example, according to stress appraisal theory (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), workaholic leadership as a team stressor could elicit both challenge stress appraisals that enhance performance and hindrance stress appraisals that inhibit performance. Future research could further parse the double-edged effects of workaholic leadership from a stress perspective.

Third, regarding moderators, this study focused on team task significance without considering other potential moderating variables, such as the leader's own performance. When workaholic leaders demonstrate strong performance, team members may be more willing to view them as role models and emulate their dedicated work style. Conversely, if workaholic leaders are obsessed with work but perform poorly, team members may instead feel dissatisfied and resist this “all work, no rest” approach. Future research could explore contingency factors affecting workaholic leadership effectiveness from the leader's own characteristics.

Finally, this study's data were collected from only one property management company's management teams (team leaders and members). While this sampling approach controls for company-level differences that might confound results, it limits external validity and generalizability. Particularly in highly competitive industries such as software, semiconductors, and internet services, workaholic leadership may be more prevalent and its effects more pronounced. Future research should expand the industry scope to enhance generalizability.

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Appendix I: Reliability Analysis Results

Workaholic Leadership (Cronbach' s $\alpha = 0.95$)

- Working hard is important to me, even if I don' t like what I' m doing.
- I feel that something inside me drives me to work hard.
- I feel obligated to work hard, even when it' s boring.
- I feel guilty when I am not working.
- I find it difficult to relax when I' m not working.
- At work, I seem to be in a hurry and racing against the clock.
- I continue working after colleagues have gone home.
- I work on several projects simultaneously to keep myself busy.
- I spend more time working than on social activities, hobbies, or leisure.
- I often do two or three things at once, such as writing memos while eating lunch or answering the phone.

Team Job Involvement (Cronbach' s $\alpha = 0.91$)

- Being involved in work is important to our team.
- For our team, work is a major part of life.
- Our team is very involved in our work.
- Our team thinks about work all the time.
- Our team' s focus is centered on work tasks.
- Our team values work.
- Work-related matters are very important to us.
- Our team is work-oriented.
- Work is our central focus.
- Our team spends most of its time focused on work.

Team Negative Affect (Cronbach' s $\alpha = 0.96$)

- Working in this team, I easily become angry.
- Working in this team, I feel resistant and annoyed.
- Working in this team, I feel tense.
- Working in this team, I feel anxious and uneasy.
- Working in this team, I feel worried.

Task Significance (Cronbach' s $\alpha = 0.91$)

- The results of our work have a significant impact on others.
- The work we do is very meaningful.
- From a broader perspective, our work itself is very important.
- The work we complete creates value for others.

Team Performance (Cronbach' s $\alpha = 0.87$)

- This team achieves its established goals well.
- This team performs very well.
- This team makes significant contributions to company performance.
- Overall, this team is very successful.

Appendix II: Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Matrices at Individual and Team Levels

Team Level (Leader/District Manager Ratings)

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Leader Gender	0.63	0.49	-								
2. Leader Age	38.52	9.03	0.08	-							
3. Leader Education	2.69	0.66	0.12	-	-						
4. Team Size	4.88	1.10	-	0.11	0.03	-					
5. Team Tenure	5.03	1.94	0.05	0.21*	-	0.18	-				
6. Property Size (Small)	0.35	0.48	-	-	-	-	-	-			
7. Property Size (Medium)	0.41	0.49	0.04	0.12	0.02	0.08	0.06	-	-		
8. Property Grade (Ordinary)	0.38	0.49	-	-	-	-	-	0.28**	-		
9. Property Grade (Mid-range)	0.45	0.50	0.09	0.08	0.11	0.07	0.09	-	0.15	-	-
10. Team Performance	4.52	0.81	0.15	0.18	0.22*	0.08	0.16	-	0.09	-	0.31**

Individual Level (Team Member Ratings)

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Member Gender	0.58	0.49	-						
2. Member Age	33.25	4.62	0.06	-					
3. Member Education	2.68	0.66	0.04	-	-				
4. Member Tenure	6.66	3.63	0.03	0.31***		-			
5. Workaholic Leadership	3.85	1.12	0.02	0.04	-	0.01	-		
6. Task Significance	4.21	0.95	0.05	0.08	0.12*	0.06	0.35***		
7. Team Job Involvement	4.35	0.88	-	0.09	0.07	0.04	0.31***	0.51***	
8. Team Negative Affect	2.67	1.15	0.03	-	-	-	0.43***	-	-
				0.04	0.06	0.02		0.26**	0.21*

Note: $N_{\{teams\}} = 105$; $N_{\{members\}} = 512$. $p < 0.05$; $\mathbf{p} < \mathbf{0.01}$; $p < 0.001$. Leader education: 1 = high school or below; 2 = associate degree; 3 = bachelor's degree; 4 = graduate degree or above. Property size: 1 = small; 2 = medium; 3 = large. Property grade: 1 = ordinary; 2 = mid-range; 3 = luxury.

Note: Figure translations are in progress. See original paper for figures.

Source: ChinaXiv – Machine translation. Verify with original.