



## The role of workaholism and perfectionism in the relationship between self-esteem and life satisfaction

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### ABSTRACT

The present study aims to investigate the role of workaholism and perfectionism in the relationship between self-esteem and life satisfaction. The study was attended by 125 people aged between 20 and 60,  $M = 38.40$ ,  $AS = 12.67$ , of which 39 men (31%), 85 women (68%), and a participant of another gender (1%). The instruments used were the Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965), the Satisfaction With Life Scale (Diener et al., 1985), the Dutch Work Addiction Scale (Taris & Schaufeli, 2003), the Perfectionism scale from IPIP-Ro (Iliescu et al., 2015). The results showed that self-esteem is a significant positive predictor of life satisfaction, but workaholism and perfectionism did not moderate the relationship between the two variables. The practical implications of the study were discussed, the ones for the research field in particular: highlighting the necessity of further studies on variables that moderate the relationship between self-esteem and life satisfaction; adapting psychological interventions regarding the chosen constructs to the cultural specificity of the Romanian population.

**Keywords:** *workaholism, perfectionism, self-esteem, life satisfaction*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

In this article, we investigated the role of workaholism and perfectionism in the relationship between self-esteem and life satisfaction. The motivation behind the topic, as well as the contribution that the present study brings to the literature, is to explore the variables that might intervene in the relationship between self-esteem and life satisfaction. In

addition, there is also the motivation to examine workaholism and perfectionism from a clinical point of view. Scientific literature provides insights about these constructs mainly related to organisational contexts, but as shown, they are also linked to emotional struggles that can be more closely addressed from a clinical perspective. The present

study explores them in a clinical context, examining their influence on the relationship in a sample that is not selected only from organisational settings.

The topic of this study is relevant to the scientific literature because it addresses the way these constructs manifest themselves in the Romanian population. The lack of differentiation between collectivist and individualist cultures when comes to the relationship between self-esteem and satisfaction with life has been mentioned many times in the literature. This aspect reveals the importance of the present study for the adaptation of psychological interventions regarding the studied constructs to the cultural specificity of the Romanian population. It also helps in understanding the constructs in this cultural framework.

### **Self-esteem**

Self-esteem reflects someone's subjective evaluation of their worth, excluding external opinions (Orth & Robins, 2014). Positive self-esteem involves self-acceptance without grandiosity, while negative self-esteem involves self-rejection and dissatisfaction, predicting antisocial behavior and depression in youth (Ackerman et al., 2011; Erol & Orth, 2011; Rosenberg, 2015).

Self-esteem fluctuates in adolescence due to various changes, but generally peaks between ages 50 and 60 before declining because of health, cognitive abilities, and socioeconomic status degradation (Bolognini et al., 1996; Orth et al., 2012).

Literature mentions many individual differences that have to be taken into consideration when discussing the development of self-esteem, such as gender (Twenge & Campbell, 2001), personality traits (Robins et al., 2001), attachment styles (Schmitt & Allik, 2005), self-efficacy (Erol & Orth, 2011), risk-taking (Erol & Orth, 2011; Wild et al., 2004), state of health (Erol & Orth, 2011; Reitzes & Mutran, 2006), etc.

Self-esteem that is highly dependent on external factors is considered maladaptive, as it shows that the individual does not feel a fundamental confidence in his or her worth (Orth & Robins, 2014). This changes as the person matures (Meier et al., 2011). More specifically, self-esteem fluctuates less as the person progresses from adolescence to adulthood, so it is less dependent on external events (Meier et al., 2011).

Other researchers have questioned whether self-esteem remains stable over time and if it is more similar to intelligence or core personality traits (Orth & Robins, 2014). Studies have shown that we tend to build a foundation that resists in front of the successes and failures we experience, as well as other external factors (Orth & Robins, 2014).

A question that divides the scientific literature into very different views on self-esteem is whether it is only a social construct that arises in individualistic cultures or whether it is a universally valid one that also includes collectivist

cultures (Schmitt & Allik, 2005). Another layer of this issue is whether positive self-esteem is more specific to individualistic cultures, while collectivistic cultures are more likely to gather individuals with negative self-esteem (Schmitt & Allik, 2005). The present study helps in completing the overall picture on self-esteem and cultural differences by closely examining how this construct looks like in the Romanian population.

### **Satisfaction with life**

Satisfaction with life is a key component of subjective well-being (Diener et al., 1985) and has become increasingly researched with the development of positive psychology, which postulates that mental health should be understood not only as the absence of psychopathology but also as the presence of factors that facilitate it (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

Life satisfaction is considered the cognitive side of the construct, referring to the individual's judgments of his or her life (Diener et al., 1985). These judgments are subjective, as individuals evaluate their lives using internal criteria, not externally imposed ones (Diener et al., 1985).

Taking these perspectives into account, a theoretical model relevant to the topic of the study is "the dynamic equilibrium model", which explores how adaptability might interfere with someone's judgments regarding life satisfaction (Pavot & Diener, 2008). What the model emphasises is that life events may have a short-term influence on subjective well-being, but the person adapts to their new life circumstances and returns to the baseline level of subjective well-being that they had before the event occurred (Pavot & Diener, 2008). However, some events can have lasting effects (Lucas et al., 2003).

Research conducted in The Netherlands showed that top-down effects could be observed: 38% of the variance was explained by heritability and the rest by the individual's unique environment, so top-down factors influence life satisfaction (Pavot & Diener, 2008).

The present study provides an opportunity to investigate the construct in a Romanian population sample.

### **The relationship between self-esteem and life satisfaction**

Self-esteem is a strong predictor of life satisfaction (Diener & Diener, 1995). Research conducted on adolescents showed that those who reported high life satisfaction had higher hope, self-esteem, and internal locus of control, but also lower scores on social stress, anxiety, depression, and negative attitudes towards teachers (Gilman & Huebner, 2006).

Further, the literature debates whether self-esteem and life satisfaction are distinct constructs since both are global evaluations (Diener & Diener, 1995). A cross-cultural study confirmed that they are because they correlated differently

across genders and nations (Diener & Diener, 1995). The cross-cultural study also mentioned the debate on differences in self-esteem between individualistic and collectivistic cultures, so the present study examines the relationship between self-esteem and life satisfaction in a sample of Romanian population, which contributes to a deeper understanding of the issue from a cultural point of view.

Considering the above, we propose to analyze the relationship between self-esteem and life satisfaction, and we formulate the following hypothesis:

H1. *Self-esteem is a significant positive predictor of life satisfaction.*

### **Workaholism**

Workaholism is defined by a strong involvement in work, and it is considered an addiction similar to alcoholism because in both cases individuals sacrifice other interests, interpersonal relationships, and their health status, rather than giving up their addiction (Porter, 1996; Spence & Robbins, 1992). Spence and Robbins (1992) expressed that workaholism is characterized by three essential properties: high engagement in work, a strong inner drive to work, and a lack of enjoyment while working. However, these properties can overlap, for example, some people may still enjoy their work even though they meet other criteria (Spence & Robbins, 1992).

There are three types of workaholics: compulsive-dependent workaholics (they experience work as an addiction or compulsion), perfectionist workaholics (they have a preoccupation with details, rules, lists, and a desire to win at all costs), and achievement-oriented workaholics (they display characteristics of Type A personality, a desire for upward mobility and achievement motivation) (Scott et al., 1997).

Therefore, there are several perspectives on workaholism, but its addictive nature is a key feature, especially for the subject of this paper which brings into question the moderating role of the construct in the relationship between self-esteem and life satisfaction.

### **Perfectionism**

Perfectionism has long been seen as pathological, implying cognitive dysfunction characterized by dichotomous thinking, overgeneralization, and imperative attitude (Brown & Beck, 2002), but this perspective is reductionist, as adaptive aspects of this construct have also been identified (Terry-Short et al., 1995). Adaptive perfectionism focuses on strengths, positive outcomes, and positive rewards received because of perfectionistic behaviour – an example is found among athletes because they set high standards for themselves without excessive self-criticism (Burns et al., 2012; Rice & Ashby, 2007; Terry-Short et al., 1995). On the other hand, negative, neurotic

perfectionism is a personality trait that is more related to fear of failure and avoidance of negative rewards (Burns et al., 2012), expressed by setting unrealistically high goals, a tendency that may originate from early environments characterized by inconsistency and conditional positive approval (Terry-Short et al., 1995).

The unidimensional perspective, which referred only to the pathological nature of perfectionism, was maintained for a long time because perfectionism is a specific characteristic of many psychopathologies (Shafran et al., 2002), such as bulimia nervosa and anorexia nervosa (Lilenfeld et al., 2000; Shafran et al., 2002) or obsessive-compulsive personality disorder (Diedrich & Voderholzer, 2015). Furthermore, a study conducted to analyze the relationship between therapeutic alliance and perfectionism in depression treatment outcomes showed that in patients with low perfectionism scores the contribution to the therapeutic alliance increased consistently, while for high perfectionistic patients, it did not during treatment (Zuroff et al., 2000). Thus, it can be understood that perfectionism can hinder the effectiveness of treatment for depression (Zuroff et al., 2000).

The multidimensional perspective, for which the MPS scale ("Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale") was developed, takes into account several facets of perfectionism, more specifically: self-oriented perfectionism (high standards by which the person evaluates themselves), other-oriented perfectionism (high expectations that the person has from others) and socially prescribed perfectionism (the belief that important people in their life expect them to be perfect in order to accept them) (Hewitt et al., 1991).

Therefore, considering the aspects discussed above, we agreed that it would be relevant to investigate the moderating role that perfectionism has in the relationship between self-esteem and life satisfaction.

### **The role of workaholism and perfectionism in the relationship between self-esteem and life satisfaction**

Scientific literature mentions no direct examination of the relationships between variables similar to this model, but there is close research on how the chosen variables interact that constitutes the theoretical basis for understanding the present study, which is why they will be presented in this section.

Next, we will describe the choice of the two moderators and how they have been understood in the literature. Over time, interactions between the two variables have been observed (Spence & Robbins, 1992). For example, perfectionism could be a risk factor for workaholism or workaholism mediates the relationship between perfectionism and burnout (Taris et al., 2010), but the literature is still limited in explaining what might be responsible for the relationship between the two (Stoeber et

al., 2013). Furthermore, certain dimensions of perfectionism may be related to dimensions of workaholism (Clark et al., 2010). For example, the characteristic of perfectionism called discrepancy (the difference between the extreme expectations that the person has of themselves and the self-evaluation of current performance) can create intrusive thoughts related to work, which are also specific to workaholism (Clark et al., 2010).

Regarding their choice in this study, even if there are workaholic-perfectionists, the conceptual distinction between workaholism and perfectionism is made by the origins of the two constructs. Thus, the origins of perfectionism may be related to neuroticism, fear of failure, a family history of conditional positive acceptance, and the neurotic desire to please the ones close to them (Burns et al., 2012; Enns & Cox, 2002; Terry-Short et al., 1995), while workaholism is addictive and a form of escape from the difficult aspects of life - the workaholic works excessively to avoid looking at his own emotions and to stay away from intimacy (Minirth et al., 1985; Seybold & Salomone, 1994). Given these conceptual differences and the fact that both constructs affect many aspects of someone's life, this study aimed to observe how strong their influence is when they both manifest themselves in the relationship between self-esteem and life satisfaction.

Researchers have tried to identify the factors behind workaholism, this internal pressure to work excessively, and by association with what is known about people addicted to alcohol, it seems that behind work addiction there is also a problem related to identity (Porter, 1996). Therefore, one of the possible causes that push a person to be a workaholic could be negative self-esteem (Porter, 1996), which underlines the existence of some relationships between the variables of this study. Furthermore, researchers have shown that there is a reciprocal relationship between job satisfaction and overall life satisfaction, so compulsive-dependent workaholics may experience reduced life satisfaction (Scott et al., 1997).

Furthermore, we will discuss both adaptive and maladaptive dimensions of perfectionism and how they interact with the other variables of this study. Maladaptive

perfectionists experience strong feelings of inferiority, tend to underestimate their successes, experience failure as devastating, and their self-esteem tends to be negative (Rice & Dellwo, 2002). Because self-esteem strongly correlates with life satisfaction, and there is a link between maladaptive perfectionism and negative self-esteem, we expect perfectionism to moderate the relationship between self-esteem and life satisfaction, which is the reason for choosing this model of research in the present study. Regarding adaptive perfectionism, one study showed that people who display this characteristic manifest self-esteem, academic and social integration similar to those of non-perfectionists, but they experience more symptoms of depression than them (Rice & Dellwo, 2002). Plus, the study showed that adaptive perfectionists and non-perfectionists exhibit significantly higher levels of positive self-esteem than individuals who exhibit maladaptive perfectionism (Rice & Dellwo, 2002). Thus, because there is a link between positive self-esteem and adaptive perfectionism, and self-esteem correlates with life satisfaction, there is a possibility that perfectionism moderates the relationship between self-esteem and life satisfaction. Moreover, life satisfaction represents a self-evaluation that people make regarding their own lives according to some subjective standards (Diener et al., 1985), and from this point of view it resembles perfectionism – an evaluation of someone's performance according to some self-imposed standards (Çapan, 2010). Therefore, the individual's ability to achieve self-imposed standards increases life satisfaction, but when the discrepancy between the results that the person expects to achieve and what he actually achieves is large, life satisfaction decreases (Çapan, 2010).

Considering the above, we propose to analyze the moderating role of workaholism and perfectionism in the relationship between self-esteem and life satisfaction, so we formulate the following hypotheses:

H2. *Workaholism moderates the relationship between self-esteem and life satisfaction.*

H3. *Perfectionism moderates the relationship between self-esteem and life satisfaction.*

## 2. METHODOLOGY

### Participants and procedure

A number of 125 people aged between 20 and 66 years,  $M = 38.40$ ,  $SD = 12.67$  participated in the present study, of which 39 men (31%), 85 women (68%), and one participant of another gender (1 %). Regarding the area of origin, 45 participants come from the rural area (36%) and 80 from the urban area (64%). Regarding the level of education, two graduated general school (2%), 39 graduated high school (31%), and 84 graduated university (67%). Regarding occupational status, 13 are employed part-time (10%) and

112 are employed full-time (90%). Regarding the period since they have been employed, there are 14 participants between 6 months and 1 year (11%), 12 participants between 1 and 3 years (10%), 10 participants between 3 and 5 years (8%), 12 participants between 5 and 10 years (10%) and 77 over 10 years (61%). Regarding the type of job, 102 hold an operational position (82%) and 23 hold a management position (18%), and regarding marital status, 31 participants are single (25%), seven are divorced (6%), 21 are in a relationship (17%) and 66 are married (52%).

Inclusion criteria: participants must be currently employed and Romanian citizens over the age of 18. The sampling method is one of convenience. All 125 people agreed to participate until the end by completing the questionnaire (100%). The answers were collected using several social networks, where participants were invited to fill out a form lasting approximately 10 minutes. The questionnaire opened with a section where participants were informed about the general aspects of the research and signed the informed consent prior to completion.

The research ethics conditions regarding data processing and interpretation, as well as data security monitoring, were met. Data were initially organized in encrypted Excel spreadsheets to which only the author of this study had access. No participants' names or other data that could link the participant's identity to the data provided by them were requested.

### Instruments

*Sociodemographic variables* were collected through a list of questions regarding gender, age, background, education level, marital status, occupational status, work experience, and type of job currently held.

*Self-esteem* was measured with Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965). The instrument includes 10 items, and the scale is summative. Answers are given on a four-point Likert scale, where 0 means "strongly disagree" and 3 means "strongly agree". The Cronbach Alpha coefficient for the entire scale is .88, which shows that the

psychometric properties of the scale are acceptable (Gray-Little et al., 1997).

*Life satisfaction* was measured with The Satisfaction With Life Scale (Diener et al., 1985). The instrument includes 5 items, and the scale is summative. Answers are given on a seven-point Likert scale, where 1 means "strongly disagree" and 7 means "strongly agree". The Cronbach Alpha coefficient for the entire scale is .87, which shows that the psychometric properties of the scale are acceptable.

*Workaholism* was measured with the Dutch Work Addiction Scale (Taris & Schaufeli, 2003). The instrument includes 20 items and measures two dimensions, "Working Excessively" and "Working Compulsively". Answers are given on a four-point Likert scale, where 1 means "(almost) never" and 4 means "(almost) always". For the WE items, the scores are added and then divided by 9. For the WC items, the scores are added and then divided by 7. The Cronbach Alpha coefficient for the entire scale adapted to the Romanian population is .85, which shows that the psychometric properties of the scale are acceptable.

*Perfectionism* was measured with the Perfectionism scale ("Perfectionism"), from the IPIP-Ro (Iliescu et al., 2015). The instrument includes nine items, it is adapted for the Romanian population, and the scale is summative. Answers are given on a five-point Likert scale, where 1 means "strongly disagree" and 5 means "strongly agree". The Cronbach Alpha coefficient for the entire scale adapted to the Romanian population is .71, which shows that the psychometric properties of the scale are acceptable.

## 3. RESULTS

The present study has a cross-sectional, descriptive, correlational design. The Jamovi statistical analysis program, including the medmod module, was used for data organization and hypothesis testing (The jamovi project, 2023).

### Descriptive statistics

Means, standard deviations, internal consistency coefficients, and correlations between variables are shown in Table 1. All scores are high, respectively for workaholism,  $M = 52.19$ ,  $SD = 12.45$ , for perfectionism,  $M = 34.45$ ,  $SD = 6.12$ , for self-esteem,  $M = 21.45$ ,  $SD = 5.72$ , and for life satisfaction,  $M = 25.26$ ,  $SD = 7.17$ .

There are significant positive correlations between workaholism and perfectionism,  $r = .28$ ,  $p < .01$ , between perfectionism and life satisfaction,  $r = .30$ ,  $p < .01$ , and between self-esteem and life satisfaction,  $r = .54$ ,  $p < .01$ . Also, self-esteem correlates significantly negatively with workaholism,  $r = -.23$ ,  $p < .01$ .

Skewness and kurtosis values range between (-1, 1) and reflect a normal data distribution. There were no missing cases and no cases were removed from any of the statistical analyses.

**Table 1.** Descriptive statistics

	M	SD	$\alpha$	WK	P	SS	SW
WK	52.19	12.45	.91	1			
P	34.45	6.12	.81	.28**	1		
SS	21.45	5.72	.85	-.23**	.08	1	
SW	25.26	7.17	.93	.07	.30**	.54**	1

Note: \*\*.  $p < .01$ .

WK - workaholism, P - perfectionism, SS - self-esteem, SW - satisfaction with life

## Hypotheses testing

H1. *Self-esteem is a significant positive predictor of life satisfaction.*

To test this hypothesis, a simple linear regression analysis was performed, with self-esteem as the predictor and life satisfaction as the dependent variable.

**Table 2.** *Simple linear regression analysis for self-esteem as a predictor of life satisfaction*

Predictor	Estimate	SE	t	p	$\beta$	95%CI	
						Lower	Upper
SS	.68	.09	7.15	<.001	.54	.39	.69

Note:  $R^2 = .29$   
SS – self-esteem

Self-esteem is responsible for 29% of the variation in life satisfaction, the regression equation being statistically significant,  $F(1,123) = 51.19$ ,  $p < .01$ . Self-esteem is significantly and positively associated with life satisfaction,  $\beta = .54$ ,  $CI_{95\%}(.39, .69)$ ,  $p < .01$ .

Considering this result, we can say that hypothesis H1 is supported by the analyzed data.

H2. *Workaholism moderates the relationship between self-esteem and life satisfaction.*

To test this hypothesis, a moderation analysis was performed, with self-esteem as the predictor, life satisfaction as the dependent variable, and workaholism as the moderating variable.

**Table 3.** *Moderation estimate for workaholism between self-esteem and life satisfaction relationship*

	Estimate	SE	95%CI		Z	p
			Lower	Upper		
SS	.76	.09	.58	.94	8.35	.00
WK	.12	.04	.04	.21	3.01	.00
SS * WK	-.01	.01	-.03	.00	-1.70	.09

Note: WK - workaholism, SS – self-esteem

It is observed that workaholism is not able to moderate the relationship between self-esteem and life satisfaction,  $b = -.01$ ,  $CI_{95\%}(-.03, .00)$ ,  $z = -1.70$ ,  $p = .09$ .

Considering this result, we can say that hypothesis H2 is not supported by the analyzed data.

H3. *Perfectionism moderates the relationship between self-esteem and life satisfaction.*

To test this hypothesis, a moderation analysis was performed, with self-esteem as the predictor, life satisfaction as the dependent variable, and perfectionism as the moderating variable.

**Table 4.** *Moderation estimation for perfectionism in the relationship between self-esteem and life satisfaction*

	Estimate	SE	95%CI		Z	p
			Lower	Upper		
SS	.64	.09	.46	.81	7.18	<.001
P	.34	.08	.18	.50	4.09	<.001
SS * P	.02	.01	-.00	.05	1.79	.074

Note: P - perfectionism, SS – self-esteem

It is observed that perfectionism fails to moderate the relationship between self-esteem and life satisfaction,  $b = .02$ ,  $CI_{95\%}(-.00,.05)$ ,  $z = 1.79$ ,  $p = .07$ .

#### 4. DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to investigate the role of workaholism and perfectionism in the relationship between self-esteem and life satisfaction in a Romanian population sample. In terms of descriptive analysis, participants scored relatively high on workaholism, very high on perfectionism and self-esteem, and high on life satisfaction.

The first hypothesis was supported by the results. Self-esteem is indeed a significant positive predictor of life satisfaction. Existing literature supports it as well. For example, a cross-cultural study showed that self-esteem is a strong predictor of life satisfaction but emphasized that the results should not be extrapolated without differentiating between individualistic and collectivistic cultures (Diener & Diener, 1995). In the present study, we can see how the two constructs interact in the Romanian population, a population that after the 1989 Revolution became an individualist one. In a study investigating the Big Five personality traits and self-esteem as predictors of life satisfaction in a population sample from Iran, it was also observed that self-esteem is strongly correlated with life satisfaction and that it may even mediate the influence that conscientiousness and agreeableness have on life satisfaction (Joshi & Afshari, 2011). The results of the present study are supported by the literature for different age groups as well. For example, a study that investigated variables in an adolescent sample, a population that is not part of the present study, showed that adolescents with high levels of life satisfaction also scored significantly higher on self-esteem, compared to youth who reported average life satisfaction (Gilman & Huebner, 2006).

The second hypothesis was not supported by the analyzed data, thus, in the present study, workaholism fails to moderate the relationship between self-esteem and life satisfaction. In the specialized literature, there are no studies that analyze the relationships between these variables according to the model presented in this study, but certain results can support the choice of studying workaholism as a moderator in the relationship between the two constructs. It has been shown that workaholism can be caused by negative self-esteem (Porter, 1996), but also that it can affect life satisfaction (Scott et al., 1997). Furthermore, there are studies which show that in countries where participants score low on self-esteem, life satisfaction is low as well (Diener & Diener, 1995). From these ideas, it can be assumed that workaholism could play a moderating role in the relationship between self-esteem and life satisfaction. The fact that in the present study, the influence of the

Considering this result, we can say that hypothesis H3 is not supported by the analyzed data.

moderator was not a significant one may suggest that some other more significant variables or mechanisms moderate this relationship (Zedeck, 1971), but those are very little studied so far (Liang et al., 2020). Another possible explanation could be that the standards by which individuals evaluate themselves or their lives are related to many aspects, and work relationship is only one of them. On the other hand, the sample is one of convenience and there is a possibility that the respondents who completed the questionnaire did not show a high level of workaholism.

The third hypothesis, according to which perfectionism moderates the relationship between self-esteem and life satisfaction, was not supported by the data analyzed. This could mean that the moderating effect of perfectionism is not significant for the relationship between the global variables. There is evidence in the literature that perfectionism can both positively and negatively influence someone's self-esteem (Rice & Dellwo, 2002) and that, depending on someone's ability to meet self-imposed standards, life satisfaction can increase or decrease. decreases (Çapan, 2010). Given these aspects and the fact that self-esteem is a predictor of life satisfaction, the possibility that perfectionism is a moderator in the relationship between self-esteem and life satisfaction was an important aspect to analyze. On the other hand, perfectionism as a moderator was not significant in this study, which may mean that there are variables that moderate the relationship more strongly, variables that may be related to other areas of an individual's life.

#### **Practical implications of the study**

This study highlights the fact that further research on exploring variables that moderate the relationship between self-esteem and life satisfaction is needed, as research on this topic is currently limited.

In addition, from a cultural point of view, the way in which the researched variables interact is important to be observed in the future because Romania is still adapting to the changes produced by the transition from a collectivist to an individualist culture, and a part of the variables are influenced by the type of culture.

#### **Limits and future research directions**

One of the limitations of the study is the use of self-report instruments. Participants can give answers that they consider desirable, which do not reflect their internal reality (Adler & Fagley, 2005). Moreover, they can only show as much as they know about themselves (Adler & Fagley,

2005). Another difficulty that can arise is that participants may not accurately remember how they behaved in certain situations or how they felt at a certain time (Adler & Fagley, 2005). The scales with which we measured workaholism and life satisfaction do not contain reversed items, which reflects that to some extent this study lacks control of this bias. In our future research, we will consider using instruments that contain reversed items so that the validity of the study is not affected by methodological aspects.

Also, some authors argue that it is extremely difficult to identify moderator effects in non-experimental studies (Morris et al., 1986; Zedeck, 1971). Thus, the design of this study could be a limitation. A future direction would be to choose a design that allows greater control over the variables.

Another limitation could be the fact that the sample was not representative – convenience sampling and the online distribution of the questionnaire could be barriers in this matter. Therefore, there is a possibility that the invitation to complete the questionnaire did not reach environments where there are extremely workaholic people (understanding workaholism as an addiction) or strong perfectionists. To address this limitation, a future direction is to share the questionnaire on as many different platforms as possible, not only social media.

Moreover, another limitation could be that many participants were in the developmental stage called maturity (40-65 years old), which is characterized by the developmental crisis of generativity vs. stagnation (Erikson & Erikson, 1998) – more specifically, 62 out of 125 participants. Given that older adults generally report higher life satisfaction than young adults (Adams-Price et al.,

2018), their overrepresentation may bias research findings. Also, the participants from the urban environment were much more numerous, 80 out of 125 participants. These aspects may represent limits in the generalization of the results. As a future direction, stratified random sampling can be used to ensure that different subgroups of the population are proportionally represented in the final sample.

## Conclusions

The present study aimed to investigate the role of workaholism and perfectionism in the relationship between self-esteem and life satisfaction. While self-esteem was found to positively predict life satisfaction, neither workaholism nor perfectionism moderated the relationship. Further, the study focused on identifying boundaries that may have prevented significant effects of the moderators from manifesting. Future studies could make improvements when comes to the instruments chosen, the control of variables, the sampling method used, and sharing the invitation to participate in more varied environments. The implications of the study are particularly relevant for the field of research, inviting a more in-depth analysis of the variables that moderate the relationship between self-esteem and life satisfaction, but also by revealing how the interaction between the variables looks in the Romanian population. Therefore, the present study brings new perspectives to the specialized literature regarding the role of workaholism and perfectionism in the relationship between self-esteem and life satisfaction, in a sample of the Romanian population. .

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