



Workaholism : A review

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ABSTRACT

The term workaholism was coined in 1971 by minister and psychologist Wayne Oates, who described workaholism as “The compulsion or the uncontrollable need to work incessantly” (Oates, 1971). From that time onwards, research on workaholism has been implemented by disagreements surrounding how to define and measure the concept. However there still lies a little confusion between workaholics and hard workers. The paper focuses on the understanding the fine line between workaholics and Hard workers. The researcher by referring various reviews has tried to explain the personality of both of the above. The paper also talks about the pros and cons associated with workaholism. Intense work of various researchers has been referred while the formation of this paper. Interestingly, while work hours and workaholism often go hand in hand, it has been seen that not all people who work long hours can be called as workaholics, and not all workaholics will work for long hours. However work will be there in the mind of a workaholic wherever he /she is irrespective of with whom he / she is

Key Words: Workaholism, productivity, Hard Worker, Human resource management

I. INTRODUCTION

The term “workaholic” is often used for a hard worker. Some people seem to take pride in identifying themselves as a person consumed by their work. But is it really a good thing? Workaholism can be described as work addiction. Due to the introduction of technology, it is possible for people to work anywhere anytime without any physical presence. “The resulting pressure for 24/7 connectivity may push more and more people into putting work ahead of all other activities. Although this may at first seem to benefit the companies for which they work, offsetting issues negatively impact business operations.”

<https://www.sciencedaily.com/terms/workaholic.htm>

The term workaholism was coined in 1971 by minister and psychologist Wayne Oates, who described workaholism as “The compulsion or the uncontrollable need to work incessantly” (Oates, 1971). From that time onwards, research on workaholism has been implemented by disagreements surrounding how to define and measure the concept. For example, it has been defined as an addiction to work by Ng, Sorensen & Feldman, 2007; Porter, 2006; Robinson, 2000), Few call it a “syndrome comprised of high drive, high work involvement and low work enjoyment” (Aziz & Zickar, 2006).

Malissa Clark in her article in the science of work has also given a brief taxonomy of workaholism. According to her the causes of work are:

1. **Motivation:** Workaholics are different from people who are simply highly engaged in their jobs. They don't enjoy their work; they feel compelled to work because of internal pressures. There lies a high level of motivation in them which drives them to work
2. **Cognitive:** Workaholics have insistent thoughts about work when they're not working, and they find it difficult to mentally disengage from work.
3. **Emotional:** Workaholics are emotionally attached to their work and hence they are emotionally obliged to work. Workaholics experience negative emotions like anxiety and guilt when they aren't working.
4. **Behavioral:** Since they are attached to their work to a high extent and they also feel obliged towards their work organization, they tend to work beyond what is reasonably expected of them by their organization.

Economic pressure, advances in technology, downsizing the workforce – all contribute to the behaviour of workaholism. (Leah Larkin 2008) True workaholism is an obsessive-compulsive disorder which can lead to serious health problems. Larkin in his study has associated workaholism with a medical condition.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A. Myths about Workaholism

Malissa Clark (2016) "A misconception is that if you love your job, you must be a workaholic. In fact however people who have high work engagement—a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind—are probably not workaholics." Because, workers who are engaged are driven to work because they find it pleasurable and they really enjoy it, on the other hand workaholics are driven to work because they feel an inner compulsion to do so.

Work addiction/workaholism is a manifestation of excessive work that carries with it a number of

consequences to both the individual and that person's network of relationships both personal and professional

As per a post in "CareerCast" Researchers have found that there are many people who can be called as workaholics, but have few of the emotional problems associated with workaholism. The term enthusiastic workaholics is used to describe workaholics without health problems who learn the requirements of a job quickly, excel at their work, put great amounts of time into the job and reap the rewards for their work-related efforts. Non-enthusiastic workaholics are those who do have health risks and put a great deal of time into work, but get none of the rewards in return. Many of these people work at companies that lack systems of rewarding exceptional work, or have an internal bias against certain types of workers. (Published on <http://www.careercast.com>)

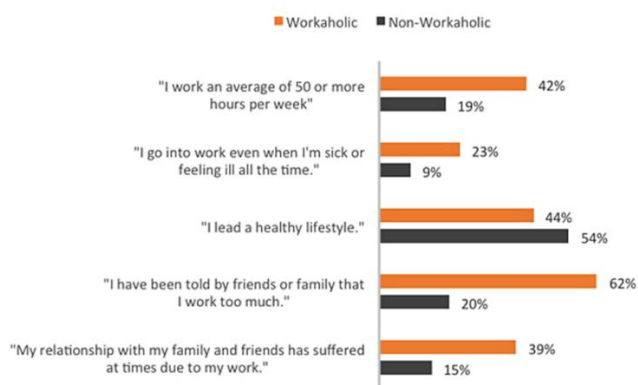
As per a Wharton article- The Truth About Being a Workaholic: Why It Isn't Always Bad for You, "What's more, the researchers found that simply working long hours alone didn't lead to poor health. In fact, employees who worked long hours but were able to mentally "recharge" overnight were not putting their health at risk. But those who worked long hours and also had a compulsive work mentality significantly increased their risk of developing metabolic syndrome."

When work becomes all consuming and joyless it becomes a negative addiction. Workaholics work because they have nothing else to take its place. Their work addiction is a recurring obsession, and typically joyless. Simply labelling oneself "workaholics" just for putting in a few extra hours per week does not justify the true meaning of 'Workaholism'. In reality because of this poor economy, many of these people are working extra hard just to keep their jobs. Real workaholics have few (if any) outside interests. They let their family lives fall apart. They often have health problems and suffer from depression and deep insecurities. Like

any addiction, they repeat destructive behaviors despite knowing that they're destructive. Many would like to stop, but find it difficult or impossible to do so. (Source: careercast.com)

In the article by Wharton, the three sides of workaholism are beautifully described as follows:

1. The Bad: They call it as 'Careerism'. Careerism is all about being focused on one's career at the expense of one's health and personal life also
2. The Ugly: Called as 'Denial'. The ugly side of any addiction is denial. When compared to non-workaholics, it is found that workaholics are more likely to believe that a workaholism is same as hard working. It is also seen that most of the workaholics believe that it is a good thing to be a workaholic. Which shows they are in a state of denial
3. The Good: Commitment. A good thing about workaholism is that workaholics are committed to their work. When compared to non-workaholics, workaholics are more dedicated to their careers and they believe that their careers are the most important aspect of their lives. Below is a graph that reflects a difference between a workaholic and a non workaholic



Source: <https://www.quantumworkplace.com>

Dedicated employees are important assets within any organization, and this aspect of workaholism is the one that organizations rely on most frequently. This "good" side of workaholism is largely incidental because intense commitment is a natural symptom of people who live to work. The idea that work is the most important aspect of life, in particular, taps into

careerism, which is an especially troublesome aspect of workaholism.

B. Workaholics and Hard Workers

Many people confuse hard-working people with workaholics. Workaholism means that you value work over any other activity, even when it negatively affects the health and family, as well as the quality of the work. On the other hand, there are many people who put in long hours, but still give back to their loved ones and enjoy outside activities when they have free time. These people are hard workers, not workaholics. There is a very serious distinction between the two.

Today because of technology nature of the workplace is Dynamic than ever before to understand the antecedents and consequences of workaholism. Technology advances (e.g., smartphones, company-supplied laptops) have allowed employees an unlimited access to their work, and changes in where work occurs (e.g., telecommuting) may further blur the lines between work and home. "Given that technology and work may be mutually reinforcing addiction patterns" (Porter & Kakabadse, 2006), future research should consider the consequences of the changing nature of work as well as changing technology for instance increased usage of wats app for businesses, which further leads to even more involvement of workholics.

It's not just a problem for the individual, either. Workaholics can also have a negative impact on their colleagues. Workaholics have a tendency to be in control of everything, explains Porter. If they are controlling the useful information and coverup it from others who need it, they can impact the productivity.

Workaholic managers may expect long hours from subordinates and force them to meet impossible standards, putting enormous stress on colleagues. Whatever the workaholic's role, their

productivity reduces. The manual labourer obviously gets tired after long hours, while the white-collar worker loses concentration ability, according to a study.

Interestingly, while work hours and workaholism often go hand in hand, it has been seen that not all people who work long hours can be called as workaholics, and not all workaholics will work for long hours.

Some of the key differences between hard workers and workaholics are explained below:

1. A very important goal of a workaholic is to be busy at all times, they associate the business with importance and believe that the busier they are, the more important they must be.
2. Hard workers think of work as a required and pleasant responsibility. However, Workaholics see work as a way to distance themselves from unwanted feelings and relationships.
3. Hard workers don't let work overrule so they can be available to their family and friends and try to maintain a balance. Workaholics believe that work is more important than anything else in their lives, including family and friends. And in case work lies as a priority for them in most of the scenarios
4. Workaholics get excitement from meeting impossible demands. Hard workers don't.
5. Hard workers take breaks from the work while workaholics don't as they are more involved in their work. They always think about work regardless of what they're doing or where they are "The workaholic is driven to make sure there's work all the time," explains Gayle Porter, an associate professor of management at the Rutgers School of Business, New Jersey.

Most workaholics are either perfectionists, have a need for control, or have a combination of both traits, she adds. What can impact a workaholic's life at work, however, is the effect on mental health. "Workaholics feel the burden is all on them. Pressures become mental health as well as physical

health issues," says Porter. Like any extreme behaviour, workaholism has some significant physical and mental downsides, combining job satisfaction and creativity with high levels of frustration, stress and exhaustion (Brian Amble 2013)

Robinson adds that workaholics are at a higher risk for depression and anxiety. Workaholism can wreck havoc on relationships, with greater marital estrangement and a higher divorce rate. "Children of workaholics have higher levels of depression, greater anxiety and less confidence," he explains. "Workaholism becomes a family disease. In the family everything centres on the workaholic."

Conclusion:

From the study we can conclude that employees work in an organization and still get none of the rewards in return. Many of these people work at companies that lack systems of rewarding exceptional work generates hard workers. For them working is necessary at the same time family is important.

Interestingly, while work hours and workaholism often go hand in hand, it has been seen that not all people who work long hours can be called as workaholics, and not all workaholics will work for long hours. However work will be there in the mind of a workaholic wherever he /she is irrespective of with whom he / she is

Expectation of long hours from subordinates and forcing them to meet impossible standards, putting enormous stress on colleagues is what a workaholic can do. Whatever the workaholic's role, their productivity reduces. The manual labourer obviously gets tired after long hours, while the white-collar worker loses concentration ability. So even though we think that workaholics are better in productivity, there are chances where they can be the reason of reducing productivity from others, especially subordinates.

We can thus say that, busy is not productive. Gardiner urges managers to analyse how people use their time. "Counsel employees to be effective and

productive, not just busy. All too often people are busy being busy,” she says. Without productive usage of the time.

Future research should consider the consequences of the changing nature of work as well as changing technology for instance increased usage of wats app for businesses, which further leads to even more involvement of workaholics. The technology is producing more and more competition which further results into more workaholics.

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