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THE INFLUENCE OF PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE ON PEOPLE'S TENDENCY TOWARDS WORKAHOLISM

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Abstract

Workalholism is placed among the phenomena of organizational pathologies and may lead to serious health problems regarding both the physical and the mental status of the directly involved person or of the ones around him/her. This phenomenon has an impact on the emotional balance of the subject leading to depression, anxiety or even paranoia, which are usually connected to drug or alcohol addiction, compulsive eating, habits that give that lead to the feeling that you are no longer able to control your own life. A workaholic is a person who cannot control himself, working more than necessary, while becoming unhappy and starting to have health problems.

The conclusions of the present research reflect that gender or the level of education are not so important when talking about the process of becoming workaholic, but the professional experience achieved over the years could strongly influence the process. The results were obtained through a survey applied on 30 persons, half men and half women of 30 to 45 years old. For the survey were selected subjects with any educational level and any kind of professional experience (0-3 years, 3-10 years and over 10 years). The hypothesis that the professional experience could influence the tendency to becoming a

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workaholic was confirmed, but more important here are the reasons of suffering from this disease. Therefore, workaholism represents a pathological relationship between a human and his work, which causes changes of his internal status, compulsive behavior, loss of control, poor health and a low social life.

Keywords: workaholism, age, experience, addiction, involvement.

1. Theoretical framework

In the modern world, many people get to work over schedule or on week-ends, losing touch with their family members/friends or talk to them in a very superficial way. Over the years, they become too involved in their work and start to ignore their families, which leads to many conflicts. The more a workaholic gets involved into his work, the more he loses contact with his family, members' of which cannot explain his behavior.

Work addiction generates some negative and hard to explain reactions or behaviors that would not be understood by his friends and family, so the workaholic would get to be rejected.

The term 'workaholism' was used for the first time by Wayne Oates (1971) having the meaning of 'the addiction of work'. It is not about a normal addiction of having a job, financial earnings or a professional activity. It is about a real addiction and an excessive orientation. In theory 'workaholism' is seen as an organizational pathology. A person which is addicted to work is called a 'workaholic'. Oates said in an article called '*Confessions of a Workaholic'* that a workaholic is '*a person who needs to work and is not able to stop even when his social life is affected*' (Oates, 1971).

One of the first academic definitions of a workaholic was given by Spence and Robbins (1992, Burke 2000) and contains some psychological mechanisms, describing the workaholic as '*a person who works too much because of his interior pressure, while having a low level of job satisfaction'*.

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Robinson thought workaholism was a fatal compulsive disease, characterized by internal requirements, overtime work and incapacity of organizing an efficient schedule.

Workaholics can be defined as '*being too involved in their work and having a lack of care towards different aspects of their lives'* (Porter 1996).

Even scientists showed interest towards workaholism, but they were unable to decide on a singular definition of it (Negrea, 2017; Negrea & Voinea, 2018; Rosca & Partenie, 2018). Some of them consider workaholics as being hyper-performers, while others consider them obsessive, unhappy persons who do not have a high job performance. In addition, some authors make a distinction between negative and positive forms of workaholism. For example, Scott (1997) has identified compulsive workaholics and those profit-oriented.

The most common approach proposes 3 dimensions:

- work involvement
- the feeling of being lead to work
- the pleasure to work

Combined, these 3 dimensions, lead to multiple types of workaholics, but trying to understand this phenomenon is still complicated.

The specialized literature defines 3 main characteristics of workaholism. First of all, workaholics spend a lot of time at work, when they have this possibility. Secondly, an workaholic is always thinking of his work issues, finding it hard to take a break.

A workaholic works a lot, up to 60 hours per week, meanwhile in most countries, the weekly working time is limited at 45 hours, usually spread in 5-6 days (Moiser, 1982).

The difference between the workaholics and non-workaholics is their attitude. A workaholic is the type of person who cannot enjoy the holiday time, because he is always concerned about what is going on at the office.

The pattern of a workaholic is made from:

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- time spent at work,
- concern about work,
- the work made outside the schedule (Scott 1997).

Zlate (2007) said that it is really important to consider emotional work involvement and the possibility to control the activities, in order to find a balance between the two.

Workaholism is an excess that leads to chaos and problems in people's lives. Some people work even 80 hours per week, but they are still able to maintain a balance in their life, while others fail after 40 hours of work per week. So not only the excess of working hours could lead to workaholism, but also breaking the balance is a certain path to it(Zlate 2007).

Workaholics work a lot, even when they are not pressed by anyone, they are glad when they work, considering other activities useless. Studies made by Ronald Gerson (1998) show that workaholism is more encountered at people with bachelor degree, because they have higher positions in an organization.

The developments of technology defined a culture of speed, where an employee must achieve more things, being overcharged with requirements.

Seybold and Salomone (1994) show more definitions of workaholism.

- Workaholism as an addiction: Robinson sustained this idea, comparing this type of addiction with alcoholism. Oates states that a workaholic has an element of addiction in his behavior since he was born. Spruell (1987) argues that nowadays workoholism is the most common addiction.
- Workaholism as a way of escapism or a method for being in control: some say this phenomenon is a way to escape from the ugly side of life through excessive work. Some say workaholism is actually a way to control their lives.
- Workaholism as the expression of a need for competition or a need for selfesteem. They wish to overcome the expectations of others. Another cause could be a low self-esteem.

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Facts that influence/sustain workaholism:

- heredity,
- personal issues,
- need to control their lives
- need to succeed
- bad self-esteem since childhood
- workaholic parents (Seybold and Salmone 1994).

Workaholism may lead to serious health issues. Mostly, a workaholic's behavior is connected to a high level of stress at the work place (Taris Schaufeli and Verhoven 2005) and to a work-family conflict (Burke 1999).

This phenomenon has a great impact on the emotional balance of a person (Coman, 2014; Coman & Coman, 2017; Basic, Delić & Sofradzija, 2019), bringing new psycho-pathological elements, such as depression, anxiety and even paranoia. These are connected to drugs or alcohol addiction and relationships destruction.

Workaholism leaves some finger prints on the health condition of a person. There may appear symptoms such as: ulcer, back pain, migraines or extreme muscular pain. In some extreme cases, workoholism can lead to a person's death. So we can say that workaholism can be seen as a real progressive disease.

In Romania, there was launched a study made by www.hr-romania.ro, ''Balanta Work-life'', that revealed more data about Romanians tendency towards workaholism. This tendency increases simultaneously with the number of employers, this fact being justified by the desire of employees to be appreciated and to obtain a higher position inside the organization. The study shows that an employer prefers the professional life instead of the personal one, being motivated by the payment or chances to promote.

The workaholism could be reduced by the companies if they would create an environment without pressure for employees (Vlăduțescu, 2018a; Vlăduțescu, 2018b; Chirițescu & Dumitru, 2019), so they can be satisfied at their work places

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and where their supervisors would be available to listen to their problems (Sandu et al., 2018; Frunza, Frunza & Grad, 2019). Other important things in the process of reducing the increasing tendency of workaholism would be: respect, mutual help and a positive attitude.

2. Objectives and hypotheses

This experiment aims to show how people can become workaholics according to age, gender, level of education and professional experience. At the same time, we wanted to observe how much workaholism can affect the self-esteem and the social life/the relationship with the family members.

The present study aimed to establish to which extent becoming a workaholic can be influenced by gender, age, level of education or professional experience, meanwhile enhancing the idea that workaholism can affect one's self -steem and personal life.

Participants

30 randomly selected participants - 15 men and 15 women with ages between 30 to 45 years old. In the given study, there were involved persons with middle level of education, as well as persons with bachelor degree, with professional experience between: 0-3 years, 3-10 years and over 10 years.

3. Methods and tools

The results were obtained by answering a series of 21 questions. The first 3 questions were about primary data, such as gender, age and level of experience. The other 18 questions referred at personal opinions, attitudes and motivation. The participants were asked to write every single question according to their own opinion, attitude, job motivation and family relationship with numbers from 1 to 5 (where 1 represented the 'false' value and 5 represented the 'true' value).

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4. Analysis and interpretation of the results

Regarding the gender, after running the test, observed that there is not a great difference between the results for men and those for women (for women the score was 56.8, while for men the score was 55.73). In the same way, I noticed that the difference between the persons with a low level of education and those with a high one is not quite big (the score for those with low level of education was 56.17, while the value for those with high level of education was 56.33). Since normally age is connected to professional experience, the results revealed the fact that the two indicators are interdependent. Therefore, after running the ANOVA test, there could be observed a significant difference between those having 0-3 years professional experience (score 34.5), those having 3-10 years (score 48.18) and those having with 10 or more years of professional experience (score 68).

5. Conclusions

The present research made me understand that no one's gender or level of education is important in terms of influencing the tendency towards workaholism, but the professional experience gained over the years. People are dealing frequently with situations that cause them certain emotions, affective states, situations that lead them to adopt certain attitudes towards their work. Nowadays, workaholics are people whose sensitivity is being used, people who devote themselves to work and employers are speculating this. As they grow older, people desire to get promoted and improve their careers, but the experience in a certain work field is not always an advantage for a workaholic's relationship with his family, friends or regarding his free time. The hypothesis that professional experience influences people's tendency towards workaholism has been confirmed, but more important are the factors which started the disease, representing a pathological connection between a subject and its work which causes changes in the internal disposition, through compulsive states, loss of

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control, poor health and diminishing of social interest. The mankind is part of a continuous process of development and its lack of social life can affect his capacity to adapt to the environment, to new or unusual situations. It is very important to discover what causes the person to become a workaholic and through what methods can we help him to manage this addiction.

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