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Evaluation of work addiction in relation to self-esteem in the organization

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Abstract. This paper explores the complex interconnections between work addiction and self-esteem in the context of the organizational environment. Work addiction, also known as workaholism, reflects an excessive commitment to work, involving excessive devotion to professional tasks and a significant difficulty in breaking away from work. At the same time, self-esteem is the subjective assessment of one's own value and competence. This paper aims to assess how these two aspects of working life influence each other in an organizational environment. Through an extensive literature review, existing studies exploring the impact of work addiction on self-esteem and vice versa are reviewed. Intermediate variables, such as job satisfaction, work-life balance, and organizational support, are examined to better understand the mechanisms underlying these relationships. Research findings suggest that there is a significant correlation between work addiction and self-esteem in the organizational environment. Individuals with lower self-esteem may tend to engage in workaholism behavior in an attempt to reinforce their personal worth through professional performance. On the other hand, excessive workaholism can negatively affect self-esteem by increasing stress levels and burnout, as well as neglecting other aspects of personal life.

Keywords. dependence, workaholism, self-esteem, organizational climate, work environment, employee,



1. Self-reported sima to the organization

Self-esteem is the evaluative component of the self¹ and refers to the affective experience, the emotions that the person experiences when referring to himself (Constantin, 2004).

Self-esteem is an assessment we make of ourselves that can take different forms (global or multidimensional, mood or moody, personal or collective). For example, Rosenberg (1979) distinguishes between high self-esteem (positive) and low self-esteem (negative). Researchers speak of personal self-esteem - with reference to the subjective evaluation of attributes that are proper to him, specific to the individual and collective self-esteem - with reference to value judgments about the characteristics of the group or groups with which the person identifies. Starting from Rosenberg's "Self-Esteem Scale," Heatherton and Polivy built in 1991 a tool to measure general self-esteem or as a "trait" and self-esteem as a "state" or momentary.

Most psychologists define self-esteem as the overall assessment of one's self-worth as a person. It is about the assessment that a person makes of his own worth, in other words, of the degree of satisfaction with himself. Self-esteem can also be defined as the affective tone of self-concept representation. Rosenberg (1979) defines self-esteem as a complex cognitive and affective synthesis. He believes that self-esteem dictates the more or less good attitude of the individual towards himself. Baumeister (1998) defines self-esteem using synonymous terms such as: pride, selfishness, arrogance, narcissism, some kind of superiority.

According to W. James (1998), self-esteem is the result of the relationship between the success of actions and the individual's aspirations to undertake that action. „If we reduce our aspirations to zero, we will have the universe at our feet”. A person will have high self-esteem to the extent that his successes equal or exceed his aspirations. On the other hand, if aspirations exceed achievements, self-esteem will be low. At the same time, if an individual does not know success in an area that is not very important to him, his self-esteem will not suffer. W. James also defines self-esteem as the awareness of one's worth. „We are masters of our inner satisfaction and minimize what does not depend on us” (W. James quoted by M. Bolognini and Y. Preteur, 1998, p. 65). He considers self-esteem to be self-awareness with affective valences of medium intensity/tonality. We can be happy with the way we are or irritated with ourselves. Feelings of self-satisfaction or self-loathing are normally provoked by successes, fulfilled desires, a good reputation or recognition in society.

The literature states that self-esteem is a crucial part of happiness. A high level of self-esteem makes an employee able to trust his thinking and judgment and make better decisions. This, in turn, helps to create more effective interpersonal and work relationships and therefore a comfortable working environment. As leaders, high levels of self-esteem allow a person to focus more positively on other people and their development. Maintaining self-esteem is a lifelong psychological process. It is like a mental muscle that must be developed and maintained through regular psychological training to prevent depression and anxiety. This helps us learn to like and respect who we are, regardless of what is happening around us. What are the different ways to build a positive self-image? Even if it's just for a few minutes, pursuing your passion is extremely rewarding. Spending quality time with kids, gardening, singing, dancing, or any of these childhood hobbies are worth reviving. Be proactive in your search for projects that generate passion. Learning new work skills will also add a passion to your work (Toshi, 2023).



Work influences self-identity, self-esteem and opportunities for personal growth. Workplace surveys show that employees consistently rank many aspects of the job higher than compensation, including, being treated with respect, having a good work/life balance and the type of work they do (Mercer, 2011). The sense of value is an important piece of an employee's assessment of the job. Those who feel valued are more likely to report that they are and feel motivated to do everything they can for their employer (93% of them feel appreciated vs. 33% of them who do not feel appreciated), (APA, 2013). On the other hand, those who don't feel valued are more likely to report that they plan to look for a job at another company (50% vs. 21%) (APA, 2013).

2. Workaholism/addiction to work

Overwork has often been conceptualised as „workaholism” (Griffiths et al., 2018). Workaholism can be identified by the presence of specific units that push individuals to work excessively. Exceeding normal working hours is only one of the possible behaviors recognized in workaholism (Kravina, 2012). The term 'workaholism' derived from the combination of the words „work” and „alcoholism”, and has been introduced into academic literature to designate a specific behavior described as compulsion or uncontrollable need to work incessantly (Oates, 1971). Over the past 50 years, various definitions and constructions of workaholism have been proposed, and terms such as „workaholism”, „work adiction”, „compulsive work” and „overwork” have been used interchangeably. However, Griffiths et al. (2018) argued that addiction to „work is a psychological construct, whereas workaholism is a more generic term”. Despite these distinctions, the two terms are generally used synonymously.

Until now, work addiction has undoubtedly been a relatively neglected and unrecognized phenomenon in the field of psychological stress. It is often considered only when it is associated with other psychological or physical problems, such as heart attacks, for which absolute rest from work is prescribed (Atroszko et al., 2019). Workaholics have an excessive and compulsive need to work, which can lead to high blood pressure, cardiovascular problems, insomnia, anxiety, overeating, stress, low self-esteem and depression, among others, all of which can cause conflicts between work and family life.

The literature found that low self-esteem was significantly associated with work addiction. Countless results confirm the hypothesis and are consistent with what has already been found in research in other countries (Kun et al., 2020).

Despite the fact that work addiction has been included among the mental illnesses of the twentieth century, the subject has been ignored in the literature, probably because of the difficulty of reaching the possible population characterized by this syndrome (Robinson, 1989). In general, studies of workaholics have focused on work efficiency, career development, as Matthews and Halbrook have done, with only more recent studies taking into account relationships between workaholics and family functioning (Robinson and Post, 1995) or psychological effects on children in families with such parents (Robinson and Carroll, 1999).

Practical studies have confirmed that work addiction develops higher levels of stress, depression, and anger than nonworkaholics (Robinson, 1989).



Typologies of individuals exhibiting excessive work tendencies have seldom been underpinned by robust theoretical or empirical underpinnings. Scott, Moore, and Miceli (1997) delineated three categories of such individuals: those who are compulsive, perfectionist, and achievement-driven. Robinson (2013) categorized four work orientations: the bulimic, who strives to complete tasks flawlessly or not at all; individuals driven by a compulsive necessity to expedite work and adhere to deadlines, finding it challenging to cease working; those who indulge in minutiae and are preoccupied with an excessive fixation on details; and individuals with attention deficit disorder, who initiate numerous projects or ventures but quickly become disoriented and restless, continually driven to seek new challenges. A persistent empirical demarcation exists between workaholics who value their employment and those who do not (Bonebright, Clay & Ankenmann, 2000).

Specifically, Spence and Robbins (1992) discovered two types of workaholics: enthusiastic workaholics, characterized by high levels of job involvement, propelled by an intrinsic compulsion to labor, and deriving considerable satisfaction and joy from their work; and non-enthusiastic workaholics, who display similar levels of job involvement and internal motivation but seem to extract little pleasure from their excessive work. The term 'real workaholics' was initially ascribed to the non-enthusiastic types, while the 'non-enthusiastic' label was later incorporated into the typology (Bonebright et al., 2000).

Despite this ostensibly simplistic delineation between workaholism types, the classification remains pertinent, contemporary, and meaningful.

3. Objectives and Hypotheses

Investigating the correlation between work addiction and self-esteem

Analysis of how work addiction and self-esteem are correlated in the organizational environment.

Identify the direction of this correlation: whether work addiction influences self-esteem, whether self-esteem influences work addiction or whether there is a reciprocal relationship.

It is presumed that employees in the state sector have a higher self-esteem in relation to the organization than those in the private sector.

It was presumed that employees in the private sector have a higher work dependence than those in the state environment.

4. Tools used and sample

For the research was used the questionnaire measuring Self-Esteem Related to Organization (Pierce, J. L., Gardner, D. G., Cummings, L. L., & Dunham, R. B. 1989), translated into Romanian by Dragoș Iliescu and the questionnaire Dutch Scale for Measuring Work Addiction conducted by Taris and Schaufeli in 2003 and translated into Romanian by Andreea Butucescu and Lavinia C. Uscătescu.

The sample is a sample of convenience consisting of 60 Romanian respondents, employed in Romania at the time of questioning, both men and women, aged between 21 and 56 from different working environments.



The application of the questionnaire was carried out online on the Google forms platform, maintaining the confidentiality of the participants, who were informed in advance of the topic and purpose of the research.

5. Results and discussion

Hypothesis 1. It is assumed that there is a statistically significant correlation between work addiction and self-esteem in the organization.

Table 1. **Correlations**

| | | Addiction | self-esteem |
|-------------|---------------------|-----------|-------------|
| Addiction | Pearson Correlation | 1 | .497** |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | | .000 |
| | N | 60 | 60 |
| self-esteem | Pearson Correlation | .497** | 1 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .000 | |
| | N | 60 | 60 |

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

There are some links between self-esteem and dependence on work in the organizational environment, although this is not a universal rule and there are significant variations between individuals. Some aspects that may contribute to this correlation include:

People with higher self-esteem may be more likely to associate their personal worth with their professional success and recognition within the organization. This can lead to a greater emotional investment in the job and a greater dependence on it for maintaining positive self-esteem. Individuals with lower self-esteem may seek approval and positive feedback from peers and superiors to strengthen their self-image. Thus, they can develop a greater dependence on work to receive validation and increase their self-esteem. A solid self-esteem can be built and strengthened by a feeling of stability and security in professional life. If an individual feels stable at work and trusts in the security of their position, they may develop an emotional dependence on this stability.

Organizational culture can influence how employees perceive and integrate self-esteem into the context of their work. A culture that encourages recognition and personal development can contribute to greater dependence on work to improve self-esteem. If an individual feels satisfied and fulfilled at work, this can have a positive impact on their self-esteem. Addiction to work can increase in this context as the individual associates their emotional well-being with performance at work.

It is important to emphasize that these relationships are complex and there is no direct relationship in all cases. People have different ways of managing self-esteem and building personal and professional identity. External factors, such as life events or changes in the organizational environment, can also influence these relationships significantly.



Hypothesis 2. It is presumed that employees in the state sector have a higher self-esteem in relation to the organization than those in the private sector.

| | | t-test for Equality of Means | | | |
|-------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------------|
| | | Df | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference | Std. Error Difference |
| self-esteem | Equal variances assumed | 58 | .000 | -7.735 | 2.058 |
| | Equal variances not assumed | 45.449 | .001 | -7.735 | 2.133 |

Self-esteem is a personal trait influenced by a variety of factors, such as life experiences, family environment, education, professional success, and more. Also, self-esteem can vary significantly between individuals, regardless of the sector in which they work.

However, there may be some reasons that could contribute to the perception that state employees have higher self-esteem in certain cases. Public sector employees can benefit from greater job stability and financial security. This stability can contribute to stronger self-esteem as employees do not feel the increased pressure of job uncertainty.

Public sector employees can benefit from a more generous package of social benefits and benefits, including health insurance, stable pensions and other benefits, which can contribute to a more positive perception of self.

Some state employees may feel greater pride in their work because they see their contribution to the public good and the community. This sense of purpose and relevance can positively influence self-esteem.

Differences in organizational culture may also play a role. In certain public sector organisations, there is greater attention to professional development, merit recognition and work-life balance.

It is important to note that these generalizations do not apply to all situations and that there is a wide variety of individual experiences in both sectors. Each person has their own factors that influence self-esteem, and these can vary considerably.



Hypothesis 3. It was presumed that employees in the private sector have a higher work dependence than those in the state environment.

| | | Levene's Test for Equality of Variances | | t-test for Equality of Means | | |
|-----------|-----------------------------|---|------|------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------|
| | | | Sig. | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference | Std. Error Difference |
| Addiction | Equal variances assumed | 1.476 | .229 | .000 | -14.251 | 1.980 |
| | Equal variances not assumed | | | .000 | -14.251 | 1.923 |

There is no simple generalization that applies to all private or state employees regarding work addiction. It is important to consider that there are significant differences between various industries, companies, and government organizations, as well as between organizational cultures.

However, there may be certain factors that contribute to the perception that employees in the private sector are more dependent on their jobs compared to those in the state. In many private companies, organizational culture can encourage a stronger orientation towards performance and results. This can create a sense of dependence on work to meet goals and keep the job.

In some countries or sectors, public sector employees can benefit from greater job stability thanks to employee protection legislation and stronger social security systems. It can reduce the pressure of being solely dependent on your job for financial security. Private sector employees may have greater dependence on their jobs if they receive substantial benefits, such as bonuses, company shares, or other performance-related benefits. These benefits can contribute to a greater investment in the success of the organization and, implicitly, to dependence on work.

In private environments, competition is often fiercer, and employees may feel greater pressure to stay competitive and relevant. This can lead to a greater emotional and time investment in work. In the private sector, there is often greater flexibility in terms of responsibilities, roles and change of organisations. This mobility can cause employees to feel more dependent on their current job to maintain their status and the benefits associated with their current position.

It is important to emphasize that these generalizations do not apply to all situations, and each person and organization is unique. There are also public sector employees who feel a strong connection to their workplace and private sector employees who can have a healthy work-life balance.

Conclusions

The importance of work addiction in relation to self-esteem in the organization is highlighted by the impact these aspects can have on employees and organizational performance as a whole. Here are some reasons why this is significant:



Work addiction can have significant consequences on employee well-being. Those affected may experience burnout, excessive stress, and neglect of personal and social aspects. In this context, self-esteem can decrease, having a direct impact on the quality of life of the individual. Work addiction can affect employees' job satisfaction. In an environment where workaholism is prevalent, satisfaction can decrease, negatively influencing the perception of work and the organization as a whole.

Workaholism can apparently bring benefits to the organization, such as increased levels of productivity in the short term. However, in the long run, this behavior can lead to burnout, decreased performance, and risk of burnout. This can adversely affect the results of the organization. The relationship between work addiction and self-esteem is bidirectional. Work addiction can negatively influence self-esteem, and lower self-esteem can contribute to the development of workaholism behavior. Understanding these dynamics is key to fostering a healthy work environment. Employees who experience work addiction and low self-esteem may be less engaged and may have a greater tendency to leave the organization. Concerns about employee well-being and satisfaction can directly affect workforce retention and stability.

An organizational culture that promotes work-life balance and encourages personal development can positively influence employees' self-esteem. Leadership geared toward supporting work-life balance can help increase engagement and self-esteem among employees.

Overall, managing work addiction in the context of self-esteem in the organization is crucial to maintaining a healthy, engaged and motivated workforce, with a positive impact on long-term organizational performance and success.

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