Workaholism – Does Working More Impact Productivity?

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Abstract - If you believe that longer work hours mean you'll get more done, you may be wrong. Doing business and being busy are two different things. Workaholics hinder the generation of new ideas and doing business differently. Essentially, workaholics never give their brains the rest required to create new ideas or focus on the task at hand, resulting in poor productivity. Research studies in UK and USA have found that these tendencies lead to elevated stress levels and result in over commitment and under achievement. Over working leads to workaholics resulting in lower productivity and profits for the organization. It has been found that workaholics not only affect today's Productivity but also future business success of the company. Today, more and more companies are looking for healthy and sustainable way of business operations and over working is definitely is not an option. Weekly work hours in several developed and developing countries are being reduced to about 40 hours for achieving sustainable productivity in operations.

Key Words - Productivity and workaholic attitudes, Research work in UK and USA, Future business success and overwork, optimizing work hours per week.

I. INTRODUCTION

Being busy (or pretending to be) may not mean you're completing what needs to be done, or even that you're doing it well. Workaholics actually may be ineffective, according to a Psychology Today article on the connection between working hard and being a workaholic. This is because they're poor team members who have a hard time delegating work, and end up overcommitted and therefore more disorganized than others. Stress, sleep deprivation and lack of exercise are hallmarks of workaholics, and they actually hinder the generation of creative ideas, according to a recent study of 1,385 people by online psychological assessment firm Psych Tests. And a large UK study of 21,000 employees found that elevated stress levels and lack of sleep lowered productivity in the workplace.

A British study found that those who work 55 hours a week or more were 33 per cent more likely to suffer a stroke compared with those who clocked 35 to 40 hours per week. There was also a significant increase of 10 per cent in heart attacks and other cardiac health issues. Stressful environment, too much sitting and poor diets are being looked at as contributing factors to the health risks of long work weeks. Since the late 1980s, there has been strong popular interest in the subject of working hours and in the so-called workaholic. There has been less interest in the academic literature on the subject of long working hours

and the motivations of those who work beyond the limits of what is necessary. The new dimension points to another group alongside workaholics: over workers. In one of the research studies, One hundred seventy-four managers and professionals with master of business administration degrees rated themselves on work and reward dimensions and provided data about work behaviors, rewards, attitudes, and job progression as part of a longitudinal study. Over workers and workaholics were found to differ on a number of dimensions. Implications for these groups, including their potential roles in the context of boundary less careers, and for the organizations that employ them were found to be not favorable.

The No. 1 goal of a workaholic is to be busy at all times — as they believe that the busier they are (or appear), the more important they must be. Workaholics fill any space in time with busy work because they feel insecure doing nothing, the insecurity comes from not knowing their value.

Figure 1: Workaholic Skipping a vacation or Lunch may not be the best idea

What's more, experts agree that grabbing lunch with co-workers and clients can be a great way to network and further your career. A high performer works hard in "healthy sustainable ways and feels happy and inspired," meanwhile, a workaholic "works hard in unhealthy unsustainable ways and feels unhappy and burned out."

II. OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

Productivity has always been a concern of all manufacturing companies. So, many companies resorted to getting an extra mile from its workers for the same salary and wages. But soon this practice led to some workers being on the job for a longer time than required to complete the work resulting in an actual drop of Productivity. More than the drop of productivity, which could be improved, permanent arm was done to the working habits of employees. Being present on the job for more and more duration than it actually called for affect the long term habit and consequently the output and productivity measures in place for measurement. The present research paper would analyze the pros and cons of such improper conduct of employees. Following specific Objectives have been identified for the purpose of the current research study:

1. A brief review of current business environment regarding productivity and its measurement.

2. Some of the concerns and causes affecting productivity.

3. Circumstances leading to workaholic attitudes.

4. Analysis of consequences of such attitudes.

5. Suggestions and recommendation for overcoming such attitudes.

A Questionnaire survey was initially considered for eliciting response from different industrial companies. This was found to be not feasible and cumbersome to collect, collate and infer conclusions from data. On a study of available literature, and the electronic web pages, it was found that adequate data was available. The task was then to identify the sources, collect, collate and classify the information and data sources. This has been done and the result was found to be satisfactory to arrive at the conclusions and recommendations.

III. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Contrary to popular belief, workaholic attitudes are wide spread and consequently the author felt the need for selecting the topic for a detailed research study. The term work holism was coined in 1971 by minister and psychologist Wayne Oates, who described workaholics as "the compulsion or the uncontrollable need to work incessantly" (Oates, 1971). Since then, research on work holism has been plagued by disagreements surrounding how to define and measure the construct. For example, workaholism has been defined as an addiction to work (Ng, Sorensen & Feldman, 2007; Porter, 2006; Robinson, 2000), a pathology (Fassel, 1990), a behavior pattern that persists across multiple organizational settings (Scott, Moore &

Miceli, 1997) and a syndrome comprised of high drive, high work involvement and low work enjoyment (Aziz & Zickar, 2006). In an effort to reconcile these varied perspectives, key commonalities across these definitions and used these to form a comprehensive definition that includes the following components (Clark, Michel, Zhdanova, Pui & Baltes, in press):

○ Feeling compelled to work because of internal pressures.

○ Having persistent thoughts about work when not working.

○ Working beyond what is reasonably expected of the worker (as established by the requirements of the job or basic economic needs)

Figure 2: Compulsive need to catch up in spite of being on a holiday

Taking work to home and create a situation of non-satisfactory conditions for wife and children is another popular form of workaholic behavior. For such people the work never ends and it stretches beyond imagination. An all-consuming devotion to work is linked to a variety of undesirable outcomes. Workaholism is linked to work-family conflict, or having competing, and often conflicting demands in one's professional and private spheres. In turn, work-family conflict can decrease satisfaction with one's family, or even one's life as a whole. After all, if your significant other or children are complaining that you're not present enough at home, and you're simultaneously feeling that you're not living up to the demands of your job; it can be a pretty stressful and conflicted existence. Consequently, it's not surprising that workaholism is also linked to burnout.

The cumulative body of research supports the idea that workaholism has negative consequences. As shown in Figure 3, meta-analytic findings overwhelmingly show that workaholism is associated with negative outcomes for the individual, for the workaholic's family, and even for the organization (Clark et al., in press). Some of the strongest

negative relationships were found between workaholism and job stress, work-life conflict and burnout. One particularly noteworthy finding from our meta-analysis was that workaholism was not significantly related to performance, which indicates that even though workaholics may spend more time thinking about and physically engaging in work than the average worker, this may not be of any benefit to their employer. In contrast, meta-analytic studies investigating the outcomes of work engagement have found a positive association between work engagement and many positive outcomes, including improved organizational performance (Christian, Garza, & Slaughter, 2011); a finding that further emphasizes the differences between workaholism and work engagement.
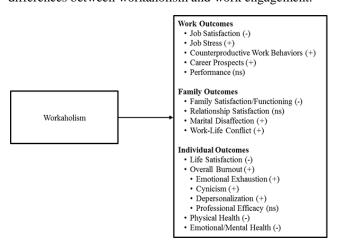

Figure 3: Summary of significant outcomes of workaholism. A positive sign (+)

indicates a significant positive relationship with workaholism, a negative sign (-)

indicates a significant negative relationship, and ns indicates a non significant

relationship. Adapted from Clark, Michel, Zhdanova, Pui & Baltes (in press).

In science and practice, workaholism and work engagement are often confused. Undoubtedly, the behaviors of workaholics and engaged workers appear similar because in both cases these individuals often work harder and longer than other individuals. However, research suggests there are several key differences between workaholism and work engagement. One key difference between workaholism and work engagement is the motivations underlying these behaviors. Whereas engaged workers are driven to work because they find it intrinsically pleasurable, workaholics are driven to work because they feel an inner compulsion to work — feelings that they "should" be working (Graves, Ruderman, Ohlott & Weber, 2012). Although the research on this topic is still in its infancy, several studies have found support for the idea that workaholism and work engagement are related to different motivational underpinnings (Clark, Hunter,

Beiler-May & Carlson, 2015; van Beek, Hu, Schaufeli, Taris, & Schreurs, 2012; van Beek, Taris, Schaufeli, & Brenninkmeijer, 2014).

Second, workaholics and engaged workers appear to experience very different emotions. For example, in a two-wave study of working adults, we found that workaholism was related to the experience of negative discrete emotions (i.e., guilt, anxiety, anger and disappointment) at work and home, whereas work engagement was related to the experience of positive discrete emotions (i.e., joviality, attentiveness and self-assurance) at work and home (Clark, Michel, Stevens Howell, & Scruggs, 2013). Additionally, it was found that workaholics reported feeling less joviality and self-assurance at work. These findings are in line with a taxonomy of work-related well-being presented by Schaufeli (2013), who posited that engaged workers experience pleasant activated emotions (e.g., excited, happy, enthusiastic) while workaholics experience unpleasant activated emotions (e.g., irritated, hostile, tense).

The cumulative body of research suggests that workaholism is primarily linked with negative outcomes, and work engagement is primarily linked with positive outcomes. By definition workaholism makes it difficult to psychologically detach from work, and can interfere with the individual's ability to recharge and recover from the job. Apart from creating psychological challenges, workaholism has also been shown to have physical ramifications. For example, one study suggested that workaholics have increased susceptibility to sleep problems and heightened cardiovascular risk. Another study of workers in the United States, Australia, and Europe found that individuals who worked 55 or more hours per week were more likely to develop heart disease or suffer from a stroke than those who worked 35-40 hours per week.

To help prevent your workaholic tendencies from sabotaging your productivity, the following suggestions can be tried out:

- Set work hours and stick to them.

- Schedule and commit to regular fresh air and exercise (to help you sleep better).

- Prioritize your work activities to start with those that will yield the most productive results.

- Say no to commitments requiring longer work hours.

- Don't answer emails or phone calls outside of your set work hours or when you're on vacation.

- Don't forget to schedule family, friend and community social time.

Workaholics who are also entrepreneurs are especially at risk for sleep problems, elevated stress levels, and poor personal and work relationships due to impatience with others. After all, you don't have a boss to help curb your workaholic tendencies. It's up to you to change your behavior. Remember, workaholic tendencies may not only hamper today's productivity, it may even work against your future business success.

Here are three more subtle differences between workaholics and high performers:

1. High performers know their value. Workaholics allow others to determine their value.

"A high performer knows their self-worth and can thus work with a sense a freedom". They do periodic self-evaluations of their performance so that they can constantly improve. And, "they create their own feedback loops rather than waiting on feedback from others." A workaholic, on the other hand, relies on external validation from those around them: bosses, colleagues, and clients. They wait for external evaluations, such as mid-year or annual reviews, to understand how well they are doing, which causes them to work with a constant sense of fear.

2. High performers give 100% at the right time. Workaholics give 110% all of the time.

A high performer knows when to "turn it up." They know when they're expected or required to give everything they have — and they save their energy for those occasions." They don't buy into the illusion of 110%," he says. "They know that 110% is unsustainable. Instead they focus on increasing their capacity so that their 100% is better than the competition's 110%." A workaholic attempts to go all out, all the time. "They have difficulty prioritizing what's important; therefore, everything is important in their mind."

3. High performers take initiative. Workaholics are reactive.

A high performer plans out their day in advance to make sure they will get their most meaningful work done. Only after they have completed these takes do they allow themselves to shift focus to unplanned events. By contrast, a workaholic's day is driven entirely by outside distractions like reading emails and handling crises.

4. High performers do business. Workaholics are busy.

A high performer's primary goal is to do business. The only thing that matters to them is results. If they can't see a way to create value in the moment, they facilitate or strategize instead. They know that like the economy, business comes in waves, therefore they get ready during the dips so they can capitalize during the upswings.
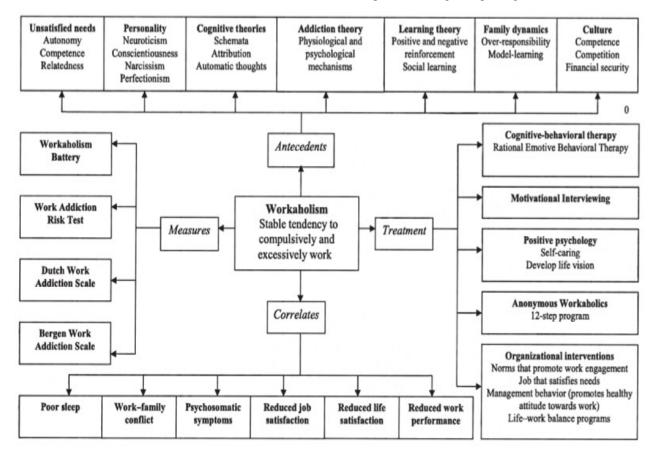

Figure: 4 Schematic overview of the workaholism field, including particular measurements, possible antecedents and consequences (correlates) of workaholism, and potential treatment approaches

A schematic view of workaholism in an organization and how interventions can help overcome problems is given below in Figure 4.The antecedents will measure the cases or factors leading to such behavior in organizations. Various measurement tools are also depicted. How workaholism can be detected or correlated to attitudes towards work is also given. Finally on the RHS suggestions as to how organizations can deal with such problems are given. This is a useful framework for organization planners.

Organizational intervention strategies are very important to design the above. In the strategic planning model it is clearly mentioned as to how organizations will interface with employees and correct the organizational functions and redirect them to organizational goals. Work attitudes are important for an organization and good organizations keep a continuous vigil on this.

IV.   FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

All work and no play, makes Jack a dull boy. It also hurts Jack's health and has a negative impact on his relationships and work life. Workaholic attitude involves a reluctance to disengage from work that is evidenced by a tendency to work or think about work anytime and anywhere. Conceptual links made with the transactional model of stress suggest that workaholics focus on work at the expense of personal relationships. A healthy attitude towards work and doing it with good spirits is important for achieving productivity and operational efficiency.

Current working environment is demanding, but an analyst will tell you that the environment has always been challenging. Productivity has always been a concern of particularly manufacturing firms where more people are employed and the need to utilize them is challenging. Somewhere along the line the misconception has given way, that the more engaged people are they contribute to improve production and productivity. Some workmen and supervisors were smitten by this fancy to be occupied always in work related activities without considering the contribution of those activities to improved production or productivity. Such workaholic behavior is causing concern.

We have seen in the literature review that such behaviors not only affect productivity but also the long term motivation and health of employees. With the competitive pressures in all facets of manufacturing, marketing and planning, the companies are waking up to this reality that working too much is not good for the employees as well as for the employer, considering the long term implications. Companies, through training and induction programs have to educate the employees regarding proper attitudes towards work and leisure activities.

As consequences, the employee's professional and private lives and health are affected. The various forms of afflictions have been described in the review of literature. The purpose of taking employment is to take care of the families and have a good life for self and members of the family. If this basic premise is threatened by workaholic attitudes, the concerned employee and the company should jointly take immediate steps to get to the root of the problem and create appropriate organizational intervention strategies and actions. Any delay or passive attitude in this regard has grave consequences for the employee and the organization.

Various suggestions for immediate identification of workaholism and taking up immediate actions have been suggested. Corporate intervention can start with defining the ideal working hours and create policies to implement. Working more should be replaced by working to schedule and completing assignments on time. Any tendency for departure from the norms should be nipped in the bud. The sooner it is realized that workaholism is a disease, the better for the organization.

Figure 5: can we stop this?!

New phenomena specific to the times we live in such as globalization, the socio-economic crisis can generate pressures upon employees and organization management. Work ethics and organizational culture encourages work and implicitly work addiction – developing into an addiction, the latest buzz word in the world of addiction. The support of the family and friends, keeping equilibrium between family and professional life, and prioritization can reduce the degree of work addiction. A serious analysis of an unhealthy organization, which encourages work addiction, can reveal communication issues, unsolved or unknown conflicts, unrealistic tasks or deadlines, a poor management, a poor control of the leadership, high-level stress. Modern organizations are confronted with new challenges which organizational management must properly manage. And sometimes the solutions are not so hard to find unless we find the equilibrium in all we do.

V.   RECOMMENDATIONS

One exciting future research direction is understanding workaholism in a dynamic sense. In a recent study aimed at understanding momentary workaholism using experience sampling methodology, it was found 46 percent of the variance in workaholism was attributable to within-person

variance (Clark et al., 2015). Additionally, workaholics reported greater negative emotions on days they also reported greater workaholism (Clark et al., 2015). Yet, we still do not know how these relationships play out in terms of discrete work or family events. For example, do workaholics experience fleeting moments of joy when they are working on a work task? Future research could also examine the contextual factors (e.g., organizational expectations, leader behavior) that may foster momentary workaholic tendencies.

Although there have been some promising advances recently in the study of workaholism, there is still much we do not yet know. Future research is needed to understand the role of organizational factors, such as a climate for overwork, in fostering and reinforcing employee workaholic behaviors. Longitudinal research on the outcomes of workaholism is sorely needed. Given the changing nature of the workplace, it is even more important than ever before to understand the antecedents and consequences of workaholism. Technology advances (e.g., smart phones, company-supplied laptops) have allowed employees potentially 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 ramifications of the changing nature of work as well as changing technology (e.g., increasing popularity of smart phones) on workaholics.

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