

Workaholism and
Well-Being

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Lecture Outline

- Discuss definitions of workaholism (WH) / work addiction
- Explore factors that are implicated in the development of work addiction
- Introduce definitions of work engagement (WE)
- Introduce the umbrella concept of Heavy Work Investment (HWI) and link to WH and WE

Workaholism and Work Engagement

1. WORKAHOLISM

Work Addiction or Workaholism?

- Work Addiction: (psychological construct)
 - Negative
 - Rooted in core addiction literature
 - Characterised by a compulsive use of work and a work persona to fulfil potential needs of intimacy, power, and success
 - Is a major source of marital discord and breakdown
 - Often affects those who come from alcoholic or dysfunctional homes

Work Addiction or Workaholism?

- Workaholism: (generic term)
 - Generally includes a wider range of theoretical underpinnings
 - Construct seen as something positive rather than negative
 - Workaholism in everyday language used to describe very engaged workers, thus adding confusion to these two terms

Work Addiction or Workaholism?

- Ongoing debate about the definition of work addiction or 'workaholism'
- Consistent evidence re: characteristics associated with workaholics
 - Personality factors
 - Perfectionism
- As well as consequences for the individual as a result of workaholism
 - Work-life imbalance (Avanzi et al., 2012)
 - Decreased satisfaction at work and lower general life satisfaction (Shimazu et al., 2015)
 - Decreased motivation to work

Work Addiction or Workaholism?

- Gibb, Ferguson and Horwood (2012):
 - The behaviours exhibited and consequences that arise as a result of workaholic behaviours mirror those displayed by individuals with other addictive disorders such as alcoholism and substance abuse.
- Griffiths (2005): six core addiction components

Core Components of Addictions

Salience:

The activity has a high level of importance in everyday life.

Mood modification:

A change in subjective experiences. People may feel a 'high' or a 'buzz'.

Tolerance:

Decreased sensitivity to the activity over time.

Core Components of Addictions

Withdrawal:

Unpleasant physical/ psychological symptoms when the activity is reduced

Conflict:

These can be intrapersonal or interpersonal.

Relapse:

After a period of control the addictive behaviours can manifest again.

**Are these components
present in individuals with
an addiction to work?**



Workaholism

- Oates (1971):

Workaholism is “an addiction to work, the compulsion or the uncontrollable need to work incessantly” (p.11)

Individuals who work excessively hard and have a strong irresistible drive to work compulsively, potentially irrespective of satisfaction with their job (Schaufeli, Shimazu, & Taris, 2009)



Workaholism

- Many definitions have been constructed to describe workaholism
 - Often not helpful when components of addiction and/or engagement are included
- All appear to include:

a behavioural component and an **affective component**



Working excessively

Working compulsively

(Mazzetti, Schaufeli, & Guglielmi, 2014).

**What contributes to the
development of
workaholism?**

Development of Workaholism

- A variety of biopsychosocial factors..

Biological	Psychological	Social
Addictions among biological family members (alcoholism)	Social learning	Peer norms
OCD	Narcissism and Type A behaviour	Organisational or cultural expectations
Unusual early response to experience (e.g., early tolerance development)	Perfectionism and conscientiousness	Societal messages and attitudes
	Neuroticism and self-esteem	

Development of Workaholism

- **Escape or control mechanism**

- Individuals attempt to escape 'real life' by engaging in excessive and compulsive work
- Issue of control is important to workaholics – unable to delegate responsibilities and tasks to others

Andreassen and Pallesen (2010)

- **Self-esteem / competition with self and others**

- Competition in today's society for (high profile) jobs – particularly prevalent in female workaholics
- 'performance-based' self-esteem
- Gain or maintain feelings of self-worth through good performances at work

Development of Workaholism

- **Type A and OCD traits**

- May play a part in initial behavioural manifestations of workaholism
- Type A behaviour pattern corresponds quite closely to that of the obsessive-compulsive, and probably to workaholics
- Are workaholics simply obsessive individuals who are using work as an avenue to act these compulsions out?
- Are they drawn to certain types of work because of this?

- **Career- or achievement-oriented**

- Also linked to Type A behaviour
- Work longer hours, recommend work to others, invest in the organisation and sacrifice non-work activities for work

Workaholism and Work Engagement

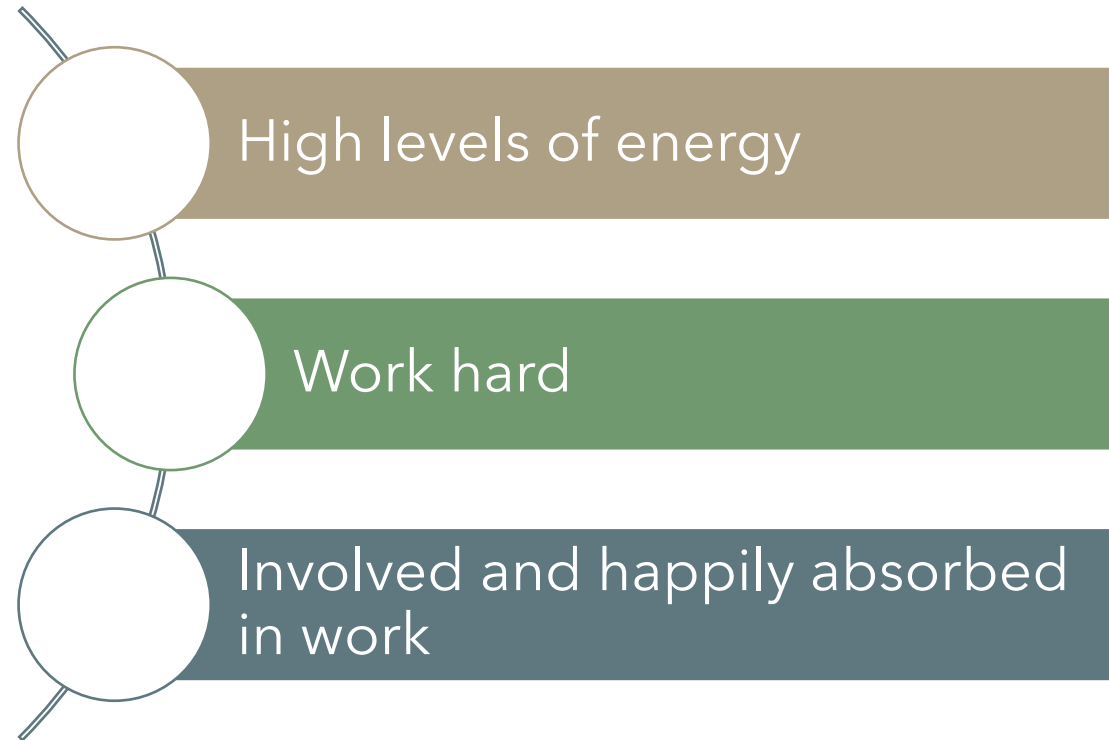
2. WORK ENGAGEMENT

Work Engagement

- Work engagement = healthy work
- A positive and psychologically beneficial/healthy type of heavy work investment
 - Proposed to be related to sense of identity and development of individual strengths
 - Brings about means of satisfaction, accomplishment, and mastery of problems

Work Engagement

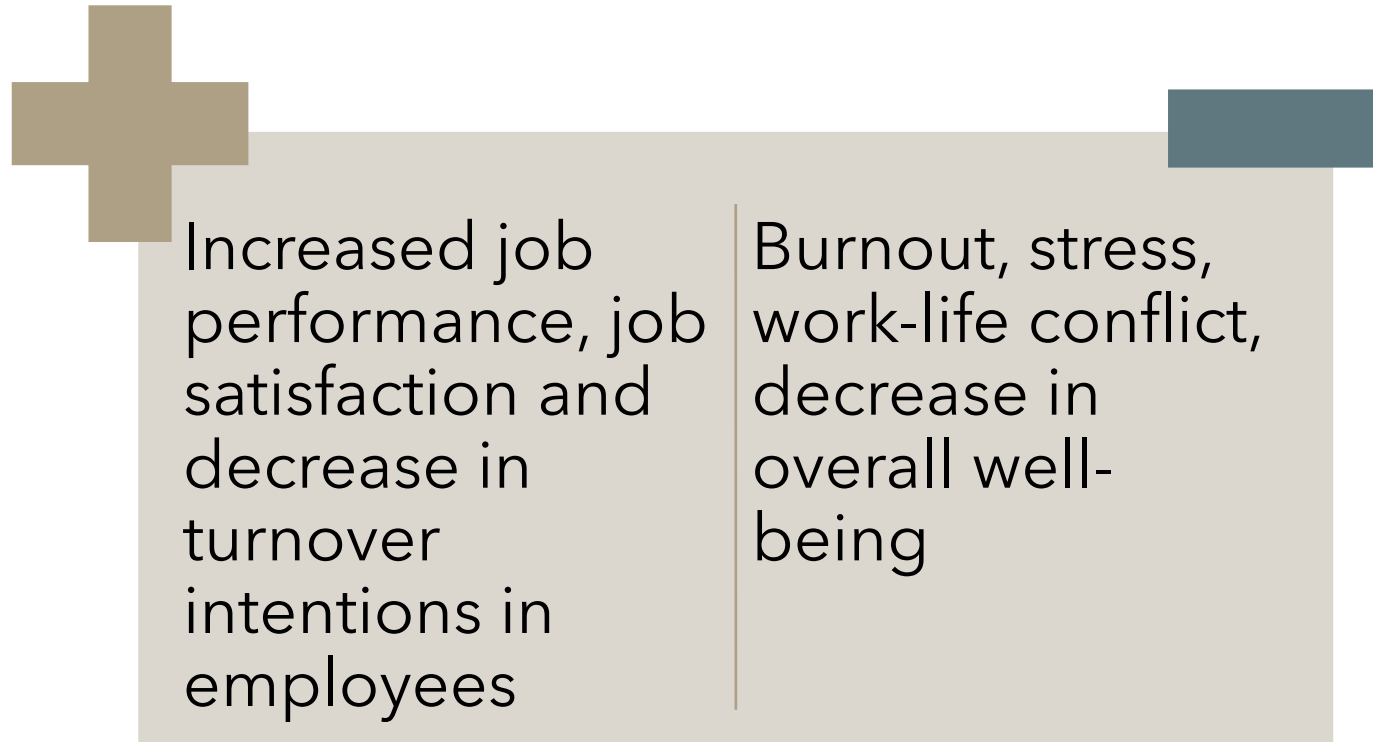
- Characterised by
vigour,
dedication and
absorption



(Hakanen et al., 2018; Schaufeli et al., 2002)

Interaction between WE and WH

- Gillet et al. (2018): high levels of WE and WH are associated with a variety of positive and negative outcomes



A blurred office desk scene. In the foreground, a pair of glasses rests on a stack of papers. To the left, a black and white mug is visible. A laptop is open in the background. The overall image is out of focus, with warm, bokeh-style light spots in the background.

Heavy Work Investment

Heavy Work Investment (HWI)

- HWI refers to the **extra** amount of time and energy an employee allocates to their work (Snir & Harpaz, 2012)
- As an umbrella construct, HWI consists of two main dimensions:

Heavy work investment

Time
commitment

Work intensity

Workaholism

Work
engagement

Heavy Work Investment (HWI)

Proposed Framework based on Job Demands-Resources Model

HWI works on a continuum between the health impairment (demands) and motivation (resources)

JOB DEMANDS

Dimensions that carry personal costs

May lead to negative outcomes such as burnout and emotional exhaustion

JOB RESOURCES

Dimensions that may lead to positive outcomes

Work engagement, goal accomplishment, personal/professional growth



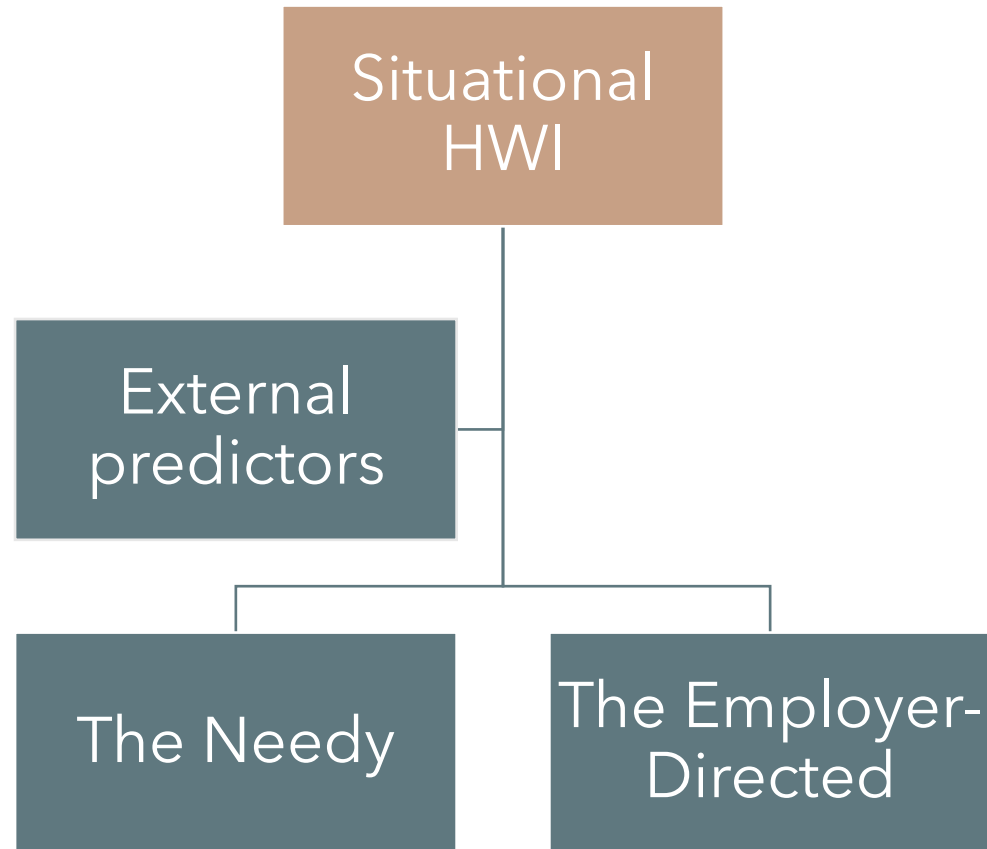
- Workers are not just **prone** to investing heavily in work; the type of person that worker **is** can have a massive impact on working behaviours
 - And therefore WH behaviours
- Modern life work seeks and selects workers who are highly motivated and committed – those willing to work hard and go the extra mile
- Employers and organisations have their own expectations of level of work engagement

The interaction between WH and WE

Snir and Harpaz
(2012): Two major
types of HWI

Situational

Dispositional



External, uncontrollable and stable (mostly)

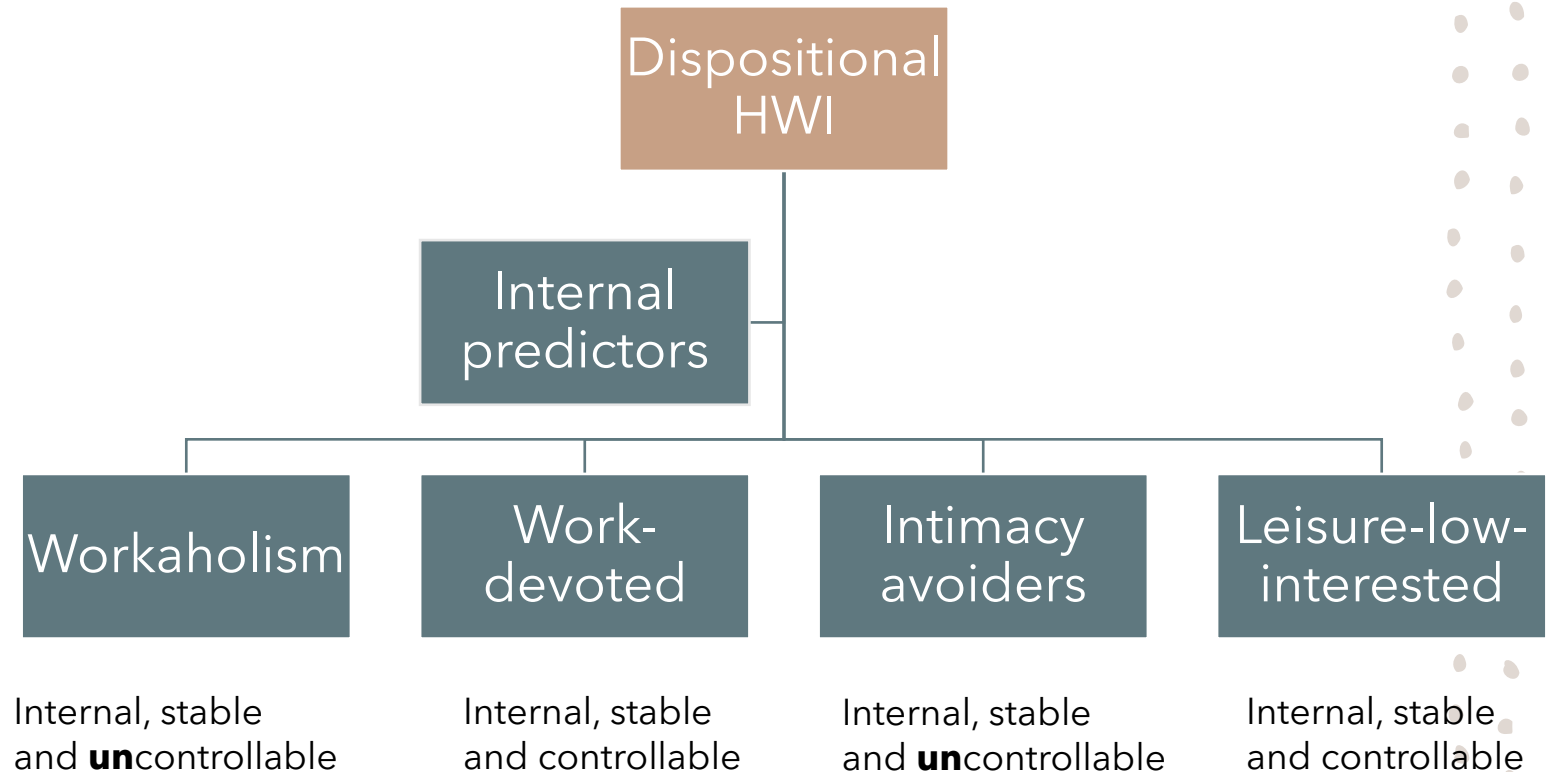
The interaction between WH and WE

Snir and Harpaz

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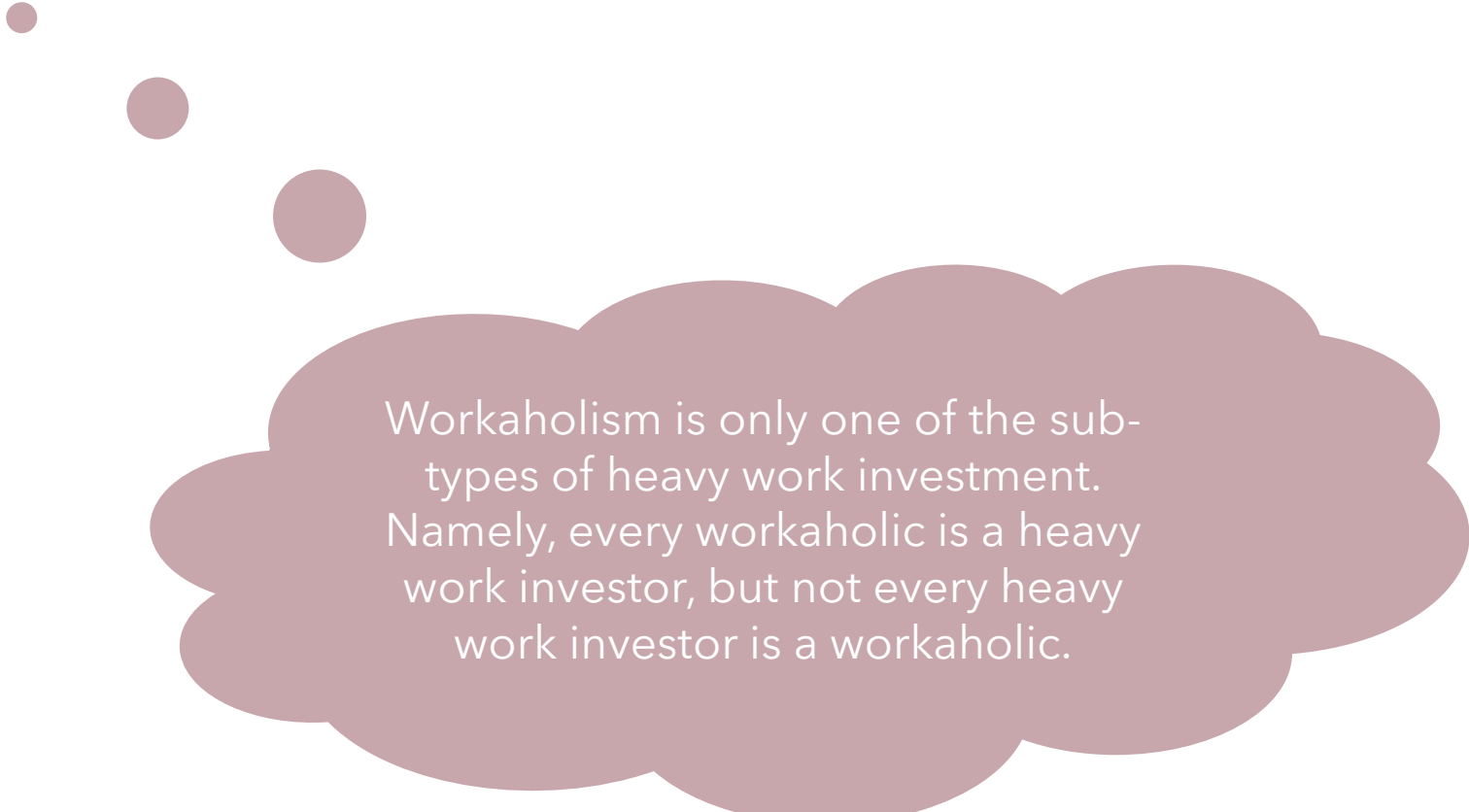
Situational

Dispositional



The interaction between WH and WE

- Snir and Harpaz (2012)



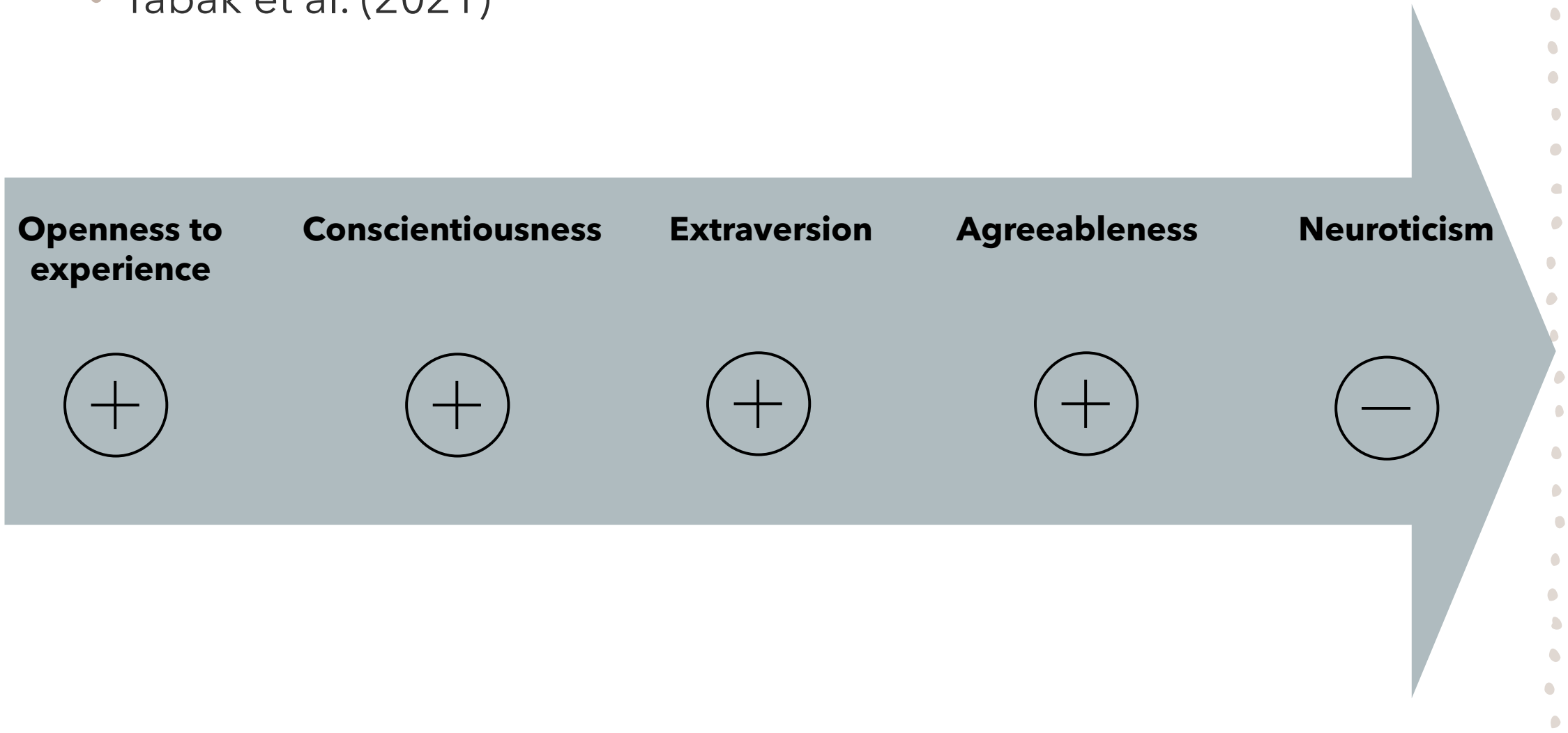
Workaholism is only one of the subtypes of heavy work investment. Namely, every workaholic is a heavy work investor, but not every heavy work investor is a workaholic.

HWI: Dispositional Traits

- Personality differences may create tendencies to engage heavily in work or not
- Often discussed in terms of behaviour, cognition, and affect
 - Traits influence perceptions/attitudes at work
 - Each of the Big 5 may have different degrees of association with B, A and C dispositions
- Makikangas et al. (2013): N is positively related to WH as perceived demands outweigh resources. O, C, E and A are positively related to WE as perceived resources outweigh demands

HWI: Dispositional Traits

- Tabak et al. (2021)



HWI: Dispositional Traits

- Tabak et al. (2021)

Openness to experience



Flexible; independent-minded; critical thinking abilities

Absorption in finding new avenues to explore is likely

Related to cognitive disposition than affective or behavioural

HWI: Dispositional Traits

- Tabak et al. (2021)

Conscientiousness



Dependability; motivation to achieve; committed to succeeding

Ethical and have high integrity

High need for achievement with internal locus of control

Want to be successful – but calculated risks

HWI: Dispositional Traits

- Tabak et al. (2021)

Extraversion



Dominant, assertive, persistent

Like to be in charge; motivated to be in position of authority

Competition is also a motivator

Sociable and function well in highly stressful environments

HWI: Dispositional Traits

- Tabak et al. (2021)

Agreeableness



High EI and value positive relationships with others

Empathy and high sensitivity to others; own needs last

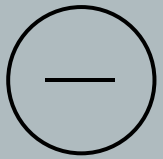
Work well with others

Manage emotions well

HWI: Dispositional Traits

- Tabak et al. (2021)

Neuroticism



Stress- and anxiety-prone personality

Insecurity and low confidence

Creates a challenge for employees; hence viewed as job demand

May be related to workaholism as likely to create a compulsive need to work

HWI: Organisational Culture

- HWI is suggested to be heavily linked to organisational culture/climate
 - **“The collection of values, expectations and practices that guide and inform the actions of all team members”**
- Organisational culture can differ between and within organisations
- Employees who feel valued and supported are more likely to be committed to, and psychologically invested in, the organisation

HWI: Organisational Culture

- Makikangas et al. (2013): an employees perceived work environment (organisational culture), independent of any other dispositional characteristics, can differentiate between WH and WE
 - WH related to overwork climate; WE related to employee growth climate
- Overwork climate (Mazzetti, Schaufeli, & Guglielmi, 2014)
 - Encouragement from organisation to engage in overtime, and the expectation that employees do so
 - Conveying the message that excessive working is desirable, and thus fostering workaholic behaviours

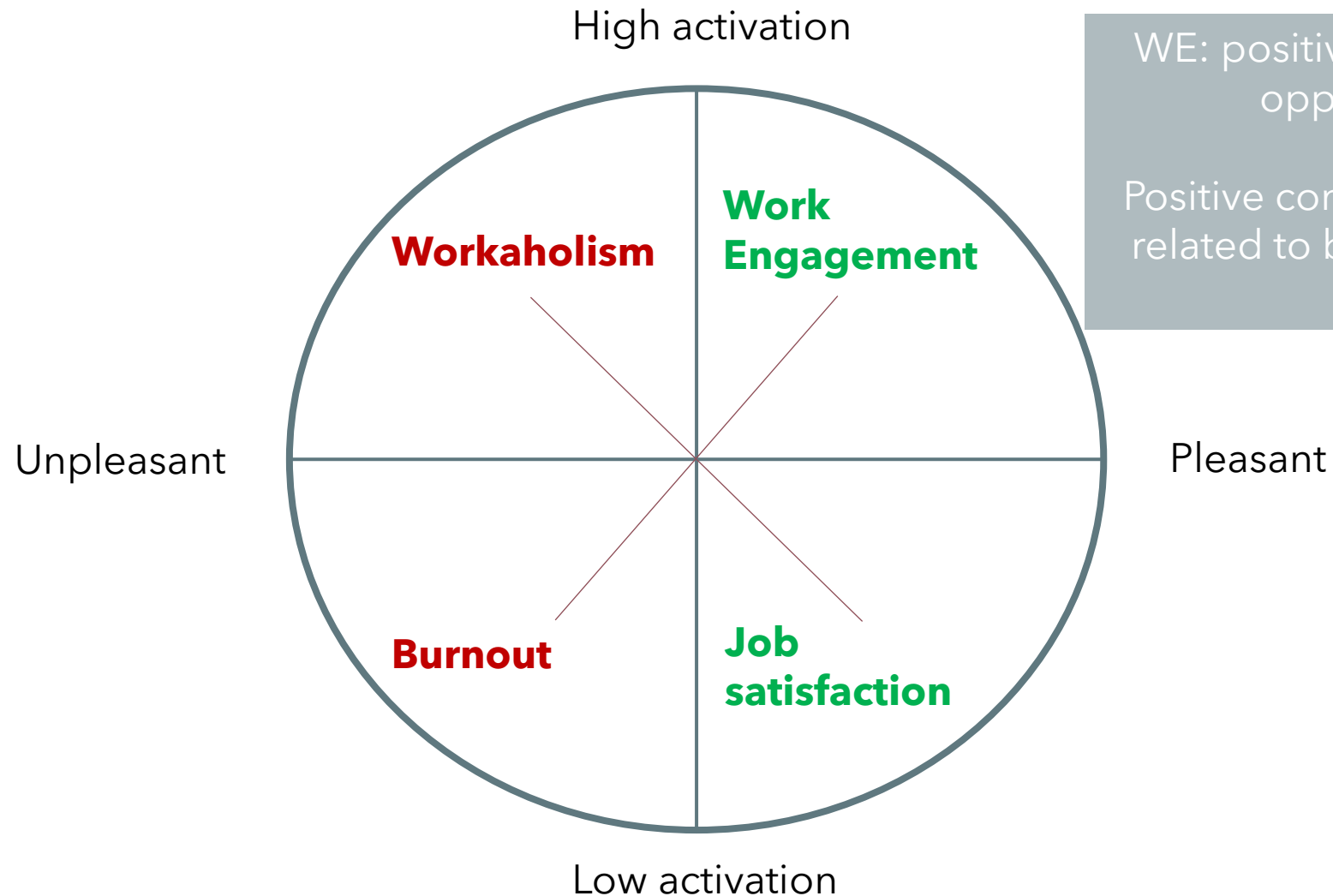
Positive and Negative outcomes of HWI

WORK-RELATED SUBJECTIVE WELL-
BEING

HWI: Positive outcomes

- HWI can result in positive outcomes for both the employer and the employee
- More time/effort from employee → higher self-esteem, identity at work
- Employer → highly engaged and committed employee

Work-Related Subjective well-Being



WE: positive form of SWB & polar opposite of burnout
OR
Positive construct that is negatively related to burnout (Schaufeli et al. 2002)

HWI: Negative outcomes

- **Burnout**

- Three elements (Maslach, 1993): exhaustion, cynicism, and lack of professional efficacy
- Burnout as a result of working too much / too hard – exhaustion, in particular, linked to depression and psychosomatic complaints

HWI: Negative outcomes

- **Far greater work-family conflicts**
 - Partners and children of workaholics suffer (Macmillan & O'Driscoll, 2004)
 - Marriage / relationship breakdown (Bakker, Demerouti, & Burke, 2009)
- **Anxiety and stress**
 - Individuals with a strong internal work drive experience higher stress-related physical and psychological symptoms when compare to those with low scores (Andreassen et al., 2007)
 - Coping style also implicated

The Impact of Covid on Workaholism and Well-Being

Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic

- Arlinghaus et al. (2019)
 - Requirement of activity beyond regular working time
 - Non-standard working hours impact on 'leisure' time
- Loscalzo (2021)
 - Teachers - reorganisation of teaching to be carried out 'online'
Work-life conflict and negative affect
 - Those who exhibited workaholic behaviours prior to pandemic experience **a higher negative impact** on their work and life
 - Work engagement positively predicted **perceived** efficacy for distance learning, and negatively predicted negative affect and work-life conflict

Remote Work and Well-Being

Yahoo has banned its staff from "remote" working. After years of many predicting working from home as the future for everybody, why is it not the norm?

2013

Another one bites the dust

No more remote work: IBM implements "move or leave" program

2017

Work-life balance [+ Add to myFT](#)

Resolve to kick the addiction to work email

It is hard for one employee to ignore office messages when others keep sending them

January 2017

Are smartphones making our working lives more stressful?

Some evidence suggests the encroachment of work on home life is creating more exhausted, cynical and burned out workers



📷 'It seems difficult, if not impossible, for mobile users to maintain a satisfactory balance between their work and personal life,' one researcher wrote. Photograph: EPA



*There's much evidence that harmful pre-pandemic ways
have simply been adapted for the remote world*

Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic

- *Remote working and HSE management standards*
 - **DEMANDS** no commuting, but home distractions
 - **CONTROL** higher level of discretion
 - **SUPPORT** Risk of isolation
 - **RELATIONSHIPS** less conflict – but harder to resolve
 - **ROLE** usually well defined / less clarification
 - **Change** May feel 'out of the loop'

Conclusion?

- Definitions of workaholism are varied
- Generally accepted that workaholism belongs on one end of a heavy work investment continuum
 - With work engagement being its positive, polar opposite
- Many theories that propose the development of HWI behaviours; many positive and negative outcomes associated with HWI overall
- Some organisations welcome 'workaholic behaviours'
 - Most notably working excessively long hours

Conclusion?

- But people often have their own reasons for working longer hours
 - Financial problems; strong career aspirations; organisation overwork climate
- The Covid pandemic has introduced a whole new wave of HWI behaviours