Occupational Psychology

Lecture 6: Work Addiction

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Lecture Outline

- Introduce the concept of work-life balance
- Discuss the definitions of work addiction
- Explore the impact of excessive working on the potential development of work addiction
- Compare core component of work addiction to other behavioural addictions
- Explore other factors that may impact the development of work addiction
- Discuss individual and organisational causes of work addiction

What has an impact on the development of ***addiction to work?***

Development of addiction to work?

Why is work-life balance important?

- Work-life balance = the proper prioritising between 'work' (careers/ambition) and 'lifestyle' (health, pleasure, family, etc)
- Brady et al. (2008): conflict arises at home as a result of inability to detach and separate work from home life
- Work-life imbalance implicated in mental health problems, decreased motivation at and commitment to work, and marital problems (Schaufeli et al., 2008)

What can be done to ensure employees have a sound work-life balance?

Working to live?
Or living to work?

Sturges and Guest (2004):

- Graduates in the early stages of their career work increasingly long hours and experience an increasingly unsatisfactory relationship between home and work

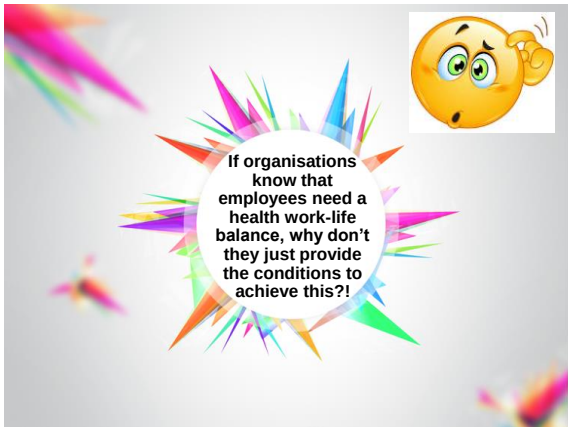
WHY?!

Study A: Quantitative measure of attitudes

- Graduates reported that achieving a healthy work-life balance was highly important to them before they started work
- Only approx. 10% of graduates stated that they worked standard office hours, with those with 8 years of service working significantly longer hours than new starters
- However, found that there was no association between greater work/non-work conflict and lower organisational commitment

Study B: Qualitative exploration of issues affecting commitment

- Importance of work-life balance emerged strongly
  - *I work to live, I don't live to work. I won't be happy at work unless I'm happy in my social life*
- Suggestions that if work-life balance was not achieved, graduates would consider leaving the organisation
- Many stated that working long hours as a short-term option was ok – but would not tolerate that becoming the norm, especially if they had family responsibilities



Work-life balance

- "Work-life balance is the individual perception that work and non-work activities are compatible and promote growth in accordance with an individual's current life priorities" (Kalliath & Brough, 2008)
- Work-life balance working group has been set up by the Division of Occupational Psychology within the BPS

Risk factors

The job:

- Demands, control and support (Johnson & Hall, 1988)

Workers' attitudes:

- High levels of job involvement and commitment to work/the organisation can turn into OVER commitment – difficulty switching off when at home.
- Organisational culture – the attitudes of OTHER workers also has an impact on the development of work-life imbalance. E.g., viewing working long hours as synonymous with dedication and productivity

Risk factors

Factors outside of work:

- Stress within family or relationships
- Caring responsibilities
- Little support from family when working long hours

Other things employers need to consider

Nowadays, customers expect to have goods and services available outside of the traditional 9 to 5 working hours

Employees want to achieve a better balance between work and home life

Organisations want to meet their customers needs AND employee needs in a way that enables them to be as productive as possible…

Solutions?

- Flexi-time
- Part-time hours
- Annualised hours
- Job-sharing
- Compressed hours
- Shift work
- Term-time working
- Working from home
- Hot-desking

Working from home – a grey area?

Individuals need the right skills and personality traits to be effective homeworkers:

- Strong time management and self-discipline
- Motivation, self-sufficiency and the ability to work alone
- Strong lifestyle management and the ability to manage the split between home life and working life
- The ability to manage IT equipment

Working from home – the benefits

For the employee

Fewer interruptions and less time spent commuting

Control over noise, heat, lighting, etc

Some reported cases of better work-life balance and improvement in health and well-being

For the organisation

Can improve employee retention, especially in the case of parents

Businesses have access to a wider pool of applicants for consideration for jobs – e.g., disabled candidates who may prefer to work from home

Financial savings on office space and other facilities

Working from home – the problems

For the employee

Deterioration in skills

Cost of working from home

If poorly managed, employee can feel confused over goals, standards and expectations

Decrease in staff morale

Unable to separate work and home life – potential for workaholic behaviours

For the organisation

Deterioration in employee skills – lower work quality

Cost of working from home – company responsible for providing suitable working conditions to meet health and safety standards

Difficult to monitor performance

Losing touch with employees and difficulty arranging meetings

Other potential implications

Overworking: the temptation to work after hours is considerable

Work addiction: Potential for the development of addictive behaviours is immense

Colleague support: the must may trust that the homeworker is WORKING at home, but fellow employees may not be so trusting

Home technology: implications for the organisation in terms of money and trust that the technology is being used for work

- **2013**

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?

"Some of the best decisions and insights come from hallway and cafeteria discussions, meeting new people, and impromptu team meetings. Speed and quality are often sacrificed when we work from home. We need to be one Yahoo!, and that starts with physically being together."

Marissa Mayer, Chief Executive of Yahoo!

2014

Reddit Gives Remote Employees Until End Of Year To Relocate To San Francisco

2017

Another one bites the dust

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

The role of technology at work

Technology = computers, email, smartphones, tablets, iPad's…

What are the implications of potentially being connected to work at all hours of the day and night?

What does the evidence show?

- Do people respond well to technology at work or not?
- What are the strengths of using new technologies? What are the limitations?

Richard Branson, Virgin Group founder

"80% of our lives are spent at work – why should work be miserable?"

"Happiness is the wrong thing, it's about development. I expect my chief of staff on email 24/7 – and she has six kids"

Jim Clifton, Gallup CEO

Volkswagen turns off Blackberry email after work hours

8 March 2012 | Technology

Could work emails be banned after 6pm?

By Tom de Castella
BBC News Magazine

10 April 2014 | Magazine

WORK-LIFE BALANCE

Your Late-Night Emails Are Hurting Your Team

by Maura Thomas

MARCH 16, 2015

After-Hours Use Of Work Email May Finally See Some Labor Regulations

By Cole Stangler @colestangler c.stangler@ibtimes.com on May 28 2015 1:14 PM EDT

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

September 2014

Checking Email After Work Leads to Stress and Anxiety, Study Finds

August 2016

French workers win legal right to avoid checking work email out-of-hours

From 1 January, workers have 'right to disconnect' as France seeks to establish agreements that afford work flexibility but avoid burnout

December 2016

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

Work addiction?

- Addiction to work is the compulsion or uncontrollable need to work incessantly (Oates, 1971)
- 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)

Work Addiction / Workaholism

- Many definitions have been constructed to describe work addiction / workaholism
- All appear to include both a behavioural component and an affective component
  - i.e., the characteristics of excessive and compulsive working, respectively.

Work Addiction / Workaholism

Work Addiction: (psychological construct)
- Negative
- Rooted in core addiction literature

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 engagement and work addiction

Work engagement:

- A positive and psychologically beneficial/healthy type of heavy work investment

Work addiction:

- Predominately negative and associated with:
  - Greater work-life imbalance (Avanzi et al., 2012),
  - Addiction and psychological distress (Schaufeli et al., 2009)
  - Lower general life and job satisfaction (Shimazu et al., 2015)

Work engagement and work addiction

Work engagement: (healthy work)

- Provides a sense of identity
- Develops individual strengths
- Brings about means of satisfaction, accomplishment, and mastery of problems

Work addiction:

- 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

How can people be classified as addicted to work?

- 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
  - Decreased satisfaction at work
  - Decreased motivation to work
  - Lower general life satisfaction

Interaction of engagement and workaholism

- Attempts to further typify workaholics through developing additional sub-classifications:

1. *Exhausted workaholic*
   - Scores high on both workaholism and burnout (negatively associated with many aspects of well-being)
2. *Engaged workaholic*
   - Scores highly on workaholism but also work engagement

Heavy work investment?

- Some organisations welcome workaholic behaviours
  - Most notably associated with working excessively long hours
- Question, therefore, whether workaholism should be viewed as a negative concept…
- People have their own reasons for working longer hours
  - Financial problems
  - Strong career aspirations
  - Organisation overwork climate

Or addiction?

- 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
  - Salience; mood modification; tolerance; withdrawal symptoms; conflict; relapse
  - Plus – impaired self control

Core components of addictions

Salience:

The activity has a high level of important 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.

DSM-5 criteria of addictions

Addictions cause physical and psychological dependency. The DSM-5 clearly distinguishes between these.

Physical dependence: this is evidenced by withdrawals or cravings when the activity is stopped or interrupted

Physiological dependence: the mental desire to experience the effects produced by partaking in an addictive activity

DSM-5 criteria of addictions

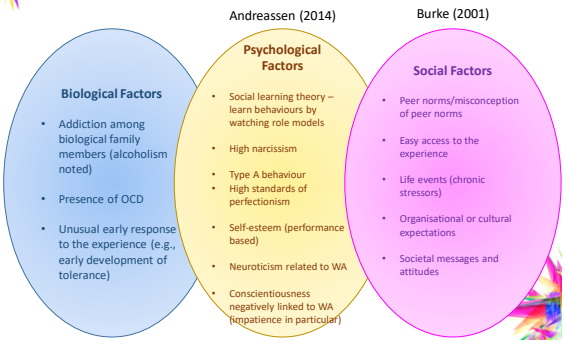
Work addiction is NOT currently recognised as a clinical problem!

Biopsychosocial explanation of addiction

Biopsychosocial model proposes that addictions are caused by a variety of factors that operate together:

- **Biological**
  - Genetics
  - The dopamine reward system?
- **Psychological**
  - Social learning theory
  - Personality; perfectionism, narcissism, neuroticism, conscientiousness
- **Social**
  - Cultural expectations, organisational culture, and attitudes

Risk factors for addiction – are these applicable for 'work addiction'?



Additional individual 'causes'

- **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

Additional individual 'causes'

- **Family upbringing**
  - Parents or other family members may model and emphasise excessive responsibility and over-achievement
  - Students scoring high on workaholism perceive their parents to be more hard-working than students with low workaholism scores (Chamberlin & Zhang, 2009)
- **Age**
  - Workaholic behaviours are more prevalent among people aged 18 to 45 than older adults

Additional individual 'causes'

- **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

Consequences?

Physical / Mental Health

- 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
- Links between workaholism, Type A and heart disease (e.g., Booth-Kewley & Friedman, 1987)

Consequences?

Physical / Mental Health

- Disrupted sleep
  - More likely to report sleep problems and tiredness at work (Kubota et al., 2010)
  - High obsessive work drive linked to insomnia (Andreassen et al., 2011)
- Development of 'secondary' or 'comorbid' addictions
  - e.g., alcohol abuse or overeating

Consequences?

Impact on life and lifestyle

- Far greater work-family conflicts
  - Partners and children of workaholics suffer (Macmillan & O'Driscoll, 2004)
  - Marriage / relationship breakdown (Bakker, Demerouti, & Burke, 2009)
- Poor functioning outside work

Consequences?

Impact on life and lifestyle

- 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

Consequences?

Impact at work

- Impact on work environments
  - Can cause competitiveness among co-workers
  - Particularly difficult if line manager is the 'workaholic' – resentment and conflict
  - Workaholics highlighted as unable to delegate tasks/responsibilities, and demand a great deal from other people

What part can/does the organisation play in this?

- 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

What part can/does the organisation play in this?

- External reinforcement
  - Organisational causes (Van Beek, Taris, & Schaufeli, 2011)
  - Work addiction / workaholic behaviours are praised by manager or organisation
  - This fosters a sense of needing to reinforce the behaviour to continue receiving praise

What part can/does the organisation play in this?

- Operant conditioning (Burke, 2001)
  - Workaholic behaviours manifest and are maintained because similar previous behaviour has led to positive outcomes
    - E.g., promotion, increase in salary
  - These positive outcomes, in turn, create a fertile environment for workaholism
  - Or… because the behaviour has resulted in the avoidance of negative outcomes
    - E.g., criticism, conflicts at home

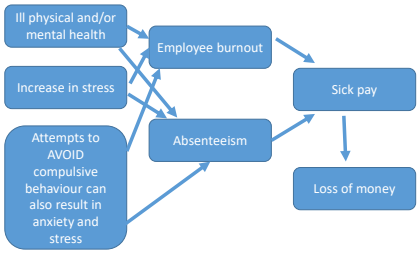
What part can/does the organisation play in this?

- Role models at work
  - Much in the same way as with family upbringing, employees can use managers or other colleagues as role models and imitate behaviour
  - Particularly with managers (who tend to exhibit workaholic behaviours more) – need to be aware of the importance of the image they project

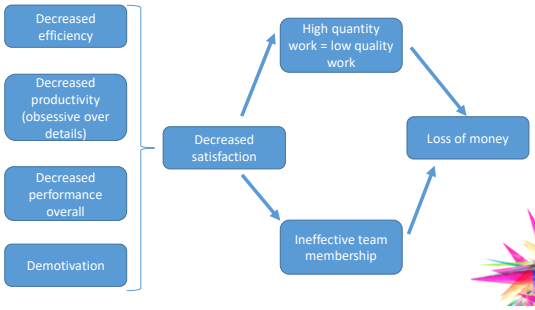
What part can/does the organisation play in this?

- Organisational culture
  - 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
- Some individuals are attracted to certain occupations BECAUSE they are workaholics and can foster their compulsions effectively

Consequences for organisations?



Consequences for organisations?



But – not always negative…

- Increased creativity and intuition
- Increase in organisational commitment
- Individual pursuit of high autonomy

Any questions??