

Workaholism: a social problem of the present essay sample

[Health & Medicine](#), [Addiction](#)



In the modern society, the problem of workaholism is quite acute. According to studies, most strongly this illness affects employees in Japan and the UK; this issue is relevant for the U. S. as well.

There have always been people who work more than others and could not imagine their life without work. However, with the commercialization of society, their number has increased dramatically. In the period of rapid development of new technologies and intense competition in almost all professional fields, there are more and more people who dedicate to work and career making a lot of time. First of all, these are motivated young people of 20-35 years old, with healthy ambitions focused on quick promotion and their income increase. Of course, higher wages and a rapid career rise add some charm to the labor madness - information overload, overtime work, around the clock communication with customers and partners, living in different parts of the world, etc. But does the goal justify the means?

Currently workaholism is recognized as mental illness that is not less dangerous than the addiction to drugs or alcohol. Numerous facts and figures indicate that workaholism can lead to a serious illness and even death.

Workaholism is manifested in the perception of work as the only (or most significant) means of fulfillment, achievement of recognition, and as means of obtaining subjective satisfaction in life. For a workaholic, work comes first in his/her life, leaving behind all the other aspects such as personal life, family, entertainment, and social activities, and can lead to the complete

social exclusion. Thus, it is a mental disorder that requires treatment and a social problem that requires a solution. In this study, we will try to give a description of workaholism as a psychological problem, consider this phenomenon in terms of the popular medicine, carry out the analysis of its causes, and attempt to formulate recommendations to overcome workaholism as a social issue.

The U. S. firmly holds the palm of the countries of workaholics. 12. 7% of Americans work more than 60 hours a week. More than half of U. S. employees said that they planned to fulfill their duties partially while on vacation (MIGnews. com). Thus, 52% of respondents said they would work during a legal holiday – a 6% increase in the last year. In particular, workers surveyed are going to deal with the following:

1. View e-mail – 30%
2. Receive calls from colleagues – 23%
3. Copy working papers to the personal computer – 19%
4. Receive messages at work – 18%
5. Have a remote access to an office computer – 13%
6. Return to work at the request of the chief, colleagues or customers – 13%.

Men are reported to be greater workaholics than women: 56% vs. 47% respectively. In the US, there is no law requiring employers to provide a paid leave to the employee, and the average American is resting a lot less than

the Europeans. A question of a “ well-deserved” rest was put to employers who specified the amount of the desired paid “ time off” in the contract. However, their number is not impressive and, as a rule, does not exceed 13 days per year.

Those who just got a job and worked only one year may get a leave lasting 5-6 days, 2 years - 9-10 days, 3-4 years - 14 days, starting from five years - 15-17 days. A paid leave of 21 days can be expected by workers who worked 15 years or more. Approximately 13 percent of U. S. companies do not pay for holidays to the staff and employees take time off at their own expense. Employees of federal agencies are entitled to 13 days’ holiday. Officials with three years work experience can apply for 20 days, and after 15 years of hard work, there are already 26 days of the compensatory time off. Therefore, with such benefits, the U. S. government, which is not able to pay as high wages as the private sector, attracts the employees. Short vacations in the U. S. are one of the causes of the high-efficient economy, as employers reduce the operating costs by squeezing from the employees “ all the juice”.

Raksha Arora in her article “ Are Americans Really Abject Workaholics?” has mentioned that although American employees work longer hours than other countries, they are still more likely to express “ complete” satisfaction, which is contrast to their counterparts in Britain and Canada. Arora mentioned that 40% of Americans are likely to work more than 40 hours and are satisfied with their jobs, which provide them with the opportunity for promotion (Arora).

Workaholism is a socially approved addiction. In a society, long ago, there was a stereotype that the more a person works, the better it is for all. However, "workaholism" is dependence, which is often found invisible, slipping out of the view not only of the common man but also of professionals. This is because the society makes workaholism normal. But if it is an addiction, it means the person has a psychological dependence. Workaholism affects all spheres of the life: family, relationships with colleagues, friends, etc. As a result, if a workaholic does not receive a professional help, that person will gradually step back from the society and will dis-adapt professionally and socially.

Immigrants work more hours than native Americans

It's good that people work more than 40 hours in order to pay their bills and become financial freedom; however, they will have busy lives and will separate from their family and friends. They don't have social lives who work more than 40 hours per week according to my interview with two hard worker Immigrant. I have conducted two different interviews for my paper on Workaholics. First, I spoke with a lady from Africa. Her name was Malika Foster who has been living in the country for five years with her family. Malika works around 70 hours per week at two nursing homes. The reason behind her working 70 hours per week is that she has been working like this since she arrived in the country with her family. She had dream about beautiful life, home and a job with her family in the USA before she came here as an immigrant. She had to work so hard to for her dream which is the reason for her to work more than 40 hours per week. She continued her

conversation that she got her dream house but not a good life and job. She said she has to make a payment of the house and also send money back in Africa for her parents and relatives. She mentioned that she can't live without money and likes to see big savings on her account; she enjoyed working more than 40 hours per week with any obligation in her daily life (M. Foster).

Life is not a bed of rose and struggle is the second nick name of life , said by Amir Sharma an immigrant person from an India who I had my second personal interview. Amir came from India last two years ago and started working at the gas station. He said he never expected to have a life like a donkey in America. He mentioned that he has been working in a gas store more than sixty per week since he came here in the state. The reason behind him working is support to himself here as well as his family back in India. He is the main income source for his family according to him. He continued that he makes \$8. 50 an hour and there will be no overtime payment. He gets flat rate for more than forty as well. I am used to working more than 40 hours per week and I feel happy at least I am taking care of myself and my family back home, said by Mr. Sharma. He has a dream to open his own gas station and bring his family hear (A. Sharma, Personal Interview).

Workaholism as a Psychological Problem

Pathological workers were called " workaholics" by the American psychotherapist Wayne Oates in 1971. In his scientific paper, he noted the general character of the development of alcoholism and morbid diligence.

According to Oates, all happen like this: at the initial stage, an “ alcohol workaholic” is outwardly normal, but increasingly thinks only of “ work-vodka,” and gradually, the human and family relationships lose their meaning for him. In the acute phase, he is aggressive, especially in case of being told about the abuse of “ work-vodka”. In the chronic phase, he falls into a depression - for him a new day is like the previous one. The final phase will inevitably lead to a physical and spiritual breakdown. Oates’ work remained unnoticed until the summer of 1983. Then, in California, at the resort at Lake Tahoe, a strange epidemic broke out. Complaining of constant body aches, fatigue, lack of attention, and wakefulness, several hundred guests contacted the doctors. It turned out that it is an ordinary physical, mental, and emotional exhaustion.

However, its level was such that the patients fell into a deep depression. It turned out that, in the U. S., the disease was described in the XIX century, but then a few cases were recorded - at the accountants, managers of major railway stations and chiefs nodes telegraph. A “ team” of the ill in Tahoe was made up of top and middle level managers, programmers, engineers, designers, and journalists. All sufferers - both in XIX and XX centuries - were united by the participation in a continuous work process, grave responsibility for the error, the high status occupations, and decent wages. A year after the “ discovery” in Tahoe, in the United States, this syndrome was observed in 5 million people, which can be attributed to the rapid technical progress and increased pace of work and life. Therapists advise to pay attention to the phrases give a true workaholic is likely to say, such as, “ I never stop there”,

“ I’m always dissatisfied with myself”, “ I am often dissatisfied with others, but I try to hide it”, “ I always stay after work to finish what I planned”, “ I work better under the pressure of an urgent need”, etc. Psychologists define four stages of workaholism.

The initial stage normally goes unnoticed. Usually, a person begins to stay after work, think about it at leisure, and his/her personal life takes a back seat. The second stage is critical as then work becomes a real passion. Their personal life is sacrificed due to work, and the person tries to find many credible excuses for that. There is a chronic fatigue, sleep disturbances. The next phase is chronic. The patient starts to voluntarily take on more and more responsibilities, thus turning into a perfectionist, but all of it does not work. The condition continues to deteriorate. At the last stage, the fourth, the person eventually becomes ill, both psychologically and physically. The efficiency is reduced, the individual is almost broken. Even in the early 1900, Ford Motor Co. held dozens of tests to determine the optimal number of working hours in order to achieve maximum performance. It was found that the “ golden mean” is 40 hours a week and that, while additional 20 hours provide a slight increase in performance, it is only for three - four weeks and after that, performance is negative. Anyone who has spent time in the corporate environment knows that what was right for factory workers 100 years ago is also true for office workers today.

People who devote to work 40 hours a week are doing more than those who regularly work 60 or more hours (Geoffrey). Workaholics as well as alcoholics do not recognize the destructive power of their addiction. Just like alcoholics,

in their addiction, they find a way to escape from the real life. An alcoholic suppresses his/her unmet need for alcohol, and a workaholic - for work. Workaholism can be said to be a form of addictive behavior when the work becomes a "state of mind", when the person sees as a source of satisfaction only in the process, not in the result, and when the person is willing to work for two people and to get paid for one. All thoughts are focused only on the job at any time of the day. The person becomes irritable and nervous. Such people do not understand the ordinary human happiness. For example, holidays "kill" workaholics. British researchers have found that if a workaholic, having a vacation leave, hears from his superiors a farewell to "break away at full speed", one can fall into a deep depression.

Especially hard is to survive the first few days; workaholics are trying to create a variety of stressful situations and come up with problems that need to be urgently addressed or a person gets sick. This phenomenon was so widespread that the authors of the study even came up with a name for it - a summer holiday syndrome (Spence and Robbins). A workaholic often suffers the so-called "diseases of the day off" as for him/her, not working is associated with the state of illness and going to work is the normal state. Hiding behind the mask of workaholism is often caused by complexes and fears. It turns out that workaholics are not hyper-working people from childhood who know the joy of work. They are people with certain psychological problems. Therefore, even a lazy person who stays at work days and nights during the domestic turmoil can become a workaholic. Very often, workaholism is caused by the fear of constant stress in personal life,

the result of the not established (or lost) relationship with the children, disappointment in a loved one, a divorce, etc. And in this case, the work is a kind of barrier, psychological protection or a shield reflecting the negative emotions. The Medical Definition of Workaholism

Workaholism can be regarded as a form of psychasthenia (obsessional neurosis). The process of work just creates the impression of “ solutions” of some internal mental problems, but, in reality, that does not solve them (Dodds). Many psychologists defined workaholism as a disease. However, scientists from the National Institute of Mental Health in the United States drew parallels between Homo sapiens and apes. It was established that when the award is readily available, the monkey is working better, but more slowly and relaxed. If you block the gene responsible for the formation of the “ pleasure hormone”, the animal ceases to notice the awards and continues to work. In the structures of the brain of a workaholic (the so-called “ pleasure center”) irritated nerve cell receptors can be operated, causing them to synthesize and throw active agents - neurotransmitters, including endorphins (hormones of mood and well being). Attrition is pretty quick, so there is a need to further increase the duration, and so on (McMillan, et al.).

“ Workaholism - is a dependence syndrome, obsessive-compulsive disorder, and it is not the same, it’s hard to work or to work extra hours”, says Brian Robinson, one of the major American researchers of this disorder (Robinson). According to Fassel, Diane. in Working Ourselves to Death: A person working more than 12 hours a day puts not only his/her mental but also physical health in a serious danger. The U. S. researchers were watching workaholics

who work in different areas for more than 13 years, and they came to a disappointing conclusion: overly intense activity leads to a number of diseases. The most vulnerable organ, unfortunately, was the heart. In more than half of the workaholics, hypertension was observed. There is a 14% increased risk of developing hypertension in those who work 41 to 50 hours a week, compared to those who work no more than 40 hours. For those who work more than 50 hours, this figure increases to 29%. There is also a 60% increased risk of occupational injury among those who are overtaxing at work (Fassel). These conclusions are also confirmed in the research of Hamermesh and Slemrod (2008).

They note that workaholic people also have the same problems like people that have other addictive behaviors as smoking, drinking alcohol, gambling, and eating. The authors also show how workaholism leads to a variety of health problems, ranging from exhaustion to high blood pressure (Hamermesh and Slemrod). Women striving to be first in everything and seeking early career success have much more difficulty with pregnancy and childbirth than their peers that do not have such a professional zeal. They are much more likely to suffer from acute and post-natal depression and are more prone to inflammatory diseases of the internal organs (Burke).

Besides, there is a 1.5 times increased risk of taking alcohol for those who work more than 50 hours a week, compared with those who work no more than 30 hours. Mental capacity of the people working more than 55 hours a week is lower than that of their colleagues who work less. Moreover, according to researchers, it can even lead to dementia. Scientists have not

been able to figure out exactly why long hours' work adversely affects the brain, but the key factors here is trouble sleeping, depression, and unhealthy lifestyle (May). The Causes of Workaholism

Any dependence is an escape from life to a particular idol. Liz Burbo called these idols the False Masters. These are such formations facing which a person experiences fear (about animals). They control the person and have power over him/her. The hosts may be false news, power, and social acceptance, wealth, clairvoyants and psychics, astrology, healing, disease, fashion, money, superstition, fear, guilt, and of course, the same work. The list is far from complete (May).

Studies show that the roots of workaholism often lie in childhood, resulting in low self-esteem which is manifested in adult life. " A lot of hard workers - children of alcoholics and children from disadvantaged families, for them depending on the job - is an attempt to control a situation that is out of control," says Stutzer. " Or they grew up in an " external good families" and their parents were perfectionists and expected unreasonable success of their children. These children grow up believing that nothing can be good enough. Some just give up, but others say, " I'll prove I'm the best in everything, and my parents will praise me." (Stutzer).

The problem is that idealism is not reachable, be the person a child or a successful professional. " Anyone who forced to perfectionism is subject to workaholism because he creates a situation where people never cross the finish line, because he continues to move further and further away", says

Robinson. That is why, in spite of the additional labor hours and the sacrifice of their health as well as their close people for the benefit of work, workaholics are frequently inefficient employees.

Signs of a Workaholic

Dependence is a permanent choice of actions that destroy a human life. This is the loss of control over their emotions and behavior without the “ drug”.

This is a desire to ever increase “ doses”. Dependence is a way of escaping from an unpleasant reality. Moreover, this flight does not change this reality and only adds to the experience over time. Dependence deprives a person of the real life, actually makes him spiritually blind and deaf. Thus, a sense of inferiority only gets stronger. For a workaholic, work is gradually becoming a shield from fear, anxiety, self-doubt, and, in the future, from the turmoil in his/her personal life. The person uses the work as a means of escaping from his problems and difficulties. So the work is transformed into dependency.

Another option depending on the formation of labor is associated with an exaggerated sense of own usefulness and relevance. Perhaps, in childhood, such an individual was often taught to be a good person and to do something useful for the society, only because “ it is the only way you will be needed by someone” (McMillan et al.). Getting his/her pleasure and euphoria of the success after an excellent work, when a sense of self-worth rises to the heavens, the person starts to feel uncomfortable if not getting this euphoria again and again.

The person begins to subconsciously seek a status, which, perhaps, will remain elusive at home, among friends, or anywhere else. Similarly, a drug addict in real life cannot find an alternative to the “ high feeling” the drug gives. Just as, for example, alcohol, work is becoming a way of life; a man not only loses friends and relatives, but also loses his health and “ burns” the soul, which is gradually transforms into the workaholism “ burn out”. The syndrome of burning is considered as a professional crash. Experts provide the following main features of workaholism: ← After a day of work, it is almost impossible to switch to another activity; the head does not want to “ turn off” or to switch to something else. Rest makes no sense and does not give joy and relaxation. ← The person feels energetic, confident, and self-sufficient only working or thinking about work.

← There is a strong conviction that the real satisfaction can be experienced only at work – everything else is a substitute. ← If suddenly for a while a person is unloaded, he/she begins to feel irritated and dissatisfied. ← Such a person is silent and grim, uncompromising and aggressive in life. However, it all disappears should he/she be at work; when working, he/she becomes a different person. ← When there is the proximity of the fact that an issue “ will be over soon”, the person experiences anxiety, fear, and confusion. To escape from this, he/she immediately begins to plan the following work “ disasters”. ← Everything that happens outside of work is idleness, laziness, and dabbling for a person. ← Magazines, television programs, or entertainment shows only irritate a person.

← Often, in the evenings, there is a lack of sexual desire,, but the workaholic it all explains that, “ today I was tired, but that’s tomorrow ...”. ← In the lexicon of such an individual very often appear the following words: “ All”, “ Always”, “ I must”, “ I cannot”, and the person more often uses the pronoun we, not I. ← The person has a habit to set explicit goals and unsolvable problems. ← All the problems and failures at work the individual begins to see as personal. ← Because of full concentration on the job, family relationships with loved ones are gradually deteriorating. If Workaholism is Curable

According to Spence and Robbins, workaholism can be overcome with the help of psychotherapy and medication. However, many are proud of the fact that they are hard workers. But when faced with the pressure of the family, as a rule, they are thinking that it is important for them to work.

Experts advise for workers to “ build” a pyramid. It will be based on the most important task, which is usually easy to identify. The next tier of this pyramid are the things that are not as urgent but also important. Often it is difficult to figure out what kind of work is really important, but it can wait. To overcome the difficulties, they are encouraged to provide the issues and tasks related to the field that were not fulfilled. Did the pyramid then collapse? If yes, then these issues should be moved into the ground; if no, then left in place.

Not only work time but also its lost should be planned. Foreign phone calls, traffic jams, delays on average take about 15% of the time. These losses are

inevitable so, in the schedule, there must be a place for them. In this case, the annoying little things will not irritate or harm the work.

There is a huge selection of social programs to help people solve the problem of workaholism. Doctors began to deal specifically with this mental illness in the U. S. in 1983. Then, the New York financier and a school teacher founded the first society of anonymous workaholics. This non-profit organization was named by analogy with the Society of Alcoholics Anonymous.

The principle of operation is also similar. Any person who believes that he is addicted to work can join the company on a full anonymity. Holding joint meetings and discussions, the group is led by psychologists trying to find a way out of this situation. The Society operates in the U. S., Canada, Australia, France, UK, Germany, Austria, and Switzerland. It is possible to participate in joint meetings and in the virtual space. However, the problem is that to monitor the progress of recovery is very difficult. However, hundreds of people around the world have still managed to overcome their passion for work, thanks to the participation in the Society of workaholics anonymous.

In addition, some employers have already realized the seriousness of the situation and are willing to pay extra bonuses to those who completely abandon the job responsibilities while at rest. So, the head of the American company FullContact additionally pays \$ 7, 500 for each employee who takes a vacation. David Gordon describes how people in the USA are working more than 40 hours per week and how some companies nowadays are designing

their new HR policy among their employees to lay as little stress as possible - for instance, rotating overtime so no worker gets stuck continually with extra hours (Gordon)

Unfortunately, as it is the case with other addictions, the workaholic himself must realize that it is not all right. To treat illnesses (a workaholic is essentially the same patient) the roots of which lie in the field of psychology is almost impossible. The problem is compounded by the fact that, in the society, workaholics are considered useful, the right people, they are cheered, and they are admired. From the family, only one main thing is required: to make clear for workaholic that his/her overindulgence in work life is difficult for him/herself. However, it is not worth the constantly " nagging" as the person will have an added incentive to fence off and work more. Much better is to try to understand why someone is so eager to work and to create a home environment in which he/she will want to return.

The therapist can offer advice on how to overcome the workaholic specific problems in life or work such as insomnia or aggression towards subordinates. However, true liberation is to change the attitude to life. The patient should cease to identify him/herself with his/her job, to realize that in the vacation, he/she remains a person - someone's son or daughter, boyfriend or girlfriend, and to separate the dreams and plans from the settings of the social environment. And then, the desire to make a career full of overvalued ideals would turn into one of the areas of self-realization, for which a person knowingly gives only as much as there is for it today.

Works Cited

<http://www.mignews.com/>

Arora, Raksha. "Are Americans Really Abject Workaholics?" Gallup Poll Tuesday Briefing (2004): 1-4. Business Source Premier. Web. 10 Nov. 2012.

M. Foster , personal interview, November 07th, 2012 in Denver, Colorado.

A. Sharma, personal interview, November 08th, 2012 in Aurora, Colorado.

May, R. Brief summary and synthesis of the theories of anxiety. Mental condition. Ed. L. V. Kulikova. St. Petersburg, 2003. Print.

Dodds, L. "Psychic helplessness and psychology of addiction". Psychology and treatment of addictive behavior. Ed. S. Dowling. Madison, CT: International Universities Press, 2000. Print.

Burke, Ronald. "Workaholism in Organizations: Gender Differences." Sex Roles 41 (1999): 333-45.

Fassel, Diane. Working Ourselves to Death: The High Cost of Workaholism and the Rewards of Recovery. New York: Harper Collins, 1990. Print.

Scott, Kimberly, Keirsten Moore, and Marcia Miceli. "An Exploration of the Meaning and Consequences of Workaholism." Human Relations 50 (1997): 287-314.

<https://assignbuster.com/workaholism-a-social-problem-of-the-present-essay-sample/>

Spence, Janet, and Ann Robbins. "Workaholism: Definition, Measurement, and Preliminary Results." *Journal of Personality Assessment* 58 (1992): 160-78.

Stutzer, Alois. "The Role of Income Aspirations in Individual Happiness." *Journal of Economic Behavior and Organization* 54 (2004): 89-109.

Hamermesh, Daniel S., and Joel B. Slemrod. (2008). "The Economics of Workaholism". *B. E. Journal of Economic Analysis & Policy: Contributions to Economic Analysis and Policy* 8. 1(2008), art. 3.

Robinson, B. E. "Workaholism: Bridging the Gap between Workplace, Sociocultural, and Family Research". *Journal of Employment Counselling* 37. 1 (2000): 31-47.

Robinson, B. E. "A Typology of Workaholics with Implications for Counselors". *Journal of Addiction & Offender Counseling* 21. 1 (2000): 34-48.

McMillan, L. H. W., M. P. O'Driscoll, N. V. Marsh, and E. C. Brady. "Understanding Workaholism: Data Synthesis, Theoretical Critique and Future Design Strategies". *International Journal of Stress Management* 8. 2 (2001): 69-91.

Burke, R. J. "Workaholism and Extra-Work Satisfaction". *International Journal of Organizational Analysis* 7. 4 (1999): 352-364.

Gordon, David M. *Fat and Mean: The Corporate Squeeze of Working Americans and the Myth of Managerial " Downsizing"*. New York: Free Press, 1996. Print.

Geoffrey, James. *Stop Working More Than 40 Hours a Week*. Web. 23 Nov. 2012.