

Original Article

The relationship between personality traits and workaholism in Iranian public bank employees

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Abstract

Introduction: The aim of the present study was to investigate the relationship between workaholism and personality traits among bank employees. Participants in this were consisted of Iranian public banks employees working in Mellat, Keshavarzi and Melli banks' branches in three different regions known as Tehran, Rasht, and Abhar city.

Methods: Sample size was calculated using Cochran formula and included 150 participants. For data collection short form of NEO-FFI questionnaire (the questionnaire for evaluating Big Five) and WorkBAT (Workaholism questionnaire) were used. Data were analyzed through descriptive and correlation analysis based on Structural Equation Modeling.

Results: There was significant positive correlation between conscientiousness, openness, and extraversion with positive workaholism and positive relationship between agreeableness with positive workaholism. Neuroticism had negative correlation with positive workaholism. Also, our analysis showed that there is a significant positive correlation between conscientiousness and openness with negative workaholism and negative correlation between neuroticism with negative workaholism. There was no relationship between negative workaholism and two other components (agreeableness and extraversion).

Conclusion: Workaholism has positive and negative dimensions with two different meanings. According to analysis, the relationship between personality traits and workaholism depends on the aspect that we consider.

Declaration of Interest: None.

Key words: Workaholism, Personality traits, Organizational psychology

Introduction

The term "addiction to work" has been introduced in psychological literature as a borrowed concept from "Alcoholism" in an article called "addiction to work, the compulsion or uncontrollable need to work incessantly" for the first time. At first, the term known as "addicted to work" was applied by Oates (1), Porter (2), Scott (3), Snir and Harpez (4), Aziz and Zickar (5) and Gorgievski (6) have defined it as a kind of addiction, a behavioral pattern, asyndrome and

a cognitive factor. Researchers have expanded their definitions by using emotional and attitudinal components. Addiction to work has less positive aspects rather than its negative features, i.e., health of a workaholic is at risk. Also, addiction to work not only decrease worker's happiness, but also it erodes his interpersonal and social relationships (6). Physiologically, workaholics experiment adrenaline's addictive secretion when encountering job requirements and hard

positions, but hardworking people don't experience this situation (7).

They come down with a sympathetic excitation, and emotionally get worried when they aren't at work, because they always think about working (8).

Research shows that workaholics have some problems including family contradictions (9), low marriage satisfaction (10), and imperfect interpersonal relationships (2); moreover their job satisfaction (10) and job performance (11) is low. Schaufeli et al. (12) realized that there is a direct and unexpected relationship between workaholism and lack of resources along with weak job control and lack of inspector's support. This result indicates that people who are addicted to work are working in undesirable psychological environments that may prevent them from improvement, development, and learning (13). However, these behaviors' hidden motive is different, those who are addicted to work are induced to work by an internal compulsory obsession; whereas an enthusiastic employee works by a positive internal motive (14).

Srivastava (8) believes that parents' attitudes and viewpoints during an individual's childhood are connected with addiction to work. Many people who are addicted to work belong to the families in which parents have lots of expectations and an ideal standpoint. Also generational transfer and managers' personality are related to addiction.

According to various ideas about addiction to work, three approaches can be considered here as follows:

1. The positive approach towards work holism: this approach results from the love to work (15), and it is an internal tendency towards long and hard work (16).

It causes the positive working manners to be developed such as increasing the organizational commitment and the outbreak of citizen behavior in the organization.

2. The negative approach towards the addiction to work: this approach has been posed as an irrational commitment to excessive working and as an addiction (1, 17, 18)

3. Typology approach: this approach is related to the existing different kinds of addicted

people to work including compulsive addicted people and those who are involved to work (19); workaholic people and those who are interested in working (20), compulsive addicted people to work; idealist people; success-oriented employees (3).

Personality is a group of emotional and behavioral characteristics that accompanies a person in his daily life. In other words, personality is the continuous features by which a person controls his interaction and compatibility with others and social environment (21). McShane & Gulino have defined the personality as rather stable patterns of behavior and the internal state of compatibility that shows a person's behavioral trends (22). Psychologists believe that individuals' personality is connected with the kind of job they choose and the method of their operation on that job; i.e., people who have special characteristics not only select certain occupations, but also they have better performance on that occupations than others (23).

Psychologists use this word just for concerning observable manners, including relations concerned with introspection and as an individual set of thought, motive, and emotions' patterns (24). Also it can be mentioned the Big Five model of personality suggested by *McCrae* and *Costa* (25) in 1985. This model contains Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness, Agreeableness and Conscientiousness (26). *Burke et al.* (28) believed that addiction to work can be analyzed by based on people's. The research showed that there is a positive and strong relationship between high scores in tendency to working and neuroticism. They confirmed that job involvement and work enjoyment are positively related to extraversion, as extroverts are generally energetic and sociable and they try to get experience and success; therefore, there is also a positive relationship between extraversion and job satisfaction. Neuroticism or sentimental instability is an internal pressure that causes a person's anxiety and continual thinking toward working to be increased; therefore, nervous characteristics will appear in an individual's personality. It is expected that working will alleviate this

undesirable feeling (1,5). Conscientiousness is a trait that has more practically been associated with internal and external successes; moreover, it is positively related to all dimensions of addiction to work (28).

In another research, Fayyazi et al. (29) using Bernreuter Personality Inventory, stated that demographical variables do not affect workaholism among managers in public organizations and a significant relationship is detected between introversion and dominance with workaholism.

The relationship between positive aspect (job involvement and work enjoyment) and negative aspect (internal tendency to work) of workaholism and five-factor model of personality has been described in Table 1.

According to the explanations, this paper investigates the relationship between two

aspects of workaholism and five factors of personality traits among the employees of Mellat, Keshavarzi and Melli banks in Tehran, Rasht and Abhar. The reasons for the choice of this population are that banks are one of the most important factors of the economic system of Iran and in public opinion, their employees have high income and wealth, so specifying their level of addiction to work has impact on these opinions. Most of the bank employees have high level of job security and adequate welfare, but they experience very stressful situations every day. In this research, we want to find that their welfare and daily stressful situations cause what level of workaholism and how personality traits effect on it.

Table 1. The relationship between the aspects of workaholism and Five-Factor model of personality

		Conscientiousness	Agreeableness	Openness	Extraversion	Neuroticism
Burke et al. (28)	Positive aspect	Positive	No data	No data	Positive	Negative
	Negative aspect	Positive	No data	Negative	No data	Positive
Andreassen et al. (30)	Positive aspect	Positive	Negative	Positive	Positive	Negative
	Negative aspect	Positive	Negative	No data	No data	Positive
Aziz & Tronzo (31)	Positive aspect	Positive	Positive	Positive	Not Related	Positive
	Negative aspect	Positive	Not Related	Positive	Not Related	Negative

Methods

Group of studying in this research involve Iranian public banks employees who work in Mellat, Keshavarzi and Melli banks' branches in three different regions known as Tehran, Rasht, and Abhar city.

This is a correlation research and the method of sampling is random. Population size was 312 and sample size was calculated using Cochran formula and included 150 participants.

The dimensions of personality traits have been considered as an independent and two aspects of workaholism have been considered dependant variables.

The tool for gathering data was two questionnaires. For measuring addiction to

work, workaholism battery questionnaire has been utilized. Workaholism battery questionnaire (WorkBAT) was introduced by Spence & Robbins in 1992 (20). They computed Cronbach's alpha for every component. Job involvement is (0.80), driveness is (0.74), work enjoyment is (0.85) and the whole test is 0.87.

The long form of Neuroticism-Extraversion-OpennessFive- Factor Inventory (NEO-FFI) questionnaire has 240 items and the shortened form has 60 questions(each trait has 12 items). This questionnaire was introduced by *McCrae & Costa* in 1985 (25). *McCrae & Costa* in 2004 (33) reported Cronbach's alpha coefficient for 5 dimension: conscientiousness (0.79), agreeableness (0.69), openness (0.75),

extraversion (0.80), neuroticism (0.86). In Iran for 2000 students, Garousi Farshi (34) measured Cronbach's alpha and the result was: conscientiousness (0.87), agreeableness (0.68), openness(0.56),extraversion(0.73), neuroticism (0.86). This questionnaire is also including Likert-type scale items. Also content validity and experts ideas were used for testing validity of results was: job involvement (0.79), driveness (0.64), work enjoyment (0.91). Workaholism battery questionnaire has 25 items and they are graded on 5-point Likert scale. It includes totally disagree (0), disagree (1), no idea (2), agree (3) and totally agree (4). Also it has three subscales, including job involvement (eight questions), driveness (seven questions), and work enjoyment (ten questions). Work involvement and work enjoyment imply the positive workaholism, and driveness means the negative workaholism. in survey questionnaires. The validity of questionnaires were confirmed with much more convergence among the experts' opinions. The method of sampling is random. Population size was 312 and sample size was calculated using Cochran formula and included 150 participants.

"Z" indicates the amount of normal variable corresponding to 95% level of significance ($Z \alpha /2 = 1,96$), ϵ , the acceptable amount of saturation, is equal to 0.06, the population size 312 ($N= 312$), and the amount of P has been considered equal to 0,5; because in this case, n can have maximum size. So, the sample size is 150. According to the expert opinions and to achieve a better result, descriptive statistics include gender, age, level of education, work experience and level of management (gender: female 16%, male 84%, age: under thirty-one-year old 7%, between thirty-one to forty-year-old 51%, between forty-one to fifty-year-old 40%, and over fifty-one-year-old 2%, level of education: diploma 11%, associate 2%, bachelor 40%, master 47%, work experience: under ten-year-old 29%, between eleven-year-old to twenty-year-old 43%, between twenty-one-year-old to thirty-year-old 24% and over thirty-one-year-old 4% and level of management: low-level management 68%,

medium-level management 28% and high-level management 4%). The period of this research has been between July and June in 2015.

Results

Table2 indicates descriptive findings related to variables including minimum, maximum, mean and variance.

As you can see, in the Table below, negative workaholism has higher mean and variance than positive workaholism. Conscientiousness has the highest mean and neuroticism has the least mean among personality traits.

Table 2. Descriptive indices of independent and dependent variables

	Mean	SD
Negative workaholism	46.27	3.17
Positive workaholism	17.95	2
Conscientiousness	36.54	2.32
Agreeableness	31.19	2.54
Openness	27.78	2.66
Extraversion	29.63	2.63
Neuroticism	22.37	2.37

Table 3 shows Spearman correlation matrix of variables associated with workaholism and personality traits. It shows that positive workaholism has a positive significant neuroticism, has negative significant correlation with positive workaholism. According to Table 3, there is a positive significant relationship between negative workaholism and conscientiousness at the level of alpha 0.01 and a positive relationship between this aspect of workaholism and openness; whereas it has a negative correlation with neuroticism. Moreover, there is no relationship between negative workaholism and two other subscales called agreeableness and extraversion.

Table 3. Spearman correlation matrix of variables associated with workaholism and personality traits

N=150	Positive workaholism	Negative workaholism
Conscientiousness	0.674**	0.592**
Agreeableness	0.244	0.050
Openness	0.298**	0.153*
Extraversion	0.548**	0.096
Neuroticism	-0.516**	-0.139*

*P< 0.05 **P<0.01

Table 4 shows the results of structural equation modeling, using Lisrel 8.54. As you see, because of proper t-value, the first, second, third, fifth, sixth, seventh, ninth and tenth hypotheses are accepted and the fourth and eighth hypotheses are rejected. Also GFI and AGFI are higher than 90 percent and it confirms the validity and goodness of fit of our hypotheses Model.

Table 4. Results of structural equation modeling, using Lisrel

Hypotheses	Standardized coefficient	t-value	Result
C \rightarrow Positive workaholism	0.26	3.7**	Accept
C \rightarrow Negative workaholism	0.48	5.32**	Accept
A \rightarrow Positive workaholism	0.21	1.99*	Accept
A \rightarrow Negative workaholism	0.06	0.073	Reject
O \rightarrow Positive workaholism	0.57	6.01**	Accept
O \rightarrow Negative workaholism	0.19	1.99*	Accept
E \rightarrow Positive workaholism	0.34	4.34**	Accept
E \rightarrow Negative workaholism	0.09	0.094	Reject
N \rightarrow Positive workaholism	0.29	3.98**	Accept
N \rightarrow Negative workaholism	0.23	2.01*	Accept
$\chi^2=133.18$	*P<0.05 **P<0.01	df=62	RMSEA=0.052 AGFI=0.91 GFI=0.95

Conclusion

The aim of the present research is investigating the relationship between workaholism and personality traits in bank employees. The results show that workaholism (positive and negative aspects) has a positive significant relationship with conscientiousness. This result contradicts the results of Burke et al.'s paper. They realized that there is no significant relationship between conscientiousness and addiction to work. This difference can be related to the statistical group's features, because the studies show that high-educated people with high income behave more addictively to work. For these people, having the achievement and loyalty spirit and the desire to progress can become a long time allocation to work (35).

Also analyses explain the positive workaholism has positive correlation with agreeableness, but it doesn't indicate a significant relationship between agreeableness and negative workaholism. We could get such result due to the existence of lifetime recruitment system in state banking system. Because of having good work ethics, people who are working in a private department catch workaholism more than state departments' employees. The elimination of limitations may give people an opportunity to allocate more time to their job. But, in state organizations, people don't need to overwork due to job security and spiritual slothfulness (14). However, some research shows that agreeableness has a negative relationship with drivenness and a positive relationship with work enjoyment. But, there is no significant

relationship between agreeableness and job involvement (5, 28, 31).

According to the results, both aspects of workaholism have positive significant relationship with openness. These are absolutely logical, because people, who are more intended to get ideas and modern experiences, enjoy their job more than others. Another result shows positive workaholism has positive correlation with extraversion. It means that the probability of positive workaholism among the employees with social spirit is more than others. These people try to communicate with others and enjoy their job.

Also the result rejects a positive significant correlation between the negative workaholism and extraversion.

And finally, the analyses show workaholism (positive and negative) has negative significant correlation with neuroticism. Researches show that people who have anxiety, stress, and depression are unable to follow their goal. On the other hand, some other researches show that overworking may create stress and anxiety in people's mind, and the state of the mind will be changed to unstable.

However, workaholism has positive and negative dimensions with two different meanings. According to the analyses, the relationship between personality traits and workaholism depends on the aspect that we consider. For example, some researchers have viewed this subject from the positive point of view, and they believe that workaholics have been so satisfied and efficient. Other researchers have the negative point of view, and they know the addiction to work as an unpleasant and compulsive phenomenon that results in some problems for others (colleagues, family members, etc). For these reasons, the workaholism was analyzed in both positive and negative dimensions in this research; in addition, we tried to represent a model that shows the best relationship between personality components and the aspects of addiction to work.

This research, carried out in Iran's state banks, shows that because of job security and recruitment and retirement process in state banks, employees don't want to overwork and

these features lead to slothfulness. So, educating employees and modifying and improving recruitment and retirement process can lead to have achievement and loyalty to organization, desire to progress and allocate time to work.

Reluctant employees who answered the questions were a limitation of this study and busy employees were another limitation. Changing quality indexes to quantity indexes human operator and software errors were other limitations.

As a result, it's emphasized that more researches must be done because workaholism is an important problem in organizations and this problem has not yet known in Iran. Thus, it is a suggestion that researchers can study workaholism in private banks to support Iran's private sector growth and compare the results to state banks. Also, the relationship between addiction to work and productivity can be analyzed in Iran's organizations.

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