Workaholic, or just hard worker?

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Abstract
Purpose
There is a lack of theoretical development on the question of why people work long hours and the nature of “workaholism”. This paper seeks to demonstrate a variety of reasons that induce a person to work “excessively”.

Design/methodology/approach
This paper discerns three subcategories of the “work enthusiast”: “materialist”, “the low-leisure” and the “perkaholic” hard workers. It is demonstrated that these work enthusiasts work long hours for relatively high job satisfaction, while workaholics gain relatively low job satisfaction. Inflicting negative externalities on fellow workers is argued to be a separate issue – any one of the hard workers might irk their fellow workers by working “too hard” or by their individual mannerisms. This paper uses the economist’s utility-maximization model to build a conceptual model of voluntary work effort that explains the work effort decision of individuals.

Findings
Individuals will work long hours when motivated to do so by the satisfaction they derive separately and collectively from income (materialism); leisure; perquisites; and work per se. It is argued that only the person who is strongly motivated by the latter reason is properly called a workaholic, and that the imposition of negative externalities on co-workers is a separate issue that might also involve work enthusiasts.

Originality/value
The paper advances the understanding of work motivation and workaholic behavior and presents a series of researchable propositions for empirical testing.

Keywords
Workaholism  Personality  Motivation  Hours of work

Citation

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Workaholic or Hard-Worker? What is the Difference? How can becoming a Workaholic affect your Life and Health? Workaholics are not just dedicated; in many ways they are addicted to their work. They are known to have a compulsive need to work excessively for long hours. Why Do We Become Workaholics? Escapism. There are many reasons for an individual to turn from a hard worker into a workaholic. To be a workaholic means to be busy all the time. Some people use work to replace a possible void in their personal life. In a way, it could be a coping mechanism or escapism. Instead of facing what may be a lonely or challenging personal life, we devote ourselves entirely to our work. A friend of mine shared: working on your biz from the poolside in your Bali villa. However, if you find it impossible to switch off (both metaphorically and literally) when you’re on vacay, it can indicate you’re verging on workaholic territory. Do you rarely take holidays and when you do, you spend more time worrying about the lack of high speed WiFi at the resort stopping you from checking your work emails than enjoying your surroundings and the people you’re with? If being present and appreciating the well-deserved break from all your hard work is a struggle, then chances are you’re a workaholic. –Miranda

What Separates a Hard Worker From a Workaholic? The critical difference between hard workers and workaholics isn’t the number of hours they work. It’s about the problems that working causes in their lives. Unlike passionate people who truly enjoy their work, workaholics often feel frazzled, worried, and stressed out. And while they don't get joy from working, they grow especially miserable when they can't work. They experience guilt when they aren't working. Is my mental health declining? Those are just a few signs you might be a workaholic. Workaholism is similar to other addictions. And although I’ve treated many people for workaholism in my therapy office, it isn’t yet a psychiatric diagnosis.