

WORKAHOLISM BEGINS

Work-related triggers of compulsive overwork
in early-career knowledge workers

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Background

Workaholism / Work addiction

= Dysfunctional form of heavy work investment mainly characterized by **compulsive overwork**

- Working compulsively
- Working excessively

Born or made to be workaholics?

- Dispositional influences
→ **Screening**
- Environmental triggers
→ **Prevention**



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Long-term work-related triggers



Overwork endorsement

= Core facet of **Overwork Climate** = Shared perceptions that working beyond set work hours, taking work home, and working during weekends or holidays are considered to be indispensable conditions for work-related success and career advancement

= Manifestation of the “**long work-hour**” **organizational culture** already found associated with trait and state workaholism

Mazzetti et al (2014); Balducci et al (under review)



Job insecurity

= perceived threat to the continuity and stability of employment as it is currently experienced

Shoss (2017)



Effort-Reward Imbalance Theory

Strategic choices: Temporary acceptance of unfavorable conditions to improve the perceived chances of later rewards, as common reason for **ERI & Overcommitment** in early-career workers

Siegrist (1996)

Short-term work-related triggers



Job demands

Higher-than-usual work pace, amount of tasks, deadlines potentially foster or intensify workaholism



Job control

Lower-than-usual work autonomy may trigger or facilitate excessive working in order to reverse the situation and gain control

Matsudaira et al (2013), Malinowska et al (2018)

But higher-than usual control might also let workaholics overindulge in work activities

Andreassen et al (2017; 2018)

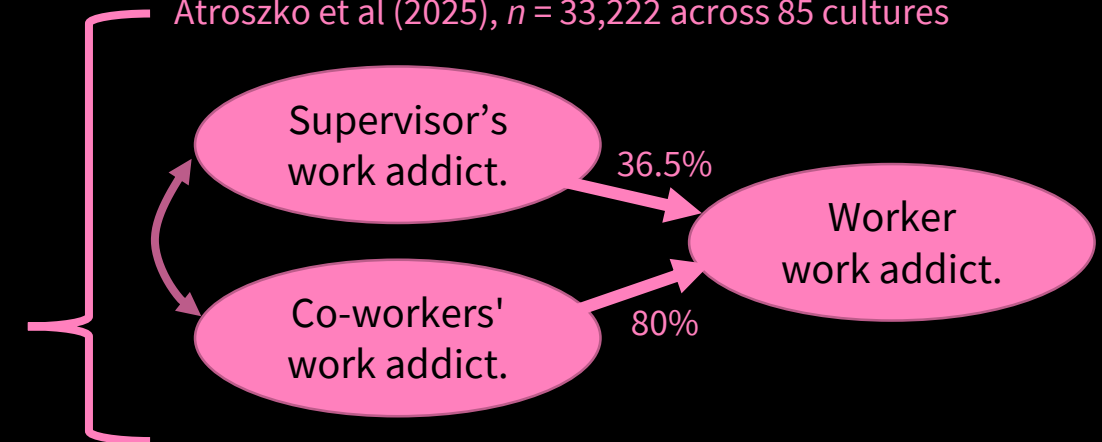


Supervisor overwork

Managers, leaders, and supervisors influence employee behaviors and attitudes, shaping organizational climate and culture



Atroszko et al (2025), $n = 33,222$ across 85 cultures



Background



Methods



Results

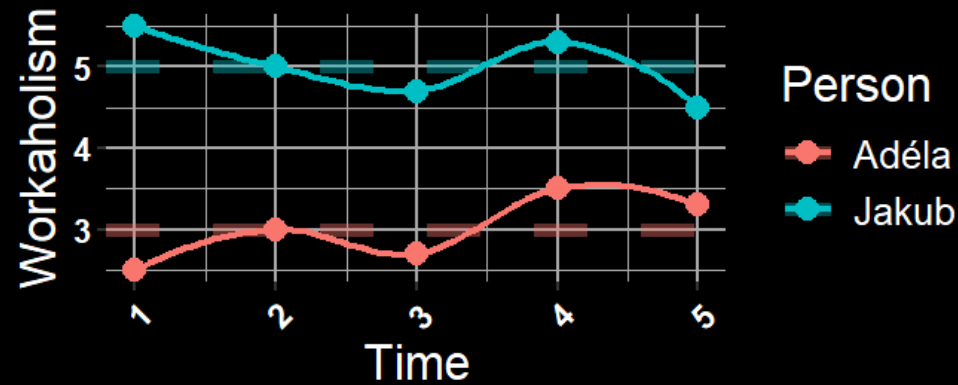


Discussion



State workaholism

= Daily level of compulsive overwork compared to one's usual level



How can work addiction vary day-by-day?

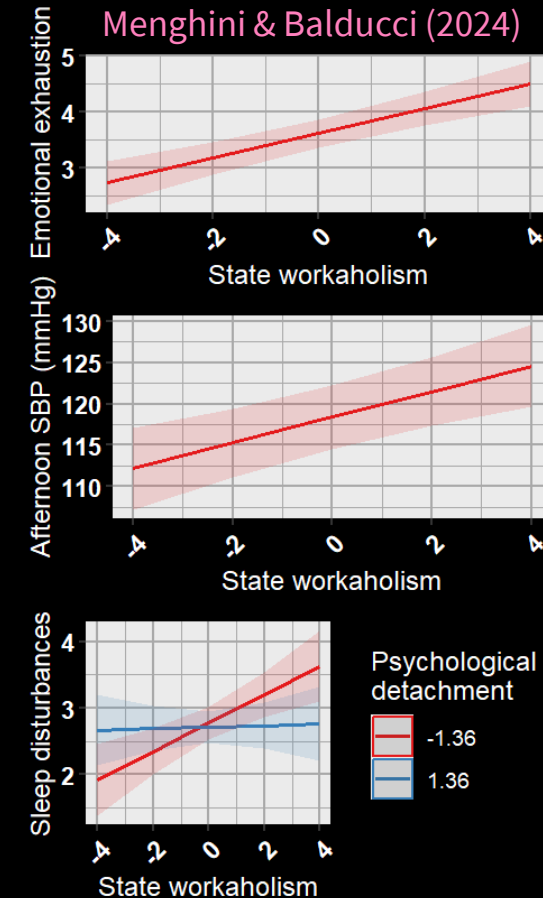
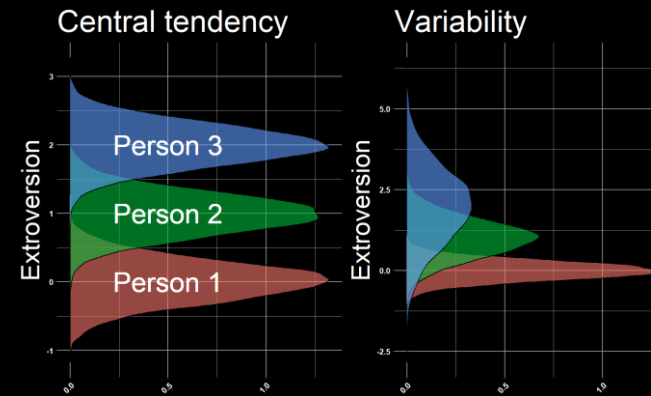
(e.g. JOHP anonymous reviewer)

In the same way in which temporal dynamics clinical (e.g. OCD) and other behavioral addictions (e.g., No. drinks/day, problematic internet/smartphone use, gambling-related craving) are investigated on both clinical and nonclinical samples

Whole Trait Theory

Traits = distributions of personality states

Fleeson (2017)





Participants & procedure

Participants

120 early-career knowledge workers
 60%F, age = $27.9 \pm 3y$, job tenure = $2.7 \pm 2.6y$
 79% employees, 50% permanent contracts
 Response rate = $70.4 \pm 21.5\%$

Inclusion criteria

- 3+ full days
- Under 36
- Intellectual job
- University/Technical degree
- 3+ interactions/weeks with supervisor
- Job tenure ≥ 1 month

Procedure

10-workday diary design

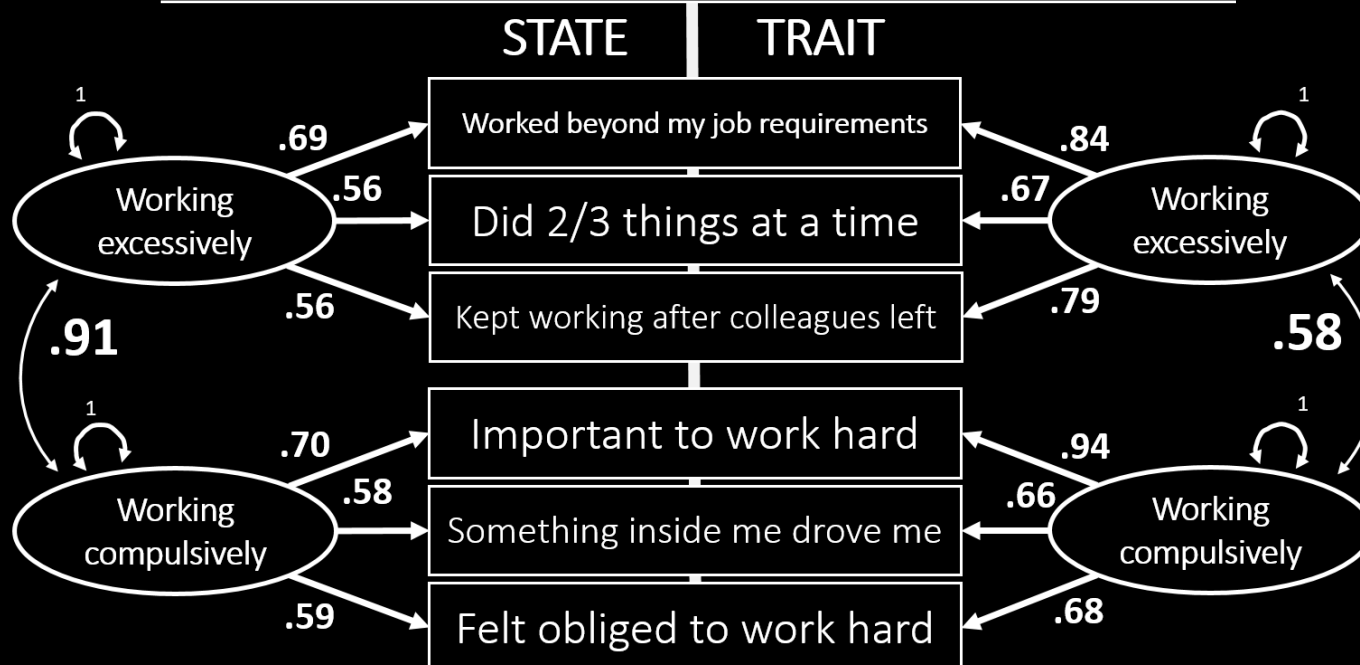


Measures

State Workaholism

Six 7-point items from Dutch Work Addiction Scale
1 = “Not at all” - 7 = “Very much” ($\omega_W = .79$, $\omega_B = .90$)
Menghini & Balducci (2024)

	No. Par.	RMSEA	CFI	TLI	SRMR _B	SRMR _W
Configural	32	.047	.973	.950	.051	.027
Metric	26	.051	.957	.942	.121	.035



Task Demand Scale (Menghini et al. 2023)
3 items, e.g. “This morning I had to work very hard”
 $\omega_W = .88$, $\omega_B = .97$



Task Control Scale (Menghini et al. 2023)
3 items, e.g. “This morning I could decide how to perform my job tasks”
 $\omega_W = .84$, $\omega_B = .98$



Supervisor overwork
3 Working Excessively items from DUWAS
e.g. “This morning my supervisor did two or three things at a time”
 $\omega_W = .89$, $\omega_B = .99$



Overwork endorsement (Mazzetti et al. 2014)
7 items from Overwork Climate Scale
e.g. “It’s normal to take work at home”
 $\alpha = .85$ [.81, .89]



Job insecurity (De Witte et al. 2000)
4 items, e.g. “I think I can lose my job in the near future”
 $\alpha = .85$ [.80, .89]

Background

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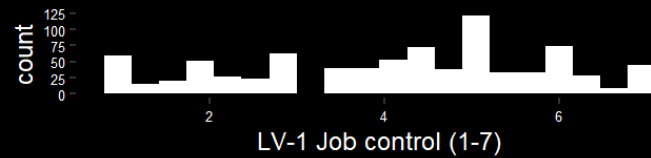
Descriptive stats



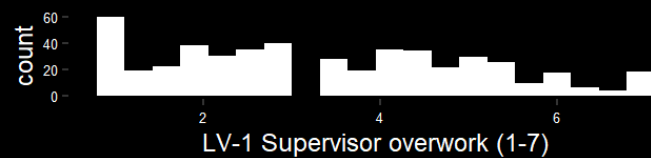
M = 3.56
SD = 1.32



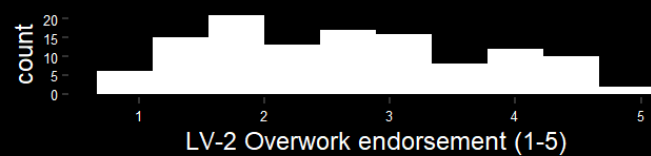
M = 3.29
SD = 1.50



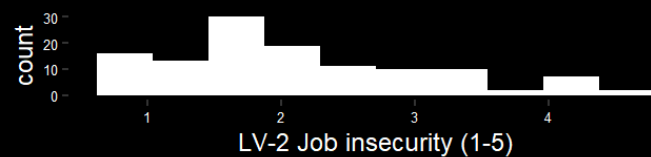
M = 4.12
SD = 1.65



M = 3.38
SD = 1.67



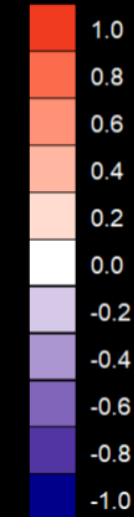
M = 2.69
SD = 1.08



M = 2.15
SD = 0.96

WH	JD	JC	SO		
1	0.44	-0.2	0.14		
0.69	1	-0.32	0.17		
-0.4	-0.42	1	-0.11		
0.25	0.15	0	1	OE	
0.3	0.16	-0.25	0.03	1	JI
0.02	-0.02	-0.25	-0.16	0.17	1

Pearson
Correlations

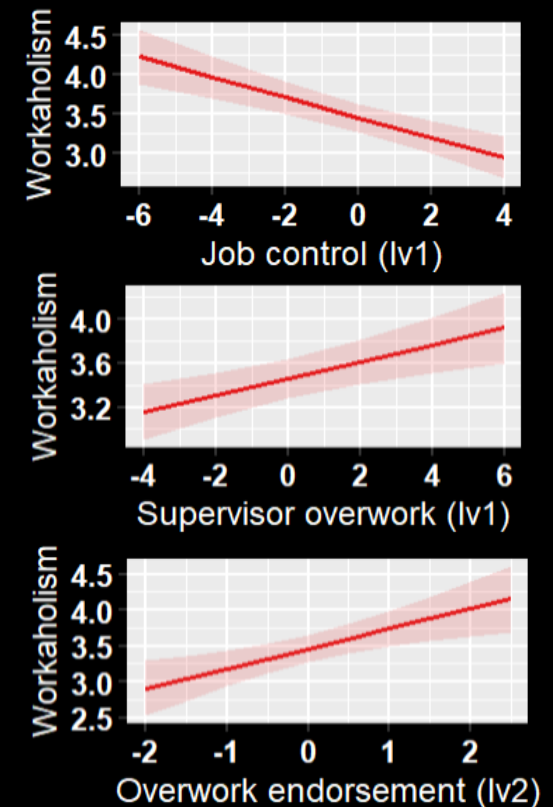


Multilevel modelling (without JD)



	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4	
Predictors	<i>b</i> (SE)	<i>t</i>	<i>b</i> (SE)	<i>t</i>	<i>b</i> (SE)	<i>t</i>	<i>b</i> (SE)	<i>t</i>
(Intercept)	3.46 (0.09)	36.66	3.46 (0.09)	38.01	3.46 (0.09)	38.01	3.46 (0.09)	38.01
Job control	-0.13 (0.03)	-5.09	-0.13 (0.03)	-5.09	-0.13 (0.03)	-4.53	-0.13 (0.03)	-4.54
Supervisor overwork ¹	0.08 (0.02)	3.39	0.08 (0.02)	3.39	0.08 (0.02)	3.34	0.08 (0.02)	3.34
Overwork endorsement			0.28 (0.09)	3.30	0.28 (0.09)	3.29	0.28 (0.09)	3.31
Job insecurity			-0.04 (0.10)	-0.42	-0.04 (0.10)	-0.41	-0.04 (0.10)	-0.42
Job control × Overwork endorsement					0.01 (0.03)	0.31		
Job control × Job insecurity							0.01 (0.03)	0.26
AIC weights	.40		.55		.02		.02	
BIC weights	.99		.012		.00		.00	
χ^2 (df)			10.52 (2)**		4.53 (3)		4.86 (3)	

Notes: $n_1 = 845$, $n_2 = 120$, ¹Supervisor overwork was recoded as 1 in those days where participants reported they did not interact with their supervisor (42%), but results were replicated without those cases.



Background

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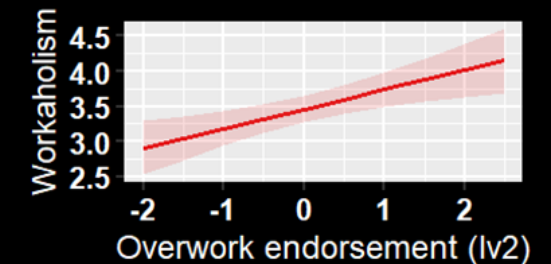
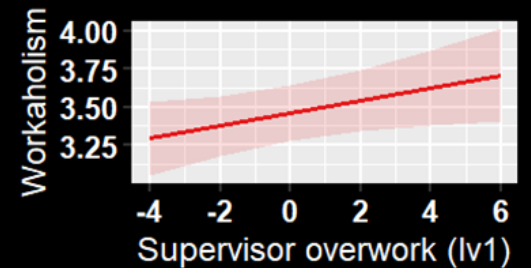
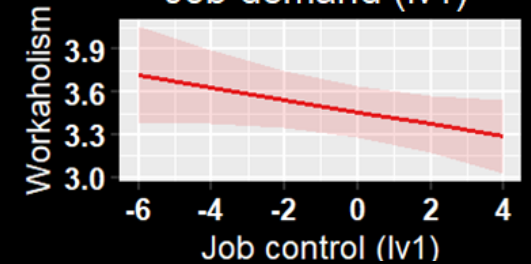
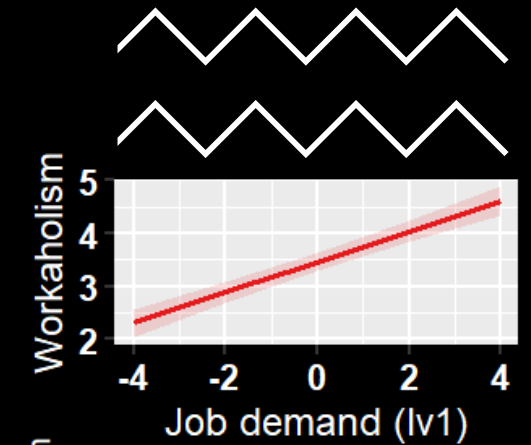
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Discussion

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Multilevel modelling (with JD)

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4	
Predictors	<i>b</i> (SE)	<i>t</i>	<i>b</i> (SE)	<i>t</i>	<i>b</i> (SE)	<i>t</i>	<i>b</i> (SE)	<i>t</i>
(Intercept)	3.46 (0.09)	36.69	3.46 (0.09)	38.04	3.46 (0.09)	38.04	3.46 (0.09)	38.04
Job demand	0.29 (0.03)	11.45	0.29 (0.03)	11.45	0.29 (0.03)	11.31	0.29 (0.03)	11.32
Job control	-0.04 (0.02)	-1.80	-0.04 (0.02)	-1.80	-0.05 (0.03)	-1.75	-0.05 (0.03)	-1.74
Supervisor overwork	0.04 (0.02)	1.97	0.04 (0.02)	1.97	0.04 (0.02)	2.00	0.04 (0.02)	2.00
Overwork endorsement			0.28 (0.09)	3.30	0.28 (0.09)	3.30	0.28 (0.09)	3.30
Job insecurity			-0.04 (0.10)	-0.42	-0.04 (0.10)	-0.43	-0.04 (0.10)	-0.42
Job control × Overwork endorsement					0.01 (0.02)	0.22		
Job control × Job insecurity							-0.01 (0.03)	-0.20
AIC weights	.42		.57		.003		.003	
BIC weights	.98		.01		.00		.00	
χ^2 (df)			10.66 (2)**		0.74 (3)		0.74 (3)	



Robustness checks

1) Similar results with different subsamples based on response rate:

- All in ($n1 = 869$, $n2 = 134$)
- 5+ full days ($n1 = 780$, $n2 = 101$)

2) Supervisor overwork turned significant (even including JD) after **excluding all days where participants did not interact with their supervisor (42%)**, otherwise recoded as 1

	Model 1		Model 2	
Predictors	<i>b</i> (SE)	<i>t</i>	<i>b</i> (SE)	<i>t</i>
(Intercept)	3.41 (0.11)	31.70	3.43 (0.10)	33.05
Job demand	0.28 (0.04)	8.08	0.28 (0.04)	8.07
Job control	-0.05 (0.03)	-1.55	-0.05 (0.03)	-1.48
Supervisor overwork	0.08 (0.03)	2.45	0.07 (0.03)	2.33
Overwork endorsement			0.31 (0.09)	3.32
Job insecurity			-0.09 (0.11)	-0.85
AIC weights	.32		.68	
BIC weights	.97		.03	
χ^2 (df)			11.10 (2)**	

Notes: $n1 = 489$, $n2 = 114$

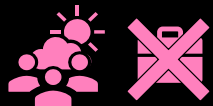


Workaholism Begins

Towards the origins of work addiction



- **Job Demands** as the most prominent predictor
→ Antecedent vs. consequence vs. facet of workaholism?
- Protective role of **Decisional Latitude**?
→ Does higher control lead to lower loss of control?
- ‘Contagion’ and social learning from **supervisors**



- Daily workaholism fuelled by **Overwork Climate**
- No significant relationship with **Job Insecurity**
→ Unrepresentative sample of early-career workers with high job security?

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Implications

- Workaholism can be developed at work or exacerbated by certain work characteristics
→ **Preventive actions are needed**
- Central role of **social learning & role modelling**
→ **Interventions at the leader/team level**
- In turn, this might **change the climate**
-overwork endorsement, +work-life balance
→ **Interventions at the climate/culture level**






Thank You!

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