

Excessive work or addiction to work: workaholism in a Colombian company. A pilot study through application of DUWAS test

El trabajo excesivo o adicción al trabajo: la adicción al trabajo en una empresa colombiana.
Estudio piloto mediante la aplicación de prueba DUWAS

O trabalho excessivo ou vício do trabalho: o vício do trabalho em uma empresa colombiana.
Estudo piloto mediante a aplicação de prova DUWAS

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Abstract

This paper examines the workaholism phenomenon in different work situations in a Colombian company. Workaholism is defined as the individual's steady and considerable allocation of time to work, which is not derived from external necessities (1). The research studies about workaholics and workaholism have increased in the last years (2). Workaholism is an addiction that currently is affecting the people around the world and has serious consequences in personal life, in the community and also in economy. Some of these researches are developing ways to diagnose a workaholic person or situations that may affect the worker's performance, daily life activities and especially the psychosocial field.

Objective: this study contributes to identify if Colombian workers present the main characteristics of workaholism and in consequence understand if their job is related to the presence of this addiction. *Materials and method:* this pilot study uses the Dutch Work Addiction Scale (DUWAS), the test suggests when a person has work addiction, through the evaluation of two main components working excessively and working compulsively. *Results:* the study found differences among two groups: the 67% of the administrative/executive jobs (AE) group are over the average while only the 33% of the members of the O group are over it. *Conclusions:* these percentages show the combinations of the components of workaholism are more evident in the

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population belonging to the administrative/executive jobs group, giving evidence that workaholism is presented in greater proportion in the population performance management positions.

Keywords: *workaholism, hours of work, job stress, work centrality.*

Resumen

El objetivo de este estudio es examinar el fenómeno de adicción al trabajo en diferentes situaciones laborales en empresas de Colombia. La adicción al trabajo se definió como la asignación constante y considerable de tiempo para trabajar por parte de la persona, que no se deriva de necesidades externas (1). Las investigaciones que se realizan sobre la adicción al trabajo y los adictos al trabajo se han incrementado sustancialmente en los últimos años (2). La adicción al trabajo está afectando a una gran cantidad de personas en todo el mundo y tiene graves consecuencias en la vida personal, comunitaria y económica. Algunas de estas investigaciones están dirigidas a explorar maneras de diagnosticar cuándo una persona es adicta al trabajo y cuándo esta situación puede afectar el rendimiento del individuo en el trabajo, la vida diaria y especialmente el área psicosocial del individuo. **Objetivo:** este estudio piloto contribuye a identificar si los trabajadores colombianos presentan las principales características de la adicción al trabajo y si el trabajo que realizan está relacionado con la presencia de las características de esta adicción. **Materiales y métodos:** para este estudio piloto se utilizó la Escala Holandesa de Adicción al Trabajo (DUWAS). Esta prueba sugiere que una persona tiene adicción al trabajo por medio de la evaluación de dos componentes principales: el trabajo excesivo y el trabajo compulsivo. **Resultados** encontramos diferencias entre los dos grupos en los componentes evaluados; 67% del grupo AE está por encima del promedio, mientras 33% de los miembros del grupo O está por debajo del mismo. **Conclusiones:** estos porcentajes indican que la combinación de los componentes de la adicción al trabajo son más evidentes en la población perteneciente a los órganos de administración o grupo de puestos ejecutivos, dando evidencia de que la adicción al trabajo se presenta en mayor proporción en los cargos directivos.

Palabras clave: *adicción al trabajo, horas de trabajo, estrés laboral, centralidad del trabajo.*

Resumo

O objetivo deste estudo é examinar o fenômeno do vício do trabalho em diferentes situações laborais em empresas da Colômbia. O vício do trabalho se definiu como a atribuição constante e considerável de tempo para trabalhar por parte da pessoa, que não se deriva de necessidades externas. (1). As pesquisas que se realizam sobre o vício do trabalho e os viciados do trabalho têm incrementado substancialmente nos últimos anos (2). O vício do trabalho está afetando a uma grande quantidade de pessoas no mundo todo e tem graves consequências na vida pessoal, comunitária e econômica. Algumas destas pesquisas estão dirigidas a explorar formas de diagnosticar quando uma pessoa é viciada do trabalho e quando esta situação pode afetar o rendimento do indivíduo no trabalho, a vida diária e especialmente a área psicossocial do indivíduo. **Objetivo:** este estudo piloto contribui a identificar se os trabalhadores colombianos apresentam as principais características do vício do trabalho e se o trabalho que realizam está relacionado com a presença das características deste vício.

Materiais e métodos: para este estudo piloto utilizou-se a Escala Holandesa de Vício do Trabalho (DUWAS). Esta prova sugere que uma pessoa tem vício do trabalho por meio da avaliação de dois componentes principais: o trabalho excessivo e o trabalho compulsivo. *Resultados:* encontramos diferenças entre dois grupos nos componentes avaliados; 67% do grupo AE está por cima da meia, enquanto 33% dos membros do grupo O, está por baixo do mesmo. *Conclusões:* estas porcentagens indicam que a combinação dos componentes do vício ao trabalho são mais evidentes na população pertencente aos órgãos de administração ou grupo de cargos executivos, dando evidencia de que o vício do trabalho se apresenta em maior proporção nos cargos diretivos.

Palavras chave: *vício do trabalho, horas de trabalho, estresse laboral, centralidade do trabalho.*

The concept of work is important for understanding the phenomenon in every society; Therefore in literature we can find several definitions of work centrality and workaholism. Work role centrality is defined as the degree of general importance that working has in one's life at any given time (3). The research findings shows work centrality to be positively related to important organizational variables such as job satisfaction, participation in decision making (4). The phenomenon of psychological aspects in the organizations, has a great coverage and complexity, due to many factors, including: individual factors, economic, social and political elements that are present in companies.

In this sense, the link between keeping or losing the mental health at work, is further reinforced today when work is more than a mean of realization of individuality, is also a form of social integration and in some cases, play a central role in the positioning of individuals in the family, social or cultural group. In this regard, some researchers argue the thesis of the centrality of work in the construction of the physical and psychological integrity, they considered that work is directly related to the individual's health (physically and psychologically). Multiple hypotheses emerge about the close relationship between mental health and work, specifically those related to instability

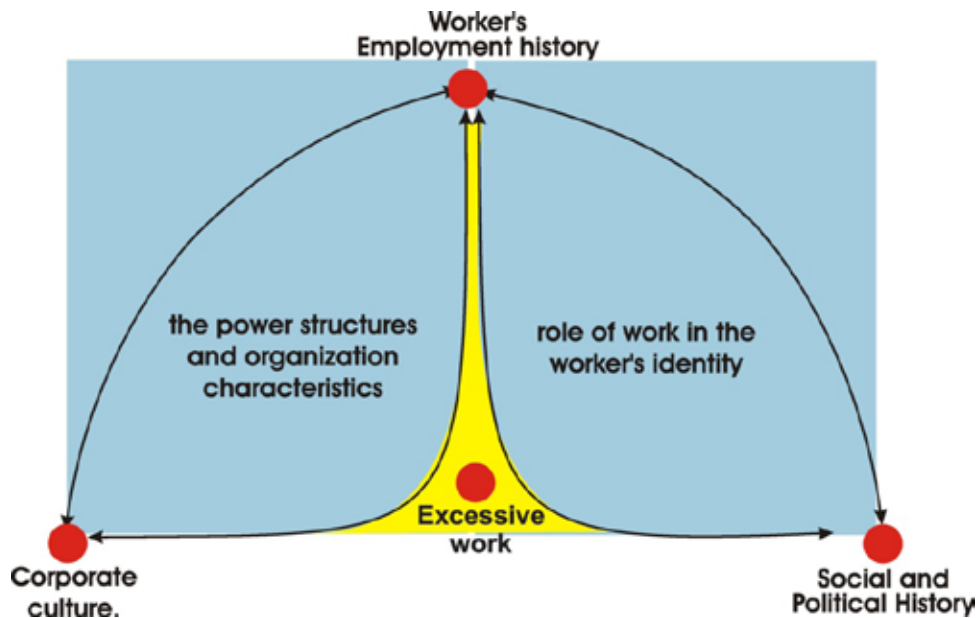
and precariousness of work, quite characteristic in the contemporary world, where the organizations begin to experience mutations and changes in its structure, therefore, the problem result from durability, quality and future development of the work.

The changes that have occurred in the new century in the work structure, reinforces the thesis of restricted access to work, the presence of work precarious forms, difficulty of job retention and changes of work activity. In addition we can identify three specific stages of the productive life, finding the first job in case of young workers, work changes and knowledge renewal for experienced workers.

These issues would be at the origin of a range of psychological disorders that hide somehow, the phenomenon of excessive work, precisely because of the conditions and scenarios that are developed work tasks today.

Researches have shown that work is integral and generally indistinguishable from other areas of the workaholic's lives (5). According to this, workaholics spend much time in work activities, resulting in the resignation to important social, family, or recreation. This means that work can move other principles and values, in some cultures the work centrality is part of the moral principles and in others it is the only way to achieve social mobility.

Structural Elements of the Workers' Adherence to Overwork



Source: Castillo (20)

Figure 1 shows how the decision to engage intensively at work, is influenced by several elements, which often define the changes in the value scales of individuals. In the first place the work takes a central role in the social life. For the individuals dominates the hypothesis of the work centrality. This hypothesis suggests that work is the best way to get a place in society through the satisfaction of economic needs, sacrificing social and family values.

These elements suggest the hypothesis in which there is a high tolerance to stand the demands and implication in the work organization, in this way, the workers hasn't a good perception of stressors factors. Is it possible then, to think that because of the Colombia social and political history, the Colombian population would have more toleration to the organizational violence. Additionally in Colombia the issue is more complex; generally, the experts in Colombia take a specific point of

view: the problem is studied as an expression of personal distress (usually not associated to the job) and in rarely times, this issue was studied as a product of structural derangement of productive organizations, that is an indirect approach to the problem.

We can deduce that implications somehow are related to the exercise of power, with the constriction of autonomy and the stigmatization of individuals, either by the organizational hierarchy or largely by the peer and equal workers in the job. In this way, we want to use the definition of workaholism to analyze this phenomenon in the world of the work in Colombia, We can find different definitions of workaholism: Oates, Porter, Spence and Robbins, Taris and Schaufeli among others, defines workaholism as an "addiction to work, the compulsion or uncontrollable need to work incessantly" (6). Spence and Robbins suggest that "workaholism consists of the dimensions

of enjoyment of work, inner drive to work, and work involvement" (7).

According to them a workaholic is a person who is "highly work involved, feels compelled or driven to work because of inner pressures, and is low in enjoyment at work", Porter and Robinson say that workaholism "is voluntarily spending time on work-related activities that produces negative consequences for social, family, and other activities" (8, 9). Taris and Schaufeli propose that "Work addiction or workaholism is characterized by an irresistible inner drive to work very hard; it is a combination of working compulsively and excessively".

Depending on the dynamics of productive organizations, working for individuals involves rethinking the objectives, this is the transformative quality and transformation of work for individuals. Understand that work for each of us is not confined solely to fulfill orders or simple instruction execution (17, 18), the work also test the ability to withstand; In this sense the work addiction alters intra subjective processes, affects the daily life of the individual, i.e., the character, expectations, affect, among others.

The recent changes that have occurred in the world of work (work intensification, reducing the number of workers available for process, process flexibility and recruitment problems, etc.) seem to be the origin of the main problems associated with the phenomenon of workaholism in Colombia. This means that people ascribe to their own behavior and others should be placed in a context of values, practices and structures underlying the organization of work.

In most academic definitions of workaholism, key elements commonly used are, excessive work and compulsive work (10). Excessive work can "relate positively to (objective) indicators of working time, such as the number of hours spent at work, allocating leisure time to work, and thinking about work when not working".

The other element is work compulsive, it is "related to personality factors, such as perfectionism, consciousness, obstinacy, rigidity, orderliness, dominance, and also to obsessive thinking and ruminating" (11). Workaholism is the combination of excessive work (the behavioral component) and compulsive working (the cognitive component) (12). Based on this, Schaufeli and Taris (10), developed a test to assess workaholism; the Dutch Work Addiction Scale (DUWAS) which consists of two sub-scales, concerning the two elements mentioned above WE (working excessively) and WC (working compulsively).

The aim of this pilot study is to identify in Colombian workers, if the main characteristics of workaholism, excessive hard work and compulsive work, are evident in workers that perform administrative/executive jobs or workers that perform operational jobs, through the application of DUWAS.

In order to begin, we should understand the current labor situation in Colombia and the main aspects of the labor legislation to identify and behold the principal characteristics in the study and the analysis of the information. In Colombia the official laws establish 48 hours as regular time of work per week. The employee and the employer may agree on the way they wish to distribute the hours, considering that an employee can work maximum 6 days a week with a day of rest which normally tends to be on Sunday. The official working shift is 8 hours a day, but the journey may be at least four (4) hours of work and up to ten (10) hours per day without any charge for additional work, when the number of hours worked does not exceed the average of forty-eight (48) hours per week, within normal working hours of 6 a. m. till 10 p. m. According to Colombian legislation, this means that in any event, it is possible that a worker works more than 10 hours per day or 60 hours per week. In this sense, analysis carried out in Colombia in 2008, indicates that the

country had 13 million workers, of whom 43% had working hours that exceed the shift by law (48 hours per week).

This is confirmed in a study on the quality of life developed by the IDB, the study establishes that in the world people work on average 40 hours per week. Latinos and Colombians, 43,7 and 48 hours respectively, the Colombian workers spend more time in their offices. These data, exceed those of industrialized countries, whose citizens work 38 hours per week. In other hand, a study prepared by the University of Groningen, the Netherlands, reveals that a considerable level of 47 countries, Colombians are located in the post ten in the ranking. According to the study, Colombian workers work 1.956 hours a year.

This data set, can generate several hypotheses about the centrality of work and addiction to work in colombian workers; regarding the behavior of the Colombian workers, it is important to note that culturally in Colombia, there is a rejection of the worker who leaves early in their workplace, which combines with the technological accessibility, which allow many Colombian workers to take their work to home. This implies an extension of the working day beyond the statutory. In this sens according to the general hypothesis, we suggest that workaholism is directly related to the job and functions performed by the worker.

When people have more responsibilities in a company, they do not work the hours established by the law, most of them work much more and are engaged a much more to their jobs; that is when workaholism characteristics become evident. While a worker who performs basic activities on his/her job is not so important or recognized in a company do not have much problems related with workaholism. however, it is important to consider that even in tasks of basic services, workers perform tasks that include many and varied responsibilities,

leading to the implication of the worker. This implication suggests, in many cases, a self prescription of tasks and activities to comply with voluntary extension of working time.

Materials and methods

The sample for the study was 21 employees from a well known company in Bogota, Colombia. This people were selected randomly from different units of the company.

As it is suggested in the hypothesis, the characteristics of workaholism are related to the job and activities that a worker performs. We propose 2 groups, administrative/executive jobs and operational jobs, to determine in which of them are more evident the elements of workaholism.

To classify the subjects and determine if they belongs to administrative/executive jobs or operational jobs, were used the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO), this classifies and describe occupations in 10 different major groups. According to this and analyzing the characteristics of the subjects the people that belong to the major group 1 and 2 were classified on administrative/executive jobs (AE) and the ones that have characteristics of groups 3 and 4 fit in operational jobs (O) (table 1).

The DUWAS test was applied to 23 employees in the company, they should fill all the questions as the instructions indicate and write on the top of the page the job title and gender. Two of the 23 employees did not respond properly the test, so these two subjects had to be removed from the sample.

The tests were divided depending on the job title, nine (9) people belong to the administrative/executive jobs group and twelve (12) workers belong to operational jobs group. Then the tests were classified in groups by gender, in the O group 6 were men and 6 women, and in the AE group 5 were women and 4 men.

Table 1. International Standard Classification of Occupations

International Standard Classification of Occupations/ Major Group	Group for the study
*1 Managers, senior officials and legislators	Administrative/executive jobs
*2 Professionals	
*3 Technicians and associate professionals	Operational jobs
*4 Clerks	

ILO, 2010

Schaufeli and Taris developed a test to assess workaholism; the Dutch Work Addiction Scale (DUWAS) which consist of two sub-scales, concerning the two elements mentioned above WE (working excessively) and WC (working compulsively) (10). DUWAS consist of two core-components: Working Excessively (WE-9 items) and Working Compulsively (WC-7 items). The test is based on two scales: the WART, and WORKBAT (13, 14). This test has promising psychometric properties although more research is needed for validation (15).

The employees were selected randomly from different divisions of the company. Each one of the selected employees was given a sheet of paper that contains the long version of the DUWAS in Spanish (obtained from the official website <http://www.schaufeli.com/>) they answered it by their own and they must do it as soon as possible. All the tests were collected and divided in the corresponding groups AE or O.

After this, and all the data were collected systematically to make easier the analysis and processing. According with the scoring tool, Working Excessively items 3, 4, 6, 8, 11, 13, 14, 17, and 19, were added and divided by 9 and the product was the resulting score (WE-score), this procedure was made individually with the results of each subject. Then the average of the WE score was made taking into account the results of the 21 participants. Following the same procedure was made with the Working Compulsively items that were 2, 5, 7, 9, 12, 15

and 18. The scores on these items were added and divided by 7. The resulting score is the WC-score, and for this score was also made the average.

Having the average for every component each subject was classified over or below the average according to the result of the test in each component. This information was expressed in percentage and graphically to determine in which group more workers are over the average showing if the characteristics WE and WC are more evident in AE group or in O group.

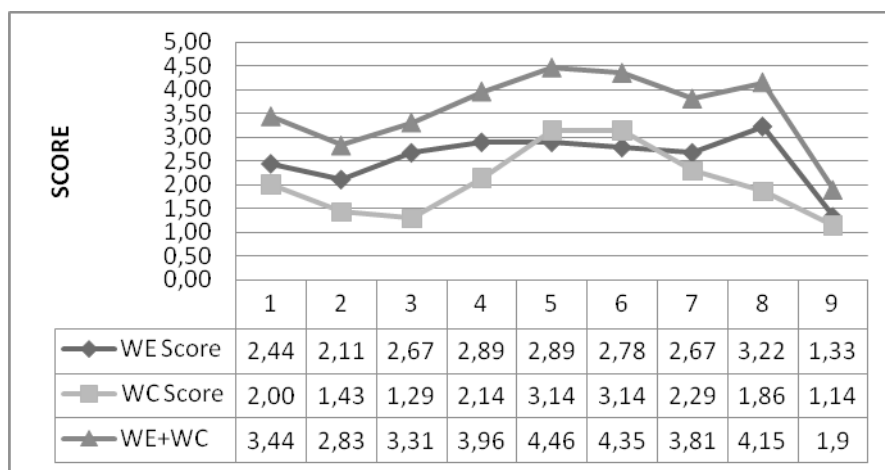
The analysis of the results is based on the average of each component (WE, WC and WE+WC) resulting score. Because in the DUWAS scoring tool is only available information to score WC for the group 5 of the norm groups, and the subjects of this study belong to groups 2, 4 and 5, which limits the analysis of the data. Another reason for use the average, is the number working hours in Colombia, that are 48 hours per week, compared with the number working hours in Europe situated around 35 hours per week. That situation indicated us some differences between the workers populations that can cause biases in the information, and with the data can't be exemplify workaholism in Colombia, because the score of Colombian workers could be lower. The jobs referred in the norm groups are different from the ones that Colombian workers perform, especially from the jobs from the subjects of this pilot study.

Results

After all the information was recompiled and the total score for each component were had been done. This information was organized and graphed to a better understanding of the

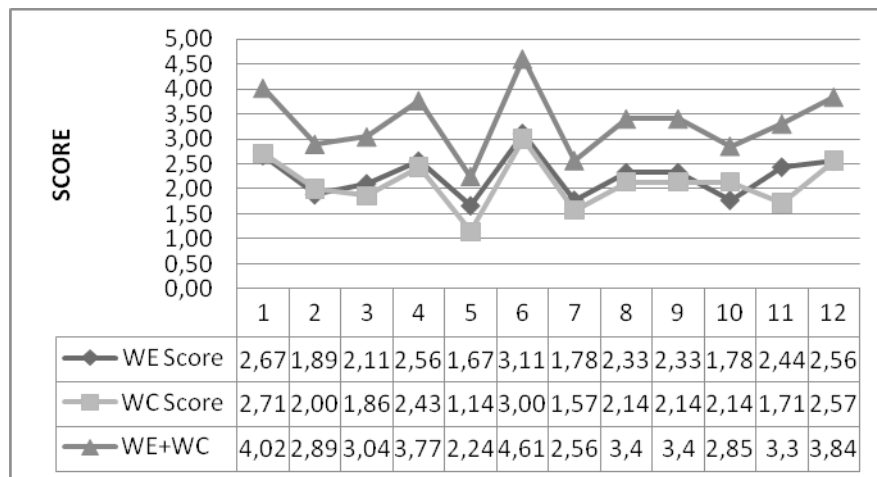
results. In table 2 we can find the results in the 3 evaluated components for the 9 subjects in the AE group and in table 3 we can find the same information for the 12 subjects of the O group.

Table 2. Results for AE Group



Study data

Table 3. Results for O Group

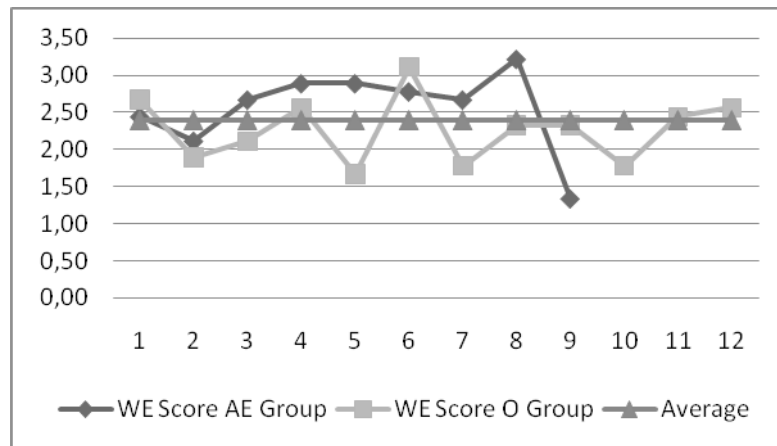


Study data

According to the results we estimate the average for each component to do the data analysis and compare the results between the groups. The average score to WE is 2,39, for WC the average score 2,08 and for WE+WC is

3,43. According to this In AE group, 7 (78%) of 9 participants are over the average in the WE component and 2 (22%) are below the average. For the O group 5 (32%) are over the average and 7 (58%) below it (table 4).

Table 4. Working Compulsively Score for the O Group

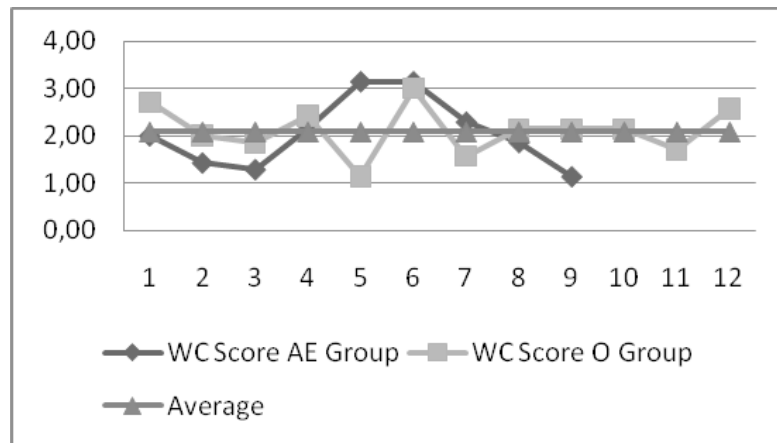


Study data

In AE group, 5 (55%) of 9 participants are over the average in the WC component and 4 participants (45%) are below the average. For

the O group, 7 participants (58%) are over the average and 5 participants (32%) below it (table 5).

Table 5. Working Compulsively Score for the AE Group

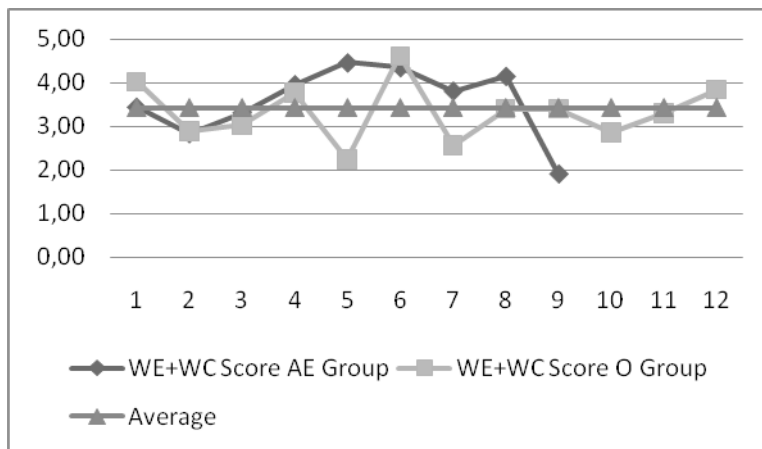


Study data

WE+WC average is 3,43; in AE group 6 workers (67%) are over the average and 3 (33%) are below the average. For O group the results were 3 worker

(25%) are over the average and 9 (75%) are below the average (table 6).

Table 6. WE+WC Score

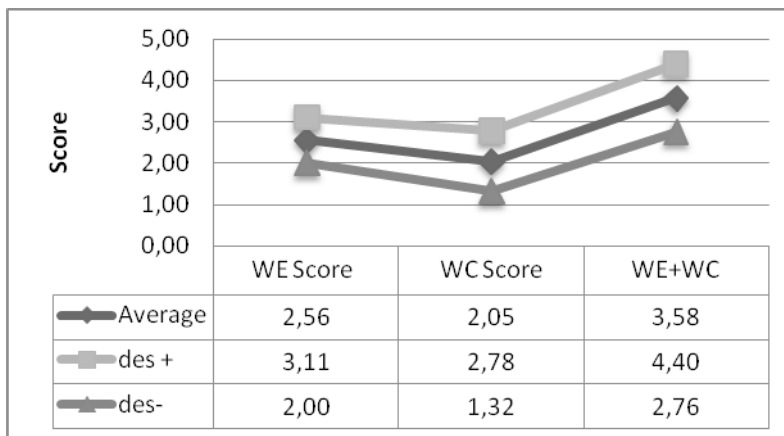


Study data

We calculate the standard deviation of the 3 components for each group and the same for the whole group. The standard deviation for

the WE Score is equivalent to 0,55; for the WC Score is 0,73 and for the WE + WC is 0,82 in AE group (table 7).

Table 7. Standard Deviation AE Group

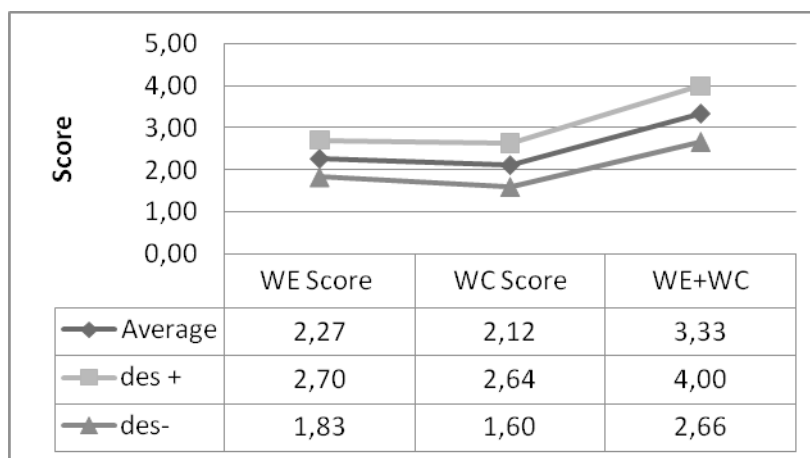


Study data

In the O group the standard deviation for the WE Score is 0,43; for the WC Score 0,52 and for the WE + WC is 0,67 (table 8).

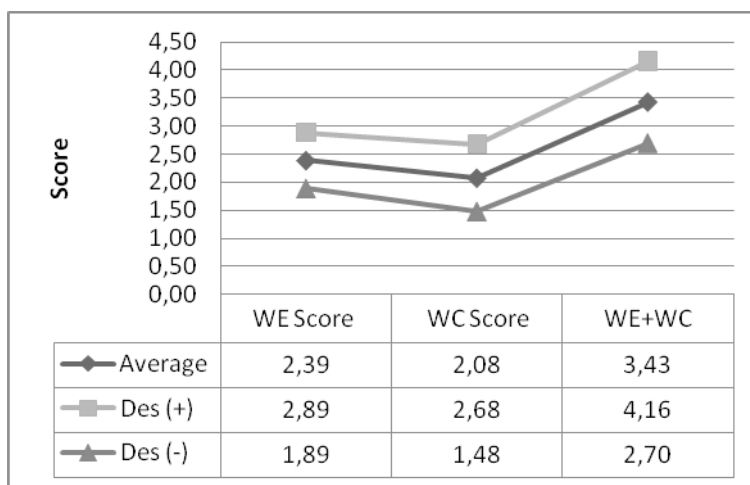
The standard deviation for the whole group in WE Score is 0,50; for the WC Score 0,60 and for the WE + WC is 0,73 (table 9).

Table 8. Standard Deviation O Group



Study data

Table 9. Standard Deviation



Study data

Discussion and conclusions

According to the test results, the excessive work characteristics are evident in the AE group, and the WC characteristics are almost equivalent in the two populations represented by 55% in one group and 58% in the other one.

Considering the standard deviation, the dispersion in AE group for the 3 components

is higher than in the O group, even though the sample in the O group is bigger than the AE group. We can see the population in the AE group is not so homogenous making a bigger difference in the results as it is showed in the standard deviation of each component.

In the WE results can be seen a big difference between the two groups, more people for

the AE group are over the average, this people have especial characteristics as working extra hours, bringing home work, overwork. As other studies show this behaviors affects the relationship with family and friends, this workers don't have hobbies or do leisure activities, affecting the psychosocial component generating medium and long term consequences that can affect the personal and working life.

At this point, we can not indicate that the WC dimension is related to the cognitive component and the personality traits. Across the results, we can't find difference between the groups, demonstrating that the characteristics component is almost the same no matter the profession or the job the person performs, this could be related to cultural aspects and the personality traits of Colombian population.

We must remember that the personality traits defined by learning and heritage, also by the experiences and the interaction with the environment, this elements could be become a learning experience (16). Some characteristics of the individual are defined by the genotype and the same time that could be associated with the environment that surround the people. Thus, we can conclude that Colombians worker's characteristics are similar because their political and social environment is similar. In fact the subjects of the sample perform their work in the same professional environment and they share a lot of experiences that could define their behavior regarding the work involvement and this could be the reason to not find much differences in the WC scores between the two groups.

In the WE+WC results we can see big differences between the two groups, the 67% of the AE group are over the average while only the 33% of the members of the O group are over it. These percentages show that the combinations of the components of workaholism

are more evident in the population belonging to the administrative/executive jobs group, giving evidence that workaholism is presented in greater proportion in management positions.

The results for the AE group can be attributed to the standards that have this type of work and the responsibilities these workers have. They are responsible for the creation, development and management of projects, this group must achieve goals that define the targets of the company and also somehow their permanence in the company. This workers should guide and supervise groups of workers that are under their command, they should be proactive, they have to propose, plan their own goals, according to the established by the company, also is important to consider the competition between pairs. all this requires time and therefore that workers sacrifices many aspects of their personal life for doing the job, being this one of the main features of workaholism.

While in the O group most of the workers are not so involved to their job because their work activities are simpler and repetitive, these elements affect the worker, to the company and the job. These characteristics make less evident the component of workaholism or work excessive. The higher scores in this group were found in WC component that is related to personality and not with the performance of the activities.

The aim of this study was to establish how the addiction can be studied adapted to the characteristics of the Colombian context. The study shows that the phenomenon of the centrality of work and work addiction, is associated with certain specific aspects social and cultural . Therefore the definition of work addiction should be modified.

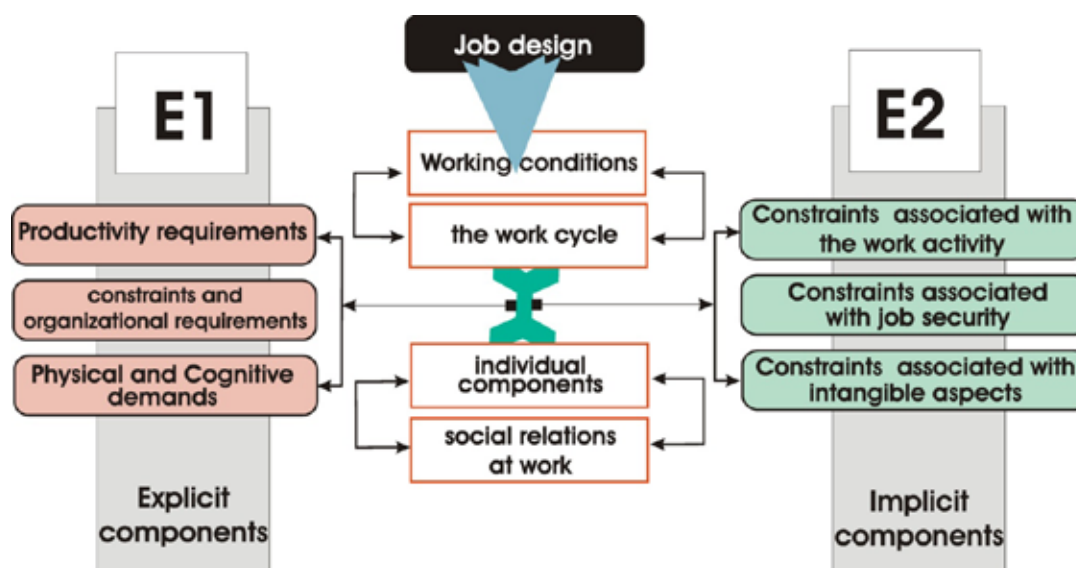
Culturally in Colombia, work is the common thread in the lives of Colombian workers. It is important to consider that the Colombian

workers grow in a work-oriented society as central to identity construction and the possibility of social mobility. This indicates that the individual must be fully involved in their work to conserve it, maintain it and achieve the permanency goal and social mobility.

The main problem associated to workaholism is the Colombian business culture, due

to confusion between the determinants of the phenomenon and its effects, making it difficult to distinguish the causes and consequences. Additionally, the events associated with work implication tend to intermingle, their interaction produces a circular phenomenon, the analyst always returns to source element, is unable to resolve what has been generated.

Figure 2. Explanatory model of the elements associated with workaholism behavior



Castillo (20)

The suggested model (figure 2) for the study of workaholism, consists of two categories of items: explicit (E1) and implicit elements (E2). The explicit elements, are present in organizations and are easily identifiable. implicit elements are associated with individuals and require deep study methods.

The model indicates the application of techniques of evaluation for workaholism, should be accompanied by analysis involving the deep study individuals inside and outside of work, in this sense the study of workaholism should also integrate the following elements:

1. Job insecurity associated with insecure conditions, related to workers' fear of losing their jobs or conditions of the current workplace in terms of salary and legal contract frame.
2. Another factor is the control of working time, which is related to the working week (between 60 and 80 hours per week for drivers for example), the long working hours are also associated with health problems. in this case, workers reported discomfort in relation to muscle tension, headaches, tightness or pain in the chest, these elements seem to appear as activators of workaholism. Therefore is

important to determine the specific gravity of them, the purpose of identifying which are introduced by the organization and which will be caused by the workers. In the study of workaholism, three dimensions structure the phenomenon of workaholism, that is, determinants associated to individuals, determinants associated to the organizational context and the interactions between these two given the stage of production cycles and are manifested in different types and forms of activity developed by individuals, working to balance organizational needs with individual availability.

The sample for this study is short, making difficult the comparison of the populations. To have more successful and representative results for the development of the study of workaholism, we will use the same procedure and the model with a bigger sample. For this new phase of the study is important to consider that the number of persons in both groups must be the equal (to prevent bias in the average information), we should contemplate secondary variables as age, gender and time that the person has been working in the company.

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