

Work Addiction and Its Risk Factors

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Abstract:

The study is primarily based on the context of the work addiction. The study explores the concept of the work addiction and the effects of the same on the professionals during the COVID 19. The study presents a detailed assessment of the ways to identify the work addiction and describes about the scale which is primarily used for the assessment of the work addiction. More importantly, the study discusses about the causes and the risk factors associated with the work addiction. The study also delivers a concrete discussion on the statistical analysis and the results obtained from the research. Most importantly, the study also provides a detailed discussion related to the findings of the research. Along with that, the study discusses about the implications of the research and the future directions of the study. Lastly, the study also shares a detailed assessment of the strength and limitations of the research.

Keywords

Work addiction, Psychological health, Anxiety.

Introduction:

According to the esteemed opinion of Mäkikangas et al. (2017), the dedication towards the work from the end of the professionals is positive in majority of the cases. Having said that, the work addiction can certainly cause monumental level of disturbances in different areas of life when the dedication towards the work reaches to an extreme level. In majority of the occasions, the overly dedicated employees who are widely referred as “Workaholics”, are observed to be unable to disconnect themselves from the work that they do. According to the comments of Andreassen et al. (2018), the long working hours on regular basis or overworking has monumental negative impacts on the health and wellbeing of the professionals. If a person’s work habit starts to fit to the pattern of the compulsive overworking, the presence of the work addiction becomes prominent. Work addiction is certainly difficult to identify as it exhibits complex reactions. It is understandable that the

employees are required to show initiatives and go above the call of duty. There are unique answers to the question of when the commitment towards a job becomes addiction. However, Griffiths et al. (2018), mentioned that the thoughts and fears which are hidden through recognizing them as discipline and dedication, is often the situation when it becomes work addiction. According to the comments of Atroszko (2019), the work addiction, which is largely recognized as workaholic nature, is also considered as a real mental health condition. Similar to other behavioural patterns, the work addiction is the incapability to stop a behaviour.

Ways to identify the work addiction:

With a thoughtful consideration towards the concept of the work addiction, Atroszko et al. (2016) mentioned that the work addiction stems from the compulsive need to achieve a status and success. Moreover, it is observed that the work addiction also gets used a tool to avoid or escape the emotional stress. As per the esteemed opinion of Brieger et al. (2020), the work addiction is largely driven by job success and the work addiction is largely evident amongst the professionals who strive to become perfectionists. The work addiction has similar potential in getting the better of someone like any other drugs. The professionals who are work addicted, exhibit the tendency of repeating the same actions under the influence of their addiction. The people who are work addicted, are usually unable to stop their behaviour even if they know that it has negative consequences on their personal life, mental and physiological health.

Considering the techniques for the assessment of the work addiction, it is important to mention that a culture where hard work is praised and the putting an extra shift on continuous basis, is largely expected, it becomes tremendously difficult to assess the work addiction (Loscalzo & Giannini, 2018). Moreover, the professionals who are work addicted, usually describe the importance of such a behaviour and the implications of the same in achieving the desired success. These professionals appear committed to their jobs and towards their success in the professional context. Having said that, it is important to mention that the concept of the ambition and addiction are certainly different. The professionals with extensive level of work addiction, will usually have the tendency of engaging in compulsive work to avoid the other aspects of their life such as the personal crisis and trouble with emotional issues (Lichtenstein et al., 2019).

There are several symptoms indicate the work addiction of a professional. However, Toth-Kiraly et al. (2018) mentioned that the signs such as putting in long hours in the office spaces or the workforces when there is no necessity for the same and compromising the valuable hours of sleep to successfully complete the work

projects, are certainly massive symptoms of a professional being addicted to his or her work. Moreover, the sign of being obsessed with the work-related success is also a massive symptom of being addicted towards work. Most interestingly, the development of intense fear of failure in work is also a massive indicator of the work addiction of a professional. In addition to this, it is observed that the tendency of the professionals of being paranoid about their work-related performance indicates their intense level of work addiction. Urbán et al. (2019), highlighted an important way of identifying the work addicted professionals with the mention that the professionals who disintegrate themselves from any sort of personal relationship at work, are certainly work addicted professionals. The tendency of having a defensive attitude towards others about the work is a massive indicator of experiencing work addiction. Moreover, the modern professionals have the tendency of using work to avoid any sort of relationship and in doing so, they become work addicted. Moreover, there are substantial number of modern professionals who becomes work addicted just by working for hours in an attempt to cope up with the depression, feelings, and guilt.

Most importantly, the dynamics of a majority of the modern professionals are turning out to be enormously complex and in such situation, the professionals do not intend to provide them some breathing space by ensuring that they are working like addicted individuals (Atroszko & Griffiths, 2017). These professionals try their level best to avoid the scope of dealing with the crisis like financial trouble, death, and divorce. Other than this, it is understandable that the work addiction influences the professionals to free up more time to work and such a tendency of searching for more work is a clear indication of work addiction. The tendency of spending more time in work than the time intended is also a clear indication of work addiction. Moreover, the tendency of avoiding day offs and holidays for maintaining involvement in work, is also a massive indicator for work addiction. The incapability of the professionals in avoiding the work stresses, trouble in sleeping, situations where the hobbies getting deprioritized because of work and continuous overthinking are monumental indication of work addiction.

Usage of the scale for the assessment:

With a thoughtful consideration towards the concept of the work addiction and the techniques for the assessment of the same, it can be said that usage of the Bergen Work Addiction Scale (BWAS) has greater significance. The scale was primarily developed by the University of Bergen and it was later accepted by the entire medical community. The scale is used to measure several factors which include how often certain

aspects apply to the life of a professional. The items are primarily measured with help of a scale comprising of options such as Never (1), Rarely (2), Sometimes (3), Often (4) and Always (5) (Orosz et al., 2016). As mentioned earlier that it is used for the assessment of the work addiction, it becomes important to acquire a competent understanding about the tool prior to the usage of the same in the assessment of the work addiction. The tool can be used to measure the items such as the “You think of how you can free up more time to work”, “You spend much more time working than initially intended”, “You work in order to reduce feelings of guilt, anxiety, helplessness and depression”, “You have been told by others to cut down on work without listening to them”, “You become stressed if you are prohibited from working”, “You prioritise work over hobbies, leisure activities, and exercise” and “You work so much it has negatively influenced your health”. There are many researches conducted on this particular scale and one such research published in Scandinavian Journal of Psychology highlighted that if one answers “often” and “always” at least four times in reply of the above mentioned items, there is monumental possibility that the individual has work addiction. As a result, it is clear that the scale has enormous implications in the successful assessment of the work addiction.

Causes of Work Addiction:

There are various causes of work addiction in the modern world and the multiple number of causes make the concept more complex. According to the comments of Atroszko et al. (2020), the desire to be seen smarter and competent is one of the massive triggers for the professionals in adopting the work addiction. Moreover, the belief of the professionals that the self-worth is attached to work is also an important thought that influences the professionals in adopting the work addiction. At the same time, the need for constant attention especially from the supervisors which have the potential to earn them advantages within the organizational context, is certainly massive trigger for the professionals when it comes to adopt work addiction. In addition to this, it is important to mention that the fear of losing money or the decline in the financial sustainability, is certainly a monumental cause of the work addiction. On the other hand, the fear of change is also massive influential factor that induces work addiction. There are professionals working in the modern employment market, who characteristically hate changes in their professional and personal life owing to the lack of flexibility and in such situation, they prefer to work vigorously to avoid any sort of changes in their professional and personal life. Most importantly, the worry of facing embarrassment related to performance within the organizational context, is an important factor that influences the professionals to continuously work

and leads them towards developing work addiction. According to the esteemed opinion of Kun et al. (2020), the fear of loneliness and solitude has monumental effects on the professionals. The modern professionals have the tendency to develop massive level of work addiction just to avoid their loneliness and fear of solitude.

Risk of Work Addiction:

Prior to understanding the risk factors associated with the work addiction, it is important to understand the professionals at risk of the work addiction. Considering the people who are at higher risk of experiencing the work addiction, it is important to mention that the professionals who previously suffered addictions are at higher threat of experiencing work addiction. The people who previously were addicted to alcohol, drugs, nicotine, and other addictive substances, are always at higher threat of experiencing the work addiction. Moreover, the professionals who face difficulty in turning off from work and the professionals who continuously strive to become perfectionist, are the professionals with massive possibility of experiencing work addiction (Balducci et al., 2021). In addition to this, the professionals who like to be called as “Workaholic” in the organizational context and the professionals who have the tendency of doing everything in all or nothing capacity, are comparatively more exposed to the work addiction. Other than this, the professionals who belong to family of workaholics are at higher threat of facing the work addiction.

There are several risks associated with the work addiction and that increases the concern for the professionals getting affected with the work addiction. The professionals who are work addicted, have tremendous possibility of feeling the absence of any sort of support network whether it is their family or friends. As a result, such professionals have the possibility of facing monumental level of mental challenges. In addition to this, the work addiction is a massive concern for the professionals as it results in physical problems such as various physiological problems, mental stress, obesity, and hypertension (Atroszko et al., 2017). The work addiction has tremendous potential of suspending the sleep of the professionals. In addition to this, the work addiction has the possibility of placing the professionals in such a position where they will face anxiety attacks and panic attacks when they are not working. There is also possibility of losing job for being unable to relate to peers and supervisor as a result of being work addicted.

Statistical Analysis:

With a thoughtful consideration towards the statistical analysis, it is important to mention that the analysis will assist in getting a clearer look at the effects of the work addiction on the professionals during the COVID 19.

The fundamental objective of the statistical analysis was to assess the impact of work addiction during COVID 19 when the entire labour and employment market was facing an obnoxious hit of the COVID 19. It becomes interesting to assess the effects of the work addiction during COVID 19 as it was an enormously vulnerable situation for the labour and employment market, there was massive job cuts, monumental suspension on the economic transaction and the people were fearful of losing their livelihood and were enormously job insecure. Most importantly, the professionals exhibited greater consideration towards being work addicted during COVID 19 as they believed that their high performances have the possibility of saving their job in a professional manner. Moreover, 110 number of professionals were involved in the study. The statistical analysis was carried out with the help of the Google Forms and the questions were related to Gender, Age, Educational level, Marital status, tenure of the professionals in the company and the role of the professionals in the company. Moreover, the professionals were also requested to share their opinion on a set of questions mentioned below:

- “You think of how you can free up more time to work”.
- “You spend much more time working than initially intended”.
- “You work in order to reduce feelings of guilt, anxiety, helplessness and depression”.
- “You have been told by others to cut down on work without listening to them”.
- “You become stressed if you are prohibited from working”.
- “You prioritise work over hobbies, leisure activities, and exercise”.
- “You work so much it has negatively influenced your health”.

Results:

With a thoughtful consideration towards the results, it is clear that the 55.5% of the total respondents were female and on the other hand, 44.5% of the respondents were male.

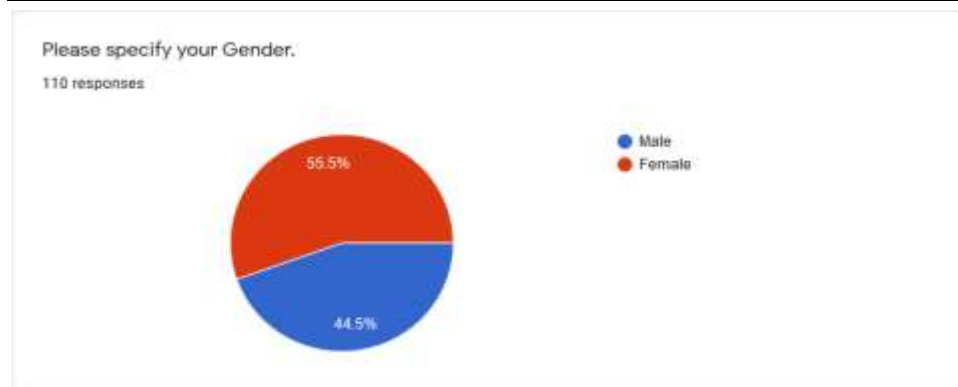


Figure 1

Moreover, 33.6% of the total respondents were belonging to the age level of 51- 60 years and 41- 50 years 33.6 % respectively, 22.7% of the total respondents were belonging to the age level of 31- 40 years, 4.5% of the total respondents were belonging to the age level of 60 years and above and the rest 5.6% of the respondents were belonging to the age level of 21- 30 years.

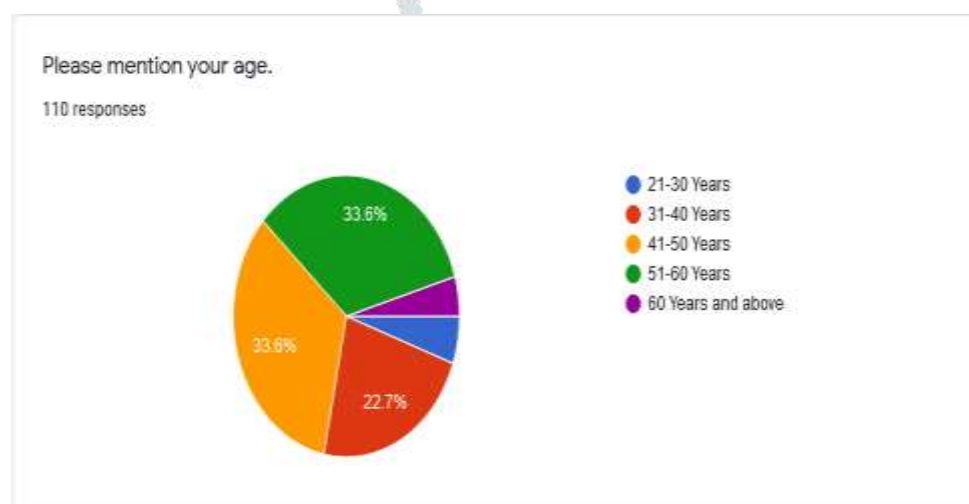


Figure 2

Considering the educational level, it is important to mention that 50% of the total respondents were graduate, 31.8% of the total respondents have completed diploma, 10.9% of the total respondents were belonging to the educational level of Master's degree and rest 7.3% of the respondents have completed high school prior to joining their work.

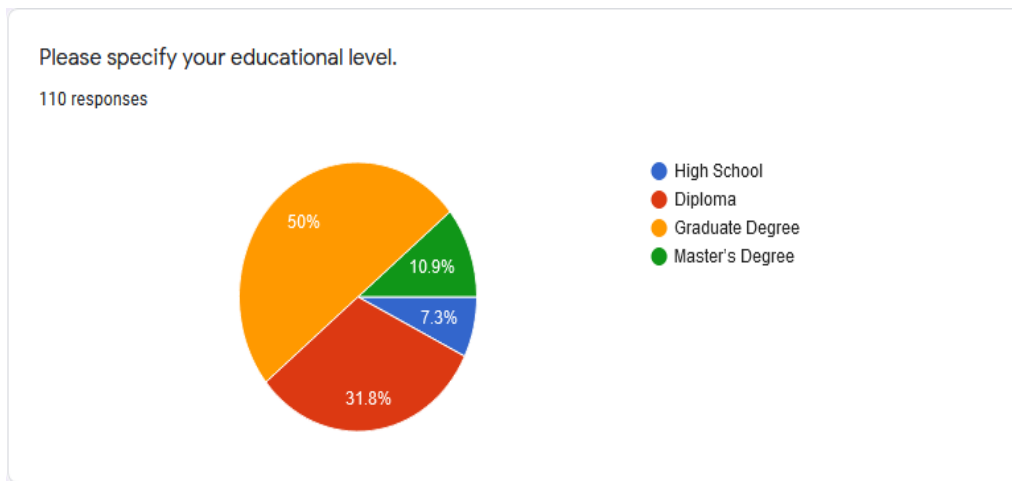


Figure 3

Considering the marital status, 73.6% of the total respondents were married and 26.4% of the total respondents were unmarried.

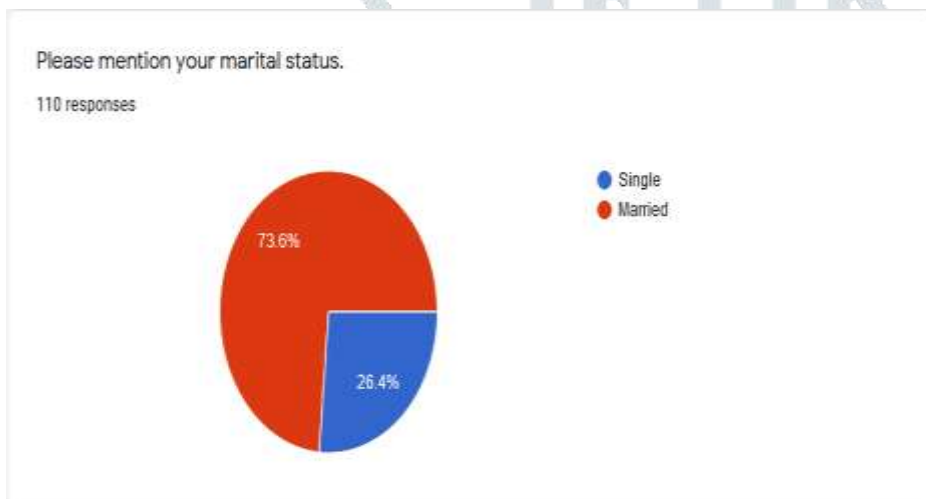


Figure 4

Considering the work tenure, it is important to mention that 46.4% of the total respondents were having a tenure of 5- 10 years, 41.8% of the total respondents were having a tenure of 1- 5 years, 7.3% of the total respondents were having a tenure of less than a year and rest 4.5% of the respondents were having a tenure of more than 10 years in their respective companies.

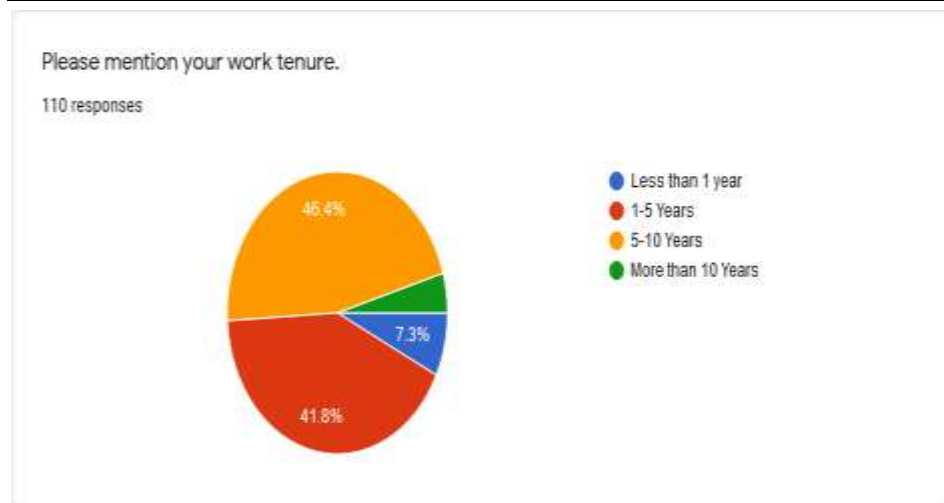


Figure 5

Considering the role of the respondents in their respective companies, it can be seen that 5.4% of the total respondents were belonging to the top level managerial positions, 5.5% of the total respondents were managing the position of trainee, 38.2% of the total respondents were responsible for other managerial works, 20% of the total respondents were liable for non- managerial tasks and 30.9% of the total respondents were responsible for the management of the mid- level managerial positions.



Figure 6

In reply to the question “You think of how you can free up more time to work”, 12.7% of the total respondents replied “Never”, 30.9% of the total respondents replied “Rarely”, 23.6% of the total respondents replied “Sometimes”, 25.5% of the total respondents replied “Often” and rest 7.3% of the respondents replied “Always”.

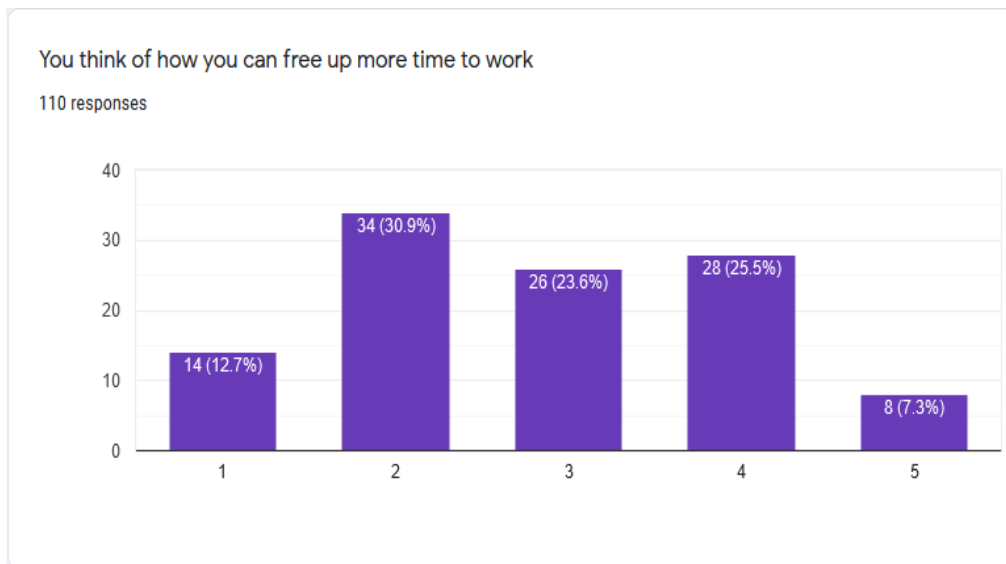


Figure 7

In reply to the question “You spend much more time working than initially intended”, 11.8% of the total respondents replied “Never”, 7.3% of the total respondents replied “Rarely”, 38.2% of the total respondents replied “Sometimes”, 29.1% of the total respondents replied “Often” and rest 13.6% of the respondents replied “Always”.

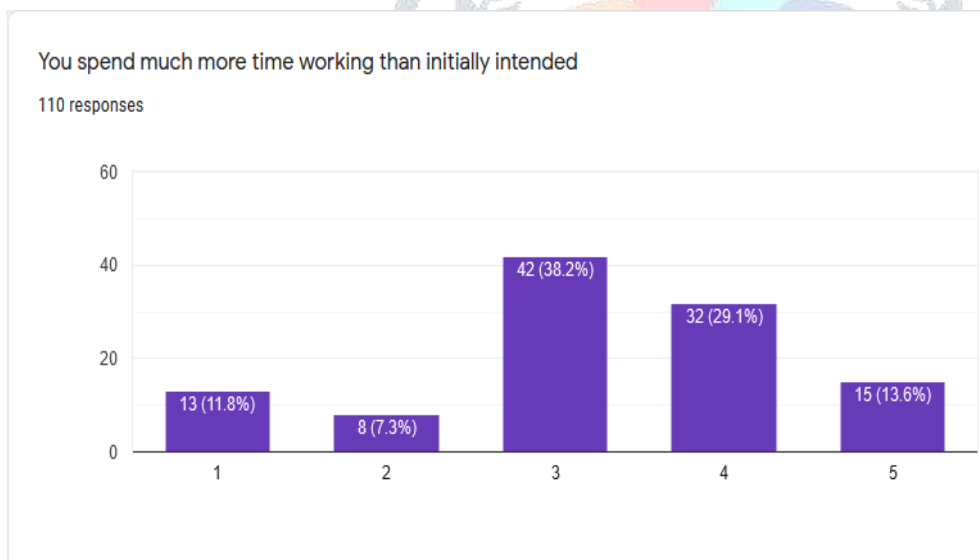


Figure 8

In reply to the question “You work in order to reduce feelings of guilt, anxiety, helplessness and depression”, 11.8% of the total respondents replied “Never”, 17.3% of the total respondents replied “Rarely”, 26.4% of the total respondents replied “Sometimes”, 26.4% of the total respondents replied “Often” and rest 18.2% of the respondents replied “Always”.

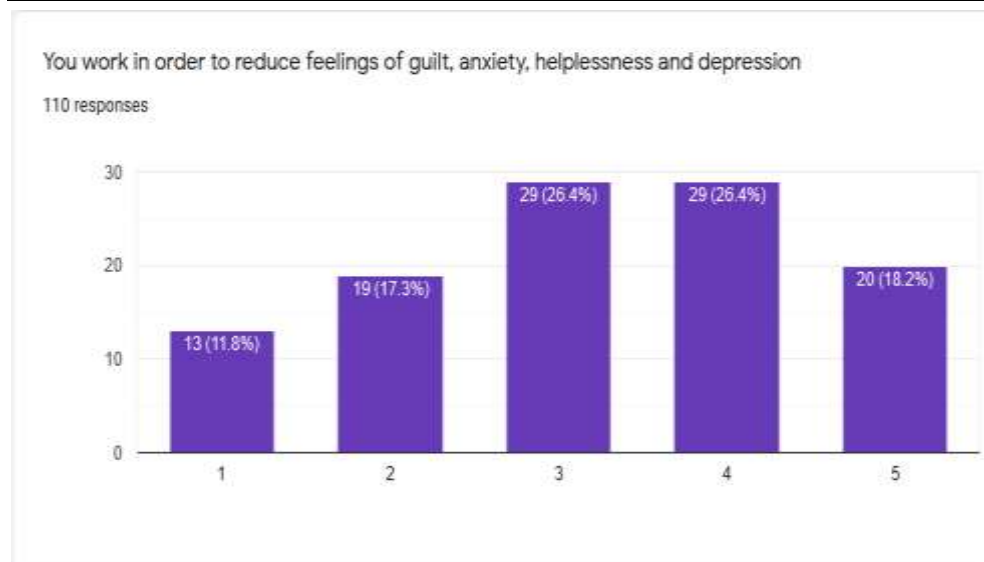


Figure 9

In reply to the question “You have been told by others to cut down on work without listening to them”, 11.8% of the total respondents replied “Never”, 16.4% of the total respondents replied “Rarely”, 27.3% of the total respondents replied “Sometimes”, 21.8% of the total respondents replied “Often” and rest 22.7% of the respondents replied “Always”.

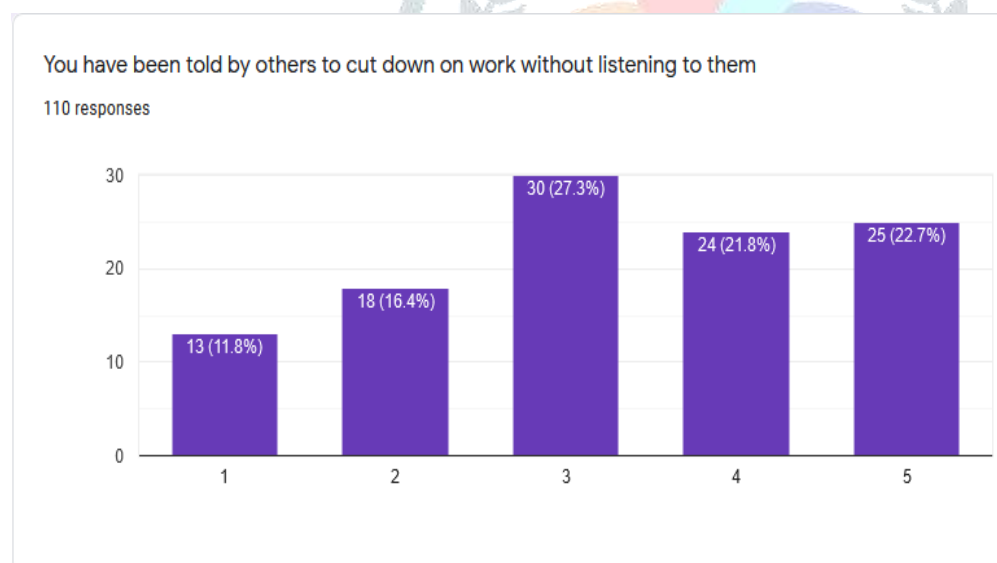


Figure 10

In reply to the question “You become stressed if you are prohibited from working”, 6.4% of the total respondents replied “Never”, 17.3% of the total respondents replied “Rarely”, 21.8% of the total respondents replied “Sometimes”, 26.4% of the total respondents replied “Often” and rest 18.2% of the respondents replied “Always”.

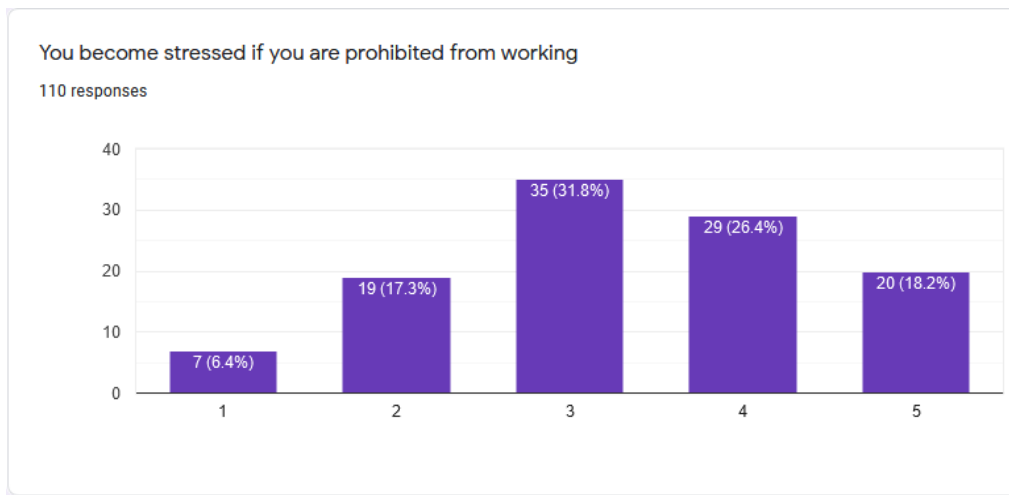


Figure 11

In reply to the question “You prioritise work over hobbies, leisure activities, and exercise”, 12.7% of the total respondents replied “Never”, 12.7% of the total respondents replied “Rarely”, 30.9% of the total respondents replied “Sometimes”, 28.2% of the total respondents replied “Often” and rest 15.5% of the respondents replied “Always”.



Figure 12

In reply to the question “You work so much it has negatively influenced your health”, 14.5% of the total respondents replied “Never”, 14.5% of the total respondents replied “Rarely”, 28.2% of the total respondents replied “Sometimes”, 20.9% of the total respondents replied “Often” and rest 21.8% of the respondents replied “Always”.

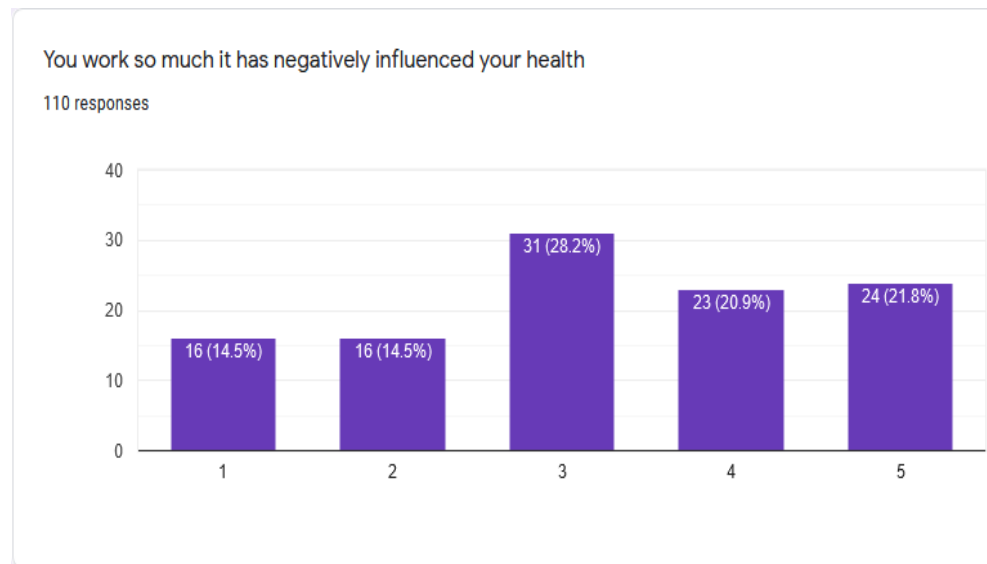


Figure 13

Discussion:

From the findings, it is clear that there are 36 respondents who can be considered as “workaholic”. These professionals have rated majority of the questions with comments like “Always” and “Often”. Moreover, it can be said that 56.4% of the total respondents mentioned that they will free up more time to work and that is a sign of work addiction which is influenced by the job insecurity during the COVID 19 situation. 80.9% of the total respondents mentioned that they spend much more time working than actually intended and that is also a sign of work addiction influenced to save their job during COVID 19, 70.9% of the total respondents agreed that they work in order to reduce feelings of guilt, anxiety, helplessness and depression and the feelings of guilt, anxiety, helplessness and depression monumentally increased during the COVID 19 while influencing the professionals to be more work addicted, 71.8% of the total respondents mentioned that they have been told by others to cut down on work without listening to them during COVID 19, 76.3% of the total respondents agreed that they become stressed if you are prohibited from working and that is a clear sign of work addiction. Other than this, 74.6% of the total respondents accepted the fact that they prioritize work over hobbies, leisure activities, and exercise and that also exhibits their enormous level of work addiction even during the COVID 19 when they had some significant scope for their hobbies, leisure activities and exercise in their home and 71% have accepted the fact that their work has negatively affected their health and that is certainly an exhibition of the risk possessed by work addiction during COVID 19.

Implications and Future Directions:

From the above discussion, it is clear that the COVID 19 had a massive role in the decline of the global business, labour, and employment market and in the increment of unemployment. In such situation, the study has successfully portrayed the rising level of work addiction amongst the professionals for saving their job with all their efforts. The study provided a clear description of the concept of work addiction, causes and risk of work addiction. At the same time, the study also helped in the assessment of the work addicted people who are at risk of work addiction. However, the future direction of the study will be the investigation of the treatment of the professionals who are work addicted and the suggestion of the probable techniques that can be applied for resolving the threat of work addiction that they are facing.

Strengths and Limitations:

As mention earlier, the strength of the study is the detailed assessment of the concept of the work addiction, the causes, and the risk factors of the work addiction. Moreover, the study also assessed the signs of work addiction of the professionals during the COVID 19. On the other hand, the limited sample size of 110 respondents and the lack of the information on the suitable strategies for resolving the threat of work addiction are two major weaknesses of the study.

Conclusion:

On a concluding note, it is important to mention that working lately in occasional cases is normal as the modern professionals are required to manage an enormous demands of market, however, the professionals who struggle to take a step back from their job or tasks, have the tendency of converting long working hours as a norm. The cases of overworking negatively affect the personal life, mental health, and physical health of the professionals and that is evident with the rising number of physiological and psychological issues that the modern professionals are developing in recent times. Moreover, it can be said that the work addiction requires to be tackled with suitable interventions as it negatively affects the physiological and psychological health of the professionals.

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