

Work addiction can be defined as a behavioral addiction with similar symptoms as substance addictions, such as withdrawal, tolerance, mood modification, or conflicts. Studies examining the prevalence of work addiction show that, depending on the country, about 6 to 20% of workers could be affected. These numbers, being significantly higher than in most other addictions, are nontrivial, and thus risk factors of work addiction should be extensively examined. The prevalence differences also suggest that macro-level factors (e.g., cultural ones) may substantially affect the scope of the problem. However, studies on risk factors of work addiction are limited. Most of them include only the individual characteristics of employees (i.e., micro-level factors), such as personality characteristics, or to a smaller degree organizational (i.e., meso-level) factors, such as job demands, excluding cultural and socioeconomic (i.e., macro-level) factors, such as country-level socioeconomic development, and the interplay between different level factors.

Empirical data support the relationship between work addiction and impaired psychosocial functioning of clinical relevance. Work addiction is related to physical and psychological problems, family conflicts, and poor job satisfaction and performance. However, most of the studies on health consequences of work addiction are cross-sectional (i.e., they include just one assessment), which excludes making causal inferences. Moreover, there is a scarcity of data on daily fluctuations of work addiction symptoms and their relationships with the same day and next day health problems. Also, very few studies examined whether and if yes, in what way, the organizational and individual factors influence the relationship between work addiction and health symptoms.

In our project, we will investigate the interplay between cultural and socioeconomic, organizational, and individual factors related to work addiction. For example, we are curious whether living in a country with a high level of socioeconomic development or working in an organization or a company that encourages work-life balance may mitigate the potentially negative effect of some individual characteristics (such as a high level of neuroticism or perfectionism) on symptoms of work addiction. To answer questions like this, we will conduct a cross-cultural study involving at least 2,000 participants from at least 40 countries (50 participants from each country). Participants will respond to the items measuring work addiction, risk factors at various levels, and sociodemographic characteristics. Most data for macro-level factors will be obtained from the world databases, e.g., from the World Bank Open Data.

In this project, we will also investigate the long-term and short-term relationships between work addiction and health problems. We will perform two studies: the first will be a classical longitudinal study (i.e., involving more than one assessment of the same participants), and the second will be an intensive longitudinal study – a diary study. The first study will involve at least 1,000 people working for organizations and companies operating in Poland. Four measurements will be taken, once every four months within a year. In a diary study, at least 200 persons who devote a lot of time to work will participate. The study will consist of two parts: (a) a pre-diary session, in which the participants will complete questionnaires concerning their individual characteristics and the characteristics of their workplace; (b) a 14-day diary study during which we will measure daily symptoms of work addiction, daily health problems, and daily well-being.

Our research will shed more light on the nature of work addiction, and at the same time, on the nature of addiction in general. This project will also initiate new directions in studies on work addiction, particularly those concerning the examination of its risk factors at various levels. In this way, it can provide a basis for preparing recommendations for governments concerning working conditions as well as influence organizational policies and procedures regarding work climate and organizational values. The advantage of the project also lies in the fact that it involves international cooperation and a scientific consortium between the University of Silesia in Katowice and the University of Gdańsk. It creates the opportunity to build a solid research team involved in extensive cross-cultural research on various risk factors and health consequences of work addiction.