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Addiction without Drugs: a Reflection from Psychoanalysis

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Abstract

The main objective of this research is to reflect on non-drug additions, particularly on work addiction. In this sense, we do not propose to identify the psychosocial factors derived from salaried work that facilitate, maintain and reinforce the worker's addictive behavior. The methodology is documentary and interpretative. The results show from the clinic of the organizations that the psychosocial, personal, organizational characteristics of the job (tasks and responsibilities) and of employment in general, as well as the process of organizational socialization and the management of interpersonal relationships with the controls are triggers of addictive behavior. The partial conclusions indicate that the addictive behavior of salaried workers is configured as a strategy of coping with the anguish and stress generated by the fear of losing their job as a perception of high job instability and job insecurity.

Key words: Addiction to work; Psychology of work; Clinic of organizations and Psychoanalysis

"Workaholics is a symptom of contemporary labor unrest and not a mental illness." Nestor Raúl Porras Velásquez

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Introduction

To begin, it is important to mention that according to our research and especially from our reflections we can emphatically state, at this time, that new drug-free addictions, particularly work addiction is a symptom of contemporary work discomfort and not a mental illness. In this sense, it is worth noting that work addiction is a topic that currently draws the attention not only of professionals and researchers of human behavior at work but of the staff dedicated to health in general. The interest in studying, understanding and explaining this work phenomenon has to do not only with the implications but with the repercussions at a personal, social and organizational level that this behavior entails as a factor of psychosocial risk intra and extra labor for the health of the working population.

Currently, the world of work has been presenting a series of changes not only at the technological level but also in the contracting conditions that directly affect a large number of people who are currently working, and indirectly to those who aspire to enter the labor market. Companies in their desire to adapt to the new demands of the global market generate new demands and demands for employees that result in increasingly complex transformations of work activities. Both the emotional work and the most frequent social interactions with a greater number of people in their daily tasks (colleagues, managers, suppliers, customers, etc.), affect both the health and well-being of the workers and have a negative impact on the efficiency of the work. The productive organizations, because they become agents that generate work stress, emotional exhaustion and work exhaustion.

On the other hand, both flexibilization and job insecurity show, in many regions of the world, the new conditions of the labor market, where the formalization of informal work becomes the norm to follow, and workers are forced to accept worse working conditions in their places of work.

Finally, among the new realities of contemporary work we can mention the following: the merger and disappearance of large and especially small businesses, which generate job instability and uncertainty about the future of work, as well as the loss of control over personal life projects and family that are reflected in a kind of existential vacuum because of the lack of meaning of the work done. For this reason, we include at the beginning of the text the phrase of Marx that can guide those who legislate or direct the areas of human talent management in the companies of our country, in matters of dignified and decent working conditions.

This document initially addresses the concepts of work psychology and occupational health psychology, as a framework for analyzing psychosocial risk factors and work addiction.

Psychology and work

For Morán (2005), the psychology of work is "a specific field of psychology that aims at the scientific study of the behavior of individuals in the workplace" (p.18). In short, according to this Spanish psychologist, work psychology studies human behavior in its individual and social dimension, in situations related to work. In the same sense, Blanch (2007) argues that: "the very nature of the psychology of work is inseparable from the socio-historical construction of the problematic realities that as a discipline it tries to understand theoretically and that as a profession it tries to solve and change in the practice "(page 210). It is evident to these authors that the psychology of work and organizations does not exist in the social vacuum. This aspect has been addressed previously by Porras (2009; 2012; 2015; 2016; 2017; 2018).

Peiró, Prieto & Roe (1996); Agulló (2001) and Blanch (2007) recognize that the psychology of work shares two basic principles: A thematic field structured around the personal interaction-organizational or labor environment, which in some cases, appears under the name labor conduct (in both what behavioral reaction to variations in the circumstances of the environment-work context) and, in other cases, as a work action of a cognitive, emotional and social subject intentionally oriented to modify their social and work environment, and -One concept of work as a singular modality of employment. In other words, work as a socially and historically determined form of salaried work activity, in a contractual regime, and within the framework of a particular form of work organization (Porras Velásquez, 2012; 2014; 2018)

Pereda, Berrocal & Alonso (2008) point out that social, political, economic, scientific and technological changes have had a significant impact both on the role, functions and responsibilities assigned to the work psychologist, as well as on the models and techniques that this as a social agent uses in its intervening and investigative professional activity. However, however drastic these changes may have been, according to the authors mentioned:

Psychology, with its scientific methods and theories, continues to be the conceptual basis of work psychology, and yet the psychologist has had to broaden his activity to aspects related to other disciplines such as economics, labor law, occupational medicine, etc., both

when working individually and when doing so as part of multidisciplinary teams (p.11). The warning is directed mainly towards those psychologists and psychologists who assume occupational psychology as an administrative practice of human resources.

Porras Velásquez (2013; 2014; 2017) shows how the limits and configuration of this specialized field of psychology applied to the world of work have economic and political interests that transcend the purely scientific interest of understanding labor reality. In this sense, the marked instrumental interests of discourse and psychological practices in the field of work have been widely exposed. The ideological burden of the practices and discourses of "scientific" psychology in the contemporary labor world and its close connection with neoliberal policies is undeniable. For now, it is considered that the information reviewed is sufficient to indicate the multiplicity of aspects addressed by work psychology, as well as the diversity of approaches used for the analysis of the behavior or behavior of people at work.

In general terms, it is easy to appreciate that work activity is always subject to very diverse variables and all of them form what we call today: working conditions. However, one of the determining factors of working conditions is the economic factor. On the other hand, taking into account the social value of work, as well as the motivations to work. It is not an exaggeration to say that work activity is a determining factor of mental health. That in addition to being a source of income, work provides people with a series of elements that influence emotional balance, a level of activity, a structure of daily time, a development of creative expression, an exchange of social relationships and a personal identity, as well as a sense of utility (Blanch, 2007). Similarly, job satisfaction - understood as the extent to which a person obtains welfare from their work - is an important variable related to mental health (Muchinsky, 2007). This dimension, according to this author, is related both to the working conditions (in particular, work situation and salary) and to the behavior in it (absenteeism and job rotation, mainly).

Finally, Moreno Jimenez (2011), argues that work has historically been a risk to health and working conditions have usually posed a threat to health that have caused accidents and diseases related to health of all kinds, including by their position the mental health of workers. Although, concern for occupational hazards has historically focused on physical and environmental risks, more attention has recently been paid to the psychosocial risks that require, on the part of researchers of human behavior in work contexts, a greater effort in the conceptualization and forms of manifestation. Particularly, in the current times, due to the expansion of the services market and globalization, psychosocial risks have increased and intensified, and their effects on health are significant. For this reason, an integral attention to occupational health is required by the administration or management of human resources.

What is work addiction?

Most psychologists agree that Oates (1971) was the first to use the term "workaholism" to refer to a type of behavior, which he observed in himself when he was working, and that resembled the behavior in alcoholism, due to its compulsive nature and lack of control, and that could become a risk to their personal health, interpersonal relationships and social functioning in general. Oates (1971), defined work addiction as an excessive and uncontrollable need to work incessantly that affects the health, happiness and interpersonal relationships of the addict. According to Salanova., *et al.* (2007), the causes of this problem "point to social, personal and work conditions that interact and cause that in a specific work context the worker is affected by this addiction" (p.1).

Cherrington (1980) defines work addiction in general terms as an irrational implication of the excessive work that characterizes people who are unable to find another source of occupation other than their own work.

Killinger (1993), states that "a workaholic is a person who gradually loses emotional stability and becomes addicted to control and power in a compulsive attempt to achieve approval and success" (p.18).

For Robinson (1997), work addiction is characterized by continuous overload, voluntary and compulsive, so that the worker is unable to regulate their work habits and ends up excluding other fields of interest and activity from their social life.

Salanova, Del Líbano, Llorens, Schaufeli & Fidalgo (2008), define work addiction as a psychosocial damage characterized by excessive work due mainly to an irresistible need or impulse to work constantly.

More recently, it has been suggested that work addiction "is an irresistible internal impulse to work very hard, that is, addicts work excessively and compulsively" (Castañeda & García, 2011, p.137). According to these authors, there are currently four criteria to define the workaholic: have a special work attitude, dedicate excessive time and effort to work, suffer a compulsive and involuntary disorder to continue working (inclusive criteria) and show general disinterest for any other activity that is not strictly labor (exclusive criterion).

In short, and for the purposes of our research, the concept of work addiction refers to a type of compulsive and uncontrollable behavior to work that affects the labor, social and mental health of the affected person. However, we recognize in advance that this is a recent concept and that there is, to date, a unique definition and accepted by all experts and researchers of the subject.

Types and characteristics of work addiction

Naughton (1987) presents a typology of the workaholic based on the dimension of involvement in professional career and obsessive compulsive behavior. Naughton, proposes two basic types: 1. The worker addicted and involved in the work, characterized by a high degree of commitment at work, and with an intensive dedication to work to the detriment of other types of relationships and interests; and 2. The addicted and obsessive worker, characterized by a high degree of commitment and an amount of energy devoted to work does not correspond to results. Other typologies, proposals are: - Ambitious worker. - Ruthless fight. - Imposition. - Competitive worker. - need to feel superior. - Guilty worker. - Work overload as an ethical imperative. - Insecure worker. - Continuous and eager search for approval and self-esteem. - Isolated and lonely worker. - Professional relationship as a substitute for interpersonal relationship (Rohrlich, 1992). However, it is important to point out that these typologies (classifications) do not currently have an empirical validation.

For Bryan Robinson (2001), a person addicted to work is characterized by: a) working compulsively, b) inability to relax after work, c) need to control and do things his way, d) gives more importance to work that relationships with others, e) is not able to delegate or is very difficult, f) their self-assessment is focused on the results of work (tasks) rather than the process of how those results have been achieved. To this list it is necessary to add: that work for these people is an obsession. According to Castañeda & García (2011), the psychosocial profile of the work addict includes the following features: denies the situation, manipulates the information, poor interpersonal communication, high need for control, willingness to work extra, performs unnecessary tasks to justify its excess of work, presenteeism (they go to work being sick), extra-work problems, work habits that exceed the prescribed, their goal at work is always perfection among others.

According to the results of the research carried out by Salanova, Del Líbano, Llorens, Schaufeli & Fidalgo (2008), it can be affirmed that a worker with a problem of work addiction has the following behaviors associated with addiction: he works more than 56 hours a week without giving costs, works late into the night without resting, works even when sick, takes work home regularly, cannot refuse additional tasks, their topic of conversation, bases their self-esteem on recognition by her work, she needs praise and permanent recognition of her work, she does not enjoy free time, vacations or rest, free time causes her anguish and anxiety, high need for control, among other behaviors.

Psychosocial effects of addictive behavior at work

Studies of addictive behavior to work have been characterized, throughout history, by a large number of theoretical, conceptual, methodological and instrumental positions. This situation has led to a variety of opinions among occupational health professionals, including psychologists and researchers of this particular phenomenon, regarding how to consider such behavior. On the one hand, there are those who consider it a positive and favorable behavior for the organization of the same type of so-called "involvement in work" or commitment to tasks and organization (Del Líbano, Rodríguez, Llorens, Cifre & Salanova, 2006). For other psychologists, the addition to work is considered a negative behavior (Killinger, 1993), finally, there are those who believe that this addiction can have positive and

negative consequences depending on certain characteristics of the personality or the level of commitment to the organization, as for example Spencer & Robins (1992).

In general terms, addictions are badly considered, however, work addiction usually has reinforcements, social, economic and personal, and is socially considered a "clean addiction". Not surprisingly, several authors have pointed out that "in our current society, of production and consumption, an important part of our identity comes from our profession and work, and a large part of our time is dedicated and consumed at work" (Moreno, Gálvez, Garosa & Rodríguez, 2005, p.417). In this case, you can talk about good social addictions (socially accepted, recognized, valued and even desirable in most people who work and want to keep their job.) Of course, this nonsense is just a comfortable reading and perverse of capitalist logic.

However, in the context of globalization of markets, the culture of companies demand a higher dedication to their employees, sometimes supposedly voluntary, sometimes imposed by real working conditions and that may overflow functional and rational limits. On the other hand, when the number of hours of work increases considerably and absorbs all the capacity of dedication of the person, when the work assumes the form of obsessive and compulsive dedication, when the person seems to define their social roles exclusively by their relationship to work and he is unable to enjoy other areas of life; for many psychologists it is usually spoken of "work addiction". However, neither its definition nor the explanatory theoretical models are a sufficiently established and clarified topic (Harpaz & Snir, 2003).

Fernández-Montalvo & Echeburua (1998), after making a review of the main aspects involved in work addiction. They conceptualize this disorder as a psychological addiction and expose the psychopathological aspects that characterize it. In addition, they suggest possible ways of intervention, based on the results obtained in other types of psychological addictions.

Conclusions

Work addiction is not a disease but a symptom of the social malaise of our time, which must be studied by both the psychologists of work and organizations and by health psychologists, from the perspective of the subjective positioning proposed by the clinic analytical work.

In the current conditions of salaried work, new work experiences and new forms of labor relations emerge, which influence, decisively, the daily life of the workers and the organizational dynamics. For this reason, any study that is done on the insertion into the "new", "dynamic" and "changing" labor market should consider the changes that have taken place in society in general and in production systems in particular.

From the work ethic, understood by Bauman (2005), as an aberrant rudeness, by making the poor responsible for their poverty thanks to their lack of readiness to work and, therefore, to their immorality and personal degradation that would become in one of the last services of the work ethic to the consumer society; where the "new poor" are those who are unable to access consumption and the novelty of the capitalist system. This situation generates high levels of psychic suffering at work.

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