WORK'S FOREMEN IN POLISH ENTERPRISES TOWARDS NEW SOCIOECONOMIC CHALLENGES

Dr. Dorota Frasunkiewicz

University of Finance and Management in Bialystok, Faculty of Management,
Tutor in Organizational Behaviour
ul. Chrobrego 1 E/3
15-057 Białystok, Poland
Phone: +48 0601 362 455
E-mail: frasdoro@tlen.pl
FRASDORO@WSFIZ.EDU.PL

Abstract

Purpose

To show internal and external sources of workaholism afflicting inhabitants of the economically backward area of Poland (North-East region) , who have found themselves in the new social and economic situation (after the constitutional transformation).

Method

The main research, in which a questionnaire method was employed, were conducted in 2005 on a sample of 450 workaholics, who had been appointed during the pilot research. The respondents were selected from three types of firms: small private enterprises, branches of concerns and corporations, taking into consideration the criterion of position.

Findings

In the economically backward region workaholics are characterized by a high enthusiasm for ten to fourteen hours-long work. It is determined by internal compulsion but also brings a lot of pleasure and therefore strengthens their self-esteem. Workaholics' behaviors are a result of compilation of personal features (satisfying of many needs in a work place, perfectionism), which development is supported by very demanding style of upbringing, common in Poland. The behaviors are also caused by the new situation which has arisen after the transformation from socialist into capitalist political system (organizational culture of firms, new ethos of laboriousness).

Research limitations

Owing to formal reasons (lack of proper researches) more detailed information and comparative considerations about the occurrence of workaholism in the period before the constitutional changes, which could have enriched significantly the received view, were not placed in the article. Moreover, psychological investigation was not applied towards the research group by virtue of the adopted sociological perspective.

Value

The article shows the occurrence of workaholism not only as a consequence of personal features of individuals, but also as a result of social demand for the new lifestyle which has come to exist along with the new socioeconomic situation of the country.

Keywords: Workaholism's sources, Aims and aspirations of workaholics, Workaholics' needs, Workaholics' behaviors, Organizational culture, Private and working life of workaholics.

INTRODUCTION

Generally speaking workaholism is a condition of working in excess and most psychologists agree that it is a parallel term to the other compulsions for doing something to a detrimental extreme (e.g. alcoholism, drug addiction) as it was suggested by Wayne E.Oates (Oates, 1968). Later Oates defined it as an *addiction to work, the compulsion or the uncontrollable need to work incessantly* that has dysfunctional implications (in a sphere of physical health, personal life, interpersonal relationships

or social perform) like any other addiction (Oates, 1971, p.4). The term further was popularized by Marilyn Machlowitz when she profiled the individuals who worked long hours even when they could have chosen not to (Machlowitz, 1980). By her definition, anyone who works long hours would be called a workaholic and there is a positive potential as well as a negative one. Nevertheless these two aspects should be distinguished (Spence, Robbins 1992; Naughton, 1987). If workers have inclinations to devotion connected with high *work involvement* and an ability to enjoy work, irrespective of - felt or not - *drivenness to work*, then we can call them work's enthusiasts. Only in some rare cases they show tendency to become addicted to work. Such approach to work is beneficial from an organization's point of view (however it can cause damage to a firm sometimes). Whereas, if high devotion to work and involvement in it is connected with strong compulsion to work and a low level of pleasure derived from it, then it is workaholism, understood as a work obsession. The literature of this subject describes both of these standpoints, however for most of researchers the addiction perspective is more important, because there are numerous implications for either family and personal life or organizational functioning (Porter, 1996; 2001). In this context workaholism is self-destructive behavior classified as a pathology because of strong disturbances of balance. It causes a lack of equilibrium between work and other important spheres of life, that is disturbance of rational proportions of work's matters to privacy. This addiction manifests itself in performing of specific activities and results from an individual's habitual reaction for something what they consider to be as rewarding and important that they cannot exist without it (Sęk, 2001).

According to some of authors, workaholism has its sources in identifying work with basic needs and values, in the others' opinion – it is caused by hereditary predispositions. In the first case work is a substitute for all or some of disturbed spheres of an individual's life and therefore workaholism arises not until adulthood. The second approach affirms that personal features condition professional activity of workaholics, which is adjusted to their personal abilities (Golińska, 2000). However, it seems that workaholism, irrespective of assumed sources, arises and develops on the base of similar - as in case of addiction to chemical substances – psycho-physiological mechanisms of human functioning, determined by specific socio-cultural and civilizational context. This context is essential especially in reference to the Polish reality after the 1989th, when "the real socialism" was changed into "the real capitalism". It does not mean that in the period of the socialist economy workaholism was not known. Since the early 50's work's foremen (so-called "*stakhanovites*")[1] were promoted in Poland. Their measure of success (both personal and institutional) was permanent exceed of norms of work's efficiency, which was understood more in quantitative than in qualitative categories. In the same time, independently of the work's foreman's attitude promoted by the state and Polish United Workers' Party, passive attitude of workers was widespread resulting – to a large degree – from the protective function of the state. It used to be expressed in simulating of work and working with mediocre efficiency according to the conviction, popular at that time, that: *either you stand or lie you deserve a pay*.

The transformation of political system induced a change in attitude to work. The competition forced by the party ideology was replaced with the rivalry forced by labor market and now is treated as individuals' fight for getting and keeping a job or for development of personal career. Such conceived competition is an impulse with great force of influence. Therefore more and more potential and real workers endeavor to participate in a particular "rat-race", offering to firms – apart from substantial knowledge – their unlimited time and disposal. Exactly such candidates, prone to devotion to an enterprise, employers engage most willingly (Paluchowski, Hornowska, 2003). On the other hand a low level of material status of many Polish families, significantly reduced during the period of political and economic transformation, together with an increase of individuals' consumer aspirations, caused the necessity for "eking out" an income. Already in 1998, the survey of The Public Opinion Research Center showed that the majority of the questioned were of opinion that: Poles work better (64%), longer (73%) and with greater involvement (70%), in comparison with the period before the constitutional transformation (Retowski, 2005). Such changes in work standard were more frequently noticed by better-educated people and with a high material status. According to another report of the same research institution, in 2003 owing to the increase of consumer needs 26% of Poles undertook supplementary job (Paszek, 2005). This fact contributed to forming of specific fashion for a notorious lack of time and hour-long working, according to the principle that: the more a person is occupied the more they are perceived as men of initiative with a high social status.

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[1] The term created in The Union of Soviet Socialist Republic from the name of Aleksiej Stachanow - the founder of "the competition in work movement", also known as "the stakhanovic movement", connected directly with the totalitarian state and planned economy.

The aim of the paper is to describe the contemporary sources and types of polish workaholism after the transformation of political and economic system as well as decide if this phenomena has positive or negative impact on the companies.

In the light of the reflections above, the author poses the following three research theses:

1) predispositions resulted from personal features of an individual and their temperament as well as individual characteristics formed during a process of socialization (especially a process of upbringing in a family) are a relevant base of workaholism, nevertheless in some special cases (sudden socioeconomic changes) environmental factor seems to be the primary element which constitutes workaholics' attitudes (see: Cloninger 1994);

2) activities of an organization can cause the behaviorist character of work, analogous as in addiction, resulting in workaholism caused by organizational culture;

3) considering current press reports (daily press, sociopolitical weeklies) one can notice that the phenomenon of workaholism occurs in great corporations and branches of concerns more frequently that in small private enterprises.

1. Method

Comparing definitions occurring in the literature, it is possible to distinguish two main approaches to workaholism (McMillan *et al.* 2001):

1) dynamic approach – concentrated on the process and its results;

2) characteristic approach – describing, typical of workaholics, behaviors and their intensity.

Referring to the accepted theses of the research, it was necessary to find the reasons which determine behaviors of Polish workers and on the other hand – to employ the characteristic approach to describe behaviors of Polish workaholics. Owing to the assumption of importance of the external (environmental) conditions of workaholism, a questionnaire and a direct interview were chosen as instruments for the investigation. Their structure was determined by the following aims of the research:

1) initial identification of workaholism through describing – in accordance with the already mentioned M. Machlowitz's conception – duration of time devoted to work from an individual's own choice, a feeling of intense compulsion to work, existence or lack of satisfaction derived from work and ability to organize work time;

2) defining of relevant personal sources of workaholism on the base of the list which was fixed during the pilot research (among others – an individual's needs, low self-esteem, perfectionism, pleasure derived from excessive work);

3) indicating of important social sources of workaholism on the base of the list which was fixed during the pilot research (among others – interpersonal relationships, upbringing, lifestyle, social and economic situation of a country);

4) defining of the sources of workaholism which are inherent to a workplace (mainly to organizational culture of a firm);

5) diagnosing of the inequality of proportions of work time to rest and to relations with a family;

6) an attempt to characterize types of workaholism depending on sources of their arising and symptoms visible in behaviors.

These aims were measured by the author's questionnaire in which the Likert scale was used to differentiate the question's level. The research were conducted in two stages: the pilot research in February 2005 and the main research – from March to June 2005. A direct method was used, which ensures obtaining of the biggest amount of questionnaires' returns. The questionnaires were distributed to 450 people (managers and firm owners). The selection of the investigated was carried out in three stages. Initially firms from the North-East region of Poland were picked at random with preservation of proper - for this region - proportions of types of firms. The author intentionally did not choose to conduct a research representative for the whole country and concentrated on one of the most under-developed regions, where people have a more intensive need to make up for civilizing backwardness through hard work than in others parts of Poland (Frasunkiewicz 2004, 2005a). Therefore there is a larger probability of the occurrence of workaholism conditioned on the external factors, what particularly interested the author. The next stage of the selection was choosing of workers from the already mentioned firms. The essential criterion of the selection in this case was information about the workers' excessive involvement in their work, which was obtained from external sources (from people, who have known the inquired). Then the criterion of position was applied: proprietors (joint proprietors) and employees (white- and blue-collar workers) were chosen from three different types of firms:

1) small private enterprises: proprietors or joint proprietors – 56%, employees – 44%, women – 31%, men – 69%, married – 70% (only 6% divorced), childless – 33%, having two children – 30%, having one child – 27%;
2) branches of larger concerns: managers and managing directors – 22%, employees – 78%, women – 44%, men – 56%, married – 64% (only 5% divorced), childless – 56%, having one child – 23%, having two children – 15%;
3) firms within corporations: managers and managing directors – 18%, employees – 82%, women – 36%, men – 64%, married – 67% (24% divorced), childless – 39%, having one child – 30%, having two children – 24%.

Considering the proportions of the proprietors to the employees one can notice that the specificity of the questioned group is mainly determined by character of the chosen region. Moreover, specific character of the structure of the appointed group, including the index of disordered family relations (divorced and childless) irrespective of the inquired age, can initially indicate the increased occurrence of workaholism in corporations and branches of larger concerns.

2. Introductory Identification of Workaholism in the Investigated Firms

Workaholics work longer then they had originally planned and at the same time they are aware that their work is excessive, but they cannot reduce or control it. According to the Polish law the working day should last eight hours, but most of the investigated workers exceed this time, irrespective of character of a firm. In the small private enterprises 44% of the employees admit working ten hours a day, in the branches of larger concerns - 46% and 45% in the corporations. However, considering the phenomenon of longer work time it is possible to notice some differences among the firms: the smaller a specific firm or a superior organ of this firm is, the longer workers stay in their work (12 hours: E [1]- 30%, B – 21%, C – 12%; 14 hours: E – 11%, B – 8%, C – 6%). In smaller firms, where organizational structure is more level, a proprietor is more often directly involved in work (e.g.: making operational actions beside managing a firm). It causes that he is obliged to make larger efforts and subordinates, being under direct supervision of the boss who has greater independence in personnel management, are forced to reduce their protests against prolonging of a working day, what they admitted during the interviews.

It is worth to emphasize that the inquired from all of the investigated firm have some problems with organizing of their work time. It happens as a rule that during their work time some unexpected tasks occur disrupting an assumed timetable. Such situation concern most often the workers of corporations (E – 32%, B – 49%, C – 56%). Whereas the inquired from small private enterprises, more than the others, arrange consciously their additional tasks and are certain of their own ability to organize time. In this case the lack of assertiveness is significant both for the owners of these firms and their subordinates (25% of them undertake tasks which they are not able to perform in the stipulated work time).

In most cases (**82,3%** on average in every type of firm) the investigated are aware of their excessive work, although only few of them claim to be a workaholic (16% of the researched population)[2]. The last-mentioned try to disregard this fact and they do not see necessity to reduce their work time. The others (84 %) consider that intensive, hour-long work is not a negative phenomenon in their cases (although that is how they interpret workaholism). In their opinion it is rather the necessity which enables them to achieve their own aims (49,7%) or an enjoyable activity (**65,3%** of the inquired indicate a high level of pleasure derived from work). Therefore these workers do not want to, or are not able to, reduce their work time. Interesting results were obtained researching on satisfaction of working. It turned out that the less the eight hours' working day is exceeded (it mainly applies to corporations), the more people enjoy their work (E-51%, B-67%, C-78%). Simultaneously the majority of the investigated from all types of the surveyed firms feel strong internal compulsion to work (P – 65%, B – 80%, C – 70%, **71,7% -** on average). In accordance with the above mentioned Spence's and Robbins's classification, it is possible to assume initially that in the researched group predominate the **aware workaholics**, who have a positive potential, spend a lot of time working (83%), feel internal compulsion to work and derive pleasure from it. However, in small private enterprises the smallest number of proprietors and workers belong to this category, what can initially suggest their greater addiction to work.

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[1] E – small private enterprises, B - branches of larger concerns, C- firms within corporations.
[2] It should be no wonder, because workaholics as well as other addicted people are likely to deny facts.

The author distinguished the following categories in the group of the aware workaholics:

1) <u>continuously intensive working</u> (53,7%) – Managers predominate in this group. Their devotion to their work often has didactic character (72%), what manifests itself in conviction that to set a good example for their subordinates is their duty and simultaneously – their vocation. There is a high probability that people from this group can become compulsive-dependent workaholics in the future;

2) <u>cyclically excessive working</u> (24,7%) – In this case periods of intensive involvement in work are alternated with periods of relative calmness, which are usually used to catch up on backlogs arisen while the previous tasks were being accomplished;

3) <u>simulating excessive work</u> (9%) – Subordinates predominate in this group (mainly the employees of branches of larger concerns). They disrupt their own and others' realization of tasks believing that the more confusion they will create around themselves, the more their commitment to work would be seen. Beside internal compulsion to work, they feel also strong external pressure of their superiors' continuous control, which overwhelms them;

4) <u>occasionally excessive working</u> (8,6%) – It mainly applies to emergencies, during which the priority is to finish a task irrespective of devoted time;

5) <u>temporarily excessive working</u> (4%) – Temporary workaholics adjust to the necessity of excessive work only seemingly, but their mental discomfort is so great that it forces them (as a defensive reaction) to look for another job.

3. The Aware Workaholics

This type of workaholics, predominant in the investigated enterprises, does not associate with any personal problems or mental disorders (Naughton,1987) – at least at this stage - although it is not possible to exclude that some negative results of this approach to work will appear in the future. In this case workaholism is rather connected with the values system within which work is a priority for different reasons (Friedman, Lobel, 2003). Not long ago the model of the person who overworks voluntarily was unfamiliar to Poles, especially at the backward area of the North-East Poland. The author's researches, conducted in the 90's of the 20th century, showed that above 60% of the surveyed in this region were characterized by passivity and the lack of belief that intensive work can improve their conditions (Frasunkiewicz, 2001). Currently the stagnation was replaced by ambitions and diligence characteristic of all age groups of the investigated workers. Therefore the phenomenon of work's foremen and "stakhanovites" of one's own free will have come back. The image of the active man who is always busy and overworked (does not have time for anything beside his work) is attractive nowadays, because it is perceived as the image of a man of success. Inhabitants of the region are convinced that their work can be a chance to create their future, irrespectively of a type of firm they work in (Figure 1). Admittedly they feel rather bound up with their firms, but the reason why they devote their private time for hour-long work is their need for individual success, which means the achievement of their own aims and aspirations. Success of their workplace is not so important for them.

This type of workaholics want to work hard to achieve individual success (E – 90%, B – 91%, C – 81%). In their opinion the main component of the success is personal development (E – 89%, B – 82%, C – 91%), because it makes them feel respect for themselves. The questioned are fascinated by their work and their own development. Therefore they are self-confident (E – 84%, B – 87%, C – 88%) and optimistic. It happens that they have periods of intense stress and exhaustion, like all active people, but they cope with it successfully and still enjoy their work, sometimes only changing form or domain of their activity. Aspiration to achieve success and individual development is the base of the next aim - career (E-81%, B – 82%, C – 87%). The corporations enable the fastest way to achieve it. The opportunity to get income in relatively short time also is of great significance in the respondents' hierarchy of aspirations (E – 82%, B – 86%, C – 81%). It is understandable considering big unemployment in this area (12,5%)[1], even if material status of the inquired does not keep up whit an increase of their incomes (in their opinion the material status is only *slightly higher* than ten years ago). Therefore probably the opportunity to get income is not the most important among life aims and only few of the investigated – mainly owners of small private enterprises – can fulfill their superior needs (E – 72% [2], B – 64%, C – 45%). Simultaneously it is should be emphasize that in the respondents'

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[1] Data from 1.08.2005 – Statistic Office of the Region
[2] Among 82% of the surveyed from small private enterprises who answered this question, as many as 92% were proprietors or joint proprietors, and only 8% - employees.

opinion earnings should be used to develop their talents and hobbies. They consider work as a value itself (not only a way to get money and social status) and its keeping is a noteworthy aspiration for 79,3% of the researched.

Figure 1. Aspirations and Aims of Workers from the Backward Area of the North-East Poland after the Political Transformation.
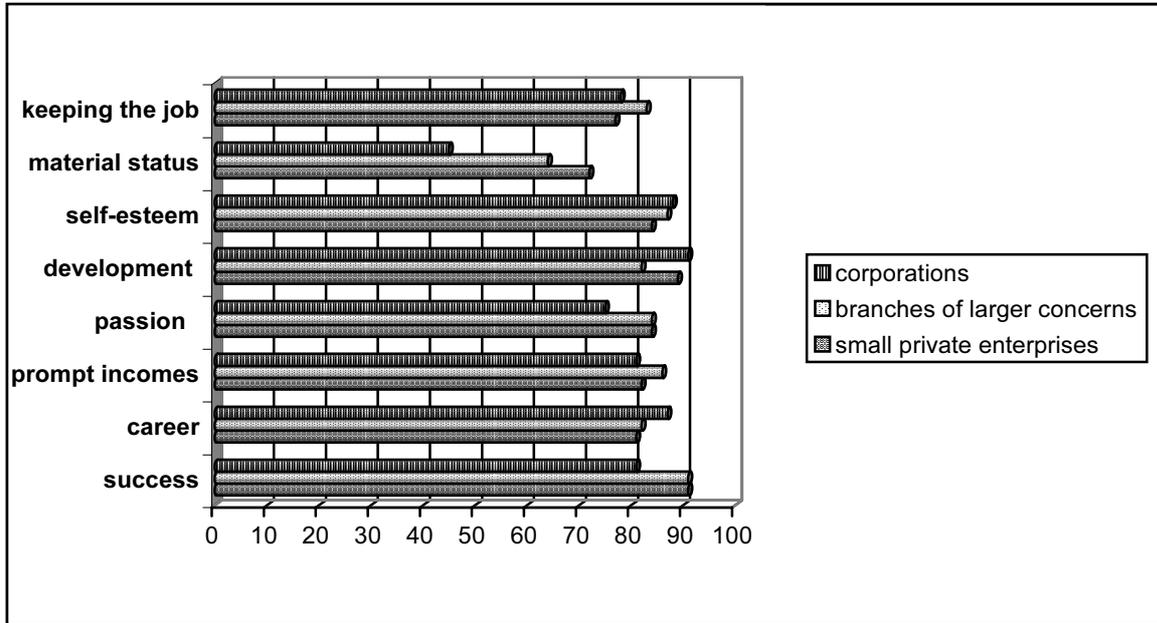
source: own research

Figure 2: Relations between Aspirations and Aims of the Aware Workaholics in Poland
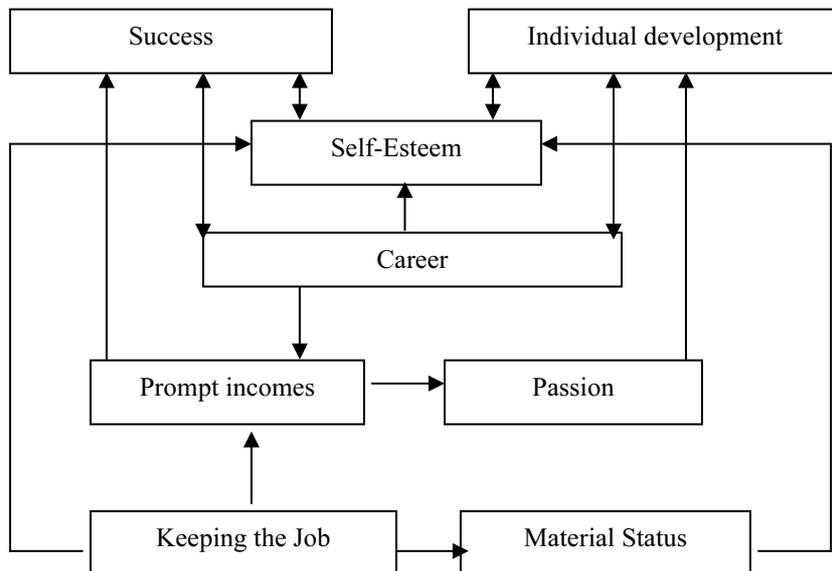

All of the inquired emphasized during the interviews that they are perceived as workaholics in their closest environment, although only half of them like such intensive work (53% of this population claim that *the more they work, the more they feel alive*) and want to keep a high pace of working

(50%)[1]. The others are rather moderately enthusiastic, although they also feel abandoned by friends and family. According to the investigated the source of their social isolation is jealously of their environment, the stronger the more it is inert.

4. Personal and Social Sources of Workaholism

As it was indicated above, the main reason that forces almost half of the inquired (let us remind: 49,7%) to work excessively is their willingness to achieve their aims and fulfill needs. The list of their needs was created on a base of results obtained during the pilot research (Siek, 1983), which are shown in Figure 2. The most significant for forming of excessive commitment to work are: the need of achievements (90,3%), fulfillment (85,7%) and activity (83,3%).

Figure 3: Needs as a Source of Workaholism
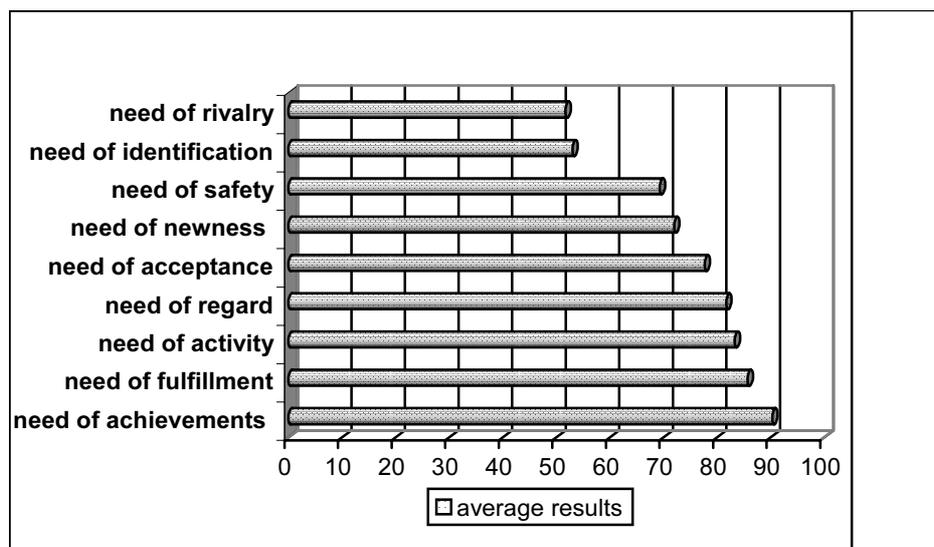
source: own research

Aiming at **achievements** (high motivation to achieve aims) includes the need of progress and on the other hand – the need of dominance, leadership as well as the ability to postpone bonuses and the desire for prizes. Scientists agree that sources of this motivation derive from childhood and are caused by conditional parents' acceptance, dependent on a child's achievements. Therefore analyzing this need, as well as the occurrence of workaholism, it is necessary to consider the specific convictions and fears, formed by social learning. One of the ways of forming of the need of achievements is the style of upbringing in which parents are very demanding and they exact their requirements using punishments and limiting prizes and approvals. In Poland the restrictive style of upbringing is widespread. The majority of the respondents recall that their parents used mental pressure as a punishment and used to put high demands (it is affirmed by 86% of the investigated). As many as 78% of the researched remember that as children they used to be victims of emotional blackmail, which was applied to force them to be the best in every field, and 68% of them used to be threatened with dismissal. Moreover, 61% of the researched used to hear phrases arousing fear (*if you do not endeavor, you will graze cattle, you will achieve nothing*). In adulthood these phrases are still current and they propel workaholics. During the process of upbringing, children learn to set and achieve aims, assimilating their own systems of values and strong motivation to reach results better than others do (the motivation to competition). The need of achievements arisen from childhood comes in useful to undertake the challenges brought by the new style of living. This style has been functioning in Poland since the political transformation and it promotes the image of an excessively working man of success. In opinion of 78,2% of the researched *nowadays everybody wants to achieve*

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[1] The other investigated want to slow down their pace of working or undertake some less absorbing work in the future.

success by intensive work, and 42,5% of the surveyed claim that *only those, who had entirely committed themselves to their jobs, achieved something*. In this case informative social influence intensifies the need of achievements and workaholism as well.

The great need of achievements is one of the constituents (apart from tendency to dominance and aggression) of the syndrome often named 'Type A' by psychologists, whose characteristics include among other things: a preference to work alone and an inability to delegate (Price, 1982). It was not the author's purpose to investigate workers from the viewpoint of their models of behaviors, but only to claim that the occurrence of these indexes is the source of workaholism. Some of the investigated (55,3%) prefer to work alone, because they are convinced that they work more efficiently when nobody disturbs them. Similarly some of them (53%) consider that asking for help during performing of a task takes more time and trouble than unaided dealing with a problem. Whereas 61% of the surveyed can delegate some of their duties to their co-workers if it is necessary, although those are less important tasks as a rule and the researched want to have a look-in during their realization. It indicates the lack of confidence in others, what the further research will show. Moreover, it is important for the investigated to be always ready to undertake ambitious and difficult tasks, which are treated as a next stage of their career or as a next test of their competencies (52%). Such approach to work causes a series of negative behaviors and emotions, such as:

- impatience (75,4%);
- haste (73,7%);
- annoyance (68,4%) in case of delays, caused not through their fault (e.g.: a traffic jam, a lack of documents which were to be delivered at a defined time, a lack of a superior's acceptance of a plan) or when something or somebody disturbs them while they are working;
- irritation, when things do not go as promptly as they have expected (65,3%);
- quick loss of balance, when things do not go according to a plan (54,7%);
- rage, when others do not fulfill their standards of professionalism (46,7%).

Therefore **64%** of the inquired have negative emotions typical of workoholics, who are determined by a high need of achievements. It should be emphasize that these feelings are more characteristic of the workers of the corporations (25% more frequently on average) and the branches of larger concerns (15% more frequently on average) than of those of small private enterprises.

No less than the need of achievements the surveyed assess the need of **fulfillment** (85,7%), because its satisfying is a way to reach self-esteem. This need is associated with readiness to undertake new challenges and test oneself in realizing of difficult tasks, but it also gives an opportunity to develop one's career, which was especially emphasized by the workers of corporations (91% of the surveyed from this group). At the same time 84,3% of the researched indicate their work as the only area in which they can realize their aims and aspirations. Therefore it is not a wonder that they are ready for sacrifices, working over ten hours a day. The high position of the fulfillment among the others needs can be interpreted as one of the sources of the internal compulsion to excessive work.

The results of the research show that the investigated like when there are many affairs around them in which they can engage. **The need of activity** (83,3%), interpreted as the need of movement, is associated with a demand for adrenaline, which affects similarly to neuropathic substances causing a state of euphoria and strengthening workaholism. As the inquired claim *they feel alive* thanks to permanent activity and *their life is rich*. However, what is interesting, the main sphere of this activity is their job (only 21% of the researched practice some parlor games, and merely 5% - extreme sports, 8% of them are involved in social activities and 1% - in politics). Simultaneously the workers of corporation have the least possibility of their activity demonstrating, because their unsatisfied need of it is the greatest. The need of activity is tightly associated with **the need of newness** (including the need of new challenges). Its main aim - beside aspiration to achieve success – is to counteract boredom, what is important for 72% of the investigated. The workers of branches of concerns and corporations feel the need of newness more frequent than the workers of small private enterprises (15% more frequent on average). Along with the high need of achievements, which is also inherent to these firms, it creates the circumstances in which workaholism can develop. Undertaking of new actions is associated with the ability to tolerate crises. In opinion of 51% of the researched they are not only able to deal with crises, but also they like them, because such situations provide them an appropriate dose of adrenaline, what increases their readiness to intensive work.

The need of regard (81,7%) and **acceptance** (77,7%) determine so-called *respectable addicts (*Killinger, 1991*)*, dependent on others for approval. It is a result of educational errors made by parents (mainly conditional love). Typical of this group is a strong internal compulsion to work directed towards economic success, which allows to achieve social esteem. The workers of branches of concerns and corporations admit it more frequently than those of small private enterprises (12% more frequently on average). The workers who are notoriously busy and strive for success at any price are convinced that

discharging of excessive duties is an evidence that they deserve to be regarded. In other words: they treat work as a chance to achieve social esteem. The approbation is particularly necessary for those who have low self-acceptance, although only 22,7% of the researched admit to have such. It is probable that the facts about that were not reflected in the received results of the research. It could have happened for two reasons. Firstly a level of self-acceptance should have been investigated by psychological tests, because a questionnaire survey does not reveal a number of subtleties. Secondly it is possible that answering to such a personal question (if the atmosphere of the opinion poll was not confidential enough) could have activated defensive mechanisms. Therefore illusion and denial could have had an influence on the respondents' opinions about their self-esteem. Nevertheless the surveyed achieve some successes in their careers (22% of them are always and 49% often satisfied with their achievements). It confirms their opinions about their value (that is way their self-esteem is not low), but they still need others' regard and acceptance to strengthen it, what forces them to continue intensive work. The impact of the need of regard on workaholism is determined also by the tendency to assent (a lack of willingness or ability to refuse) to undertake more and more tasks. Workaholics are always willing to accept every assigned brief owing to a fear of dismissal. This attitude is characteristic of 61% of the inquired, what is an evidence for a connection between the need of regard and workaholism.

The last of the needs most frequently mentioned by the surveyed is **the need of safety** (69,3%). In the respondents' case it results from a difficult economic situation of the country (including the possibility of a job loosing). It is perceived as a threat by the workers of branches of concerns and corporations more frequently than by those of small private enterprises (22% more frequently on average). The great rivalry, not only at the labor market, causes a decrease in space in different spheres. In such situation the behaviors which contribute to keeping of one's post are understandable. For the surveyed the most obvious behavior is excessive work. Their motivations are various: they are convinced that without this increased effort *I will not be promoted, I will not get a pay-rise, I will not achieve the aims I am expected to achieve, I can be dismissed*. In this case internal compulsion is often caused by economic coercion. The results of the research clearly indicate that the people who do not derive pleasure from their work (34,7%) belong to the group of workers who feel such threat. The menace of unemployment is very actual in the North-East of Poland and even young and dynamic workers lose their self-confidence under these circumstances. The employers use to confirm their workers in such concerns (the surveyed often quoted their superiors' words: *there are many people waiting for your post and they are ready to take it for dirt-cheap*).

On the base of the results analyzed above it is possible to affirm that workaholism of the inquired is a consequence of unsatisfied needs, what more often takes place in large than in small firms. The excessive work is a way to satisfy these needs.

Beside aspiration to satisfy their needs workaholics are characterized by a tendency to **perfectionism** (Machlowitz, 1980). It refers especially to those whose need of regard and acceptance was not satisfied in their childhood and whose need of achievement was roused in that time. Many theorists claim that the perfectionism is a way of dealing with a feeling of uncertainty and with fear for the incidents which results can not be foreseen. Therefore it is caused by a lack of a feeling of safety, which originated in the process of upbringing.

The results of the survey showed that the dominant feature of Polish workers is **making improvements to realization of a task**. They polish off details permanently (75,6%), what is especially possible when there is no need to hurry, but they do it also under time pressure. The workaholics–perfectionists differ from the others because they are, despite frustration and tiredness, conscientious, hard-working, persistent and categorical. They perceive frustration and tiredness as the personal challenge which is worth to undertake to receive regard from others and because of that also from themselves. However, making improvement to realization of a brief impedes its accomplishment, because perfectionists are convinced that if they continued to make corrections they could achieve better effect. An expected prize is also very important, because it induces them to multiply their efforts and polish off their work more carefully. Such approach towards briefs is in a strict connection with **aspiration to perfection** (64,7%) and **a high level of self-criticism** (63,7%). In the respondents' opinion a task can be always done better if they work a few hours longer. They also think that all briefs are important and all should be done perfectly. It leads to uprising of a noose of excellence. However the greatest problem of the workaholics–perfectionists is their fear of defeat. Perfectionists act under pressure of duty and with the conviction that they will never be good enough. Such attitude gives rise to self-criticism as a result of negative evaluation of one's own achievements. Therefore perfectionists live with a permanent feeling of guilt and anxiety. This consequently causes their tendency to dread disapproval (which is often fictitious) resulting in an increase in demands they put on themselves. That is why it frequently happens that the investigated reschedule deadlines of their tasks and postpone

their work for later on, although the more briefs are put off the stronger is their frustration. It causes a paralysis, understood as total inability to perform tasks. On the other hand a comparatively high level of **distrust** towards others (57,4%) does not allow the researched to delegate some of their duties to their co-workers. It increases frustration and induces **self-aggression** (52%). The inquired admit that they are annoyed with themselves for making the smallest mistakes therefore they work "four times more" to exclude them. The researched are aware of their exterior image as people of success, but their internal voice keeps telling them that *they are not as good at their work as they could be*. They feel permanent **fear** (46%) that their weak points and mistakes could be revealed by others and then their low professional usefulness would become evident. Therefore they **do not allow themselves to make mistakes** (45%), and they sense their defeats very acutely. If it happens that they make a mistake, they work even more intensively to achieve results above expectations of others. That is why they progress in their work much greater than it is necessary.

Figure 4: Inclination to perfectionism
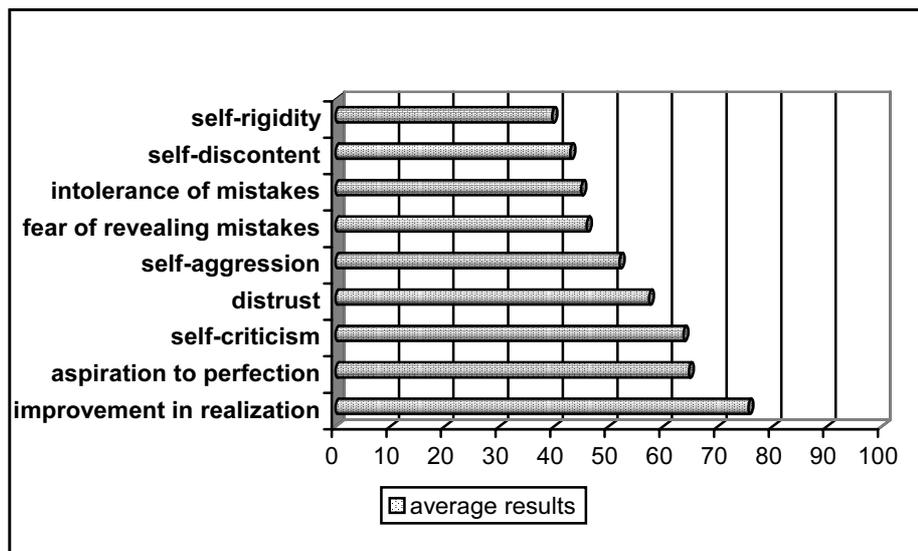
source: own research

In social perspective perfectionism is an advantageous occurrence, because the individuals who have this feature are disciplined, punctual, reliable, firm and consistent. Perfectionists often contribute to development of a firm, but they bear costs of this success such as frustration or fears. The last-mentioned are most frequently felt by the workers of corporations.

Ending this part of the study it is worth to mention another psychosocial source of workaholism, however it was indicated only by less than a half of the researched (43,7%). That is **the jealousy** of professional position, earnings and successes of others (Zaleski, Hupka, 1991-92). It strengthens the willingness to excessive work, especially among with the workers of corporations, in which 62% of the investigated feel it. Probably in these firms it is a reason for the already mentioned need of rivalry (52%), which is not so evident in the other types of enterprises.

The workaholics' opinions, especially these which refer to their own abilities to control their behaviors, are often only their wishes. The investigated addicted to work are convinced (58,9%) that they are able to discontinue excessive working, but simultaneously their own experiences indicate their deficit of control over their own behaviors. They talk about the pleasure they derive from intensive work (let us remind: 65,3%) not seeing the problem and therefore not seeking for a solution.

5. Organizational Culture as a Source of Workaholism

Independently of individual predispositions to workaholism, organizational culture can strengthen workers' tendency to it. The literature of the subject does not provide one established definition of the organizational culture. Propositions are most often focused on reasons, results and

processes relating to workers' behaviors. Therefore the following approaches to the issue can be indicated (Kilman *et al*. 1986):

1) in terms of reason-result – organizational culture is comprehended as a result of functioning of specific and coherent *cross individual behavioral consistency* (CIBC). In this approach the culture is interpreted as a system of problems solving, tasks performing and treating of workers or customers, which is obligatory in a given organization;

2) in terms of process – organizational culture is comprehended as an assemblage of the mechanisms which compose the CIBC. In this approach the culture is understood as all values, norms and convictions which enable social control over interactions between individuals and groups within an organization and between an organization and its environment.

Edgar Schein (1992), the author of one of the first exhaustive interpretations of organizational culture, recommends to analyze organizational culture at three levels. It enables to understand sources of values and activities, occurring commonly in organizations (artifacts, accepted norms and values as well as **basic assumptions**). In the author's opinion the basic assumptions have the most important role in forming of models of workaholism. They refer to workers' convictions with regard to 1) human nature (e.g.: *people are hard-working*); 2) interpersonal relations (e.g.: *relations between people in our organization are based on rivalry*); 3) an organization itself (*our organization is directed towards success*) and 4) character of environment (e.g.: *considering a difficult economic situation of the region, it is easy to lose a job*)[1]. The results of the research prove that among all of the mentioned convictions the most important are those which refer to an organization itself. The questioned are of the opinion that a decrease in effort would be possible, if their firms did not expect greater and greater **commitment to duties** from them (69,8%). And the larger an organization is, the more it is concentrated on productiveness and on immediate economic success. On the other hand the investigated do not want to decrease effort, because their behaviors are determined by a high need of achievements affirmed before. Furthermore, the surveyed achieve intentional aims by dint of high commitment to their work (60,7%). Therefore they believe that **the culture of mutuality** prevails in their organizations. Hard work seems to be a desirable behavior not only for the firm, but also for them. It is characteristic of the culture of mutuality to privilege those who are more engaged in work than an average employee (e.g.: insurance, cheap credit, partly financed vacation, vouchers, company car)[2]. However, it seems that prerogatives are not as priced by the researched (only 39,7% of the surveyed value them) as achieving of individual aims.

The organizations, which culture is directed towards strengthening of addiction to work, promote the conviction about **the connection between excessive work and the development of career**. Therefore 60% of the surveyed perceive their chance of promotion mainly in working ten to twelve hours a day and in undertaking all proposed tasks. Stand-offish and impersonal atmosphere, noticed by 62% of the researched, is conductive to that (only in small private enterprises the workers mention homely work environment). Such atmosphere causes that work environment is devoid of social relations and workers are treated instrumentally (**instrumental culture**). In the respondents' opinion (56%) functioning of such culture results in promoting of **extended work time** by superiors. Although the superiors are of the opinion that staying after hours is an expression of the workers' good will (and also of the managers'), which occurs only in the event of temporary emergencies. Admittedly, motivations of the subordinates are various: beginning from exterior pressure (*it is known that one has to stay without any extra payment. Work has to be done*) to internal compulsion resulted from individual features (*if one wants to achieve something, he must stay longer at work without a question*). Nevertheless these motivations prove specific character of the organizational culture. It should be emphasized that the literature of this subject provides two conceptions of the origins of organizational culture. The first one says that the culture is brought into an organization from outside (by its members) and therefore it arises from their needs, aspirations or aims and is manifested in models of workers' attitudes. The second approach maintains that organizations create the culture by themselves and workers only adopt it. These conceptions are not contradictory, because the culture is a result of constant oscillation between inside and outside environment.

The most rarely mentioned source of workaholism was decidedly the atmosphere of morbid rivalry (35%). It is the most noticeable in private firms. The majority of the researched do not experience it and it seems that the need of rivalry is a consequence of individual predispositions and does not result from organizational culture.

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[1] More about basic assumptions of organizational culture in firms of the North-East of Poland see: D. Frasunkiwicz, 2005 b
[2] In order of the most often mentioned prerogatives.

Every organization creates its own rules which define what is good and what is bad, what is correct and what is improper, that is - it lays down its own norms and values. Values are formed firstly and then they become norms. In all of the researched enterprises **commitment to work** and strong involvement in it, is treated as a value (mentioned by **91%** of the inquired). An expression of this commitment is **the norm to continue working,** even if other employees finished their work time, in the hope that it will help to deal with a multitude of briefs. This is expectancy of a firm and 68% of the researched comfort to it. Workers often feel forced to **go about not their own businesses** (67,7%). For instance they rush to the aid of their co-workers when *something tumbles down at work*, being convinced that *it is a rule here*. Such behaviors are particularly characteristic of corporations. Another normative order is **to take work** home for evenings, weekends or holiday (66%). It is an effect of instrumental culture and typical of it - disrespect for private time of workers. In the researched organizations this type of culture is connected with **efficiency culture**, in which overstated plans are a norm (affirmed by 46,4% of the surveyed). It is especially felt by the workers of corporations. **Workings under time pressure**, forced by organizations, is the next important norm in the inquired firms (60,4%). At the same time 49,7% of the surveyed voluntarily work under time pressure, because it provide them a shot of adrenaline. Therefore one can suppose that organizations make use of workaholics' personal features rather than form them. Moreover there were no imperative aims - beside efficiency – observed in the researched enterprises which could indicate that the culture creating workaholism exists there (surviving of a difficult economic situation of a firm could be such aim, but 85% of the investigated organizations are not under threat of crisis). Therefore one can affirm that organizational culture is conductive to the development of workaholism, but it does not create it.

6. Limits Between Professional and Private Life

One of the symptoms of workaholism, affirmed in many scientific publications, is workers' attitude to the world, people and to themselves. It is, to a large extent, a matter of appropriate proportions of work to rest (see Figure 5).

Figure 5: Proportions of professional to private sphere
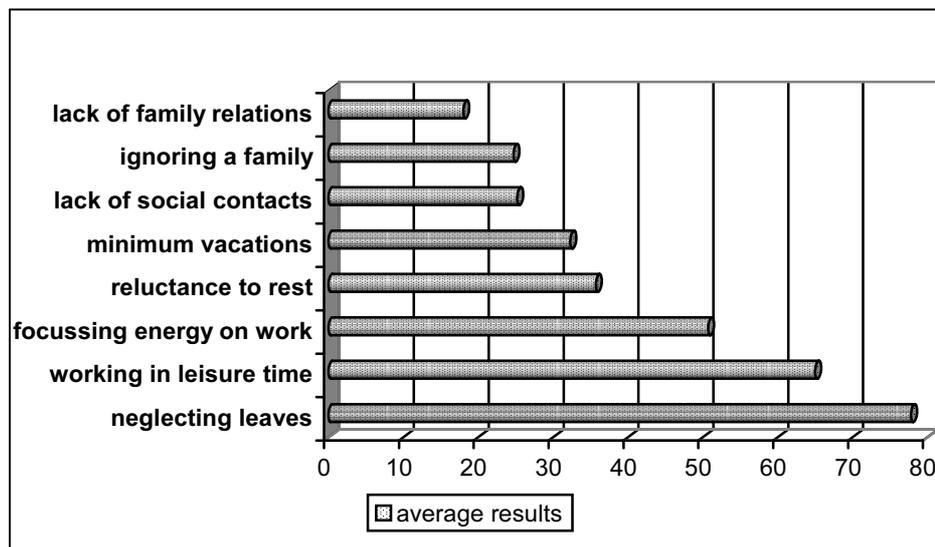
source: own research

As the results of the research show these relations are admittedly disturbed, but not as much as it is necessary to state the respondents' strong addiction to work. The majority of the inquired (77,8%) do not neglect their leaves (only 9% of the researched have not rested from work longer than two years). It can be a result of the culture of organizations, which – in accordance with the law – induce workers to go on leaves. The workers choose two-weeks' (33%) or one-week's (27,3%) holiday most frequently, but 39,7% of them take a few days off often several times a year. Such a brief leave is

rarely extracted by a firm, in the other cases (32,3% of the researched) workers themselves have tendency to shorten their vacations to minimum. The decision to have a rest does not mean yet the real willingness to end working. Therefore some of the investigated (35,7%) have a feeling that leave, which was planned long ago, fall on too fast, while there are still unfinished tasks in a firm. This workers are convinced that a few more days at work would help them to deal with current businesses, even if their own experiences show them that new urgent matters will always arise and force them to stay in a firm. The way to break this vicious circle – as it was emphasized during the interviews – is a family's pressure for taking leave.

However, in the perspective of workaholism not the decision to take leave or the fact of going for holiday is important, but the quality of this leave. As many as 65% of the surveyed take care of office matters during their free time. On the one hand it is connected with the norm to continue work, mentioned before, on the other hand - with inability to mental separation from work. The investigated confess that they *have their fingers on the pulse* with regard to businesses in their firms (e.g.: being on a beach, they have conferences with their co-workers by mobile phones, give instructions, follow the current progress of events). They are on stand-by all the time and therefore they do not make real use of leave. It arouses suspicion that they are addicted to work.

If an individual spend much more energy, commitment and time on work than on interpersonal relationships, especially family relations, then it is the next symptom of workaholism. A half of the investigated have such tendency (50,7%). Similarly, almost a half of the surveyed (48,7%) demand from their families to understand the importance of their work in connection with an unstable situation in the labor market. Therefore they expect tolerance for their commitment to work. Nevertheless one cannot say that in this case relations within family are disturbed. Only 24,7% of the inquired ignore their families (including notoriously forgetting about important family events and regarding home as a hotel), and 18% admit that house matters are unimportant from their point of view. The others take care of their families (they allocate their earnings mainly for consumer and educational needs of a family – 87,6%) and it seems that they value a family as an institution (what can result from strong family traditions in Poland). On the other hand they are conscious that they devote not enough time to their families, spending it on work and on satisfying of their own needs. Some of the inquired (30,7%) promise to spend less time working, but they are not always able to keep their words in the face of requirements connected with work (14,2% of the investigated break such promises). Nevertheless, it can be stated that excessive work is not a way used to avoid some insoluble family problems (let us remind that 67% of the researched are married). It is rather a consequence of their own aspirations, employers' requirements for high commitment to work and a difficult economic situation of the region.

It cannot be stated either that the inquired have some, characteristic of workaholics, difficulties with interpersonal relations, including the ability to create constant relationships and social contacts. As many as 74,8% of the surveyed maintain their friendships, although these contacts are not very frequent (59,9% of the investigated meet their friends at least once a month). As a rule these meetings have a form of Saturday's parties, which enable them to find an outlet for their overstrain (61,4% of the inquired consume alcohol and younger workers use drugs – 11% of the researched confessed that). It is interesting the respondents prefer private parties (80%), in which their co-workers do not participate, and only 20% of them take part in the parties organized by their firms. It evidently shows willingness to escape from work. Beside the above mentioned form of relax the surveyed prefer to rest inactively: 73% of them spend their free time watching TV, 61,2% - reading press (but only 22% of them read books), 24% of the workers find time to realize their own passions and 16,8% of them to practice sport.

Conclusions

After the period of sudden constitutional transformation, which caused socioeconomic changes in Poland, the majority of workers of enterprises from the economically backward area of the North-East Poland have absorbed the model of workaholism. Nevertheless this occurrence have not had self-destructed character yet.

1. The majority of the researched workaholics feel strong internal compulsion to work (71,7%) spending on it from ten to fourteens hours a day (74% overall), that is much more than in the period of socialism. At the same time they derive much pleasure from such intensive work (65,3%), which gives them possibility of their personal aims achieving. That makes them workaholics-enthusiasts with high self-esteem (86,3%).

2. They devote their private time to work, including weekends and leaves (65%), what confirms the attendance of a large group of individuals addicted to work, but at the same time the majority of the

researched do not neglect their personal lives, setting up families (67%) taking care of family relations (50,7%) and maintaining interpersonal relations (74,8%) with (what is important) the people from outside their work circle. However, it should be emphasized that devoting time to family is not as important as work in their hierarchy of aims (irrespective to the fact that a family was mentioned as an essential value for an individual in many sociological researches). It confirms the declining role of a family in Polish culture.

3. Some negative behaviors are already typical of the researched (impatience, haste, irritation, short-temper – 67,2% overall) as well as emotions (annoyance, rage – 57,6% overall). That indicates that the limit between enthusiasm for work and work obsession was crossed.

4. The workaholics' behaviors are determined by a desire for success and personal development (87,3% overall) as well as the need of achievements (90,3%) fulfillment (85,7%), activity (83,3%), regard (81,7%) and – to a smaller extent – tendency to perfectionism (62,6% of the surveyed have more than five features indicating perfectionism).

5. Such approach to life is – to a large degree – a result of the restrictive style of upbringing (86%), in which emotional blackmail and threat of dismissal are used to force a child to satisfy parents' demands.

6. On the other hand, in most cases the mentioned needs can be satisfied only in a work place (84,3%), not in other spheres of life.

7. The results of the research proved that organizational culture of enterprises has smaller – than it had been expected – influence on workaholics' behaviors (64,2% overall). The culture lays stress especially on the necessity to commit to work and involve in it. At the same time the model of an overworked man, adopted by Poles, appeared to be the relevant external factor of workaholism forming.

8. This model determines workaholics' behaviors definitely more than the difficult economic situation of the region.

9. Workaholism in its positive version occurs more frequently in branches of concerns and in corporations than in small private enterprises, where employees more often do not enjoy their work, but only feel compulsion to do it.

10. Moreover relation between the type of a firm and environmental forming of workaholism was noticed: the bigger a firm is, the more frequently it creates efficiency culture, which promotes workers' excessive involvement in their duties.

Workaholism in its negative meaning had not been a social problem in Polish society until recently owing to the lack of the ethos of laboriousness, especially in tradition of the North-East Poland. The results of the research proved that this problem has arose, despite the fact that enthusiasm for work, conditioned by a desire for success (positive workaholism), is still of great importance. Personal predispositions, strengthened during the process of an individual's socialization, are the main source of workaholism, but environmental factors (including: activities and culture of an organization) are equally important, even if they are not essential for workaholics' attitudes forming, like it was assumed before. It appeared that more important external source of workaholism is the fashion for "being busy with work" and new ethos of laboriousness.

Recapitulating the consideration, it should be stressed that the choice of the researched group from the economically backward area caused that environmental influence on the occurrence of workaholism was emphasized. However, to obtain a complete view comparative researches should had been conducted, which could have showed tendencies to workaholism in previous years, before the period of constitutional changes (such researches had not been conducted). Moreover, more detailed examination of workaholics' personal predispositions was not undertook owing to the sociological perspective of the presented article. It is the task for the future.

Summary

Generally speaking workaholism is a condition of working to excess and most psychologists agree that it is a parallel term to the other compulsions for doing something to a detrimental extreme (e.g. alcoholism, drug addiction). There are different sources of this phenomena (e.g. identifying work with basic needs and values or hereditary predispositions), however irrespective of sources, workaholism arises and develops on the base of similar - as in case of addiction to chemical substances – psycho-physiological mechanisms of human functioning, determined by specific socio-cultural and civilizational context. This context is essential especially in reference to the Polish reality after the 1989th, when "the real socialism" was changed into "the real capitalism". The transformation of political system induced a change in attitude to work. The socialist competition was replaced with

the rivalry forced by labor market and now is treated as individuals' fight for getting and keeping a job or for development of personal career. More and more potential and real workers endeavor to participate in a particular "rat-race", offering to firms – apart from substantial knowledge – their unlimited time and disposal. On the other hand a low level of material status of many Polish families, significantly reduced during the period of political and economic transformation, together with an increase of individuals' consumer aspirations, caused the necessity for "eking out" an income. Therefore the aim of the paper was to describe the contemporary sources and types of polish workaholism after the transformation of political and economic system as well as decide if this phenomena has positive or negative impact on the companies. This aim was measured by the author's questionnaire in which the Likert scale was used to differentiate the question's level. The research were conducted in two stages: the pilot research in February 2005 and the main research – from March to June 2005. The questionnaires were distributed to 450 people (managers and firm owners) living in the North-East region of Poland, where people have a more intensive need to make up for civilizing backwardness through hard work than in others parts of Poland.

In the researched group predominate are the aware workaholics, who have a positive potential, spend a lot of time working, feel internal compulsion to work and derive pleasure from it. The author distinguished the following categories in the group of the aware workaholics: continuously intensive working, cyclically excessive working, simulating excessive work, occasionally excessive working and temporarily excessive working. Not long ago the model of the person who overworks voluntarily was unfamiliar to Poles, especially at the backward area of the North-East Poland. But currently the stagnation was replaced by ambitions and diligence characteristic of all age groups of the investigated workers. The image of the active man who is always busy and overworked is attractive nowadays, because it is perceived as the image of a man of success. The real reason why inhabitants of the region devote their private time for hour-long work is their need for individual success, which means the achievement of their own aims and aspirations (success of their workplace is not so important for them). It is why the main reason that forces almost half of the inquired to work excessively is their willingness to achieve their aims and fulfill needs among which the need of achievements, the need of fulfillment and the need o activity are the most significant for forming of excessive commitment to work. On the base of the results it is possible to affirm that workaholism is a consequence of unsatisfied needs and the excessive work is a way to satisfy them. Speaking about personality sources of workaholism. Beside workaholics are characterized by a tendency to perfectionism. It refers especially to those whose need of regard and acceptance was not satisfied in their childhood and whose need of achievement was roused in that time. The results of the survey showed that the dominant feature of Polish workers is making improvements to realization of a task. The greatest problem of the workaholics–perfectionists is their fear of defeat. Perfectionists act under pressure of duty and with the conviction that they will never be good enough. Such attitude gives rise to self-criticism as a result of negative evaluation of one's own achievements. Perfectionism is also characterizes by a comparatively high level of distrust towards others as well as self-aggression. In social perspective perfectionism – and therefore workaholism - is an advantageous occurrence, because the individuals who have this feature are disciplined, punctual, reliable, firm and consistent. Perfectionists often contribute to development of a firm, but they bear costs of this success such as frustration or fears. The last-mentioned are most frequently felt by the workers of corporations.

Independently of individual predispositions to workaholism, organizational culture can strengthen workers' tendency to it. A decrease in effort would be possible, if their firms did not expect greater and greater commitment to duties from them. The companions, which culture is directed towards strengthening of addiction to work, promote the conviction about the connection between excessive work and the development of career. Therefore many of the surveyed perceive their chance of promotion mainly in working ten to twelve hours a day and in undertaking all proposed tasks. Every organization creates its own norms and values. Commitment to work and strong involvement in it, is treated as a value. Normative order is to take work home for evenings, weekends or holiday. Workings under time pressure, forced by organizations, is the next important norm in the inquired firms. Moreover there were no imperative aims - beside efficiency – observed in the researched enterprises which could indicate that the culture creating workaholism exists there. Therefore one can affirm that organizational culture is conductive to the development of workaholism, but it does not create it.

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DARBOHOLIZMAS LENKIJOS ĮMONĖSE NAUJOMIS SOCIOEKONOMINĖMIS SĄLYGOMIS

Dr. Dorota Frasunkiewicz
Bialystoko universitetas, Lenkija

Santrauka

Santvarkos transformacija Lenkijoje visuotinai pakeitė lenkų požiūrį į darbą. Vietoje partinės ideologijos primesto lenktyniavimo atsirado rungtyniavimas, kurį skatina darbuotojų konkurencija siekiant darbo vietos arba asmeninės karjeros. Atsirado ir visuotinai paplito darboholizmo reiškinys.

Ankstesniais dešimtmečiais darboholizmas lenkų visuomenėje nebuvo pasiekęs visuomeninės problemos masto, darbštumo etoso ypač trūko šiaurės rytinėje Lenkijos dalyje. 2005 metais atlikta anketinė apklausa ir tyrimas parodė, kad minėtame ekonomiškai atsilikusiame regione darboholizmas tampa problema. Darboholizmą labiausiai skatina asmenybės polinkiai, stiprėjantys vykstant jos socializacijai. Reikšmingi yra išorinės aplinkos veiksniai (įskaitant organizacijos veiklą ir kultūrą), nors jie nėra svarbiausi darboholiko nuostatų formuotojai, kaip buvo manoma anksčiau. Esminė pasirodė mada „būti persidirbusiam" ir naujas darbštumo etosas.

Naudodama Likerto skalę autorė apklausė 450 firmų vadovų ir vadybininkų iš šiaurės rytų regiono, kuriame žmonės turi stipriai išreikštą poreikį sunkiai dirbti įveikiant atsilikimą.

Šio straipsnio tikslas – atskleisti šiuolaikines lenkų darboholizmo ištakas pasibaigus politinei ir ekonominei sistemos transformacijai, nustatyti jo pobūdį bei įtaką įmonių veiklai.

Pagrindinės sąvokos: darboholizmo šaltiniai, darboholikų tikslai ir siekiai, poelgiai, darboholikų privatus ir darbo laikas, organizacinė kultūra, gyvensenos modelio keitimas.