Unraveling the Researcher’s Work-Life Imbalance

Murat Gunes, PhD

Senior Researcher @IMB-CNMC, CSIC, Barcelona, Spain
STSM Coordinator @ReMO COST Action CA19117: "Researcher Mental Health"
Chair of the Bridging Science and Business Working Group of the MCAA
Member of Turkey Chapter of the MCAA

murat.gunes@imb-cnm.csic.es | (+34) 93-594-77-00 (435436)
https://www.linkedin.com/in/gunesmurat/
The Struggles of Passion-Driven Researchers

Researchers often find themselves unable to separate their work from their life due to their intense passion for their field. High workloads, unclear boundaries, and a pressure to publish can lead to neglecting personal time.
High Workload and Long Work Hours

1. The Daily Grind
   Long hours and endless experiments create an exhausting workload that leaves little room for personal life.

2. Academic Pressures
   Pressure from university administration, grants, and other parties can add to the workload and exacerbate stress levels.

3. Deadlines Looming
   The constant need to meet project timelines and research commitments means that there is always work to be done.
Boundary in Work and Life

Remote Research
Thanks to online tools and networks, research can often be conducted from the comfort of your own home, blurring the boundaries between work and life.

Public Places
Academic work can be done anywhere, including public areas such as cafes or while commuting, making it difficult to untangle work-related brain from personal life.

Collaboration and Friendships
Research teams are often composed of close-knit groups of colleagues who share a passion for the topic, making it hard for work to not spill over during social interactions.
Pressure to Publish and Neglecting Personal Time

1. Perfectionism Prevails
   The pressure to publish high-quality research creates a culture of perfectionism that makes it difficult to take time off or detach oneself from work entirely.

2. Career Prospects
   Publishing research is integral to career progression and job security, leading to feelings of guilt or being undervalued if personal time is prioritized over work.

3. Publishing is a Metric
   The amount and quality of research published has become a metric for measuring success, leading to researchers spending most of their time on work-related activities to the detriment of their personal lives.
how they are linked to the academic job market, are often neglected. In this study, we show that publication and grand pressure are not just external forces but internal ones as scientists apply pressure to themselves in the process of competition. Through two surveys, one of 1,133 recent PhDs at five Dutch universities and one of 225 postdoctoral researchers at two Dutch universities, we found that publication and grant pressure have to be considered in relation with competition for academic jobs. While publication and grant pressure are perceived to be too high by a majority
A mental-health crisis is gripping science – toxic research culture is to blame

With researchers reporting high rates of anxiety and depression, calls are growing to fundamentally change science before it's too late.

STRUGGLES IN SCIENCE
Surveys show researchers are experiencing high rates of mental ill health, such as anxiety, depression and a sense of being overwhelmed by their work.

Graduate students report anxiety and depression at rates six times that of the general population, according to a survey of some 2,300 people from 26 countries. Rates were highest among transgender and female students.

In a worldwide survey of more than 13,000 researchers between October 2019 and July 2020, 38% said they felt overwhelmed by their situation at work very often or fairly often during the previous month.

Perceived publication pressure is linked to intentions to engage in future scientific misconduct

PsyPost

Perceived publication pressure is linked to intentions to engage in future scientific misconduct

by Mane Kurn-Yakcutian — November 10, 2021 in Social Psychology
Competitive Environment and Overworking Culture

Overworking is Normalized
A competitive research environment can lead to workaholic behavior being normalized and even glorified, making it hard for researchers to break away from the cycle.

Work is Valued Over Time
In such an environment, work is often valued over personal time and the notion of work-life balance can be seen as a weakness.

Burnout and High Attrition Rates
The prevalence of overworking has led to high levels of stress, burnout and a significant attrition rate in the academic profession.
Consequences

Workaholism can negatively influence private relations, leisure and health (Andreassen, Griffiths, Hetland et al., 2012). The symptoms are similar to what we see in other addictions, including effects on mood, tolerance and withdrawal (Andreassen, Griffiths, Hetland et al., 2012; Griffiths, 2011; Sussman, 2012). The following presents an overview of central findings related to the consequences of workaholism.

Studies show that when one experiences stress at work, individuals with a strong internal work drive report an increase in subjective stress-related physical and psychological symptoms compared to those with low scores (Andreassen et al., 2007; Andreassen, Hetland, Molde & Pallesen, 2011; Bonebright et al., 2000; Schaufeli et al., 2008; Taris, Schaufeli & Verhoeven, 2005). Thus, it is possible that coping style regulates the relationship between workaholism and health (Andreassen, Hetland et al., 2012; Shimazu, Schaufeli & Taris, 2010).

Two studies have looked further into how workaholism relates to sleep. In one study, persons with the highest scores on workaholism were more likely than workers with low scores to report sleep problems, tiredness at work, and difficulties waking up in addition to fatigue in the mornings (Kubota et al., 2010). In the other study, Andreassen et al. (2011) found that high obsessive work drive was associated with insomnia.
## Work-Life Imbalance is Unsustainable

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<th>Pressure to Publish</th>
<th>+</th>
<th>Unclear Boundaries</th>
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<th>Competitive Environment</th>
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<tr>
<td>Neglecting Personal Time</td>
<td>+</td>
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<td>Overworking Culture</td>
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The Benefits of a Balanced Life

**Reduced Stress**
Balancing work with relaxation has been shown to significantly reduce stress levels and sustain a positive outlook on life.

**Improved Relationships**
Spending ample time with loved ones, engaging in social activities, and developing a robust social support system can strengthen relationships.

**Renewed Energy**
Needed rest and relaxation leads to renewed energy levels, a positive attitude, and greater productivity in work tasks.
The Importance of Work-Life Balance

1. Establish Clear Boundaries
   Set clear rules for yourself regarding when and where you will engage in research activities, and stick to them.

2. Prioritize Personal Time
   Make sure to prioritize your personal time, hobbies, and relationships to maintain a healthy balance with your work life.

3. Take Breaks
   Allow yourself time to rest and recharge. Do something that you enjoy, read a book, or go for a walk.
Thank you...

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