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Employee stress and burnout

Work stressors

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Academic Workload, Well-Being and Workaholism in Italian Universities

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Content: As suggested by Romainville (1996), universities are the only organizations focussed on dual core functions of knowledge creation and knowledge transmission through the processes of research and teaching. University academic staff do complex work in an increasingly demanding environment, so the workaholism risk seems to be higher than in other professions. Although this type of work behavior seems to be culturally approved by the academic community, it constitutes an element of risk for the health and well being of those who have chosen this type of profession on the basis of different expectations, especially in pace, amount, and independence at work. A very interesting line of research (with the keyword Academic Workload) explores the physical and psychological risk of this continuing increase in work demands that affect the academic world, where an increasingly competitive and intense research (or rather, the publication of research work) overlaps with teaching and supervision requests and a more explicit request to spend more time in raising funds (Tight, 2010). The present work aim to explore the connection between Academic Workload, well-being, and the possible effects of addiction to work in academics. The participants of this study are 332 Italian university teachers, balanced by research field and size of their university. We administered the DUWAS scale (Dutch Workaholism Scale, Taris, Schaufeli & Verhoeven, 2005), which investigates two dimensions, Work Excessively (WE) and Work compulsively (WC), a scale that investigates the Academic Workload (AW) developed by Houston, Meyer & Paewai (2006), which explores three dimensions (academic overload, teaching and research activities, academic environment) and the General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-12, Goldberg, 1978). Results show a close relationship between the academic commitment, risk of addiction to work and levels of discomfort above the threshold suggested by the GHQ literature.

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