

Well-being not a priority for workaholics, researcher says

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Working overtime may cost you your health, according to a Kansas State University doctoral researcher.

Sarah Asebedo, doctoral student in [personal financial planning](#) and [conflict resolution](#), Edina, Minn., conducted a study using the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1979. She and her colleagues—Sonya Britt, assistant professor of family studies and human services and director of the university's personal [financial planning](#) program, and Jamie Blue, [doctoral student](#) in personal financial planning, Tallahassee, Fla.—found a preliminary link between workaholics and reduced physical and mental well-being. The study, "Workaholism and Well-Being," will appear in *Financial Services Review*, a journal of individual [financial management](#).

"We looked at the association between workaholism and physical and mental well-being," Asebedo said. "We found workaholics—defined by those working more than 50 hours per week—were more likely to have reduced physical well-being, measured by skipped meals. Also, we found that workaholism was associated with reduced mental well-being as measured by a self-reported depression score."

The link between workaholism and well-being has been assumed for years; however, there was a lack of research supporting the link until this study, Asebedo said. To understand why people work overtime even when they know it is not good for their well-being, the researchers used Gary S. Becker's Theory of the Allocation of Time, a [mathematical](#)

[analysis](#) for choice measuring the cost of time.

"It looks at the cost of time as if it were a market good," Asebedo said. "This theory suggests that the more money you make, the more likely you are to work more. If you are not engaged in work-related activities, then there is a cost to the alternative way in which time is spent. Even if you understand the [negative consequences](#) to workaholism, you may still be likely to continue working because the cost of not doing so becomes greater."

According to Asebedo, Becker's theory suggests that not only can working more make a person wealthier but it also creates less leisure time to spend money. As income increases a person may be more likely to work more and create an unhealthy habit.

As a full-time wealth manager for Accredited Investors in Edina, Asebedo has found the research useful in counseling clients. She advises workaholics to be aware of the effect excessive work has on their physical and mental well-being and to be prepared for what they can do to mitigate or counteract the effects during busy work periods.

"From a financial planning and counseling perspective, it's good to be aware of workaholism," Asebedo said. "It helps me understand what can be the cause of my clients' stress. It's just a reminder that you may want to dig a bit deeper into clients' [work](#) lives. Sometimes you might find that they don't like what they are doing and they want to make a change, yet financially, they don't know how they can accomplish that."

Asebedo received her bachelor's and master's degrees from Kansas State University. She returned to the university to get her doctorate in personal financial planning through the Division of Continuing Education distance program because she was interested researching the role conflict resolution plays in financial planning.

Data for the study was taken from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth 1979 cohort, a nationally representative sample of 12,686 young men and women who were interviewed on an annual basis from 1979 through 1994 and are currently interviewed on a biennial basis.

More information: www.drsm.org/FSR_journal/Finances_Review_home.htm

Provided by Kansas State University

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