

Achievement Addiction: Theoretical Prospect

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Abstract- This study corresponds to one of the prevailing personality type or characteristic in the people who experience a never-ending thirst for success and achievement. These people love to achieve everything they think of and struggle hard in order to get admiration from others. Their goal oriented quality and perseverance keep them pushing to strive for a particular public image that eventually water their grandiosity. This grandiose nature or characteristic become the feedback loop of narcissism and elated self-esteem in them. Several potential correlates are clustered into different domains of psychological, social, emotional, personality, and environment, followed by the expected outcomes. It is suggested to explore these areas through scientific researches as there is no literature available on this topic, although it may be hard to assess the actual expressions in such people due to their rigid personality patterns.

Index Terms- Achievement addiction, narcissism, elated self-esteem.

I. INTRODUCTION

Achievement addiction is a type of compulsion to succeed at something, often pursued at the expense of personal health and well-being.¹ This phenomenon ties very closely with a strong need for external validation and acknowledgment, hence falling under or relating more broadly to personality characteristics such as narcissism and grandiosity.^{2,3,4} Narcissism is the feeling of entitlement, a sense of superiority, and an expectation of admiration.⁵ Achievement addiction promotes an unhealthy obsession with one's own success and public image. Exaggerated self-esteem supports the relentless pursuit of achievement. We may find such people around who apparently and explicitly may be seen at the peak of their self-actualization perhaps, but on a closer view their greed to achieve more and more may be observed where they even do not fear to manipulate circumstances and even damaging other people far or near to them. This grandiose feeling demands constant admiration and entitlement where they do not want to let go the spotlight over them. People with achievement addiction love to play with their authority and positions they hold publicly. They do not let other people and especially their competitors to achieve more than them. This paper will explore how this dynamic interplay of achievement addiction, narcissism, and high self-esteem leads to maladaptive behavior and negative psychological consequences.

A. Achievement Addiction

Achievement addiction refers to an intensive and compulsive striving for accomplishment and success. It usually takes over the reins of guiding behavior and thought in people. People with this behavior maintain a narrow-minded focus on achieving goals in the search of extrinsic motivators and approval. They have an obsession with status indicators that may involve an exceptional level of academic credential or preeminent leadership role in a profession. Besides, they start relying on these signs as a means to define their existence. Contrasting intrinsic motivation, which draws from the individual himself, his being satisfied, and a genuine enthusiasm for what is pursued, achievement addiction extracts more from the extrinsic satisfaction. This sets an unstable base on which to form self-esteem as most individuals build their sense of worth upon how they have performed. Thus, they are caught in an endless cycle of constantly heightening the levels of anxiety, inducing perfectionism, and burnout, as pressure to achieve becomes relentless.¹

B. Narcissism and Achievement Addiction

Narcissism is a very complex personality characteristic which presents itself in the form of grandiose sense of self-importance, high achievements accompanied by grandiose fantasies of unlimited success, and an insatiable craving for excessive admiration from others.² As proposed by the Narcissistic Personality Inventory model,⁶ there are two distinct dimensions of narcissism:

In grandiose narcissism; over self-enhancement according to the Extended Agency Model;⁷ one finds a drive for dominance with the tendency of having a craving for exhibition. Individuals with narcissistic tendencies characterized by grandiose narcissism generally crave recognition and validation through other people's reactions. They thus become compulsive in their drive for achievement and, in striving for status and admiration, relentlessly excel in pursuits, not out of personal gratification but more for the accords and pats on their backs.

On the other hand, vulnerable narcissism is marked by increased sensitivity to criticism and an underlying fragile sense of self-esteem.⁸ Those who identify with this dimension often experience a lot of emotional upheaval at the slightest sign of slight or inadequacy. In order to protect their fragile sense of worth, vulnerable narcissists may also become addicted to achievement. Their efforts are always driven by a deep-seated need to avoid feelings of inferiority or embarrassment.⁹

In both dimensions of narcissism, personal accomplishments become a central way of achieving the adoration or envy of others.¹⁰ Success addiction becomes compulsive, where achievements are not only pursued for their inherent rewards but

as signs of self-worth. Therefore, it becomes a strategy for the addict of achievement to defend and safeguard his grandiosity as well as against their inadequate feelings or self-doubt.

C. *Elated self-esteem and performance*

Elated self-esteem has been described as inflated perceptions of worth positively exaggerated and having a great sense of detachment with facts about capabilities or situations.^{11,12} This inflated sense of self goes hand in glove with narcissistic feelings since it survives on superiority and invincibility feelings.¹³ It is combined with an internal assumption that there is a propensity to win on natural right. Those who carry this kind of self-esteem enter very often a vicious cycle whereby they become achievement compulsive people, always seeking more experiences to feed this inflated self. They are always on the look for reinforcement; they are ever searching for circumstances that support the notion that they are actually unique.¹¹

In the addiction of achievement, narcissistic overestimation actually feeds an unrelenting need for achievement; this is exacerbated by a misleading feedback loop. Victories are warmly taken by such people in as legitimizing one's primacy while failures are dismissed, or at worst, down-played as causes outside of personal control. This distorted way of thinking presents a constant requirement to perform because if one does not, they become convinced that somehow they must prove again and again their continued sense of value in the world. Here, the social media has exacerbated this phenomenon and contribute to strengthen the elated self-esteem.

D. *Response Cycle Between Narcissism, Elated Self-Esteem, and Achievement Addiction*

The intricate interplay between narcissism, inflated self-esteem, and achievement addiction forms a complex and reinforcing feedback loop:

Narcissism makes the individual pursue success with an energetic fervor. It is one of the prime avenues to promote their social standing and to provoke the adoration of others. This quest for self-affirmation has been reinforced through an exaggerated ego, thus making it an appropriate psychological protective device.¹¹ Additionally, self-confidence is enhanced as such individuals would interpret their success both personally and in relation to approval of their goodness in comparison with the others.¹⁴

As this process continues, then achievement addiction takes hold. There is no escape from being locked in an endless cycle pursuing accolades and recognition for the insatiable need to maintain a grandiose self-image. The compulsive pursuit of achievement becomes part of their identity and overshadows all other pertinent parts of life. For example, the accumulative interaction of all such factors eventually imprisons them into interminable cycles of accomplishing more success. Many often pay too heavily for it i.e., their personal development may suffer, strains on interpersonal connections may arise, or even jeopardizing sustainable success is what one finally experiences.

E. *Psychological and behavioral consequences*

Burnout. The constant striving for demands takes a huge psychological and emotional toll on these people. The chronic stress may lead to physical and psychological exhaustion,

rendering individuals powerless to cope with the demands of everyday life and, eventually, to burnout. Chronic stress associated with striving for excellence may compromise functioning in both personal and professional contexts.¹⁵

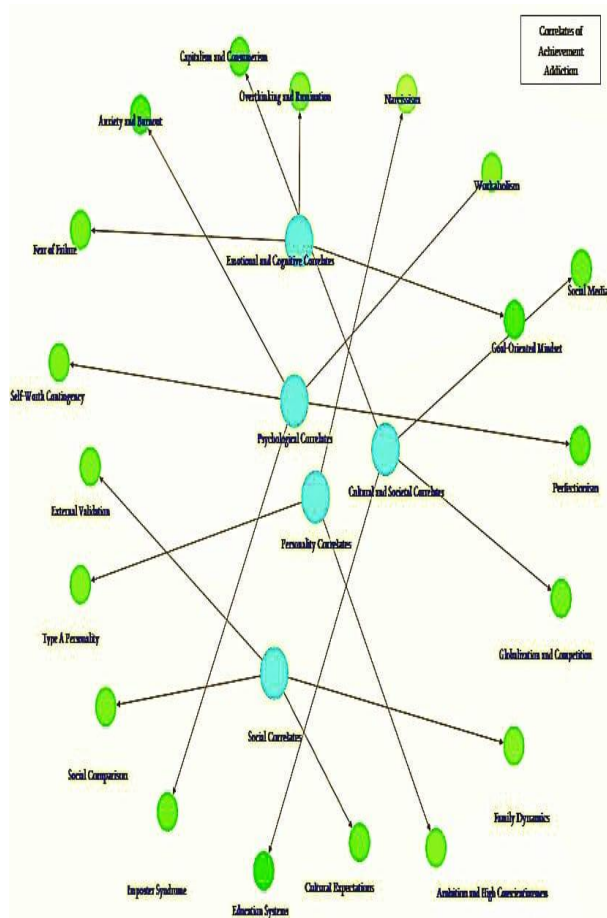
Damaged Relationships. Success-oriented achievement might have deeply impacted relationships with others. The individual caught up in trying to achieve more and fulfill that goal might get lost in neglecting the desires and feelings of family, friends, and sometimes even colleagues.^{16,17} Resulting fractures or breakdowns mean they are all alone in relation to their personal support systems in case of further breakdown.

Easily Shattered Self-Esteem. While one may view high self-esteem as a strength, it only often reveals itself as fragile, heavily dependent on external validation and accomplishments.^{11,14} This fragile nature means that any setback, criticism, or perceived failure leads to immense emotional distress. Such distress may provoke a cycle of compulsive behaviors because people try to reaffirm their worth through further achievements, perpetuating a cycle that demoralizes mental health.

Maladaptive Perfectionism. The seeking of unyielding achievement has the tendency to perpetuate maladaptive perfectionism i.e., a non-attainable perfectionism. Those caught up in this mode are seldom satisfied when they attain what they set out to do and tend always to go for goals that are impossible of attainment. Chronic unhappiness and anxiety with a failure to have fun in their success are inevitable consequences of maladaptive perfectionism.¹⁸

F. *Other Correlates of Achievement Addiction*

There may be several intersections of the complex phenomenon of achievement addiction i.e., emotional, cognitive, psychological, social, and cultural along with personality. Different potential correlates may be clustered into the following, that may play the role of both risk and protective factors altogether:



G. Interventions and Mitigating Factors

Understanding this framework in-depth opens the doors to developing interventions that can work effectively in reducing the problem of achievement addiction. Cognitive-behavioral therapy is a strong tool, helping people find and challenge their cognitive distortions that distort perception of self-worth and success. By helping them find and challenge those harmful thought patterns, CBT enables people to redefine their relationship with achievement. This could seriously break the vicious cycle that underscores compulsive achievement-seeking behavior. It does this by establishing present-moment awareness, leading people to accept failure as part of life. By this practice, resilience blooms, and a more authentic self-compassion develops an appreciation within oneself for their intrinsic worth independent of the accomplishments.

This theoretical framework explores the complex and multifaceted relationship between narcissism, inflated self-esteem, and the compulsive pursuit of achievement, which is often referred to as achievement addiction. Society generally celebrates the drive for success as a laudable characteristic, but it is crucial to recognize that when taken to extremes, it can manifest in pathological forms leading to profound psychological and emotional turmoil. This complex nature, therefore, must be understood in order to develop targeted interventions aiming at helping people find a way out of achieving addiction and

eventually encouraging a more balanced and sustainable sense of self-worth which is not placed on achieving.

II. CONCLUSION

Achievement addiction is multifaceted, rooted in a combination of individual personality traits, social environments, and cultural norms. Addressing its correlates requires a holistic approach, including psychological intervention, societal awareness, and cultural shifts toward valuing intrinsic motivations and balanced living.

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