
Measuring job greediness: Development and validation of an Italian scale

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✎ **ABSTRACT.** Il presente studio si pone l'obiettivo di validare lo strumento Greedy Job Scale (GJS), progettato per misurare la percezione di richieste eccessive di lavoro e la loro interferenza con la vita personale. Sulla base di un campione di 1.208 lavoratori italiani, i risultati delle analisi fattoriali esplorative e confermate hanno mostrato una struttura monofattoriale, con buone proprietà psicometriche. Il GJS fornisce uno strumento affidabile per indagare l'impatto potenziale dell'intrusività del lavoro sul benessere, sui percorsi di carriera e sui risultati organizzativi. Questo studio sottolinea l'importanza di valutare la percezione dei lavori avidi, dato il loro impatto, già documentato in letteratura, sui confini tra lavoro e vita privata e sul benessere generale.

✎ **SUMMARY.** Greedy jobs demand excessive time, energy, and emotional investment, eroding boundaries between work and personal life. They perpetuate inequalities, notably by limiting flexibility for those with caregiving responsibilities. The current study aims to validate the Greedy Job Scale (GJS) to assess perceptions of job demands and their intrusion into personal life. A multi-step process involving item development, refinement, and testing was conducted. Using a sample of 1,208 Italian workers, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) were employed to validate the scale. The obtained results supported a single-factor solution and demonstrated adequate psychometric properties of the GJS in terms of internal consistency and construct validity. In addition, greedy jobs significantly blur the boundaries between work and personal life, demanding constant availability and responsiveness. Greedy jobs significantly strain individuals, especially when they can undermine work-life balance, especially for individuals managing caregiving responsibilities. The GJS offers a critical tool for future research in understanding how job-related greediness impacts employee well-being, career trajectories and organisational outcomes.

Keywords: Greedy jobs, Work-life balance, Demands, Burnout, Flexibility, Inequality

INTRODUCTION

The concept of greedy institutions (GI) was initially introduced by Coser (1967) and further elaborated in *Greedy institutions: Patterns of undivided commitment* (1974). Coser described GIs as entities that make total claims on their members, requiring exclusive and undivided loyalty that “coercion and physical isolation, GIs operate through non-physical means, eliciting voluntary compliance from their members by offering symbolic and material rewards that make continued engagement attractive. These institutions minimise the influence of competing roles and create environments where individuals’ identities become embedded within a restricted set of institutional expectations” (Coser, 1974; De Campo, 2013). This framework provides a vital perspective for understanding how institutions maintain control in modern society without resorting to overt coercion.

GIs have been extensively studied in contexts where individuals face competing demands from different institutions, such as the family and the workplace. These institutions often compete for individuals’ time and energy, leading to conflicts when one becomes too dominant, a situation particularly evident in high-commitment environments like the military (Segal, 1986; Vuga & Juvan, 2013). In such cases, both institutions demand a level of commitment that can overwhelm individuals’ ability to balance roles, creating what Sullivan (2014) calls the perception of greediness. These dynamics have far-reaching implications, especially in contemporary work environments where the expectations placed on employees often blur boundaries, pushing them to prioritise work over other aspects of life consistently.

More recently, the concept of greedy jobs (GJs) has emerged as a related yet distinct, framework for examining the specific characteristics of occupations that require disproportionate amounts of time, energy, and emotional labour. Goldin (2014, 2021) introduced this term to describe jobs that require long working hours and permanent availability from workers, thus exacerbating the perception of work-life conflicts. This is particularly relevant in high-status professions such as law and finance, where long hours are often rewarded with higher pay and prestige but at the cost of personal and family time (Goldin & Katz, 2011). GJs are not merely an extension of GIs; they represent a more focused analysis of how individual job characteristics contribute to broader systemic inequalities, particularly the gender pay gap. While GIs typically refer to

institutions as a whole, GJs isolate the occupational aspects that disproportionately burden individuals, especially women, who may seek more flexibility in their work to accommodate family responsibilities (Meekes & Hassink, 2022).

The extension of Coser’s concept of greedy institutions to greedy jobs represents a critical advancement in understanding labour market inequalities, particularly concerning gender. Goldin (2014, 2021) introduced the notion of GJ to describe occupations that require substantial time commitment, emotional engagement, and continuous availability, often leading to the erosion of work-life boundaries. These jobs, characterised by their high demands and inflexibility, contribute disproportionately to the gender pay gap, as men are more likely to occupy these positions, while women often choose more flexible but lower-paid roles due to caregiving responsibilities (Wiswall & Zafar, 2018). This divergence in occupational preferences is not merely a reflection of individual choices but is deeply rooted in the structural inequalities embedded within these jobs, where long hours and lack of flexibility are not just expected but are central to success (Goldin & Katz, 2011).

The theoretical underpinning of GJs is grounded in Coser’s (1974) original work on greedy institutions, which highlights the tension between multiple competing institutions that demand undivided commitment. This tension is particularly salient in contemporary professional environments where the boundaries between work and personal life are increasingly blurred (Sullivan, 2014). In GJs, workers are expected to devote excessive time and emotional resources to their jobs, often at the expense of personal and family life. These jobs are designed to reward individuals who can offer full-time dedication, creating structural barriers for those who need flexibility, such as women (Pan, 2015). The rigid time demands inherent in GJs thus reinforce gendered divisions within the labour market, limiting women’s ability to progress in high-status, high-paying roles (Meekes & Hassink, 2022).

Recent studies have further developed this theoretical framework by examining the characteristics of greedy jobs and their impact on gender inequality. Sullivan (2014) emphasises that while these demands may appear voluntary, the structure of GJs often leaves little room for alternative arrangements, making them inherently inflexible and exclusionary. Furthermore, Sobeck (2024) argues that the perception of job greediness varies depending on institutional and cultural contexts. In countries with strong

labour protections and collective bargaining structures, the impact of GJs may be mitigated, allowing workers more flexibility to balance competing demands (Wasserman, 2023). Conversely, in countries with fewer labour protections, the demands of GJs are more likely to exacerbate work-life conflicts, particularly for women.

Research goal

Despite the growing body of literature on greedy institutions and jobs, limited research has focused on developing tools to measure how workers perceive the demands of greedy jobs. While existing studies, such as Mittlböck's (2023), have examined structural job characteristics like working hours and employer expectations, these approaches have not addressed the need for a reliable and valid scale to capture how individuals perceive the demands of greedy jobs. This study aims to fill this gap by developing and validating a brief scale that focuses on the perception of job greediness. The aim is to move beyond purely objective measures of job structure and incorporate psychosocial factors that influence how workers experience job demands.

METHOD

To validate the Greedy Job Scale, we followed a two-step approach. First, we conducted a literature review to generate and evaluate scale items. We performed a content validity assessment using a panel of four judges to ensure the instrument's clarity. Then, we administered the resulting questionnaire to a sample of employees to test its psychometric properties. Participation was anonymous and voluntary, with informed consent obtained from all individuals. The procedures adhered to the ethical guidelines outlined in the Helsinki declaration. Participants were free to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or compensation, and data were analysed in compliance with Italian privacy laws, ensuring participant anonymity.

Strategy of analysis

The data analysis strategy involved both exploratory and confirmatory approaches. For the exploratory factor analysis

(EFA), a principal component analysis was conducted on the six items with oblique rotation via IBM-SPSS 29.0. Items with factor loadings of at least .32 were retained, ensuring that only items with sufficient explanatory power were included.

Then, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), using maximum likelihood parameter estimates with robust standard errors (MLR), was conducted using Mplus software to assess the measurement structure of the scale. Following the guidelines provided by Brown (2015), two alternative models were systematically compared. The first model (M1) specified a one-factor structure consistent with the solution obtained from the EFA. In this model, all six items were hypothesised to load onto a single latent factor representing the overarching construct of a **greedy job**. This model assumes that all the characteristics described in the six items collectively represent a single construct of a job that consistently intrudes on personal life and demands high levels of commitment and responsiveness.

The second model (M2) proposed a two-factor structure. The first factor included four items (items 2, 3, 5, 6) focusing on the extent to which work disrupts personal life by intruding into free time, either through direct demands or psychological pressure (i.e., Work intrusion). The second factor consisted of two items (items 1 and 4) reflecting the demand for extended working hours and the need to remain highly responsive to work-related matters, even outside standard work hours (i.e., Work intensity).

To assess model fit, different fit indices were used: the χ^2 goodness-of-fit statistic, the Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), and Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR). Fit was considered acceptable when SRMR and RMSEA values were below .08, and CFI and TLI values were above .90 (Byrne, 2009; Hu & Bentler, 1999). Adopting the MLR estimation model, Satorra-Bentler scaled chi-square difference test was used to determine whether the more complex model provided a significantly better fit. In addition to the CFA, internal consistency was assessed by calculating Cronbach's alpha (α) and the omega (ω) index, following recommendations by Hair and colleagues (2010). Furthermore, the CFA results provided information for calculating the average variance extracted (AVE), which is a supplementary internal consistency indicator. This metric offers a more robust evaluation of the scale's reliability, reinforcing the conclusions drawn from traditional methods like Cronbach's alpha.

Participants

An overall sample of 1,208 employees completed the six items on the Greedy Job Scale. The total sample consisted of respondents from various private organisations who completed an online questionnaire hosted on an occupational health website as part of an occupational health survey. The sample was gender-balanced, with 49% identifying as female, and the mean age was 52.4 years ($SD = 6.43$), ranging from 26 to 66 years.

The sample was split randomly into two equal groups without any specific criteria to conduct the exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). The EFA was conducted using data from 606 employees, with 51% identifying as female. The mean age in this group was 52.3 years ($SD = 6.23$), with ages ranging from 27 to 66 years. This analysis was used to identify the underlying structure of the scale and its dimensions.

The remaining 602 participants formed the second group, which was used for CFA. In this group, 53.3% identified as male, with a mean age of 52.23 years ($SD = 6.61$), ranging from 26 to 66 years. The CFA validated the dimensional structure identified during the EFA, ensuring the scale's robustness across an independent sample.

Scale development

Regarding scale development, the items were created based on the definition of greedy jobs proposed by Goldin (2014, 2021). The current items differ from the ones proposed by Mittlböck (2023), relying on greediness indicators derived using principal component analysis of objective job characteristics, such as working hours and availability requirements. In contrast, to the best of our knowledge, the current scale is the only available measure that focuses solely on individual perceptions of greedy jobs. This scale explores how workers subjectively interpret the demands and expectations of their roles. This psychosocial focus enables a deeper understanding of how greedy jobs are experienced and perceived in the workplace. This resulted in a pool of 6 items focused on core aspects of greedy jobs. These items balanced conciseness and representativeness, ensuring that the scale captured the essential elements of the construct. In particular, brief instruments are advantageous due to time constraints imposed by employers during employee surveys

(Fisher, Matthews & Gibbons, 2015). Additionally, concise scales reduce participant fatigue, frustration, and boredom while minimising survey refusals caused by perceptions of excessive length (Burisch, 1984).

The items were subjected to an expert evaluation. The evaluation panel consisted of four women ($M_{age} = 39$ years, $SD = 10.49$), including three faculty members with an average of 14 years of experience as industrial-organisational psychologists and one PhD student in their second year of study. The panel was tasked with evaluating each item's relevance, clarity, and coverage. Following Lynn's (1986) methodology, both the content validity of individual items (I-CVI) and the overall scale (S-CVI) were assessed. Each judge received an evaluation sheet to determine the theoretical relevance of each item to the construct of a greedy job. They were asked the question: "To what extent do you believe this item is relevant in assessing the perception of one's job as greedy?". The judges independently rated the items on a four-point Likert scale, where 1 = irrelevant, 2 = somewhat relevant, 3 = quite relevant, and 4 = extremely relevant.

The I-CVI for each item was calculated by dividing the number of judges rated the item as 3 or 4 by the total number of judges. According to Lynn (1986), an I-CVI of 1.00 is required when fewer than five judges are used; therefore, only items with unanimous agreement were retained. As a result, all six items were included in the final scale. The S-CVI was determined by averaging the I-CVIs of all items, with an S-CVI of .80 or higher considered acceptable (Davis, 1992). Given that all items achieved an I-CVI of 1.00, the S-CVI also demonstrated excellent content validity, with a final value of 1.00. Thus, the final scale consisted of 6 items rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree.

RESULTS

The Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) identified a single-factor solution, accounting for 58% of the variance. This finding suggests that the scale measures a unidimensional construct effectively. Descriptive statistics, including means, standard deviations, and factor loadings for each item, are presented in Table 1. These values are well within established thresholds, suggesting that the single-factor structure provides a parsimonious and theoretically sound data representation.

Table 1 – EFA results: means, standard deviation and factor loadings of the GJS

Items			<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Factor loadings
1	Spesso lavoro più ore di quante dovrei o vorrei	I often work more hours than I should or would like to	3.48	1.17	.65
2	Il mio lavoro non mi consente facilmente di ‘staccare la spina’	My job does not easily allow me to ‘unplug’	2.97	1.24	.78
3	Anche nei momenti liberi ricevo richieste da parte dei miei colleghi o dei miei superiori	Even during my free time, I receive requests from my colleagues or supervisors	3.00	1.27	.81
4	Devo sempre essere ‘tempestivo’ nelle risposte ai miei clienti o al mio capo, anche nel tempo libero	I always have to be ‘prompt’ in answering my clients or manager, even during my free time	2.85	1.29	.78
5	Il lavoro e quello che devo fare è spesso un pensiero invasivo, anche nel mio tempo libero	My job and what I have to do is often an intrusive thought, even during my free time	2.64	1.24	.81
6	Faccio molta fatica a pianificare il mio tempo libero a causa dei miei impegni di lavoro	I find it very difficult to plan my free time due to my work commitments	2.27	1.12	.74

Then, the CFA compared the fit of two competing models: a single-factor solution reflecting the EFA results and a two-factor solution positing the presence of two underlying dimensions (potentially named Work intrusion and Work intensity).

The single-factor model demonstrated excellent fit to the data, with fit indices indicating a robust measurement structure, with CFI = .99; TLI = .98, RMSEA = .05, SRMR = .01.

In contrast, the two-factor model yielded the following fit indices: CFI = .93; TLI = .88, RMSEA = .13, SRMR = .15. A Satorra-Bentler scaled chi-square difference test was conducted to compare the two models. The results indicated that the more complex model (Model 1) provided a significantly better fit to the data than the more parsimonious model (Model 2), $\Delta\chi^2(3) = 71.73$, $p < .001$. These findings support the robustness of the single-factor structure identified through the EFA and provide a clear rationale for its selection as the most appropriate model for our data.

Table 2 presents the standardised factor loadings for the selected single-factor model, along with the associated values for Cronbach’s alpha (α), omega (ω), and average variance extracted (AVE). Internal consistency was confirmed for the single-factor structure, with all indices exceeding the recommended thresholds, thereby supporting the reliability and validity of the GJS. The unique factor captures the pervasive intrusion of work into personal life, characterised by job demands that extend well beyond regular working hours.

DISCUSSION

The present study aimed to develop and validate the Greedy Job Scale (GJS), a novel tool designed to measure workers’ perceptions of job greediness, which reflects the extent to which demanding work environments intrude into personal life. In doing so, we address a central gap in the literature

Table 2 – CFA results: descriptive statistics, standardized factor loadings, and item reliability

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	λ	α	ω	AVE
Item 1	3.48	1.17	.59	.89	.89	.57
Item 2	2.97	1.24	.79			
Item 3	3.00	1.27	.71			
Item 4	2.85	1.29	.74			
Item 5	2.64	1.24	.87			
Item 6	2.27	1.12	.82			

Legenda. λ = standardized factor loadings; α = Cronbach's alpha value; ω = omega value; AVE = average variance extracted.

by moving beyond objective measures to incorporate psychosocial factors that influence how individuals perceive job demands and their intrusion into personal lives. Building on Goldin's (2014, 2021) conceptualisation of greedy jobs as roles that require significant time, energy, and flexibility, the GJS operationalises this construct into a concise and psychometrically sound tool.

The validation process for the GJS involved a rigorous, multi-step psychometric analysis. An exploratory factor analysis (EFA) identified a single factor underlying the scale's items, suggesting that work-life intrusion is best understood as a unified construct. This finding was further supported by confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), which demonstrated an excellent fit to the data, confirming the robustness of the single-factor structure. Alternative models, including a two-factor solution, were tested but failed to achieve acceptable fit indices, reinforcing the appropriateness of a single-factor representation. These results align with the theoretical framework of greedy jobs, where time, energy, and loyalty demands merge into a specific intrusion experience.

Theoretically, the GJS provides a tool to examine how the concept of greedy jobs translates into measurable psychosocial experiences. The current results show that job greediness is a unified reality experienced by employees, consistent with

earlier findings by Sullivan (2014). This evidence expands the discussion on how structural demands in occupations limit workers' ability to maintain a balanced life. Moreover, the results corroborate and build upon the work of Mittlböck (2023), who developed a multidimensional scale to measure the perceived greediness of jobs based on autonomy in scheduling, autonomy in work content, and employer intervention during non-work hours. While Mittlböck's scale primarily focuses on structural job characteristics and objective indicators, our scale differs by shifting the emphasis to workers' subjective perceptions of job demands and the psychosocial dimensions of greedy jobs. The Greedy Job Scale captures how individuals experience the intrusion of work into personal life, extending beyond structural aspects such as autonomy to explore how employees internalise expectations of constant availability and emotional engagement. According to Mittlböck, jobs with less autonomy and higher levels of employer intervention were perceived as significantly greedier, as supported by this study's participants, who also reported frequent employer expectations to remain available during personal time. However, the GJS refines this understanding by quantifying not only the impact of these structural demands but also the degree to which workers perceive them as intrusive and all-consuming.

This study highlights the importance of assessing perceptions of greedy jobs, given their well-documented impact on work-life boundaries and overall well-being. Previous research demonstrates that jobs requiring high levels of emotional investment exacerbate work-life conflicts, leading to burnout and reduced job satisfaction (e.g., Lott & Wöhrmann, 2023). Greedy jobs demand time and emotional engagement, contributing to the persistent erosion of work-life boundaries, where employees find it increasingly difficult to disconnect from their professional roles, even when off-duty.

The need to limit such job demands is further supported by research by Zhu and colleagues (Zhu, Sun, Liu & Xue, 2019), who describe the ambivalence of greed in organisational contexts. They found that while greed can enhance task performance through a heightened desire for social status, it also undermines employees' sense of distributive justice, leading to job dissatisfaction and burnout. These insights emphasise the long-term costs of greedy jobs for individuals and organisations, as high emotional exhaustion and dissatisfaction inevitably lead to reduced productivity and employee disengagement.

Cross-cultural variations in the impact of greedy jobs also demonstrate the importance of institutional and cultural contexts in shaping employees' experiences of job demands. Sobeck (2024) highlights how robust labour protections, such as mandatory limits on working hours and policies promoting work-life balance, mitigate the adverse effects of greedy jobs. In contrast, greedy jobs significantly burden workers in countries with fewer labor protections, such as the United States, where the expectation of constant availability is often embedded in workplace culture. This underlines the need for employers and policymakers to promote protections and flexibility that reduce work-life conflicts.

Additionally, structural inequalities perpetuated by greedy jobs warrant close attention. For instance, Dowd and Park (2024) found that women are disproportionately affected by the inflexible demands of precarious work, limiting their access to higher-status, better-paid roles due to caregiving responsibilities and systemic barriers. These findings emphasise how greedy jobs, by demanding undivided commitment, create systemic obstacles that disadvantage workers with greater non-work responsibilities. Although the present study did not examine gender disparities directly, these broader patterns underscore the importance of understanding and addressing how job demands perpetuate structural inequalities.

Study limitations

This study presents some limitations that should be addressed in future research. First, the sample is geographically limited to Italian workers, which may affect the generalizability of the findings to other cultural or national contexts. Labour market institutions and work-life balance policies vary significantly across countries, which may influence how greedy jobs are experienced in EU and extra-EU countries. Second, the study primarily relies on self-reported data, which can introduce response biases, such as social desirability or recall bias. Future research could address this limitation by integrating objective measures to assess the greediness of an organisational context. For instance, future studies might include metrics such as working hours logged, the frequency of after-hours communication or employer expectations explicitly drawn in policies and/or contracts.

Additionally, while the Greedy Job Scale provides a robust measure of workplace greediness, it does not capture all potential job characteristics that may contribute to work-life conflict, such as job insecurity or job design. Future research should explore how different dimensions of job characteristics interact with greediness perceptions and their consequences on career progression and personal well-being. Finally, longitudinal studies would be beneficial to track how perceptions of greediness in the workplace evolve and influence long-term career outcomes and work-life balance.

CONCLUSION

The Greedy Job Scale provides a valuable tool for understanding how job demands intrude into personal life. This study highlights the disproportionate impact of these roles on individuals, particularly caregivers, who need greater flexibility. By exploring the challenges posed by high-demand jobs for work-life balance, the findings pave the way for future research into how job structures affect employee well-being and career progression. In a nutshell, this research not only deepens our understanding of the systemic pressures driving work-life imbalances but also provides a foundation for future studies and policy interventions to create healthier, more sustainable work environments.

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