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THE EFFECT OF CONTROL OVER WORK SCHEDULE, AVAILABILITY OF RESOURCES, UTILIZATION OF RESOURCES, AND WORK-SCHOOL-LIFE DEMANDS ON WELLNESS

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With college students working an ever increasing number of hours, the demands placed on them from multiple roles is often significant leading to decreases in their overall wellness. This study used the job demands-resources perspective (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007) to examine how the availability and utilization of resources buffered the negative effects of work-school-life demands (WSLD) on student wellness. Wellness, a multidimensional construct, defines an active process in which people attempt to better themselves to achieve their full potential (Dunn, 1957; Hettler, 1980). We hypothesize that the availability and utilization of life resources will moderate the effect of WSLD on overall wellness. Consistent with the JD-R model, we predicted that there would be a negative relationship between life demands and wellness for those with lower levels of resources, whereas those with higher resources were predicted to report higher wellness regardless of their level of life demands.

Method

Participants and Data Collection

Working college students (219 females, 63 males) who ranged in age from 19 to 51 years ($M_{age} = 24$ years, $SD = 4.76$) and worked an average of 26.95 hours per week responded to an online survey. The majority of students were enrolled fulltime.

Measures

Work-school-life resources was measured using the 6-item Perception of Availability of Life Resources Index (Scherer, 2013) and the 3-item Utilization of Life Resources Index (Scherer, 2013). Factor analysis determined that perception of availability of resources and actual utilization of resources to be separate constructs. Work-school-life demands was assessed using the 3-item Perceived Level of Life Demands Index (Scherer, 2013). For each of these indices, responses were summed to form the aggregate index. Test-retest reliability has been shown to exceed .85 (Scherer, 2013). The 36-item Perceived Wellness Survey (Adams, Bezner, & Steinhardt, 1997), $\alpha = .91$, was used to evaluate student wellness.

Results

Hierarchical multiple regression was used to test the hypotheses. As predicted, availability of life resources significantly moderated the relationship between WSLD and wellness, ($\beta = -.078$, $t(279) = -2.491$, $p = .013$, 95% CI [-0.139, -0.016]); however, the form of the interaction was not in the predicted direction and was contrary to the implications of the JD-R model. Utilization of life resources did not moderate the relationship between WSLD and wellness. Due to the unexpected form of the interaction we looked at intercorrelations for each scale and found that control over work schedule was highly and significantly correlated with all core variables. We determined there may be a three-way interaction between life demands, control over work schedule, and availability of resources on wellness and utilized regression analyses to test this new hypothesis. Our results were significant, ($\beta = .069$, $t(273) = 2.085$, $p = .038$, 95% CI [0.004, 0.135]). A significant three-way interaction between life demands, control over work schedule, and utilization of resources was also tested and found to be significant, ($\beta = .074$, $t(273) = 2.195$, $p = .029$, 95% CI [0.008, 0.140]). Higher levels of resources led to higher levels of wellness compared to lower levels of resources. Additionally, higher levels of control over work schedule did not influence wellness when resources were low. However when resources and control over work schedule were high, control over work schedule influences the relationship between demands and resources. Figures available upon request.

Discussion

This study contributes to the literature by examining the effect of control over work schedule, total life resources and demands on college student wellness. This study provided evidence that students' control over their work schedule acts as an important resource and positively influences student wellness. Specifically, students with higher levels of resources and higher control over their work schedule experience higher levels of wellness regardless of the level of life demands; however students who have lower control over their work schedule, even with higher resources experience a lower level of wellness. This study extends the JD-R model in the work-life demand research on working college students by suggesting that control over work schedule is an important additional resource that should be considered in predicting and enhancing college student wellness.

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