

2015

Buffering Role of Perceptions of Work-Life Balance on the Relationship Between External Obligations and Health

Benedict J. Fern
University of Nebraska at Omaha

Lisa Leahy Scherer
University of Nebraska at Omaha, lscherer@unomaha.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.unomaha.edu/psychfacproc>

 Part of the [Psychology Commons](#)

Please take our feedback survey at: https://unomaha.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_8cchtFmpDyGfBLE

Recommended Citation

Fern, Benedict J. and Scherer, Lisa Leahy, "Buffering Role of Perceptions of Work-Life Balance on the Relationship Between External Obligations and Health" (2015). *Psychology Faculty Proceedings & Presentations*. 3.

<https://digitalcommons.unomaha.edu/psychfacproc/3>

This Poster is brought to you for free and open access by the Department of Psychology at DigitalCommons@UNO. It has been accepted for inclusion in Psychology Faculty Proceedings & Presentations by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@UNO. For more information, please contact unodigitalcommons@unomaha.edu.



Buffering Role of Perceptions of Work-Life Balance on the Relationship Between External Obligations and Health

Benedict J. Fern, MA
University of Nebraska at Omaha

Lisa L. Scherer, Ph.D.
University of Nebraska at Omaha

ABSTRACT

The study proposed that perceptions of work-life balance (WLB) among employed college students is a critical antecedent of student health. We also predicted and found evidence suggesting that how students perceive their life demands influences WLB, with WLB being enhanced for those perceiving life-demands positively and being undermined for those with negative views of their life demands. In this online study of 119 working college students, we found that WLB completely mediated the effect of external obligations on health. Specifically, health outcomes were higher among employed students when they perceived their external obligations as providing balance in their lives.

INTRODUCTION

Working college students are experiencing increased demands as they attempt to work an increasing number of hours while often juggling a fulltime course load. According to King and Bannon (2002) almost 50% of college students work 25 or more hours per week, resulting in a weekly investment of 60 to 80 hours on school and work. Consequences of these high demands include decreased academic performance (Markel & Frone, 1998), increased tendency to experience depression (Butler, Grzywacz, Bass, & Linney, 2005) and higher levels of alcohol consumption (Butler, Dodge, & Faurote, 2010). In contrast, Work-Facilitation Theory (Butler, 2007) has demonstrated that work and school demands are not always in conflict with one another; thus, at times, work can facilitate school success.

This study extends these two theoretical frameworks by suggesting that employed student roles, beyond those of work and school, be examined to determine whether these external role obligations (e.g., volunteering, extracurricular activities, civic engagement) serve as demands or resources.



HYPOTHESES

Hypothesis 1: Increased external obligations will be associated with decreased WLB

Hypothesis 2: Increased external obligations will be associated with decreased health

Hypothesis 3: WLB mediates the relationship between outside obligations and health

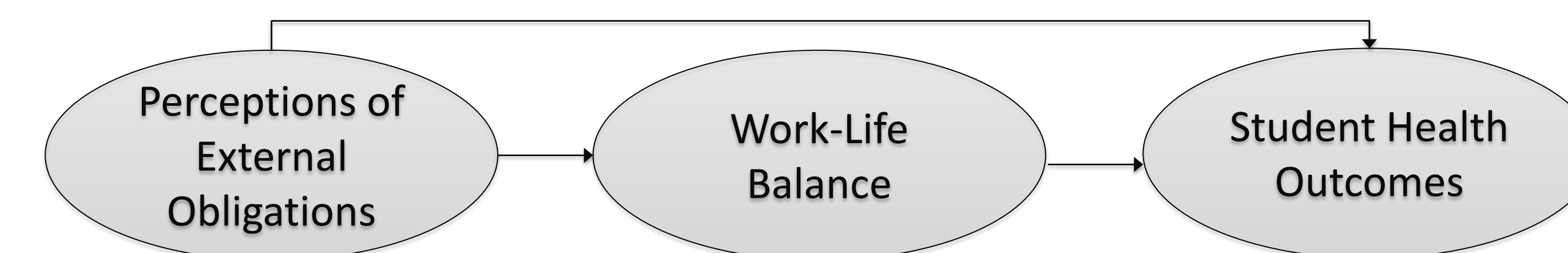
METHOD

Participants

- 119 working college students
- 88 female (73.95%)
- 113 white (95%)
- Worked and average of 21.68 hours per week (SD=11.12)
- 106 full-time students (89.4%)

Variables

- Perception of External Obligation: A 4-item measure of external obligations was created for this study with ($\alpha = .82$).
- WLB: The 5-item Hill, Hawkins, Ferris and Weitzman's (2001) Work-Life Balance Scale ($\alpha = .83$)
- Health: SF-20 (Ware, Sherbourne, & Davies, 1992), a shortened version of the SF-36



RESULTS

Hypothesis 1: An increase in external obligations was associated decreased WLB, $\beta = .220$, $p = .019$

Hypothesis 2: An increase in external obligations was associated with decreased health, $\beta = .346$, $p < .001$

Hypothesis 3: WLB mediated the relationship between outside obligations and health Sobel = 2.78, $p = .005$

DISCUSSION

From a conservation of resources model (Hobfoll, 1989, 2001) WLB appears to serve as a resource that can ameliorate the negative effects of excessive outside obligations on health. Therefore, one way in which schools and employers can take to improve the health of their students and employees is to help their students and employees achieve WLB. Future research needs to delve into how other outside obligations affect WSC and if all obligations decrease health or if different, types of obligations have different influences on health.

REFERENCES AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST

Contact Lisa Scherer at lscherer@unomaha.edu for questions and paper requests