Navigating work and study: Antecedents and outcomes of conflict and facilitation aspects of the work-school interface ☆

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ABSTRACT

The current study investigated a model of the work-school interface among working adolescents. The examined model investigated the partial mediating role of conflict and facilitation relations between three antecedents (social support, number of working hours, and the existence or absence of the freedom to choose to work) on three outcomes (life satisfaction, school grades and academic behavior). The participants were 289 Israeli working students (M_{age} = 17.56; SD_{age} = 0.56). SEM analysis indicated an adequate index fit, suggesting that aspects of conflict and facilitation relations co-exist when blending work and school. Social support, number of working hours, and the freedom to choose to work were associated with facilitation relations which, in turn, were associated with greater life satisfaction, higher school grades, and higher academic behavior. Low social support and the absence of freedom to choose to work were associated with conflict relations that, in turn, were associated with lower academic behavior. Results suggest that role blending during adolescence and adulthood share similar mechanisms. Practical implications are discussed.

1. Introduction

High school students' participation in paid work has increased significantly over the past 25 years in many Western countries, but this phenomenon has received only scant attention among career development researchers, who acknowledge the important role of work in people's lives. The existing literature regarding the effects of blending work and school has revealed both positive and negative outcomes, albeit typically offering no theoretical framework to explain the mixed results (Cinamon, 2015). Consequently, our understanding of the developmental role of work during adolescence is limited, as is our knowledge about role blending at different developmental stages.

The current study adopted an integrative theoretical model designed to study the work-family interface among adult employees (Frone, 2003) in order to investigate adolescents' work-school interface. The model comprises conflict and facilitation relations between work and school, which partially mediate the effects of personal and environmental antecedents upon three different types of outcomes: psychological health, school grades, and academic behavior.

1.1. Youth and work

In OECD countries, 20.3% of adolescents between the ages of 15–19 blend work and student roles (OECD, 2015), while in Israel,

about 10% of high school students work after school hours (CBS, 2015). For the general adult population, employment has been shown to serve as a protective force against depression as well as offering benefits for physiological and mental health (see Van der Noordt, IJzelenberg, Droomers, & Proper, 2014); however, the role of employment among adolescents is not clear. For instance, does employment have the same effect on adolescents as it does on adults? What factors facilitate a positive work experience for adolescents? These questions have yet to receive evidence-based answers.

Considerable research has been devoted to examining the negative outcomes of part-time work on adolescents' school behavior, academic achievement, and aspirations, whereas possible positive outcomes have attracted much less research interest (see Zimmer-Gembeck & Mortimer, 2006). This literature has demonstrated particular interest in students working > 20 weekly hours, generally revealing deleterious effects of employment on adolescents' school behavior, grades, time devoted to homework, school engagement, dropout rates, and class attendance (e.g., Marsh & Kleitman, 2005; Zierold, Garman, & Anderson, 2005). In addition, working students may experience psychological strain, lack of sleep, and increased physical injury (Bachman, Staff, O'Malley, & Freedman-Doan, 2013). Some studies have indicated increased risk-taking behaviors, such as smoking and alcohol use (Butler, Dodge, & Faurote, 2010; Kingston & Rose, 2015; Liu, Keyes, & Li, 2014).

However, some research findings have reflected a positive effect of working on school performance (e.g., Bachman, Staff, O'Malley, Schulenberg, & Freedman-Doan, 2011; Lee & Staff, 2007). Working a moderate number of weekly hours has been associated with higher school commitment, higher grades, lower dropout risk, and stronger intentions to attend college (Staff & Mortimer, 2007; Vuolo, Mortimer, & Staff, 2014). Furthermore, working high school students are more likely than their nonworking peers to participate in physically active leisure activities (Carrière, 2005) as well as in community activities (Paschall, Ringwalt, & Flewelling, 2002). Working during adolescence has also been associated with the development of career maturity, positive career attitudes, career networking, and career exploration (Creed, Patton, & Prideaux, 2007; Houshmand, Seidel, & Ma, 2014).

The mechanism by which part-time work affects adolescents is not at all clear. Most studies in this area have focused on the time demands at work as the main cause of the negative outcomes of part-time employment during adolescence. However, this explanation is incompatible with findings showing that adolescents' engagement in various types of activities (e.g., sports, volunteering) alongside their studies contributes positively to their academic performance and fosters their development (e.g., Flanagan, Kim, Collura, & Kopish, 2015; Larson, Hansen, & Moneta, 2006; Mahoney, Larson, Eccles, & Lord, 2005). These mixed findings suggest the possibility that other variables may partially mediate the associations between working hours and psychological and academic outcomes, and correlate with the different outcomes. Another important issue left unanswered is whether these findings differ according to individuals' motivation for working in conjunction with their studies (Dupré, Inness, Connelly, Barling, & Hoption, 2006; Staff & Mortimer, 2008; Staff, Schulenberg, Bachman, Parks, & Van Eseltine, 2013). For instance, individuals' motivation for working may shape their ability to manage difficulties and affect the outcomes of this blending of roles. It would be reasonable to assume that adolescents who have to work in order to support their basic needs experience considerably more pressure than would their peers who have the freedom to choose working to earn extra money for nonessentials, such as designer clothes.

Therefore, a conceptual model to guide the research on adolescents' work experiences is needed in order to understand the many facets of the work-school interface and the factors that shape them. Such an integral model could serve as a basis for the investigation of other common role-blending phenomena.

1.2. Theoretical models for understanding work-school interface

Several theoretical perspectives reflecting a holistic view of the individual have contributed to enhancing our understanding of role blending. Super's (1990) life-span life-space theory and his life-career rainbow model describe a conceptual framework that builds on the interplay of multiple roles across the life span.

Another perspective is reflected in Bronfenbrenner's (1989) ecological systems theory, focusing on the reciprocal interactions between life environments. The individual's immediate environments (microsystems), such as family, school, or work create, through their permeable borders, interrelations that, in turn, generate subsystems (mesosystems), such as work-school. These systems interact with broader social structures, such as governmental institutions (exosystems) and politics (macrosystems).

Indeed, these perspectives, emphasizing reciprocal influences between individuals' performance of various roles, have served as a basis for an extensive research program on the work-family interface among working adults. Frone (2003) described an integrative model of the work-family interface, incorporating conflict as well as facilitation relations between these two demanding roles, their antecedents, and how they affect individuals' health and performance in work and family domains. Based on the scarcity perspective, which assumes that individuals have limited resources, Frone adopted Greenhaus and Beutell's (1985) definition of work-family conflict as an interrole conflict, where role pressures from work and family are mutually incompatible, so that engaging in one role becomes more difficult due to engagement in the other role. The concept of *role facilitation*, also termed *role enhancement*, represents the extent to which role engagement in one context (home or work) is enhanced by virtue of the experiences, skills, and opportunities gained or developed in the other context (home or work; Grzywacz & Marks, 2000).

Markel and Frone (1998) adapted the concept of work-family conflict to work-school conflict (WSC), which they defined as the "extent to which work interferes with an adolescent's ability to meet school-related demands and responsibilities" (p. 278). This definition will serve the current study. The theoretical development of facilitation relations between work and family has lagged behind that of conflict relations (Whiston & Cinamon, 2015). A similar trend has characterized the study of work-school interface. Butler (2007) was the first who investigated a model of work-school conflict and facilitation among college students as mediator variables between job characteristics and school performance and school satisfaction. He defined work-school facilitation (WSF) as an improvement in the quality of the school role resulting from participation in a work role. This definition will serve the current study