



PSIWORLD 2013

## Recovery opportunities: one step forward for employee's well-being

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### Abstract

The concept of recovery opportunities is a key concept in recent research on stress. Starting from the Conservation of Resources Theory, the aim of this study is to explore incremental value added by recovery opportunities, on top of family and personal resources, to the employee's well-being. Well-being was operationalized as work engagement and health. Using a sample of 274 employees (72.1 % woman), the results of hierarchical regression analysis showed that kin support and Neuroticism were related to health, while spouse and kin support and Conscientiousness were related to work engagement. Overall, the findings support the idea that recovery opportunities increase the well-being of employees.

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Selection and peer-review under responsibility of Romanian Society of Applied Experimental Psychology.

*Keywords:* recovery opportunities, family resources, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism, work engagement

### 1. Introduction

In the last years, recovery has become a hot topic in the field of organizational psychology, especially in the studies that examine factors that create opportunities for recovery (e.g., Sonnentag & Krueger, 2006; Sonnentag & Zijlstra, 2006). Recovery involves different concepts, such as the need for recovery or recovery experiences. Need for recovery is a sign for employees to take a break from work demands (Sonnentag & Zijlstra, 2006). Recovery experiences consisted of four forms: psychological detachment from work, relaxation, control over leisure time, and mastery experiences (see Sonnentag & Fritz, 2007, for details). But this study refers to specific activities or mechanisms, and ignores an important problem. People need recovery opportunities to detach from work, to feel

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relaxed or to engage in social activities. Recently, the concept of recovery opportunities was operationalized as “the possibility, in terms of available time, to engage in situations that facilitate the psychological experience of recovery” by Rodriguez-Muñoz, Sanz-Vergel, Demerouti, Bakker (2012, p. 86). Sonnentag & Zijlstra (2006) observed that work-related activities or household tasks may be particularly fatiguing. When people have the opportunity to satisfy the need for recovery, they will be accomplished.

This study had exploratory objectives, and one of these was to examine the role of family resources and personal resources in predicting employee’s well-being, while the other one was to evaluate the incremental value added by recovery opportunities. In this study, well-being was operationalized as work engagement and health.

## **2. Propose of study**

The basic idea of the Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory (Hobfoll, 1989) is that people struggle to obtain, maintain and grow those things that have value to them. In situations where there is a loss in resources, where there is a threat of a loss of resources or in the case that an expected result is not achieved as effect of resource investment, stress is installed. Recovery opportunities have the potential to reduce stress by changing the way individuals perceive the source of stress (Rodriguez-Munoz et al., 2012) and by recovering energy, creating new resources. Family resources are of two types: enabling resources and psychological rewards (Voydanof, 2005). Enabling resources from family may generate resources in the work domain. Enabling family resources contributes to well-being by increasing the competence and capacities of individuals to perform across domains.

Family resources can function as psychological rewards and these rewarding aspects may lead to particular psychological benefits (Voydanof, 2005). These types of resources were associated with positive emotions, provide respect for unpaid work done at home and, finally, contribute to well-being. In this study we include spouse and kin support as enabling resources, and household and parenting rewards as psychological rewards..

Research in the organizational area (Inceoglu & Warr, 2011) shows that Conscientiousness positively correlates with work engagement as “workers who are engaged in their jobs tend in dispositional terms to be achievement oriented” (p. 180). Their results also show that two of the five FFM dimensions, Stability and Conscientiousness, explained the variance at the level of this outcome.

In a research on burnout and work engagement, Langellan, Bakker, van Doornen, & Schaufeli (2006) concluded that burnout is associated with high neuroticism, and low neuroticism in association with high extraversion characterized work engagement. In a study on the role of the Big Five dimensions in stressor-strain relationship, Extraversion, Conscientiousness, and Openness were related with better perceived health among healthy people, while Neuroticism was associated with poorer perceived health (Goodwin and Engstrom, 2002). In our study we included only Conscientiousness and Neuroticism as personal resources.

Employee’s well-being is affected by work conditions and experiences from personal life. Work engagement is associated with positive affect and is a positive experience in itself. In our study we examine if family resources, personal resources and recovery opportunities are related to work engagement and health.

## **3. Research Methods**

### *3.1. Participants and procedure*

This study was conducted in a company specialized in industrial production, where we applied a series of questionnaires to 360 employees. Only 274 individual answers were taken in the analysis (76.1 % of the tests distributed) as some of the scales were not returned or there were incomplete answers. The testing phase was done individually by paper and pencil questionnaires. The environment in which the participants answered the questionnaires was a suitable one (without noise or disturbance factors). Therefore, the sample consists of 274 participants (72.1% women) with a mean age of 35. Participants in the study had an average seniority of the position of 35.7 months and 85.4% had a permanent employment contract and 14.6% had temporary contracts. Anonymity and confidentiality were guaranteed to participants under the research code of conduct requirements specified in the Romanian legislation.

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