

# IMPACT OF LEARNING ADAPTABILITY AND TIME MANAGEMENT DISPOSITION ON STUDY ENGAGEMENT AMONG CHINESE BACCALAUREATE NURSING STUDENTS



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The aim of this study was to explore the relationships among study engagement, learning adaptability, and time management disposition in a sample of Chinese baccalaureate nursing students. A convenient sample of 467 baccalaureate nursing students was surveyed in two universities in Tianjin, China. Students completed a questionnaire that included their demographic information, Chinese Utrecht Work Engagement Scale–Student Questionnaire, Learning Adaptability Scale, and Adolescence Time Management Disposition Scale. One-way analysis of variance tests were used to assess the relationship between certain characteristics of baccalaureate nursing students. Pearson correlation was performed to test the correlation among study engagement, learning adaptability, and time management disposition. Hierarchical linear regression analyses were performed to explore the mediating role of time management disposition. The results revealed that study engagement ( $F = 7.20, P < .01$ ) and learning adaptability ( $F = 4.41, P < .01$ ) differed across grade groups. Learning adaptability ( $r = 0.382, P < .01$ ) and time management disposition ( $r = 0.741, P < .01$ ) were positively related with study engagement. Time management disposition had a partially mediating effect on the relationship between study engagement and learning adaptability. The findings implicate that educators should not only promote interventions to increase engagement of baccalaureate nursing students but also focus on development, investment in adaptability, and time management. (Index words: Baccalaureate nursing students; Study engagement; Learning adaptability; Time management disposition; Nursing education) *J Prof Nurs* 30:502–510, 2014. © 2014 Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

ENGAGEMENT IS CONSIDERED as a positive, fulfilling state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). The concept was initially considered as a work-related measure. However, more recently, the notion of study engagement was

designed and developed in recent years (Salanova, Schaufeli, Martínez, & Bresó, 2010; Schaufeli, Martínez, Pinto, Salanova, & Bakker, 2002; Schaufeli, Salanova, González-Romá, & Bakker, 2002). It has been, increasingly, recognized as a decisive factor of quality in higher education (Australian Council for Educational Research, 2008).

Study engagement is the core of learning. It enables nursing students to accomplish their study effectively. Lack of study engagement in courses is, considered by some, to be a primary reason why students switch out of learning. Students' disengagement in higher education has been reported in several researches, which happened in both Chinese and international universities (Astin, 1999; Greenwood, Horton, & Utley, 2002; Horstmannshof & Zimitat, 2007; Meng, Liu, & Du, 2012; Zang, 2010). In China, study engagement is at a moderate level from a

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research including 161 nursing students in a medical university (Zang, 2010). Other researches found that students made less effort to engage themselves into academically oriented activities (Ma, Shek, Cheung, & Lam, 2000; Zang, 2011), and students' confidence toward their academic performance could be lowered by not acquiring enough engagement in studies, and lacking confidence in their ability to succeed may lead to lack of willingness to engage in learning (Rocca, 2010). Enhancing students' study engagement is the key element of the educational process, which brings forward one of the greatest challenges for preparing a future generation of learning.

## Related Literature

### Study Engagement

Study engagement generally refers to processes oriented toward schooling that students engage in. This includes behavior and instrumental processes (Wentzel, Weinberger, Ford, & Feldman, 1990). Kuh (2009) emphasized engagement—reflection, the importance and relationship of time on task, quality of effort, and student involvement to learning.

As a key indicator in positive psychology, study engagement can effectively improve students' study developments and cultivate study interests. It also has a positive relationship with students' achievements (Furrer & Skinner, 2003) and is very effective on their careers (David, Deirdre, & Alex, 2012). Lack of study engagement could be a barrier for learning (Robinson, 2013).

Many independent variables have been proven to have positive effects on study engagement. About 12% of the differences in engagement between students were related to learning environment (Opdenakker & Minnaert, 2011). In the sampled university, many students are juggling with competing academic demands and striving to balance study with part-time jobs, which often means they may have less lecture attendance (Curtis & Williams, 2002). A prospective survey including 126 nursing students who were participating in a pathophysiology subject was conducted. The result showed that the amount of part-time job had a significantly negative influence on study engagement (Salamonson, Andrew, & Everett, 2009). In Spanish and Belgian students, study engagement could be enhanced by improving efficacy beliefs (Salanova, Breso, & Schaufeli, 2005). On the other hand, students' self-efficacy is related to their study engagement and task performance (Ouweneel, Schaufeli, & Le Blanc, 2013). Moreover, study engagement fully mediates the relationship between performance obstacles and facilitators, whereas study engagement has a negative correlation to burnout (Salanova et al., 2010).

### Learning Adaptability

Learning adaptability is defined as a process by which an individual, on the basis of learning, adjusts himself or herself to achieve the balance (Feng & Li, 2002). Learning adaptability is at a moderate level in China (Meng et al., 2012). Separation from family and friends, adapting to new tasks, new academic skills, and demands are considered

inherent difficulties to the process of transition. To experience a positive adaptation, nursing students need to adjust themselves to adapt to new environments when they are in different stages of their academic life. To achieve the success in study, it is necessary for the students to take the learning methods into their hands to adapt the characteristics of the current higher education, adopting active strategies in learning process (Rosário, Núñez, & Pienda, 2006; Seco, Alves, Filipe, Pereira, & Duarte, 2012).

Learning adaptability directly affects the students' study achievements (Cole, Maxwell, & Martin, 1997; Pajarks, 1996), and excellent learning adaptability could promote study progress (Tian, 2004). What's more, a longitudinal study on university students in Grade 1 explored the impact of study self-efficacy and optimism on students' learning adaptability. The results demonstrated that study self-efficacy and optimism were strongly related to learning adaptability (Chemers, Hu, & Garcia, 2001).

The demographic factors influencing learning adaptability in previous researches were grade, gender, and family factors. Four hundred forty-two students from two medical schools in Korea were surveyed, and the results demonstrated that males scored higher on learning adaptability than females (Yune, Park, Chung, & Lee, 2011). Furthermore, family factors are a considerable impact on learning adaptability (Strage, 1998).

### Time Management Disposition

Time management disposition is a type of personality tendency, with individuals using the time in their psychological characteristics and behavior, presenting a multiple components of mind structure (Huang & Zhang, 2001). Chinese researchers found that the level of time management disposition in Chinese baccalaureate nursing students is medium or low (Nian & Liu, 2012). The success of study for students depends on the ability of managing time (Ghamari, Barmas, & Biglari, 2013). During the golden period of cultivation in university, time management is not only the basic safeguard of learning knowledge but also the necessary premise of their personal growth and development (Zhi & Yang, 2002). The results of a research, conducted in Nigerian undergraduates, showed that students were considered as a risk population with the high level of time wasting (Ogonor & Nwadiani, 2006).

Many studies demonstrated that time management disposition directly impacts the students' study state. A sample was composed of 38 students in third grade and studied in two 19-person groups. The results identified that students' academic performance could be increased by time management trainings. On the other hand, a random sample including 200 students was surveyed in the university. The results showed that the interconnection between metacognitions strategies, time management, and academic performance was significantly positive (Bakhtlarpour, 2012). It noted that the study state could be improved by increasing the time management disposition.

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