



Which resources moderate the effects of demanding work schedules on nurses working in residential elder care? A longitudinal study



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ABSTRACT

Background: Shiftwork is a major job demand for nurses and has been related to various negative consequences. Research suggests that personal and job resources moderate the impact of work schedules on stress, health and well-being.

Objectives: This longitudinal study examined whether the interactions of personal and job resources with work schedule demands predicted work engagement and emotional exhaustion in nursing.

Design: This longitudinal study included two waves of data collection with a one year follow-up using self-report questionnaires among 247 nurses working shifts or irregular working hours in residential care for the elderly in the Netherlands.

Methods: Moderated structural equation modelling was conducted to examine the interactions between personal and job resources and work schedule demands. Two work schedule demands were assessed: type of work schedule (demanding vs. less demanding) and average weekly working hours. Two personal resources, active coping and healthy lifestyle, and two job resources, work schedule control and the work schedule fit with nurses' private life, were assessed.

Results: Results showed that the work schedule fit with nurses' private life buffered the relationship between work schedule demands and emotional exhaustion one year later. Furthermore, the work schedule fit with nurses' private life increased work engagement one year later when work schedule demands were high. Work schedule control

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strengthened the positive relationship between work schedule demands and emotional exhaustion one year later. The personal resources, active coping and healthy lifestyle were no moderators in this model.

Conclusion: Nurses suffer less from decreasing work engagement and emotional exhaustion due to work schedule demands when their work schedules fit with their private lives. Work schedule control did not buffer, but strengthened the positive relationship between weekly working hours and emotional exhaustion one year later. Job resources appeared to be more important for nurses' well-being than personal resources. These findings highlight the importance of the fit of a work schedule with nurse's private life, if the work schedule is demanding.

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What is already known about the topic?

- Shiftwork is a major job demand experienced by many nurses and has been related to various negative consequences such as health problems, burnout, decreased motivation, and problems with recruitment and retention.
- Personal and job resources can be expected to buffer the negative effects of job related demands on health.
- Personal and job resources seem to influence work engagement in particular if demands are high and if the type of resource matches the type of demand.

What this paper adds

- The work schedule fit with nurses' private life appeared to be an important job resource as it buffered the relationship between work schedule demands and emotional exhaustion one year later and it improved work engagement one year later when work schedule demands were high.
- Work schedule control appeared not to be a job resource, as it increased the effects of hours worked on emotional exhaustion on year later.
- The personal resources healthy lifestyle and active coping appeared not to be resources as they were not related to work engagement and emotional exhaustion one year later or interacted with work schedule demands.

1. Introduction

Shiftwork is a major job demand experienced by many nurses (Demerouti et al., 2000; McVicar, 2003). It has been related to negative consequences, such as burnout, health problems, decreased motivation, high turnover, decreased work ability, cardiovascular disease, problems with recruitment and retention (Brown et al., 2009; Burch et al., 2009; Jamal, 2004; McVicar, 2003; Nabe-Nielsen et al., 2010; Puttonen et al., 2010; Samaha et al., 2007; Wisetborisut et al., 2014).

Research suggests that personal resources, such as coping styles, good sleep quality and physical activity, moderate the impact of work schedules on stress, subjective health, cardiovascular disease and burnout (Caruso et al., 2006; Puttonen et al., 2010; Taylor et al., 1997). A cross-sectional study indicated that the fit of the

work schedule with nurses' private life moderates the impact of work schedule demands on subjective health (Peters et al., 2011). Because it may be difficult to change work schedule systems, especially in the short term, another way to limit negative effects on health and well-being is to pinpoint the resources that help workers tolerate demanding schedules (McVicar, 2003; Pallesen et al., 2010; Samaha et al., 2007). However, research on how personal and job resources moderate the negative effects of work schedule demands are scarce (Caruso et al., 2006).

1.1. Work schedule demands in nursing

This study concentrates on the specific demands of work schedules and its effect on emotional exhaustion and work engagement. Job demands refer to those physical, psychological, social or organizational aspects of work that require sustained physical or psychological (cognitive and emotional) effort or skills. They may turn into stressors when poorly designed jobs or chronic job demands (e.g. work overload, emotional demands) exhaust employees' mental and physical resources, leading to the depletion of energy and, in turn, health problems such as emotional exhaustion. Although there is debate about which work schedules cause more negative consequences, rotating three-shift systems, irregular schedules and nightshifts have been found to have more negative consequences than other work schedules (Garrosa et al., 2011; Jamal, 2004; Muecke, 2005; Winwood et al., 2006). Another important work schedule demand is the duration of working hours (Lipscomb et al., 2002). Long working hours are positively related to negative mental and physical health indicators (Dall'Orta et al., 2015; De Raeve et al., 2007; Geiger-Brown et al., 2004; Jansen et al., 2003; Lipscomb et al., 2002; Stimpfel et al., 2012).

1.2. Personal and job resources

Given that work schedules are an on-going source of stress, personal and job resources can be expected to buffer the negative effects of work schedule demands on health (Caruso et al., 2004; Schaufeli and Taris, 2014; Tenkanen et al., 1998; Totterdell, 2005). According to the Conservation Of Resources (COR) theory, resources are entities that have intrinsic or instrumental value, including objects, conditions, personal resources, and energy resources

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