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For the degree of: Doctor of Philosophy
Department: Educational Leadership, Research and Technology

Title: Work Stress: A Review, Analysis, and Extension of the Job Demands-Control (-Support) Model

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Occupational stress and health literature is devoted to understanding and predicting the phenomenon of stress in the workplace, given its costly implications to individual and organizational health and well-being. The job demands-control (-support) (JDC(S)) model (Karasek, 1979; Karasek & Theorell, 1990) has been highly influential in occupational stress and health literature for over 37 years, and has been the theoretical foundation of more empirical studies than any other work stress model. To date, over three-hundred published studies have examined relationships between various forms of demands, control over work, and support on numerous physical and psychological strains. However, several issues concerning the model have yet to be addressed. This three article dissertation provides an updated literature review of this prominent model, and addresses two of these issues in separate studies.

The last literature review of the JDC(S) model was published by Kain and Jex in 2010. They summarized research which indicated that the main effects of demands, control, and support on strain were generally supported, but that the moderating effects of control and/or support on the relationship between demands and strain were less frequently found. The authors also highlighted a number of gaps in research on the model, including a meta-analytic review of the model, and the importance of examining moderating effects of control and/or support on alternative conceptualizations of
demands. This literature review summarizes the history of the JDC(S) model, discusses how several calls for research have been addressed since the last review. Further suggestions for future research are also made.

The first study is a meta-analysis of the JDC(S) model. This analysis builds upon the recently published meta-analysis of demand-control-support interrelationships by Luchman and González-Morales (2013), in two ways. First, moderators of interrelationships between demand, control, and support are examined; specifically, gender, nationality, and occupation. Second, moderating effects of gender, nationality, and occupation on relationships between demands, control, and support, respectively, and job satisfaction and emotional exhaustion are examined. Job satisfaction and emotional exhaustion are the most examined forms of well-being and strain in studies of the model.

The second study examines whether moderating effects of control and support resources, which underpin much theory on the JDC(S) model, are applicable to a relatively new concept of demands: that of illegitimate tasks, in a sample of US-based students. Illegitimate tasks refer to tasks that constitute “identity stressors” (Thoits, 1991) by violating an individual’s professional identity. Illegitimate tasks have been shown to have unique variance in relating to strain over-and-above other frequently measured forms of demands (e.g., Semmer et al., 2010). Thus, from a JDC(S) and broader demands-resources perspective, it is important to understand the role of control and/or support resources in moderating negative effects of illegitimate tasks on various types of strain. Knowledge of this may build impetus for interventions, as well as for future theory building on the effects of illegitimate tasks from a work stress perspective. Studying illegitimate tasks will also answer Kain and Jex’s (2010) call to examine moderating effects of control and support on alternative forms of demands.