

# "I have a lot of things to do!"

## Educational Time Management and College Student Health

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### Abstract

This study examined the relationship between educational time management and four indicators of health (i.e., perceived stress, physical health, depressed mood, misconduct) among college students. Educational time management was significantly correlated to all health outcomes and contributed to predicting better health over and above existing control measures (i.e., educational primary and secondary control, and disengagement).

### Introduction

- Using the Lifespan Theory of Control (Heckhausen & Schulz, 1995) as a theoretical framework, a psychological construct of educational time management that specifically included concepts of balancing time (i.e., optimizing control) was developed and correlated to college students' health ratings.
- Previous research has examined the relationship between academic primary and secondary control striving with subjective health ratings among first year college students (Hall, Chipperfield, Perry, Ruthig, & Goetz, 2006). Results revealed that the more students used primary and secondary control in regulating their educational goals, ratings of perceived stress and illness-prone behaviors were lower.
- This study tests additional control strategies (i.e., educational disengagement and time management) and includes a wider set of health-related outcomes.

### Study Hypotheses

**Hypothesis 1:** Students higher in educational time management were expected to report better health and higher intentions of primary and secondary school.

**Hypothesis 2:** The dimension of balancing time was expected to contribute to students' subjective health outcomes, over and above traditional measures of control striving.

### Sample

194 University of California college students completed an online survey: 81 Asians (42 %); 32 Hispanic/Latino (16.6 %); 53 European (27.5 %); 26 Other (13.5 %)

- Mean *age* = 21.13 years (*SD* = 1.70)
- Mean *educational aspirations* was between Master's degree (e.g., M.A., M.S.W., M.F.T., M.B.A.) and law degree (J.D.) (*M* = 2.7, 5 pt. scale)
- Mean *mother's educational attainment* was between high school graduate and vocational/technical school/some college/junior college (*M* = 4.99, *SD* = 1.39)

### Measures

**Educational Time Management**  $\alpha = .55; .66$

(4 pt. scale: 1 = *never*, 4 = *always*)

- I often find myself engaging in too many extracurricular activities (i.e., student clubs, sports) (*r*)
- I have a hard time saying "no" when people (i.e., friends, family members) need my help (*r*)
- I typically can't prioritize activities efficiently (*r*)
- I don't set aside enough time to study (*r*)
- If I have to study for an exam, I do not attend any social gatherings.
- I minimize my social activities (e.g., parties, dinners) when I have a school deadline.
- I will call in sick at my workplace when I have a pressing school deadline. (ONLY answer if this applies to you)
- I will tell my parent(s) that I can't come home if I have assignments that I need to complete.
- I often don't go to club meetings (e.g., sororities, fraternities, etc) when I have a lot of homework to do.
- I typically hand in my assignments late (*r*)
- I feel like I am good at balancing my academics with my other goals.
- I tend to procrastinate with my studies (*r*)

#### Health Measures:

Perceived Stress (Cohen, Kamarck, Mermelstein, 1983)

Physical Health (Cohen Hoberman Inventory of Physical Symptoms 1983)

Depressed Mood (CESD, Radloff, 1977)

Misconduct (Chen, Greenberger, Lester, Dong, and Guo, 1998)

#### Educational Achievement:

College GPA (self-reported)

#### Control Measures:

Primary Control (Heckhausen & Tomasik, 2001; 5 items, 4 pt. scale)

*If it gets more difficult to get the education that I want, I will try harder*

Secondary Control (5 items, 4 pt. scale)

*When making my educational plans, I think about the long-term consequences for my career*

Disengagement (6 items, 4 pt. scale)

*If my educational plans do not work out, I will remind myself that others would be partly to blame*

### Results and Conclusions

#### Intercorrelations between Key Variables (for Hypothesis 1)

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
<b>Control Strategies</b>	1. Edu. Time Management	1	.50***	.52***	-.03	-.29***	-.15*	-.26***	-.28***	.34***
	2. Primary Control		1	.73***	-.14*	-.35***	-.12	-.32***	-.23***	.39***
	3. Secondary Control			1	-.14*	-.19**	.07	-.15*	-.20**	.38***
	4. Disengage.				1	.16*	.05	.17*	-.02	.00
<b>Health Outcomes</b>	5. Perceived Stress					1	.46***	.72***	.01	-.17*
	6. Physical Health						1	.53***	.10	.08
	7. CESD							1	.13	-.10
	8. Misconduct								1	-.13
<b>Academic Adjustment</b>	9. GPA									1

Note. \* $p \leq .05$ , \*\*  $p \leq .01$ , \*\*\*  $p \leq .001$

There was a significant relationship between educational time management and health, which were consistent with hypotheses. However, the relationships were modest. Furthermore, educational time management was correlated with primary and secondary control, and not with disengagement.

#### Multivariate Analyses to test Hypothesis 2

Predictor = Educational Time Management (Step 3):

Health Outcomes	<i>b</i>	( <i>SE</i> )	$\beta$	$\Delta R^2$	<i>Adj. R^2</i>
Perceived Stress	-.32*	.13	-.20	.03*	.17***
Physical Health Problems	-.46*	.21	-.18	.02*	.10***
CESD	-.32*	.14	-.18	.02*	.14***
Misconduct	-.19**	.07	-.23	.03**	.06**

Note. \* $p \leq .05$ , \*\*  $p \leq .01$ , \*\*\*  $p \leq .001$

Educational time management contributed significantly to these health variables. In addition, the strongest contribution to time management was misconduct. Future studies of control must incorporate the optimizing control of competing measures and not simply the cognitive or volitional investment in their educational goals.

#### Limitations

- There is room for measurement improvement for educational time management.
- This study was correlational. Thus, the causal direction of influence can not be determined.
- This study relied on self-reported questionnaire.