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WORK, STUDY, AND HOME DEMANDS:
AN INVESTIGATION OF THEIR INTERRELATIONSHIP,
COPING, AND SATISFACTION

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Abstract

Escalating tertiary fees, user pay systems, and high living costs are some of the reasons students are combining paid work with study. In tertiary institutions there are a large proportion of students studying while working. Working students of all ages have home commitments, be it household management, family, pet, or flatmate responsibilities. The aim of this research was to look at how working students manage interrole conflicts between work, study, and home. This included how interrole conflicts, satisfaction, and coping related to one another and whether task-focussed coping and emotion-focussed coping mediated and moderated the interrole conflict and satisfaction relationships. Three hundred and twenty seven students who had been undertaking paid work during the semester completed an online survey. Results showed that although there were some mediational and moderational relationships, overall coping made little difference to the relationships between interrole conflict and satisfaction. It was found that the domain that gave rise to interrole conflict was also the domain where most dissatisfaction was experienced, suggesting the source of the conflict is more resented than the role affected by the conflict. The highest conflict was time-based study interfering with home, and the second highest conflict was time-based work interfering with study. Tertiary institutions need to extend hours for their services, and evening and weekend availability of lecturing staff. Ongoing promotion through seminars of ways to successfully manage home commitments with study commitments would be useful for working students as well. It is also important that workplaces promote initiatives such as flexible hours to help students combine work and study successfully. Postgraduates experienced interrole conflict more than undergraduates in 5 of the 6 interrole conflicts so it is important that they are specially targeted for attention. Future research might like to compare larger samples of postgraduates and undergraduates and see if each group experiences similar or different mediational or moderational effects such as coping. Future research should also continue to differentiate between time and strain-based interrole conflict as working students experience them differently.
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