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## The Effects of Part-Time Work on Sleep Quality in College Students

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**VCU**

# The Effects of Part-Time Work on Sleep Quality in College Students

Beachy, K., Moore, C., Smith, M., Calderwood, C., Gabriel, A.S., & Bennett, A.A.

## Abstract

Part time work can negatively affect sleeping patterns, resulting in poorer academic performance and a diminished sense of overall well-being. 521 undergraduate students working at least 20 hours per week were surveyed and self-reported post-work experiences and sleep quality. Results of a multiple regression analysis indicated that a block of four post-work experiences (psychological detachment, relaxation, mastery, and control over leisure time) were predictive of self-reported sleep quality. Completion of more mastery experiences and greater control over choosing post-work activities were both statistically significant predictors of higher sleep quality (Sonnetag, Binnewies, & Mojza, 2008).

## Introduction

Adequate sleep quality is essential to students' overall health, well-being, and academic performance. Despite this, sleep quality is often jeopardized by activities that students engage in outside of the school settings, such as employment. Psychological detachment, relaxation, mastery, and control over leisure time were analyzed as predictors of sleep quality. These recovery experiences have been shown to be beneficial for recovery from work-related stress.

## Hypotheses

**Hypothesis 1:** *Quality of sleep will be positively correlated with psychological detachment from work.*

**Hypothesis 2:** *Quality of sleep will be positively correlated with relaxation.*

**Hypothesis 3:** *Quality of sleep will be positively correlated with mastery experiences.*

**Hypothesis 4:** *Quality of sleep will be positively correlated with control during leisure time.*

**Hypothesis 5:** *Recovery experiences are predictive of quality of sleep.*

## Recovery Experiences Defined

- **Psychological detachment** - The degree that one feels physically and mentally detached from work (Sonnetag & Fritz, 2007).
- **Relaxation** - A state of low activation and increased positive affect (Stone, Kennedy-Moore, & Neale, 1995).
- **Mastery experiences** - Activities that improve expertise in an off-job domain, such as a sport or learning a hobby (Sonnetag & Fritz, 2007).
- **Control during leisure time** - One's ability to choose what they do during leisure time (Sonnetag & Fritz, 2007).

## Methods

Participants were 521 undergraduate students, all of whom were required to be working at least 20 hours per week and be at least 18 years of age. They accessed an online survey using the VCU SONA system, and received 0.5 SONA credits if they completed the survey. Recovery experiences were measured using the Recovery Experiences Questionnaire (Sonnetag & Fritz, 2007), while sleep quality was measured with a single item adapted from the Pittsburg Sleep Quality Index (Buysse, Reynolds, Monk, Berman, & Kupfer, 1989).

## Results

| Variable                 | 1     | 2     | 3     | 4     | 5     |
|--------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Sleep Quality            | -     |       |       |       |       |
| Psychological Detachment | .08   | (.88) |       |       |       |
| Relaxation               | .09*  | .25** | (.95) |       |       |
| Mastery                  | .15** | .03   | -.01  | (.90) |       |
| Control                  | .19** | .23** | .42** | .19** | (.90) |

\*p < .05. \*\*p < .01.

## Results

| Predictor Variable       | B    | S.E. | β   | t      |
|--------------------------|------|------|-----|--------|
| Intercept                | 1.62 | .20  |     |        |
| Psychological Detachment | .03  | .03  | .04 | .81    |
| Relaxation               | .01  | .03  | .02 | .34    |
| Mastery                  | .09  | .03  | .12 | 2.64** |
| Control                  | .14  | .04  | .15 | 3.12** |

N = 521. Recovery experiences entered as a set were statistically significant predictors of sleep quality,  $F(4, 514) = 6.729$ ,  $R^2 = .05$ . \*\* p < .01.

## Conclusion

The results provide evidence that several post-work recovery experiences are related to quality of sleep. As displayed in Table 1, higher levels of relaxation, mastery, and control experiences were associated with better sleep quality. These findings are consistent with Hypotheses 2, 3 and 4. The four recovery experiences as a set were predictive of sleep quality (see Table 2), with mastery and control experiences supported as predictors of this outcome in the full model. These results are consistent with Hypothesis 5.

These results suggest that working students who engage in more post-work recovery experiences may have better sleep quality. Consequently, students who are employed may benefit from engaging in relaxing activities away from work, but also by challenging themselves with mastery experiences by setting specific, difficult goals outside of work to encourage healthy sleeping habits.

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