SPENDING TOO LITTLE TIME OR PERCEIVING TOO LITTLE TIME?
: LINKING TIME USE, PERCEIVED TIME ADEQUACY, AND WELL-BEING OF
EMPLOYED PARENTS

A Dissertation In
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by
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ABSTRACT

Employed parents experience increasing challenges in combining work and family roles. One of the primary issues is a lack of time; yet, it is unclear whether parents actually spend too little time in a role or perceive having a less than adequate amount of time for the role (i.e., perceived time adequacy). This dissertation conducts two studies that investigate potential predictors and outcomes of time use and perceived time adequacy. Study 1 used computer-assisted personal interviews of employed mothers (N=440) to understand work and family factors that contribute to relative patterns of time use and perceived time adequacy. Study 2 used daily telephone diaries of employed parents (N=102) to examine the effects of time use and perceived time adequacy on daily well-being.

Study 1 revealed three latent profiles based on time use and perceived time adequacy for work and parenting roles: “Work Oriented”, “Role Balanced”, and “Parenting Oriented”. The “Work Oriented” profile was characterized as spending more time at work but perceiving lower time adequacy for work, spending less time with children and perceiving lower time adequacy for children, whereas “Parenting Oriented” profile showed the opposite pattern. Mothers in the “Work Oriented” profile had greater demands and fewer resources across work and family domains than those in the “Parenting Oriented” profile. Longitudinally, increases in work-to-family conflict predicted greater odds of moving toward Work Oriented profile, whereas decreases in work-to-family conflict predicted greater odds of moving toward Parenting Oriented profile.

Study 2 demonstrated that, on days when parents perceived lower time adequacy for their child, partner, and oneself they reported less positive affect, more negative affect, and greater physical symptoms independent of the effects of time spent in the role. Moreover, the combination of spending less time and perceiving lower time adequacy in each role had particularly negative effects on daily well-being. This study added a possibility of manipulating the experience of time through a workplace intervention that was designed to increase temporal resources. The workplace intervention improved well-being for parents who spent more time with their family.

Overall, this dissertation suggests that stressful demands and limited resources in work and family contexts likely deplete employed parents’ perceived time adequacy for family, which takes a toll on their daily well-being. Future work should continue to examine how to increase employed parents’ time with family that can lead to their better well-being and further positive family relationships.