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PUPPET OR PUPPETEER? THE ROLE OF RESOURCE CONTROL IN THE OCCUPATIONAL STRESS PROCESS

Paul E. Spector

ABSTRACT

This chapter discusses how the control and strategic management of resources plays a role in the occupational stress process. Building upon prior resource theories of stress, the idea is developed that control of external and internal resources, and not resource acquisition or maintenance, is a vital element that contributes to a strain response to workplace demands. This can occur at the level of objective resources (resources needed to cope with demands), and it can occur at the level of perceived resources (the individual's perception of resource control). The chapter also discusses the importance of resource management strategies that individuals engage in, as well as both internal and external resource management resources. Several common stressors are discussed in resource control terms, and the role of power and politics in strategic resource management is discussed.

The concept of resources has played a prominent role in many theories of stress, both inside and outside the workplace (e.g., Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, & Schaufeli, 2001; Grandey & Cropanzano, 1999; Hobfoll, 1989, 2001; Maslach, 1998). Such theories present the stress process as an interplay between environmental demands (stressors) and resources that an individual possesses that can deal with those demands. The most influential of those general theories is Hobfoll's (1989) conservation of resources (COR) theory that states people are motivated to acquire and conserve their resources. It is the loss or threat of loss of resources that is stressful. However, that resource loss is necessarily stressful is merely assumed, with little attention given to why and under what conditions it is stressful. Thus COR theory deals primarily with the connection between resource existence and stress, and not the underlying mechanism that would make the loss of resources stressful.

This chapter goes further than existing treatments of resources to discuss how the control and strategic use of resources plays a role in stress. It assumes that humans have a basic need to control their environment, and one aspect of that environment that is particularly salient is the set of resources that are necessary to accomplish goals and deal with demands. The absence and/or loss of control over such resources is stressful because it threatens an individual's likelihood of survival, for example, if the biological demand of acquiring food cannot be met. Thus it is not resource loss or threat of loss that is itself stressful, but rather the loss or threat of loss of control that is stressful because the loss of that control produces uncertainty that one can achieve important goals and cope with demands. One aspect of control has to do with resource allocation (Grawitch, Barber, & Justice, 2010). From this perspective the individual is a strategic decision maker who makes choices as to where his or her resources will be spent. Individuals have a variety of goals and objectives that require the expenditure of resources to achieve, and demands that require resource with which to cope. Individuals go through what is much like a budgeting process to allocate their resources strategically among various activities throughout the day. The expenditure of resources to achieve personal goals is not in and of itself stressful to an individual, and in fact progress toward achieving goals can have positive psychological effects, for example, feelings of accomplishment and positive emotions such as pride. Rather it is the loss of control over resources that leads to strain, either because resources are consumed and additional resources are unavailable to meet current demands, or because the individual has inadequate control over resources to meet anticipated future demands.

THE NATURE OF RESOURCES

Resources have been defined in a variety of ways by different researchers. Some definitions emphasize that resources are things that are valued (Hobfoll, 2001),

whereas others are more pragmatic, defining resources as things that enable one to accomplish goals (Bakker & Demerouti, 2014; Demerouti et al., 2001; Halbesleben, Neveu, Paustian-Underdahl, & Westman, 2014), or reduce job demands (Bakker & Demerouti, 2014; Demerouti et al., 2001). A definitional distinction can be found between resources as things perceived by the individual to help attain goals and cope with demands (Halbesleben et al., 2014) and resources as environmental or objective things that actually help with goals and demands (Demerouti et al., 2001).

In this chapter, I will adopt the utilitarian definition of resources as things that assist goal attainment and coping with demands. Consistent with Action Theory (Frese & Zapf, 1994), it is assumed that human activity is purposeful, with individuals striving to accomplish individual goals or objectives. Such goals can represent major life accomplishments or quite mundane everyday activities such as sharpening a pencil. Many goals are hierarchical, with long-term objectives being broken down into accomplishment of individual goals that are further divided into immediate activities. Thus the goal of earning a college degree can be divided into intermediate goals of successfully completing individual courses, each of which involves accomplishment of assignments and examinations. These can be further divided into daily activities, such as reading and outlining certain book pages. Resources are applied to the accomplishment of goals at all of these levels.

Resources have been distinguished as things that are external versus internal to the person. External resources can be distinguished as organizational, physical, psychological, and social aspects of a work environment (Demerouti et al., 2001). Internal resources are characteristics of the person, such as knowledge, skill, ability, and personality. It is useful to go beyond these classifications and consider properties of resources that are important. For example, resources can be classified as those that are volatile or expendable such as energy and time versus those that are more durable that can be used more than once such as social support from a friend (ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012). Still other resources are relatively fixed within the individual (e.g., cognitive ability). Some expendable resources are cyclically renewable, for example, energy and time can be allocated by the individual to specific activities within a given work day, and then are available to allocate again at the beginning of the next work day. From the perspective of an individual whose life is organized around cycles of waking/sleeping, energy and time are both cyclical in that they are consumed throughout the waking cycle and are replenished during the sleeping cycle. Time has a fixed rate of consumption uncontrollable by the individual who is limited to choosing how much time will be spent in each activity. Energy also is consumed continually, although it can be regulated by an individual to some extent by choosing activities that might drain it more or less quickly (e.g., running a marathon vs. watching a movie). Effort is the mechanism by which one regulates energy, as energy is expended at a rate dependent on how hard and quickly one engages in an activity. Also depending on the nature of the

activity, one can replenish energy to some extent by taking a break that does not necessarily involve sleep.

Although durable resources are relatively fixed, there can be limits that make them ultimately expendable if overused. For example, social support by a coworker or supervisor can be called upon when needed, but the number of times one can call upon another for assistance is limited, as is the amount of time one asks the other person to provide. One might be able to ask a coworker for 20 minutes of assistance occasionally, but to receive 6 hours of assistance out of an 8 hour shift day-after-day is hardly possible when a coworker has his or her own work to accomplish.

It takes resource management resources to effectively utilize resources to achieve goals and cope with demands (Freund & Riediger, 2001). Fixed internal resources are things within the individual that facilitate coping. Some of these resources are necessary for the effective management of other resources that are directed toward coping. From a job performance perspective, some internal resources are the knowledge, skills, abilities, and other personal characteristics (KSAOs) that are relevant to task activities. KSAOs are fixed in a relative sense in that one does not consume them as they are used. Although these characteristics can be developed, at least within limits, one does not decide to allocate a certain amount of, say knowledge, to one task and withhold it from another. Where choices are made it is with level of effort and time spent using the internal resources.

Resource management resources are also KSAOs, but they are KSAOs that enable people to effectively utilize their resources, such as time and energy. Time management skill, for example, is an internal resource that enables one to efficiently utilize temporal resources. Knowledge and skill in performing core tasks can also directly affect temporal resources as skilled individuals might be able to minimize the time it takes to meet demands (e.g., complete a job task), and might meet them with minimal effort and energy consumption.

Resources can also be placed into three general categories depending on source: Personal, Interpersonal, and Organizational. Personal resources consist of those things an individual possesses. Some of those things are internal qualities, such as energy and KSAOs. Time is another resource that an individual possesses in terms of working on job tasks. In many jobs working hours are fixed, so that everyone has the same time resources (although not the same amount of energy and efficiency), whereas in others time spent on the job is controlled by the individual. Finally, individuals can have their own equipment, supplies, and tools that can be used for working tasks. This can be especially true of tradespeople (e.g., electricians or plumbers) who might supply their own tools.

Interpersonal resources are the assistance that an individual can draw upon from other people. This can be in the form of direct assistance with demands or emotional support that helps the individual better use personal resources. Direct assistance can come formally from the human resources of the organization. This can consist of team members who share task goals, coworkers who

are responsible for inter-dependent tasks, or subordinates whose efforts are directed by the target person. There can also be informal voluntary support from others, such as interpersonal organizational citizenship behavior, or personal favors by friends.

Organizational resources consists of things in the work environment that can be helpful for accomplishing goals other than human resources. This can include equipment, supplies, and tools, as well as organizational structures designed to facilitate performance.

An aspect of resources that has received little attention is time (Halbesleben, 2010). Resources that involve human effort, both personal and interpersonal, involve an aspect of time. As noted earlier, an individual has a finite number of working hours to devote to accomplishing work goals. From an organizational perspective, human resources can be considered from a time perspective as the sum of working hours available from employees. Additional human resources can be acquired from contract workers, or by outsourcing. The availability of human resources is to a great extent controlled by the organization in terms of budget and staffing levels.

Although there can be a large number of internal and external things that can serve as resources, the literature has focused on relatively few. Perhaps the most frequent operationalizations of external resources are control (e.g., Akhtar & Lee, 2010; Alarcon, 2011; Grebner, Elfering, & Semmer, 2010; Hu, Schaufeli, & Taris, 2016; Searle & Lee, 2015) and social support from coworkers, supervisors and others (e.g., Akhtar & Lee, 2010; Brough et al., 2013; Grebner et al., 2010; Kane-Frieder, Hochwarter, Hampton, & Ferris, 2014; Searle & Lee, 2015). Internal resources have been operationalized as emotional stability (Rubino, Perry, Milam, Spitzmueller, & Zapf, 2012), proactive coping (Searle & Lee, 2015), and self-efficacy (Feuerhahn, Bellingrath, & Kudielka, 2013), among other things.

RESOURCE ALLOCATION PROCESS

Resource acquisition itself is not likely to lead to achievement of goals or coping with demands (Freund & Riediger, 2001). In order for resources to facilitate achievement and coping, they must be allocated in an effective manner. Resource allocation is a cognitive process whereby an individual makes choices about where to expend resources including effort and time. Such choices are made continually over time as feedback and information about the changing environment can provide continual input as the individual maintains efforts or shifts efforts. Action Theory (Frese & Zapf, 1994), describes the process whereby individuals choose goals, devise plans, and then maintain or revise their plans and even goals based on feedback. From a resource allocation perspective, plans represent choices by which individuals decide on exactly

what activities to engage in and how much effort, time, and other resources to invest. Of course, such plans are not necessarily effective or efficient, and an individual might choose to engage in activities that are suboptimal. This might result in abandonment of the goal, choice of a different approach to the goal, or an increase in the resources allocated.

Organizations provide a great deal of structure over goals and specific strategies taken to achieve goals. Many organizational devices from job analyses to training programs can be considered external resources that facilitate employee resource allocation. Organizations can go even further in prescribing levels of effort and time allocation that are expected and even demanded. Such expectations can be reinforced or countermanded by norms that arise among workgroups for productivity (Coch & French, 1948). Nevertheless, even with the most structured jobs, individuals still have considerable control over resource allocation. The terms "goldbrick" and "rate buster" recognize individual control over level of performance in production work, such as in factories, where employees exert either less or more effort than expected, respectively.

People's working, as well as nonworking lives, can vary in terms of structure. Some jobs have fixed schedules and fixed working activities that allow for little autonomy over how, when, and where tasks can be completed. Such jobs, such as traditional factory assemblers, minimize resource allocation choices and impose them externally. Other jobs, such as a faculty member, have greater autonomy and at the extreme the individual is responsible for choosing goals, at least within acceptable limits (e.g., must publish and teach classes), and allocating resources.

CONTROL AND STRESS

It is well accepted that control plays a central role in the stress process. The dominant transactional approach to stress (Lazarus, 1991; Perrewe & Zellars, 1999) connects environmental demands to a variety of physical and psychological strains. As noted by the Job Demands-Resources model (Demerouti et al., 2001), strain occurs when demands exceed an individual's resources. Control can play two roles in this process. First, the lack of control can serve as a stressor in its own right, and can directly link to both physical (Nixon, Mazzola, Bauer, Krueger, & Spector, 2011) and psychological (Alarcon, 2011; Spector, 1986) strains. Control has also been posited as a buffer of the demand-strain relationship (Karasek, 1979), such that high control would reduce the negative impact of high demands. Tests of the buffering (moderator) effect, however, have been inconsistent. For example, de Lange, Taris, Kompier, Houtman, and Bongers (2003) reviewed 19 studies that had rigorous methodology, finding that only 42% yielded significant moderator effects.

A number of reasons have been suggested for the lack of consistency in finding significant moderator effects, including that control needs to be over the specific demands and not just general work control or autonomy (de Jonge, Dollard, Dormann, Le Blanc, & Houtman, 2000). Thus in order for control to buffer the adverse effects of a demand, the individual must be able to control that demand. The lack of control over resources would be expected to lead to strain only when the resources in question are important to the individual for achieving goals and meeting demands. When a particular resource is irrelevant to goal achievement, whether the individual does or does not have control over it would have little impact on strains.

An important question concerns why control should matter at all in the stress process, that is, what is the underlying mechanism. First, people are motivated to control the outcomes of their behavior, with the loss of that control being stressful (Heckhausen & Schulz, 1995). As noted in self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2009), people have an innate need for autonomy and control. From an evolutionary perspective, this makes sense as individuals who make efforts to control the environment are more likely to survive than passive individuals who do not attempt to exert control. Individuals find the loss of control to be stressful because it represents a failure to fulfill a fundamental need by the individual.

Second, it has been shown that control over aversive events, most notably the ability to avoid them, results in finding those events less aversive (e.g., painful), and more tolerable (Thompson, 1981). The most likely explanation, according to Thompson, can be found in Miller's (1979) minimax principle. This principle suggests that control provides an individual with the ability to minimize the maximum danger or discomfort of a stressful event. This also enables an individual to shift attributions from an external and potentially unstable source to an internal stable source of the self. Thus the individual has more certainty that potential harm can be averted, which is not the case when the individual has no control.

Third, there are different forms of control that have been identified. Rothbaum, Weisz, and Snyder (1982) distinguished primary control (direct control of the environment) from secondary control (control of one's response to the environment). Included in secondary control is predictive control in which individuals are able to anticipate future events, in other words, an individual is able to reduce uncertainty by being able to predict what will happen. Although having primary control can directly minimize danger and threat, having predictive control reduces uncertainty about the maximum danger a threat might represent. Assuming that maximum is within tolerable limits, the individual can be assured that he or she will be able to cope with the environment.

Primary and secondary control can be viewed from the perspective of external and internal resource control, respectively. Primary control concerns direct control over the environment, so it would mean the control of external resources. Secondary control is focused inward, and would mean the control of

internal resources, such as emotional reactions. Thus both forms of control are necessary for resource management.

In order to achieve goals and cope with demands, an individual needs control over relevant resources. Having objective control allows the individual to allocate those resources in a way that can lead to goals or cope with demands. Of course, control alone is not sufficient for achievement and coping, as an individual might have a surplus of resources that are not allocated in an efficient and effective manner. This could occur because the internal resource needed to appropriately allocate external resources is insufficient. However, it is also possible that resource allocation strategies are appropriate, but a changing or chaotic environment impedes their effectiveness.

The perception of resource control can serve to buffer strain responses to demands. When an individual believes he or she controls sufficient resources, demands are unlikely to result in strain. Frankenhaeuser and Johansson (1986) discuss the effort-distress model, suggesting that completing controllable tasks requires effort, whereas uncontrollable tasks also result in distress (strain). Thus under high resource control the expenditure of effort over time can lead to fatigue, but if an individual has confidence that resources are sufficient, there will be little distress. When control over resources is insufficient, however, the individual will have uncertainty over the ability to cope with demands, and thus anxiety and other negative emotional states will occur.

A line of research supports the idea that resource control plays and important role in the stress process. Hochwarter, Perrewé, Meurs, and Kacmar (2007) developed a measure to assess an individual's perceived ability to manage work resources. Items asked about being able to conserve energy and pace the work, having sufficient equipment and support from others, and being able to take breaks. In a series of studies, Hochwarter and colleagues showed that resource management ability related to strains (Hochwarter, Laird, & Brouer, 2008), and served as a moderator of relationships between demands and outcomes, both stress-related (Hochwarter et al., 2007, 2008; Zellars, Hochwarter, Lanivich, Perrewé, & Ferris, 2011), and performance-related (McAllister, Harris, Hochwarter, Perrewé, & Ferris, 2016).

RESOURCE CONTROL AND STRESS

The JD-R model suggests that resource availability would serve as a buffer of the demand to strain relationship, that is, demands would lead to strain when resource availability is low (Bakker, Demerouti, & Euwema, 2005; Xanthopoulou et al., 2007). This takes the Control-Demand model (Karasek, 1979) a step farther in suggesting that control operates as one from a variety of resources that can be available in dealing with demands. How resources operate can be viewed from the perspective of resource control and

management. For example, when an employee is given an assignment to complete a task, accepting that assignment produces a workload demand. Likewise, an employee can produce a self-demand by setting an internal goal, such as completing extra tasks in order to make a positive impression on a supervisor or to learn a new skill. An internal goal can also involve avoidance of certain stressful conditions or events, such as avoidance of being abused by a supervisor. In either case, an individual will likely seek control of resources that enable goal attainment through completion of associated tasks or avoidance of stressors such as supervisor abuse.

Resources are the external and internal things that are needed to accomplish goals and cope with demands. From a stress perspective, both the perceptual nature and objective nature of resource control are important as they can lead to strains through different pathways. Objective resources allow for direct coping with demands and reaching goals, assuming those resources are relevant and utilized in an appropriate manner. If an individual has control over sufficient internal and external resources, assuming those internal resources include the ability to effectively apply resources, a demand would be appropriately met. Perceived resource control is the extent to which an individual believes he or she has control over resources that are needed to accomplish tasks, whether or not they really are.

As noted in JD-R theory (Demerouti et al., 2001), demands become stressors and lead to strain when resources are insufficient. This leads to the demand-strain moderating effect (Bakker et al., 2005). When resources are insufficient to meet demands, the demand will rise to the level of a stressor. Of course, the individual might not be immediately aware that the demand cannot be met, and as long as that lack of awareness exists, the demand will not be perceived as a stressor, and therefore will not lead to strain. However, at some point as the individual realizes there is a problem in meeting a demand, either by receiving external feedback or by realizing it himself or herself, the demand will become a perceived stressor. The individual will experience strain either because of the frustration of not meeting a demand or because not meeting it might have real consequences, such as receiving a negative performance review. Strain can manifest as the individual starts to realize he or she cannot cope with a demand, with emotional reactions including frustration, anger, and anxiety. The specific emotion is likely to be determined by the importance of the demand, with minor demands more likely associated with frustration and irritation, and important demands with anxiety over the implications of failure.

Control over objective resources or resource management can also directly affect the level of demands themselves. Increasing resources can reduce objective demands in two ways. Internal resources enable a person to complete a task efficiently and can affect the effort and time required. For example, an individual with a high level of skill can accomplish a job task more comfortably and in a shorter time than an individual with a low level of skill. In some cases low skill individuals might not be able to complete certain tasks at all.

External resources are things that make it possible to accomplish a task or meet a demand, as well as determine the time/effort required by the individual. For example, a supervisor can perform a task himself or herself, or delegate that task to subordinates. Delegation will likely reduce the time/effort required of the supervisor who does not have to personally perform the task, and in cases where the supervisor does not have the internal resources (e.g., skill), it makes task completion possible. Having control over external resources would allow the supervisor to reduce his or her own demands by delegating tasks to others. Insufficient external resources could put an increased burden on the supervisor who might have to perform tasks that should be performed by subordinates. Thus insufficient control over resources can lead to an increase in quantitative, and in some cases qualitative workload, and could lead routine workload demands to become stressors that lead to strain. Resource insufficiency can also lead to the necessity for performing tasks that should be accomplished by others, such as subordinates, resulting in the experience of the stressor illegitimate tasks (Semmer et al., 2015). These tasks consist of things the individual believes should be done by someone else or not done at all. Asking a nurse to scrub a dirty floor because of a shortage of custodial staff would be an example of an illegitimate task, necessitated by insufficient human resources. A nurse experiencing the illegitimate task of scrubbing the floor would likely perceive the objective insufficiency of resources as well as the perception of inadequate control over resources, as he or she did not feel empowered to refuse the task.

Perceived control of resources work through a different mechanism than objective control of resources. When control over resources is perceived to be insufficient to cope with demands, uncertainty about whether or not demands can be handled is produced. This occurs even if those resources under control are in fact sufficient. The uncertainty results in negative emotions, most notably anxiety over the inability to cope, and anger over being in a position to have to deal with demands in the absence of proper resources (e.g., accomplishing a work task without the tools to do so), and perhaps in having to perform illegitimate tasks because there are insufficient human resources to delegate the task to someone more appropriate. More distal and longer-term strains follow after the immediate negative emotions including poor job attitudes (e.g., job dissatisfaction) and physical strains that are associated with emotional upset, such as digestive symptoms and headache.

Perceptions of resource control insufficiency can lead to strain even in cases where those resources are not needed. Thus there can be a disconnect between objective resources that are needed and irrelevant resources that would not be helpful in reaching goals. Likely individuals differ in the extent to which their objective and perceived control over resources coincide. Experience and skill on the job are certainly important as individuals learn which resources are needed for particular demands, and which are not. Such knowledge itself becomes an

internal resource in that it allows for the efficient control and use of resources to achieve goals.

It should be emphasized that there is a distinction between resources that the individual needs or believes he or she needs to meet demands from the broader range of resources that would not be helpful to the individual in meeting goals. It is not the gain/loss of resources in general that is important, but rather that critical resources are under control, and the more critical the resource, the more important there is to have control − either direct control or predictive control.

Another thing to keep in mind is that there is a distinction between control of resources and possession of resources. It is not that individuals stockpile resources, much like a collector, but rather that they seek control so that they can acquire and apply resources where needed. In other words, an individual can utilize the just-in-time principle to resource management, and remain secure in the knowledge that he or she can access resources as needed. In an organizational setting, for example, a manager might not seek to build a department that contains individuals able to perform every task that department ever needs to accomplish. Rather an effective manager would attempt to optimize the use of human resources by including both an internal staff of employees and a network of other people to call upon when needed. This can include both insiders and outsiders (contractors and vendors). Effective resource management means networking and building social capital so that one has at one's disposal a cadre of individuals who can be called upon when needed. As demands arise decisions would be made whether to delegate to a direct report, seek assistance of others within the organization, or to outsource. Such decisions are based on a consideration of the most efficient use of each resource, those internal versus those external to the organization.

Objective and perceived resource control are not always in perfect alignment as people can be inaccurate in their assessment of the resources they need for demand coping and the resources they control. People vary in the level of internal resources they possess that can be called upon to evaluate the resource needs for specific situations, as well as their ability to control those resources. When both forms of resources are aligned, and objectively inadequate resources are perceived as such, there are two pathways through which strain can occur. First, when demands increase beyond the individual's coping resources (Demerouti et al., 2001) strain can result. Second, perceiving a lack of control of needed resources to cope with demands is itself stressful.

Resource Management

An individual can be viewed as a resource manager, developing strategies to build control systems to identify potential resources and acquire their control. For internal resources, this would involve identifying and developing needed

KSAs to meet demands and personal goals, for example, to accomplish tasks for the current job or to meet goals of advancement. An individual can accomplish this by taking advantage of organizational resources (e.g., developmental opportunities at work). Many organizations have sophisticated performance management systems that can assist an individual in developing KSAs to enhance the current job and to prepare for advancement. Personal development can also be accomplished outside of work, for example, through formal education (e.g., completing a college degree) that might or might not be supported by the employer. It is also possible for people to learn KSAs through informal means such as self-study at home.

The development of external resource control requires a complex set of approaches, and is dependent upon having the appropriate internal resources (KSAs). Physical resources, such as equipment and tools, need to be researched to identify which are most effective for the current situation, and how best to acquire them (e.g., lease or purchase). Management of human resources involves identifying the correct individuals and developing relationships that can be called upon when a resource is needed. The concept of political skill (Ferris et al., 2005) is relevant here. Political skill is a set of four related skills that enable an individual to influence other people. Apparent sincerity is the ability to appear authentic and trustworthy, Interpersonal influence is the ability to adapt behavior to influence others' behavior, networking ability is the ability to develop networks of relationships with others, and social astuteness is the ability to understand social situations and the behavior of others. Combined this set of skills would enable an individual to build and utilize human resources both inside and outside of his or her organization. Political skill would represent an internal resource that enables people to control their external resources. Therefore, one might expect that being high on political skill should result in having less strain, because that skill would enable enhanced control of resources. Support for this can be found in (Perrewe et al. 2004) who found that political skill was negatively related to both physical and psychological strains. Furthermore, political skill was found to buffer the relationship of role conflict (a stressor) and both types of strains, as well as on blood pressure. Similarly, Zhou, Yang, and Spector (2015) found that political skill buffered the effects on strains of exposure to both nonphysical and physical aggression at work. Findings from these two studies can be explained from a resource control perspective. Having the internal resource of political skill enables the individual to better control the human resources needed to cope with demands at work, thus reducing the impact on strains.

Organizational Resource Control Systems

An organization can be considered as a complex resource control system. Organizations are entities created to accomplish goals requiring coordinated

effort by multiple people through the acquisition and management of both human and material resources. In order for the organization to effectively function, its overarching goals must be compatible with the personal work goals of its members. Thus many of the resource control systems enhance organizational performance by enabling employees to efficiently perform organizationally relevant goals. This is accomplished by providing employees tools to enhance their own resource control, both internal and external. Failure to provide adequate resource control to employees can result in not only strain, but can adversely affect performance efficiency. For example, Wall, Corbett, Martin, Clegg, and Jackson (1990) showed that allowing factory workers control over the repair of their own machines reduced strain and increased job performance.

The development of internal employee resources can be accomplished by enhancing their job-relevant KSAs. As noted earlier, individual employees often have their own private development plans, such as attaining formal education outside of work. Many organizations have highly developed systems to support such efforts, such as paying tuition for college classes, especially in courses that are directly relevant to the workplace, such as an account clerk taking courses in accounting. Organizations also have their own internal resources for employee development that can be provided by an in-house training staff or from external sources. This can include mandatory training programs as well as optional growth opportunities.

The entire human resource function of an organization can be considered a control system for acquiring and managing human resources. Recruitment systems are used to determine the internal resources needed for individual hires, and development systems are used to enhance those resources. Compensation and other systems are used to motivate employees, that is, to align employee goals with organization goals, and to encourage individual employees to allocate the resources they control in service to the organization. Of course, goal conflict between individual employees and the organization, as well as among employees can lead to incompatibilities in how resource allocations occur throughout an organization.

COMMON STRESSORS FROM A RESOURCE CONTROL PERSPECTIVE

There are a limited set of common stressors that have been well studied, and shown to relate to strains. Task-related stressors concern the nature of work demands, and thus they reflect the resources needed to accomplish work requirements. They include organizational constraints, role ambiguity, role conflict, and workload. Social stressors such as interpersonal conflict and various mistreatment constructs (e.g., bullying and incivility) are concerned with negative interpersonal encounters from both organizational insiders (coworkers and supervisors) and

outsiders (e.g., customers or patients). Each can be considered from the perspective of resource control.

Organizational Constraints

Organizational constraints are workplace conditions that interfere with or make it difficult for an employee to complete job tasks (Peters & O'Connor, 1980). Spector and Jex (1998) included 11 constraints areas in their organizational constraints scale, with many of the items explicitly indicating an inadequacy of resources, both material and social (e.g., inadequate training, lack of necessary information, or poor equipment). Other items concern things that interfere with task performance, thus diverting resources away from the task (e.g., interruptions by others). Combined the items reflect both lack of resources and things that consume resources (e.g., effort and time) that could be put to use on task performance.

The major focus of the organizational constraints construct is on the sufficiency of resources themselves. Thus its connection to strains is directly from resources, because a high level of constraints implies resource insufficiency. The perception of high constraints, however, also suggests that the individual perceives insufficient control over needed resources. In other words, if a person perceives high constraints, he or she is perceiving that there are insufficient resources to control, either because of resource insufficiency or because of environmental demands (e.g., interruptions) that divert resources away from the goal of performing required job tasks.

Role Ambiguity and Role Conflict

The two role stressor variables of ambiguity and conflict (Katz & Kahn, 1978) are stressful either because they create uncertainty for the individual about where resources should be allocated (ambiguity) or because they create conflicting demands that tax or exceed current resources (conflict). Role ambiguity reflects a situation in which the individual is uncertain about what his or her organizational role should be. In other words organizational goals for their position are unclear. Since goals are unclear, it is uncertain where resources should be placed. This uncertainty can lead to strain, as the individual does not know what will be rewarded and what will be punished as a result of their actions. Since the individual does not know what resources are needed and how they should be used, resource management is compromised.

Role conflict occurs when there are competing demands on an individual that cannot all be adequately addressed. Such demands can occur within the job, for example, when two superiors ask the individual to accomplish tasks at

the same time, or where goals are in conflict, such as the demand for both speed and accuracy. Role conflict can also transcend the work, as with the conflict between work and family (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). There are two aspects of role conflict that can be stressful to individuals. First, role conflicts can represent competing demands that together tax an individual's resources to accomplish all goals. This can occur because there is too much work given available resources, or with temporal conflict, two things need to be done at the same time. As demands exceed resources, strain is likely to result.

Second, role conflict can produce challenges to an individual's ability to manage and control his or her resources. When demands compete, the individual must decide whether to accomplish one and ignore the other, partially accomplish both, or find a way to complete both quickly but at the cost of quality. With both forms of role stressors, the individual can be uncertain about how resources should be allocated, either because demands exceed resources making it difficult to prioritize efforts, or because there is uncertainty about how resources should be directed to goals.

Work−family conflict has been conceptualized from the perspective of resource allocation. Grawitch et al. (2010) present a holistic approach in which the individual manages his or her personal resources by making decisions about resource allocation across life domains. According to this view, role conflict occurs when resource management is ineffective.

Workload

Workload is simply the amount and difficulty of work an employee is assigned or takes on. Quantitative workload is the amount of work that needs to be done in a unit of time, that is, the number of units of productivity, such as loading 100 boxes into a truck in an hour. Qualitative workload concerns how difficult it is to do tasks, and is related to the level of knowledge and skill needed. Thus loading 10 pound boxes might represent only quantitative workload (amount of work) but loading 100 pound boxes by hand represents qualitative workload because it requires considerable strength and effort. Generally, jobs with high qualitative workload require specific high level knowledge and skill.

Workload is a direct measure of demands so an analysis of workload can provide a determination of the resources necessary to address it. As described in the JD-R model, strain occurs when demands exceed resources (Demerouti et al., 2001). Thus an individual strives to control resources that he or she believes will be needed to manage a given workload, so that the greater the workload, the more resources the individual will need to control in order to meet the demands. These can include both external (e.g., assistance of others) and internal (skill) resources. Perceptions of insufficient resources to deal with

a given workload will lead to strain because the individual will be uncertain about his or her ability to meet work demands or realize that task goals are unattainable.

Social Stressors

There are a number of overlapping constructs concerning negative social inter-actions that fit the category of social stressors (Nixon & Spector, 2015). Those constructs include abusive supervision (Tepper, 2000), bullying (Rayner & Keashly, 2005), incivility (Pearson, Andersson, & Porath, 2005), interpersonal conflict (Bruk-Lee & Spector, 2012), and workplace aggression (Schat & Kelloway, 2005), among others. Although the specific constructs include vary-ing subsets of behaviors to which an individual is exposed, social stressors in general includes physical and/or nonphysical acts that vary in intensity from insensitive comments to physical violence.

The connection between social stressors and resources can be complex and involves at least three pathways. First, a social stressor can be a distraction, diverting resources from goals and tasks. When an employee encounters an instance of mistreatment from another, an additional demand has been created that requires resources to address. This can include time to respond to the other individual directly or to deal with the consequences of the act. For example, if a customer service employee is verbally abused by an unhappy customer, that employee must deal directly with the customer, attempting to fix whatever has caused customer dissatisfaction. At the same time, the employee will likely have to discuss the incident with a supervisor, and if the employee is deemed at fault, there could be disciplinary action. Furthermore, the employee will have to use internal resources to deal with the likely emotional strain, and might have to engage in emotional labor (Glomb & Tews, 2004) to keep from expressing neg-ative emotions toward customers. With physical violence, an employee might be injured, and likely there will be incident reports to complete. The demands for resources to deal with the social stressor represent a loss of resource control because the employee did not have the ability to avoid the situation and con-tinue to maintain resource focus on tasks.

Second, social stressors that occur among employees represent a potential threat to an individual's interpersonal resources at work. Having negative social exchanges, such as conflicts, can adversely affect working relationships and undermine teamwork. An individual who is in conflict with another person will likely find it difficult to attain that person's assistance and cooperation in dealing with demands. In cases of serious conflict employees might well take steps to undermine one another's efforts (Duffy, Ganster, & Pagon, 2002), which not only represents a loss of an interpersonal resource, but an intentional interference with an individual's work tasks.

Finally, being exposed to social stressors can be a threat to internal resources that are needed to perform tasks. For example, a continuing pattern of abusive supervision can undermine a subordinate's self-efficacy and confidence in being able to adequately perform the job (Kim & Yun, 2015). That loss of self-efficacy can reduce the motivation to perform the job if the person begins to feel that he or she is unable to accomplish tasks. In the extreme a form of situation-specific learned helplessness might occur in which the individual becomes paralyzed because it seems no matter what he or she does, the supervisor feels the results are inadequate.

Social stressors reduce control over resources in multiple ways that results in having fewer internal and external resources available to deal with other demands. They can be particularly stressful, especially when all three mechanisms are involved, which can occur when the source of social stressor is an organizational insider, especially one with power over the individual, such as a direct supervisor (Nixon & Spector, 2015).

POWER AND POLITICS AS RESOURCE CONTROL STRATEGIES

Employees can enhance their control over organizational resources through the use of strategies to enhance their power, often through the use of political strategies. Power concerns how one individual can affect the behavior of others, that is, the extent to which one has social influence. By attaining power, an individual gains control over human and material resources. Politics, on the other hand, has to do with the strategies people use to exercise power (Ferris & Treadway, 2012). Although both power and politics have negative connotations to the lay public and the organizational research community, it has been pointed out that politics should be viewed more neutrally, as it can have positive as well as negative effects (Ferris & Treadway, 2012; Hochwarter, 2012).

Political behavior by organization members is generally seen as self-serving and strategic, as it is used to achieve personal goals (Ferris & Treadway, 2012). If personal goals are in opposition to organizational goals, then that behavior is self-serving and from the organizational perspective, dysfunctional. If personal and organizational goals, however, are in alignment, then political behavior becomes a tool that can help organizations function effectively by enabling employees to accomplish important objectives. This of course assumes that the environment is not overly competitive with individual employees and work units each out to maximize their own functions at the cost of others. This can be of particular concern when overall organizational resources are limited so that employees must adopt cut-throat approaches in order to deal with their personal task demands.

Hochwarter (2012) discusses politics from a positive perspective, noting how it can be utilized in a functional manner to enhance individual and organizational functioning. He notes that at its core, politics concerns the acquisition and utilization of resources than serve goal achievement. As Hochwarter points out, this can be achieved by building relationships with others through networking and other activities, thus building social capital. Effective managers use their social contacts and networks to effectively manage resources so that organizational objectives can be reached. From the individual employee perspective, gaining resource control reduces uncertainty, which can reduce psychological strain in response to demands.

Political behavior can be viewed as the application of strategies to gain control over material and social resources. By increasing objective and perceived resources, politics enables an individual to manage demands themselves, and to reduce the extent to which demands are perceived as stressors that lead to strains. Perrewé, Rosen, and Maslach (2012) reviewed the literature linking politics and stress. They noted that politics can be a response to stressors in the work environment, and it can serve as a positive coping response that can be effective in dealing with stressful job conditions, especially for individuals who are skilled in their use. This makes sense as the effective application of politics can enable one to apply resources to deal with organizational demands. The effective use of politics also enables someone to acquire resources, both material and emotional, in dealing with work demands.

Political skill (see earlier description) is a constellation of skills that allows an individual to utilize politics to manage social resources to achieve goals and cope with demands. It also can be an important internal resource in dealing with stressful job conditions. Ferris et al. (2005) showed that this constellation of skills, as expected, was related to managerial performance. This makes sense since a big part of a manager's job is being able to influence direct reports and others.

From a resource control perspective political skill would act as an internal resource that enables an individual to control external resources through the use of politics. Thus having a high level of this skill should allow employees to better manage demands and avoid strain. Indeed (Ferris, Treadway, Brouer, & Munyon, 2012) argued that political skill can neutralize the effects of stressors because individual with high levels of skill have greater resources to deal with job demands, and they have more confidence in their ability to cope with those demands. Thus the world for them is less threatening.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This chapter extends thinking about the role of resources in the occupational stress process by focusing on the control and management of both external and

internal resources. This approach goes beyond current resource theories that focus more on the possession of resources than on their control and management. As noted by Freund and Riediger (2001), resource possession itself is not particularly helpful to individuals. Resources take on utility when they are linked to goals and are utilized in an effective manner. Furthermore, the acquisition and possession of resources can themselves consume resources. It seems unproductive for individuals to invest precious resources to essentially hoard other resources. Rather an effective resource management strategy would be to invest in developing control systems that can be applied in a just-in-time fashion to call upon resources necessary to meet specific demands. Thus as demands occur, the individual has the control over resources that can be allocated as needed.

An effective resource control strategy focuses on both external and internal resources. Developing internal resources can be done by acquiring knowledge and skill that is relevant for personal and organizational goals. External resource control can involve the use of power and politics that can build social capital. This can be applied in a positive way that enables an individual to be an effective performer through the control of human and material resources.

The proper control and utilization of resources can be an effective means to cope with the stress of work and nonwork. Effective resource utilization strategies can both reduce demands and buffer the effects of demands on strains. Needed are studies that directly study resource management strategies, and how people use them to both achieve their goals and cope with demands. This approach links both stress and performance, treating them as inextricably linked rather than separate aspects of organizational behavior. It also views the individual, not as a passive recipient of stressful job conditions (a puppet), but as an active agent who manages the work environment through the control and strategic use of demand-relevant resources (a puppeteer).

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