

ABSTRACT

Societal changes over the past few decades have added to the number of roles that make demands on people's resources, especially women who have to hold more social roles in addition to traditional roles as homemakers. A result of this phenomenon is an accumulation of literature relating to the relationship between women's multiple roles and well-being. This study explored the associations among role quality, role spillover, role compensation and psychological well-being (specifically both mental health and life satisfaction) of 434 Chinese female married nursing professionals in Hong Kong who held three social roles simultaneously (i.e., wife, mother and nurse as an occupation). Results replicated the superiority of role quality in understanding women's psychological well-being, and indicated that a net gain of benefits over cost from the roles was related to positive well-being. Hierarchical multiple regression analyses were performed to examine the role spillover and role compensatory hypotheses. The home-to-work spillover effect was generally not supported when predicting the health status of this nurse group. Instead, the role compensatory hypothesis was confirmed, suggesting that the rewarding aspects of social roles had compensatory effects on that role (or the other role), which in turn mitigated negative psychological outcomes. This compensatory effect was particularly salient for the worker role. Moreover, as compared to role rewards, role concerns of the mother role were more predictive of women's mental health status.

In this study, the moderating effects of role centrality, mastery and family orientation on the role-health association were also investigated. Consistent with previous results, instead of exacerbating the negative effects of role stress, higher role centrality protected women from the negative effects of the distressing experiences for holding a mother role, suggesting a possibility of self-effacing attribution style. Higher level of mastery did result in better mental health status as well as life satisfaction. A lower level of mastery

with higher role concern was associated with poorer mental health status and life dissatisfaction. Furthermore, as predicted, family orientation associated positively with both mental health status and life satisfaction. However, it did not serve as a moderator on the role-health association. The limitations and implications of these results for future research were discussed.

In sum, this study documented the importance of the qualitative aspects of multiple role involvement in understanding the psychological well-being of a unique female-dominated occupation (i.e., nurses). To extend the literature on role-health association for women, the roles of three important internal individual factors were examined: role centrality, mastery and family orientation. These moderating variables should not be overlooked when trying to promote or develop health management programmes for this group of helping professional in future.