

**IMPACT OF STRESS ON HEALTH COGNITIONS
AND BEHAVIOURS**

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Impact of stress on health cognitions and behaviours

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Abstract

The present thesis attempts to extend the knowledge of stress- health behaviours relationships by integrating social cognitive variables (i.e. from the TPB model) into the study of stress. This thesis also aims to elucidate how nationality and gender shape cognition, intention and health behaviour by utilizing samples representing both individualistic and collectivistic cultures (i.e. UK and Malaysia) and both genders. The results of a systematic review of relevant previous research examining the effect of stressor (i.e. perceived stress, work-family conflict, work stress and hassles) on health behaviours is reported first in Chapter 2. In pursuing the aims of this study, three empirical studies (Chapter 3-5) were conducted. Study 1 examined the utility of the TPB and the impact of perceived stress as well as additional variables on nine types of health behaviours using both cross sectional and prospective designs in student sample. In an attempt to further understand the effect of stressors on health behaviours, using a cross-sectional design, Study 2 examined the potential effects of job related characteristics (i.e. job demands, job resources, job hours) and work-family conflicts on five types of health behaviours in a sample of employees. Results of Study 1 and 2 highlighted the support for the efficacy of TPB which consistently accounted for the largest proportion of explained variance in intentions and behaviours. There was limited evidence to support the direct effect of stress in explaining intentions and behaviours, yet a role for stress within TPB was observed based on mediation and moderation approaches. Study 3 used a daily diary method to examine the effects of daily job related characteristics, work-family conflict, hassles on five types of health behaviours for 14 consecutive days. The results demonstrated that the effects of stressors were particularly associated with unhealthy behaviours including decreased fruit and vegetable intake, reduced physical activity and increased smoking. Following the empirical studies, Chapter 6 provides a summary of key findings, discussion, implication of the findings, limitations and also future directions for work in this area. Of note, the present thesis demonstrated the implication of incorporating variables from a social cognitive model (TPB) into the relationship between the study of stress and health behaviours, both from theoretical and practical perspectives.