
**WORK STRESS IN AUSTRALIAN PROFESSIONALS: THE ROLE OF
CULTURE, GENDER AND WORK-FAMILY CONFLICT**

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Abstract

Australia is one of the most popular countries for immigrants to settle. Many highly qualified Indians from India have made Australia their home, and they hold important positions in the Australian work-force.

The Australian work-force now consists not only of employees from different countries, but also of parents who try to balance their work roles and family roles simultaneously. For dual-earner families this can be difficult and could lead to increased job stress and work family conflict. Due to these cultural and gender differences, experiences in the paid work-force cannot be assumed to be the same for all employees. The purpose of this research was to investigate the role of culture and gender among working professionals in Australia and to study the interactional patterns within dual-earner couples in the Australian work-force.

This was exploratory research and was conducted using three studies. All studies were cross-sectional, and qualitative as well as quantitative measures were used for data collection. In the first study data were collected from matched pairs of 10 Australian and 10 Indian born mothers who were employed in the Australian work-force. Interviews were conducted and responses to the interview were recorded. Results suggested some significant differences in job stress, with Australian mothers experiencing more job stress than Indian mothers. Further, interview results indicated that women from both cultures were responsible for most of the household work.

Study two of the thesis combined culture and gender to investigate job satisfaction, work stress and work family conflict among Australian men and women working in the Australian work-force ($N = 58$). A 2 X 2 ANOVA was used for this. There were no cultural differences found among men and women of both cultures on measures of job satisfaction, work-family conflict and family-work conflict. However, cultural differences were observed on the job stress scale with Australian men and women experiencing more job stress than Indian men and women. There were also significant gender differences in job stress, work-family-conflict and family-work conflict. Australian men and Indian men reported higher family-work conflict. Results of this study revealed significant gender differences and therefore, the third study was designed to investigate these gender differences further.

Study three investigated the role of gender and work stress variables through crossover and spillover research. Many gender differences in predictors of fatigue, job stress and dyadic adjustment were found among couples both working in white collar professions. This study too strengthened the traditional gender role with women experiencing higher job stress and family-work conflict.

It is suggested that these findings contribute to the work-stress literature in three ways. Findings confirm that gender, rather than culture, are responsible for differences among immigrants in their perception of job satisfaction, work-family conflict and family-work conflict. Findings also confirm the traditional gender role of women, who are responsible for most domestic household work, and also demonstrate that increase in work-family conflict and family-work conflict contributes to an increase in job stress among dual-earner couples. This research has provided an insight into factors contributing to both crossover and spillover among Australian dual earner professionals, an area which has not received much attention.

Declaration

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by any other person, except where due reference has been made in the text.

I give consent to this copy of my thesis, when deposited in The University of Adelaide Library, being made available for loan and photocopying.

Shruti Mujumdar

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