

Gender, Occupational Status, Work-to-Family Conflict, and the Roles of Stressors among Korean Immigrants: Rethinking the Concept of the 'Stress of Higher Status'

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Abstract : Introduction: The 'stress of higher status' hypothesis suggests that workers with higher-status occupations are more likely to experience work-to-family conflict (WFC) than those with lower-status occupations. Yet, the occupational difference in WFC and its mechanisms have not been explicitly explored within Asian culture. This present study examines (a) the association between occupational status and WFC and (b) the mediating roles of work-related stressors and resources, focused on gender perspectives using a sample of Korean immigrants. Methods: Data were derived from a cross-sectional survey of foreign born Korean immigrants who were currently working at least two years in the Greater Area of Toronto or surrounding towns. The sample was stratified for equivalent presentations of micro-business owners (N=555) and paid employees in diverse occupational categories (N=733). Results: We found gender differences and similarities in the link between occupational status and WFC and the mediating roles of work-related variables. Compared to skilled/unskilled counterparts, male immigrants in professional, service, and microbusiness jobs reported higher levels of WFC, whereas female immigrants in higher-status occupations were more likely to have WFC with the exception of the highest levels of WFC among microbusiness owners. Regardless of gender, both male and female immigrants who have longer weekly work hours, shift work schedule, and high emotional and psychological demands were significantly associated with high levels of WFC. However, skill development was related to WFC only among male immigrants. Regarding the mediating roles of work-related factors, among female immigrants, the occupational difference in WFC was fully mediated by weekly work hours, shift work schedule, and emotional and psychological demands with the exception of the case of microbusiness workers. Among male immigrants, the occupational differences remained virtually unchanged after controlling for these mediators. Conclusions: Our results partially confirmed the 'stress of higher status' hypothesis among female immigrants. Additionally, work-related stressors seem to be critical mediators of the link between occupations and WFC only for female immigrants.

Keywords : work-to-family conflict, gender, work conditions, job demands, job resources

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