

# **Stressors and Strains in Combining Work and Family: A Study of Filipino Working Parents**

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*The study tapped 370 Filipino working parents in Metro Manila to determine the relationship between demographic, personality, family and work characteristics on total, work and non-work stressors and total, physiological, psychological and behavioral strains. Although the resulting hierarchical models are not robust, they do show significant relationships between particular demographic, personality, family and work-related variables and the various stressors and strains. Age, income, self-esteem, civil status, age of children, work level and dual-income households are the specific variables which predict one or more criterion outcomes. A significant interaction effect was also found between high-level work of both respondent and spouse. Human resource management implications are discussed and recommendations are forwarded with respect to organization policies and programs.*

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As the Philippines seeks to attain the status of Newly Industrialized Country, much effort has been placed on the infrastructure and resources the country needs to become a major economic player in the region. The strategy of industrialization is seen as means of alleviating the country's most pressing problem - poverty. However, even industrialization bring with it its own problems. As seen in first world countries, industrialization has changed the culture of societies. As the country adapts to industrialization, individuals are often faced with new demands, expectations and roles. Work occupies an increasing portion of people's lives and family and social life often revolves around work demands. The impact of all these changes is seen not only in social roles or institutions but in the well-being of individuals and their families. Given that work and family are both potent sources of stress, this study sought to look at the impact of work on working parents who are tasked with juggling demands of both work and family. Specifically, it seeks describes the stressors and strains of working parents as well as the variables which can affect their stress experience.

### **Work Related Stressors**

Latack (1984) found that major career transitions precipitate changes in families and are sources of stress. Whether job loss is regarded as a stressor itself or as an antecedent to other stressors such as economic deprivation and status reduction, it has shown to bring about psychological and physiological strains such as depression (Kahn & Byosiere, 1992) especially when experienced by people with inadequate psychological or social resources (Bhagat, Lindholm, McQuaid, & Segovis, 1985).

A study by Schmitt, Colligan, and Fitzgerald (1980) revealed that certain organization characteristics such as perceived work pressure, poor climate for innovation and high levels of task orientation are related to a number of physical symptoms such as light-headedness, headaches, sleepiness, weakness. These symptoms were also related to dissatisfaction with job security, promotional system, salaries, freedom to make decisions

and performance evaluation. Promotion prospects, office politics, problems with communication channels and bureaucracy are other elements which have been shown to be significantly related to occupational health (Leong, Furnham, & Cooper, 1996). In addition, a study on Filipino workers reveal that the more satisfied workers are with the working conditions, organization climate, leadership and work load, the less stress they report .

### **Non-Work Stressors**

Aside from work-related stressors, the average adult is faced with other life stressors which emanate from their roles of parent and spouse. Marital stressors for example, exert a direct effect on distress (Glickman, Tanaka, & Chan ,1991) and have significant adverse effects on quality of children's home environment (Menaghan, 1994). Kandel, Davies and Raveis (1985) describe marital strains as: non-reciprocity (lack of marital reciprocity and feeling that marriage inhibits one's growth), depersonalization (feeling of emotional distance) and inadequacy of partner to fulfill role obligations. Specific marital stressors also include increased time of spouse away from family, increased conflict, sexual relationship problems, poor communications among others.

Stressors related to the parenting role include child care concerns, child-bearing and pregnancy difficulties, difficulty in managing children conflict amongst children and conflict between parents and children. Kandel et al. (1985) have found that mothers have lower rates of depression than non-mothers, although parenting stress has also been found to negatively affect parents' psychological well-being and perceptions of marital quality (Lavee, Sharlin, & Katz, 1992).

Financial concerns include loss or inadequacy of income, debt or other financial difficulties, major purchases, increasing expenditures and lack of stability of resources. Kandel et al. (1985) found that financial stressors are significant predictors of psychological distress and depression. Income loss does not only affect the well-being of the job holder and his/her spouse but

also increases conflict with children (Flanagan, 1990) and decreases family cohesion and quality of emotional bonds (Silbereisen, Walper, & Albrecht, 1990).

Illness, accidents or disabilities which may debilitate the individual or a family member and require special care can affect families in many ways. Frude (1991) report that partners of chronically ill patients may themselves experience depression and somatic symptoms. Parental illness experienced by children may also produce psychological and physical disorders.

Just like physical work environment, different aspects of the residential or community environment may also be sources of stress. Crowding threatens intimacy and may cause excessive and unwanted interaction. Commuting elicits stress responses such as heightened arousal, blood pressure and heart rate, decreased alertness and impaired performance (Singer & Baum, 1983). Cohen and Weinstein (1982) reveal that there is some evidence for a link between community noise and psychological and psychosomatic complaints. Incivilities or cues of decay of social order and crime have also been linked to fear and anxiety (Taylor, 1982).

### **Interaction of Work and Family**

Aside from what a working parent has to contend with in the occupational and family setting, research has also shown that the interaction between the two may exacerbate strains from stressors. Beehr and Bhagat (1985) propose that all other things being equal, the greater number of stressors encountered in either family or work domain, the greater the degree of stress and strain experienced. Wiersma (1994) describe work-family conflict as consisting of time based issues of role overload and psychological issues of role quality. Thus, work-family conflict occurs when individuals feel they are not able to handle the demands from both work and family roles and/or when they feel dissatisfied about the quality of their performance in one or both roles. Work-family conflict has been found to be related to job, life and marital

and family satisfaction and symptoms of mental and physical well-being (Sekaran, 1985, Matthews, Conger, & Wickrama, 1996).

In addition to a merely additive approach however, researches have identified the spillover effect where the strain produced by stressors in one domain provoke stressful situations in another domain (Hughes & Galinsky, 1994; Leong et al. , 1996). Studies for example, have established a spillover from work to non-work (Eagle, Miles, & Icenogle 1997; Frone, Russell, & Cooper, 1992; Leiter & Durup, 1996; Loscosco, 1997). Hughes and Galinsky (1994) found that workers with enriching jobs (challenging job tasks, high decision-making latitude and supportive work relationships) report more frequent marital supportive behavior and less frequent marital disagreements. They explain that psychologically demanding jobs, high pressure for output and low support may leave workers too emotionally or physically drained to fulfill marital role expectations. Jones and Fletcher's (1996) study using daily questionnaires (diaries) also reveal significant correlation between partner stress scores, implying a transmission of stress between individuals' work stressors.

## **Strains**

A number of studies have established the link between stress and physiological symptoms such as headaches, heartburn, backaches, fatigue, decrease of immune response, respiratory infections, arthritics, low back pain and gastrointestinal disorders (Fleming & Baum, 1985; Quick, Horn, & Quick, 1987). Leong, et al. (1996) found that occupational stress was significantly correlated ( $r=.34$ ) with physical stress.

The most overt signs of stress are seen in behavioral changes. Increased smoking, alcohol and drug use, accident proneness and aggression are among changes which research has associated with increased stress (Quick et al., 1986). Other behavioral consequences are poor performance and inability to concentrate (Fleming & Baum, 1985).

Stress consequences may also take the form of psychological problems including sleep disturbance, sexual dysfunction, depression, psychogenic disability (Quick et al., 1986). Leong et al. (1996) found a correlation of  $r = .23$  between occupational stressors and mental health.

### **Factors which influence Stressors and Strains**

The previous sections have described the various components of stress, but in reality, the experience of stress varies from person to person. The following section discusses the factors which influence the incidence of stressors and their consequences. They are categorized into demographic, personality, family related and work-related factors.

*Demographic.* Schmitt et al. (1980) found that sex is the single most important correlate of number of physical symptoms. Specifically, women with few alternative job opportunities, considerable economic pressures and family responsibilities which conflict with work responsibilities are more likely to be affected by stress. Anderson and Leslie (1991) likewise report that women experience significantly more work and family-related stress than their husbands.

Studies have also found a significant negative correlation between age and work family conflict and stress (Judge, Boudreau, & Bretz, 1994). Bednar, Marshall and Bahouth (1995) report that younger managers report higher perceived stress associated with responsibility for personal and family relations more than older managers.

Goldberg, Greenberger, Hamill and O'Neil (1992) and Gore and Mangione (1983) report that level of education is negatively correlated to incidence of depression. Highly educated individuals are also likely to be more optimistic than those with low education especially in terms of money and job problems (Pearlin & Schooler, 1978). In direct contrast however, Aquino

(1991) found that educational level is significantly and positively related to job stress. Specifically, the higher level of education, the higher probability of stress. She explains that individuals with higher levels of educational attainment often have higher aspirations and expectations. Particularly, goal-driven and achievement oriented individuals create undue anxiety on themselves.

Aquino (1991) also found that income level is negatively correlated with stress. That is, the lower the income level, the higher the incidence of stress. Gore and Mangione (1983) also reveal that individuals with higher family income report significantly lower levels of depression than those with low income. Golderberg et al. (1992) found that it was not just the income level but the stability of income that is negatively correlated to depression among working single parents.

*Personality.* Internal locus of control, is the extent to which one sees life's chances as being in one's control in contrast to being fatalistic. A number of researches have found that people with higher internal locus of control experience lower levels of job stressors (Newton & Keenan, 1990; Spector & O'Connell, 1994).

Another personality trait which appears to be potent protection against stress-related debilitation is self-esteem. Pearlin and Schooler (1978) and Noor (1994) found that self-esteem buffers occupational strains and psychological distress.

Dispositional optimism has been defined as general expectancy for positive outcomes especially in difficult or ambiguous situations (Scheier & Carver 1987). Such outlook is associated with better physical and psychological adaptation to stress.

Another personality characteristic which has been linked to stress is Type A behavior. Individuals who manifest this are described as impatient, irritable and achievement oriented. Empirical support has shown that Type A behaviors are correlated to job stressors and strains (Leong et al., 1996; Newton & Keenan, 1990).

In addition to personality traits, health behaviors may moderate the impact of stressors on individuals. Belloc and Breston (1972) propose that health habits such as eating regularly and moderately, no cigarette smoking, moderate exercise, moderate use of alcohol and 7 to 8 hours of sleep moderate the effect of stress of physical health include:

*Family-Related Factors.* The mere presence of children appears to influence the experience of stress. Ray and Miller (1994) report that mothers perceive more home-work stress than non-mothers. Katz and Piotrowski (1983) found family size is a significant predictor of family role strain.

Aside from number of children, the age of children is also a significant factor. The term family life cycle describes the amount and type of responses that occur as a result of the age and development needs of children. Olson (1989) found that stressors start to pile up starting from the arrival of children, peak when they are adolescent age and a discernible drop is seen when all of them reach adulthood and leave the parental home.

There is considerable evidence that the marital role is central to mental and physical health. Married persons have the lowest rates of contact with physicians, hospital stays, and visits to psychiatric hospitals and outpatient clinics compared to non-married persons. (Kandel et al., 1985). Gore and Mangione (1983) report that married individuals are in better health than those who have never married or were previously married (widowed, separated or divorced).

Anderson and Leslie (1991) report significant differences in stress occur between one and dual-income families. Greenhaus and Parasuraman (1986) describe that with two career families, expanded work and family responsibilities increase time conflicts and pressures from one domain may be exacerbated by pressures in other domains. However, Gore and Mangione (1983) point out that both employment and marriage make a positive impact on psychological health for both men and women. Their study found that housewives report significantly more somatic symptoms than employed parents of either sex.

Other researches point out that it is not having dual-careers but the particular interaction between demands of each spouse's career. Male executives who hold high-level jobs and those who were in dual-income families report higher levels of job stress than those in other level jobs (Judge et al., 1994). Matthews et al. (1996) report that conflict from a spouse's job exerts as much influence on individual's distress levels as does conflict from one's own job.

*Work-Related Factors.* Bednar et al. (1995) found that low-level managers report more stress associated with promotion opportunities, discrimination and performance evaluation than high-level managers. This is consistent with findings that occupational stress is negatively correlated with employee rank and positively correlated to job satisfaction (Guppy & Rick, 1996; Leong, et al., 1996). Aquino (1991) however reports contrary findings among Filipino workers. That is, more physiological stress symptoms are reported by workers holding high-level jobs.

Flexible work schedules predict perceived control which in turn, negatively predicts work-family conflict and reports of depression and somatic complaints (Hammer, Allen & Grigsby, 1997; Thomas & Ganster, 1995). Number of hours worked has also been found to be positively correlated to both job stress and work-family conflict (Judge et al., 1994). Hughes and Galinsky (1994) report that low job flexibility is especially problematic among workers with children under thirteen.

Some researches have revealed that the degree of involvement of a person in his/her work or work salience account for variance in work and family conflict. For example, Hammer et al. (1997) found that for both males and females, higher work salience is related to greater conflict felt between work and family.

Thus, this study aims to determine whether relationships established in previous research on stressors and strains apply to the experience of Filipino working parents. Specifically, it seeks to answer the question: To what extent do demographic, personality, work and family variables influence the stressors and strains of Filipino working parents? In addition, it also seeks

to determine if there is a spillover effect between work and family wherein work variables influence family stressors and family variables influence work stressors.

## **Method**

### *Sample*

A total of 371 Filipino working parents in Metro Manila were respondents to this household survey. Households were chosen on the basis of purposive sampling of communities intended to obtain a representative number of respondents stratified across income levels and location. Mean age of respondents was 43 years old and the average number of children was 3. Majority of the respondents (58%) were women, married (87%), and had college degrees (57%). Some 69% of the respondents belonged to two-income families and the composition of the sample in terms of high, middle and low income was 38%, 25% and 37% respectively.

### **Procedures**

Based on a review of literature, a questionnaire was developed to tap the different stressors and strain experienced by working parents or their family members. The instrument was then translated into Filipino and were pre-tested on 10% of the target sample population. Based on respondent feedback, some adjustments were made on wording of items.

For sampling purposes, Metro Manila cities were roughly assigned into North, South, East and West and sites were chosen to represent each locale and income class. Sites selected were: High income : Makati (Bel-air, Forbes Park, Dasmariñas Village), Pasig (Valle Verde, Corinthian Garden, Greenhills), Q.C. (Ayala Heights, La Vista). Middle Income: Parañaque (Merville, Better Living), Q.C. (Proj. 6, Proj. 8, Teacher's Village), Manila (Ermita, Malate), Makati (San Antonio Village, Poblacion)

and Low Income :Manila (Tondo, Quiapo, Sta. Ana), Q.C. (Payatas, Pag-asa, U.P. Pook Dagohoy & Palaris), Pasig (Bagong Ilog), Makati (Guadalupe, Pembo).

Interviewers were then assigned to selected locations, assigned quotas and were given the selection guidelines such as respondents must be at least 3 houses away from each other and respondents must not be related to each other up to the third degree of consanguinity.

## Measures

*Demographic variables.* Age was measured on a continuous scale while education was an ordinal variable ranging from 1 (less than high school) to 5 (post-graduate). Gender was a binary variable (1=male, 2=female) and annual family income which was clustered into three levels of low (69 T and below), middle (70-249T) and high income (250 and above) based on data from National Statistics Office.

*Personality Traits.* Personality traits of self-esteem, locus of control, optimism and Type A behavior were measured using Likert-type scales where respondents indicate the extent in which statement is very much like them (4) to not at all like them (1). Cronbach alpha for the scales were .54 for self-esteem, .52 for locus of control, .71 for optimism and .57 for Type A. Health behaviors were measured by summing respondent scores on the extent to which they smoked, drank alcohol, exercised etc.

*Family-related variables.* Respondents were asked to provide information on their family regarding, number of children, age of children, civil status and spouse's work. The extent to which a respondent's spouse shares in financial, household and child care responsibilities were likewise measured using a 5-point scale where 5 indicates spouse is doing more than their share and 1 means spouse takes on much less than their share.

*Work-related variables.* Respondents were asked to provide information on work, work hours and work schedule. In addition, they were asked to

indicate their role in meeting the family's financial needs (3 = sole breadwinner, 2 = part-breadwinner, 1=spouse is breadwinner).

*Stressors.* A listing of work and non-work stressors were provided and respondents were asked to check which among the identified stressors they, their spouse, children or important family members experienced in the last six months. The stressors were grouped according to: Work Stressors (starting a new job, changed jobs, problems with boss, problems with peers, promotion, increased work demands, increased time spend outside home because of work etc.) and Non-Work Stressors (difficulties with regards to love and marriage, child bearing and rearing, family relations, family health, residence, crime, etc.)

*Strains.* Respondents were asked to indicate which of the stress symptoms provided they experienced within the past six months as a result of the stressors they experienced. Strains were of three types: physiological (headaches, sleeplessness, fatigue, stomach ache, fever, flu, colds, fractures, sprains, accidents, heart attack, increased/loss of appetite, high blood pressure, diarrhea), psychological (irritability, excessive worrying, indecisiveness, agitation, lack of interest, suicidal thoughts, depression, guilt, hopelessness etc.) and behavioral (crying spells, fits of anger, absenteeism, increased smoking or drinking, poor work performance etc.)

## Results

### *Descriptive results*

Means, standard deviations and zero-order correlations between the study variables are presented in Table 1. Among the demographic variables, both age and education are significantly correlated with income. That is, older and more educated individuals tend to have higher incomes. Males report more Type A behavior while women report better health habits and less satisfaction with spouse's sharing of family-related responsibilities. Educational attainment of respondents are positively correlated with

Table 1. Zero-Order Correlations for Study Variables

Mean	S.D.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	
1	Age	1.00													
2	Gender	-0.07	1.00												
3	Education	0.09	0.06	1.00											
4	Income	0.19**	0.01	0.56**	1.00										
5	Self-Esteem	0.09	0.00	0.37**	0.29**	1.00									
6	Locus of Control	0.00	-0.04	0.32	0.25**	0.40**	1.00								
7	Optimism	0.13*	-0.02	0.30**	0.27**	0.51**	.39**	1.00							
8	Type A	0.01	-0.15**	0.09	0.12*	0.08	0.05	0.16**	1.00						
9	Health	0.07	0.18**	0.10	0.01	0.10	-0.07	0.03	-0.11*	1.00					
10	Civil Status	0.02	-0.07	0.09	0.11*	0.07	0.06	-0.01	-0.03	0.02	1.00				
11	No. of Children	0.47**	0.00	-0.06	0.02	0.02	-0.05	0.02	-0.06	0.07	0.10	1.00			
12	Family Life Cycle	0.82**	0.00	-0.01	0.15**	0.11*	-0.04	0.15**	0.07	0.09	-0.06	0.43	1.00		
13	Spouse Sharing	0.09	-0.21**	0.13*	0.23**	0.10	.14**	0.13*	0.09	-0.09	.24**	0.03	0.06	1.00	
14	Dual Income	-0.11*	0.16**	0.25**	0.22**	0.15**	.10*	0.07	0.03	0.11*	.51**	-0.03	-0.17**	-0.01	1.00
15	Spouse's Work	0.00	0.06	0.25**	0.29**	0.21**	.13**	0.15**	0.05	0.04	.41**	0.01	-0.05	0.08	0.08
16	Breadwinner Role	0.13*	-0.52	-0.05	-0.04	0.06	-0.01	0.09	0.16**	-0.22**	.29**	-0.03	0.09	0.06	0.06
17	Work	0.11*	0.09	0.13*	0.27**	0.08	0.09	0.21**	0.09	0.04	0.00	0.08	0.14**	0.07	0.07
18	Work Hours	-0.10	-0.13*	-0.12*	-0.08	-0.02	0.01	-0.01	-0.07	-0.14**	-0.04	0.05	-0.10	-0.05	-0.05
19	Work Schedule	0.09	-0.09	0.00	0.10*	-0.03	0.00	0.04	-0.05	-0.05	0.01	0.05	0.11*	0.00	0.00
20	Choice	0.00	0.19**	-0.11*	0.03	-0.08	0.00	-0.04	-0.07	-0.05	-0.16**	0.02	0.04	-0.01	-0.01
21	Stressors	-0.13*	-0.06	-0.07	-0.01	-0.16**	0.00	-0.02	0.03	0.02	-0.12	0.00	0.11*	-0.05	-0.05
22	Nonwork stressors	-0.09	-0.04	-0.17**	-0.08	-0.21**	-0.09	-0.08	-0.02	-0.01	-0.16**	0.00	-0.06	-0.05	-0.05
23	Work stressors	-0.13*	-0.09	0.07	0.07	-0.05	0.10	0.11	0.09	0.07	0.01	-0.01	-0.15*	-0.02	-0.02
24	Strains	-0.13*	-0.03	-0.23**	-0.20**	-0.12*	-0.08	-0.02	0.00	-0.13*	-0.18**	0.04	-0.07	-0.08	-0.08
25	Physiological	-0.07	-0.07	-0.13*	-0.16**	-0.08	0.01	0.00	-0.01	-0.03	-0.10	-0.09	-0.07	-0.01	-0.01
26	Psychological	-0.09	-0.01	-0.25**	-0.18**	-0.13*	-0.06	-0.01	-0.01	-0.07	-0.16**	0.01	-0.06	-0.12*	-0.12*
27	Behavioral	-0.08	0.13	-0.13	-0.08	-0.12	-0.09	-0.06	0.07	-0.19*	.00	-0.05	0.00	-0.11	-0.11



optimism, spouse's work and dual-income families. Respondents with lower income and educational attainment report more nonwork stressors and strains. Income is also positively and significantly correlated with personality traits of self-esteem, locus of control, optimism and type A behavior. Civil status is negatively correlated to nonwork stressors, psychological and total strains. That is, parents who are either (single, separated or widowed) report more family stressors compared to married working parents. One-income households are associated with more stressors and strains than dual-income households. In addition, work of spouse is negatively correlated with non-work stressors and strains. Respondents with spouse's who hold low status jobs report more non-work stressors and psychological and total strains. Interestingly, work of respondents is also positively and significantly correlated with work of spouse. The role of breadwinner is associated with longer hours and more non-work (specifically, financial stressors). Finally, all types of stressors are positively and significantly correlated to psychological, physiological and total strains.

#### *Impact of Individual, Work and Family characteristics on Stressors.*

Stepwise regression analysis was done for demographic, personality, family-related, work-related variables using the dependent variables work, non-work and total stressors. In addition, an interaction effect was tested combining work of respondent with that of his/her spouse. Significant factors which emerged were then utilized in hierarchical regression in the same order previously mentioned. Finally, stepwise regression was run again on the hierarchical model to confirm significance of variables and to obtain the semi-partial regression coefficient ( $(R^2)$ ) and partial correlation coefficients ( $(pr^2)$ ) for each variable. Results of such analysis are summarized in Table 2.

The results reveal that demographics (particularly age), personality (self-esteem) and family factors (age of children) account for 7% of the variance in nonwork stressors. The direction of the partial correlation coefficients reveal that the incidence of non-work stressors is higher for those with lower educational attainment, low self-esteem and solo (single, separated or

Table 2. Summary Of Significant Regression Coefficients To Total, Work and Non-Work Stressors (Alpha=.05)

Variable	Total Stressors			Work Stressors			NonWork Stressors		
	pr <sup>2</sup>	ΔR <sup>2</sup>	cum ΔR <sup>2</sup>	pr <sup>2</sup>	ΔR <sup>2</sup>	cum ΔR <sup>2</sup>	pr <sup>2</sup>	ΔR <sup>2</sup>	cum ΔR <sup>2</sup>
Demographic			.02						.03
Age	-.15	.02		n.s.	n.s.		n.s.	n.s.	
Education	n.s.	n.s.		n.s.	n.s.		-.09	.03*	
Personality			.02						.02
Self-Esteem	-.14	.02*		n.s.	n.s.		.16	.02*	
Family Factors			.01			.02			.02
Civil Status	n.s.	n.s.		n.s.	n.s.		-.23	.02*	
Age of children	n.s.	n.s.		-.16	.02		n.s.	n.s.	
Dual Income	.14	.01		n.s.	n.s.		n.s.	n.s.	
Work Factors						.02			
Manual Work	n.s.	n.s.		-.13	.02		n.s.	n.s.	
Interaction Variables			.03			.04			
Work x Spouse Work	-.18	.03*		.21	.04*		n.s.	n.s.	
Total R <sup>2</sup>			.08			.08			.07
Adj R <sup>2</sup>			.07			.07			.07

\* also significant at alpha=.01

widowed) working parents. About the same amount of variance is also accounted for in work stressors by family factors, type of work and an interaction between one's work and one's spouse's work. In particular, parents with young children who have lower level jobs report more work stress. Interestingly, while lower levels jobs are associated with higher number of work stressors, the interaction of high level (managerial/supervisor) jobs for both respondent and spouse is also related to more work stress. Finally, demographic (age), personality (self-esteem), dual income and interaction between work and spouse's work account for 8% of the variance in the combination of work and non-work stressors.

The same statistical treatment described above was done for the criterion variables of physiological, psychological, behavioral and total strains. Each cluster of variables was regressed to the criterion variables. Significant predictors were then entered into a hierarchical regression model. Table 3 summarizes the significant regression coefficients to strains. 10% of the variance in total life strains are accounted for by demographic variables (6%) with education having the biggest effect. Over and above that which is explained by demographics, family characteristics account for 4% of variance in total strains. The model thus tells us that younger, less educated workers who belong to one-income households are the most susceptible to experience of stress. Very little of physiological strains is accounted for by the variables measured. Among them, only income appears to be a significant predictor of physiological strains. In particular, lower income workers report more physiological symptoms of stress. Interestingly, health behaviors are predictors of physiological symptoms of stress but rather behavioral strains. Education (or the lack of it) appears to be a strong predictor ( $R^2=.06$ ) of psychological strain. Over and above that which is explained by education, family factors account for 2% of the variance in psychological strains.

Regarding interaction between work and family, while none of the work variables were significant predictors of non-work stress, family factors (in particular age) does predict work stressors to some extent.

Table 3. Summary of significant regression coefficients to total, physiological, psychological and behavioral strains (alpha=.05)

Variable	Total Strains			Physiological Strains			Psychological Strains			Behavioral Strains		
	pr <sup>2</sup>	ΔR <sup>2</sup>	cum ΔR <sup>2</sup>	pr <sup>2</sup>	ΔR <sup>2</sup>	cum ΔR <sup>2</sup>	pr <sup>2</sup>	ΔR <sup>2</sup>	cum ΔR <sup>2</sup>	pr <sup>2</sup>	ΔR <sup>2</sup>	cum ΔR <sup>2</sup>
<b>Demographic</b>			.06			.02			.06			
Age	-.12	.01		n.s.	n.s.		n.s.	n.s.		n.s.	n.s.	
Education	-.23	.05*		n.s.	n.s.		-.25	.06*		n.s.	n.s.	
Income	n.s.	n.s.		-.16	.02		n.s.	n.s.		n.s.	n.s.	
<b>Personality</b>												.04
Health behaviors	n.s.	n.s.		n.s.	n.s.		n.s.	n.s.		-.19	.04	
<b>Family Factors</b>			.04						.02			
Dual Income	-.22	.04*		n.s.	n.s.		-.14	.02		n.s.	n.s.	
<b>Interaction Variables</b>												.04
Work x Spouse work	n.s.	n.s.		n.s.	n.s.		n.s.	n.s.		.20	.04	
<b>Total R<sup>2</sup></b>			.10			.02			.08			.08
<b>Adj R<sup>2</sup></b>			.09			.02			.07			.06

\* also significant at alpha=.01

Dual Income: 1 = one income family, 2=dual income family

## Discussion

This study sought to determine the demographic, personality, family and work variables which moderate the experience of stressors and their consequences for Filipino working parents. The study also aimed to find out the extent to which family variables influence incidence of work stressors and vice versa.

The correlational analysis generally support previous findings on the relationship between stressors and strains. Both work and non-work stressors are positively and significantly related to total, physiological and psychological strains similar to findings of Quick et al. (1986) and Fleming and Baum (1985). The significant relationships do not hold true however for stressors and behavioral strains. Beehr (1995) notes that while there is some evidence that smoking behaviors are linked to job stressors, studies of behavioral strains other than smoking have been sparse and the results inconsistent.

The regression analysis results support the moderating effect of age on total strains. Specifically, the negative correlation ratio show that younger workers report more stressors and strains similar to the findings of Judge et al. (1994). The buffering effect of education on psychological strains reported by Gore and Mangione (1983) is likewise supported by the results. In addition, individuals with higher educational attainment appear to experience less non-work stressors. While income is significantly correlated to strains, the variable dropped out in regression analysis. It is possible that this simply indicates lack of strength of relationship or is a result of error in the measurement of income a fact which is discussed more thoroughly with other research implications. Gender did not emerge as a significant variable which is not an unusual finding given that majority of the respondents belong to dual-income families. Arce (1975) proposes that as a result of shift of roles from the man as breadwinner to a partnership between husband and wife, women in younger generations may experience less stress as a result of a more equal sharing of homemaker roles with their husbands. However, such explanation is contradicted by the fact that women report significantly less satisfaction than men on the extent to which their spouses

share family responsibility ( $\bar{X}_{\text{women}}=2.9$ ,  $\bar{X}_{\text{men}}=3.2$ , significant at .01). An alternative explanation could therefore be that while there is still an imbalance between role sharing among genders, women have learned to adjust to and tolerate taking on more family responsibilities and hence are not significantly more stressed than men.

Among the personality variables, only self-esteem emerged as a predictor of stress which is consistent with findings of Pearlin and Schooler (1978) and Noor (1994) that self-esteem buffers occupational strains and psychological distress. The emergence of health behaviors as a predictor not of physiological strain but of behavioral strain. One explanation is that unhealthy behavior may exacerbate effect of stressors leading to behavioral stress manifestations such as irritability, aggression, poor work performance among others.

All family-related variables except number of children emerged as predictors of stressors and strains. Consistent with findings of Gore and Mangione (1983) that solo parents are most vulnerable to stress. Given the absence of spouse to buffer and share the burden of parenting and household responsibilities, it is not surprising that the results show that civil status is predictive of family-related stressors.

The literature on dual income families reveal much inconsistencies with some indicating dual incomes as a source of additional strain (Anderson & Leslie, 1991) while others reporting a beneficial effect on psychological health (Gore & Mangione, 1983). The study findings appear to support the latter perspective at least in the point of view of the respondent. That is, working parents whose spouse do not work report more stressors and strains.

Among the work levels, respondents with low level jobs report more work stressors than high level jobs. This is consistent with previous findings that occupational stress is negatively correlated with employee rank (Leong et al., 1996). Interestingly, an interaction effect emerged between respondents and spouses who both hold managerial/supervisory jobs. Judge et al. (1994) report that male workers who hold high levels jobs and those who are in dual-income families report higher levels of job stress than did those in

low-level jobs. In the study sample, it appears that such phenomenon exists especially when spouses hold high-level jobs themselves.

However, some caution should be taken in making strong conclusions about these findings. Given the limitations on size and location of the study population, validation of study findings are important, expanding both the size and location to allow for generalizability of results. The variable of income level and how it was operationalized likewise needs to be reviewed. For this study, the categories were based on data from the National Statistics Office on income levels and distribution. However, the profile of respondents per income level, does not seem consistent with the national profile. The large percentage of upper income respondents, for example, may simply mean that income levels have largely been understated. Thus, this variable needs to be re-defined in order that it be more proximate to existing income distribution.

The study focused only on stressors, consequences and coping behavior for the past six months. While the research sought to obtain a bird's eye view of the situation working parents face and how it affects them, it does not deal with the process of stress. Longitudinal studies may provide more information on appraisal process, duration and chronicity of stressors and coping behaviors. In addition, the causality between stressor and consequence is difficult to ascertain because of the generality of responses. Aldwin (1994) points to the need to study the amount of variance in coping strategies contributed by personality and situational factors. Thus, a variation of the study can be to concentrate on individuals undergoing a specific stressor to better capture the relationship between personality characteristics and situation.

But as they stand, the results already point to several human resource management implication starting with the need for "family-friendly" organizational policies. Given that working parents spend a large chunk of their waking hours on the job, employers can do a lot to help them in balancing work and family life. A specific stressor which was commonly cited by

parents was the increasing time spent away from the home. Given the worsening traffic situation in Metro Manila, options such as flexitime and working at home are but some of the arrangements that may benefit working parents. The growth of telecommunications and computerization however, will hopefully open more opportunities for such and allow workers to achieve more balance between work and personal life.

Although organizations may, on their own, seek to provide organizational arrangements more conducive to parenting, legislation may also be enacted to require organizations to provide such. In the U.S. for example, family leaves and day care are required by law. Other countries such as Canada have 90-day maternity leaves in addition to another 90 day family leave.

In addition to organization policies and labor laws, developing and teaching working parents skills is another important means of equipping working parents to handle stress. Thus developmental programs that cater to the needs of these particular groups may be a good place to start. Problem-focused stress management, problem solving, negotiation training, assertiveness training, time management, and relaxation training are but some of the program that are apparently most needed especially by parents with low and managerial/supervisory jobs who experience most stress as well as those with low educational attainment who are most passive in dealing with stress.

In addition, the significant correlation between health behaviors and strains imply that stress management must also consider all behaviors that contribute to and aggravate stress. Thus another program for parents could be one focused on life style management which includes the integration of exercise, nutrition, personal goal-setting and value clarification.

Organizations typically look after employees' physical health. However, given the established link between stress and illness, the concept of health should be expanded to include mental health as well. Thus, services related to the diagnosis and intervention of mental health should also be included in organizational health services.

## Conclusion

This study aimed to look at the factors which influence work and family stressors and their strains of Filipino working parents. While the resulting hierarchical models are not robust, they do show significant relationships between particular demographic, personality, family and work-related variables and the various stressors and strains. It thus, appears that the relationship between these variables and stress is more complex and more investigation is required to establish stronger predictors of stressors and strains. Notwithstanding the limitations of the study and the many ways that the topic can be explored further and deepened, it is hoped that the results may already prove useful in the development of programs and policies of business and government.

One direction organizations may take for example, is in the reduction of work-related stress via work policies and benefits. However, while there are some stressors which are controllable, the total elimination of these stressors is not a realistic nor intended goal, for the experience of stress is not always detrimental and its consequences not always negative (Aldwin, 1994). The fact that stress may also bring about not just negative but also positive consequences should not however, be a reason for complacency. Aldwin (1994) forwards that "the key to understanding the positive aspects of stress lies in how the individual copes with a given stressor". She further adds that if coping is to produce positive outcomes, it should not merely maintain or create equilibrium but should be able to transform individuals towards self-knowledge, mastery and wisdom. Thus, business organizations have their role not only in minimizing stress and its consequences, but also in providing the support and structures individuals need to cope with unavoidable stressors and minimize. With such, we hope to have individuals, families and subsequently, a society that is transformed by rather than defeated by stress.

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