



“YOU DON’T LOOK DYSLEXIC”: USING THE JOB DEMANDS—RESOURCE MODEL OF BURNOUT TO EXPLORE EMPLOYMENT EXPERIENCES OF AUSTRALIAN ADULTS WITH DYSLEXIA

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Published: International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, Dyslexia Special Edition

BACKGROUND

Employment and job security are key influences on health and wellbeing. Yet in Australia, little is known about the employment lifecycle of adults with dyslexia.

The Job Demands-Resource Model was used to provide a guiding framework to explore how and why workplace job resources and job demands can be connected to work-related outcomes (such as job burnout and employee wellbeing) for those with dyslexia.

PARTICIPANTS IN THIS STUDY WERE:

- highly educated with 93% holding a post-secondary education
- gainfully employed in positions across several different sectors, with work including manual labour, professional executive roles and self-employment.

HIGHLIGHTS

The majority of participants experienced significant job demands, which resulted in challenges throughout their employment including:

- not meeting employer expectations
- difficulties with working relationships
- difficulties with career progression and other systemic organisational barriers.

EMPLOYEES WITH DYSLEXIA REPORTED:

- feeling mental exhaustion and fatigue
- feeling fearful and indecisive about disclosing their dyslexia. A minority reported receiving positive, useful support from team members following disclosure.
- a lack of awareness and understanding of dyslexia as a disability, leading to discrimination
- limited access to reasonable adjustments to work demands.

Dyslexic employees demonstrated high levels of self-efficacy with the ability to implement their own coping strategies and were very resilient.

IMPLICATIONS

These findings suggest that employees with dyslexia are facing a number of workplace challenges, leaving them vulnerable to job burn-out and poor mental health and wellbeing.

- Employers play a vital role in improving job resources (e.g., provision of social support, disability-friendly policies and procedures, and awareness training for leaders)) and reducing overwhelming job demands (e.g., reducing work overload, and increasing access to reasonable adjustments), to ensure those with dyslexia stay engaged and mentally healthy at work.

Dyslexia does not have to be a major barrier to success in any occupation. When in supportive, informed workplace environments, employees with dyslexia can thrive.

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