

# DUAL-CAREER COUPLES AND PARENTING ROLE: SPECIFIC CHALLENGES FOR WORK-LIFE BALANCE

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## **Abstract**

*With the considerable increase of women's share in workforce in all types of organizations and levels, their work and non-work demand has also increased. Therefore, dual career couples always faces new work-life challenges and a spillover effect on work and family demands. Their parenting role also got diverted to work demands due to increased organizational work pressure. This study also provides the evidence that dual career couple face challenges related to balancing their work pressure and their parenting role and to explore the strategies and processes to be adopted by working couples to manage this special work life challenge. The results shows that there is a significant relationship between the work pressure and parenting role of dual career couples. The results proved that couples having small children and having high work pressure results into results into high absenteeism, turnover and less organizational commitment as professional life and as parenting role, found failure or guilty themselves for not spending quality time.*

## **Keywords:**

*Dual Career Couple, Work Pressure, Parenting Role, Work Life Balance*

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Work and family are the key domains of an employee life. Due to an increasing women's share in present workforce, work-life integrations has become an exceptionally challenging and sensitive matter for today's dual career couple. Dual Career Couple was originally discussed and the phrase coined by Rapoport and Rapoport [12] [13] they describe such a family as one where both heads of household pursue a professional career by choice and at the same time maintain a family together. Family was arbitrarily defined as involving at least a marital pair and one child living as a domestic unit. Consistent with the existence literature Dual career couple will also be called as dual income couples regardless of organization type.

Rapoport and Rapoport [13] defined dual career couples as partners occupying career which are characterized by high professional standards. Today's workplace involves more dual career couples as the women's share increasing in all types of organizations. Women now a days having educational qualifications equivalent to men which leads to the change in the values on men and women's roles in the society. Now-a-days more egalitarian partnership constellations are taking place of traditional family models. In the traditional family model "Male" had dominating successful professional and female was just the supported hand, either with the employment or without employment. But in the modern age, scenario is totally different, the central concern of dual career couple is to arrange both partners' career and upward aspirations with a happy family life. By considering this fact researchers recognized the bidirectional nature of work family conflict i.e. work interference with family

or family interference family. In the same direction Greenhaus and Beutell [6] also offered three forms of work family conflict

- Time-base conflict
- Strain-based conflict, and
- Behavior based conflict.

Time based conflict occurs when time devoted to one role makes it difficult to participate in another role. Strain-based conflict suggests that strain experienced in one role intrudes into and interferes with participation in another role.

Gutek et al. [9] also mentioned two directions of work family conflict with each of these three forms. When two directions work interference family and family interference work are combined with three forms i.e. time based conflict, strain-based conflict and behavior based conflict resulting into six dimensions:

- Time-based work interference family
- Time-based family interference work
- Strain based work interference family
- Strain based family interference work
- Behavior based work interference family
- Behavior based family interference work.

Multiple threads of evidence consistently indicate that work-family spill over appears to be in every Dual Career Couple daily routine.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

Greenhaus et al. [9] examined distinctive kinds of work domain pressures as sources of work-family conflict among dual-career couples. Data collected from a matched sample of 119 men and 119 women who were partners in a dual-career relationship. The finding shows that the impact of work salience and task characteristics was somewhat stronger for women than for men. There were significant relations between partners career priority on men's level of strain-based conflict and between partners' job involvement on men's level of time-based conflict.

Frone et al. [4] expanded the term working hours. According to him if an employee spends more time at work then he/she should have less time other activities. As hours increase, so should one's level of perceived work demand [7]. Therefore with increasing work demands, work family conflict also increases which may affect employee work activities.

Izraeli [10] examined gender and domain (work domain and family domain) differences in work-family conflict among 211 men and 237 women managers in dual career couples in Israel. The findings of the study suggested that women and men who are similar in their place of employment and occupational status are also similar in sources of work-family conflict.

Frone [5] examined the relationship between work–family conflict and several types of psychiatric disorders: anxiety, mood, substance abuse and substance dependence. Data collected from a sample of 2,700 employed adults who were either married or the parent of a child 18 years old or younger. Hierarchical logistic regression analyses revealed that both work-to-family and family-to-work conflict were positively related to having an anxiety, mood, and substance dependence disorder.

Elloy and Smith [3] analyzed the level of stress, overload and work-family conflict among single-career couples and dual-career couples. The data for this study collected from a sample of 121 accountants and lawyers from Australia. The outcomes confirmed that dual-career couples experience higher levels of stress, work-family conflict and overload than single-career couples.

Boyar et al. [1] proposed a model which describes various family domain variables and work domain variables. This model clearly shows the work-life domain variables and how perceived family demand and work demand variables results to family interference work and work interference family.

Budworth et al. [2] also agreed that the decision regarding career development should be made with each other’s consultations such as number of hours spent at work, promotions, and relocations and sharing of household tasks. There is a need of

greater coordination between work and family roles when couple decides to raise the children.

Razak et al. [11] explained that work overload was a strong predictor of both the dimensions of work-family conflict resulting to more exhaustion and fatigue.

### 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

- *Research Design:* This study was exploratory and descriptive in nature. The objective was to explore and identify the various work life challenges faced by dual career couples in context of workload per day and age of children.
- *Sample:* Data used in this study were collected from a convenience sample of dual-career couples, drawn from Kurukshetra. Further extending the sampling technique to snow-ball sampling where the dual career samples are taken. This process continued until a sample of 70 dual-career couples was located.
- *Analysis:* Analysis has been done of the data collected and the results have been discussed regarding the work-life challenges faced by dual career couple.

Table.1. One way analysis of variance tests, mean and standard deviations of workload per day on various work-life challenges faced by dual career couples

Challenges Items	7-8 hours		8-9 hours		9-10 hours		10-12 hours		More than 12 hours		F-value	p-value (Sig.)
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Late hours at office	1.90	.84	2.52	.87	3.44	.72	4.00	.00	5.00	.00	8.112	.000
Take work at home	2.80	1.24	2.64	1.22	2.66	1.58	5.00	.00	5.00	.00	4.674	.002
Stressed about the amount of time spend at work	2.26	.98	3.04	.84	3.44	.52	4.00	.00	4.00	.00	7.675	.000
Stressed when think about work	2.43	1.07	2.92	.99	3.44	.52	3.00	.00	3.50	.57	2.731	.036
Lunch break less than 30 minutes	3.76	1.40	3.68	1.24	5.00	.00	4.00	.00	2.00	.00	4.524	.003
Not able to spend quality time with family and friends because of work pressure	3.30	1.26	3.52	1.00	4.33	1.00	4.00	.00	4.50	.57	2.300	.068
Work is having negative effect on personal life.	2.56	.81	3.20	1.15	3.11	.33	4.00	.00	4.00	.00	3.959	.006
You do not get enough time for yourself.	3.56	1.40	3.64	1.25	4.22	.44	5.00	.00	5.00	.00	2.104	.090
Feel upset because of working environment	1.96	.99	2.24	.83	2.55	1.94	2.00	.00	2.00	.00	.606	.660
Lose your temper at work	1.53	.62	2.16	.80	2.00	.86	2.00	.00	2.50	.57	3.487	.012
Disturbed on account of your spouse priority and Engagement in work	3.53	1.25	3.28	.93	2.77	.44	3.00	.00	4.50	.57	2.241	.074
Your spouse is available to your personal and work demands.	4.26	1.28	4.28	1.27	4.77	.66	5.00	.00	5.00	.00	.779	.543

Table.2. One way analysis of variance tests, mean and standard deviations of various age levels of children of employees on various work life challenges faced by dual career couples

Challenges Items	Under 2 years		2-5 years		6-10 years		11-14 years		15-18 years		Over 18 years		F-value	p-value (Sig.)
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Late hours at office	2.52	1.12	2.76	1.16	3.25	1.90	2.10	.87	1.88	1.05	2.76	.43	1.778	.130
Take work at home	2.88	1.16	2.92	1.38	3.25	1.90	3.50	1.35	2.11	1.16	2.84	1.34	1.096	.371

Stressed about the amount of time spend at work	3.23	.97	2.53	.96	3.25	.88	2.20	1.03	2.33	1.22	3.23	.48	3.120	.084
Stressed when think about work	3.11	.85	2.07	.86	3.25	.46	2.20	1.03	2.77	1.39	3.38	.65	2.436	.082
Lunch break less than 30 minutes	3.94	.89	3.92	1.49	3.25	1.38	2.60	2.06	4.22	.44	4.46	.51	1.268	.091
Not able to spend quality time with family and friends because of work pressure	3.94	1.08	3.15	1.62	4.00	.75	3.00	.00	3.55	1.50	3.84	.80	1.629	.165
Work is having negative effect on personal life.	3.58	1.00	2.53	1.12	3.50	.53	2.40	.51	2.44	1.13	3.15	.37	3.652	.061
You do not get enough time for yourself.	4.35	1.11	3.23	1.36	4.25	.88	2.80	1.31	3.66	1.58	4.23	.43	3.529	.077
Feel upset because of working environment	2.05	.96	1.76	.72	1.75	.46	2.20	1.03	1.66	.86	3.15	1.34	1.950	.063
Lose your temper at work	2.23	.66	1.61	.76	1.75	.88	1.30	.48	1.66	.86	2.38	.50	2.268	.082
Disturbed on account of your spouse priority and Engagement in work	3.70	1.10	3.00	1.63	4.00	.75	2.70	.48	3.33	.86	3.53	.51	2.245	.060
Your spouse is available to your personal and work demands.	4.29	.91	4.34	1.50	5.00	.00	4.20	1.03	3.66	2.00	4.84	.37	1.663	.156

### 3.1 WORK-LIFE CHALLENGES COMPARISON TO THE WORKLOAD PER DAY

Descriptive statistics (mean, SD) was calculated (Table.1) and one-way analysis of variance was conducted to analyze the impact of different working hours on the work-life challenges faced by dual career couple, have been shown in the table. It was observed from the mean value which lies from 1.88 to 5.00, that DCC confronts different level of work family conflict (WFC) with respect to their working hours.

To explore the statistical significance of the impact of workload per day on work-life challenges, one way analysis of variance test was performed. Since some of the values of such comparison give Sig.-value less than 0.05, all of the null hypothesis were not accepted. Therefore, there is statistical difference at Sig. < 0.05 level in work-life challenges scores for workload per day.

### 3.2 WORK-LIFE CHALLENGES FACED BY DCC COMPARED TO THE AGE OF THEIR CHILDREN

The present study consists of 6-age groups: under 2 years, 2-5 years, 6-10 years, 11-14 years, 15-18 years, over 18 years. Couples with children under 2 years were found to be  $n = 17$ , children with age 2-5 years were  $n = 13$ , children in age bracket of 6-10 years were found to be  $n = 8$ , children of age 11-14 years were  $n = 10$  and 15-18 were  $n = 9$ , and children over 18 years were  $n = 13$  (Table.2). Mean and S.D was calculated, have been shown in the Table.2, for every age group in comparison to work-life challenges encountered by working couples. Results show that all the couples agreed that they face the work-life challenges while working in many corporate. One-way analysis of variance test was applied to know the impact of different age groups of children of DCC on the work-life challenges they face in daily routine life. The result of ANOVA reveals that the work-life challenges are being faced at same level among all the couples irrespective of children's age. If some differences lie, then that may be due to chance only.

### 4. DISCUSSION ON FINDINGS

- *Employees' children age comparison with the dual career couple who work late hours at office every day:* As shown in Table.2, the p-value comes to be insignificant i.e. more than 0.05. Hence, no statistical significant difference was found between employees' children age and dual career couple who work late hours at office every day. This result proves that all the employees work late hours at office every day whether they are parent of pre-school going child or parent of high school child.
- *Employees' children age comparison with the work DCC brings at home:* To test the significant difference between employees' children age and bringing work assignments at home one way analysis was performed. The p-value was more than 0.05. Therefore, null hypothesis was accepted i.e. there is no significant difference found regarding the work brought at home. The results depict that work pressure is faced by the employees whether their child is too young or teenaged. This result calls for organization support and employers sensitivity towards dual career couple.
- *Employees' children age comparison with the stress DCC feel about the amount of time spends at workplace:* To find the significant difference between employees' children age and amount of time spend at company one way analysis was applied. The null hypothesis was accepted as the p-value comes to be more than 0.05. So, no significant difference was found for working hours. This result confirms that due to work pressure employees are not able to give required attention to their children of any age.
- *Employees' children age comparison with the stress DCC feel when they think about work:* The null hypothesis was tested to find the significant difference between employees' children age and stress regarding work. The p-value was found to be more than 0.05. This implies that no significant difference was found for stress regarding work. Hence employees being workaholic in nature are not able to cope up with family demands.

- *Employees' children age comparison with the DCC who take lunch break:* As shown in Table.2, the p-value comes to be insignificant in comparison between employees' children age and taking lunch break. The null hypothesis was accepted as p-value comes to be greater than 0.05.
- *Employees' children age comparison with the DCC who miss out quality time:* As shown in Table.2, the p-value is again more than 0.05, hence accepting the null hypothesis. This clearly indicates that there is no significant difference found for the DCC misses out on quality time with your family and friends because of work pressure.
- *Employees' children age comparison with the DCC who think work is having negative effect on their personal life:* The significant value of ANOVA test, applied for testing the hypothesis, that there is no significant difference in the employees' children age and thinking about work is having negative effect on personal life. Children's age related issue can't be related to negative effect of work.
- *Employees' children age comparison with the dual career couple who think that they do not get enough time for themselves:* As shown in Table.2, the p-value comes to be insignificant i.e. more than 0.05. Hence, no statistical significant difference was found between employees' children age and dual career couple who think that they do not get enough time for themselves. This result proves that all the employees do not get enough time for themselves whether they are parent of pre-school going child or parent of high school child. These unmet demands of family front leads to more fight at family front.
- *Employees' children age comparison with the disappointment because of working environment in organization:* To test the significant difference between employees' children age and disappoint because of working environment in organization one way analysis was performed. The p-value was more than 0.05. Therefore, null hypothesis was accepted i.e. there is no significant difference found regarding the disappointment because of working environment in organization. The results depicts that work pressure is faced by the employees whether their child is too young or teenaged.
- *Employees' children age comparison with the DCC who loose temper at work:* To find the significant difference between employees' children age and temper loosing at work one way analysis was applied. The null hypothesis was accepted as the p-value comes to be more than 0.05. So, no significant difference was found for temper loosing at work. This result confirms that due to extra work pressure employees are not able to give required attention to their children of any age.
- *Employees' children age comparison with the DCC who feel disturbed on account of spouse priority and engagement in work:* The null hypothesis was tested to find the significant difference between employees' children age and disturbance on account of spouse priority and engagement in work. The p-value was found to be more than 0.05. This implies that no significant difference was found. Hence employees being workaholic in nature are not able to cope up with family demands.

- *Employees' children age comparison with the spouse availability to personal and work demands:* As shown in Table.2, the p-value comes to be insignificant in comparison between employees' children age and spouse availability to personal and work demands. The null hypothesis was accepted as p-value comes to be greater than 0.05.

## 5. CONCLUSION

Descriptive statistics (mean, SD) was calculated and one-way analysis of variance was conducted to analyze the impact of different working hours on the work-life challenges faced by dual career couple. The result showed that workload leads to different job demands and limited time availability which leads to work-life imbalance. Results showed that all the couples agreed that they face the work-life challenges while working in many corporate. One way analysis of variance test was applied to know the impact of different age groups of children of DCC on the work-life challenges they face in daily routine life. The result of ANOVA reveals that the work-life challenges are being faced at same level among all the couples irrespective of children's age. If some differences lie, then that may be due to chance only.

## 6. SUGGESTIONS

- Dual-career couples should develop a network of family and friends that offer instrumental and emotional support in times of stress.
- Policy makers should recognize that career goals and ambitions can be reset at certain other stages in the family life cycle.
- Employers should provide flexible work environment (e.g. work from home)
- Working couples should encourage their children to help them out at household chores.
- Policymakers should provide range of alternatives supports for parental and child care giving including alternative work schedules, flextime, flexplace, day care centres, health check-up campaigns, on-site dependents support centres, supportive leave management policies like pooling of all leave entitlements.

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