

Work- Life Loyalties : A New Outlook for Dual Career Couples

Ms. Roma Jaitly¹,

Ms. Tanvi Rana²,

Ms. Ruchika Sharma³

Abstract

In today's competitive world, where males and females are considered to be equally responsible and proficient enough to take up the challenges at their respective workplaces, it is inevitable for them to surpass their traditional family roles. The increasing level of education and awareness has enhanced the career aspirations among females in India. It has resulted into the pursuance of simultaneous careers by both the partners. Dual career couples are those couples where both the partners pursue their respective careers and at the same time manage their personal life. This study tries to explore the issues and dilemma encountered by dual career couples while managing their professional and personal life. In the light of literature review, various parameters such as career transitions, role conflict, work life balance, role overload, spousal rivalry etc. have also been considered under this study. The different statistical tools and tests such as ANOVA, t-test etc. have been employed and on the basis of the findings, recommendations/ suggestions have been proposed.

Keywords: Dual Career Couple, Career Transitions, job stressors, family stressors, role ambiguity and conflict, Role Overload, Role Conflict, Work Life Balance, Spousal Roles.

Introduction

During the survey, we met Nitya Sinha, a 40 year old, married, mother of two young children and an HR manager in a reputed consulting firm in NCR who was consistently juggling with her professional and personal life. She was busy in conducting interviews, arranging for the training and induction of the new joinees, receiving calls from home, making arrangements for her son's pick up from school, directing her domestic help, cutting a sorry figure for cancelling the weekend get together with her family.

^{1, 2 & 3} Assistant Professor, Delhi Institute of Advanced Studies, New Delhi

This is the story of most of the working females in Indian society who equally contribute in earning bread and butter for their family and simultaneously fulfilling household responsibilities. Over the past three decades, a change has been observed in the work force composition of the country, which is the steady increase of women employees in various organizations. This change is not due to the increasing educational level among women only but also due to their needs for the personal development and financial independence (**Elloy & Smith, 2004**).

The dual-career lifestyle has created a unique set of challenges, many of which relate to socialization and role expectations, work role conflicts, and family role conflicts.

Within the work and family domain the conflict arise from a clash of the 'roles' and are mainly due to a combination of personal, domestic and societal 'expectations and demands' (**Poisg & Kickul, 2004**).

Dual-career couple has been defined as “a married couple where both husband and wife have different careers” (**HR Dictionary, 2011, online**). “For dual-career couples and working women, balancing work demands with personal and family responsibilities is difficult to do” (**Jackson and Mathis, 2007**), and the situations becomes even more challenging where dual career couples have dependant family members (Children/parents).

A woman in Indian society who is by default responsible for taking care of household chores, when decides to pursue her profession either to extend an helping hand to her husband or to fulfill her career aspirations is in no-win situation. She is continuously juggling between two different sets of responsibilities and this gives rise to role conflict and ambiguity. Both the roles require some distinguished qualities to deal the various situations in personal and professional spheres. Very often these two set of qualities are incompatible with each other.

The man too is struggling between the various roles he has been assigned as he has got a working partner as well. He has to do household chores even if he has not been brought up with the same mindset. In the Indian society, he has been by default assigned the role of Head of the family who is majorly responsible for earning and has to do little socialization. Devoting great deal of his time in domestic activities may adversely affect his performance at the workplace in case the man has to compete with a colleague who is free from household obligations.

The review of literature suggests that the factors affecting the dual career couples are Job Stressors, Family Stressors, Role Conflict & Ambiguity. These factors are inter-related and affect each other to a very great extent. For example, if a person is not happy at the workplace, he is likely to bring the stress at home which may affect his family life. Similarly, if the person's family life is disturbed, his performance at the workplace is surely going to be affected adversely. Role conflict and ambiguity, either at work place or home has a negative impact upon person's work and family life both.

JOB STRESSORS

Job stressors like excessive work pressure at the workplace, politics, unsuitable timings, HR policies of the organization, competition, rivalry among peers, unsatisfied job profiles etc. create stress and may lead to not so good performance of the employee. This in turn affects his/her family and social circle.

FAMILY STRESSORS

Also the factors like household chores, child rearing, grocery refilling, fulfilling the social commitments produce stress and affect person's mind. Unequal distribution of work between husband and wife and other expectations in family immensely leads to Family stressors. The relationship between the dual career couple gets disturbed when one partner is doing well in his or her career and other partner is adjusting his career according his/her spouse's career. This can worsen the situation especially when one of the partners is making sacrifice or not able to take up better opportunities in his/her career for the sake of his/her partner's career. The partner at the sacrificing end experiences resentment and frustration in personal relationships giving birth to the spousal rivalry syndrome.

ROLE CONFLICT & AMBIGUITY

Males in Indian society are majorly recognized as bread earners and females as home makers. But from the above discussion, it is very clear that because of career aspirations and increased level of education, females are also raising the finances for a household. Husband has to share the household activities with his better half. This creates role conflict and ambiguity among the dual career couple as the line of bifurcation of activities is very thin.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To study the impact of various demographic factors (Gender, Age, Level of Education, type of the organization, Family structure and number of children) on Job stressors.
2. To study the impact of various demographic factors on Family stressors.
3. To study the impact of various demographic factors on Role conflict & Ambiguity stressors.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design:

A structured questionnaire was designed to collect the data. Different possible indicators contributing to work life balance were identified through literature review and theoretical framework. These factors majorly include Job stressors (JS), Family stressors (FS) and Role conflict and ambiguity (RC&A). This paper illustrates the differences in the level of JS, FS and RC&A with respect to Gender, Age, type of family, Education Qualification. Questionnaire was designed with a pool of 16 items and the data on these items was collected on a 5 point likert scale. The opinion indicated as 'strongly agree' has been assigned the weight of 5. The cronbach alpha reliability of this questionnaire was found to be .70, which is an acceptable level of internal consistency.

Sampling and Data Collection:

The study was conducted in Delhi-NCR region. A data of 123 respondents was collected through convenience sampling.

Demographic Definition:

| AGE | | Frequency | Percent |
|-----------------------------|--------------------|-----------|---------|
| Valid | 20-25 | 12 | 9.8 |
| | 26-30 | 36 | 29.3 |
| | 31-35 | 38 | 30.9 |
| | 36-40 | 14 | 11.4 |
| | 41-45 | 2 | 1.6 |
| | 46-50 | 13 | 10.6 |
| | above 50 | 8 | 6.5 |
| GENDER | | | |
| Valid | Male | 54 | 43.9 |
| | Female | 69 | 56.1 |
| TYPE OF FAMILY | | | |
| Valid | Nuclear | 63 | 51.2 |
| | Joint | 60 | 48.8 |
| TYPE OF ORGANIZATION | | | |
| Valid | Public | 31 | 25.2 |
| | Private | 92 | 74.8 |
| NO. OF CHILDREN | | | |
| Valid | None | 53 | 43.1 |
| | one or more than 1 | 70 | 56.9 |
| EDUCATION | | | |
| Valid | graduation | 25 | 20.3 |
| | post-graduation | 98 | 79.7 |

DATA ANALYSIS & INTERPRETATION:

t- Test is applied to find the significant relationship between gender and the different Job stressors, family stressors and role ambiguity & conflict.

JOB STRESSORS AND ITS IMPACT:

Ho: There is no relationship of Gender, Age, Level of Education, type of the organization, Family structure and number of children with job stressors.

Table 2: Relationship between Gender, Age, Level of Education, type of the organization, Family structure and number of children and different job stressors

| GENDER | Levene's Test for Equality of Variances | | t-test for Equality of Means | | |
|--|---|------|------------------------------|-----|-----------------|
| | F | Sig. | t | Df | Sig. (2-tailed) |
| JS: My presence at work gets important over my family issues | 4.046 | .046 | 3.695 | 121 | .000 |
| JS: Cognitive challenges at work restricts my family involvement | .356 | .552 | -2.454 | 121 | .016 |
| JS: Many a times i face work family conflicts | 2.799 | .097 | -3.413 | 121 | .001 |
| EDUCATION | | | | | |
| JS: I well understand my job and its expectations from me | 6.929 | .010 | -2.467 | 121 | .015 |
| JS: I have clear goals and objectives for my job | .581 | .448 | -2.660 | 121 | .009 |
| TYPE OF FAMILY | | | | | |
| JS: Many a times i face work family conflicts | 12.403 | .001 | -3.442 | 121 | .001 |
| JS: I have clear goals and objectives for my job | .124 | .725 | -2.430 | 121 | .017 |
| TYPE OF ORGANIZATION | | | | | |
| JS: I well understand my job and its expectations from me | 1.392 | .240 | 2.774 | 121 | .006 |
| JS: Many a times i face work family conflicts | 2.452 | .120 | -2.038 | 121 | .044 |

Table 2 reveals that H_0 is rejected for Gender, education, type of family, type of organization but accepted in case of number of children. Considering sub categories of Job stressors, it shows significant relationship with some parameters as mentioned above in the table. Males ($m_1=3.5$) admit that their work gets more important over their family issues in contradiction to females ($m_2= 2.8$). Females ($m_2= 4.4$) restrict their family involvement due to work challenges but males ($m_1=4$) balance it in a better way. Females ($m_2=3.9$), possibly due to more of dual role, face more of work family conflict as compared to males ($m_1=3.1$). Graduates ($m_1=2.2$) have less understanding about their jobs as compared to post graduates ($m_2=2.8$). Similarly post graduates ($m_2= 3.4$) have better understanding of their goals and objectives being in the job as compared to graduates ($m_1=2.7$). Joint families

($m_2=3.9, 3.5$) face more of role conflict and have better understanding of their job as compared to nuclear families ($m_1=3.2, 3$). Type of the organization, the couples is working in also decides the impact of job stressors. Employees working in the private organizations ($m_2=2.58, 3.7$) are little less aware about their work and face more of work conflict as compared to the employees working in the public organizations ($m_1=3.2, 3.1$).

Ho: There is no relationship between Age and Job stressors.

Table 3: Relationship between Age and Job stressors

ANOVA

| | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|----------------|----------------|-----|-------------|-------|------|
| Between Groups | 4.046 | 6 | .674 | 2.293 | .040 |
| Within Groups | 34.116 | 116 | .294 | | |
| Total | 38.163 | 122 | | | |

The analysis demonstrates that null hypothesis is rejected that means there is a relationship between Age and Job stressors. Post Hoc test reveals that the age group of 36-40 face the maximum impact of job stressors (mean value = 3.78) and age group of 45-50 and above 50 (mean value = 2.0) face the least impact of job stressor for maintaining their work life balance.

FAMILY STRESSORS AND ITS IMPACT:

Ho: There is no relationship of Gender, Age, Level of Education, type of the organization, Family structure and number of children with different Family stressors.

Table 4: Relationship between Gender, Age, Level of Education, type of the organization, Family structure and number of children and different family stressors.

Independent Samples Test

| | Levene's Test for Equality of Variances | | t-test for Equality of Means | | |
|--|---|------|------------------------------|-----|-----------------|
| | F | Sig. | t | df | Sig. (2-tailed) |
| GENDER | | | | | |
| FS I face the problem of Spousal Rivalry | 5.397 | .022 | -4.910 | 121 | .000 |
| FS My work restricts me from meeting social expectations | 3.713 | .056 | -2.802 | 121 | .006 |
| FS: My family issues take priority over my work | .012 | .913 | -5.010 | 121 | .000 |
| EDUCATION | | | | | |
| FS I face the problem of Spousal Rivalry | 9.420 | .003 | -3.612 | 121 | .000 |
| TYPE OF FAMILY | | | | | |
| FS I face the problem of Spousal Rivalry | 3.056 | .083 | -2.536 | 121 | .012 |
| NUMBER OF CHILDREN | | | | | |
| FS Work place tensions bothers my personal relationships | .141 | .708 | -4.299 | 121 | .000 |

Table 4 reveals that H_0 is rejected for Gender, education, type of family and number of children but accepted for the type of organization. Considering the sub categories of family stressors females ($m_2=3.4$) face more problem of spousal rivalry as compared to males ($m_1=2.5$). Female ($m_2= 3.1$) faces the problem of meeting social expectations more than males ($m_1=2.5$). Females ($m_2=3.1$) always keep their family issues at priority over work as compared to males ($m_1= 1.9$). Female prefer their family obligations more over work. Post graduates ($m_2= 3.2$) also face the problem of spousal rivalry possibly due to inter spousal competition as compared to graduates ($m_1=2.3$). The problem of spousal rivalry is also common in case of Joint family ($m_2=3.3$) in comparison to Nuclear family ($m_1 = 2.8$). In case of number of children, work place tensions bothers personal relationships more in case

of children in a family ($m_2=3.2$) in comparison to the situation where couples do not have any child in the family ($m_1=2.3$). In order to find the relationship between age and family stressor ANOVA was applied to the data and resulted in the significant value more than 0.05 resulting in acceptance of H_0 . This means there is no significant relationship between age and family stressors.

ROLE AMBIGUITY AND CONFLICT:

H_0 : There is no relationship of Gender, Age, level of Education, type of the organization, Family structure and number of children with role ambiguity and conflict.

Table 5: Relationship between Gender, Age, level of Education, type of the organization, Family structure and number of children and Role Ambiguity and Conflict.

Independent Samples Test

| | Levene's Test for Equality of Variances | | t-test for Equality of Means | | |
|--|---|------|------------------------------|-----|-----------------|
| | F | Sig. | t | df | Sig. (2-tailed) |
| GENDER | | | | | |
| RCA Being the part of more than one role increases my stress | 4.689 | .032 | 4.506 | 121 | .000 |
| RCA I feel role ambiguity both at work and family issues | .895 | .346 | 3.115 | 121 | .002 |
| EDUCATION | | | | | |
| RCA Better role definition increases my performance at both the ends | .251 | .617 | -3.004 | 121 | .003 |
| TYPE OF FAMILY | | | | | |
| RCA I feel role conflict and overload many a times | 7.722 | .006 | 2.135 | 121 | .035 |
| TYPE OF ORGANIZATION | | | | | |
| RCA Being the part of more than one role increases my stress | 16.586 | .000 | -2.354 | 121 | .020 |

Table 5 reveals that H_0 is rejected for Gender, education, type of family and type of organization but accepted for the number of children. Males ($m_1=4.6$) feel more stressed out as compared to females ($m_2=3.9$) in case of more than one role or responsibility. Males ($m_1=3.6$) also feel role ambiguity whereas females ($m_1=2.9$) manage it well. Post graduates ($m_2=3.9$) have better understanding of their roles and perform well at both the ends unlikely

graduates ($m_1=3.3$). The employees living in joint families ($m_2=3.7$) face more of role conflict and overloaded as compared to the nuclear family employees ($m_1=3.3$). Also, private organization cause more stress and role expectations from their employees. For this particular reason possibly private organization employees feel more stressed being the part of more than one role ($m_2=4.3$) while public organization employees are able to handle more than one role conveniently ($m_1=3.9$).

Table 6: Relationship between Age and Role ambiguity and conflict ANOVA

| | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|----------------|----------------|-----|-------------|-------|------|
| Between Groups | 6.496 | 6 | 1.083 | 3.222 | .006 |
| Within Groups | 38.984 | 116 | .336 | | |
| Total | 45.480 | 122 | | | |

Table 6 demonstrates the significant relationship between age and role ambiguity and conflict. Post Hoc test reveals that the age group of 31-35 & 36-40 ($m=3.81, 3.87$) face the highest role ambiguity and conflict being in more than one role. Age group of 46-50 and above 50 ($m= 3.3, 3.2$) face the least of it.

Discussion

This study has considered the important parameters that may affect the work life balance of Dual career couples. The important demographics that may directly or indirectly impact the job stressors, family stressors and different roles and responsibilities of couples are explored. Considering women, the study suggests that their inclination towards their families has always taken a better edge over their responsibilities towards their work. Cognitive challenges at workplace restricts their involvement at home whereas males do not fear of accepting challenges and are more inclined towards their jobs. Considering family stressors, females are less able to manage social expectations due to 360 degree pressure and

expectations. They also face problem of spousal rivalry possibly due to the fact that they are expected to be more inclined towards their family and its demands. Males are comparatively free of such obligations. Talking about role ambiguity and conflict, Females face fewer amounts of role ambiguity and conflict as compared to males. Education plays an important role in deciding the income peace and stability of any couple. The study reveals that post graduates have better understanding of their jobs and its expectations from them. This makes them in a better position to balance their personal as well as professional life. With the higher level of education, responsibilities do increase but at the same time the competency to maintain balance between the two ends also increases. In case of family structure also, as the number of members in the family increases, the roles to be played by both males and females are also increased. Couples living in the joint families face more of role conflict and ambiguity. These couples also face the problem of meeting social expectations and family demands in terms of responsibilities, time, and other expectations. This study has taken one important parameter of presence of a child at home. The families where couples have children are prone to more stress both at workplace and family. Somewhere or somehow, their work pressure and job expectations affect their child directly or indirectly. They face the problems of picking their child from school, giving him complete attention, time, proper grooming etc. These entire responsibilities imbalance their competency to maintain their work life balances. Due to the competitive environment, the type of the organization also decides the couple's contentment and balance. Employees of private organization feel more stressed and role conflict while public organization employees are able to handle organizational stress more conveniently. On exploring the relationship with age it was found that as the age increases the ability to manage family and work also gets better. At early age, both the ends are less stable or less in form but as the experience increases the couples become better managers of their responsibilities. All these findings can be used to design the strategies for MNCs and public organizations to get the better side of their employees. The areas of problems can be given solutions both at family and work to utilize the best of dual career couple competencies.

Conclusion

In today's demanding world, where everyone expects to lead a life of contentment, there has been an accelerated trend of dual career couples gathering the maximum comfort for

themselves and their family. This investigation has explored the different sub categories of job stressors, family stressors and Role ambiguity and conflict. Different efforts on both organizational and family end can support couples to maintain their work life balance effectively. The organizations should list the different parameters for assessing the work life balance expectations of their employees. The facilities like crutch for children, transport facility, flexible timings, and maternity leaves, work from home and a better structure of communication can be a successful input to extract the best of its employees. Both the couples and organizations should together conduct an audit and perform analysis to find out what best can be contributed from both the ends to generate the best for the organization as well as its employees.

References

1. Butler, Matilda and Paisley, William. "Coordinated-Career Couples: Convergence and Divergence in Dual-Career Couples, Beverly Hills: Sage, 1980 Pp. 207-228.
2. Byars, LL & Rue, LW, 2006, Human Resource Management, Prentice Hall
3. Chan, C.H. and W.O. Einstein, —Quality of Work Life (QWL): What can unions do?|| , SAM Advanced Management J., 1990, Page. No. 17-22.
4. David F. Elloy, Catherine Smith, (2004) "Antecedents of work-family conflict among dual-career couples: an Australian study", Cross Cultural Management: An International Journal, Vol. 11 (4), pp.17 – 27
5. Elloy & Smith, 2004, Cross Cultural Management: An International Journal, Antecedents of work-family conflict among dual-career couples: an Australian study, Volume 11 issue 4 .
6. <http://globalcitizendaily.com/story/mindful-life/2013/04/making-your-work-fit-your-life> retrieved on 9th May, 2014.
7. <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/ewh-sent/pubs/occup-travail/balancing-equilibre/index-eng.php#a21> retrieved on 9th may, 2014.
8. Jackson, JH, Mathis, RL, 2007, Human Resource Management, CengageLearning
9. Kim, J.; Ling, C. 2001. Work-family conflict of women entrepreneurs in Singapore, Women in Management Review 16(5): 204-221.
10. Kinnunen, U.; Mauno, S. 1998. Antecedents and outcomes of work-family conflicts among employed women and men in Finland, Human Relations 51: 157-177.

11. Lamanna, MA & Riedman, A, 2006, Marriages & Families: Making Choices in a Diverse Society, Cengage Learning
12. Luthans, F., —Organisational behaviour|| . (Eighth edition). Boston, MA: Irwin McGraw-Hill, 1998.
13. Marc Sher., —Mary Dual Career Couples — Problem or Opportunity?|| Vol. 25, No. 2, Ga, zette, 2006, pp 8-17.
14. Noor, N. M. 2002. Work-family conflict, locus of control, and women's well-being: Tests of alternative pathways, *The Journal of Social Psychology* 142: 645-662.
15. Pleck, J., Staines, G. & Lang, L. (1980). "Conflicts between work and family life", *Monthly Labor Review*, 103,3, 29-32
16. Poisg, M. & Kickul, J.(2004), Work-role Expectations and Work Family Conflict: Gender Differences in Emotional Exhaustion. *Women in Management Review*. 19(7), 373-386.
17. Posig M.; Kickul, J. 2004. Work-role expectations and work family conflict: gender differences in emotional exhaustion, *Women in Management Review* 19(7): 373-386.
18. Rapoport, Rhona and Rapoport, Robert N., —Dual-career families|| . Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1971.
19. Rose, R. C., Beh, L. S., Uli, J. & Idris, K., —Quality of Work Life: Implications of Career Dimensions|| , *Journal of Social Sciences*, 2006, Vol 2(2), pp 61-67.
20. Sekaran, U. 2006. *Research Methods for Business, A Skill Building Approach*, New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons.
21. Sekaran, U., *Dual-career Families*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1986.
22. Snell, S. A.; Dean, J. W., Jr. 1992. Integrated manufacturing and HRM: a human capital perspective, *Academy of Management Journal* 35(3): 467-504.
23. Susan B. Hester Assistant Professor, Design and Environmental Analysis, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York., Kitty G. Dickerson Associate Professor and Chair, Department of Clothing and Textiles, College of Home Economics, University of Missouri-Columbia, July 1984, Volume 22, Number 4.
24. Thomas, L. T.; Ganster, D. C. 1995. Impact of family-supportive work variables on work-family conflict and strain: A control perspective, *Journal of Applied Psychology* 80(1): 6-15.

25. Walton, R.E.,—Criteria for Quality of working Life. In L.E., Davis, and A.B., Cherns (Eds), *The quality of working life*, Newyork: The free press, 1975, Vol. 1.
26. Work-role expectations and work family conflict: gender differences in emotional exhaustion, *Women In Management Review*, Vol. 19 Iss: 7, pp.373 – 386
27. Yogev, S., & Brett, J. (1985). Patterns of work and family involvement among single-and dual-earner couples, *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 70, 754-768.