A STUDY OF STRESS AND JOB SATISFACTION OF DUAL CAREER TEACHER COUPLES OF TAMILNADU

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ABSTRACT

Nowadays work-life balance is viewed by many employees and organizations as an important issue. In today’s world, where every individual has to balance conflicting responsibilities and commitments, work-life balance has emerged as a predominant issue in the workplace. Between men & women the frequent topic is the search for work life balance. Work-life imbalance usually arises out of a lack of adequate time and support to manage work commitments as well as personal and family responsibilities. Meeting competing demands of work and family is not only tiring but can be stressful and can lead to sickness and absenteeism. It inevitably affects productivity. The results also indicate that female members face more stress than the male members. Both genders with high work family conflict and work-role stress have lower levels of job satisfaction than those facing lower family conflict and work-role stress. Women who have higher family roles experience greater job satisfaction than those who face low family role stress.

Keywords: work-life balance, Work family conflict, stress, job Satisfaction.

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Introduction

The last two decades have been marked by striking changes in the world of work and nature of the family. Market competition requires companies and employers to be more flexible, flexible and responsive to long hours, increased workload, job insecurity, uncertainty and stress are characteristics of most jobs. These changes have important implications for the employees as well. One important change in the nature of the workforce is the ever increasing number of in paid employment. This change has introduced new challenges for most families having implications for family structure, responsibilities, child and elderly care and everyday household chores.

Twin-earning couples are now routine, and male and female employees are more likely to have significant household duties and family responsibilities (Allen, Hearst, Brock & Sutton, 2000).

Technological advancement has blurred the boundaries between work and family life by making it easier for work to intrude into family and vice versa resulting in increased difficulty for most employees to maintain a balance between these two central life domains successfully. According to Parasuraman and Greenhaus (1993), this translates into a difficult effort to combine career and family.

The present researchers strongly view that Indian-dual career couples, in contrast to similar couples in other parts of the world (where the single parent family or the nuclear-family system is a more common way of life) must be facing and confronting lot more pressures and conflicts in their attempts to meet the varying and contrasting demands of work and family roles. The pressures are likely to be high, primarily because of the Indian socio-cultural context, where the joint-family-structure and the extended family system, with its emotionally loaded familial bonds and close-knit character, is the dominant way of life. Hence, the researchers of this paper found the dual-career couples in India, about whom not enough data and information is generated and available, as an interesting source materials for exploring and furnishing new insights into the problems of work-family-integration.

Indian dual-career couples were considered an interesting study material for one other reason also. It is a commonly known fact that the sociocultural ethos in the sub-continent is quite
different because of its strong social and family support system. In the face of industrialization, modernization, urbanization, globalization and growth in the standards of education and economy levels of the aware and interested, rapid transformation is taking place in the social fabric and social structure of the nation. The typical joint-family structure, especially in urban areas and amongst the educated lot, is rapidly getting destroyed and substituted by nuclear and close single families.

The burden of family income is fast being shared equally by both male and female members. But it is still very true that despite these quick changes and transformations, working couples in India can still bank on a plethora of familial support when in crisis. Regular, cheap, hired, and dependable help is much more easily and conveniently available in India than in most other parts of the world, whether developing or developed. Family-support, either from the wife's side or from the husband's is a very common feature in most Indian families, irrespective of whether they are nuclear institute or placed in some metro or cosmopolitan town - and that too, help that is willingly, eagerly and readily given. How do dual career couples, within this kind of supportive environment and social-context, respond to and cope with the conflicts and pressures (and resultant stress) from work, family and work-family-interface. Do the two genders respond differently and adopt differential coping strategies; is the feeling of stress, conflict, happiness well-being and satisfaction in and with job and family, differential in respect to their genders? - These are some very pertinent questions that triggered the interest and attention of the investigators, especially because of the exponential and voluminous growth of women in the work force.

It has been observed that a large segment of educated-women’s population in India (most probably in other countries—also) show preference to teaching as a profession over jobs in private sectors and the government etc. This in all probability is because of the inherent nature of the profession, which on the face of it is less demanding and allows more leverage and comfort to its occupants. It has its working hours (time period), flex-tables, convenient timings, no time bound fixed targets, none or very little need for tour and travel, regular and frequent holidays with the added bonus of status and respectability in society.
Such characteristics of a profession, in all probability must be providing enough edge over others to its women professionals, helping them to cope with the multifarious roles and responsibilities towards their family and work in it more non-stressed manner. Arlee reported that the husbands feel less burnout than their wives and attributed the reason to the differential roles played by men and women in a gender stratified social system. Sekaran (1986) also found multiple role stress to significantly impair the mental health of wives but not husbands in a dual-earner relationship. Aryee (1992) attributed this to the gender stratification of the social structure, which prescribes differential sex roles and the differential socialization processes that it entails. Thus, a profession that is likely to provide more time, less pressure and more 'space' to carry out the social and cultural mandate of having primary allegiance to the family, without any doubt, is going to draw the maximum number of women towards it (the growing demand of teachers training institutions and the increasing number of female enrolment in them, is sufficient evidence to support the claim). Hence, it is no wonder, that most Indian families as also its prospective women employees, regard teaching to be the most suited and respectful, less-stress inducing profession for women.

This is all the more so with respect to the middle-class segment of the population which, in its attempt to meet economic challenges and acquire the mantle of modern, liberal and forward class, is increasingly allowing its women to join the workforce, but without enough will or courage to break the traditionally assigned differential Roles of the Gender Tier Social Organization.

Differential social roles assigned to men and women are still the order of the day and probably the root cause of greater levels of stress and burn out in women. It was within this experimental, theoretical and research based background framework that the present investigators thought of examining the nature of conflicts and stress emanating from work and family domains of dual-career teacher couples with their job-satisfaction a strong and predictive factor of burn out.

Need for balancing work and life

Work-life balance, which is considered as a state of wellbeing to handle multiple responsibilities, has become a critical factor for bringing individual and organizational success. Work-life balance is best achieved when an individual’s sight to a fulfilled life, both inside and
outside paid work, is accepted and respected as the norm, to the mutual benefit of the individual, business, and society. A balanced life conceives of work and family as mutually reinforcing. Organizations, aware of the positive implications of balanced life, have begun considering family experiences as part of what workers bring to their workplace to enrich their contributions to work and organizations and vice versa. In fact, work-life balance brings greater effectiveness to all aspects of life. Employees will do better if they find enough time for their work schedules, family and personal interests.

In the eyes of employees, work-life balance is an effective solution to the dilemma of managing work habits and personal or family responsibilities. In the eyes of employers, work-life balance poses the challenge of creating an organizational culture that supports the family needs of employees so that employees can focus on their work better while on the job.

When an employer adopts policies favorable to work-life balance, it is likely to be perceived by the employees as a huge incentive, which can motivate them as much as other considerations like additional remuneration or provision of training opportunities. Results of various researches indicate that employees are no longer interested in devoting their entire time to their work or profession. They are becoming increasingly conscious of the outcomes of a healthy life as well.

**Work-family challenges of women professionals**

In most of the societies, work-life conflict seems to be quite high in case of working women. Although men also face this challenge of balancing work and other priorities, it affects women more since they do most of the work associated with the household activities, apart from taking care of children, older family members, and other dependents. Although many roles at work and family are satisfactory for working women (Crosby 1987), the inclusion of related family roles is often associated with conflict, overload, and stress (Frone, Russell, and Cooper, 1991; 1992; Lewis and Cooper, 1987; 1988).

Pleck’s (1977) research suggests that family-to-work spill-over is stronger for women and the work-to-family spill-over is stronger for men. Family environment and work environment are the two factors that contribute to the enhancement of complications or
problems for employed women, and between the two, Work-related or family-related factors are particularly important for women (Joshi, 1990).

Gender differences exist in terms of work and family boundaries in almost every society and this has resulted in gender differences in the experiences of work-family interface (Rothbard, 2001). Even in developed countries in the West, especially in North America, sources of stress for women include role overload from paid work and family work, role conflict, pressures associated with child care and other family care, and aspects of spousal relationships, including dissatisfaction with spouses’ contribution to family work (Lewis and Cooper, 1987; 1988). Research over time and across cultures has continued to document the persistent inequality in the allocation of household work within dual career families, even among couples Modernist ideologies and commitment to gender equality at home and in the workplace (Brannen and Moss 1991; Hochschild 1989; Sandqvist 1992). Study conducted by Goo gins and Burden, (1987) suggests that among married couples, fathers reported to be spending 10-15 hours less each week on home and childcare tasks than full-time employed mothers, giving fathers combined weekly job-home load of 68.92 hours and mothers 83.91 hours. Women give birth to children, and still do most of the work of bringing them up. To do a demanding job and managing family and social life simultaneously is notoriously difficult. It is generally women who take the primary responsibility for childcare and who, in situations of conflict, adjust their working lives to accommodate family pressures (Wajcman, 1981; Falkenberg and Monachello, 1990).

The Indian Context

The growing number of educated women in India now participate in Technical, professional, and administrative positions in the urban, organized, industrial sector, with sustainable growth in dual-occupancy homes (Gomraju, 1997). Compared to their counterparts in other parts of the world, Indian employees face a lot of difficulties managing their careers and lives. A study by Rudd, Lewis, and Kagan (1999) found that women in India experience considerable stress, in the morning and before work, to do everything they need for the family. As Gomaraju (1997) notes, the relative lack of an infrastructure provides a reliable supply of electricity, water and time-saving, modern kitchens and other equipment, giving the performance of domestic responsibility burdens, especially for women in dual-occupational households. In
addition, the lack of flexible working hours and child care facilities is a barrier to support for working mothers (Bharat, 2001).

Though in urban India, things have started improving, yet they are not adequate. For maintaining work-life balance, social support plays a very significant role for women managers. In societies, where there is low gender egalitarianism, such as in India, spousal support is extremely important for women (Rosenbaum and Cohen, 1999). But unfortunately, even though Indian husbands are supportive of their wives’ participation in the workforce, they are yet to assume responsibility for sharing domestic chores (Ramu, 1989). In India, instrumental support for most working women comes in the form of hired domestic helps or female members of extended families. Although hired domestic helps in urban areas of India have been noted to be expensive and unreliable, they still continue to be a major source of support for the growing number of nuclear families who live far from their relatives (Sekaran, 1992).

Although conflict between career and family roles can be a potential source of stress for both women and men managers, it affects women in India more than men because of many reasons. While social, legal and economic reforms have helped women join the work force in India, the continued influence of ethical attitudes and values has prevented them from changing society’s perceptions and their own about their sexual roles.

Equal distribution of domestic responsibilities is thus a distant possibility now (Bharat, 2003).

The expectation that women should give priority to their family-needs leads to higher levels of personal role-overload for women than men. This has definitely affected the career prospects of women in particular. In many cases, the supervisors/managers are sensitive to this issue and try to handle employees’ difficulties at an individual level. However, in the absence of any systematic policy to address this important issue, the women suffer more than men in terms of their career advancement and family role fulfillment.
Impact of Family Responsibilities on Career Decisions

In today’s world, work and family domains influence each other greatly. It is a fact that the family interferes with work as the family interferes with work (Gudek, Searle and Kleba, 1991). For female managers, this is even more true because they have more pressure to meet social expectations. There is indeed a critical linkage between career and family of the female executives. It has been found that the roles, demands and achievements of the female manager in the employment and family domains are mutually exclusive (Gudek, Repetti, and Silver, 1988).

The internalization of the belief that roles are gender-specific prescribes different life-options for men and women. For men, this life option implies prioritization of work over family, whereas for women, it implies prioritization of family over work. In the context of India, Rajadhakshya and Bhatnagar (2000) reported that men are more committed to work or occupation than women and that gender-role expectations and Gender-based socialization leads men to identify themselves with their work roles. And women to identify themselves with ‘family roles.’ Women are expected to identify with the family and, therefore, invest more time and energy resources to enhance performance in that role.

The expectation that women should give priority to the family suggests that women managers would experience higher levels of parental role-overload than men (Aryee, Srinivas and Tan, 2005). A very recent study by Warren, Fox and Pascal (2009) reveals that combining paid-work and motherhood remains a major source of difficulties for women. Mothers are more likely than fathers to bend jobs to meet family needs. While there appear to be signs of growing gender convergence, but not equality, in parent’s contribution to childcare times (O’ Brien, 2005), women are still responsible for domestic labour and childcare (Tang and Cousins, 2005). It has also been found by empirical research that professionals and managers are expected to take on a considerable amount of responsibility, which reveals a preference for providing short and flexible working hours and an unsolicited work environment (Conard, 2003).

While this holds true for both male and female respondents in the study, women have been seen to be affected more than men because they traditionally spend more hours in household work than men. Women managers consistently report significantly higher job-family role conflict, which may
be accompanied by higher mental and physiological strains than men managers. Research also suggests that women managers’ report greater stress than men managers due to childbearing, conflicts with their partners, and other family-related problems. This indicates that even though career demands may be equal for both the partners, married women managers do not receive the support they need from the organizations and society (Davidson and Cooper, 1986). It has also been observed that extensive family responsibilities, especially those involving marriage, childcare, and household activities can impede women managers’ career achievements (Gutek, Repetition Silver, 1988; Olson and Frieze, 1987). Some studies seven show that women experience extensive work-family conflicts because of their involvement in family affairs. And more often than not, women respond to this problem by reducing their involvement in work. Because geographical mobility is dangerous to career advancement and family equality, many female managers choose to roam the toymaine, rooted in one place (Beelby and Beelby, 1992). It limits their career prospects and progress (Parasuraman and Greenhouse, 1993).

Considering the influence of the patriarchal value structure of the family on their career aspirations and motivations for work, Desai (1996) notes that Indian women tend to place constraints on their career aspirations or personality achievements for family reasons. She argues that keeping a low profile in one’s career enables these women to be in both the worlds, i.e., work and family. Employed women who are married and/or those who have children tend to experience high levels of career-family conflict because of the conflicting pressures arising from family and work (Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985; Sekaran, 1986). Research also indicates that women who experience extensive role conflict and time pressures from their career and family roles tend to reduce their level of career involvement (Bourne and Wigler, 1982) or assign less work to their jobs (Kingstone and Knock, 1985; Pittman and Arthner, 1988). This is conditioned by an expectation that such an effort would alleviate the conflict.
Methodology
The manuscript compares the relationship of stressors at work, family domains, and the work family interface' on the job satisfaction of male and female members of dual career teacher couples. The sample comprises of 250 dual career teacher couples from Karur district of Tamilnadu, with level of education. Results indicate that work-role and work-family distress are negatively associated with job satisfaction in both sexes.

Family rolestresses positively relate to the female member's job satisfaction but have no relationship to that of their male partners.

Results and discussion

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<th>Males (N - 250)</th>
<th>Females (N=250)</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
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<tr>
<td>Work Role Conflict</td>
<td>19.36</td>
<td>8.13</td>
<td>21.12</td>
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<td>Family Role Conflict</td>
<td>34.02</td>
<td>6.48</td>
<td>37.93</td>
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<tr>
<td>Work Family Conflict</td>
<td>48.36</td>
<td>15.41</td>
<td>53.44</td>
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<td>Job Satisfaction</td>
<td>25.97</td>
<td>6.38</td>
<td>27.23</td>
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From the above table presents the means, standard deviation, and the t values of the three dimensions of stress and the job satisfaction for both males and females separately. The results indicate that there exists significant difference in the level of stress faced and the job satisfaction of male and female teachers. Since there is a significant difference in the means, the comparison of means indicates that females face more stress as compared to males and they have more job satisfaction. The mean scores of female teachers as compared to males are higher for work role stress; family role stress, and work-family conflict.
Significance of difference between the mean scores of criterion variables of high and low groups of both genders

Table 1: The mean and standard deviation obtained by the low and high groups of work role stress, family role stress and work family conflict of both genders in respect to job satisfaction. The computed t value has also been presented in the Table. The result indicates that in the context to work role stress and work-family conflict, there exists significant difference in the job satisfaction of teachers facing low stress than those facing high stress. The mean scores indicate that those facing low levels of these stresses experience greater job satisfaction. With respect to family role stress, in the case of female teachers the low and the high family role stress groups significantly differ in their level of job satisfaction. However, the level of job satisfaction is more for females with high level of family role stress. Among the male teachers, the job satisfaction level in the high and low groups is not significantly different.

The correlation analysis shows that job satisfaction negatively relates to work role stress and work family conflict for both the genders of dual career couples. However, family role stress has no significant relationship with the job satisfaction of men but has a significant positive relationship with the job satisfaction of women members of dual career teacher couples.
Correlations with Data of Male Teachers

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<th>Males</th>
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<tr>
<td>Work Role Stress (WRS)</td>
<td>1.00</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Family Role Stress (FRS)</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work Family Conflict (WFC)</td>
<td>0.38**</td>
<td>-0.42**</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Satisfaction (SATIS)</td>
<td>-0.11*</td>
<td>-0.07</td>
<td>-0.28**</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* = p < 0.05 and ** = p < 0.01

The results indicate that females face significantly more stress than the male members of dual career teacher couples. Interestingly, the job satisfaction of female teachers is also more than that of the male teachers. Both male and female members of dual career couples who face low job role stress and work-family conflict have more job satisfaction than those who face high levels of these stresses. However, female teachers who face high family role stress have more job satisfaction than those who face low family role stress.

Even though female teachers face more stress, they have higher job satisfaction than the male teachers, probably because the job provides them with a sense of their worth. The economic independence gives them satisfaction that may also be a compensatory source for any discord with their job. In India, the opportunity for women to work outside the home is in itself satisfying. Though the social setup is now changing, increasingly women are taking up the dual responsibility. Hall and Hall (1979) noted that the likelihood of providing support and understanding is greater if both partners are in the same or similar fields. In the family domain, receiving spouse support has been found to be negatively correlated with role overload and work-family conflict and positively related to career commitment. The reasons for the female members...
having more satisfaction with their jobs, even when they face more stress, could be the sense of support that they get from their spouses.

They may be getting more support than they would expect from their spouses considering the social norms. The job may be providing them the opportunity to have their own social circle, which could help them and provide them support in managing their jobs and as well their family problems. They get the opportunity to share their family problems with someone who can give them emotional support without any bias. Lawrence (2006) argues that colleagues have the ability to provide emotional support when employees are attempting to cope with the impact of work-family conflict on relationship in their non-work life. Colleagues can also provide informational support to cope with work-family conflict. Therefore, even if there are job related problems, the female members do not mind them much. The sense of achievement, the individuality, and identity they get from their job is satisfying to them. In addition, since they have to break the stereotyped thinking of the male dominated work domain, they would not like an image of someone who gets bothered easily. They are ready to take on challenges and as a result demonstrate more perseverance.

**Conclusion**

The study has implications for prevention and reduction of stress for dual career teacher couples. The responsibility for stress reduction lies with organizations/institutions, with dual career couples and with their family members. Today Indian organizations need to understand and focus on providing support to the couples for work-personal life balance. In order to maintain high performance of the employees, organizations may organize professional counseling programs to help the couples cope with work role stress, family role stress and work family conflict. The human resource policies should be designed, keeping in mind the stress that an employee faces at work and due to work-family conflict. Organizations could conduct training programs, especially for women employees, to enable them to cope with their traditional roles. Stress prevention techniques like yoga, meditation, and physical exercise could also form a part of such programs’ curriculum. More emphasis needs to be placed on providing counseling before the problem becomes acute rather than after dysfunctional consequences are evident. In conclusion, it is evident that organizational performance can be improved by
developing an understanding, localization and empathy approach to managing dual industry pressure continued employment and maximum performance among dual career couples.

References


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