
Effects of Coping Strategies and Role Overload on Dual-Earner Couples of India

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ABSTRACT

The life style of Women in India influenced mostly by the rapid development of society. The dual earner couples are trying to manage the demands of their working lives and also struggling to create quality time for their family. As dual-career partners experience perceived role overload, they attempt to deal with it by employing coping strategies. The Dual career role strain Scale and the Dual career coping scale were employed for collection of data. The data were analysed using r-test analysis at 0.05 level of significance. From the results we found that overload of work has a significant effect on work-family conflict in dual earner families. Also we found that marital maintenance and coping are interrelated to one another.

Keywords: Dual-earner family, Coping strategies, Role overload, Work-family conflict, Marital maintenance

INTRODUCTION

Rapid development in various sectors of the society has played major roles in changing the career patterns, professional roles and life style of women in India. This transformation provides better life style and living standard .In dual career family, two people have to manage three jobs; two in the work place and one at home. And for that they have to face many problems frequently. The problem is usually viewed in terms of equity, as women tend to perform more than half of the third unpaid job at home. Managing time in a dual earner family is a real problem. That constantly demands developing strategies in order to keep the household operating successfully on a day-to-day basis. The dual earner couples are trying to manage the demands of their working lives and also struggling to create quality time for their family. In most cases, the wife compromises, thus her career suffers. The sources of stress in the dual-career couples can be classified as internal and external types. The internal are, deal with balancing career and family life and finding satisfactory child care arrangement whereas the external types includes the incongruity between the dual-career lifestyle and traditional norms and the occupational pressures for mobility. The coping mechanism automatically is initiated in response to perceptions of role overload. In situations when perceptions of role overload are so great that partners are unable to identify coping strategies to overcome their stress, they often resort to using coercive negotiation. As dual-career partners experience perceived role overload, they attempt to deal with it by employing coping strategies. Coping in other way is known as, activities engaged in with the intention of reducing or avoiding stress by reducing demands, increasing resources, creating more favorable beliefs and appraisals, or reducing the emotional reaction to stress.

In this paper a sincere attempt has been made on the effective coping strategies and role overload particularly, in dual-earner couples of India. Accordingly in the next section a review of literature on this topic has been made. From the results we found that overload of work has a significant effect on work-family conflict in dual earner families.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The author (Kluwer, 2000) has investigated on the marital quality from the viewpoint of the stress and coping theory. Another study (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) reveals that the stress is a process which results in both personal and relational consequences. The past research (Guelzow et al., 1995) had led foundation on coping and distress in dual career couples. Very little study has been made on

evaluation of marital quality as an outcome of the Role overload. In a recent literature (Pearlin & McCall, 1990) the authors have observed that role overload is considered as the beginning of the stress process. When the dual partner tries to satisfy the demands of multiple roles, then role overload arises. Selection and use of coping methods affect the partner's relationship. It is reported that use of individual coping technique reduces the negative impact of role overload. The study made by Schnittger & Bird (1995) focused on role overload and emphasizes the temporal challenges faced by dual-career couples. Coyne & Downey, (1991) have shown that successful coping is associated with resiliency against stress. According to Bouchard et al., (1997) some earning couples manage or eliminate role overload based on individual coping strategies.

Two types of coping techniques have been reported in the literature. These are emotion-focused and problem-focused. The emotion focused coping relies on effect regulation as a result of a stressors. But in case of Problem focused coping, seeking information on taking direct action towards removing stress is employed (Taylor & Aspinwall, 1996). Another investigation reveals that those who have more education have a tendency to rely more on behavioral coping strategy in response to role overload (Schaefer & Moos, 1992). Relational coping resources utilized by marital partners encourage interaction and appeal to the partner in a way that the partners take supportive actions. According to the study made by Lyons et al., (1998) dual career spouses tries to maintain their marital quality by engaging in effort to collaborate with the stressed partners until the stress is removed and normal relationship is restored. Marital quality according to Jacobsen (1978) is depended on partners' equal contribution to maintenance of marriage. The study carried out by Christensen & Walczynski (1997) states that partners who negotiate more cooperatively are better able to handle more complex life events and relational incompatibilities. This study relies on stress and coping theory to provide a conceptual frame work .The purpose of this research is to examine the link between role overload, engagement of individual coping strategies and relational coping resources.

Lazarus and Folkman (1984) defined role overload as the cognitive evaluation of the stressor's demands in conjunction with one's ability to respond to those demands. They perceived role overload as chronic stressor for dual career partners. Temporal boundaries from work get crossed by technology through various sources i.e. email, cell phones, and fax machines for both partners who have careers. Partners' satisfaction with their personal relationship can be greatly affected by how couples handle these boundary invasions (Fraenkel & Wilson, 2000). As partners have many tasks to perform without sufficient time, there is a constant sense of rushing and hurrying which results in role overload. The process of individual coping, either emotion-focused or problem-focused, provides time and opportunity for the stressed partner to construct meaning of the situation, thus perceiving the relevance and intensity of the threat and then selecting a strategy to manage it (Pearlin & McCall, 1990).

In another study Thoits (1986), stated that Problem-focused coping involves direct actions on the self or environment for removing or altering threatening circumstances. Emotion-focused coping includes actions or thoughts to control the undesirable feelings which arise from perceived stress. As described by Lazarus & Folkman, (1984) emotion-focused strategies include acceptance and wishful thinking. The aim of the study to test that role overload indirectly affects marital quality through individual coping strategies and relational coping resources.

Duxbury & Higgins, (2003) stated that role overload has also relates to higher rates of absenteeism, lower levels of commitment, turnover intentions, and poorer physical and mental health. In the context of this study, coping refers to the strategies that people use to deal with the strains of role overload. The vast majority of coping research has focused on the coping strategies that individuals employ (Bird & Schnurman-Crook, 2005). According to Darch-Zahavy & Somech, (2008) the research that has been done, however, is consistent with gender-role theory, which suggests that strategies such as structural and personal role redefinition will benefit women more than men when the role responsibilities being shed or delegated are in the domestic domain. Coping strategies reduces work-role demands and more beneficial for men than women.

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The ability to achieve an appropriate balance between work and family commitments is a growing concern for present-day spouses, parents, employees, and organizations, with increasing evidence connecting work-family conflict to decreased health and well-being (Kalliath, Kalliath, & Singh, 2011). Perrone & Worthington, (2001) viewed that role types become challenging when they fail to meet the needs of one of the spouses or when they cause an excessive amount of demands, and ultimately lead to role strain.

Hypothesis

The following hypotheses are prepared to find out the true factor of the topic. These are

H₁: Overload of work has a significant effect on work-family conflict in dual earner families.

H₀: Overload of work has no effect on work-family conflict in dual earner families.

H₂: Marital maintenance and coping are interrelated to one another.

H₀: There exists no relation between marital maintenance and coping.

METHODOLOGY

This section deals the pilot study, sampling and data collection and the analysis utilized in the study. A pilot survey was undertaken and was administered to a sample of twenty dual career couples. The purpose carried out was to identify any ambiguous or confusing terminology, to determine if response choices provided adequate item variance, and to obtain overall reaction to the questionnaire. Ambiguous, confusing items and directions were changed. Subsequently, responses to a well thought questionnaire on the topic from 100 dual-earner couples were collected. Internal consistency among the items within the scale was calculated using Cronbach's coefficient alpha for subscale scores. Responses to questionnaire items were coded and entered in to a computer. All analyses were carried out using SPSS software package. The Dual career role strain Scale used by Guelzow et.al,(1995) and the Dual career coping scale used by Schnittger & Bird, (1995) were employed for collection of data. Participants were asked on how they manage the family and career demands. There are 8 items under dual career role strain scale or role overload and 11 items were on dual career coping scale. The responses were collected on a 7 point response scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree).

RESULTS OF ANALYSIS

The data were analysed using r-test analysis at 0.05 level of significance.

Hypothesis 1: This indicates that overload of work have a significant effect on work-family conflict in dual earner families. This shows a marginal positive correlation between role overload and work life conflict.

Hypothesis 2: It states that marital maintenance and coping are interrelated to one another. It means that marital maintenance and coping are positively related to one another.

Table1.

Variable	N	r	df	Sig.(2-tailed) P value	Remark
Correlation between overload of work and work-family conflict	100	0.021	98	0.000	P<0.05 Reject H ₀

Table2.

Variable	N	r	df	Sig.(2-tailed) P value	Remark
Correlation between marital maintenance and coping	100	0.410	98	0.000	P<0.05 Reject H ₀

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

From the table-1 as presented above it is observed that the ‘r’ value is found to be highly significant for the hypothesis (Hypotheses 1-2)as stated above. Thus the alternative hypothesis may be accepted in each case. So it may be inferred that the pair of attributes under considerations in each of the hypothesis are not independent of one another, rather there exists certain association between them

From the above results we found that overload of work has a significant effect on work-family conflict in dual earner families. The degree of association between role overload and work life conflict is found to be 0.021. This indicates a marginal positive correlation between role overload and work life conflict. Thus it may be concluded that the conflict may rise with increase in role overload and vice versa in a dual earner family. Thus we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternate hypothesis.

From the table-2 we found that marital maintenance and coping are interrelated to one another. From the result we saw the correlation value is 0.410. It is found that a significant correlation ($r=0.410$) between marital maintenance and coping of couples exists. It means that marital maintenance and coping are positively related to one another. Marital maintenance would be higher when there is higher coping found between couples and vice versa. The more the cooperation, coping and help to each other between wife and husband, the better the marital life of the couples. And when there is no cooperation and coping the marital maintenance would be more difficult.

Married working women experience work-family conflict in trying to meet the expectations of work and family roles. The conflict arising from the expectations of multiple roles, the women tended to cope through reactive role behavior and personal role redefinition more than structural role redefinition. Women will need assistance in terms of facilities, education, and advisory and support services in trying to cope with the conflict. Specifically, research has shown that women are more likely to be socialized to ask for and accept help from others, whereas men are judged on their ability to be self-sufficient and in control. It is also possible that, because women's traditional role responsibilities are those that are purchased, it becomes their responsibility to secure support for those activities. It is possible that the modern view of gender roles, which suggests that housework and child care should be shared equally when the wife works outside the home, is far from reality.

Coping by restructuring family roles attenuated the overload-stress relationship for both men and women. So dual-earner men and women can reduce stress associated with greater role overload by getting their family to do more at home.

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