

CHALLENGES AND RELATED COPING STRATEGIES OF WORK-LIFE BALANCE OF DUAL CAREER COUPLES

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Abstract: *Dual-Career Couples is the new trend of 21st –century. It is a fact nowadays that “the number of Dual Career Couples is increasing and the trend is worldwide. It encourages the challenges and coping strategies of dual career couples in the demographic workforce with an increase in the rush of women. By literature point of view, Dual Career-couples is one in which the career of both husband and wife is taken seriously. This paper presents the challenges and related coping strategies of work-life balance of Dual Career couples. The two important domain of dual-career couple’s life is Family and Work. A harmful effect emerges with employees and Organization and it is mainly due to conflicts between these two domains. Dual career faculty couples face a unique set of challenges within the Organizational and Personal world. Dual Career couples face stresses with some special challenges. Conflicts and stress arising in the workforce may have an effect on the family such as long working hours prevents the performance of domestic tasks. Likewise, those originating from the family domain may have a negative organizational outcome, such as care for elders or a sick child in the family prevent attendance at work. Various researchers have suggested various coping strategies adopted by DCC. Social and work supports are two important factors in the work-life balance of DCC. The challenges for couples include job search, finding two different positions, promotion, contributions to the organizational growth and along with career growth. This paper will discuss challenges, strategies, and level of stress of work/life balance for a Dual Career Couples in a different field and analyze the various suggestive strategies to overcome challenges and stress. This will help couples in maintaining a healthy work-life balance.*

Key Words: *Work-Life Balance, Dual-Career Couples, Challenges, Workplace, Conflicts, Coping Strategies, Stress.*

1. INTRODUCTION:

Overview: Dual-Career couples Work-Life Balance & Development of DCC

Work and Family are like two sides of a coin which depicts key domains. Life is Balancing act and in Indian Society, almost everyone is seeking Work/life balance. There is an increasing number of women’s in today’s workforce and work-life integration has become a common and challenging issue for today’s dual career couples. Over the past 4 decades, industrialized nations have experienced major changes in their labor market characteristics. Of most importance is the balanced increase of women’s participation in the paid workforce. According to Indian Statistics, a high number of women enters workforce equal to men. According to US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 72.3% of women aged between 25 and 54 were employed in the United States (US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2009), and 59.1% of women aged between 15 and 64 were in employment in the European Union (EU, EUROSTAT, 2009). Women’s have educational attainments equal to men. As per with the term DCC, both partners are highly educated and have a high upward career orientation and work full time in the demanding job. This particular partnership is termed as Dual-career couples and this exists almost for 4 decades. Traditional family models have been steadily replaced by more egalitarian partnership constellations. However women’s roles are no longer going to be restricted only within family and home-Keeper, and men are no longer the sole breadwinners in the family.

Dual-Career couples term was first used in the year 1969. Dual career couples are the couples working in a same or different organization with an ambition to pursue goals in the career. They are focused on career goals and ambitions. Both partners pursue an independent career. They have high involvement towards their work and partners are highly educated. Dual-career couples have upward career orientation. Work conflicts are one of the major issues which give negative outcomes. Work to family conflict and family to work conflict are called work-family conflicts. This conflict gives negative outcomes such as high work stress, more absenteeism, high turnover intentions, unmatching role demands, more emotional outcomes and various other psychosomatic symptoms. To have balance,

dual-career couples seek various related coping strategic support from family and organization. The family support includes taking spouse support, social support and domestic support. The organizational support improves employees' job satisfaction and organizational commitment reduces work-family conflicts, job stress and decrease turnover intention.

2. AIM AND STRUCTURE OF THE PAPER:

The main aims of the paper are:

- To enumerate the Challenges faced by Dual Career Couples at work and family.
- To assess the Coping strategies for the problems faced by Dual Career Couples in their Work and life.

3. WORK-LIFE BALANCE

Work-life balance is the optimal arrangement of an individual's on-the-job and private time to facilitate health and personal satisfaction without negatively impacting productivity and professional success. A healthy Work-life Balance provides a way to spend the time with self-care, family, friends, social life, spiritual growth, and meeting the demands of the workplace. A corporate culture and management style has to be changed to maintain a healthy work-life balance.

There are two basic elements to achieve balance. They are sufficient time off and an appropriate workload. Other common elements are telecommuting, flexible hours, wellness initiatives in the workplace such as yoga classes and mindfulness training.

According to a study by the Federal Reserve Bank, work-life balance increases employee productivity by 10.6 percent. Other benefits to the business include fewer incidences of burnout, less absenteeism, higher levels of employee engagement which can lead to more innovation and a greater likelihood that employees will advocate for the company

When one spends the majority of the daytime on work-related activities, there is a feeling of stress and unhappiness that occurs. This takes place mostly because they feel they are neglecting the other spheres of life. When an employee pays attention to all the aspects of their lives, they can meet work-life balance, and see an increase in productivity.

Today industries have realized the importance of the work-life balance of their employees. Organizations are setting up policies to maintain a work-life balance. They are going in for innovative methods to keep their employees happy and satisfied, as it makes the office a better place to work and also positively impact productivity.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study includes exploratory research on the concerned areas relating to the challenges of work-life balance of Dual-Career Couples and strategies to overcome challenges. We have tried to use the latest concepts in management to highlight the challenges faced by Dual-Career couples and suggestions for correcting Dual-Career work-life issues.

4.1 DATA COLLECTION

The study was done mainly using secondary sources such as newspaper, magazines and online resources such as blogs and websites.

4.2 CHALLENGES

Dual-Career Couple has been defined as "a married couple where both husband and wife have careers". From a purely economic point of view, Increasing number of Dual Career couples considered to have a positive tendency towards the nation with a good level of tax revenues and pretty lifestyle. However, Dual-Career couples are subjected to pressure in their professional and personal life For Dual-career couples balancing work demands with personal and family responsibilities is difficult to do"(Jackson and Mathis,2007,p.295), and the situation becomes more challenging where Dual career couples have a child or children.

The considerable increase in the number of Dual-career couples in society and changing family values is beautifully explained in (Aswathappa and Dash, 2007, p.160) DuPont, for example, has 3,500 dual-career couples in the workforce of 100,000.It clearly explains the fact nowadays that "the number of dual-career couples is increasing and the trend is worldwide. However, Dual-Career Couples are subjected to pressure in their professional and personal life

Specific Challenges of Dual Career Couples are Stress issues, Career issues, Mobility issues. Issues related to Marital Satisfaction, Partnership stability, and Parenthood issues. Dual-Career couples face several challenges to keep their relationship intact. Challenges can be generally categorized into three namely Work, Family and Personal challenges.

4.2.1. Work-Related Challenges

Career Development is tandem in nature. More often, one partner's career is permanent and the other's is temporary. One partner has to put extra time and energy for his/her career opportunities and the other has to pick up the slack at home which creates tensional imbalances. This generally raises questions about who needs are most

important. If it is not properly addressed, one's feelings can be turned into imbalances problems. Dual-Career couples who don't have a proper plan of career paths will experience relationship problems.

The more challenges to be faced by work-family conflict is longer working hours. Late working hours, night shifts, work at home, no flexible scheduling and rigid corporate timings all these are demanding flex time work strategies.

Increase of workload at work brings negative spill over of stress from office to home and from home to office. Working for very late hours, taking work to home, less time for lunch at office hours are the common work problems faced by Dual-Career couples. It may lead to more turnover as before. Dual-career Couples experience work-family conflicts. Dual-Career Couples tend to experience work-family conflict when demands from work and family are both high and difficult to satisfy.

4.2.2. Family-Related Challenges

Division of household duties is a major important issue for most couples. A household chore has to be equally shared between partners, but the real issue is the household chores are not divided equally. In 80 percent of the couples, women perform 70 percent to 80 percent of the household chore. The traditional concepts of women's household chores are still appreciated and it's a major challenge in today's workforce. It creates overload situation for women. A series question facing for today's Dual-Career couples is whether to have children. Timing may be critical if couples decide to have children. Starting a family at an early stage in one's career can have a negative impact, but if the couple waits too long, age can be a problem. Dual-career couples who do not discuss their expectations of each other with regard to family and parenting issues run the risk of putting their relationship in jeopardy.

4.2.3. Personal Challenges

Dual-Career Couples face different personal and career challenges. Women always make a decision considering her family, but men makes decision without considering family, thinking that work and family roles are being independent. Working women always have struggle and guilt that they work outside the home. This is because they receive little or no support from society and family which label them as selfish. Due to demands and expectations of work, home and family pile up, working women may feel like they are losing control of their lives.

Dual-career Couples don't have time for leisure and social activities. They struggle to spend quality of time with children or each other. This may leave little time for relationships outside the immediate family. When couples finally find time to spend with each other or with friends, the occasion is often overshadowed by feelings of guilt.

4.3 STRATEGIES TO BE ADOPTED BY THE DUAL-CAREER COUPLES PERSONALLY

4.3.1. COMMUNICATION

A good relationship has good communication. Dual-Career couples can enhance their relationship through proper communication and understanding. It makes the relationship stronger. Couples have to clarify their roles and expectations then and there. It will provide a way to compromise and negotiate on things to have an effective dual-worker relationship.

4.3.2. PRIORITIZATION

The outcome of communication results in the proper prioritization of personal activities by successfully managing the challenges of their lifestyle. Sorting out priorities considered to be an effective strategy. Prioritization results in a good relationship of couples. It makes couples successful in their endeavors and marriage work.

4.3.3. DAY-TO-DAY SKILLS

Dual-Career Couples put their more interest into their wedding day than in any part of their relationship. The actual test occurs for the couples on day-day activities such as conflicts in clearing garbage, Lunch preparations, picking up kids from school. Couples who value the process of day-day skills can overcome the challenges of daily living.

4.3.4. FLEXIBILITY & CREATIVITY

Dual-Career couples can overcome the work-life challenges by being creative and flexible. A creative couple shines like a hallmarked gold coin. They look at things differently and always flexible to derive best solutions to the day-day problems. This brings a quality of work both inside and outside the family.

4.3.5. TOLERANCE SKILLS

In order to have a quality of life, couples have to forgive on family mistakes. Forgive and Forget are two sides of a quality relationship coin. Have a regular exercising of tolerating skills to have a healthy work-life balance.

4.3.6. LEISURE ACTIVITIES

The leisure can be an effective coping strategy to maintain employee health and wellness. Leisure activities such as watching television, exercising or yoga, playing sport, holidays, day off are effective strategy for work-life integration.

4.4 STRATEGIES TO BE ADOPTED BY ORGANIZATION FOR WORK-LIFE BALANCE OF DUAL-CAREER COUPLES

Organizations can offer financial compensations for the spouses of employees assigned for relocation; they can also offer the reimbursement of tuition fees of their family members whenever necessary. They can also assist with the employment of employee spouses once they are relocated and even they can organize onsite childcare facilities.

Therefore, this paper proposes a set of cost-effective strategies to organizations in order to deal with the challenges associated with the work-life balance of dual-career couples.

4.4.1. Telecommuting

The term Telecommuting is defined as an employment at home while communicating with the workplace by phone or fax or modem. Telecommuting involves the flexibility of doing work from their preferred location in order to accomplish their job responsibilities. (Torrington et al, 2008). This form of employment became popular by advancements in information technology and by the introduction of internet in particular. By this method, Dual Career couples can spend more time with their families

However, only a certain type of jobs can be done through telecommuting that includes few Recruitment related jobs, programming, writing, online and telephone customer services, technical support, software developer role etc.

4.4.2. Job Sharing

Job Sharing refers to “Alternative work schedule in which two employees voluntarily share the responsibilities of one job, and receive salary and benefits on pro-rata basis”. Job sharing creates regular part-time (half days, alternate weeks, etc.) where there was one full-time position, and thus avoids a total loss of employment in a layoff. The concept of Job sharing has been introduced during the second half of the last century and it gained popularity due to its advantages. Dual Career couples can devote rest of their time to their family members and also it relieves pressure both at work and personal life.

4.4.3. Support

Research has shown that Support from others is an effective coping strategy. Supportive supervisor and work culture makes work life easier. And also communication plays a key role in fostering support.

4.4.4. Work and Life Counseling

The counseling refers to the provision of professional assistance and guidance in resolving personal or psychological problems. It also helps them to acquire necessary skills that would help them in both professional and personal life. It should be provided by a third party counselor in a systematic manner.

The organization can give counseling assistance to their Junior Dual-Career Couples through experienced staff member to deal with emotional support in terms of work-life balance

4.4.5. Offering Flexible Time off

Organizational accommodations to Dual-Career couples are flexible working schedules. The policies such as leave policies under which either parent may stay at home to take care of newborn. One of the recent trends among corporations is to introduce a flexible time off policy, allowing their employees to take time off at their choosing, without having to count or accrue time off hours. As a result, some employers are choosing to switch to flexible or unlimited time off policies.

Offering flexible time off opportunities to dual-career couples represents another effective strategy available to companies to be incorporated into their HR policies. This specific strategy is effectively being used by most of the companies. Hewlett-Packard (HP) is one of the market leaders in IT industry, where the vacation and sick leave periods of employees are combined in order to increase the number of time employees, can spend with their families.

Dual Career couples can use their flexible time offs with their families such as Wedding anniversaries, birthdays and other family functions. Moreover, flexible time off can be used considering the holiday of other partner and partners can spend time together and achieve a higher level of work-life balance.

4.4.6. Employing Both Partners

A greater level of employee loyalty and motivation in organizations can be achieved by employing both partners at the same organization.

Dual-career couples should not be employed at the same level of divisions within the organization, as it will create negative implications on the overall performance of the team.

Preferably, Dual-career couples should be employed in different divisions of a company. This will avoid interactions between partners and they can achieve the greater level of work-life balance.

4.4.7. Leisure activities

Organization should encourage Dual-Career couples to take vacations, participating in social activities, taking time for leisure may have healthier work environment.

4.4.8. Time Management

Organization should have a control over time management of employees. Set time limits to go home early to spend time with the family instead of staying in the office after hours.

5. SUGGESTIONS:

The study revealed the Challenges and related coping strategies of work-life balance of Dual-career couples. Dual Career Couples has additional family responsibilities and professional responsibilities. It is a highly challenging task for Dual-Career Couples to Balance both of these responsibilities and it may cause high pressure and stress to employees and it will result at the lower performance at work. Hence, Couples face many problems inside workforce and also in personal life. In order to overcome the challenges, various strategic solutions have been mentioned in detail in this paper. The best possible solutions for Dual-Career Couples to balance work and life are; Maintaining Good communications between partners, Prioritizing works flexibility at work, creative thinking in tackling problems, the equal dividing of household chores and to have tolerance skills. Few strategies have to be followed by the organization in work for Dual-Career couples like Job sharing, Telecommuting, Flexible time off, providing leisure activities and work and life counseling. The above all suggestions keep the professional and personal life of Dual Career Couples in a balanced, healthy and happier way.

6. CONCLUSION:

Throughout this chapter, we have been concerned with Challenges and related coping strategies of work-life balance of Dual Career Couples. The study revealed the challenges faced by Dual-Career couples at work and personal life. Despite many challenges that dual-career couples have faced and will be facing, the present economic scenario is demanding more and more such couples to pop up around the world. Many organizations are now changing their policies in order to accommodate both the partners in the company thus ensuring the best productivity of the employees. Different types of coping strategies have been discussed in this paper to overcome the challenges of balancing a Professional and personal life of couples. Organizational strategies for dual career management help a lot and are the more necessary belongs to the highly upward oriented couples with an equal priority of both careers. Also, with increased awareness and proper planning of work and life, it can be ensured that such couples can live a happy and a prosperous life.

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