Organizational Implications of Dual Career Couples: A Study in the Indian Context

Sonam Chawla
Assistant Professor
Department of Human Resource
Jindal Global Business School
O. P. Jindal Global University, India
sonam@jgu.edu.in

Ateequr Rahman
Ph.D. Research Scholar
School of Management & Entrepreneurship
Indian Institute of Technology, Jodhpur, India
rahman.1@iitj.ac.in

K. K. Lai
Professor & Vice President
Department of Business Administration,
Chaoyang University of Technology Taichung, Taiwan.
laikk@cyut.edu.tw

Abstract

With more women entering the workforce and the increasing trend of dual career couples, the paper examines the movement in the Indian context concerning its effect on organizations and vice versa. In this study, we empirically try to observe if the spouse's employment status affects the engagement with the employee and if there is a difference between the dual-career and single career couples concerning organizational policies. Through this paper, in light of this trend of both husband and wife being employed, we try to understand if the family-supportive work environment impacts the employees' engagement levels. Consequently, do the organizations now need to take cognizance of the phenomena and initiate practical implications to win this respect?

Keywords
Organization Implications, Dual Career couple, working couple.

1. Introduction
The study attempts to analyze the trend of the increase in the dual-career couple and its influence on the work and organizations. This paper is set in the Indian context, chosen because the trend is relatively new to the country, and sparse work is done in this area. This Indian context makes the study interesting since it brings a complex interplay of the role of males and females. It also subtly touches on the issue of the duality of roles that Indian women are caught in because of the existing values and norms and the newfound independence of employment that they have found (Ramu 1989). This paper becomes essential to the Indian context for the organizations since they can gauge if it's about time to take cognizance of this phenomenon or if not now, it is inevitable shortly. The boom in opportunities in employment has come as a mixed blessing for the Indian 'dual career couple' who is caught between the dilemmas of their occupational pursuits conflicting with their domestic roles. With both men and women working in a marriage, there have been shifts in the traditional roles and responsibilities shared between men and women in Indian society. The accountabilities of household chores, child-care, and taking care of elderly parents have now been divided between husband and wife. We try to study if it means any implication for the organization

or a situation that requires the organization to initiate action to make this transitionary phase comfortable for both
husband and wife.

1.1 Objectives

In light of the previous discussion, the primary objective of this study is to establish that there is a direct bearing of
the employment status of the spouses (employed or not) to their level of work engagement. Also, the influence of the
employment status of spouses, that is, dual-career couples or single career couples, on organizations' perceived
family-supportive work environments. We also wish to see if there is any relationship between a family-supportive
work environment and levels of engagement of employees. We hope to understand the effects, differences, and
similarities by doing so. Hence, the organizations now need to wake up to the sensitivies of these groups of dual
career couples, which show an increasing trend concerning workforce participation in the Indian context. It was
assumed that since dual-career teams have to play multiple life roles concerning family and work, a perceived
family-supportive work environment would lead to greater work engagement (Steffy and Ashbaugh 1986).

2. Literature Review
2.1 Dual Career Couples

The phenomenon of increasing dual-career couples or two-career couples has changed the current composition of
the organizational workforce. A dual-career couple here means a married couple, both are employed (Hall & Hall,
1978). This trend of the dual-career couple is a shift in the societal context from a man being the sole earner and
breadwinner for the family to a woman seeking to pursue a career to carve an identity of her own and not just for
purely economic reasons. The emergence of employment opportunities and increased education for the female
gender has encouraged many women to seek paid work outside the home (Ramu 1989).

Since Rapoport and Rapoport first coined the term dual career in 1969, there has been a wide variety of literature
addressing the concerns of the dual-career couple. The early study reveals the impact of dual-career earners on
domestic relations with a particular focus on the effects of wife's and mother's employment on the upbringing of
children. The studies in the 1960s focused on women seeking employment for economic reasons (Hoffman 1963;
Rossi 1964; Fogarty et al. 1968). In the 1970s, there was a shift in the work in this field, with Rapoport's doing
seminal work in this area. The Rapoport's couple's focus was not on only the wives in the dual-earner couples but
also on the family in the context of the social support systems. However, other researchers focused mainly on the
influence of the wife's work on domestic relations (Epstein 1971; Holmstorm 1973). The gender roles and cultural
prescriptions for the genders were studied in this context (Bailyn 1970; Garland 1972; Poloma 1972). Since the
studies focused on the role of the wives, only the female spouses were studied or interviewed for the study purposes.
While it was primarily established in these studies that the women's roles, responsibilities, and duties in the
domestic work and relationships had seen no change. However, there was a change in the career status of women.
These formed the basis of the study of men's role in dual-earner couples and observed changes in husbands'
contribution to domestic work (Robinson 1977; Berk 1979). These studies challenged the notion of men being the
family's breadwinners (Bernard 1981).

Further, the research in the area of dual career couples moved to study the effect of both the spouses on the mental
and physical well-being by observing the stress patterns and quality of work-life balance of both the partners and not
considering one of them in isolation (Parasuraman & Saroj 1992; Mauno 1999). These studies showed that both
spouses work and experience stress to balance work and personal life demands. The recent research in this area has
now shifted focus from studying the effects of both the spouses working only on personal relations and family or
social implications to taking into account the impacts on the career advancement, choice of career, and
organizational implications of the increasing trend of dual career couples in the workplace today (Sulliva 2005;
Pierce 1996; Kaliath 2011).

2.2 Indian Context

In the Indian context, although the population is still agrarian and illiterate, the urban population has come to occupy
a significant demographic structure in India (Ramu 1989). Thus, it can be said that such a visible demographic
change would have resulted in a difference in the constituents of workforce participants in India. Concerning the
work done in India in the context of dual-earner couples, the research done in this area has been sparse because of
the more significant subject of the status of women in the Indian society pre-dominantly occupying research studies.
It is interesting to study these phenomena of dual career couples in the Indian context because, on the one hand,
there exist values, norms, and cultural prescriptions creating a vast divide between the gender-role stereotype, and
on the other hand, there is the trend of increasing participation of women in the workforce; that undermine the age-

old beliefs, values, and family structures. With such a background, the husbands and wives face an ongoing dilemma of adopting and adapting to this new structure or adhering to customary beliefs. As a result, they continue to seek solutions to this dilemma while working in organizational settings together as a couple. The organizations in such a context can play an essential role in this transitioning period of society, moving towards this phenomenon of both the husband and wife working.

2.3 Implications for the organizations

With the increasing trend of women's participation in the workforce, there has been a spillover effect on household responsibilities. These responsibilities like childcare and household chores are now being shared by both the male and female counterparts of a dual-career couple. The workplace or organizations occupy an essential part in the lives of dual-career couples as they manage their workplace and family or household responsibilities at a given point in time. So, they manage household responsibilities and work commitments (Bond et al. 1998). As a result, there was a need felt at the organization's end to facilitate this phenomenon due to the increase in the trend of dual career couples (Lobel & Kossek 1996).

The research has focused on the socio-cultural support of the phenomena of increased women's participation in full-time employment. In previous studies conducted so far on dual-career spouses about implications on organizations, a couple of personal and organizational implications have surfaced concerning organizational policies like increased employee motivation, reduced absenteeism, and at an individual level, issues such as marital satisfaction affecting organizations (Green & Zenisek 1983) and help employees manage the multiple life roles (Allen 2001).

While the organizational issues of having dual-career couples employed in their workforce have surfaced from the previous research work, there is a limited level of responsiveness from the organizations on this issue (Pierce & Delahaye 1996). This could be attributed to the lack of evidence available to organizations if there is a significant difference in the way a dual-career couple perceives the family-supportive work environment compared to a single career couple. Though there has been a study done to establish a relationship between reaching job involvement and work flexible work arrangements, transfer policies, spousal anti-nepotism, childcare commitment among dual-income and single-income workers (Elloy & Flynn 1998), it does not take into account the factor of perceived organizational policies affecting their involvement and commitment. While there may be the presence of employee-friendly policies like flexitime, transfer policies, and childcare, being family supportive lies in implementing these policies (Allen 2001). The mere presence of such family-supportive policies does not guarantee that the employees would be able to use these policies to their advantage. Other factors like the supervisor's or the line manager's support to avail these policies would also affect implementation. In many organizations, attending to personal needs by availing organizational policies like flextime is perceived as employees not committed to the job and work. Therefore, in this study, we would study the family-supportive work environment, which encompasses the employees' perception of the organization being family supportive in its true spirit. The objective will be to establish a relationship between the spouse's employment status and employee/work engagement level concerning the employee's perception of the organization having a family-supportive work environment. In this paper, we try to see if there is a relationship between the family-supportive work environment and the engagement levels of employees, which would make the organizations act upon building a family-supportive work environment. We consider the dependent variable as employee engagement since it has been believed that there is a connection between employee engagement and business results. Also, engagement leads to positive individual outcomes (people's own experience of doing their work) as well as organizational level outcomes (growth and productivity of organizations) (Saks 2006).

2.4 Employee Engagement

We first define employee engagement for our study. Engagement is a widely used term and defined in various ways (Robinson et al. 2004). In the academic literature, several definitions have been provided. Kahn (1990) defines personal engagement as "the harnessing of organization members' selves to their work roles; in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances." Thus, according to Kahn (1990 1992), engagement means to be psychologically present when occupying and performing an organizational role. Rothbard (2001) also defines engagement as psychological presence but states that it involves two critical components: attention and absorption. Concentration refers to "cognitive availability and the amount of time one spends thinking about a role." At the same time, absorption "means being engrossed in a role and refers to the intensity of one's focus on a role."

Research on burnout also defines engagement as the opposite of the dimensions of burnout (Maslach 2001). Schaufeli et al. (2002) define engagement "as a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption. "It also states that engagement is not momentary but more pervasive in nature. Since, in the academic literature, there is much overlap of the concepts of engagement, commitment, and Organization citizenship behavior (Saks 2006), we look at how they are different from each other. Robinson (2001) differentiates engagement from constructs like commitment and Organization Citizenship Behavior (OCB). He mentions that while engagement might contain elements of both, it is in no way similar to them. While OCB is an attitude that involves involuntary and informal behavior, engagement is not an attitude but the degree to which an individual is absorbed and inclined towards his performance (Robinson 2001). Also, we have considered engagement in the framework of the study of this model and not the other concepts because it has been said to have a direct bearing on the organization's performance.

Therefore, we consider the concept of employee engagement as defined by Allen Saks(2006), cognitive, emotional, and behavioral components associated with individual role performance that have two levels-job organization level engagement.
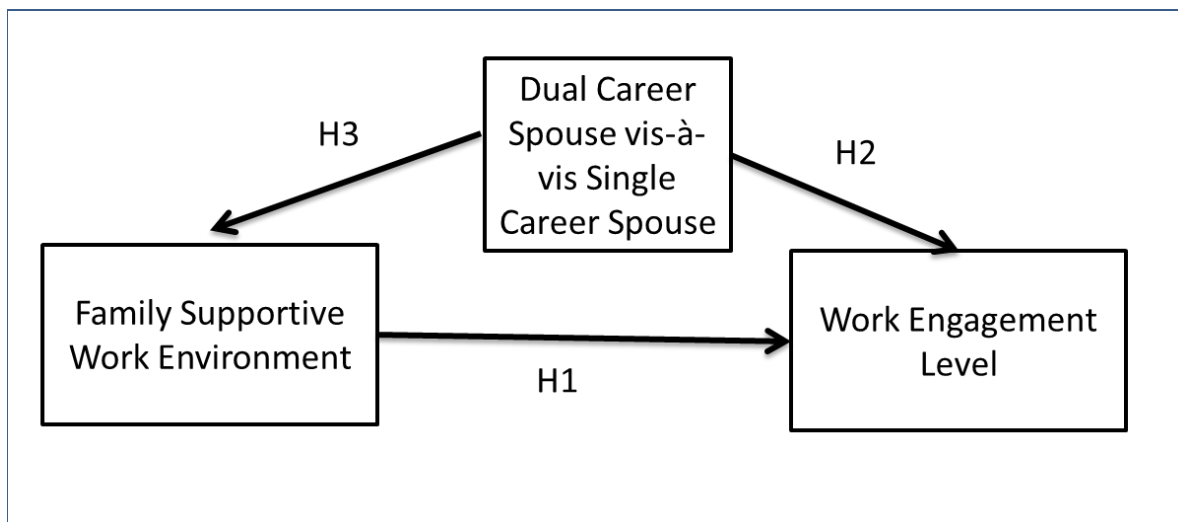
Hypothesis 1: Family supportive work environment leads to higher engagement levels of employees

Hypothesis 2: There is a difference among the means of the dual-career couple and single career couples in the engagement levels

Hypothesis 3: There is a difference among the means of the dual-career couple and single career couples regarding the perceived family-supportive work environment.

3. Methods

Engagement is treated as the dependent variable in Hypothesis 1 and Hypothesis 2. An eleven-item scale developed by Saks (2006) was used to study the work engagement levels of the respondents. The eleven-item inventory contained five items to measure job engagement and six things to measure organization engagement. The scales that measured job engagement had questions like "Sometimes I am so into the job that I lose track of time." The other six-item scale measuring organization engagement asked respondents to answer questions like "One of the most exciting things for me is getting involved with things happening in this organization." Participants indicated their response on a five-point Likert-type scale with anchors (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree. The Work Engagement scale was tested for its reliability, and the Cronbach's alpha was calculated to be 0.75, which is greater than 0.70, thus pushing for reliability.

A family Supportive Work environment measures the employees' perception of how supporting the organizations are in terms of facilitating family responsibilities in terms of policies and how conducive the organization's climate is to implement the policies. It acts as an independent variable in Hypothesis 1 and a dependent variable in

Hypothesis 3. The family Supportive Work environment was measured using the 14-item inventory developed by Allen (2001). The instructions to the participants stated that- "To what extent do you agree that each of the following statements represents the philosophy or beliefs of the organization. Remember, these are not your own beliefs, but rather respond based on what you think is your organization's philosophy". The intent was to measure the employee's perceptions about the extent to which they considered it to be family supportive. The items were rated on a 5-point response scale ranging from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree. The reliability of inventory was measured where Cronbach's alpha measured 0.704.

Dual Career Spouse-Our model checks the influence of the status of employment of the spouse, that is, whether they are a dual-career couple or a single career spouse, on engagement levels and perceived family-supportive organizations.

4. Data Collection

Data were gathered through a sample selected partly by convenience and partly by judgment sampling to test the hypotheses. The survey was sent to 176 people who were employed full-time. A total of 78 completed questionnaires were returned, representing a response rate of 44%—the sample consisted of people used in India. Out of the total respondents, 53% are males, and 47% are females. The model primarily consisted of married people comprising 87% of the total sample population, 69 respondents. 50 people out of the 69 respondents reported that their spouse was employed. Almost 50% of the married respondents had children. The majority of the respondents, 53%, belonged to 22-30 years.

A web-based survey utilizing www.docs.google.com and an invitation e-mail with the survey link was sent out to all the 176 individuals. Respondents were given a brief about the scope and purpose of the study and were assured of confidentiality in the cover note of the invitation mail. A pre-test was done with a small subsample of 4 people to detect the online survey design problems. After the pre-test, a few minor changes were incorporated, and then the survey link was mailed to all the respondents with the cover note and invitation mail.

5. Results and Discussion

We examined the role of employees' perception of Family Supportive Work Environment on the work engagement. The regression analysis does not support our alternate hypothesis is a perception that an organization that has a family-supportive work environment would lead to employee engagement.

The other two hypotheses were also rejected, implying no difference in engagement and perception of a family-supportive work environment between dual-career couples and single career couples.

These findings from the analysis may be attributed to the following reasons:

Even in India's vast and high-performing organizations, the family supportive policy and environment are rarely found. Therefore, the respondents would not have experienced it, which does not affect the levels of engagement with the organization. (Poster 2005)

The socio-cultural role of women in the Indian context and history is entrenched as nurturer, one who takes care of the family, who is responsible for the upbringing of the children, and men are supposed to be the breadwinners. This gender-role socialization makes males and females accept these behaviors and stretch to any levels to perform these along with job commitments (Rabi S Bhagat 2001). This masculine culture makes the organization's family-supportive work environment oblivious to males and females. It is a need that is still not recognized in Indian society.

The status of an Indian woman is in a transitionary phase. Women are trying to escape the age-old traditional domestic confinement to take on newer employment avenues (Acharaya 1998). Therefore, they might not want to take advantage of the flexible work policies because they are still trying to create a perception of equality by working as hard as the men

The family-supportive work environment might not significantly affect the employee's engagement levels. There might be other antecedents leading to employee engagement like meaningfulness of the job (Kahn 1990), use of skills on the job (Hackman and Oldham 1980), and rewards and recognition(Saks 2001).

5.1 Numerical Results

A regression analysis was employed to test the first hypothesis: family-supportive work environments lead to employee engagement.

Table 1: Simple Regression Analysis for Family Supportive Work Environment predicting Employee Engagement

Variable	Employee Engagement				
	B	SE B	β	t	Sig.
Family Supportive Work Environment	-.021	.128	-.018	1.637	.106
R^2		.000			
F		.026			

Family Supportive work environment does not significantly predict Employee Engagement, scores, b= -.18, t (1.637), p > .05. Family Supportive work environment also does not explain a significant proportion of variance in employee engagement scores, R^2 = .034, F = 2.679,
p > .001.

To test the second and third hypotheses, we use Independent Sample T-test to establish if there is any difference between the dual and single career couples regarding engagement levels and family supportive work environment. T-test results are given in Table 2 & Table 3.

Table 2. Levels of Employee Engagement in terms of Status of Employment of Spouse

Status of employment of spouse	n	$\bar{X}$	t	p
Employed	50	3.44	.067	.947
Not Working	19	3.45		

Note: p<0.05

According to Table 2, the levels of employee engagement have no significant difference in terms of the spouse's employment status. The story of employee engagement of people who are dual-career couples that is their spouse is also employed ($\bar{X}$=3.44), and the engagement levels of people whose spouses are not working are almost the same ($\bar{X}$=3.45). Therefore, our second Hypothesis is rejected that is there is no difference in the levels of engagement of dual career couples and single career couples.

Table 3. Perception of Family Supportive Work Environment in terms of Status of Employment of Spouse

Status of employment of spouse	n	$\bar{X}$	t	p
Employed	50	3.25	.523	.603
Not Working	19	3.45		

Note: p<0.05

According to Table 3, the perceptions of an organization having a family-supportive environment are different in terms of a spouse's employment status. The mean score ($\bar{X}$=3.25) for perceptions about dual family-supportive work environment career couples is less than the mean score ($\bar{X}$=3.45) for family-supportive work environment than the single career couple. Still, the difference is not significant(p>.05). Therefore, our third hypothesis is rejected, and thus there is no significant difference between the perceptions of the family-supportive work environment of dual career couples and single career couples.

6. Conclusion

Though the results of the differences between the dual career and single career couple might not be very significant in this study, this needs to be validated by another study. Organizations need to take cognizance of this phenomenon in the immediate present and the future. This trend of both partners would only increase in the Indian context. The Indian organizations should look at the West to draw parallels to the situations that may arise in years to come and be future-ready to cater to the needs of this group which would be a significant population of the organizations in a few years.

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Biography

Dr. Sonam Chawla is currently working as an assistant professor at Jindal Global Business School, O. P. Jindal Global University; she is a Fellow in Management from Management Development Institute, Gurgaon (India), in the area of Organizational Behavior. Before that, she worked for five years with leading companies across different verticals in the human resource function, contributing primarily to organizational development, learning, and development roles. She has done her MBA in HR from FORE School of Management, Delhi, and B. Com (Hons.) from Jesus & Mary College, Delhi University.

Her doctoral thesis is on gender diversity and women's career advancement at the board level. Her research interests include gender diversity in organizations, well-being, careers, psychological capital, and qualitative research methodology. She has published research papers, book chapters, and cases in peer-reviewed high impact factor and ABDC-listed journals like Frontiers in Psychology. She has also been selected to present her research at international conferences of repute like the Academy of Management (AOM), the Indian Academy of Management (INDAM), and Oxford University. She is also a reviewer for international journals and conferences of repute. Additionally, she is an active member of the Academy of Management (OB, Careers & GDO division).

Ateequr Rahman is a Ph.D. research scholar in the school of Management and Entrepreneurship, IIT Jodhpur. He is currently designated as Assistant Registrar (Academic Affairs) at the Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur. He has done a Master of Business Administration with a specialization in Finance. He is working in the field of sustainable strategy and green Finance. He has published 5 of his manuscripts in various Scopus indexed conferences.

Prof. (Dr.) K. K. Lai is the Vice President and a Professor of the Department of Business Administration, Chaoyang University of Technology Taichung, Taiwan. He has served as a professor and the Chairman of the Department of Business Administration, National Yunlin University of Science and Technology, Taiwan. He received his Ph.D. degree in the Graduate Institute of Management Sciences from Tamkang University in Taiwan. His research interest focuses on technology management in patent citation analysis, patent portfolio, patent family, and technological forecasting. He has published more than many of his academic papers in journals of national and international repute.