

# ROLE CONFLICT, STRESS AND DUAL-CAREER COUPLES: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY

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## INTRODUCTION

With the increasing number of women getting into employment in India, there has been explicit changes observed with regard to the conventional norms regarding the position and status assigned to them in the family and in society. Women globally belonging to any class or creed have progressed and reached a new paradigm. They have established their freedom, self-autonomy and personal growth, are better able to express themselves, and are striving hard to achieve their objectives. These new roles are the additional to traditional roles and responsibilities of bearing and rearing children and management of domestic and household. In the dual career families, where both husband and wife are earning, a different situation emerges. Women have to balance identity, power and status with family roles and responsibilities often in conflict and psychological distancing from

the spouse resulting in tension, stress and strain. There is a clash between the domestic roles and the job roles for both-working couples. The man is trying to share some domestic chores with his spouse. It is obvious that without man's sharing in domestic chores, no family harmony and peace can be retained in dual-career families.

Numerous studies have been conducted in India on the dual-career couples and on employed women. Studies have recognized some authentic reasons of conflict between the spouses and conflict among all family members. Mahajan<sup>1</sup> analysed conflicting roles which modern educated women in India have to face if they decide to pursue a career and traditional pattern of home life. The cultural and social realities of this country still force the traditional family role of house-wife and mother and not the role outside house. Mahajan opines that educated women themselves

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are not sure of their capabilities to handle contradictory roles at various stages of their lives. Cultural contradictions existing within the country plays a vital role and they need to be removed before solving the problem. Ramaih<sup>2</sup> explores the economic, psychological and social factors influencing women to opt for a career. Mishra<sup>3</sup> reports what curve the educated employed woman is the dissonance between the social expectations and her actual situation. Working women are seeking new role fit, a consistent frame of reference to anchor her to a relatively stable set of values. To her spouse the role-person-system complex is in a state of flux, essentially due to inevitable value lag. Although, the major sub-structures of society have been undergoing profound changes at the macro levels e.g. in political, economics, religious spheres and ideological plane, their effect is marginal at the micro levels where values on social roles of women have not changed much. As Desai and Krishnaraj<sup>4</sup> observe, middle class women outside work participation is not merely an economic activity, but it affects norms regarding the proper sphere of women, their status vis-a-vis their husbands, values underlying patriarchal family structure, redefinition of the roles of family members, care of children, mixing with other men and remaining outside the house for long periods. Mathur<sup>5</sup> examined the motivational levels of professionals and decisions to seek employment, implications of dual roles, problems and the conflicts they face, due to dual role situations among women engaged in full time continuous employment in professional and non-professional jobs. The impact of their economic status on domestic division of labor and marital satisfaction are assessed and strategies are outlined by which working women strike to preserve a balance and adjust with their roles. Noor<sup>6</sup> found that after taking into account factors such as initial well-being, personality and demographic variables; work overload is the only variable which

predicts psychological distress in working women. Andrade, Postma & Abraham<sup>7</sup> concluded that husbands in both working families experienced better social support but less social contact, less mental mastery, and poorer perceived health than husbands in one-working families. Few or no socio-demographic variables were associated with well-being. Finally, employment may benefit women but stress their husbands. Arora<sup>8</sup> found that the psychological pressure and conflicts encountered by an employed woman, who by her conscious and concerted effort achieves a higher socio-economic status in the society. The conflicts experienced by her are not just an outcome of her status but of clashing societal values, norms, and natural non-acceptance and non-adherence of them as an individual. The resulting conflict is also due to disapproval of and their inability to comply with traditional family and social roles. Coltrane<sup>9</sup> and Cooke<sup>10</sup> found that when men do more of the housework, women's perceptions of fairness and marital satisfaction rise and the couple experiences less marital conflict and less strain and there is a minimum level of role conflicts. Radloff<sup>11</sup> got that the traditional role of a house-wife is unstructured, devalued, frustrating, restrictive and isolated. Beteille<sup>12</sup> opined that there are equally sharp differences of opinion about the changes taking place in the position of women in India. Some regard these changes as profound and pervasive; they indicate that increasing participation of women in public life and to the changes introduced in their legal status. Others maintain that the position of women has changed very little and that Indian society continues by and large to be a male dominated society. Jain<sup>13</sup> found that working women face difficulties in performing her familial roles. Often she has conflicting demands but she is not prepared to leave her job on account of these and she tries to make new adjustments in her family life. Similarly, in the performance of her occupational goals,

her family responsibilities often come in the way. Coverman & Shelly<sup>14</sup> found that there is little change in the amount of time that husband spends on household activities in dual-earner families. Berardo, et. al.<sup>15</sup> & Ferber and Birnham<sup>16</sup> found that men in dual-earner families do as little work as men in single-earner families.

Gove<sup>17</sup> and Thoits<sup>18</sup> say that multiple roles can buffer the individual against the consequences of the role conflict. Multiple roles may also provide gratification and security, increase self-esteem and a sense of purpose in life. According to the contemporary theories of stress, perceptions of uncontrollability, unpredictability and overload of life circumstances are the key components of a stressful existence.<sup>19,20,21</sup> Various types of overload (e.g. multiple tasks, time demands) can also create stress.<sup>22,23,24</sup> Other stress producing factors reported have been lack of control over the content of one's work or when it is done, feeling of inability to influence other people in the work environment or inability to understand what others expect of oneself.<sup>25,26,27</sup> The implicit belief in studying expectations is being that all participants in the social drama hold expectations. Role negotiations and role conflict are produced by two or more people who interact, social and structural factors condition much of it.

Traditionally, sociologists and psychologists focused on the problematic nature of multiple roles, arguing that more complex role sets produce stress.<sup>28,29</sup> Recently, there has been a shift in focus away from the stressful and towards the beneficial effects of occupying different roles. Sieber<sup>30</sup> articulated four types of benefits of role accumulation: role privileges, overall status security, resources for status enhancement and role performance and the enrichment of personality and ego gratification. Marks<sup>31</sup> advanced a similar argument. Stress is viewed as a result of imbalance between the person's perceptions of the

demand made on him and his ability to cope with it. An imbalance of such type gives rise to the experience of stress.<sup>32</sup> Stress is also perceived as an individual phenomenon and is subjective in nature.<sup>33</sup> Role characteristics have been one of the most widely investigated organizational qualities in Stress Research. Role ambiguity, role conflict, role overload, role under load has been found associated with stress.<sup>34,35,36</sup>

Carter,<sup>37</sup> Oliver and Brief<sup>38</sup> found a positive relationship between role conflict and job related tensions. Singh and Sinha<sup>39</sup> found that general role conflict positively related with job related tensions and work alienation. Biederman and Cooper<sup>40</sup> examined the extent to which graduate assistants function under assistance of role conflict and role ambiguity and whether satisfaction and stress levels are associate with either variable. The result revealed strong positive correlation ( $r = +0.72$ ) between role conflict and stress for all graduate assistants. Pahl & Pahl<sup>41</sup> found financial difficulties and Dohrenwend & Dohrenwend<sup>42</sup> found crises as important potential stressors since they act in a feedback loop between work and outside environment. Several studies have examined the relationship between the family and work life<sup>43,44,45</sup> and different psychological and social consequences for dual-career families. According to Rajeswari,<sup>46</sup> situations outside the working environment like residential and community conditions, technological changes, changes in family are the potent extra organizational stressors.

Job related stress and strain arise from various job dimensions i.e. role overload, ambiguity, role conflict, group and political pressure, poor peer relations, intrinsic impoverishment, responsibility for persons.<sup>47,48</sup> It has also been found that job strain is extensively related to organizational variables; however, the results of this have not so far been conclusive. Hammer & Tosi<sup>49</sup> have found

positive correlation between role conflict, job threat and anxiety and no relation between role conflict and job satisfaction in a sample of managers. Similarly, Tosi and Tosi<sup>50</sup> observed a negative relationship between role conflict and job satisfaction among teachers but found no association between role conflict, job threat and anxiety. Beehr and Newman<sup>51</sup> and Caplan et al.<sup>47</sup> found that role conflict is positively associated with several forms of strain such as fatigue, complaints, depression and irritation. Singh and Sinha<sup>39</sup> have studied role conflict, role ambiguity and job person fit in relation to three aspects of job strain and found a positive relationship among the variables. Rajeswari<sup>46</sup> has identified the potent stress situations among bank employees and then classified them into factors relating to organizational policies, structure, process, physical working conditions, group behaviors and others. Structure rigidity, poor physical working conditions and extra-organizational factors were identified to be potent stressors among bank employees.

This is an empirical study to find reasons of role-conflicts and stress among the dual-career couples; decide the level of conflict and stress among the dual-career couples, and explore the coping strategies and to identify areas for policy interventions.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The 'Snowball' sampling method was applied to collect information about the dual-career couples in Orissa and Delhi both, because no government departments are preparing the data about dual-earner families in either of the States. It was very difficult to know the exact size of the universe. So, the Snowball sampling method was preferred instead of other methods of sample selection. The sample size was 320 or 160 couples working in the organized sectors were selected. Equal numbers of respondent couples were selected from each State (Bhubaneswar and Cuttack of Orissa and Delhi). Respondents

who were between 18-45 years of age, with at least one child, educated at least upto class X were selected for this study.

The study was conducted by using two separate structured questionnaires, for the husband and for the wife. Some questions were identical in the both questionnaires and some were different. The questionnaires were filled by the Respondents without consulting each other in the presence of the Researcher. After this there was an informal discussion for half an hour with each couple to observe their feelings and note their opinions about the questionnaire and related issues. This discussion also allowed the respondents to supplement their suggestions if they wanted to provide additional relevant comments. Three Stress levels were categorised as score below 50 points as 'Low' Level of Stress, between 50-100 points as 'Moderate', between 101-150 points as 'High' Level of Stress.

The limitation of the study was that the questionnaires were not translated into the local languages.

This paper explores issues pertaining to role conflicts between the dual-couples related to childcare, domestic work, role conflict, main reasons for stress, and their opinions about stress that was caused due to workload and whether they get time to finish tasks assigned at office everyday. This study also discusses questions related to conflict with colleagues working hours, time spent with family after working hours, family responsibilities, domestic workload, factors responsible for higher level of strain, and how the working couples manage strain and stressful situations, conflicts between multiple roles.

## **RESULTS**

### *Level of stress*

Out of the total 320 respondents 148 of them were found in stress facing conditions. Out of the total 148 stress

facing respondents, 29.7 percent were found in high level of stress, 34.5 percent in moderate level and the 35.8 percent were in low level of stress (Table 1).

In the state of Orissa 50 percent of male and the 68.8 percent of female respondents were found in low level of stress. Similarly, in Delhi, the 41.1 percent of male and 30.7 percent of female respondents were in stress conditions. Most 42.3 percent of the male and 22.5 percent of female spouses from Orissa were found in moderate level of stress. Similarly, the 34.2 percent of male and the 34.7 percent of the female spouses from Delhi were in moderate stress situations. Only 7.7 percent of the male and 8.8 percent of the female spouses from Orissa were in high level of stress whereas in Delhi, the 24.7 percent of male and 34.7% of the female spouses were found in high level of stress. Hence, it can be stated that the 24.7% male and 34.7% female spouses in Delhi face high level of stress in a larger number in comparison the male (7.7%) and female (8.8%) spouses in Orissa. The highest numbers of female employees (68.8%) in Orissa were found in low level of stresses but in Delhi, only the 30.7% of the female employees were in the low level of stress (Table 1). So, the women employees in Orissa are in a better mental status than the women employees in Delhi.

**TABLE 1**  
**Level of stress faced by dual career couples**

State	Gender	Level of Stress			Total
		Low	Moderate	High	
Orissa	Male	39	33	6	78
		50.0%	42.3%	7.7%	100.0%
	Female	55	18	7	80
68.8%		22.5%	8.8%	100.0%	
	Total	94	51	13	158
		59.5%	32.3%	8.2%	100.0%
Delhi	Male	30	25	18	73
		41.1%	34.2%	24.7%	100.0%
	Female	23	26	26	75
30.7%		34.7%	34.7%	100.0%	
	Total	53	51	44	148
		35.8%	34.5%	29.7%	100.0%

Table 1 shows whether conflict with colleagues is somewhat stressful or not. Out of the total 320 respondents the 66.3 percent of them opined that conflict with colleagues is not stressful for them and the rest 33.8 percent stated in favour. Most (75%) of the male and 63.8 percent of female respondents from Orissa viewed that conflict with colleagues is not stressful and 25 percent male and 36.3 percent of female respondents from the same state opined that conflict with colleagues is somewhat stressful.

In Delhi, 63.8 percent of male and 62.5 percent of female respondents stated that conflict with colleagues does not cause any stress and the other hand, 36.3 percent of male and 37.5 percent of female respondents from Delhi viewed in favour. Male employees in Delhi face stress due to the conflict with their colleagues in a larger number (36.3%) than the male employees working in Orissa (25%).

#### *Reasons for stress*

For around a quarter of the respondents, the main reason for stress was excessive workload, limited time and strict words from boss (25.9%), misunderstanding with seniors and boss (29.4%) and preparing homework for the children and making them ready for school (22.5%). For 11.3 percent of the respondents stress was caused due to unfavourable decisions related to increments and for 6.6 percent it was due to family responsibility and conflict with spouse. Only 4.4 percent of the respondents stated to have no stress (Table 5). Gender differential was found to be wide for misunderstanding with seniors and boss (45.6% female; 13.1% male); preparing homework and making child ready for school (30.6% male; 14.4% female) and for excessive workload, limited time and strict boss (32.5% male, 19.4% female). In Orissa the most commonly reported reason was misunderstanding with seniors and boss (40.6%), while it

was excessive workload, limited time and strict words from the boss (34.4%). Gender differentials were found to be wide for misunderstanding with seniors and boss with more female respondents stating

this in both Orissa and Delhi. The gender differentials for other reasons for stress was present but not wide, which was reported more by male respondents than female respondents (Table 2).

**TABLE 2**  
**Main reason for stress among dual-career couples**

		Main Reason for Stress						Total
		Excessive workload, limited time and strict words from boss	Misunderstanding with seniors and boss	Preparing homework and making child ready for school	Unfavorable decisions related to increments	Family responsibilities and conflict with spouse	Not Applicable (No Stress)	
Orissa	Male	19 23.8%	16 20.0%	33 41.3%	10 12.5%	0 .0%	2 2.5%	80 100.0%
	Female	9 11.3%	49 61.3%	13 16.3%	7 8.8%	2 2.5%	0 .0%	80 100.0%
	Total	28 17.5%	65 40.6%	46 28.8%	17 10.6%	2 1.3%	2 1.3%	160 100.0%
Delhi	Male	33 41.3%	5 6.3%	16 20.0%	7 8.8%	12 15.0%	7 8.8%	80 100.0%
	Female	22 27.5%	24 30.0%	10 12.5%	12 15.0%	7 8.8%	5 6.3%	80 100.0%
	Total	55 34.4%	29 18.1%	26 16.3%	19 11.9%	19 11.9%	12 7.5%	160 100.0%
Total	Male	52 32.5%	21 13.1%	49 30.6%	17 10.6%	12 7.5%	9 5.6%	160 100.0%
	Female	31 19.4%	73 45.6%	23 14.4%	19 11.9%	9 5.6%	5 3.1%	160 100.0%
	Total	83 25.9%	94 29.4%	72 22.5%	36 11.3%	21 6.6%	14 4.4%	320 100.0%

Note : Not Applicable means the respondents do not come under stress

#### *Conflict related to child care*

Table 3 shows dual-career couples facing conflict due to child care related issues. Out of the total 320 respondents from both of the study States, the 62.8% of them were of the opinion that they had faced conflict between the spouse and the other 37.2% of them had never faced conflict for the cause of child care.

The couples working in Bhubaneswar

and Cuttack of Orissa were found facing conflicts more relating to child care in comparison to dual-career couples in Delhi as reported by 67.5 percent of male-spouses and 77.5 percent of female-spouses from Orissa. In comparison 51.3 percent of male-spouses and 55 percent female spouses from Delhi had faced spousal conflict for the reasons of child care. Clearly more female spouses (52.7%) than male spouses face (47.3%) spousal conflict in both the state.

**TABLE 3**  
**Couples facing marital conflict due to child care issues**

		Facing conflict for child care				Total	
		Facing conflict		Not facing conflict			
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Delhi	Male	41	51.3	39	48.8	80	100.0
	Female	44	55.0	36	45.0	80	100.0
Orissa	Male	54	67.5	26	32.5	80	100.0
	Female	62	77.5	18	22.5	80	100.0
Total		201	62.8	119	37.2	320	100.0

Most of the conflict was related to the child spending too much time inside the home (40.3%), while 15 percent was related

to neglect of child, health care and 7.5 percent due to the child spending too much time outside the house (Table 4).

**TABLE 4**  
**Major cause of conflict related to child care faced by couples**

		Major cause of conflict related to child care								Total	
		Child spendin time outside home		Child spending time inside home		Child health care		Facing no conflict			
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Delhi	Male	1	1.3	25	31.3	15	18.8	39	48.8	80	100.0
	Female	5	6.3	35	43.8	6	7.5	34	42.5	80	100.0
Orissa	Male	18	22.5	22	27.5	14	17.5	26	32.5	80	100.0
	Female	1	1.3	47	58.8	13	16.3	19	23.8	80	100.0
Total		25	7.5	129	40.3	48	15.0	118	37.2	320	100.0

Various processes were adopted for conflict management. Nearly a quarter (23.1%) of the couples resorted to doing their own work, with more female (31.3%) respondents in Delhi and more male (26.3%) respondents in Orissa reporting this. Family interference was reported by 22.2 per cent of the spouses with more female spouses having felt this is both Delhi (18.8%) and Orissa (37.5%).

Friends and colleagues also intervened in eight percent of the cases, mostly reported by female spouses in Orissa (15%) and male spouses in Delhi (10%). About six percent respondents reported they stopped talking with each other, reported more by male spouses and about four percent beat their children and watched TV as an escape mechanism (Table 5).

**TABLE 5**  
**Conflict management processes related to child care adopted by the respondent couples'**

		Conflict management process related to child care adopted by the respondent couples												Total	
		Compromising their own work		Family intervention		Friends and colleagues intervention		Stop talking		Beating child/watching TV etc.		Facing no conflict			
		No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Delhi	Male	16	20.0	9	11.3	8	10.0	5	6.3	5	6.3	37	46.3	80	100.0
	Female	25	31.3	15	18.8	3	3.8	2	2.5	2	2.5	33	41.3	80	100.0
Orissa	Male	21	26.3	17	21.3	3	3.8	6	7.5	5	6.3	28	35.0	80	100.0
	Female	12	15.0	30	37.5	12	15.0	5	6.3	1	1.3	20	25.0	80	100.0
Total		74	23.1	71	22.2	26	8.1	18	5.6	13	4.1	118	36.9	320	100.0

The level of role conflict has been assessed from three major issues - participation in domestic work, child care, and kitchen work. The level of role conflict has been determined at three levels - low, moderate and high. These three levels are determined on scoring points. A score below 50 points 'low' level of role conflict, scoring between 5-100 points determines 'medium' level of role conflict and score between 10-150 points is 'high' level of role conflict.

*Role conflict*

Out of the total 160 respondents from Delhi, 66 (41.2%) of them had role conflict and the rest of the 94 respondents had faced no role conflict, 42.4 percent of

them were found in moderate level of role conflict. Among those who faced role conflict, 42.4 percent had moderate level of role conflict, while 26 percent had a high level of role conflict, and 32 percent had a low level of role conflict. In Orissa, 77 (48.1%) out of 160 respondents faced role conflict. Among them, 62 percent faced low of level of role conflict and 27 percent had moderate and 10 percent had high level of role conflict while no gender differential was seen in high level of role conflict, gender differential was present in low and medium level of role conflict, with more men in Orissa and more women in Delhi facing 'medium' level of role conflict (Table 6).

**TABLE 6**  
**Level of role conflict facing by the dual career couples**

		Level of Role Conflict			Total
		Low	Moderate	High	
Orissa	Male	24	9	4	37
		64.9%	24.3%	10.8%	100.0%
	Female	24	12	4	40
		60.0%	30.0%	10.0%	100.0%
	Total	48	21	8	77
		62.3%	27.3%	10.4%	100.0%
Delhi	Male	9	14	8	31
		29.0%	45.2%	25.8%	100.0%
	Female	12	14	9	35
		34.3%	40.0%	25.7%	100.0%
	Total	21	28	17	66
		31.8%	42.4%	25.8%	100.0%
Total	Male	33	23	12	68
		48.5%	33.8%	17.6%	100.0%
	Female	36	26	13	75
		48.0%	34.7%	17.3%	100.0%

*Note: A 150 point scoring scale was used to measure the level of 'Role conflict'*



Table 7 describes whether the over workload causes stress to the dual-career couples. Out of 320 respondents the 84.4 percent of them informed that over workload causes them stress and only 15.6 percent of them denied that over workload was not causing stress to them.

The 90 percent of female and 83.8 percent of male respondents from Orissa were found in stress for the cause of over work load in their offices. Similarly, in Delhi the 86.3 percent of female and 82.5 percent of the male respondents were facing stress due to over workload.

Majority (82.5%) of the men and 86.3 percent of women were found having stress due to over workload. However, 17.5 percent of male and 13.8 percent of female respondents were without stress for the same cause.

More number of female employees were found in stress due to over workload in their office in comparison to the male employees. Respondents working in private sector units were found in stress in a large number than the respondents working in public sector units for the cause of over workload.

**TABLE 7**  
**Working couples opinion on stress caused due to over work load**

State	Gender	Stress that caused due to over workload		Total
		Causing stress	No stress	
Orissa	Male	67 83.8%	13 16.3%	80 100.0%
	Female	72 90.0%	8 10.0%	80 100.0%
	Total	139 86.9%	21 13.1%	160 100.0%
Delhi	Male	65 81.3%	15 18.8%	80 100.0%
	Female	66 82.5%	14 17.5%	80 100.0%
	Total	131 81.9%	29 18.1%	160 100.0%
Total	Male	132 82.5%	28 17.5%	160 100.0%
	Female	138 86.3%	22 13.8%	160 100.0%
	Total	270 84.4%	50 15.6%	320 100.0%

Over a third (33.8%) of the working couples opined that stress was caused due to conflict with colleagues. It was reported more by females (36.9%) than males (30.6%). It was more in Delhi (36.9%) than

in Orissa (30.6%) and more among females than males both in Delhi and Orissa. However, the gender disparity was greater in Orissa (Table 8).

**TABLE 8**  
**Working couples opinion on stress due to conflict with colleagues**

State	Gender	Conflict with colleagues is somewhat stressful		Total
		Stressful	Not-stressful	
Orissa	Male	20 25.0%	60 75.0%	80 100.0%
	Female	29 36.3%	51 63.8%	80 100.0%
	Total	49 30.6%	111 69.4%	160 100.0%
Delhi	Male	29 36.3%	51 63.8%	80 100.0%
	Female	30 37.5%	50 62.5%	80 100.0%
	Total	59 36.9%	101 63.1%	160 100.0%
Total	Male	49 30.6%	111 69.4%	160 100.0%
	Female	59 36.9%	101 63.1%	160 100.0%
	Total	108 33.8%	212 66.3%	320 100.0%

While there was no gender difference in the couples' opinion on stress caused due to not getting enough time to finish tasks everyday, the proportion was higher

in Delhi (45.6%) than in Orissa (36.9%). It was higher among males (42.5%) in Orissa and among females (51.3%) in Delhi (Table 9).

**TABLE 9**  
**Working couples opinion on stress due to getting enough time to finish tasks assigned everyday**

State	Gender	Getting enough time to finish tasks assigned everyday		Total
		Able to finish	Not able to finish	
Orissa	Male	46 57.5%	34 42.5%	80 100.0%
	Female	55 68.8%	25 31.3%	80 100.0%
	Total	101 63.1%	59 36.9%	160 100.0%
Delhi	Male	48 60.0%	32 40.0%	80 100.0%
	Female	39 48.8%	41 51.3%	80 100.0%
	Total	87 54.4%	73 45.6%	160 100.0%
Total	Male	94 58.8%	66 41.3%	160 100.0%
	Female	94 58.8%	66 41.3%	160 100.0%
	Total	188 58.8%	132 41.3%	320 100.0%

Most (68.8%) of the couples stated that they were happy with their working hours. More males (33.1%) than females (29.4%)

were not happy. No difference was found in Orissa and Delhi as well as gender differential in these two locations (Table 10).

**TABLE 10**  
**Working couples opinion on being happy with their working hours**

State	Gender	Happy with working hours		Total
		Happy	Not happy	
Orissa	Male	52 65.0%	28 35.0%	80 100.0%
	Female	57 71.3%	23 28.8%	80 100.0%
	Total	109 68.1%	51 31.9%	160 100.0%
Delhi	Male	55 68.8%	25 31.3%	80 100.0%
	Female	56 70.0%	24 30.0%	80 100.0%
	Total	111 69.4%	49 30.6%	160 100.0%
Total	Male	107 66.9%	53 33.1%	160 100.0%
	Female	113 70.6%	47 29.4%	160 100.0%
	Total	220 68.8%	100 31.3%	320 100.0%

*Level of strain*

Nearly 70 percent of the couples faced moderate to high level of strain. It was

faced by more men than women and more in Delhi than Orissa, and more female in Delhi than in Orissa (Table 11).

**TABLE 11**  
**Level of strain faced by the dual career couples**

State	Gender	Level of strain			Total
		Low	Moderate	High	
Orissa	Male	5 38.5%	7 53.8%	1 7.7%	13 100.0%
	Female	8 40.0%	7 35.0%	5 25.0%	20 100.0%
	Total	13 39.4%	14 42.4%	6 18.2%	33 100.0%
Delhi	Male	2 28.6%	2 28.6%	3 42.9%	7 100.0%
	Female	2 12.5%	7 43.8%	7 43.8%	16 100.0%
	Total	4 17.4%	9 39.1%	10 43.5%	23 100.0%
Total	Male	7 35.0%	9 45.0%	4 20.0%	20 100.0%
	Female	10 27.8%	14 38.9%	12 33.3%	36 100.0%
	Total	17 30.3%	23 41.1%	16 28.6%	56 100.0%

The main reasons for strain was due to financial crisis (31.3%), followed by unpleasant comments from boss and leave related matters (25.3%) and doing kitchen work after office hours (22.8%). Other reasons were conflict with spouse/colleague/boss (11.3%), and long working

hours without proper rest (5.9%). Only 3.4 percent couples reported no strain. While reason for strain due to kitchen work after office hours was highest in Delhi (32%), it was unpleasant comments from boss and leave related matters in Orissa (37.5%) (Table 12)

**TABLE 12**  
**Main reasons of strain reported by working couples**

State	Gender	Long working hours without proper rest	Unpleasant comments from boss and leave related matters	Main reasons of strain Financial crisis and unable to meet financial problems timely	Kitchen work after office hours	Conflict with spouse or colleagues or boss	Having no strain	Total
Orissa	Male	3 3.8%	30 37.5%	22 27.5%	15 18.8%	10 12.5%	0 0%	80 100.0%
	Female	3 3.8%	30 37.5%	34 42.5%	7 8.8%	6 7.5%	0 0%	80 100.0%
	Total	6 3.8%	60 37.5%	56 35.0%	22 13.8%	16 10.0%	0 0%	160 100.0%
Delhi	Male	5 6.3%	10 12.5%	22 27.5%	23 28.8%	12 15.0%	8 10.0%	80 100.0%
	Female	8 10.0%	11 13.8%	22 27.5%	28 35.0%	8 10.0%	3 3.8%	80 100.0%
	Total	13 8.1%	21 13.1%	44 27.5%	51 31.9%	20 12.5%	11 6.9%	160 100.0%
Total	Male	8 5.0%	40 25.0%	44 27.5%	38 23.8%	22 13.8%	8 5.0%	160 100.0%
	Female	11 6.9%	41 25.6%	56 35.0%	35 21.9%	14 8.8%	3 1.9%	160 100.0%
	Total	19 5.9%	81 25.3%	100 31.3%	73 22.8%	36 11.3%	11 3.4%	320 100.0%

The factor most responsible for the high level of strain was the boss (80.6%), family (6.9%) and colleagues (3.8%) were other

factors. This was found to be across the locations and gender (Table 13).

**TABLE 13**  
**Most responsible factors for higher level of strain among working couples**

State	Gender	Factors				Total
		Office boss	Family	Colleagues	Any other	
Orissa	Male	70	6	0	4	80
		87.5%	7.5%	.0%	5.0%	100.0%
	Female	68	5	5	2	80
		85.0%	6.3%	6.3%	2.5%	100.0%
	Total	138	11	5	6	160
		86.3%	6.9%	3.1%	3.8%	100.0%
Delhi	Male	59	6	4	11	80
		73.8%	7.5%	5.0%	13.8%	100.0%
	Female	61	5	3	11	80
		76.3%	6.3%	3.8%	13.8%	100.0%
	Total	120	11	7	22	160
		75.0%	6.9%	4.4%	13.8%	100.0%
Total	Male	129	12	4	15	160
		80.6%	7.5%	2.5%	9.4%	100.0%
	Female	129	10	8	13	160
		80.6%	6.3%	5.0%	8.1%	100.0%
	Total	258	22	12	28	320
		80.6%	6.9%	3.8%	8.8%	100.0%

Note: Any other: health problems, workloads and spousal conflicts etc.

**TABLE 14**  
**Managing strain and stress situations by working couples**

State	Gender	Type of coping mechanisms					Total	
		Watching comedy programs, sleeping pills, smoking, drinking	Discussing problems with spouse, elders, friends or colleagues	Try to avoid unnecessary things and try to cope with work	Practicing meditation, go for worship, movies and outing etc	Try to handle responsibilities carefully and timely		Not applicable
Orissa	Male	2	12	29	22	8	7	80
		2.5%	15.0%	36.3%	27.5%	10.0%	8.8%	100.0%
	Female	5	22	18	22	11	2	80
		6.3%	27.5%	22.5%	27.5%	13.8%	2.5%	100.0%
	Total	7	34	47	44	19	9	160
		4.4%	21.3%	29.4%	27.5%	11.9%	5.6%	100.0%
Delhi	Male	4	10	7	16	23	20	80
		5.0%	12.5%	8.8%	20.0%	28.8%	25.0%	100.0%
	Female	11	11	18	10	29	1	80
		13.8%	13.8%	22.5%	12.5%	36.3%	1.3%	100.0%
	Total	15	21	25	26	52	21	160
		9.4%	13.1%	15.6%	16.3%	32.5%	13.1%	100.0%
Total	Male	6	22	36	38	31	27	160
		3.8%	13.8%	22.5%	23.8%	19.4%	16.9%	100.0%
	Female	16	33	36	32	40	3	160
		10.0%	20.6%	22.5%	20.0%	25.0%	1.9%	100.0%
	Total	22	55	72	70	71	30	320
		6.9%	17.2%	22.5%	21.9%	22.2%	9.4%	100.0%

Note: Not Applicable means the couples do not face strain.

Various coping mechanisms were adopted by working couples in managing stress and strain. It was mostly trying to avoid unnecessary things and try to cope with work, meditate or go for entertainment and try to handle responsibilities carefully and timely (Table 14).

## CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that the traditional gender roles such as child care, house keeping and kitchen works of women have been significantly changing in dual-career families. These responsibilities are shared either by the male spouse or by the paid servant or part time maids. Though, the people of India have walked a long distance in development, yet patriarchy is not completely impotent. Woman as an employed individual could be able to add new values and elevate her importance in the family due to her earning capacity, choosing a career and power of decision making. Role conflicts, stress and strain among the dual career/employed couples affect the career and goals of the wife in more cases than the husband and the same was also found in some male cases. An employed woman loses interests in domestic or household chores and she feels that these chores causes stress if she continues to perform them. The employed women have decreased their interests in domestic chores because of the job responsibilities and time constraints.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

One can appreciate that in India, there are various legislations, policies and programmes that have been implemented to protect the interests of the people. In some aspects women are needed to be well concentrated to improve their status. Unfortunately, the policies and programmes are not adequate, extensive and many times even they are not properly implemented. Keeping this understanding and the

conclusions drawn from the findings, this study recommends some suggestions for the policy measures to improve gender justice concerns.

- It is high time to prop up women to allow having job and promotions without any ambiguity and consternation. Simultaneously, more family and career counseling centers are required to open including the semi-urban areas so that proper awareness can be generated.
- Work places are not sufficiently safe and conducive for women. The private sectors are needed to take serious interventions in protecting their employees' dignity and image. This is based upon the fact that most of the female respondents of this study admit that sexual harassment is not completely rooted out from their offices and in many places; there was no committee to look into the sexual harassment cases.
- In the work places there should be proper baby sitting and child care centers so that working mothers can keep their jobs without having to choose between their job and child care. Dual-career families will benefit a lot and many conflicts can be avoided through this measure. Educated women who are not in employed can be motivated to secure jobs.
- There is a need to reform maternity and paternity leave rules and the private sector should not create any adverse circumstances that directly or indirectly force pregnant employees to quit from the job during their pregnancy.
- Patriarchal attitudes can be diminished through the proper socialization of the child at home and school. Study materials should cite proper examples and pictures maintaining gender equality. For example, women should

not be cited as always performing the domestic work in the kitchen, cleaning, serving of food and caring for a baby only but a man can also be cited in those places. These values are needed to be incorporated in the education materials from childhood.

- There is a need to encourage organizations and activists working on gender issues in a large scale. Women should be aware to oppose any form of discriminations against them and men should accept women as equals.
- Some private institutions or companies are exploiting their employees without giving proper salaries to them and there is a need to prosecute these institutions for reprehensible justice to the employee. Corrupted officials are the main hurdles in proper execution of their duties. So, immediate actions should be taken against them.

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