



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Role Strain Experienced by Dual-Career Couples Due to Role Expectation

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Today's Indian dual-career couples have a dual role to play, when they take up jobs they have to take care of their homes along with their outside employment. This puts strain on them and affects their mental and physical well being. Family expectation, societal expectations and personal role expectations are main predictor of role strain. The study was designed on the basis of scarcity hypothesis; this hypothesis postulates that individuals have a limited amount of time, energy and attention. Therefore multiple roles could easily and quickly deplete an individual's resources, affecting their satisfaction, if not allocated appropriately. Women still bear more responsibility for child-care and homecare than their male counterparts. The cross sectional study on gender differences in role expectations and role strain was carried out in Jaipur city of Rajasthan state. Total 50 couples (50 wives and 50 husbands) were selected. Data were analyzed using SPSS 16.0 statistical tool. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used. Independent t-test result shows that males score in occupational role reward value and role commitment was higher than females and females score higher in parental and homecare role than males. Females experienced higher level of role strain than males. Bivariate analysis and Pearson Correlation Coefficient result shows that positive correlation between aspects of role expectation and aspects of role strain. It means higher level of role expectations, role commitment and little support from family and others increase the role strain in spouses.

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Introduction

Traditionally the primary role of men is conceived to be occupational role while that of women consist of parental and homecare roles. This traditional role allocation pattern was considered ideal for the family functioning as responsibilities of women were confined within the four walls of their home. Today women expect to gain life satisfaction from occupational roles as well. They are entering the labour force in large numbers.

Although women have worked in service sector but at the same time, they have to perform all the household work and family responsibilities single handedly, which they have been doing from the centuries. In today's world the women have dual role i.e. the occupational and political position while at the same time the major responsibility for home. The

men expected their wives to be homemakers and child rearers. Evidences indicate that today's women are preparing themselves for future work with the expectation of combining family and household activities with regular employment (Mary, Van and Somuel, 1982). Women have a dual role to play, when they take up jobs they have to take care of their homes along with their outside employment. This puts strain on them and affects their mental and physical well being.

The work and home interface creates much conflict for the dual-career woman because of the different role expectations and demands on her time. It is not surprising that dual-career women suffer from role conflict and role overload (Puckrin 1990). O'Leary (1977) describes role overload as the inability to satisfy all role expectations in the time available,

despite recognizing the legitimacy of all the demands. Dual-career women do not have time to perform the tasks of the different roles incumbent on them resulting in a compromise of some degree in one or more roles. This tends to have an impact on either their work or personal life.

The expectations of women come from external and internal sources. Societal pressures are present that often create a conflict between work and family for working women (Gorman & Fritzsche, 2002). In addition, women are still expected by their spouses to be responsible for the majority of household management which puts a strain on their time (DeMeis & Perkins, 1996). Finally, women's perceptions of their role also play into effect to determine how they feel about society's expectations as well as their responsibility for child care and household management (Mederer, 1993; McVeigh, 2003).

Role theorists maintain that the amount of role strain experienced by a working woman depends on the degree of her commitment to different roles and the role reward value expected by her from these roles. Role strain increases, when a working woman expects to gain life satisfaction from more than one role, especially the occupational role along with other traditional roles of her (Philip, 2000).

Role strain is defined as the difficulty felt in fulfilling the simultaneous demands of multiple roles (Goode, 1960). Sieber (1974) found that role strain consists of two main aspects i.e. role overload and role conflict. Role overload is when obligations of one role impinge on the time needed to meet the obligations of other roles. Role conflict occurs because of the incompatibility of pressures that arise within the different work and family roles (Sieber, 1974).

Role strain theory is based on the scarcity hypothesis. This hypothesis suggests that the sum of human energy is fixed and that multiple roles inevitably reduce the time and energy available to meet all role demands, thus creating strain (Goode, 1960; Marks, 1977). The scarcity hypothesis also suggests that the workload involved in multiple roles would be an important predictor. Some, but not all, researchers have found that greater workload, as measured by demands at home or at work; hours spent at work or in child care or other domestic tasks, or by the presence of young children, contributes to greater role strain (Crosby, 1991; Crouter, 1984; Emmons et al., 1990; Marshall & Barnett, 1991; Marshall & Barnett, 1993). Others have found that the quality of one's experiences in work or parenting roles is also predictive of role overload and role strain (Barnett & Baruch, 1985; Burke, 1988; Duxbury & Higgins, 1991; Loerch, Russell, & Rush, 1989).

One of the most commonly researched problems of dual-career couples is work and family role strain. Many dual-career couples experience role strain because of the gendered stereotypes they have adapted from societal expectations and norms (Silverstein, Auerbach, & Levant, 2002).

Objectives

The present investigation was planned with the following specific objectives:

1. To identify the role expectation of dual career couples towards multiple roles as perceived by husband and wife.
2. To assess the role strain among husband and wife in fulfilling role expectation.
3. To find out the difference between male and female in the aspects of role expectation and role strain.
4. To find out the relationship between role expectations and role strain as experienced by husband and wife separately.

Material and Methods

Design

Cross sectional study on gender differences in role expectation and role strain in dual-career couples was conducted in Jaipur city of Rajasthan state. Two types of research i.e. explanatory and descriptive research were used in the study.

Sample

Total 50 couples (50 wives and 50 husbands) were approached to participate in this study. The respondents were purposively selected from their working places. The selection of the respondents were based on following criteria- (1) nuclear family (2) husband-wife and at least one child living together (3) youngest child below 12 years of age and (4) husband – wife each have at least eight hours job period.

Instruments

To assess role expectation, the 'Life Role Salience Scale' (LRSS) developed by Amatea et. al (1986) was used after suitable modification. The LRSS was designed to assess men's and women's personal expectations. In the LRSS, four major life roles- the occupational, the parental, the marital and the homecare roles were assessed in terms of two dimensions. The first dimension was **Role Reward Value**, indexed by means of statements in which the individual agree that the role is an important means of self-definition and personal satisfaction. The

second dimension, the **Role Commitment** level dimension, was assessed by statements describing the extent to which the person demonstrates a willingness to commit personal resources to assure success in the role or to develop the role. A total of eight separate scales, assessing each of these two dimensions for each of the four life roles, were used. The LRSS is a 40 items scale (5 statements in each aspect). A Likert type attitude scale format was adopted, with five possible response choices: (1) disagree, (2) somewhat disagree, (3) neither agree nor disagree, (4) somewhat agree, (5) agree.

To assess role strain of the female spouses 'Women's Role strain Inventory' developed by Lengacher and Sellers in 2003 was used after suitable modification. To assess role strain of the male spouses a questionnaire was prepared by the investigator on the basis of 'Women's Role strain Inventory'. The inventory was divided in 3 subscales- (1) **Role Distress**: indicating that there was adverse strain associated with multiple roles of working and family/ significant others/ personal. (2) **Role Enhancement**: indicating a positive response to multiple roles of working, family and personal. (3) **Role Support**: indicating the importance of support from family/ friends/ children and significant other. In the role strain inventory total 46 items, in which 18 items in role distress, 16 items in role enhancement and 12 items in role support. A five point Likert rating scale with responses of strongly agree, frequently agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree and rating scale 1-5 was used. In the 46 item inventory there was a possible range of the items from 46- 230 points, with 46 indicating absolutely no role strain and 230 indicating complete role strain.

Specifically for the purpose of the study the investigator developed a third instrument after an extensive literature review. The third instrument elicited demographic data such as age, type of occupation, number of children etc. Finally two packets of the questionnaire were prepared by the investigator, one for female spouses and other for male spouses.

Procedure

The questionnaire was distributed to the respondents after the permission of their managing director along with written and verbal instruction that explained the nature and scope of the study. Two sets of the questionnaire were distributed to each respondent, one for their own and other for their spouse. Respondents were requested to complete the questionnaire without discussing their responses with others. After few days questionnaire were collected by investigator.

Data Analysis

Data were analysed using SPSS 16.0 statistical tools and descriptive and inferential statistics were used. To analyse the family background of the respondents' and level of role expectation and role strain of male and female spouses', numbers and percentages were used. To analyse the difference between male and female regarding role expectation and role strain, mean, standard deviation and Independent T-test was used. To analyse the relationship between different aspects of role expectation and role strain of male and female spouses, Bivariate analysis and Pearson Correlation Coefficient was used.

Result and Discussion

Personal Attribute

Majority of the respondents (56% females and 38 % males) belonged to age group of 25-30 years. Twenty-six percent females and 34 percent males belonged to age group of 31-35 years. Those 36 years and above age group constitute only 18 percent females and 28 percent males. Majority (62 %) respondents have one child and 36 percent have two children.

Table- 1. Personal attribute of the respondents

N= 100 (50 M+50 F)

S. No.	Personal Attribute	Category	Female		Male	
			No.	%age	No.	%age
1.	Age	25-30 yrs.	28	56 %	19	38 %
		31-35 yrs.	13	26 %	17	34 %
		36 yrs. & above	9	18 %	14	28 %
2.	No. of Children	One	31	62 %	31	62 %
		Two	18	36 %	18	36 %
		Three	1	2 %	1	2 %

Role Expectation of Dual-Career Couples

1. Past studies revealed that today's women are upwardly anchored and expect to gain life satisfaction from their involvement in a job. They take up jobs not only to contribute to the financial resources of family but also to obtain status, esteem, power and psychological satisfaction. Hence, it is quite likely that these women attribute high level of personal importance to occupational roles. Table-2 shows that majority of the respondents (94 % husbands & 82 % wives) attributed a high level of occupational role reward value, which indicates the high degree of importance given to this role. Here males' score in occupational role reward value is higher than females. This could be due to the fact that in Indian society men consider occupational role as

their primary role and the most important role performed by them. Similar findings were also reported by Philip (2000), who observed that husbands in all the groups exhibit a higher level of personal importance to occupational roles. This could be due to two reasons. Firstly, men in our society conceive occupational role as their primary role. Hence they attribute higher degrees of personal importance to this role, whereas women in our society conceive occupational role as a subsidiary role to their homecare and domestic responsibilities. Secondly, a large number of women in our society take up occupational responsibilities primarily to contribute to the financial resources of the family and not to obtain personal satisfaction from status, power and esteem that come along with a job. Hence they do not show a higher degree of personal importance to their occupational role.

2. The main reason of role strain in working couples has been identified as the intended level of commitment of personal time and energy resources to enactment of different roles. Employed women perform multiple roles and it requires additional time and energy resources for them to carry out such roles effectively. Commitment of dual-career couples to occupational role has been studied keeping this factor in mind. Majority (58 %) of the husbands had high level of occupational commitment as compared to 34 percent wives and 64 percent wives manifested average level of commitment to occupational role.

3. Traditionally, parental role was considered the primary role of female spouses. Now, with the changing patterns of family system and other factors in the immediate environment which affect the family system, parental role of spouses have also undergone qualitative changes. In this study the reward value attributed to parental role by both spouses were studied. The table-2 indicates that majority of (86%) females' exhibit high level of reward value attributed to parental role. Fifty percent male spouses attributed high level and 50 percent manifested average level of parental role reward value. This indicates that female spouses spent increased amount of time with their children and perform most of the parental responsibilities than male spouses.

4. The time and energy spent by dual-career couples on their parenting role is an important factor of their level of commitment to parenting role. Job patterns and job demands can influence the role commitment of working spouses. In this study it was found that majority (72%) of females exhibit high level of commitment to their parental role but more than half (58%) of males attributed average level of commitment to their parental role. Only 42 percent males exhibit high level of parental role commitment. It was observed that Indian women are still more committed to their parental roles than male counterparts.

Table- 2. Level of Role Expectation of Female and Male Spouse

N=100 (50+50)

S. No.	Aspects of Role Expectation	Female (No. and percentage)			Male (No. and percentage)		
		Low	Average	High	Low	Average	High
1.	ORRV	0	9 (18%)	41 (82%)	0	3 (6%)	47 (94%)
2.	ORC	1(2%)	32(64%)	17(34%)	0	21(42%)	29(58%)
3.	PRRV	0	7(14%)	43(86%)	0	25(50%)	25(50%)
4.	PRC	0	14(28%)	36(72%)	0	29(58%)	21(42%)
5.	MRRV	0	3(6%)	47(94%)	0	4(8%)	46(92%)
6.	MRC	0	9(18%)	41(82%)	0	8(16%)	42(84%)
7.	HRRV	0	2(4%)	48(96%)	0	11(22%)	39(78%)
8.	HRC	0	13(26%)	37(74%)	1(2%)	28(56%)	21(42%)

ORRV- Occupational Role Reward Value, ORC- Occupational Role Commitment, PRRV- Parental Role Reward Value, PRC- Parental Role Commitment, MRRV- Marital Role Reward Value, MRC- Marital Role Commitment, HRRV- Homecare Role Reward Value, HRC- Homecare Role Commitment.

5. Past studies show that in dual-career families' there are adverse effects of women's

employment on marriage. Job characteristics of women can adversely affect marriage only when

spouses attach low level of importance to their marital role compare to their occupational role. It was found that a large number of male and female spouses (92% males and 94% females) attributed a high level of personal importance to their marital role. These findings clearly indicate that husbands and wives attribute an equal level reward value to their marital role.

6. Higher level of commitment shows a highly satisfactory marital life. To achieve high marital satisfaction spouses need to support each other, understand each other and trust each other etc. these may exist in marriage when the spouses are committed to the performance of different, marital responsibilities. The table-2 shows that 84 percent male and 82 percent female spouses exhibit a high level of marital role commitment. Here males and females commitment level is found equal.

7. In dual career families women expected men to participate more actively in maintenance of house affairs. If men participate in homecare roles, women get considerable relief from their burden of homecare management. Keeping this fact in mind, the present study investigated to assess the homecare role reward value of spouses. Majority of the respondents (96% females and 78% males) attached high level of personal importance to homecare role. Twenty-two percent males attributed average level of reward value to their homecare responsibilities. It was observed that female spouses attach a higher degree

of personal importance to homecare role compared to their husbands.

8. Commitment of husbands to homecare responsibilities is seen from the context of sharing of homecare responsibilities with wife. Men with egalitarian sex role orientation derive more personal satisfaction from taking active part in the management of day-to-day homecare activities. Now, men in dual-career families take part in the management of home affairs. In this study it was observed that differences in the husband's and wives' commitment to homecare responsibilities. Table-2 shows that majority (74%) of the females showed high level of commitment to homecare roles while 42 percent husbands attributed high level of commitment to homecare roles. More than half (56%) of the males exhibit average level of commitment to homecare roles. These data clearly indicate that wives exhibit a higher level of commitment to home care roles than husbands.

Role Strain felt by Dual-Career Couples

Goode (1960) presents the scarcity hypothesis in that the social structure creates over demanding role obligations, resulting in role strain. This supports a major assumption that multiple role obligations can be a source of role strain. Goode (1960) believe that an individual faces many role demands and cannot meet all of them; therefore, role strain is a 'normal' experience that everyone encounters. The levels of role strain of female and male spouses are presented in Table-3.

Table- 3. Level of Role Strain of Female and Male Spouse

S. No.	Aspects of Role Strain	N=100 (50+50)					
		Female (No. and percentage)			Male (No. and percentage)		
		Low	Average	High	Low	Average	High
1.	RD	0	17(34%)	33(66%)	0	36(72%)	14(28%)
2.	RE	0	10(20%)	40(80%)	0	22(44%)	28(56%)
3.	RS	0	6(12%)	44(88%)	0	15(30%)	35(70%)

RD- Role Distress, RE- Role Enhancement, RS- Role Support

Majority (66%) of the female spouses experienced high level of role strain in the aspect of role distress as compared to 28 percent husbands, while almost two-third (72%) of the males experienced average

level of role distress. More than two-third (80 %) of the female respondents encountered high level of role strain in the aspect of role enhancement and 88 percent female respondents encountered high level of

role strain in the aspect of role support. Male respondents also experienced high level of role strain in above mentioned (aforesaid) aspects i.e. 56 per cent and 70 per cent respectively but these ratios are lower than female ratio. It means working women experienced high level of role strain due to multiple roles than men. It was also observed that females also receive lower support from their family members.

Difference in the aspects of role expectation among female and male spouse

Independent t-test result shows significant difference between female and male spouses in different aspects of role expectation (table-4).

Table-4. Difference in the aspects of role expectation among female and male spouse

N= 100(50+50)

S No.	Aspects of Role Expectation	Female		Male		T-value	Level of significance
		Mean	S.D	Mean	S.D		
1	ORRV	18.8200	2.74561	20.7000	2.14999	3.812	0.01
2	ORC	14.7400	2.98848	16.5400	2.77165	3.123	0.01
3	PRRV	20.7600	3.58887	16.4800	3.46552	6.066	0.01
4	PRC	18.6000	3.64776	16.1200	3.30516	3.563	0.01
5	MRRV	21.0400	3.26990	20.5600	3.36343	0.724	NS
6	MRC	19.2800	2.99687	18.9000	2.67452	0.669	NS
7	HRRV	20.7600	2.81077	18.6000	2.96235	3.740	0.01
8	HRC	18.2200	2.40993	16.2200	2.52570	4.051	0.01

ORRV- Occupational Role Reward Value, ORC- Occupational Role Commitment, PRRV- Parental Role Reward Value, PRC- Parental Role Commitment, MRRV- Marital Role Reward Value, MRC- Marital Role Commitment, HRRV- Homecare Role Reward Value, HRC- Homecare Role Commitment, NS- Not Significant

Significant difference was observed between husbands and wives in the aspects of occupational, parental and homecare role reward value and role commitment. It was significant at 0.01 level. The mean score of males were higher than females in aspects of occupational role reward value and role commitment. It means men in Indian society conceive occupational role as their primary role and they attribute higher degree of personal importance to this role. On the other hand women in Indian society conceive occupational role as a subsidiary role to their childcare and household responsibilities. Due to the above reason males are highly committed to occupational role compared to the females. The mean scores at the females were high in the aspects of parental and homecare role reward value and role commitment than their husbands. It can be concluded from the findings that females attribute higher level of reward value and commitment to their parental and home care roles compared to their husbands. The main reason of these responsibilities is that traditionally, child care and home care responsibilities are ascribed to females. There was no significant difference found between male and female spouses in the aspects of marital role reward value and role commitment. It means male and female spouses in dual-career families attribute equal level of reward value and commitment for their marital roles.

Difference in the aspects of role strain among female and male spouse

Independent t-test also shows significant difference between male and female spouses in different aspects of role strain (table-5). Significant difference was found in aspects of role distress, role enhancement and role support between males and females. It was significant at 0.01 level. The mean score of female spouses were higher than the mean score of male spouses. It indicates that female spouses experienced higher level of role strain due to their multiple roles, self role expectation and societal expectation etc. than their husband. Female spouses also receive little help from their family member in family task; it is also the main reason of their role strain.

Relationship between Aspects of role expectation and role strain among females

Relationship between aspects of role expectation and role strain among female spouses were analyzed using bivariate analysis (table-6). Pearson correlation coefficient result shows that role distress was positively correlated with parental role commitments marital role reward value and role commitments. It was significant at 0.05 level. Positive correlation was also found between role enhancement and parental and marital role reward value. It was also significant at 0.05 level. Role support was also positively correlated with parental role reward value and

commitment and marital role commitment. It was also significant at 0.05 level and 0.01 level respectively. These findings indicate that with an increase in expectation of parental and marital role there is also an increase in the level of role strain.

Relationship between Aspects of role expectation and role strain among males

Relationship between aspects of role expectation and role strain among male spouses are presented in table-7. It was observed that role distress was positively correlated with marital role reward value and commitment and home care role reward value. It

was significant at 0.01 level and 0.05 level respectively. Positive correlation was also found between role enhancement and marital and home care role reward value. It was significant at 0.01 level. Role support and aspects of role expectation i.e. parental, marital and homecare reward value and commitment were also positively correlated. It was significant at 0.01 level. Role support and parental role commitment was significant at 0.05 level. It can be concluded that if male spouse receive support from their family members and significant others in fulfilment of the role expectations they may easily reduce their role strain experienced by them.

Table- 5. Difference in the aspects of role strain among female and male spouse

N= 100(50+50)

S. No.	Aspects of Role Strain	Female		Male		T-value	Level of significance
		Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.		
1	Role Distress	64.7000	8.44248	54.8200	9.33873	5.549	0.01
2	Role Enhancement	59.7400	8.00717	54.0800	7.91238	3.555	0.01
3	Role Support	48.1000	5.94962	43.1400	8.12909	3.482	0.01

Table- 6. Relationship between Aspects of role expectation and role strain among females

S. No.	Aspects of Role Expectation	Aspects of Role Strain (correlation & level of significance)		
		Role Distress	Role Enhancement	Role Support
1	ORRV	-0.103 (NS)	-0.253 (NS)	0.046 (NS)
2	ORC	-0.252 (NS)	-0.047 (NS)	-0.110 (NS)
3	PRRV	0.235 (NS)	0.316 (0.05)	0.285 (0.05)
4	PRC	0.309 (0.05)	0.117 (NS)	0.294 (0.05)
5	MRRV	0.350 (0.05)	0.285 (0.05)	0.251 (NS)
6	MRC	0.357 (0.05)	0.041(NS)	0.404 (0.01)
7	HRRV	0.152 (NS)	0.224 (NS)	0.194 (NS)
8	HRC	0.134 (NS)	0.101 (NS)	0.006 (NS)

ORRV- Occupational Role Reward Value, ORC- Occupational Role Commitment, PRRV- Parental Role Reward Value, PRC- Parental Role Commitment, MRRV- Marital Role Reward Value, MRC- Marital Role Commitment, HRRV- Homecare Role Reward Value, HRC- Homecare Role Commitment, NS- Not Significant

Table- 7. Relationship between Aspects of role expectation and role strain among males

S. No.	Aspects of Role Expectation	Aspects of Role Strain (correlation & level of significance)		
		Role Distress	Role Enhancement	Role Support
1	ORRV	0.068 (NS)	0.229 (NS)	0.264 (NS)
2	ORC	-0.177 (NS)	0.079 (NS)	-0.010 (NS)
3	PRRV	0.206 (NS)	0.161 (NS)	0.364 (0.01)
4	PRC	0.128 (NS)	0.096 (NS)	0.325 (0.05)
5	MRRV	0.454 (0.01)	0.415 (0.01)	0.496 (0.01)
6	MRC	0.502 (0.01)	0.053(NS)	0.444 (0.01)
7	HRRV	0.318 (0.05)	0.566 (0.01)	0.577 (0.01)
8	HRC	0.196 (NS)	0.239 (NS)	0.426 (0.01)

ORRV- Occupational Role Reward Value, ORC- Occupational Role Commitment, PRRV- Parental Role Reward Value, PRC- Parental Role Commitment, MRRV- Marital Role Reward Value, MRC- Marital Role Commitment, HRRV- Homecare Role Reward Value, HRC- Homecare Role Commitment, NS- Not Significant

Conclusion

It can be concluded that male spouses scores higher in occupational role reward value and role commitment than females and female spouses' scores higher in parental and homecare role reward value and role commitment than male spouses. It means that in Indian society men consider occupational role as their primary role and the most important role performed by them. Hence they attribute higher degrees of personal importance to this role, whereas women in Indian society conceive occupational role as a subsidiary role to their parental, homecare and domestic responsibilities. Indian women still perform major role in parental and homecare responsibility. Due to multiple responsibilities women experienced higher level of role strain than their male counterparts. Self role expectation, societal expectation and little support from their family members also increase role strain of female spouses.

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