



# A study on stress and coping mechanisms among dual career couples

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## Abstract:

*In India, dual career couples face many stressors due to their demands of balancing work and family. As the number of dual-career couples continues to rise, it is increasingly apparent that they face unique challenges as they try to balance family matters while pursuing demanding careers. Moreover, the stressful experience is an overriding concern of dual career living. Dual career couples must cope with the changes in their lifestyle. The aim of this research paper is to study stress and coping mechanisms among dual career couples. The study is to find out how various job related stress factors like Workload, Time pressures & deadlines, Repetitive & boring work, Lack of career development, Lack of job security affects stress levels of dual career couples and tries to explore the variation of role stress among working couples across demographic variables like gender, experience groups and also coping mechanisms used by these couples to manage their work and family life. The data for this study was collected from 100 dual career couples of different companies working in different areas and domains across India. The study we also came to know that most of the respondents get appropriate spousal support from the partner. Well, most of the respondents show effects of stress on reduced work effectiveness. When it comes to organisational support to combat stress most of the times respondents get a clean & peaceful working environment.*

*Keywords: Dual career couple, Stress, Coping mechanisms*

## Introduction

In the present day culture, the dual career relationship addresses the perplexing association between career and gender role connection. Marital partners in both family relationships and in their individual careers or professions show psychological commitment. The demands which have given rise by two parallel careers, notwithstanding shared remunerations, be that as it may, can deliver over burden on couples, work-family conflict and stress, these are bothered

when couples have children and other family commitments. Along these it offers ascend to dual loyalties, may bring about contrary ramifications for individual connections and the workplace.

Australian Bureau of Statistics in 1996 established that among 52% percent of couples in the workforce are dual income earners. There was a 58% expansion in the number of dual earner couples in the last 27 years. At the same time there was an extension of 24% in the total number of couple families in the comparable period.

In the coming thousand years, we can notice that the productivity and reliability of both the gender employees are identified with their ability to balance between the work and family responsibilities. In the earlier days the employment practices were mostly around the heterogeneous workforce profile. Employers in the current scenario must give up their past assumptions and stereotypes to achieve the higher efficiencies from the employees. We can notice from some Australian associations that are tending to work and their family issues underestimate the impact due to dual career aspects mainly in geographical movement.

Organizational planning required to develop a blueprint and procedure to cater to the problems experienced by dual income couples in managing their career and family are still in their infancy stage. The theory has been developed in this field of study due to the research conducted on the dual income couples but the theory has not translated into development of good organizational strategies put in practice to solve the problems faced by dual income couples. The gender gap between men and women is reported in all organizations across all the sectors. The gender discrimination and also the fact that women are not empowered and supported in their work life results in women not occupying positions of authority and the outcome being that the problems faced by women in work environment are not represented in the board meeting. This causes the problems faced by women to increase and the solution not being developed creates frustration and also resulting in many women resigning from their jobs. The discrimination in pay between men and women is at a stage where women earn 82 cents compared to \$1 earned by men for the same work done. The family picture also remains the same with women doing most of the household work like getting the children ready and ensuring that the house is in order. The dual pressure of running the house and meeting the office obligations are taking a toll on the couples both men and women and hence increasing their stress eventually.

## Literature Review

Recent research by Zhiyu Feng and Krishna Savani (2020) was done to understand the gender gaps of dual career couple parents, who are working from home with respect to work productivity and job satisfaction in regards to COVID 19. The results have shown that before the pandemic there was no gender difference in the self-rated work productivity and job satisfaction. But, during the lockdown, women reported lower work productivity and job satisfaction compared to men.

The authors Zheng Chena, Tammy D. Allenb, Limin Houc in their paper “Mindfulness, empathetic concern, and work–family outcomes: A dyadic analysis” (2020) was done to understand the role of mindfulness and empathetic concern related to the work of the working dual career couple. By using the partner rating, results showed the significance of mindfulness in achieving desired spousal work-family outcomes. They additionally bring to notice the role of empathic concern in mediating the relationship between mindfulness and spousal concern in mediating the relationship between mindfulness and spousal work-family results dependent on crossover theory. And it also showed that mindfulness has an inverse relationship with the positive emotions. The research paper “Efficacy of Brief Mindfulness Intervention on Happiness among Distressed Married Couples” by Delphi P.P , & D.V. Nithyanandan (2020) was done to understand the impact of brief mindfulness training in order to decrease distress among marital couples and furthermore among distressed couples to upgrade their blissfulness. The results uncovered that brief mindfulness intervention is a powerful strategy in order to lessen distress among married couples. It also resulted that the individuals who practice mindfulness in everyday life can keep up their own and day to day family life in the condition of prosperity.

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The research paper “Efficacy of Brief Mindfulness Intervention on Happiness among Distressed Married Couples” by Delphi P.P , & D.V. Nithyanandan (2020) was done to understand the impact of brief mindfulness training in order to decrease distress among marital couples and furthermore among distressed couples to upgrade their blissfulness. The results uncovered that brief mindfulness intervention is a powerful strategy in order to lessen distress among married couples. It also resulted that the individuals who practice mindfulness in everyday life can keep up their own and day to day family life in the condition of prosperity.

The authors Carmen Martínez, Consuelo Paterna in their paper, “Attitude towards career progression in Spanish dual-earner couples: A dyadic approach” (2018) was done to understand the perceived discrimination towards women in attitude for career progression in working couples. The research found out that the traditional gender roles positively impacted the husband's behaviour towards career progression. “A Dyadic Approach to Understanding Associations between Job Stress, Marital Quality, and Dyadic Coping for Dual-Career Couples in Iran” by Reza Fallahchai et al., (2019) prime objective is to study the relationship between job stress and marital quality in dual career couples from Iran. The results indicated that job stress was negatively associated with marital quality and that perceived support of partner and common dyadic coping moderated the association and also improved the quality of relationships among the dual career couples.

The paper on “Patterns of stress, work-family conflict, role conflict, role ambiguity and overload among dual-career and single-career couples: an Australian study” by David F. Elloy, Catherine R. Smith (2003) studied the degree of stress and family conflict among dual career couples contrasted to the single career couples. The research concluded that there are high levels of stress and family conflict for dual career couples in comparison to single career couples.

The authors P Li, TW Taris, MCW Peeters in their paper “Challenge and hindrance appraisals of job demands: one man's meat, another man's poison? (2020) Objective is to see and know how individuals are appraising particular job demands whether they are taking as a challenge or as a hindrance and also how these are affecting the relationship between job demands and engagement or burnout. Generally the results indicated that the high job demands indicated high negative outcomes too. It was seen that job demands like time urgency, role conflict and Emotional demands as a challenge moderated the associations between these demands and engagement or burnout.

“The authors Tamara D. Afifi, Kathryn Harrison, Nicole Zamanzadeh & Michelle Acevedo Callejas in their paper, “Testing the theory of resilience and relational load in dual career families: relationship maintenance as stress management” (2020) was done to understand whether maintaining relationships reduces the stress to balance between work and family. In the study, the stress shown throughout the week was recorded and during the middle of the week on two consecutive days and salvation was also collected. It was discovered that mothers and fathers did not altogether vary in their apparent support from one another and their reports showed moderate levels. The research concluded that greater levels of satisfaction for balancing work and family were shown by fathers than mothers. Greater loneliness was shown by mothers than adolescents and yet it was found that they did not vary in their loneliness from fathers. There is a greater rise in cortisol awakening response (CAR) among adolescents contrasted to mothers and fathers.

“We've come a Long Way? An Overview of Research of Dual-Career Couples' Stressors and Strengths” By D Viers, AM Prouty (2002) was done to understand the strength and stressors of dual career couples. These spaces incorporate work overburden, roles in work and family, individual and cultural perspectives, marital distress level among the couples, identity clashes and power etc. The results showed that dual career couples are recognised with five stresses such as overburden of work, reduced usage in social networks, adjusting to balance between family and work roles, individual identity clashes and also disparities seen between individual and accepted practices. It was discovered that both men and women, who reported work experiences both positive and negative shows that they get affected by mental health and distress. “The authors Saroj Parasuraman, Jeffrey H. Greenhaus and Cherlyn Skromme Granrose in their paper, Role stressors, social support, and well-being among two-career couples “ (1992) was done to understand the impacts of stressors in the work and in family spaces. The three indicators of wellbeing of work family interface are satisfaction on job, satisfaction on family, life stress among dual career couples. The research showed that the relationship of stressors having wellbeing within the domain relationships results in stronger in comparison with between domain relationships.

The authors RA Tudy, I Gauran-Tudy in their paper “Struggles, Coping Mechanisms, and Insights of Childless Teachers in the Philippines. A Descriptive Phenomenological Approach” (2020) was done to understand the experiences of childless teachers, to portray their struggles, and how they dealt with the coping mechanisms. The research has shown embarrassment, incompleteness and pressures from others being felt by the respondents. Also, after the analysis of the interview found that both men and women informants viewed themselves as victims of mumbling and jokes outside the school and inside the school by their colleagues.

“The author Naval Garg in the paper “Organizational Role Stress in Dual-Career Couples: Mediating the Relationship between HPWPs, Employee Engagement and Job Satisfaction (2015) primary aim is to study the mediating or the moderator effect of the Organizational Role Stress in dual career couples. The employees were from both lower and middle levels because they are the ones who have to encounter such HPWPs more than anyone else. The research concluded that employees' satisfaction, organizational role stress serves as a main purpose with the aid of HPWPs.

“The authors Dr.Supriya Pal, Dr.Neeta Sinha, Sandeep Pathak in their paper “Work life Balance of Millennial Dual Career Couples and its Impact on Organizational Culture: An Explorative Study in Textile Sector of Gujarat” (2020) studied the relation between the work life balance and organizational culture of the millennial dual career couples in the private sector of Gujarat. The research found out that there is a significant relationship between work life balance and organizational culture in the textile sector. A type of a positive spillover of personal life in the professional life that contributes to the positive presence of work life balance in both sectors.

The authors Parveen Kalliath, Thomas Kalliath and Varsha Singh in their paper “When Work Intersects Family: A Qualitative Exploration of the Experiences of Dual Earner Couples in India” (2011) investigated the work family conflict and coping experiences of a sample of employees and their partners with the main participants from IT, public service and social welfare services. The results of the paper completely supported couple-level crossover effects of role salience to influence each partner’s experience of work-to-family (W-F) and family-to-work (F-W conflicts). In addition, the impact of crossover effects on W-F and F-W conflicts was found to be more pronounced for women than men.

The paper on “Career cooperation, coordination, compatibility and co-working: how female expatriates mobilise dual-career strategies” By S Shortland (2020) prime objective is to find out how female expatriates mobilise the dual career couple’s coordination strategic choices to achieve their own and their partners’ desired career goals. It was concluded that the female expatriates use a number of tactics ranging from cooperation in maintaining a dual career hierarchy to coordinating aspects of their own and their partners’ assignments, undertaking compatible industry roles and co working.

### Research Gap:

The earlier researches did not cover a variety of neglected states in India like Jharkhand, Ranchi, Kerela which we have included. We have tried to include an equal proportionate of both male and female respondents to have a better detailed analysis which we found neglected in the earlier ones.

### Research Objectives:

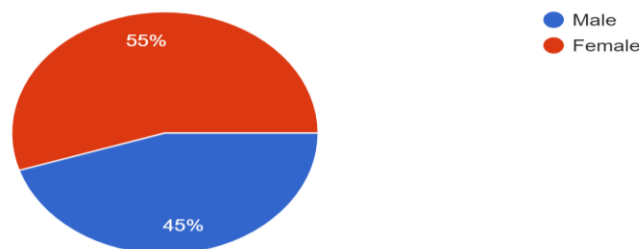
1. To explore the variation of role stress among working couples across demographic variables like gender, experience groups.
2. To find the impact of the following factors on stress levels of dual career couples:
  - a) How workload affects stress levels
  - b) How repetitive and boring affects stress levels
  - c) How time pressure and deadlines affects stress levels
  - d) How lack of career development affects stress levels
  - e) How lack of job security affects stress levels
3. To understand the various role stress coping styles used by these couples to manage their work and family life.

### Methodology

The study was conducted on a sample of 100 dual career couples (after rejection of five responses; the respondents were from the USA, UK and Singapore, thus falling out of the scope of the research which is understanding stress factors & coping mechanisms of dual career couples in India).

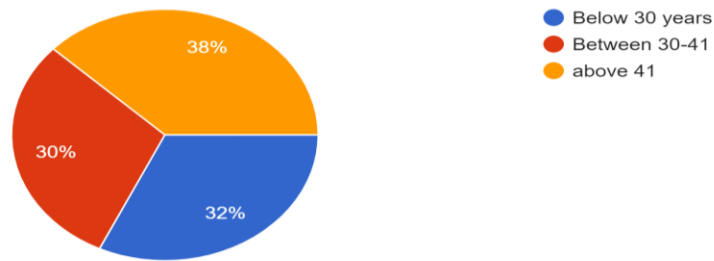
The data collected were analysed using various statistical tools and the hypothesis checked as shown below.

#### 1.) Graph showing the gender of respondents



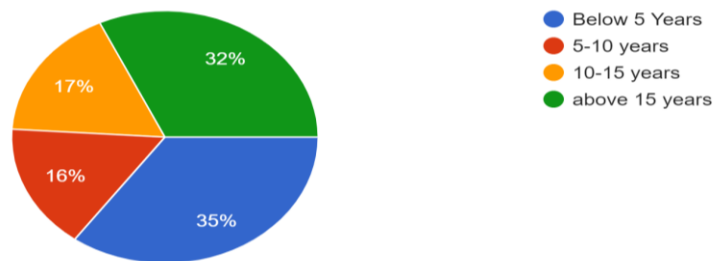
**Interpretation:** The data shows that 55 % of the respondents are male & 45 % of the respondents are females.

## 2.) Graph showing the age of the respondents



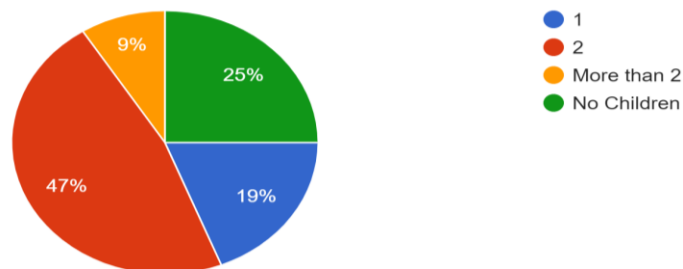
**Interpretation:** The data shows that 38 % of the respondents belong to the age group Above 41, 32 % belong to the age group below 30 years, 30 % belong to the age group between 30 - 41 years.

## 3.) Graph showing the number of years of experience of the respondents



**Interpretation:** The above data shows that 35 % of the respondents have Below 5 years of Experience, 32 % of the respondents have above 15 years of experience. 17 % of the respondents have 10 - 15 years of experience and 16 % of the respondents have 5 - 10 years of experience.

## 4.) Graph showing the number of children of the respondents.

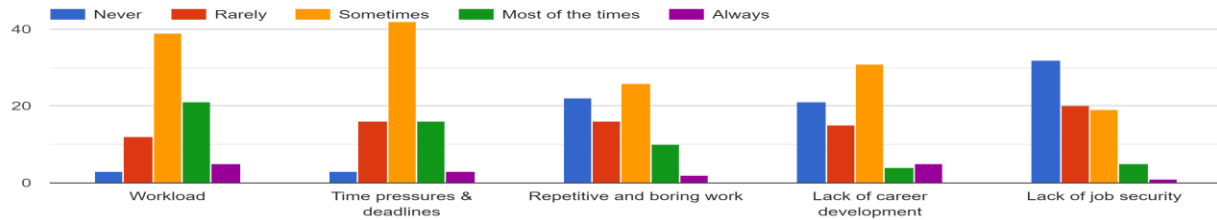


**Interpretation:** The above data shows that 47 % of the respondents have 2 children, 25 % of the respondents have no children. 19 % of the respondents have only one child and 9 % of the respondents have more than 2 children.



## 5.) Graph showing the Job related factors that are causing stress among the respondents.

What are the job related factors causing stress in your job? Please choose:



**Interpretation:** The above data shows the job related factors causing stress in the job.

From the above chart it is clear that 42 % respondents show job related factors causing stress on time pressures & deadlines “Sometimes”, 32% & 20% of respondents never or rarely show job related factors causing stress on lack of job security, whereas most of the times 21% and 5% of the respondents show job related factors causing stress on workload and Lack of career development respectively. We can see that from among all the other factors workload is seen to be always causing stress among the respondents whereas lack of job security is seen to be the least important factor.

### Linear Regression Analysis

The regression analysis was performed on the collected data. The analysis was done on the Independent variables namely workload, Repetitive & boring work, Time pressures & deadlines, Lack of career development, Lack of job security to the dependent variable Stress

Linear regression table shows the impact of work-related factors on Stress with Beta Coefficient values.

Coefficients							
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Hypotheses
		B	Std. Error	Beta			
1	(Constant)	.104	.427		.243	.809	
	Workload	.248	.082	.215	3.047	.003	H1
	Repetitive and boring work	.156	.089	.119	1.755	.081	H2
	Time pressures & deadlines	.228	.078	.220	2.913	.004	H3
	Lack of career development	.202	.085	.164	2.379	.019	H4
	Lack of job security	.319	.075	.302	4.224	.000	H5
<b>a. Dependent Variable: Stress</b>							

**Interpretation:**

H1: Workload had a significant impact on Stress with  $\rho < 0.05$ ,  $\beta = 0.215$  and t-statistics = 3.047

H2: Repetitive and Boring work had no significant impact on Stress with  $\rho > 0.05$ ,  $\beta = 0.119$  and t-statistics = 1.755

H3: Time pressure and Deadlines had a significant impact on Stress with  $\rho < 0.05$ ,  $\beta = 0.220$  and t-statistics = 2.913

H4: Lack of career development had a significant impact on Stress with  $\rho < 0.05$ ,  $\beta = 0.164$  and t-statistics = 2.379

H5: Lack of Job Security had a significant impact on Absenteeism with  $\rho < 0.05$ ,  $\beta = 0.302$  and t-statistics = 4.224

**Model Summary**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted Square	R	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.638 <sup>a</sup>	.408	.386		1.03241

a. Predictors: (Constant), workload, Time pressures & deadlines, Repetitive and boring work, Lack of career development, Lack of job security

The model summary shows the R-square (Coefficient of determination) value = 0.408 which indicates that the model is having low effect on dependent variables. As per Hair et al (2012) the R-square value ranging from 0.25-0.49 is considered as weak, 0.50-0.74 is considered as medium and  $> 0.75$  is considered as strong effect on dependent variables.

**Independent Sample T-Test**

The T-Test was carried out on the responses collected. The findings from the T-Test are given below in the table

To identify the difference in gender towards stress coping mechanisms we use an independent sample t-test.

**Independent Sample T-Test**

		t-test for Equality of Means						
		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Differen ce	Std. Error Differen ce	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
							Lower	Upper
Workload	Equal variances assumed	-2.975	141	.003	-.596	.200	-.992	-.200
	Equal variances not assumed	-2.931	116.113	.004	-.596	.203	-.999	-.193
Repetitive and boring work	Equal variances assumed	3.240	141	.001	.571	.176	.223	.919
	Equal variances not assumed	3.081	100.496	.003	.571	.185	.203	.939
Time pressure and Deadlines	Equal variances assumed	1.916	141	.057	.37581	.19619	-.01205	.76367
	Equal variances not assumed	1.929	125.426	.056	.37581	.19487	-.00985	.76147
Lack of career development	Equal variances assumed	6.277	141	.000	1.08993	.17365	.74663	1.43322
	Equal variances not assumed	6.089	109.193	.000	1.08993	.17900	.73515	1.44470
Lack of job security	Equal variances assumed	1.788	141	.076	.30311	.16957	-.03211	.63833
	Equal variances not assumed	1.915	140.994	.058	.30311	.15830	-.00984	.61606



**Interpretation:**

From the above table, the following interpretation can be made

H6: There is a significant difference in the levels of role stress between both male and female couples working together from a family. The sub hypotheses can be written as

H6A: There is a significant difference between Workload & between both male and female couples working together from a family with  $\rho < 0.05$ .

H6B: There is a significant difference between Time pressures & deadlines and between both male and female couples working together from a family with  $\rho < 0.05$ .

H6C: There is no significant difference between Lack of job security and between both male and female couples working together from a family with  $\rho > 0.05$ .

H6D: There is a significant difference between Repetitive and boring work and between both male and female couples working together from a family with  $\rho < 0.05$ .

H6E: There is no significant difference between Lack of career development and between both male and female couples working together from a family with  $\rho > 0.05$ .

- Except work load, Time pressures & deadlines, Repetitive and boring work rest all the variables are not having any significant difference with  $\rho > 0.05$  between both male and female couples working together from a family.

**One Way ANOVA**

The below table gives the values after One Way ANOVA is performed. To identify the difference in the levels of role stress among couples across four different experience groups the One-Way ANOVA test was applied.

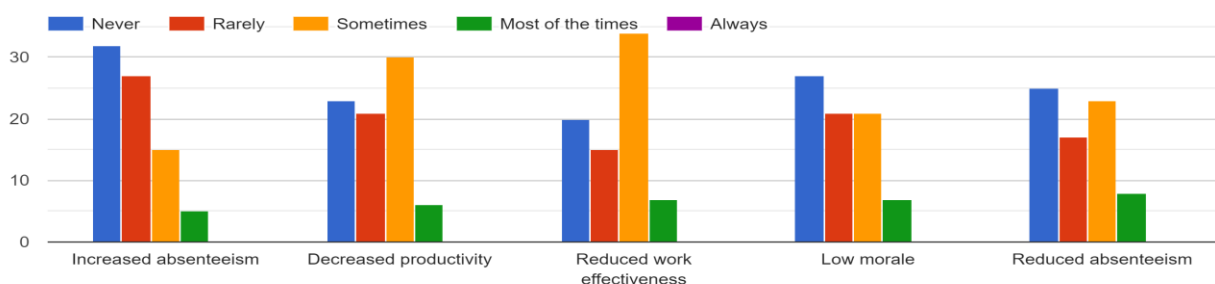
ANOVA						
		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Workload	Between Groups	4.496	3	1.499	1.027	.383
	Within Groups	202.777	139	1.459		
	Total	207.273	142			
Repetitive and boring work	Between Groups	5.137	3	1.712	1.515	.213
	Within Groups	157.074	139	1.130		
	Total	162.211	142			

Time pressure and Deadlines	Between Groups	1.427	3	.476	.347	.791
	Within Groups	190.549	139	1.371		
	Total	191.976	142			
Lack of career development	Between Groups	.887	3	.296	.220	.882
	Within Groups	186.649	139	1.343		
	Total	187.535	142			
Lack of job security	Between Groups	1.772	3	.591	.582	.628
	Within Groups	141.165	139	1.016		
	Total	142.937	142			

**Interpretation:** H7: There is no significant difference in the levels of role stress among couples across various experience groups with  $p > 0.05$ .

**6.) Graph showing the Effects of stress on the job performance of the respondents**

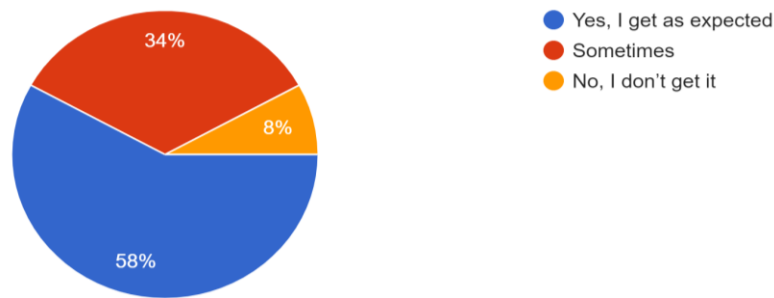
How stress shows its effects on your job performance? Please choose:



**Interpretation:** The above data shows effects of stress on job performance.

From the above chart it is clear that 34 % respondents show effects of stress on reduced work effectiveness “Sometimes”; 32% & 27% of respondents never or rarely show effects of stress on increased absenteeism, whereas most of the times 8% of the respondents show effects of stress on reduced absenteeism.

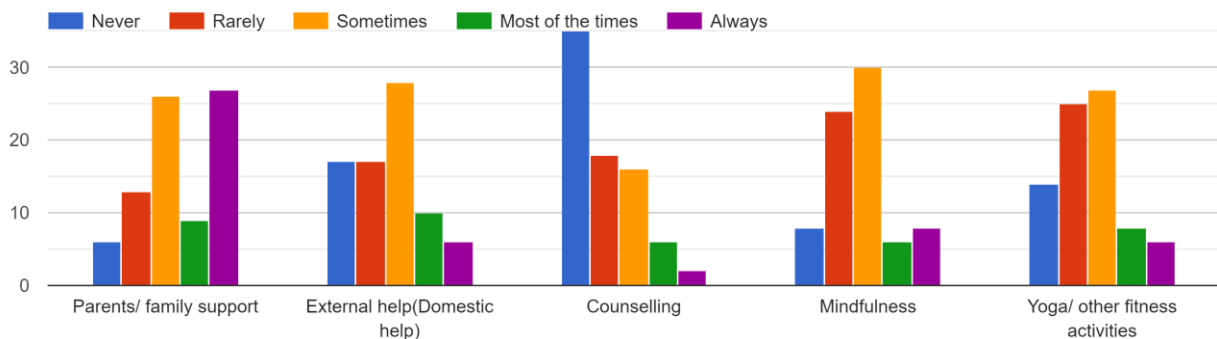
7.) Graph showing the Spousal support received by the respondents.



**Interpretation:** The above data shows appropriate spousal support from the partner. 58% of the respondents agree with the statement that “Yes, I get as expected “. 34 % of them responded that they get spousal support “Sometimes”, and 8 % of them agree with the statement that “ No, I don't get it”.

8.) Graph showing the Support mechanisms/ Coping strategies of the respondents.

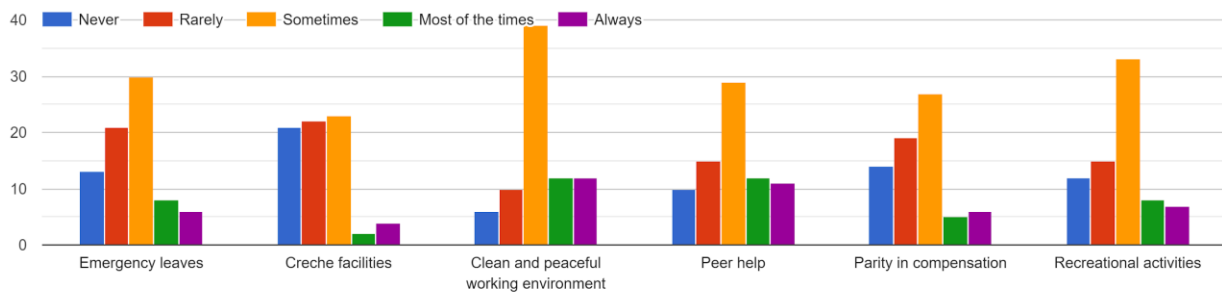
What are the support mechanisms/ Coping strategies available to you ? Please choose:



**Interpretation:** The above chart shows support mechanisms/ coping strategies available to dual career couples. From the above chart it is clear that 40% of respondents say that they never got counselling as a coping strategy to reduce stress. Whereas 27% of respondents say that parents/ family support is the support mechanism which is always available to them, most of the times 10% of respondents get external help & 25% of the respondents rarely get yoga/ other fitness activities as a support mechanism/ coping strategies to reduce stress .

### 9.) Graph showing the availability of Organisational support to the respondents.

Is organizational support available to you to combat stress ? Please choose:



**Interpretation:** The above chart shows organisational support available to dual career couples. From the above chart it is clear that 38% of the respondents sometimes get clean & peaceful working environment to combat stress as organisational support, 21% & 22% of the respondents never or rarely get creche facilities respectively, 12% of the respondents most of the times get peer help & parity in compensation to combat stress, whereas 12% of the respondents always get clean & peaceful working environment to combat stress as organisational support.

### Findings:

The below table lists down the beta values in descending order for all the independent variables.

NO.	Variables	Beta values from regression analysis
1.	Lack of job security	0.302
2.	Time pressures & deadlines	0.220
3.	Workload	0.215
4.	Lack of career development	0.164
5.	Repetitive & boring work	0.119

The Beta values from the regression analysis suggests that the factors namely Lack of job security & Time pressures & deadlines have the highest value and we can understand that these two factors are most important variables when comparing to the dependent variable “stress”. A change in the stress factor means that there is an increase in the Lack of job security & Time pressures & deadlines when compared to other three independent variables namely Workload, Repetitive & boring work, Lack of career development. The regression analysis showed that Lack of job security & Time pressures & deadlines had the most significant difference on stress levels of dual career couples, followed by Workload. The study showed that Repetitive & boring work had no significant difference on stress levels of dual career couples.

The T-Test result also proved that there is a significant difference with respect to work load, Time pressures & deadlines, Repetitive and boring work with both male and female couples working together from a family. Except work load, Time pressures & deadlines, Repetitive and boring work rest all the variables are not having any significant difference with  $p > 0.05$  between both male and female couples working together from a family.

The One-Way ANOVA result also proved there is no significant difference in the levels of role stress among couples across various experience groups with  $p > 0.05$ .

From the study we also came to know that most of the respondents get appropriate spousal support from the partner. Most of the respondents said that they never got counselling as a coping strategy to reduce stress, whereas they said that parents/ family support is always available to them. Well, most of the respondents show effects of stress on reduced work effectiveness. When it comes to organisational support to combat stress most of the times respondents get a clean & peaceful working environment.

### **Conclusion and Implication:**

The current research on stress and coping mechanisms of dual career couples has made some important and practical contributions. Based on the findings the practical implication is that dual career couples have Lack of job security, Time pressures and deadlines as job related factors that cause stress. Whereas, Repetitive & boring work has no impact on stress. From this study, it can be inferred that Lack of job security and Time pressures & deadlines have the most impact on stress of dual career couples.

From the study we also came to know that most of the respondents get appropriate spousal support from the partner and they said that parents/ family support is the coping strategy which is always available to them. At the same time, when it comes to organisational support to combat stress most of the times respondents get a clean & peaceful working environment.

### **Limitation and Future Research:**

The limitations of this study included the sample size of the respondents being very small. The sample size is not representative of the entire population of India. Future research opportunities include increasing the sample size of the respondents from across India which would give equal representation of all the states in India would make the study more relevant. The study was conducted by collecting responses from the citizens of India and the findings cannot be applied to other countries which have different cultural values.

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