
Relationship Between Workplace Stress, Marital Adjustment and Conflict Management in Dual Working Couples.**Shenna Dhingra****MA (Organisational Behavior)****Amity University, Noida****ABSTRACT**

Work and Marriage are age old aspects of life since civilizations. The perspective of these two crucial decisions of life have undergone a transformation in recent times. The reason being that now women are as career oriented and ambitious as men and with dual working couple, marital and domestic equation faces imbalances. Work related Stress is the first and foremost fallout of such imbalances. It is widely observed that Work place Stress is the major contributory factor behind poor Marital Adjustment, which leads to conflicts amongst the working couple. The Conflict Management Style adopted by the working couple is the key to compatibility between Stress and marital harmony. The present research aims to study the relationship between Workplace Stress, Marital Adjustment and Conflict Management in Dual Working Couples. A sample of 60 employees of Multinational Organizations of Delhi/NCR was used to study this relationship. Organizational Role Stress Questionnaire by Udai Pareek, Marital Adjustment Scale by Kumar and Rohtagi and Thomas Killman Conflict Mode Instrument was used. The results supported the hypothesis that there will be a significant correlation between Workplace Stress and Marital Adjustment. Further it was also found that there was a significant correlation between Marital Adjustment and Conflict Management Style. Significant Gender Differences were also found in Organizational Role Stress dimensions and the use of Conflict Management Styles.

Key Words : Workplace Stress, Marital Adjustment, Conflict Management

INTRODUCTION

Life in current times is characterized by ambition, cut throat competition and drive to excel. Such desires are the direct causes of Stress. It is often observed that there are typical situations in everyday life which are the cause as well as effect of stress. Such situations are called triggers. Ambition to outperform co-workers, stuck in traffic snarls, fast approaching deadlines, addressing an audience are the common examples of such triggers. The complexities of socio cultural life of the resultant pressure also called stress. Further, when people observe that there is a mismatch between the demands to be fulfilled and the means available to meet those demands, they experience stress.

The concept of Stress was given by Hans Selye in 1956. He defined stress as “*the non specific response of the body to noxious stimuli*” (Selye, 1956, pp 12) Finemann defined stress as a “*psychological response state of negative effect, characterized by a persistent and a high level of experienced anxiety or tension.*” (Finemann, 1986 pp 31) Lazarus and Folkman defined psychological stress as “*a particular relationship between the person and the environment that is appraised by the person as taxing or exceeding his or her resources and endangering his or her well being.*” (Lazarus & Folkman 1984)

Every job places certain demands on the worker and when such demands cannot be met out of the available resources or capabilities of the worker, he experiences physical and emotional disturbance, this is often called Job Stress. Job stress results from the interaction of the worker and the conditions of work. Caplan, Cobb, and French (1975, pp 211) described work-stress as "*any characteristics of the job environment which poses a threat to the individual.*" According to Cooper and Marshal (1976, pp 12), *occupational stress is negative environmental factors associated with the job.* Beehr and Newman (1978) *defined job stress as a condition wherein job related factors impact the worker and change (disrupt or enhance) his psychological condition such that the person (mind and or body) is forced to deviate from normal functioning.*

Marriage

Marriage is an important milestone in one's life. Marital relationship is a reflection of a unique bond of emotions and legal commitment between a man and a woman. People are inclined towards marriage on account of several reasons viz. companionship, love, happiness, to produce kids, physical intimacy or avoiding unpleasant situations. Generally, marriage takes off with a public announcement and is expected to last a lifetime. There is a silent contractual relationship in marriage which lays down the reciprocal rights and duties between the spouses and future children. (Hashmi, Khurshid and Hassan, 2007)

Marital Adjustment

The state of delivering a feeling of happiness and satisfaction from each other is called marital adjustment. All marriages are based on certain expectations, however, not all expectations are realistic. This is because each individual is different from others and quite complex in himself/ herself. Therefore, for marriages to be successful, marital adjustment is required. Marital adjustment is based on maturity that accepts and understands growth and development in the spouse. If this growth does not take place or stagnates, marriage is bound to die an untimely death. This is because a relationship between marital couple grows slowly and steadily(Hashmi, Khurshid and Hassan, 2007)

Stress and Marital Adjustment

Life in current times is characterized by advanced technology, faced paced lifestyles and Stress. Workplace Stress is a complex phenomenon which is common to large number of corporate employees particularly those belonging to the late 20's and early 30's age group. Reasons for this workstress could be many; most common reasons being round the clock work schedules (owing to IT revolution), frequent travels and cut throat competition. This is further compounded by major retrenchment drives owing to global economic crisis and recession.

Having a good job and a great married life are both associated with a satisfactory and good quality life(Glenn & Weaver, 1981). But in today's highly competitive scenario, these two aspects of a good job and a great married life mostly come in conflict with each other. Work and Marriage are two most important dimensions of an individual's life that are not easily separable. When trying to strike a balance between the two, the individual often encounters a lot of conflict and dilemma. The incompatibility between these two areas of life, often creates a lot of pressure in a person's life. The individual is always struggling to strike a balance, which when doesn't happen, leads to conflicts and frustrations (Jamadin, Mohamad, Syarkawi, and Noordin 2015) Indeed, a wide body of research has shown that work demands such as a high workload or work stress in general is associated with poor marital relationships and marital discords.(Jamadin, Mohamad, Syarkawi, and Noordin 2015)

According to Gupta and Jenking (1985) and Sekara (1986), the likelihood of stress in the case of working couple is far higher owing to heavy pressure of work and family. Understandable, greater efforts and

adjustments need to be put in order to strike a balance between work life and family life. As held by Alloy and Smith (2003), the stress faced by the dual career couples is far greater than the single career couples causing greater possibilities of family conflict, role ambiguity and role conflict. Consequently, the chances of conflict between the two roles become more prominent as the individuals have to encounter simultaneous and conflicting demands of careers as well as the family. The intensity of conflict is such that it poses the threat of disturbing peace of mind, quality of work and the process of family integration (Adams, King and King, 1996, Frone, Russell and Cooper, 1992).

Work Related Stress in the case of dual career couples is far more pronounced in Indian work set up as compared to other parts of the world, which further leads to heightened pressure and greater conflicts in maintaining a parity between job demands and family roles. An apparent reason for this contrast could be the Indian cultural system which places premium on joint family structure, where families are more emotionally connected. Higher emotional quotient makes the working couple more inclined towards family responsibilities and often find themselves torn between family and work.

Marital Conflict

Every relationship is characterized by ups and downs during the course of its journey and this is particularly true of marital relationship where two individuals from altogether different backgrounds come together to share their lives with each other. Differences of opinion are the underlying feature in any marriage and at times, such differences culminate into disagreements and conflict. Although, each marital relationship has its own character, yet conflicts are an essential feature of every marriage which keeps it dynamic and prevents it from stagnation. Since each marriage is unique, therefore, means to resolve the marital conflict are also unique.

According to Buehler et al (1998), marital conflict refers to high degree of disagreement leading to stressful and unpleasant interaction between spouses, disagreement and verbal abuse. Cummings (1998 p.80) perceives marital conflict as any degree of interpersonal interaction which involves differences of opinions and where such differences blow out of proportion. Marital aggression is an extreme manifestation of marital conflicts which comprises of both verbal and physical abuse.

Dealing with Conflict

Conflict resolution refers to all the means deployed to reduce the intensity of the conflict. It also involves the concept of conflict management, in which the parties attempt to adopt less extreme tactics of conflict, settlements in which efforts are made to agree on those critical issues which are the root cause of conflict. Conflict management also aims to remove the underlying causes of the conflict.

There can be numerous approaches for dealing with conflict. The difference in these various approaches might be due to a lot many factors. These include culture, personality, the kind of conflict, the demographic variables of the parties that are involved in the conflict (Kozan, 1997). There can also be a lot many cultural factors which include language, religion, geographical location, beliefs and value system of the individual etc. These can be said to be some of the reasons of the differences in conflict management styles of the individuals (Kozan, 1997).

There are various behavioral styles for managing conflict (Drory and Ritu, 1997) Blake and Mouton (1964) proposed a model for conflict management. This was the "two-dimensional" model based on two criterias i.e. "concern for people" and "concern for production" for classifying styles of conflict management. Thomas (1976) diversified the "two dimensional model" and inculcated the dimensions of "assertiveness" and "cooperation" in classifying the various styles.

The model of conflict management styles which was initially proposed by Blake and Mouton (1964) and further diversified by Killman and Thomas (1975) and Rahim (1983), have identified the five conflict management styles. The styles for handling conflict vary according to two basic dimensions: "Concern for self" and "concern for others"

1. Integrating/ Collaborating – This particular style involves high concern for self as well as the other party that is involved in the conflict. This style is high on both assertiveness as well as cooperation. It is based on an exchange of information and an open minded approach such that the needs of both parties can be met by considering their own interests along with that of others.
2. Dominating/ Competing – The dominating/ competing style involves a high concern for one's own self and a low concern for the other party which is involved in the conflict. This strategy goes high on assertiveness and low on cooperation. Here, one person is determined to have his/her own way, irrespective of its cost to others.
3. Compromising – This style includes a moderate amount of concern for self as well as the party that is involved in the conflict. This strategy is a combination of cooperative as well as assertive behavior. This style calls for give-and-take or sharing the search for a middle ground solution.
4. Avoiding - This particular strategy involves low concern for self as well as for the other party involved in the conflict. This approach is low on both assertiveness as well as cooperative behavior. It tends to avoid conflicts all together and the person is not obsessed with his own point of view. This basically means withdrawing from the conflict situation.
5. Obliging/ Accommodating – This style involves low concern for self and high concern for others. This strategy is high on cooperative behavior and low on assertive behavior. Under this style, a person puts aside his/ her own needs and concerns in favour of others. It basically aims at solving out the differences and focusing on the points of agreements between each other.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Several studies have been found in examining the relationship between job stress and marital adjustments. The research on job stress and marital adjustment is rising because it has posed to be a growing problem in today's scenario. Robinson, Flowers and Carroll (2005) studied the relationship between work stress and marriage. Using structural equation modeling, the relationship between work stress and marital cohesion was empirically investigated. It was hypothesized that work stress and marital cohesion would have an inverse relationship. The sample size consisted of 326 adults who were a part of the American Counselling Association. They used the data- model fit analysis. The results supported the hypothesis. The coefficient was 0.60, and it indicated a substantial degree of explanation for the relationship tested.

In another study by Gul and Delice (2011), the effects of job stress on the spousal relationship was examined. The data used was secondary data of 1632 responses. The target population was police officers. The findings indicate the high levels of stress found in their job is significantly positively and strongly related to spousal relationship. Further, the use of stress reduction/coping programs, helped to strengthen their relationship with their respective spouses. Also, higher level of education increases the likelihood of the spousal relational problems.

According to Uttam Kumar Panda (2011), An increasing number of women are coming into the work front. Gone are the days when men played the instrumental role of being the breadwinner of the family and the women assuming the household responsibilities. There have been a lot many changes that are being observed with regard to the conventional norms that are being observed surrounding the position and status assigned to the women in our society. Women, all over the world, belonging to any caste or

creed have established themselves and created a new paradigm. They now, are able to express themselves in a better way. They have established their freedom, self autonomy and personal growth, and are striving hard to achieve these objectives. In dual career families, where both the partners are earning, an altogether different situation arises. Women have to balance their careers and the traditional roles and responsibilities of their families and domestic households. This often results in conflict and psychological distancing from their respective partners. The following studies support this view.

In a study by Hashmi, Khurshid and Hassan (2006), the relationship between Marital Adjustment, Stress and Depression was explored. The sample size consisted of 150 working and non working women (75 working and 75 non working). Their age ranged between 18 to 50 years. The educational qualification criteria demanded them to be atleast a graduate and above. They were segregated into two categories, educated and highly educated. They belonged to middle and high socio economic status. The tools used were Dyadic Adjustment Scale (2000), Beck Depression Inventory (1996) and Stress scale (1991). The results indicated highly significant relationship between Marital adjustment, depression and stress. The study also highlighted that working married women are more stressed and tend to face more problems in their married life as compared to non working married women. The results further show that highly educated working and non working women can perform well in their married life and they are free from depression as compared to educated working and non working women.

An Indian research study by Parveen (2009) aimed at investigating occupational stress among married and unmarried women in Hyderabad city. The study was basically a comparative study of occupational stress. The comparison was between married and unmarried working women. The sample size consisted 180 working women, out of these 180, 90 of them were unmarried and 90 were married with atleast 1 child. The tools used were Occupational Stress Scale (OSS) (Sohail and Khanum,2000) . The findings confirmed the hypothesis that married working women experienced more stress than unmarried working women.

A study by Vanagas, Axelsson and Vanagiene (2004) examined the impact of age, gender and marital status on job strain development. The target population was general practitioners. The article aimed to review the subjective underlying processes which make general practitioners more prone and susceptible to job strain. For this, a computerized database called Medline was searched. The search included data from the year 1983 to 2003. In this database, many comparative cross- sectional studies were found which were incorporated in the research. A data collection form was prepared and developed and filled up on reviewing each article. According to the results, the collected studies highlighted that age, gender and marital status influence job strain development for general practitioners. It was found out that females have higher outcomes for job strain as compared to the males. The age impact on job strain between males and females tend to increase in older age groups. Middle aged general practitioners were the ones who were worst affected by job strain. Married males and females were the ones who were most vulnerable to job strain.

There have been a variety of researches done on work stress in various professional areas. Multinationals have been worst affected by the concept of work place stress. In a study by Manshor, Fontaine and Choy (2003), sources of occupational stress among Malaysian managers working in multinational companies (MNCs) was examined. The sample size was 440 managers. The tool used for data collection was questionnaires distributed to managers in 34 multinational companies in Malaysia. It was found that workloads, working conditions and relationship at work were the main factors that

lead to stress at the work place. The results further also indicated that there are certain demographic variables that do influence the level of stress among managers.

One major reason for stress in India is the privatization of companies(Rathore and Kaushik 2009) Most of the government owned companies have now been taken over by the private sector enterprises. This has created an endangered environment for the employees as they are unsure about the permanency of their jobs in these organizations. The employees now need to work under constant deadlines, increased workloads and strict bosses which has further increased their stress. In the public sector, employees are much more relaxed, as there are no deadlines and workload, there is no changes in routines, posts and salaries. There is absolutely no motivation to work hard (Rathore and Kaushik 2009) A study by Rathore and Kaushik(2009), analyzed the stress levels of managers in selected industry in India. The sample size consisted of 180 managers of manufacturing units. Total sample was divided into two categories, 90 managers from public sector units and 90 managers from private sector units. The two major tools used were Background Assessment Performa and Stress Assessment Scale (SAS,Kaushik, 2001). The results indicated that Stress range of approximately all managerial levels of manufacturing units in both the private and public sector were in the range of "high stress". It was also concluded that increase and decrease in stress levels will have an impact on quality, quantity of work, and productivity of work.

Marriage is said to be an altogether new stage of transition in one's life. Two different individuals from different backgrounds enter this institution with a thought to start a family which demands equal responsibilities from both husband and wife. (Dildar, Sitwat, Yasin, 2013) Marriage is not only a source of fulfillment of various desires, but it also requires constant attention on the part of both the individuals (Dildar, Sitwat, Yasin, 2013). During the course of their marital journey, a couple experiences many ups and downs. Differences of opinion are the underlying feature in any marriage and at times, such differences culminate into disagreements and conflict. With good reason, conflict in marital relationship has evinced great deal of interest with reference to academic research. Sensitive handling of marital conflicts can enable relational partners to learn about each other and instill a sense of loyalty and cohesion (Siegert & Stamp, 1994) But the vice versa is also true and improper handling of marital issues can have adverse implications for the relationship as well as for the relational partners (Fincham & Beach, 1999) Jitters in such relationships are felt not just by the couple, but by the children as well, who have to face the brunt of a failed marriage (Amato, Loomis, & Booth, 1995; Booth & Amato, 2001; Jekielek, 1998) Interestingly, researches have proved that children whose parents get separated are relatively much better off as compared to kids whose parents drag on the marriage despite frequent and intense differences and disagreements (Morrison & Coiro, 1999).

The concept of conflict management involves both Constructive and Destructive approaches (Deutsche, 1973). Research in this field of conflict management has also revolved around these two global aspects of conflict management (Fincham and Beach, 1999) Constructive processes often include interaction involving sensitivity towards other's problems, accommodating others, sensitizing oneself about other's mindset, open minded interaction over conflicting issues and giving priority to relations rather than the individual (Hocker and Wilmot, 1995). On the other hand, Destructive processes include interactions that involve intimidation, insensitive outlook, manipulative tactics and attempts to dominate and subordination. Various researchers have pointed out that there are variations between males and females with respect to conflict handling styles. Leonard et al (1989) found that women were more inclined towards collaboration style of conflict management. Further, it was discussed that women were more in favour of using an intergrating style and less likely to use an avoiding style with their spouses. Whereas males, preferred to be obliging towards their partners. Minet et al (2007), reported that with regard to conflict management style adopted by adolescent girls and boys, while the girls used problem

solving, withdrawal and compliance more frequently with boys, both sexes scored low on conflict engagement.

In another study by Byadgi, Yadav and Hiremath (2014), conflict management style adopted by the dual-earner couples to manage their marital conflict were identified. The sample size was 150 couples residing in the state of Karnataka. The tool used was Thomas Kilmann conflict management scale. The results indicated that the husbands preferred collaboration style followed by accommodation, avoidance, compromise and then competition whereas wives preferred accommodation style followed by collaboration, compromise, avoidance and then competition to resolve their conflict. Further, it was also found that compared to wives, husbands were significantly high in the adoption of collaboration and avoidance styles whereas wives were significantly high in the adoption of accommodation style.

In a study by Chusmir and Mills (1989), Gender differences in conflict resolution styles were studied in managers. Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode instrument was used to measure the five conflict resolution styles. The sample size was 201 managers (99 males and 102 females). Sex differences were examined along with hierarchical rank. Results indicated that both genders tended to handle conflict more competitively at work than at home, and used the accommodating style more frequently at home than at work. Further it was also found that at home, low-level women managers were more willing to collaborate and less willing to avoid conflict than at work, men managers overall were less likely to compromise at home than at work.

However, not much research has taken place on the conflict management style among the dual earner couples. Therefore, the present research focuses on identifying the conflict management style resorted to by the couple in dual earning families.

METHOD

Hypothesis

- There will be a Significant Negative Correlation between Workplace Stress and Marital Adjustment
- There will be a Significant Correlation between Marital Adjustment and Conflict Management Styles
- There will be a Significant Difference in the Organizational Role Stress Dimensions of Males and Females
- There will be a significant difference in the Conflict Management Styles of Males and Females

Sample

The sample size consisted of 60 employees working in Multinational Organisations in Delhi/ NCR. Out of the 60 employees, 30 were males and 30 females. The participants were aged between 35 to 45 years of age. They were married for a minimum of 5 years.

Description of the Tools

The participants were asked to fill in a total of 3 questionnaires. Organisational Role Stress Scale by Udai Pareek (1983) was used to measure the Stress levels of the participants, followed by Marital Adjustment Questionnaire by Kumar and Rohtagi (1999) which was used to measure the Marital Adjustment and lastly, the Thomas Killman Conflict Mode Instrument by Kenneth L. Thomas and Ralph H. Killman (1977) was used to measure the conflict resolution style the participants resorted to. The description of each of the scale is given below :

1. **Organisational Role Stress Scale** - The Organisational Role Stress Scale was developed by Udai Pareek (1983). It consists of a total of 50 statements. There are 10 role stressors in all and 5 items were placed under each stressor. It uses a 5 point scale
0 – if you never or rarely feel this way
1 – if you occasionally (a few times) feel this way
2 – if you sometimes feel this way
3 – if you frequently (often or regularly feel this way)
4 – if you always feel this way
The total score on the Organisational Role Stress ranges from a minimum of 0 to a maximum of 200. The scores on each role stressor ranges from a minimum of 0 to a maximum of 20. Following is the list of role stressors :-
 - 1) Inter Role Distance (IRD)
 - 2) Role Stagnation (RS)
 - 3) Role Expectation Conflict (REC)
 - 4) Role Erosion (RE)
 - 5) Role Overload (RO)
 - 6) Role Isolation (RI)
 - 7) Personal Inadequacy (PI)
 - 8) Self Role Distance (SRD)
 - 9) Role Ambiguity (RA)
 - 10) Resource Inadequacy (RIn)
2. **Marital Adjustment Questionnaire** - The Marital Adjustment Questionnaire was developed by Dr. Pramod Kumar and Dr. Kanchana Rohatagi (1999). The MAQ consists of a total of 25 highly discriminating “Yes – No” type statements. These statements are divided into three areas, such as Sexual, Social and Emotional. The Yes response is given a score of 1 excluding item numbers 4, 10 and 19, wherein reverse scoring is applicable. The total score on all the items gives the marital adjustment score. The higher the score is, the greater would be the marital adjustment of the individual.
3. **Thomas Kilman Conflict Mode Instrument** - The Thomas Kilman Conflict Mode Instrument was given by Kenneth L. Thomas and Ralph H. Killman (1977). This instrument is created to study an individual’s behavior in conflict situations. The situations in which the interests of two people appear to be incompatible are called conflict situations. In such kinds of situations, a person’s behavior can be described along two basic dimensions. They are Assertiveness and Cooperation. These two parameters of behavior can be used to examine 5 specific ways of dealing with conflicts. The 5 conflict handling modes are:
 - Competing
 - Accomodating
 - Avoiding
 - Collaborating
 - Compromising

The Scale consists of 30 pairs of statements describing various conflict handling modes. The subjects are asked to choose the statement which best describes their behaviors in different conflict situations. The score on each subscale ranges from 0 to 12, with 0 being the minimum and 12 being the maximum.

DATA ANALYSIS

TABLE 1 Showing Means and Standard Deviation of Organisational Role Stress Dimensions

DIMENSIONS	MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION
Inter Role Distance	11.49	3.26
Role Stagnation	9.17	2.94
Role Expectation Conflict	9.75	2.86
Role Erosion	7.27	3.05
Role Overload	10.43	2.73
Role Inadequacy	7.90	3.70
Personal Inadequacy	8.53	3.11
Self Role Distance	8.23	2.78
Role Ambiguity	8.47	2.77
Resource Inadequacy	8.57	2.64
ORS Total	54.63	35.69

TABLE 2 Showing Means and Standard Deviations of Marital Adjustment Dimensions

DIMENSIONS	MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATIONS
SEXUAL	2.98	.892
SOCIAL	5.80	1.38
EMOTIONAL	8.33	1.36
MARITAL ADJUSTMENT TOTAL	17.12	2.52

TABLE 3 Showing Means and Standard Deviation of all Conflict Management Styles

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STYLES	MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION
COMPETING	5.37	3.13
COLLABORATING	4.67	1.79
COMPROMISING	4.0	1.18
AVOIDING	6.77	2.52
ACCOMODATING	4.75	1.36

TABLE 4 Showing Correlation between Organisational Role Stress and Marital Adjustment Dimensions

	SEXUAL	SOCIAL	EMOTIONAL	MARITAL ADJ SCORE
IRD	-0.73	-.329**	-.241	-.337**
RS	-.386**	-.486	-.120	-.468**
REC	-.426**	-.256**	-.182	-.389**
RE	-.390**	-.487**	-.116	-.468**
RO	-.157	-.357**	-.317*	-.422**
RI	-.365**	-.393**	-.145	-.423**
PI	-.204	-.305*	-.199	-.347**
SRD	-.278*	-.334**	-.284*	-.435**
RA	-.359**	-.182	-.262*	-.368**
RIN	-.290*	-.449**	-.298*	-.510**
ORS TOTAL	-.526**	-.645**	-.382**	-.746**

** Correlation is significant at 0.01 Level

* Correlation is significant at 0.05 Level

TABLE 5 Showing Correlation between Organisational Role Stress and Marital Adjustment

VARIABLES	PEARSONS CORRELATION
ORGANISATIONAL ROLE STRESS AND MARITAL ADJUSTMENT	-.746**

** Correlation is significant at 0.01 Level

* Correlation is significant at 0.05 Level

TABLE 6 Showing Correlation between Marital Adjustment Dimensions and Conflict Management Styles

	SEXUAL	SOCIAL	EMOTIONAL	MARITAL ADJ
COMPETING	-0.34	.154	-0.33	-.74**
COLLABORATING	.102	.416**	-.169	.174
COMPROMISING	.126	.020	.34*	.71*
AVOIDING	-.055	-.270*	.112	-.108
ACCOMODATING	.024	-.117	-.201	-.164

** Correlation is significant at 0.01 Level

* Correlation is significant at 0.05 Level

TABLE 7 Correlation between Gender and all dimensions of Organisational Role Stress, Marital Adjustment and Conflict Management Styles

VARIABLE	CORRELATION	SIGNIFICANCE LEVEL
INTER ROLE DISTANCE	.416	.001
ROLE STAGNATION	.126	.338
ROLE EXPECTATION CONFLICT	.064	.625
ROLE EROSION	.198	.129
ROLE OVERLOAD	.414	.005
ROLE ISOLATION	.009	.945
PERSONAL INADEQUACY	.413	.005
SELF ROLE DISTANCE	.024	.855
ROLE AMBIGUITY	.085	.520
ROLE INADEQUACY	.076	.563
ORS TOTAL	.168	.200
SEXUAL	.094	.474
SOCIAL	-.097	.461
EMOTIONAL	0.000	1.000
MARITAL ADJUSTMENT TOTAL	-.020	.880
COMPETING	-6.00	.000
COLLABORATING	-3.19	.013
COMPROMISING	-.074	.573
AVOIDING	.587	.000
ACCOMODATING	.062	.639

TABLE 8 Showing significant difference between males and females in Organisational Role Stress and Conflict Management Styles

GENDER	MEAN	STANDARD DEVIATION	t score
IRD	males 10.06 females 12.76	2.97 3.02	-3.48**
RO	males 9.58 females 11.56	2.76 3.02	-2.97*
PI	males 11.12 females 13.72	1.67 3.45	-3.1*
COMPETING	males 7.23 females 3.5	2.82 2.19	5.71
AVOIDING	males 5.3 females 8.23	1.93 2.17	-5.52

** Correlation is significant at 0.01 Level

* Correlation is significant at 0.05 Level

CHAPTER 5 - DISCUSSION

A good career and a satisfactory married life are deemed to be two important milestones in one's life. However, it is equally true that these two aspects of life often come in cross conflict with each other and become a cause of stress leading to unsatisfactory married life. The incompatibility between these two areas of life, often creates a lot of pressure in a person's life. The individual is always struggling to strike a balance, which when doesn't happen, leads to conflicts and frustrations (Jamadin, Mohamad, Syarkawi, and Noordin 2014)

Rapoport and Rapoport (2009) defined dual career couples as people who are into high intensity jobs which are fairly growth intensive. According to them, a family in which both the partners are career oriented and maintaining a family together is called a dual career family. In the words of Johnson, Kaplan and Tusel (2008), a dual career family is characterized by high career responsibility, social reputation, economic rewards and personal investment of time and energy for both partners. It is relatively difficult to have an estimate of number of couples following this lifestyle, however, one thing is known that number of such couples is on the increase.

Work related stress is often held to be the bone of contention between working couples. Demands of a strenuous work schedule include working overtime, meeting deadlines and frequent travelling is very stressful and kills the patience of the couple. This gets aggravated when both partners are working and tend to dump work related problems on the spouse. Stress

resulting from one's job is bound to disrupt the atmosphere at home. Job related stress can ruin the married life irrespective of the couple's satisfaction with one another and their parental status.

Conflict is an inevitable aspect of life at all stages. Conflict may occur in marital relationships, in professional spheres or even in the family (Periot & Robin, 1987; Wang, 2006) . Marital Conflicts are viewed as one of the most frequent and common issues in today's fast paced life. A marital relationship takes off on a happy note and both partners are optimistic about their future. However, factors such as expectations, financial status, sexual incompatibility, kids and most prominently Workplace Stress are the commonly accepted causes of divorce (Navidian & Bahari, 2013).

Comstock and Sterzizweick (1990) are of the view that marital quality is not a function of the presence/absence of conflict, but it is the conflict handling strategy that determines marital health. Therefore, proper conflict management is the key to long term relationships. Each individual has his/her conflict management style, which flow from their experiences, knowledge and value systems. (Guttman, 1994; Wilmot & Hocker, 2000). These Conflict management styles are the individual's patterned responses or sets of behaviors which are the key to successful handling of conflicts. (Wilmot & Hocker, 2000).

The extensive review of literature done in the area of Stress and Marital Adjustment indicates that there is a strong relationship between Workplace Stress and Marital Adjustment. But there has been a dearth of literature in the Indian context; hence the present research was undertaken. Further, it is also observed that the studies which have been done on Conflict Resolution between couples have shown inconsistent results. Therefore another purpose of this study is to investigate if and how gender influences the explicit or implicit choice of conflict resolution style adopted by dual working couples.

The sample size consisted of 60 employees working in Multinational Organisations in Delhi/ NCR. Out of the 60 employees, 30 were males and 30 females. The participants were aged between 30 to 45 years of age. They were married for a minimum of 5 years. The participants were asked to fill in a total of 3 questionnaires. Organisational Role Stress Scale by Udai Pareek (1983) was used to measure the Stress levels of the participants, followed by Marital Adjustment Questionnaire by Kumar and Rohtagi (1999) which was used to measure the Marital Adjustment and lastly, the Thomas Killman Conflict Mode Instrument by Kenneth L. Thomas and Ralph H. Killman (1977) was used to measure the conflict resolution style the participants resorted to. Proper instructions were given to all the participants before administration

As it can be seen from the data analysis, the means and standard deviations of all the dimensions on the three tests are given. Table 1 shows the mean and standard deviation of Organisational Role Stress dimensions. The highest mean was for Inter Role Distance, this is indicative of the fact that Inter Role Distance stressor causes the greatest amount of stress for the participants. The lowest stressor was Role Erosion. Table 2 shows the mean and standard deviations of Marital Adjustment dimensions, herein, the highest mean was for Emotional Dimension and lowest was for Sexual Dimension. As far as conflict management styles are concerned, table 3 depicts that the highest mean was for Avoiding Style. This is indicative of the fact that on an average, most of the participants use avoiding style of conflict management. Lowest mean was for compromising style. Compromising style of conflict management was the least in use by participants.

The first hypothesis of the research was that there will be a significant correlation between Organisational role stress and marital adjustment. As can be seen from table 4, the correlation between all dimensions of Organisational Role stress and all dimensions of Marital Adjustment is shown. The overall correlation between Organisational Role Stress and Marital Adjustment is -0.74 as can be seen from table 5. There is a negative correlation, which is significant. This means that higher the Organizational Role Stress, poor will be the Marital adjustment of the individual. Hence the hypothesis was proved.

There can be various reasons for this. One of the recent changes in employment pattern observed in the Indian society is reflected in more and more women taking up jobs and becoming career conscious. Understandably, the traditional status and position held by women in the family as well as in the society are in a transition phase. Across the globe, women belonging to any class or creed have come out of their shell, established their freedom and autonomy, have become greater growth oriented and are working hard to achieve their goals. These new roles are in addition to the age old responsibilities of bearing and rearing children and running the house. In dual career families, the situation is somewhat different. Females have to very diligently indulge in multitasking so as to strike a balance between family roles and career aspirations. At times, these two roles clash. The male members try to ease the burden of females by offering to perform some domestic tasks. It is understood that in order to maintain peace and harmony in the family, it is essential that the man helps the woman with the household work,

In most cases, it is observed that career graphs of both the partners do not move equally. While one partner may be doing well in his job, the other may still be struggling. Such imbalances lead to tension since one partner is investing time and efforts to avail important career opportunities while the other partner is left to attend at home. At this point of time, the couple enters into serious arguments over whose needs are more important and eventually such arguments eliminate into resentment and distancing. Therefore, it is observed that couples who are not conscious about solving this problem regarding unparallel career paths may experience severe relationship problems culminating into marital discords and unsatisfactory marital life.

Career oriented women generally opt for careers with a burden on their conscious for neglecting their family. At times, they may receive little or no support from their family or society, but the pressure to prove themselves in their work place always keeps them on their toes and as a result, working women feel they are losing control of their lives. At the other end, men are waking up to this fact that they are not the sole bread winner of the family and their wives may outperform them in terms of monetary contribution as well as career advancement. This leads to a feeling of inferiority complex among men folk, which again leads to poor marital adjustment.

Personal time and recreational time at the disposal of working couple is very little. In the pursuit of a demanding work life, the couple is left with very little time for relationships outside the family or for simple recreational activities. This again leads to a feeling of frustration, guilt and resentment in the couple, which inturn leads to poor quality of marital life.

The second hypothesis was that there will be a significant correlation between marital adjustment and conflict management styles. As can be seen from table 5, there was a negative significant correlation between Marital Adjustment and competing style of conflict management. The correlation coefficient was -.74, which was significant at .01 level. This is indicative of the fact that higher the usage of competing style of conflict management, poor will be the marital adjustment of the individual. There is also a significant correlation between Marital Adjustment and Compromising style of conflict management. The correlation coefficient is -.71 which is significant at .05 level. This shows that higher

the use of compromise style of conflict management in times of marital conflict, higher will be the marital adjustment of the couple. Hence this hypothesis was also proved.

The third hypothesis states that there will be a significant difference among males and females in Organisational Role Stress. As can be seen from the table 7, Inter Role Distance Dimension witnessed significant differences between males and females. The means for males was 10.06 and for females was 12.76. The t score value came out to be -3.48. This shows that the perception of Inter Role Distance as a stressor for females was much higher as compared to males. Inter Role Distance refers to the incompatibility and imbalance between the two or more roles that a person occupies (Pareek, 1983). There can be various reasons for this. It can be inferred that a significant shift can be seen in the dual career families with respect to the typical gender roles such as child care, housekeeping and cooking. Now, these jobs are shared either by the male spouse or there is a domestic help to assist. Although, the mental and social level of an average Indian has grown, yet , the patriarchal values still prevail in the Indian mindset. Role conflicts, work demands and the resultant stress amongst the dual career couples affect the career aspirations of females more than the husband. Working women commonly voice their concerns regarding the stress caused by divided time and attention on account of household work and feel incompatible between the two domains of work and family.

The second dimension of Organisational Role Stress which witnessed a significant difference between males and females was Role Overload. As can be seen from table 6, the mean for males was 9.58 and for females was 11.56. The t score was -2.97. This again shows that females perceive Role Overload to be a major stressor as compared to males. When the individual feels that there are too many expectations from his/her role and it is becoming increasingly difficult to cope up with the expectations required by those roles, he/she feels a sense of Role Overload. A significant fact arising from the review pointed towards the female entrusted with major part of the household work irrespective of her equally demanding job and comfortable salary, it is the wife who usually performs most of the household jobs regularly with an occasional helping hand from the husband. Husbands were found to be supportive of their wives career decision and aspiration but as far as sharing of household work is concerned, husbands were found to be extending just a helping hand and not an equal responsibility partner. The females have to manage both their work as well as their family. When unable to cope up with the pressures of work and family simultaneously, they feel a sense of Role Overload at their work.

The next dimension of Organisational Role Stress which witnessed a significant gender difference was Personal Inadequacy. From table 6, it can be seen that the mean scores for males are 11.12 and for females are 13.72. The t score is -3.1. This is indicative of the fact that females perceive Personal Inadequacy to be a greater stressor as compared to males. This feeling arises when the role occupant feels that he/she does not have proper skills and training to perform the duties and responsibilities arising from that particular role. It was frequently observed that despite all the stress and strain caused by dual career lifestyle, large number of couples favored and could foresee real benefits for the family. At the same time, dual career lifestyle also witnessed some real practical problems. However, the couples in many cases, did not work out a sharing arrangement of family roles and as a result, it was the wife who had to shoulder additional responsibilities for smooth conduct of family life. Sometimes the wives come under so much pressure to balance their personal and professional lives, that they start questioning their own credibility. They tend to feel that they no longer have the necessary skills and expertise to handle their professional roles. Hence this feeling of Personal Inadequacy occurs. Hence significant difference between males and females in Organisational Role Stress dimensions were found. Therefore, the hypothesis was proved.

The next hypothesis was that there will be significant differences in the ways males and females use conflict management styles. As can be seen from table 7, there are gender differences in Competing and Avoiding Styles of Conflict Management. The Competing Style is used more by males as compared to females. The mean score for males is 7.23 and for females is 3.5. the t score is 5.71. On the contrary, the Avoiding style is used more by female as compared to males. The mean value for females is 8.23 and for males is 5.3. The t score is -5.52. Hence the hypothesis was proved. The reasons for this can be many. Some of them are discussed in the following section.

Pop and Natalya (1989) expressed that gender differences have an active role to play in rising conflicts. While men are dominating and tend to compete, women are more often than not seen to be compromising with the situation and avoiding conflict (Wang, 2006). Tannon (1984) also subscribed to the same opinion by claiming that while women avoid conflicts, men try to control the conversations in their favour. Often, women play the role of a "listener" in the correlations and therefore are perceived to be the weaker partner (Wang, 2006)

Conflict Handling Styles are related to gender and yet they may be culture specific. Kertch, Meyer and Cohen (1992) opined that conflict management style vary with culture. Obuchi and takahashi (1994) gave a similar viewpoint by saying that a style that is acceptable within one culture, may be unacceptable within another.

Di Cook (1995), Ferray (1993), Hope (1987) and Kagan, Night and Martishes-Romiro (1982) point out that variations in culture suggest resolution of conflict. Styles of conflict resolution between two cultures may vary to such an extent that what may be unpleasant in one culture may be acceptable in another. (Obuchi & Takahashi, 1994). Cultures are different in their preferred forms of handling conflict (Cai & Fink, 2002).

Indian Society on account of its various beliefs and value systems draws a huge contrast in conflict handling styles between men and women. Whereas females avoid direct confrontation and hence avoid disputes, men are more aggressive and dominating because of their mental make up of living in a male dominated society. Women are by nature accommodating because of their inherited and historical role imposed by the society wherein they are meant to be caring and sensitive towards others.

An interesting observation after reviewing various literatures was the stark differences in the behavior of fathers and mothers when they returned home after a long stressful day at work. Whereas, a typical father wanted some private time all by himself, a typical mother was often found focusing her attention on her children and her needs. It was also found out that women who had close friends and confidantes were better able to cope and deal with work place stress. Because women can cope with stress better than men, they have lesser chances of getting caught by stress related disorders such as aggressive hypertension or addiction of any kind. Opening up with friends and carrying out their family duties against all odds strengthens a woman's immune system, thereby providing useful safeguards against stress.

CONCLUSION

The aim of the research was to study the relationship between Workplace Stress, Marital Adjustment and Conflict Management in dual working couples. This paper explores issues pertaining how does work stress affect the marital relationship of dual working couples? What is the relationship between marital adjustment and conflict management styles in dual working couples? Are their significant differences in the way males and females respond to workplace stress and conflict management styles.

The extensive review of literature done in the area of Stress and Marital Adjustment indicates that there is a strong relationship between Workplace Stress and Marital Adjustment. But there has been a dearth of literature in the Indian context; hence the present research was undertaken. Further, it is also observed that the studies which have been done on Conflict Resolution between couples have shown inconsistent results. Therefore another purpose of this study is to investigate if and how gender influences the explicit or implicit choice of conflict resolution style adopted by dual working couples.

Workplace Stress is a direct and contributing factor towards poor marital adjustment. Results of the present research revealed that highly demanding jobs and an equally rigorous household responsibilities caused unmanageable stress levels particularly amongst women. This gets further aggravated by an often arrogant male attitude which does not allow them to compromise between home and office. Results are the escalating difference between the couple often leading to marital discord and in some cases terminating in divorce.

Another dimension of the study revolved around the conflict management styles adopted by the working couples. Significant differences were found between males and females as far as conflict management styles were concerned. While males preferred to use more of Competing style of conflict management, females resorted to avoiding style more as compared to males.

The strength of the marital relationship and its sanctity depends largely on the conflict resolution style adopted by the couple and determines the fortune of their togetherness. A positive approach can go a long way in resolving differences wherein a negative approach may even blow up minor issues and often end up with unpleasant results.

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