

DIVISION OF FAMILY WORK AND DECISION MAKING PATTERN AMONG THE DUAL EARNER COUPLES

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Abstract

Dual earner couples are those dyads, in which both members work for pay. In the dual earner couples both husband and wife work and their work is classified as a job rather than a career. Dual earner couples are an upcoming trend and they face challenges in organizing their daily activities. How these couples divide their work and what are the decision making patterns they follow is the focus of this research paper. The present study has been done in Chandigarh on 300 respondents, 150 husbands and 150 wives i.e. husband wife in pairs. In an attempt to gain a deeper and wider understanding of dual earner couples the present paper examines the division of family work and patterns of decision-making among the couples.

Key words – Dual earner couples, Decision making, division of family work

Introduction: Different researchers in the field of work and family have tried their hand to define the concept of dual earner. Rapoport and Rapoport (1969) created the term ‘dual career families’, which designated “a type of family structure in which both heads of household, the husband and the wife pursue active careers and at the same time maintain a family life together.” A number of studies using these terms or very similar concepts were constructed shortly thereafter. The terms “two professional family”, “two career families”, “two income families” and “two bread winner families” were also versions of what is a general category of ‘dual workers family’.

‘Dual career’ families are distinct from ‘two person career couple’ in their attitudinal support of the equalization of power and domestic responsibilities and in their belief in career advancement (Bryson & Bryson 1976; Epstein, 1971).

‘Dual earner couples’ can be classified as both partners employed in labor force as professional or worker couple, depending upon the location of their work roles in the labor force. In the dual earner couples both husband and wife work and their work is classified as a job rather than a career.

Review of literature

Since dual earner couples are an emerging group, the implications of the dual earner

life style for couples have received the most attention in the work family literature. Although the division of domestic work has been the focus of sociological enquiry for the past several decades but social scientists failed to develop a consensus on how women’s employment affects the household division of labour. Some studies suggest that wife’s employment leads to negligible increase in the husbands’ participation in the household chores. Rapoport & Rapoport (1976) confirm that men do some household chores but only to ‘help’ their wives and mainly regard it as ‘her job’. Rao (1990) reveals that working women seem to receive virtually no help from their husbands. Working women have to perform dual functions- domestic as well as occupational functions. It is the women who bear the primary responsibility for house work and child care (Bhandari 2004; Ramu, 1989). Wajcman (1996) confirms that in addition to undertaking a disproportionate volume of domestic work, working wives organize and supervise paid domestic work. According to Pleck (1981) husbands in the dual earner families are beginning to increase their domestic work even though employed wives continue to have primary responsibility for family work. Wives in dual career marriages typically continue to perform substantially more household labor

as do their husbands in most dual-career families (Hochschild, 1989; Ferree, 1991; Shelton, 1992). Although the majority of dual earner couples believe in the ideology of fairness in sharing paid and unpaid work, in the reality of day-to-day life, equality in the family work is not the norm (Coltrane, 2000). According to Gordon & Whelan-Berry (2004) working women carry more responsibility of home, family life and childcare as compared to men. Geed (2007) states that the changing workforce and demographic factors have made it difficult for dual earners to lead balanced lives in the context of their families.

In emerging equalitarian families, husbands are taking more responsibility for performing household chores, but the wife is still carrying a much heavier load (Erickson et al. 1979), whereas, others (Maret & Finlay, 1984; Ross, et al. 1983; Thornton, 1989) report that women in the dual earner families are less likely to bear the role responsibilities for care, cooking, washing and cleaning. Greenstein (2000) has found that dual earner couples share more family work than traditional, male only breadwinner couples. He further argues that the more equal spouse's contributions to the household income, the more equal the division of labor. Further, as wives' absolute income increases, their time spent on household labor decreases. Brines (1994) reveal that for men there is curvilinear relationship between economic dependency and participation in the household labour. However, Presser (1994) states that if partners' incomes are roughly equal, men tend to contribute proportionately more to the housework but not much more than their counterparts who earn substantially more or less than their partners.

According to Crompton (1997) wives earn & work as much as their husbands, in order to change the power dynamics. They successfully want to increase the husbands' contribution to household labour. McFarlane et al. (2000) find that wives in dual-earner families who work full-time and who earn more than 50 percent of the family income do less housework than if they earn

less than 50 percent of the family income. The housework is generally most equitably shared among the equalitarian couples and also among couples in which wife earns a greater proportion of the income (Bianchi et al. 2000). Some researchers have found that share of housework is related to husband and wife's earnings (Maret & Finlay, 1984). Domestic work is shared the most equally among couples where the woman or both spouses have a career status (Känsälä and Oinas, 2016). However, other researchers report no relations between spouses' income level and the division of labour (Berardo et al. 1987). Erickson et al. (1979) indicate that husbands who earn high income feel justified in letting their wives do majority of the housework and childcare. Spitze (1986) states that as men's income increases, their family work decreases.

Hochschild (1989), on the other hand, finds that among those couples where the wives' income excels than husbands', none of the men are categorized as sharing equally in the house. According to Brines (1994) men who earn more than their partners and those who earn less, tend to do less household labor but for different reasons. If men earn more than their partners, they view their responsibility as 'bread winner' as compensating for doing housework. It is argued that men who earn less than their partners eschew housework to protect and assert their threatened masculinity.

Davis & Greenstein (2004) find that households where the wife is employed outside the home, their husbands perform at least half of the household labor. They also suggest that wives relative income is salient to men's' perceptions of their contributions to the household. Wives with greater relative income seem to be able to negotiate a more equalitarian division of labor.

Bird et al. (1984) and Edgell (1980) report that as wives increase their involvement in responsibility for the economic support of families, husbands feel concomitant pressure to participate more fully in childcare and household tasks. Pleck (1985) report that men's involvement is slowly increasing in the household with a greater rise in child

related tasks as compared to household tasks. Cowen & Cowen (1987) find that husbands are more involved in the daily task of looking after their children when they are employed for fewer hours. Deutsch et al. (1993); Deutsch & Saxon (1998) document that men in dual earner couples are typically engaged in caring for their children than men in traditional single earner families, although women typically still perform the majority of childcare. Men are most likely to care for children when the wife is unavailable to care for the child.

A number of studies maintain that wives employment has brought about marginal changes in their ability to take decisions in the family. According to Blood & Wolfe (1960) employed women have more decision-making power than do non-employed women. It is argued that relative power of husbands and wives in making family decisions depends upon the relative resources (such as education, employment, occupational status and income), which each spouse brings into the marriage. Blau (1964) points out that power of decision-making depends on how much each partner values the resources possessed by the other. A wife who greatly enjoys a high income and societal prestige is likely to show greater deference toward a successful husband than is a wife who cares very little for money or social standing.

Working wives in general usually have more voice in decision-making than housewives (Bahr et al. 1974). Working wives contribute to the family income; they take more part in the important decision of how the income will be spent (Hoffman and Nye, 1974). Kapoor (2006), report that education helps women not only to gain self-confidence & self-respect, but also participate in the decision-making process. Devi (1987) reports that the husband's power in decision-making in dual earner families is significantly lower than that of his counterpart in single earner households. Ramu's (1988) suggests that wives are increasingly gaining authority from their husbands to make decisions.

A few researchers report that wife's employment does not alter decision-making process in the family (Blood & Hamblin 1968; Rani & Khandelwal, 1992). Others are of the view that dual earning couples are more egalitarian in decision-making (Shukla 1987; Sinha and Prabha 1988). Safilios (1976) focuses attention on who makes important versus unimportant decisions, infrequent versus frequent decision and how these dimensions intersect. Davidson et al. (1979) supporting Safilios suggest that due to their contribution to the family's income, employed women will have shares of both orchestration and implementation power more nearly equal to that of their husbands in contrast to non-employed wives, who tend to have far less orchestration power and much more implementation power than do their husbands. Kartz (1983) reveals that in modern urban settings, exclusive male dominance in conjugal decision-making is on the decline. The reason is that in such settings an increasing number of women are employed.

Dual earner couples in India are an upcoming trend the present study was undertaken with the following objectives:

Objectives

- To examine the role responsibilities and division of family work between the dual earner couples.
- To look into the nature of decision-making between the dual earner couple

Methodology

The present study was confined to 300 respondents, 150 husbands and 150 wives i.e. husband wife in pairs residing in Union Territory of Chandigarh. To qualify for inclusion in the study, the following criteria were adopted;

- The respondents had to be 'co-habiting' dual earner couples.
- Both husband and wife were employed outside the home in formal sector.
- Couples had children

Questionnaire was used as a research tool to collect information. The data was tabulated

and subjected to statistical analyses by using descriptive analysis and chi- square.

The demographic profile of respondents has been shown in Table 1.

Results

Table 1 Distribution showing profile of the respondents

Age	#	%	Educational qualification	#	%
25-30	27	9.0	Up to Graduation + Diploma, degree	89	29.7
30-35	38	12.7	Post-graduate	87	29.0
35-40	82	27.3	M. Phil, M.Ed., MBA, etc.	64	21.3
40 and above	153	51.0	Professionals	60	20.0
Marital Duration			Occupational Status		
Up to 5 years	40	13.3	High	102	34
5-10	46	15.3	medium	107	35.7
10-15	62	20.7	Low	91	30.3
15 +	152	50.7	Income		
No. of children			Up to Rs. 30,000	109	36.3
1	106	35.3	Rs. 30,000- 40,000	117	39.0
2	162	54	Rs. 40,000- 50,000	51	17.0
3	32	10.7	Rs. 50,000 +	23	7.7
Family composition					
Nuclear	174	58.0			
Joint	126	42.0			

Results show that 51 percent of the respondents were 40 years. The mean age of the respondents was 42.64 years. The mean age at marriage was 26.17 years. 50.7 percent respondents were married for more than 15 years. There were 13.3 respondents who were married for 5 years only. Dual earner couples had fewer numbers of children i.e. an average of 1.75 children per couple. 35.3 percent had single child while 54 percent couples had two children. 58 percent of the respondents were living in nuclear families while 42 percent of them found to be living in joint families. In terms of educational attainments, all the respondents were educated while only 20 percent of them were professionals. There were 69.3 percent respondents who were working in Government Offices followed by 17 percent who were engaged in Semi-Government Organizations. It was found that 34 percent respondents had high occupational status, 35.7 percent had medium level of occupational status, while

30.3 percent of them were engaged in lower level of occupations. Only 13.7 percent of them were working in private organizations. There were 39 percent respondents who were earning between Rs. 30,000 to 40,000 per month followed by 36.3 percent who were earning up to Rs. 30,000 per month.

Division of work

Literature review documents that, with more and more married women earning part of family income by working outside the home, division of household responsibilities and decision about money have emerged as major points of contention among these husbands and wives. In order to obtain a more valid estimate of the couple's participation in domestic chores the choices were coded into 5 categories i.e. Husband, wife, both, hired paid help, and live in help i.e. elders and grown up children. The idea was to understand who was primarily performing the household tasks and who helped?

Table 2 Distribution showing Tasks performed

Tasks	Husband	Wife	Both	Servant/ maid	others
Preparing meals	1(0.3)	191(63.7)	37(12.3)	18(6.0)	53(17.7)
Cleaning the house	1(0.3)	60(20.0)	22(7.3)	173(57.7)	44(14.7)
washing dishes	1(0.3)	126(42.0)	12(4.0)	150(50)	11(3.7)
washing clothes	2(.7)	52(17.3)	42(14.0)	167(55.7)	26(8.7)
maintenance task	189(63.0)	5(1.7)	24(9.0)	54(18.0)	28(9.3)
preparation of household budget	95(31.7)	43(14.3)	139(46.3)	-	23(7.7)
payment of bills	173(57.7)	30(10.0)	56(18.7)	3(1.0)	38(12.7)
purchase of grocery	76(25.3)	60(20.0)	125(41.7)	19(6.3)	29(13.0)
purchase of vegetables/fruits	87(29.0)	75(25.0)	96(32.0)	20(6.0)	22(7.3)
filing income tax returns	187(62.3)	19(6.3)	75(25.0)	-	19(6.3)

Results show that nearly two third of the respondents i.e. 63.7 percent confirmed that cooking still remained the primary responsibility of the wives even among dual earner households. Although paid help was available to only 6 percent of respondents, but 17.7 percent reported that ‘Live in Help’ i.e. Elders and grown up children assisted them in preparing the meals. Though small in number, but 12.3 percent of the respondents admitted joint sharing between husband and wife in preparation of meals.

A majority of the respondents i.e. 57.7 percent informed that task of cleaning the house was delegated to servants.. Husband’s participation in this task was negligible, but 7.3 percent of the respondents admitted the joint sharing between the husband and the wife. 20 percent of the respondents were of the view that the cleaning of the house was the primary responsibility of the wives.

Similarly 50 percent of respondents informed that the job of dish washing was done by servants/part-time maids. 42 percent respondents reported that dish wishing was the task of the wife. Husband’s sharing in this task was negligible.

There were 44.7 percent of the respondents, who admitted that in their household it was the wife who was primarily responsible for washing of clothes. However, 34 percent of the respondents reported that this task was done by paid helpers.

A large majority of respondents i.e. 63 percent confirmed that in their household, usually, husbands were responsible for the maintenance of electrical goods. Wife’s contribution was almost negligible. Only 8 percent reported joint sharing between spouses but 18 percent sought the help of the servant while 9.3 percent respondents reported the assistance by the elders.

Preparation of household budget was shared by 46.3 percent of the respondents, but more often this task belonged to the husbands. For 31.7 percent, dual earner respondents, husbands alone were responsible for the preparation of the budget or division of money into different heads. There were 7.7 percent of the respondents who reported that in their household, preparation of household budget was the task of the elders.

Purchase of Grocery might be the responsibility of either spouse. It was found that as per the responses of 10 percent of the respondents wives alone had assumed this responsibility, while 18.7 percent reported joint sharing in this task.

Further probe indicated that due to electronic media, these bills could be paid online. Purchase of Grocery might be the responsibility of either spouse. indicate that even in dual earner households both husband and wife most equitably shared it. 41.7 percent of the respondents confirmed joint sharing while 25.3 percent of the respondents reported that husbands alone performed this task. However,

20 percent of the respondents opined that in their households it was the wife who was primarily responsible for the purchase of grocery.

62.3 percent of the respondents confirmed that husbands were filing the tax returns for the couple. The reason might be that the husbands had more expertise than wives in this task. There were, 25 percent of the respondents where both the spouses filed tax returns i.e. this task was performed by either husband or wife depending upon the availability of time.

Decision making

The entry of married women in gainful employment outside the home has drawn the attention of family sociologists to study the impact of women’s employment on decision-making. In modern urban settings, exclusive male dominance in conjugal decision-making is on the decline (Kartz, 1983). Others have found that wife’s power in decision making is

almost same in single and in dual earner households. An attempt has been made to examine whether women’s contribution to the family income enabled them to have a say in family decisions or it continued to be the male prerogative. These financial decisions were analyzed under three categories to gauge the financial independence of husbands and wives.

- Routine financial decisions
- Occasional financial decisions
- Vital decisions

Routine Financial Decisions

Financial matters vary by their very nature. There is some routine expenditure that each family has to incur i.e. purchase of vegetables, fruits, grocery items, clothes, payment to domestic help, etc. These items do not involve a huge amount of money and thus treated as routine financial decisions.

Table 3. Distribution of the respondents showing their power in taking routine financial decisions

Items	Decision makers					
	Husband	Wife	Both	Elders	Total	Significance
Vegetables	53 (17.7)	87 (29.0)	128 (42.7)	32 (10.7)	300	P > 0.05 not significant
Grocery	45 (15.0)	89 (29.7)	130 (43.3)	36 (12.0)	300	P > 0.05 not significant
Clothes	22 (7.3)	98 (32.7)	167 (55.7)	13 (4.3)	300	P > 0.05 not significant
Payment to domestic help	29 (9.7)	97 (32.3)	132 (44.0)	42 (14.0)	300	P > 0.05 not significant

Table 3 shows the distribution of respondents’ decision-making power on routine domestic purchases. Spending on daily items is not a very challenging job. Results indicate that these decisions were considered basic and it was decided by both husband and wife, depending upon their mobility and availability. Nearly 30 percent of the respondents were of the view that in their household it was the wife who had to decide as to how much to spend on these routine items. More than 42 percent of respondents reported joint decision-making. Though small in number but a substantial proportion of the respondents opined that in their household it was the husband alone who took these decisions. Some respondents

living in joint families along with their siblings informed that in their families it was the elders who took all these decisions. Chi square test was applied for each item. Results indicate that no association exists between the occupational status of couples and decision-making on routine purchase. No striking difference was observed among the couples.

Occasional Financial Decisions

For clear understanding of economic autonomy it becomes essential to examine as to ‘Who has the final say on decisions where huge money is involved?’ i.e. buying/renting a house, purchase of scooter/car, purchase of furniture, financial aid to kins.

Table 4: Distribution of the respondents showing their power in taking occasional financial decisions

Items	Decision Makers						Significance
	Not applicable	Husband	Wife	Both	Elders	Total	
Buying/ renting house	13 (4.3)	61 (20.3)	9 (3.0)	183 (61.0)	34 (11.3)	300	P < 0.05 significant
Purchase of Vehicle	0 -	73 (24.3)	6 (2.0)	195 (65.0)	26 (8.7)	300	P < 0.01 highly significant
Purchase of household Furniture	0	40 (13.3)	39 (13.0)	193 (64.4)	28 (9.3)	300	P > 0.05 not significant
Financial aid to kins	0	41 (13.7)	20 (6.7)	216 (72.0)	23 (7.7)	300	P < 0.05 significant

Data breakup brings to the fore that nearly two third i.e. 61 percent or more respondents confirmed joint decision making between the spouses on all the four items. The respondents mentioned that in mutual consultation with their respective spouses they took these decisions. Buying/renting a house & purchase of scooter/car still appeared to be husband’s prerogative. Nearly 20 percent of them expressed that in their families; it was the husband alone who took these decisions. However, wives autonomy in taking these decisions was reported by a very small number of respondents. Again respondents living with their in-laws confirmed that it was the elders who took these important decisions in their families. Chi square values indicate that except purchase of furniture, close association exists between the occupational status of the couples and decisions related to expensive items i.e. the purchase of vehicle, renting house and providing financial aid to kin. Further analysis depicts that in buying/renting a house purchase

of vehicle & financial aid to kins, respondents who informed that wives alone took these decisions were found to be from second category of couples, in which husbands’ occupational status was lower than their wives. It appears that these wives having higher position could manage to get more autonomy in taking these decisions. To some extent resource theory fits well. There seems to be a direct relationship between the earning status of husband and wife and their power to take important financial decisions.

Vital Decisions

‘Who takes the final decision on financial matters?’ provides a rough approximation of the economic power between dual earner couples. Along with share of autonomy in spending, there are a series of other important matters on which decisions are taken in the household. Information pertaining to decisions related to children, recreational activities and giving gifts(monetary or in kind) to relatives was also procured

Table 5 Distribution showing decision making power of the respondents for other vital decisions

Other Vital Issues	Decision Maker						Significance
	Not applicable	Husband	Wife	Both	Elders	Total	
Decision related to schooling of Children	30 (10.0)	31 (10.3)	41 (13.7)	185 (61.7)	13 (4.3)	300	P < 0.01 highly significant
Decision related to career of Children	30 (10.0)	22 (7.3)	18 (6.0)	210 (70.0)	20 (6.7)	300	P < 0.01 highly significant
Gift to Relatives	0	14 (4.7)	45 (15.0)	221 (73.6)	20 (6.7)	300	P < 0.05 significant
Recreational activities	0	56 (18.7)	51 (17.0)	171 (57.0)	22 (7.3)	300	P > 0.05 not significant

Table 5 shows distribution of respondents on other vital decisions. In the cultural configuration of the people, child rearing is associated with feminine role, but women's participation in decision-making on vital matters or concerning children is not allowed as it is regarded exclusively as men's domain (Devi, 1982). Majority of the respondents informed that these decisions were taken jointly by them. Although a small percent of respondents admitted that these decisions were taken by elders in their family. These respondents were living in joint families.

Discussion

The pattern that emerged from this study shows that wives still accomplish the bulk of the household tasks. A substantial proportion of the respondents stated that division of work in their household tended to be "Joint". It was found that wives still assumed the major responsibility for home and childcare even when she was employed. Sociologists call this as 'the double burden'. A noteworthy point is that husband's involvement in traditionally 'female' tasks, such as cleaning, cooking was low relative to their spouses. The most prominent features observed was high involvement of husbands in 'masculine' tasks such as repair/service of electrical appliances, vehicle registration, filing of income tax returns, preparing household budget. Joint sharing indicates noticeable adjustment between the couples in terms of doing family work in order to prevent disruptions in running the household affairs. It was also found that indoor related tasks were generally the prerogative of the wives the husbands "helped with" some of the household tasks, as if such activity was a favour to the wife rather than part of the role as family member.

The findings of the present study also support the resource theory. The resource theory asserts that, power is generally associated with resources brought into marriage by each spouse. Consequently, the more resources either spouse has in comparison to the other, the greater will be

his/her marital and bargaining power and these resources are usually economic in nature i.e. education, occupation and income. The same was held true in the present research also. The findings suggest that the relative distribution of resources between husband and wife have a great impact on the household division of work as well as on patterns of decision-making. Resource theory has been amply substantiated in the present study in the context of division of work as well as in the patterns of decision-making.

Conclusion

Although dual earner families are a reality in contemporary world yet these have to go far off to achieve the status of equalitarian family. Society remains patriarchal although women have greater economic and legal equality with men than in the past. Even when both spouses are employed full time, wives continue to perform the majority of household tasks. It is important to note that household labour is still defined primarily as women's work and women still do most of it. Women have primary responsibility of childcare and also spend more time than men on domestic tasks, regardless of their working status. However decision making continues to remain with men. There is no denying fact that employed women have more decision-making power than do non-employed women. Simple decisions with regard to day today activities are assigned to women but main decision making power lies with men.

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