

THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF BUSINESS & MANAGEMENT

Measuring Employer's Sensitivity for Working Couples: An Empirical Research

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Abstract:

Due to today's dynamic and challenging business environment, the success of any organization depends on how to attract and retain the dedicated workforce. The workforce dimensions and demographics changes at robust and due to increased influx of women employee, there comes the need of supportive organizational policies and employer sensitivity. Dual career couple faces a strong conflict between work-nonwork domains creating lots of work stress and emotional strain. This implies that employers should be more sensitivity and responsible towards them. The present research study will review the meaning of employer's sensitivity towards dual career work life balances. For this study the data collection is done from various corporate offices in Delhi, Gurgaon, Noida and Faridabad regions. A sample of 270 working couple is taken using convenience and snow ball technique. Participants completed a total of 56 items on the questionnaire that surveyed for four instruments namely, demographics section, challenges faced by working couple, coping strategies, employer sensitivity and organisational support. An association is shown between the employer's sensitivity and written work life balance policies for dcc. The result shows that employer's sensitivity depends on written work life balances in which 5 out of 8 associations are statistically significant. Further, an analysis was done on all the items of employer sensitivity resulting that employers are not sensitive on all the variables by finding the mean rank sum using Friedman test. Results indicate that the employers should be more responsible towards dual career couple and integrating their work-life issues more easily. This not only reduces the spanning boundaries between the work-family conflicts but also increases the employees' organisational commitment and loyalty towards the organisation.

Key words: dual career couple (dcc), employer's sensitivity, work-life policies, work-family conflict (WFC), supervisor support, family work conflict (FWC), employee assistance programs (EAP)

1. Introduction

Meaning of dual career couple: DCC are the married couple in which both wife and husband are working and having their own individual careers.

Today, the work-life challenges faced by dcc have gone bidirectional (WFC to FWC) and have become a predominant issue for today's human resource management. These conflicts have brought a lot of stress and strain on professional and personal front. Interference of family role in work domain and vice-versa brings a negative spillover from family to work commitment and converse. Some of the predictors of WFI are work demands, role conflict, role ambiguity (Frone, Russell, & Cooper, 1992; Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985; Grandey & Cropanzano, 1999; Parasuraman, Purohit, Godshalk, & Beutell, 1996), work related stressors and strain and predictors of FWI are families responsibilities, parental overload. Pertaining to the family domain, strain-based antecedents include family conflict, financial strain, and family expectations (Carlson, Kacmar, & Williams, 2000; Cooke & Rousseau, 1984; Frone, Yardley, & Markel, 1997; Kinnunen & Mauno, 1998), whereas time-based antecedents include number and age of children, spouse's work role salience, and spouse employment status (Bedieian, Bruke, & Moffett, 1988; Carlsons & Kacmar, 2000; Frone et al., 1997; Higgins, Duxbury, & Irving, 1992; Parasuraman et al., 1996). Therefore all these results to stress, frustration, depression, higher absenteeism, lower organisational commitment, job and life dissatisfaction between the working couple.

The role of supervisors is particularly important in implementing formal flexible scheduling and work time policies as well as informal working arrangements and schedules. Supervisors are responsible for staffing levels, allocation of work assignments, and unit output. Although supportive supervisors often can allow more flexibility than exists in the written policies of the organization, unsupportive supervisors can subvert employers' family-friendly policies. Thus, high pay and benefits, employment security, and career development opportunities should create an environment in which employees view their employers as supportive of family needs and demands (Valcour P. Monique & Batt Rosemary 2003). Also employers should go for Employee Assistance Programs (EAP's) helping in reducing the stress of employees and increasing quality life for them (Lockwood R. Nancy, 2003). Supportive supervision also was associated with lower work-family conflict and higher employee control. Job security predicted lower work-

family conflict, while both job security and access to career development policies were associated with greater employee control over work-family integration. High levels of employee control, in turn, were associated with a lower probability of turnover (Kochan A. Thomas, Drago Robert & Bailyn Lotte, 2001).

Loy-Blair Mary & Wharton S Amy (2004) predicts that having a supportive supervisor might increase employees' optimism about using flexibility policies in the future (Flack and Reskin 1998; Fried 1998; Glass and Estes 1997; Kelly and Kalev 2002; Kossek, Barber, and Winters 1999). Because many work-family benefits are not fully institutionalized (Kelly 1999), the social support of powerful actors may be important in allowing employees to feel comfortable using these contested policies (DiMaggio 1988). Our earlier research on this sample found that employees were more likely actually to *use* policies when they had powerful supervisors and co-workers who buffer them from the perceived risks.

The official availability of corporate work-family policies alone is insufficient to alter these patterns. Employers are not only supervisors but also a change agent for the organisations, hence their role is incomplete until or unless they make these work-family policies working and curtailing high degree of freedom available by dcc without any hesitation or any other perceived punishment. This is not surprising, given the view that many employers provide work-family policies to professionals (and managers) in part to increase their loyalty and encourage work effort (Konrad and Mangel 2000; Osterman 1995). Using an exchange model, Lambert (2000) finds a positive relationship between workers' views of the usefulness of work-family benefits and organizational citizenship. Supportive supervisors directly and indirectly influence employee job attitudes, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment (Allen, 2001). Anderson et al. (2002) reported that managerial support directly affected job satisfaction and absenteeism.

Expressed in a more positive way, employees were more likely to remain with the organization when their leader reported lower levels of negative work-to-family spillover (Oneill, Harrison, Cleveland, Almeida, Stawsik & Crouture, 2009). This confirms past research that supervisor work-life support significantly predicts job satisfaction (e.g., Baral & Bhargava, 2010; Parasuraman & Alutto, 1984; & Straub, 2012).

Simply perceiving supervisors as supportive on work and family fronts make employee control over their work-family domains satisfactorily and increasing loyalty and productivity towards the organisation, in a way a good sign of employer's sensitivity.

2. Null hypothesis

- Employer's sensitivity does not depends on written work-life balances policies in the organisation.
- Employers are equally sensitive on all the variables.

3. Methodology

This study investigates the relationship between Employer's sensitivity and written work-life balances policies. The main research design is descriptive cum diagnostic.

A sample of 270 working couple was collected from various corporate sectors using convenience and snow ball sampling techniques. The study was conducted in the north zone of India covering Delhi, Gurgaon, Noida and Faridabad. Sample is taken from executive level to managerial level.

4. Measures

Employer's sensitivity was taken as dependent variable and written work-life balances policies as independent variable. For employer sensitivity measure 8-items were scaled on a 5-point likert scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The cronbach's alpha was obtained as 0.77.

5. Analysis

The chi-square analysis was used for null hypothesis 1. For further analysis for hypothesis 2 we have applied Friedman Test, taking employer's sensitivity items as dependent variables. For this all the required assumptions were fulfilled.

6. Results

The concerned associations are shown individually with all items. The analysis results show that out of 8-items of employer sensitivity 5-items are statistically significant showing that employers are the concerned associations are individually presented in the appendices; however a summary of association is presented in the table shown below:

Employer's Sensitivity	Chi-value	p-value
My supervisor does not support use of work life policies.	10.91	.004
My boss helps me deal urgent family or personal issues without hassles.	6.35	.042
I'm encouraged to take my own decision.	6.40	.041
My boss makes an active effort to help me when there is a conflict between work and other commitments.	18.44	.000
My boss helps in future career planning and allocate work accordingly.	33.90	.000
Even if I'm efficient and finish my own work, I'm just given work from other people.	1.58	.453
Relocation/ transfer decisions are taken without consulting the employees.	5.42	.143
Employers in this organization are quite accommodating of family related needs.	3.18	.203

Table 1

Also the null hypothesis 2 stated is rejected, showing that the employer's are not equally sensitive on all the issues and therefore today's employers should give a prior concerns to the dcc work-life interface which in return increase the productivity and organisational commitment of the employees.

Therefore the results given by Friedman's test are as follows where p-value as 0.000 shows that null hypothesis 2 is rejected.

Test Statistics ^a	
N	271
Chi-square	89.477
df	7
Asymp. Sig.	.000
a. Friedman Test	

Table 2

7. Discussion

As both of our null hypothesis are being rejected, showing employer's insensitivity towards dcc. All this leads to more work related stress and family related strains and emotions. With a negative spill over between the work and family domain a willingness to perform undermines an individual. The case goes even more complicated when working couples with children want to continue their careers. Due to unsupportive employer's attitude and unsupportive organisational culture an obstruct of unbalanced work-life always hit the dcc and to their children. However some implications are drawn from the present study.

8. Implications for Employers

Today the most triggered human resource challenge is employer's insensitivity towards dcc. Many of the past researchers also shows that the most critical reason for a high employee turnover is due to the work-family conflict faced by working couples, which causes a high attrition rate and a bad organisation image. Despite of all these circumstances very few employers are actually doing efforts to provide a solution. Only official or by officiating work-life policies doesn't extend a helping hand to the dcc. Various informal work-life policies like shortening the workload for a week when required by dcc, providing work from home facility, change in work shift when required may be in case of sickness of any dependents are some of the friendly ways to enhance a work-life balance for working couples.

Banwell Wilson, 2006, provides a holistic approach to designing interventions is needed, acknowledging that work and family are not separate spheres. Supervisors play a critical role in work-life balance. To echo Duxbury and Higgins' recommendation, most important in this regard is the development of 'supportive managers' – who are good communicators, focus on output rather than hours, show respect for employees, and support their career development.

Also employers need to visualise a clear association between longer working hours and work-family conflicts and to provide retention and succession planning policies more in use. Certain interventions are needed to be designed for handling urgent family related needs and more effective family friendly policies. This will also reduce the level of job stress, frustrations, reducing employee health benefit cost, increased organisation citizenship and productivity simultaneously. Supportive supervisors directly and indirectly influence employee job attitudes, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment (Allen, 2001). Anderson et al. (2002) reported that managerial support directly affected job satisfaction and absenteeism. Making employees use these policies as their rights and not as favours.

Employers when perceived as sensitive and concerned for employees work-family conflict creates an optimistic image for the supervisor. Supervisors also shape employee views of organizational support and its association with work-life conflict (Kossek et al., 2011). Eisenberger, Singlhamber, Vandenberghe, Sucharski, and Rhoades (2002) are in agreement with Kossek et al. They argue that workers view supervisors as organizational agents, and they consider supervisor actions to be equated with organizational actions. Kossek et al. (2011) define perceptions of supervisor work-life support as an employee's perception that their supervisor cares about his or her work-life well-being. Supportive supervisor behaviors include emotional support, instrumental support, role modelling behaviors, and creative work-life management (Hammer, Kossek, Yragui, Bodner, & Hanson, 2009). A supervisor engages in emotional support when they listen and show their subordinates they care about their work-life demands. Instrumental support occurs when a supervisor reacts to employee's work-life demands on a daily basis or as it is needed. When supervisors actively demonstrate how to balance their work-life behaviors on the job, they are engaging in the third dimension of support, role modelling behaviors. The fourth and final dimension of supervisor support is creative work-life management. Creative work-life management takes place when a supervisor rearranges a work day in order to enhance employee effectiveness on the job and off the job. It is important to consider all four dimensions of perceived supervisor support as they relate to employee and organizational outcomes.

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