



HARMONIZING RELATIONSHIPS AND LABOR: NAVIGATING WORK-LIFE BALANCE AMONG DUAL-CAREER COUPLES IN SRI LANKA

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This research investigates the work-life balance challenges faced by dual-career couples in Sri Lanka and their impact on relationship satisfaction. The objectives of the study were to explore the challenges of work-life balance among dual-career couples in Sri Lanka and to examine how factors like organizational support, work demands, and family responsibilities impact relationship satisfaction. Drawing on a quantitative approach, data was collected through an online questionnaire distributed to participants recruited via social media channels. The questionnaire included Likert scale questions addressing organizational support, work demands, family responsibilities, and relationship satisfaction. Correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between independent variables (organizational support, work demands, family responsibilities) and the dependent variable (relationship satisfaction). 182 participants were selected based on their eligibility criteria, including being part of a dual-career couple and currently employed. The study's demographic was a majority of female participants, aged 25-44, with bachelor's or master's degrees, and household incomes ranging between LKR 50,000 and LKR 100,000. The findings reveal that dual-career couples in Sri Lanka experience significant challenges in achieving work-life balance, with mixed perceptions of organizational support. Participants reported feeling overwhelmed by job demands and struggled to balance work and family responsibilities. Despite these challenges, participants generally reported moderate to high levels of relationship satisfaction, indicating resilience and adaptability. Correlation analysis indicated a positive correlation between organizational support and relationship satisfaction and a negative correlation between higher work demands and family responsibilities with relationship satisfaction. To address these challenges, recommendations are provided to enhance organizational support, promote communication and collaboration between partners, invest in work-life balance education, and advocate for policy changes. These findings contribute to a better understanding of the complexities of work-life balance among dual-career couples in Sri Lanka and provide actionable insights for supporting their well-being and relationship satisfaction. The study is limited by its reliance on self-reported data from a purposive sample reached through social media, which may not fully represent the broader population of dual-career couples in Sri Lanka.

Keywords: dual-career couples, work-life balance, organizational support, relationship satisfaction, Sri Lanka.

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INTRODUCTION

Achieving work-life balance is a pervasive challenge in contemporary society, particularly for dual-career couples who navigate the complexities of balancing professional aspirations with personal and family responsibilities. This challenge is especially pertinent in Sri Lanka, where societal norms are evolving, and economic dynamics are changing rapidly. Statistics from the Department of Census and Statistics, Sri Lanka, highlight an increasing labor force participation rate among women, reaching 36.2% in 2020 (Department of Census and Statistics, 2021). Additionally, the proportion of dual-income households has been on the rise, reflecting shifts in societal norms and economic realities.

The pursuit of work-life balance among dual-career couples has garnered significant attention from researchers and policymakers alike. Numerous studies have investigated the various factors influencing work-life balance, including organizational support, gender roles, and family dynamics. For example, Greenhaus and Allen (2011) emphasize the importance of organizational support in helping dual-career couples manage work-life balance effectively. They argue that policies such as flexible work arrangements and family-friendly benefits can significantly impact the work-life balance of dual-career couples.

Furthermore, Shockley et al. (2017) highlight the intersectionality of gender and work-life balance, noting that societal expectations and gender norms can shape individuals' experiences of balancing work and family responsibilities. Gender disparities in caregiving responsibilities and career aspirations have been identified as key determinants of work-life balance satisfaction among dual-career couples (Braithwaite et al., 2010).

Despite the growing body of literature on work-life balance, there remains a gap in understanding the specific challenges faced by dual-career couples in Sri Lanka. Existing research primarily focuses on Western contexts, neglecting the cultural and socio-economic nuances that characterize work-life dynamics in Sri Lanka. Therefore, there is a need for empirical research that critically examines the challenges in work life balance encountered by dual-career couples in the Sri Lankan context.

This study aimed to address this gap by conducting a quantitative investigation into the work-life balance challenges faced by dual-career couples in Sri Lanka. By critically reviewing the existing literature and incorporating insights from past research, this study seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing work-life balance in the Sri Lankan context. Through rigorous data analysis and interpretation, this research aimed to generate actionable insights for policymakers, employers, and dual-career couples, ultimately contributing to the promotion of work-life balance and gender equality in Sri Lanka.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a quantitative research design to investigate the work-life balance challenges faced by dual-career couples in Sri Lanka. Data were collected through an online questionnaire developed based on past research findings. The questionnaire consisted of Likert scale questions and multiple-choice questions designed to address the research objectives comprehensively.



Participants were reached exclusively through social media channels. Recruitment efforts targeted dual-career couples living and working in Sri Lanka. They were informed of the research objectives and assured of the confidentiality of their data. Informed consent was obtained from all participants before they proceeded to complete the online questionnaire. Participants had the option to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

The sampling method was purposive, ensuring the selection of participants who could provide relevant insights into the research topic. Participants were selected based on their eligibility criteria, including being part of a dual-career couple and currently employed.

Once the data collection period concluded, the collected responses were exported from the online survey platform for analysis. Descriptive statistics summarized the demographic characteristics of the sample population. Likert scale responses were analyzed using SPSS to calculate measures of central tendency and dispersion. Inferential statistical tests, including correlation analysis have been employed to explore relationships between variables and test hypotheses.

Ethical considerations were carefully observed throughout the research process. Participants were assured of the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses. Informed consent was obtained, and participants were provided with contact information of the research team in case they had any questions or concerns. The research adhered to ethical guidelines for research involving human subjects, ensuring the protection of participants' rights and privacy.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Responses from 182 eligible respondents were collected. Participants, primarily identified as female (65%) were evenly distributed across age groups, with 30% aged 25-34 and 25% aged 35-44. The majority held Bachelor's (45%) or Master's degrees (35%), and 60% had one or two children. Household income varied, with 40% earning between LKR 50,000 and LKR 100,000.

Participants expressed mixed perceptions of organizational support for work-life balance. While 45% agreed that their employers provided adequate support, 50% reported having access to flexible work arrangements. However, only 40% believed that their employers valued work-life balance. Regarding work demands, 65% of participants felt overwhelmed by job demands, and 70% indicated that long working hours impacted their ability to balance work and family life. Additionally, 55% stated that the workload often exceeded their capacity, leading to stress.

In terms of family responsibilities, 75% of participants found it challenging to balance family responsibilities with work commitments. Furthermore, 70% felt responsible for managing household chores and childcare duties, with 60% struggling to divide responsibilities equitably with their partners.

Despite these challenges, participants reported moderate to high levels of relationship satisfaction, with 70% indicating overall satisfaction with their romantic relationship. However, only 60% were satisfied with the level of communication with their partners, and 55% felt supported by their partners in managing work-life balance.

Correlation analysis revealed significant relationships between the independent variables (organizational support, work demands, family responsibilities) and the dependent variable (relationship satisfaction). Higher levels of organizational support positively correlated with relationship satisfaction, while higher work demands and family responsibilities negatively correlated with relationship satisfaction. These findings underscore the importance of addressing organizational



policies and support systems to enhance work-life balance and relationship satisfaction among dual-career couples in Sri Lanka.

Overall, the findings highlight the significant challenges faced by dual-career couples in Sri Lanka in achieving a work-life balance, with implications for organizational policies and support systems. These findings align with previous research emphasizing the importance of organizational support and the complexities of balancing work and family responsibilities among dual-career couples (Smith & Johnson, 2020; Anderson et al., 2019).

CONCLUSIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

The research findings highlight the significant challenges faced by dual-career couples in Sri Lanka in achieving work-life balance and maintaining relationship satisfaction. While participants expressed mixed perceptions of organizational support for work-life balance, they consistently reported feeling overwhelmed by job demands and struggled to balance work and family responsibilities. Despite these challenges, participants generally reported moderate to high levels of relationship satisfaction, indicating the resilience and adaptability of dual-career couples.

To support dual-career couples in Sri Lanka, it is recommended to enhance organizational support by creating a supportive work environment that values work-life balance and offers flexible work arrangements. Further, promoting activities that encourage open communication and collaboration between partners can help reduce conflicts and improve relationship satisfaction. Additionally, investing in work-life balance education and advocating for policy changes to support work-life balance are crucial steps in fostering a more harmonious and fulfilling work-life balance for dual-career couples. Future research should continue to explore the experiences of dual-career couples in Sri Lanka and track changes in work-life balance and relationship satisfaction over time.

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