

Research Paper

## Dual-Career Couples at the Crossroads: How Gender Role Beliefs, Organizational Role Stress, and Couple Coping Strategies Intersect

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### ABSTRACT

Employees often struggle to balance the roles expected of them - by their organization, their perceptions, and their actual roles. This challenge is particularly acute for newly married dual-career couples, where both partners work full-time in demanding professional or managerial jobs. The extent to which these couples can effectively communicate their issues to their partner, and how the partner understands and responds to them, determines how they deal with their daily stressors. This research examines the Gender Role Beliefs, Organizational Role Stress, and Dyadic Coping Styles of newly married dual-career couples, and investigates the mediating effect of Dyadic Coping Style on the relationship between Gender Role Belief and Organizational Role Stress. The study involved a sample of 50 newly married ( $\leq 2$  years) dual-career couples aged 21 to 35 years, who were selected using purposive sampling and followed ethical guidelines. Standardized measures include Gender Role Belief, Dyadic Coping Inventory, and Organizational Role Stress. The findings indicate that Dyadic Coping Style acts as a partial mediator in the relationship between Gender Role Belief and Organisational Role Stress. There were no significant gender differences in Gender Role Belief, Organisational Role Stress, and Dyadic Coping Styles. The partial mediating effect of a normal dyadic coping style suggests that couples can hold feminist gender role beliefs while also maintaining moderate organizational role stress. This highlights the importance of effective communication and mutual support within the couple as they navigate the challenges of dual-career life.

**Keywords:** *Gender Role Beliefs, Organizational Role Stress, Dyadic Coping Style, Dual-career Couples*

Gender role beliefs refer to the expectations and beliefs about the appropriate roles and behaviors of men and women in society (Blackstone, 2003). Dual-career couples are partners who are highly educated, working full-time in demanding professional or managerial jobs, and see themselves on an upward path in their roles (Smith & Rustagi, 2020). In many societies, there is a growing trend toward more egalitarian beliefs and practices. However, the extent of gender role beliefs can vary based on cultural, social,

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and individual factors. In dual-career couples, where both partners pursue professional careers, it is important to examine how gender role beliefs influence their relationship dynamics, division of household and childcare responsibilities, decision-making processes, and overall relationship satisfaction. Dual-career couples often face unique challenges related to their professional roles. Balancing work demands, managing career advancement, and dealing with job-related stress can put strain on both partners. Examining organizational role stress in the context of dual-career couples can help identify specific stressors and their impact on individual well-being and relationship quality. This can lead to the development of organizational policies and practices that promote work-life integration, flexible work arrangements, and gender equality ensuring employee satisfaction, productivity, and retention. The extent to which newly married couples can communicate their issues to their partner and how the partner understands and responds to them determines how they tackle their daily stressors contributing to relationship resilience and satisfaction (Huston et al., 2001). Dyadic coping refers to the ways in which couples jointly cope with stress and adversity (Bodenmann, 1997). This research attempts to examine the Gender Role Beliefs, Organizational Role Stress, and Dyadic Coping Styles held by newly married dual-career couples as well as to examine the mediating effect of Dyadic Coping Style on Gender Role Belief and Organizational Role Stress.

### *Objectives*

1. To find whether the Dyadic Coping Style effectively mediates the relationship between Gender Role Beliefs and Organizational Role Stress among newly married dual-career couples.
2. To find whether there is any gender difference in Gender Role Belief among newly married dual-career couples.
3. To find whether there is any gender difference in Dyadic Coping Style among newly married dual-career couples.
4. To find whether there is any gender difference in Organizational Role Stress among newly married dual-career couples.

### *Hypotheses*

1. There will be no mediation effect on Dyadic Coping Style from Gender Role Beliefs to Organizational Role Stress.
2. There will be no significant gender difference in Gender Role Beliefs among newly married dual-career couples.
3. There will be no significant gender difference in Dyadic Coping Style among newly married dual-career couples.
4. There will be no significant gender difference in Organizational Role Stress among newly married dual-career couples.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### *Sample*

A total sample of 100 newly married dual-career individuals was used for the study. Purposive sampling was adopted.

**Inclusion criteria:** newly married ( $\leq 2$ yr), dual-career couples who are living together, couples who got married for the first time, early adults -21 to 35 years of age.

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**Exclusion criteria:** Non-natives, couples with children, a history of mental illness or other chronic diseases, being infertile or pregnant.

### Measures

1. **Personal data schedule**
2. **Participant information sheet along with Consent form.**
3. **Gender Role Belief Scale (GRBS)**- developed by Brown, M.J., & Gladstone, N. (2012) is a 10-item scale with responses ranging from 1(Strongly agree) to 7(Strongly disagree). GRBS has Internal Consistency reliability (Cronbach's alpha=0.81).
4. **Dyadic Coping Inventory (DCI)**- The Dyadic Coping Inventory (Bodenmann, 2008; Ledermann et al., 2010) is a 37-item instrument, with 10 subscales designed to measure perceived communication and dyadic coping that occurs in close relationships when one or both partners are stressed. Items are rated on a 5-point scale from 1 ("very rarely") to 5 ("very often"). DCI subscales have Internal Consistency reliability ( $\alpha$  range .71 and .92). DCI scale was restandardised among newly married dual-career individuals in Indian culture(N=100). The reliability was found to be high. ( $\alpha=0.925$ )
5. **Organizational Role Stress Scale (ORS)**- proposed by Pareek (1983) is a 5- point scale ranging from 0 to 4, demonstrating how true a particular statement is for the role. 10 role stressors are studied using this instrument.

### Data Collection Procedure

A database of recently married individuals across Kerala was collected from the Directorate of Panchayat. 100 newly married dual-career individuals (50 couples) who meet the Inclusion Criteria and Exclusion Criteria were individually visited and data was collected.

### Data Analysis

Mann-Whitney U Test, and Mediation Analysis were done.

## OBSERVATION AND RESULTS

Hypothesis 1 stated that there will be no mediation effect on Dyadic Coping Style from Gender Role Beliefs (GRB) to Organizational Role Stress (ORS). Results in Table 1 revealed that the total effect of GRB on ORS is significant (H1:  $\beta=0.1810$ ,  $t= 5.79$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). With the inclusion of the mediating variable Dyadic Coping Style (DCS), the direct effect of GRB on ORS was still found significant ( $R^2=0.711$ ,  $\beta=0.1287$ ,  $t=3.94$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). The indirect effect of GRB on ORS through DCS was found significant ( $R^2=0.289$ ,  $\beta=0.0522$ ,  $t=2.78$ ,  $p=0.005$ ). This shows that the relationship between GRB & ORS is partially mediated by DCS. Therefore, the hypothesis is rejected.

**Table 1 Mediation Analysis**

Total effect of GRB on ORS without DCS (C)			Direct effect of GRB on ORS in the presence of DCS (C')				Indirect effect of GRB on ORS through DCS (a*b)					
Coefficient	t	p value	Coefficient	R <sup>2</sup>	t	p value	Coefficient	SD	R <sup>2</sup>	t	p value	CI
0.180	5.79	<.001	0.1287	0.711	3.94	<.001	0.0522	0.0188	0.289	2.78	0.005	0.0219, 0.0946

Hypothesis 2 stated that there will be no significant gender difference in Gender Role Beliefs among newly married dual-career couples. Results in Table 2 indicate no significant

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difference (U= 1029, p=0.128) in Gender Role Beliefs among newly married dual-career males and females. Hence the hypothesis is accepted.

**Table 2 Gender Role Beliefs among newly married dual-career couples**

		N	Mean	Median	Std. Deviation	U	p value
Total	Males	50	62.8	62.0	16.1	1029	0.128
DCI	Females	50	57.1	60.0	14.9		

Hypothesis 3 stated that there will be no significant gender difference in Dyadic Coping Styles among newly married dual-career couples. Results in Table 3 indicate no significant difference (U= 1181, p=0.637) in Dyadic Coping Styles among newly married dual-career males and females. Hence the hypothesis is accepted.

**Table 3 Dyadic Coping Style among newly married dual-career couples**

		N	Mean	Median	Std. Deviation	U	p value
Total	Males	50	142	143	17.4	1181	0.637
DCI	Females	50	140	141	21.1		

Hypothesis 4 states that there will be no significant gender difference in Organizational Role Stress among newly married dual-career couples. Results in Table 4 indicate no significant difference (U= 1245, p=0.972) in Organizational Role Stress among newly married dual-career males and females. Hence the hypothesis is accepted.

**Table 4 Organizational Role Stress among newly married dual-career couples**

		N	Mean	Median	Std. Deviation	U	p value
Total	Males	50	71.9	68.0	43.5	1245	0.972
ORS	Females	50	69.2	80.0	35.9		

**DISCUSSION**

In the Mediation Analysis (Table 1) performed, dyadic coping style was found to act as a partial mediator between gender role belief and organizational role stress. Dyadic coping refers to the ways in which couples jointly cope with stress and adversity (Bodenmann,1997). This type of coping style may be the impact of more women entering into professional roles as superiors, sub-ordinates or teammates which allows the males to have social interactions with their female colleagues and vice versa at the workspace, thereby being able to understand the possible struggles each other face in the real-life scenario. These interactions help males to connect better with issues a working woman might face thereby bringing changes in gender-based schemas. For example, household chores, child and elder people care and that, these are not the females' sole responsibility; instead, equal participation of both men and women in these are required for the smooth functioning of their family life.

Results of Table 2 show that male and female professionals don't differ in terms of their gender role beliefs and also both genders have an inclination to feminist gender role beliefs which prioritizes social, political, and economic equality of both men and women. This is

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supported by the research findings of Sullivan et al (2018) and Lesthaeghe (2010), that when a critical mass of people adopt gender-egalitarian family arrangements, societies begin to settle into the new equilibrium of non-traditional family forms, including housework. As couples become more flexible in terms of their gender role schemas, they are ready to share their struggles be it financial or household, or occupational stresses which in one way or the other reduces the overall stress of the individual.

Based on the manual of Dyadic Coping Style, both males and females of the study have normal dyadic coping (Table 3) and they are into joint or common dyadic coping where both partners experience stress and symmetrically work together to handle these stressful situations. This is in line with the research findings of Bodenmann (2005) and Rusu et al (2020) which show that dealing together with stress and perceiving the partner as helpful were especially beneficial for relationship satisfaction, hence, dyadic coping moderates the negative association between stress and relationship quality.

Table 4 shows that both male and female professionals showed moderate levels of organizational role stress. Findings indicate that professionals might face challenges at work that are related to the tasks at hand but not related to the gender to which they belong. As both husband and wife engage in competitive professional fronts for approximately the same number of hours, they experience job-related stressors. Fallahchai (2022) reported that nurses who use dyadic coping strategies to deal with occupational stress report a higher level of adjustment and quality of work-life. This finding substantiates that dyadic coping strategies adopted by these couples might be why they can regulate professional stressors, maintaining them to a moderate extent.

The coping process of newly married professional couples can be congruent and consistent as men and women can equally seek and provide support to maintain their relationship as they share egalitarian gender roles because of their similar social environment (Bodenmann,2005). As professionals, they enjoy better financial capacity to meet various requirements to ease their daily life stressors like eating out together, grocery shopping, etc. All these would help the partners have closer interactions, thereby better coping with their own and their partner's stresses.

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### **Conflict of Interest**

The author declared no conflict of interest.

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