



## A socio-cultural study on dual earners couple in Odisha

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### Abstract

A dual earner couple is a cohabiting couple where both the partners are employed in jobs and contributing to the household incomes. Due to modernization, industrialisation, urbanisation and expansion of economic activities, an increasing number of dual working couples are entering into the job market. More particularly in the post globalisation period, this trend is increasing in Odisha too. To meet the challenges of price rise & for improved standards of living many couples prefer to work simultaneously. Although it has strengthened the financial position of the family nonetheless it has brought many challenges for the working couples in maintaining a balance between work and home. Further the rise in the number of working couples have a deep socio-cultural impact on the lives of Odia family system.

Under these circumstances, this paper examines how their work and earning statuses impacts their family lives, socio-cultural interaction and overall well being.

**Keywords:** Work, family, gender, culture, conflict, stress

### Introduction

Situated on the eastern coast of India, Odisha is a unique blend of Aryan and Dravidian Cultures. The stunning architecture, history, vibrant art, music and dance forms make Odisha ever sprightly state of India. Families in Odisha are deeply rooted in tradition and culture, characterised by strong family ties, hierarchy and a focus on collective well-being. Family structure is often lean towards patrilineal and Patri-local systems. Family system emphasises on interdependence and mutual help among the members. Within the Odia Patriarchal family system dominating and controlling roles are assigned to men whereas the supportive functions are prescribed for the women. By birth males are regarded as creators of resources, bread earners, whereas females are treated as family caretakers, the functions of child nurturing, carrying of the aged and running the households. Girls are socialised to be an obedient daughter, a faithful wife, a nurturing mother and a benevolent grandmother. In other words, in traditional Odia family's women's roles are confined to the private sphere and male persons are assigned the role relating to public sphere activities.

But these dynamics of family relations have undergone a significant transformation in Odisha in recent times, reflecting the intricate interplay between tradition, modernity, socio-economic factors and cultural shifts. Due to modernisation, urbanisation, spread of education, advancement of technology etc, a large number of dual earning couples are entering into the workforce. In the post globalisation period, this trend is increasing in Odisha also. With the growing level of inflation and for better lifestyles, young couples in recent times prefer to work simultaneously. Working outside in paid jobs has strengthened the financial position of the family, nonetheless it has brought new problems for the couples and for their families. Performing their marital role and workforce role creates conflict & tension among the couples. Further increasing in the number of such earning couples promotes new culture in the Odia families which has a deep socio-cultural impact on the Odia family system.

This paper tries to analyse the issues and problems of dual earning Odia couples from the socio-cultural milieu. The basic objectives of this paper are

- To understand the issues & challenges faced by double earner couples.
- To explain the socio-cultural shifts due to the rise of dual working couples.
- To suggest remedial measures to overcome the problems faced by double earner couples.

### Methodology & Data Collection

This is an empirical study that seeks to identify the issues and challenges faced by dual earner couples. The present study was conducted within the Bhubaneswar municipal area. Primary data was collected from 75 working couples using a random sampling method. For the purpose, self-administered closed ended questionnaires were administered to the dual working couples who gave their opinion on different aspects. Data also collected through personal observation, informal discussion with the working couples regarding the socio-cultural changes and gender roles.

All the respondents were married, residing in the Bhubaneswar smart city areas along with their spouses. Among the 75 respondents, 35 (46.66%) were male and 40 (53.33%) were female. Further 32(42.66%) belonged to the teaching community, 15 (20.00%) belonged to Odisha Administrative Service Cadre, 04(5.33%) were Doctors, 11(14.66%) were IT professionals and the rest 13(17.33%) belonged to Government Assistant grade employees. Majority 47 (65.33%) were living in the nuclear families and 62 respondents 82.66%) having one child.

### Analysis on Experience of Dual earning Couples

Increasing presence of dual earner couples has become a reality in Odisha. This new trend creates both opportunities and challenges for working couples. In the case of dual earner couples, both expectations and stakes are high. Negotiating with workplace tasks along with household duties is a reality, a tough task for the couples, especially for a woman employee. Of course, work and family roles are

viewed differently in different cultures. In this regard it is worth examining the most common areas of challenges and opportunities and experiences of dual earning couples in Odisha. For this purpose, a specially designed structured questionnaire was prepared and presented before the respondents to know their experiences with regard to the areas like managing professional and household work, Childcare, relationship with family members and relatives, gender roles etc.

The opinion of the respondents were analysed and the study found both positive and negative lifestyle experiences of the working couples.

### Negative Experiences

When couples go out to work, they experience many negative impacts on their lifestyles. Of course, the impact differs from couple to couple depending upon the environment and situation. From our study, it is revealed that time management is the biggest challenge for the double earning couples. Combining paid employment with majority unpaid domestic work, care responsibilities create a situation of double burden for the women employee. This creates a significant disparity in workload compared to male employees impacting women's time, health and well beings. (Bartberg, Dahl and Risa :2002) <sup>[3]</sup>. Double burden reduced women employees' leisure time, and free hours compared to men as they spent more time on performing domestic work, child care (Hindu:2023) <sup>[7]</sup>. Performing multiple roles brings psychological, Physical and relational stress to a woman employee.

This signifies that going out into the workplace does not replace the conventional role that Odisha families expect from the women employees. They still expect that their daughter in laws work but after performing the domestic work at home. Men's sharing of household work is not appreciated by family members. In traditional Odia families working women still looked as a mother and daughter in laws first then to her professional role. Our data revealed that many families do not accept the new roles of working women, hence they ended up feeling misunderstood and distressed.

In other cases, some families desire that their daughter in laws can work, but not at the cost of household and family responsibilities. It brings about an imbalance in the life of a women employee (Begum, Muqsthan and Wani, 2017) <sup>[2]</sup>. Double burden creates a stressful life for the women employees. Of course, the levels of burden are different. Empirical data reveals that the main reasons for the stress are due to child care, preparation of home work of the school going children, making children ready for the school and elderly care. Furthermore, misunderstanding with the office head and unfavourable office environment are the other reasons for stressful life (Panda, 2011) <sup>[10]</sup>.

Many times, stress from the workplace spills into the home. A stressful or anxiety filled work affects the home environment, negatively affects the children. Children are confused and frustrated. Parents' stress is not appreciated by kids. Work related stress also pollutes the home peace, creating an environment of misunderstanding with the spouse. This creates strained relationships and emotional instability. Many times, they ended up with divorce as they failed to establish a proper balance between career and home responsibilities.

### Positive Experiences

Our study has found certain positive experiences of dual earning couples. Despite many challenges, dual earning couples enjoy their chosen lifestyles. Almost all the respondents are of the opinion that they are not only experiencing financial benefits but also personal benefits. Both husbands and wives in dual earning families are experiencing higher levels of self esteem and social status because of their high lifestyles. Women employees feel happy being enjoying more freedom, socially and economically. Work outside the home provided women with a sense of accomplishment and competence. Women employees report that working outside promotes gender equality, bring more happiness in relationships. A job provides them a sense of security, boosts their morale, and confidence to achieve their goals in life.

On the other hand, couples expressed their view that having extra income helps the parents to meet the expenditure of the kids in a better way. Couple can afford better school facility, spend more money to build the career of their kids. Further, when both the parents work, respondents viewed that children develop positive perception about their future careers. Such earning couples reveal that their kids appreciate work culture. As working couples spent less time on their children, their kids become self reliant and grow up to be a responsible man.

### Socio-Cultural Changes

Dual earning couples, which was a rare concept in urban areas during the time of independence, have completely changed in recent times. Census report (2011) <sup>[4]</sup> reveals that there is increasing participation of Odia women in the workforce from 26.66% to 27.16% (Census Report, 2011) <sup>[4]</sup>. With the rise of dual earner couples, the traditional socio-cultural values have changed. In recent times young people prefer to choose a working partner. The parents of either side are also agreeable on this issue. There was a time in 1960s and 70s, when Odia conservative families did not accept this culture of dual earner couples. Traditionally, Odia families had a choice for wives / daughter in laws as ideal house makers even if the girls/brides had a higher education background. Even the relatives did not appreciate the culture of dual earning couples.

Acceptance of dual earning couples within Odia families have some deep impacts on the socio-cultural side. Due to the rise of dual working couples, traditional practices prevalent in odia society like dowry, caste system, untouchability etc. are on decline. Caste system is no longer posing a great barrier in marriage selection. In the present technological driven society, casteless marriage is promoted. Caste system to a greater extent has declined in the face of family economics of dual earning couples. Further the rise of dual working couples has its impact on the family system. Traditional Odia families typically exhibit strong traditional values including focus on joint family systems. But now both the partners are employed and staying away from their traditional joint families. Hence many dual earner couples are separating themselves from their ancestral families, who are staying in rural areas. As a result, the traditional joint family system is breaking down. The Arranged marriage system is also on the verge of decline. Earlier arrange system was common practice. Now, young people choose their mates based on personal preferences. Factors like career aspiration and financial

stability are causing a shift away from the traditional practices (Naik & Avasthi: 2025) <sup>[8]</sup>.

The rise of dual working couples is also responsible for bringing out alteration in domestic roles and responsibilities. Traditional, gender roles are often assigned to women to perform household duties, child and elderly care. But now both the couples are engaged in professional work, they are unable to perform household activities. Hence, demand for maid / domestic servants has been increasing in the state (Das :1998) <sup>[5]</sup>. Time management is a major issue for working couples. These couples get no time / less time to observe pujas, religious festivals. Visiting temples and religious places, observing traditional Odia festivals also get less focussed. On the other hand, outing activities, eating out, picnic, party activity, celebrations etc. which were not the part of Odia culture have significantly increased in recent times.

### Conclusion

The present study seeks to examine (i) the issues and challenges faced by the dual earner couples (ii) the socio-cultural shifts that have taken place due to the increasing number of dual earner couple families in Odisha. Our study has found that the interface between career and home has given rise to new challenges and opportunities as it has both positive and negative impacts on the lifestyles of dual earners. Further, this emerging new working-class culture has brought radical changes in the socio-cultural values in Odia society. There is alternation in the family structure, gender roles, value and belief system, food habits, rituals, marriage system etc. Career aspiration and financial stability are causing a lot of changes in traditional practices in the Odia family system.

### Recommendations

Maintaining a balance between work and family life is the real challenge for the dual earners couple. Further coping with the radical alteration in socio-cultural values, gender roles are other challenges for them. These challenges require effective strategies for managing time, stress and potential conflicts along with making an adjustment with changing socio-cultural values. For this purpose, the present study recommends the following measures to overcome the problem.

1. There is a need for mutual understanding between the couples to share their responsibility, including domestic chores and child care to balance work and personal life.
2. Cooperation and supportive attitude of the husband is essential to manage the time of stress effectively.
3. There is a need for open communication with each other about the needs and expectations of the working earners couples.
4. Parents of the job holder's family have to play a responsible role in making adjustments to make the delicate home unit successful.
5. Dual earner couples in Odisha need to strengthen their support system, such as family, friends, relatives who can help them to manage work and home responsibility smoothly.
6. As more and more working couples will enter into the workforce incoming days, there is a need for greater focus as work-life balance, couples need to be adoptive, communicative effectively to prioritise their relationship.

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