

Family Roles and Dual Career Marriages in Ghana: Benefits and Challenges to Emerging Families in Ghana

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Abstract

In most of the newly married families in Ghana today, both spouses are employed outside the home. Employment has a profound effect on the family life as well as on personal satisfaction. In turn, family life can influence the work environment and vice versa. The study examines the relationship between work and family, its effect on marriages and the entire family life. The study reviewed existing literature on Family Roles and Dual Career, Dual-earner Marriages.

Keywords: Marriage, Dual Career, Work, Environment, Relationship, Employment, Satisfaction, Family Role and Dual-earner Marriages.

1. 0. Introduction

Traditionally in Ghana, men have had the responsibility for supporting their families economically (financially) while their women counterpart have had the responsibility for nurturing the family (day to day care such as cooking). These traditional roles of both men and women placed on men kind of pressure to live up to expectation. On the side of the men, especially those who held traditional gender values did define success in terms of their work and that is where they invested most of their time and energy sometimes to the detriment of their families with the assumption that their wife's will take care of their homes. The women on the other hand remained at home investing all their time and energies at domestic chores sometimes at the detriment of the families' economic growth trusting that their husbands will provide economically. It can however not be said today that those traditional roles is/are static today as it used to be because of contemporary issues to be discussed through this study.

1.1. The Provider Role

It is undeniable fact that, there have been many changes over the years. Most men however still consider one of their primary roles to be a provider for the family. The male who successfully fulfils this role is more likely to be happy with himself and to feel adequate as a husband and father than is a male who feels he is not capable or not a good provider. Draughn (1984) found that men judge their own job competences and satisfaction according to four criteria: Personal achievement, Income achievement, Task and work achievement and Perception of Spouse and friends.

Personal Achievement: the extent to which men feel important, capable and adequately rewarded; have received pay rises; have promotion opportunities and a sense of achievement; and find their jobs interesting. Women look at their ability to take charge of their homes in respect to the training of their children in terms of their observance of societal norms and rules.

Income achievement: the extent to which men feel their level of income is satisfactory, compares favourably with others', reflects men' personal worth, includes cost-of-living raises and enables them to save money. Women adequacy was targeted at how they are able to manage the financial as well as economic resources of the home.

Task and work environment: the extent to which men are challenged, but not burdened, by job difficulty and job pressure; and the extent to which men are satisfied by the physical surroundings and facilities in which they work, the other people on the job, and the amount of time the work requires. On the side of the women, they look at how they are able to handle the multi-task demanded from them from their families.

Perception of spouse and friends: the extent to which their spouse make a favourable assessment of their success, salary, and workplace; the extent to which men friends assess their accomplishment favourably; and the impact of home problems on the job and of job problems on the marriage. On the side of the women the perception of their spouse concerning how neat their houses are and how organised they have kept their homes.

Feelings of inadequacy in fulfilment of the provider role are likely to be disastrous for both man, woman and their family. It is difficult for men and women to feel good about them at their role performance if he or she wants to but can't supply and also serve the bare necessities of their family life. If the family housing is dilapidated apartment, if their house is unkempt, if the children goes to school not properly dressed but in shabby cloths, if the family can't afford a dependable means of transport, birthday present, both men and women may feel they have failed in their principal area in which others expect them to be competent: that of provider. Women have not been socialised over the years in Ghana to a great extent to provide financially for their family.

Their inadequacy therefore manifest when their housed looks untidy, family goes angry, do not preserve the basic hygienic rules and many known domestic task. In their study of relationship between marital adjustment and work identity of meddle level working class men, Gaesser and Whitebourne (1985) found that satisfaction with the extrinsic work factors (wages, security, work setting and hours, and company policies) is the most important consideration related to marital adjustment. Workers who are satisfied with their job have more energy to devote to their marital relationship.

1.2. Work, Stress, and the Family in Ghana

In Ghana as it happens all over the world, job stress affects the parents' marriage and relationship with their children (Kinnunen, Gerris, and Vermulst, 1996). There are jobs that are particularly stressful for the family includes; those that are so difficult to the extent that, one is always under constant pressure at work to meet estimated target and hard to live with at home. Stressful jobs also includes those that requires periods of separation and are so time consuming that one can't spend any quality time with family.

1.3. Work, Stress, effect on the Family in Ghana

When people experiences stress on the job, their partner is also likely to experience psychological distress (Rook, Dooley and Catalano 1991). In fact, the partner may experience as much over the other person's job as if it were her or his own job. Interestingly, women in untroubled marriages feel the greatest concern and suffer more from their spouse's job misfortune than those who marriages can be described as troubling or in marriages in which the spouses are not so close. Men with high dual commitment to jobs and marriage in Ghana and elsewhere and who perceive their spouses as very supportive of their work and parenting activities report less role strain than men with a less supportive spouse (O' Neil and Greenberger, 1994)

The spouse who is a workaholic and devote between 80-90 hours a week to a job has no time or energy left for him or her for the family. The partners seldom go out together or spend time alone; they seldom communicate and they hardly make love. The workaholic hardly knows the children since he or she is rarely home during their working hours. The more ambitious the person is and the harder he or she works, the less likely he or she is to take the time to develop close family relationship.

In some cases the compulsion to work is so hard and long comes from within the person. True workaholics are compelled to succeed, often for personal ego fulfilment, to bolster their self- image as they try to become a 'somebody'.

Some spouses work to the extent that, they become absorbed with details and are unable to delegate responsibility. When they fail to reach unrealistic goals or estimated targets, they suffer anxiety, guilt, anger and depression, which they attempt to overcome by further attempt at control. In Ghana, some of those spouses becomes irritable and abusive towards their spouses, children and fellow employees.

Leisure time becomes a burden, an empty period during which nothing is accomplished. When parent' in Ghana like all parents over the world, show signs of anxiety and depression if they are deprived of something to do for even a few hours. This work addiction may contribute to high blood pressure or heart disease which tends to become a burden for the family

There is no doubt that, there are various ways of finding fulfilment in life other than through work. Meaningful family relationship can meet real needs, too. People need to sort out their priorities and ask themselves if their job is worth sacrificing their family for.

Marriages and family relationships like anything else worthwhile require time and attention to maintain in other cases. The pressure to work in Ghana now for long hours comes from the employers who display a callous disregard for employees' mental health and personal life. These people have to satisfy their boss or lose their jobs.

One barrier to family closeness in Ghana is job schedules that make it difficult for family members to be able to be together. Some jobs require rotating shifts (White and Keith, 1990). If the spouses work on different shifts they rarely have any time to be together. Working the same shift can be important in maintaining a relationship. One study found that divorce is common among couples in which one spouse works at night (Presser 2000). Fathers who work nights are six times more likely to divorce than fathers who work during the day. Mothers who work at nights triple their odds of divorce. Other jobs such as that of 'policeman', is very stressful in and of them and requires a lot of work on weekend and holidays. Others such as the armed services and merchant called 'seamen in Ghana' require long periods of separation. Conflict between family and job demands becomes a source of individual family stress.

1.4. The parent's Child-Care Roles

The decision that parents make about work and family, especially about how they care for their children, help shape their children's intellectual development, social behaviour and personalities. In everything they do, from the jobs they do choose to the way they allocate household chores, parents provide powerful models of male and

female behaviour for their children. Parent inadvertently or intentionally, prepare their children for similar future roles in the workplace and the family.

Today, unlike decades or more ago, most fathers are expected to share the in the responsibility of child care, especially in dual-earner families. Mothers benefit from fathers who participate in raising children. Fathers who assume responsibility for child care ease the burden of employed spouses and mothers and reduces the maternal stress associated with work overload, anxiety and a shortage of time for rest and leisure. It should however be noted here that as children grow older, the role of fathers as caregivers shrinks. Fathers who are actively involved in caring for their children enjoy the positive effect of multiple roles, which include enhanced marital relationship and closer father-child bonds. Men-like-women-who combine different life roles such as parent, worker, and spouse may be better off emotionally than men with fewer life roles.

1.5. Employed Women and the Family

In recent times, the number of employed women both single and married has seen a tremendous growth in numbers. Since then significant number of women reports that their experiences of mothering is altered significantly when they work outside home, and they often must address new variations of problems concerning time pressure and conflicting role demands. Mothers who are employed not only have less time to spend with their children and families but also spend fewer hours on household chore such as meal preparation and cleaning. Like women who remain at home, however employed mothers perform most of the household chores and care activities. Women employed fulltime may reduce the amount of time they spend on household tasks, but not the range of their responsibilities. This led some researchers to refer to employed mothers as ‘supermoms’-mothers who heavily involved with family responsibilities while also meeting the demands of paid employment (DeMeis and Perkins, 1996). Can we therefore say that impact of paid employment on women live is adequate? Are employed wives more fulfilled, more satisfied with life, and just plain happier than housewives? Work has been described as an alienating force in the lives of men, but it is somehow transformed into a liberating force in the lives of women. This proposition assumes that any sort of paid employment is preferable to full-time home making. The research on life satisfaction of mothers who work outside the home versus those who do not show slightly greater satisfaction among those working outside the home, but the results depend on a number of variables (Benin and Nienstedt 1985; Freudiger, 1983; Tiedje et al., 1990).

1.6. Dual Career Families

There are two basic types of two-income families: dual career and dual earner. The dual-earner family is the one in which both spouses are involved in the paid labour force (Rachlin, 1987). Ordinarily, merely having a job does not involve as extensive a commitment as much as continuity of employment, or as much responsibility as the pursuit of a career. The dual career family also called dual professional family (Hiller and Dyehouse, 1987), is a specific subtype of the broader category of dual earner families (Rachlin, 1987). The dual-career family has two career-committed individuals, both of whom are trying to fulfil professional family roles. But the the pursuit of a career requires a high degree of commitment and continuous development. Individuals pursue careers by undergoing extensive education and preparation and then moving upwards from one job level to another.

1.7. Benefit of Dual-Career Marriages

There are some real satisfaction and benefits in a dual-career marriage. The financial rewards in dual-career marriages are considerable, especially if both spouses are earning salaries as professional’s people (Hanson and Ooms, 1991). The standard of living is relatively high, with the couple able to afford costly leisure activities and go on expensive vacation. It is said that one major reason why any highly qualified woman wants a career in addition to a family is the need for creativity, self-expression, achievement, and recognition. A woman who is trained for a profession wants the satisfaction of using that training. Many such women are dissatisfied with confining their energies to their spouse and children, with simply being “kwame’s wife” or “Yaw’s mother” and they find a large part of their identity in their career life. There are also indirect benefit to the spouse and the family. A woman with a rewarding, satisfying career will be a happier mate and mother.

The most successful dual-career marriages are those in which the spouses treat each other as equal partners. As a result, they share not only in earning the income but also in caring for children and in performing household tasks. Women are far less satisfied and under more strain in marriages in which the responsibility for homemaking tasks rest primarily on their shoulders.

1.8. Challenges of Dual Career Couples (Family)

According to Adam 2012, dual career marriages in Ghana if not well worked at will pose a great challenge to the family system in Ghana. There are a number of challenges that if faces among them is Role strain. The strain of dual-career marriages is considerable (Galambos and Silbereisen, 1989). One source of strain is overwork. The demand of marriages, children, career, and the home are great and often leave couples tense and exhausted.

Factors related to role strain include flexibility of work schedules, the age of the youngest child and the number of children. Challenge in respect to once inability to do frequent travel as their career may demand, child care difficulty as one may be tired upon close of work and weaken love relationship may arise.

Conclusion

Despite the good description and the obvious challenges of Dual-Career relationship and marriage it is observed that if a great effort is applied and enough commitment is shown, it will be worthy relationship to be happy off. The following should be taken into account if one wants to have a quality dual-career marriage and relation in Ghana and elsewhere.

- a. Positive regard for one's spouse.
- b. Emotional gratification (Expression of affection, sexual satisfaction, encouragement of each other's personal growth from the spouse, and congruence between ideal and actual spouse.
- c. Effective communication
- d. Role fit (absence of role conflict and presence of role complementary and role sharing)
- e. Acceptable amount of interaction (sharing activities and companionship)

The researcher emphasis that: marital quality of dual-career couples depends on the extent to which the spouses find that these requirement are met in their life-style and their relationship. One study of Ghanaian dual-career couples reveals as with Black dual-career relationship in US that marital happiness contributes significantly to overall happiness and psychological well-being (Thomas, 1090). Another study also found that both spouse' perception of marital quality are affected by marital characteristics rather than by employment characteristics. Overall, work related factors seem to have only a slight effect on marital quality as perceived by either spouse (Blair, 1993).

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