

# Dual-Career Couples or Dual-Career Women? Quality of Life in Terms of the Dual-Career Couples

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**Abstract:** Women today want to work in the business world, and they prefer to be with their partners in social and business environments rather than be supporters. Dual-career couples are defined apart from traditional couple roles. Both members of the couple follow their own professional goals and are rewarded for them. This study focuses on the concept of dual-career couples. The concept's equal gender perspective is questioned in general. Even though the concept of dual-career couples is still popular, does experience support collaborative family structures? This question serves as the study's starting point. In the study, in which purposive sampling was used, 196 dual-career couples who work at a public university in Turkey were interviewed. A holistic method was used to assess the responses to multiple-choice, open-ended, and Likert-type questions. According to the results, when the attitudes of women in dual-career couples are taken into account, the concept of dual-career women is seen as a much fairer approach.

**Keywords:** dual-career couples, quality of life, women, gender, academic

## INTRODUCTION

The traditional patriarchal society dictates that the man's primary responsibility is to protect his home and family and to produce sufficient income to support the family's needs, while the woman's primary responsibility is to handle the housework and raise the children (Canetto 1996; Jackson & Scharman 2002). Events such as the first industrial revolution and the first world war, whose consequences were experienced all around the world, somewhat altered this distribution of responsibilities (Berg 1993; Braybon 2012;

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Holahan & Gilbert 1979; Oppenheimer 1977; Tilly 1994). Globalization, breakthroughs in information and communication technology, and transformations and revolutions in paradigms have resulted in a significant differentiation in the roles of women in social life over the previous quarter-century. The number of dual-career couples has increased as a result of this social transformation (Greenhaus & Powell 2012; Neault & Pickerell 2005).

Women's importance and influence in the professional business world are growing by the day (Mavin 2001; Peris-Ortiz et al. 2012). Women nowadays strive to have a profession in the business world instead of simply earning money. Rather than being a supporter, women prefer to be with their partners in social and work environments (Hampton et al. 2015). Men who spend more time at home in their daily lives and take more responsibility in childcare and cooking cause the roles in work and family life to become even more complex in structure (Parker & Arthur 2004). Changing roles and hierarchies in work and family life support a more collaborative family structure (Allen et al. 2000; Bhowon 2013; Biernat & Wortman 1991). As a result, the topic of dual-career couples represents a way of life that is more equitable in terms of responsibilities, regardless of the conventional roles of women in the household (William et al. 2015). Do practical experiences promote collaborative family structures, even though such family forms remain popular in terms of the priorities? This is a long-standing research question (Holahan & Gilbert 1979; Marshack 1994). One of the crucial issues in the lives of dual-career couples is the reality of how their careers are shaped by the other individual in the couple. In terms of family priorities, how are dual-career couples' perspectives on the other individual's professional advancement evaluated? Is there a difference between male and female points of view? Answering these questions objectively will allow us to determine the real meaning of the term "dual-career couples".

This study, which was conducted on dual-career couples working at a public university in Turkey, examined their quality of life and family satisfaction. The purpose of this study is to reveal the couples' individual perspectives on issues that impact the quality of life and family satisfaction of dual-career couples, as well as to identify the concerns that negatively affect these themes according to the participants. Apart from these primary objectives, the data collected will allow us to evaluate the degree to which both men and women within couples accept the concept of dual-career couples. The main

reason why the study was focused on university employees is that academia has the greatest number of women represented in the field compared to all other career fields in Turkey. In Turkey, female academics account for 45% of all academics, which is higher than the average for the EU and the USA (YÖK 2021). Women's participation in academia depends on the country and across time, which is regarded as evidence of the impact of cultural variables (Canetto et al. 2017). However, it is estimated that double-career couples in universities have a higher level of awareness and actual life experience about the concept of "dual-career couples" than those in other professions.

### QUALITY OF LIFE IN DUAL-CAREER COUPLES

Family life is an institution that all societies hold in high regard to safeguard their cultural assets (Elliot 1995), as well as a vital social unit that governments support to safeguard social welfare and peace (Rusli 2020). Family and business conflicts and impact variables can negatively affect each other. In terms of traditional attitude, there is a strong relationship between quality of life and demographic factors such as gender, age, education level, income level, and marital status (Neto et al. 2018). According to diffusion theory, the psychological implications of one aspect of work and family life have an impact on the other. Individual experiences in various areas of life interact with one another, and the type of effect felt in one area affects the other in the same way (Edwards & Rothbard 2000; Judge & Watanabe 1994; Kirkcaldy & Cooper 1993). All of these areas of interaction demonstrate that the work-family balance is a key to dual-career spouses' quality of life.

The universal issues that are highlighted socially and individually have included the level of quality of life. In recent years, it has been clear that the theme of quality of life has been mostly discussed concerning health difficulties, with studies focusing on the consequences of both psychological (Loayza & Valenzuela 2021; Medvedev & Landhuis 2018; Tavakoly Sany et al. 2021; Valikhani et al. 2020) and physical (Adams & Wrightson 2018; Donkor 2018; Haegele & Zhu 2021; Mason et al. 2018; Mokhatri-Hesari & Montazeri 2020; Nwosu et al. 2021; Silveira et al. 2021; Tzeravini et al. 2018) health problems on quality of life.

Quality of life is defined by the World Health Organization (1998) as "individuals' perceptions of their position in life in the context of the culture and value systems in which they live and concerning their

goals, expectations, standards and concerns”. This definition refers to a personal aspect of life quality. In particular, individual expectations, norms, and concerns have the potential to change (Felce & Perry 1995). Nevertheless, it should be noted that a collective experience that affects the impression of the quality of life will affect the individual’s perception (Rice et al. 1986). Therefore, researchers have observed that the quality of life has a multidimensional structure related to different variables in terms of subjective and objective criteria (Wilson 2016). As a result, quality of life expresses life pleasure based on an individual’s cognitive qualities and contextual factors. It is inarguable that the factors and variables related to work and family life are the most influential factors on this level of pleasure.

Work and family balance indicates how well working individuals can adapt to their roles in both family and business life (Grzywacz & Carlson 2007). Work and family life balance can be defined as having enough time for both family and work responsibilities, participating in and achieving satisfaction in family and work life with less role conflict as much as possible (Greenhaus et al. 2003). Maintaining a work–family balance in the workplace has a good impact on an individual’s mental health, and this process promotes the individual’s contribution and productivity to society (Neto et al. 2018).

#### THE IRONY OF DUAL-CAREER COUPLES

The concept of dual-career couples has emerged in social life as a result of women becoming more active in the business world and trying to advance in their careers. Dual-career couples are defined apart from the traditional couple roles, as both members of the couple follow their own professional goals and are rewarded for them (Griffin 1978; Pierce & Delahaye 1996; Rapoport & Rapoport 1977). In dual-career couples, partners’ fluctuating responsibilities and the situations that these roles cause are felt more acutely and are perceived as a source of business and social problems. The concentration of each member of the couple on their work does have a negative impact on the other partner’s time management and quality of life (Allen et al. 2000; Boles et al. 1997; Frone et al. 1997; Kinnunen & Mauno 1998).

Regardless of their social level, women employees must exert greater effort than men to coordinate their personal and professional lives (Bakıcı & Aydın 2020; Metz-Goeckel 2018). In order to maintain a work–family balance, academics, particularly female academicians, prefer partners from professions close to their own. It is expected that

this preference will facilitate the work of women in their career journey (Fox et al. 2011; Metz-Goeckel 2018). Despite the fact that this result is theoretically expected, women are found to make greater sacrifices and face more difficulties and challenges (Fox et al. 2011; Mason & Goulden 2008; Raddon 2002). At the same time, dual-career couples exhibit a different approach than other families in matters such as family life and having children (Boiarintseva et al. 2021; Mason & Goulden 2008). In contrast, except for dual-career couples, the increase in the number of children in families with working parents causes the working hours of women to decrease (Jacops & Gersen 2001).

In the business life of dual-career couples, it has been shown that men advance in their careers faster than women, and women lag. This situation brings to the agenda the view that one of the partners' careers may take priority over the other in dual-career couples. Because of women's traditional roles, particularly motherhood (Aarseth 2021; Tsouroufli 2020), it may be claimed that the concept of dual-career couples loses its significance when this primacy is given to males.

## METHODOLOGY

This study is based on the data of dual-career couples, among which one partner is an academician. After obtaining permission from the university management, we focused on determining dual-career couples in the units. According to the principles of information confidentiality, a focus group list was created with the approval of the unit managers and participants. Only the academic members of dual-career couples were included in the study. At the university where the study was carried out, 196 dual-career couples were detected among 668 academics. The full count sampling method was used to reach all of these individuals and obtain more detailed information.

The data were obtained using structured, semi-structured, and open-ended survey questions. The survey questions were adapted from three studies which are considered to be culturally appropriate: Aytaç (2001), Yılmaz (2009), and Öztürk (2016). A survey with four sections and 36 questions was designed to accommodate the study's aims. In this context, demographic questions were included in the first part; multiple-choice questions about the couple's relationship, children, and family were included in the second part; open-ended questions about the positive and negative aspects of dual-career couples were included in the third part; and 19 Likert-type attitude statements about the

quality of life of dual-career spouses were included in the last part. These 19 statements expressed concern about academics' perceptions of work–family balance and quality of life. The questionnaire was designed to measure the quality of family relationships in the career processes of dual-career couples. Analysing the averages for this question group and comparing them according to the gender variable has a significant potential for providing realistic findings in determining male and female participants' general tendencies.

Qualitative methods can be more useful for identifying and characterising open-ended questions. In the third part, content analysis will be used. Statistical analysis was performed using SPSS (22.0) software for the analysis of Likert-type attitude questions. The responses to all of these questions will be analysed holistically, allowing for more accurate and valid inferences about the challenges and quality of life of dual-career couples. This study is based on the assumption that if couples with dual careers leave traditional roles and share tasks, their quality of work and life will increase.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Women comprised 43% (84 people) of the academics who took part, while men comprised 57% (112 people). In terms of the study's objectives, it can be noted that a proper balance of male and female participants has been attained. Of the academicians in the study, 33.67% were between the ages of 31 and 35, 28.06% were between the ages of 36 and 40, 20.41% were between the ages of 26 and 30, 11.22% were between the ages of 41 and 45, and 1.53% were between the ages of 46 and 50. The majority of the participants (93.4%) were seen to be between the ages of 26 and 45.

Of the participants, 75.5% reported having children. There was a wide range of responses to the question "Who is in command of childcare when both parents are at work?" In general, dual-career couples reported receiving childcare help from their family groups and circle.

Of the participants, 67% (131 persons) believed that marriage has no negative impact on their professional lives. Those who expressed concerns about the negative effects of marriage on professional life cited a variety of factors. In this group, 37 people (19%) believed that family and child-related issues prevented them from focusing on business, 14 people (7%) believed that academic development and opportunities were hindered, 7 people (3.5%) believed that their

development was stymied, and 7 people (3.5%) believed that it causes problems other than those mentioned in the study.

The primary reason for dual-career couples' profession choice varied greatly by gender. Female academicians were found to be more career-dependent than male academicians, and women's perceptions of success and satisfaction were more acknowledged. On the answer "A brighter future for the family", a second difference in terms of gender can be noted. This significant disparity has traditionally been attributed to family requirements and the belief that men are in charge of and responsible for the future.

When dual-career couples' opportunity to work at home is analysed, it is clear that the situation is biased against women. Men who participated in the research reported finding the opportunity to work at home more than women. This difference is assumed to be attributable to the fact that, despite their advancement and education levels, women are still viewed as the primary caregivers for concerns such as housekeeping and child care. Unfortunately, even the answers to this question are enough to show that women in dual-career couples have to put in more effort in the business world, as shown in previous studies (Bakıcı & Aydın 2020; Metz-Goeckel 2018).

Reliability was calculated using Cronbach's alpha. With regard to 19 Likert-type attitude questions about the quality of life, the Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient was 0.714, indicating that reliability is generally provided. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests were used to see whether the Likert-type questions and expressions conformed to a normal distribution. Many of the distributions were normal, so parametric signed-rank tests were run. The normality analysis table shows that all expressions related to concerns influencing the quality of life of couples with dual careers satisfied the parametric test criteria ( $p > 0.05$ ) with values of  $p = 0.20 > 0.05$  and  $p = 0.395 > 0.05$ .

Table 1. Attitude averages of the participants

Average of Statements / Variables	(1) Gender Independent t-test Sig. (2-tailed)	(2) Age ANOVA F-test Sig. (2-tailed)
Attitude statements (n=19) about the quality of life	0,003<0,05 H1 Accept, There is a significant difference	0,317>0,05 H1 Reject, No Difference

When the averages of opinions on issues affecting the quality of life of couples with dual occupations are analysed by gender, remarkable results emerge. Female academicians selected the “My professional career takes priority” statement at a higher rate than male academicians. When comparing the average positive responses to the statement “Generally I feel cheerful and pleasant at home,” women (Avg. 4.23) responded at a higher rate than men (Avg. 3.92). An independent t-test was conducted to test whether any differences existed between genders. There was a significant gender difference ( $p < 0.05$ ) in the views of dual-career couples regarding the statements about the issues affecting their quality of life. Male participants showed a higher level of agreement with statements about issues that affect their quality of life than did female participants. When the general scores are examined, male academics believe that balance in family–work life has a greater impact on quality of life. Female academics were shown to have a greater involvement rate in family-oriented statements and a family-oriented approach to quality of life. An ANOVA F-test was performed to determine whether there was a difference between age groups. In regards to statements about concerns influencing their quality of life, there was no significant age group difference ( $p > 0.05$ ) in the views of dual-career couples. The fact that the participants’ perceptions about quality of life were unaffected by their age is a noteworthy finding.

Table 2. “What are the advantages of being a dual-career couple?”

Groups of the themes	Male (112)		Female (84)	
	n	%	n	%
1 Advantages in terms of economic	95	85%	58	69%
2 Networking and socialization	72	64%	63	75%
3 Personal development	55	49%	69	82%
4 Self-confidence	60	53,5%	68	81%

When the answers to the “What are the advantages of being a dual-career couple?” question were analysed, 153 out of 196 participants emphasised economic advantages. Male participants expressed economic factors at a higher rate than did female academics. The themes of personal development, self-confidence, networking, and sociability were given more weight by female participants. Male participants evaluated the situation economically, whereas female



participants reported having higher intellectual expectations than their male colleagues.

Table 3. "What are the disadvantages of being a dual-career couple?"

Groups of the themes	Male (112)		Female (84)	
	n	%	n	%
1 Bringing up baby and child	72	64%	74	88%
2 Lack of quality time spent with family	65	58%	69	82%
3 Disruption of household and family duties	50	44%	64	76%
4 Lack of spent time together with couple	63	56%	72	85%

The most frequently mentioned issue among the disadvantages of being a dual-career couple was related to bringing up children. The answers to open-ended questions showed that it is clear that female academicians were more worried about child care. Women exhibited a very sensitive attitude, especially about family unity and commitment. Female participants reported experiencing the disadvantages of being a dual-career couple more deeply and concretely. The fact that male participants complained about concerns under the heading of disruption of home and family duties at a significantly lower level should be considered as a striking finding.

Table 4. "Which activities do you enjoy doing with your family?"

Groups of the themes	Male (112)		Female (84)	
	n	%	n	%
1 Journey	83	74%	73	87%
2 Having a picnic	82	73%	65	77%
3 Playing games (Computer, Brain Games, Card Games)	90	80%	38	45%
4 Chatting	46	41%	67	80%
5 Watching movies at home	62	55%	44	52%
6 Go to the cinema	56	50%	48	57%
7 Hiking	76	68%	27	32%
8 Shopping	23	20,5%	72	86%
9 Reading books	47	42%	28	33%

The activities that dual-career couples enjoy doing with their families were questioned, grouped and shown in Table 4. We found that the dual-career couples whose opinions were sought enjoyed travel and picnic activities at a high percentage, with no noticeable gender differences. Dual-career couples' favourite activities, such as games,

walking, shopping, and reading books, differed significantly by gender. While female academics stated that they enjoy chatting (80%) and shopping (86%) more than male academicians, male academics clearly reported a preference for playing games (80%) and hiking (68%).

## CONCLUSION

Human resources have been evaluated in a new light as a result of the radical changes in technology and corporate life that occurred in the 20th century. The concept of the career has transformed into a phenomenon that has overtaken all of humanity's fields of interest and professions, removing the monopoly of just certain genders, as well as physical and intellectual characteristics.

In this study, we analysed how female members of dual-career couples put extraordinary effort into achieving success in business and family life. Prior to the era when women commonly entered the working world, women were responsible for all aspects of household and child-related duties. While it was believed that these responsibilities would subsequently decrease, the opposite seems to be true. It is clear that no matter how high one's education level, getting rid of traditionally assigned roles is very difficult. While the benefits of dual-career couples are widely established, including increased understanding and support for one another, it is obvious that academicians have different viewpoints on situations such as having children and childcare. When women obtain economic independence, their happiness and quality of life improve, and they win a higher position in society. The most consistent way to maintain this position is to have a career. However, the lives of women who began working in the business world have not changed over time in terms of household and child-related issues. Despite these disadvantages, women continue to have roles both in the office and at home in order to solve this difficult challenge.

A holistic analysis of responses to this study's four-part questionnaire shows that career women had a stronger sense of responsibility and respect than did men, bringing their quality of life to a more family-oriented position. In the concept of a dual-career couple, it is apparent that the responsibilities of the male partner are no different from those of other types of families. Despite their busy schedules, the women within dual-career couples maintain their family responsibilities and duties. Open-ended questions especially show that

women do not use excuses or excuses, no matter how hard the problems are. In this way, it is more realistic to talk about dual-career couples as dual-career women.

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:** The authors sincerely thank Karamanoğlu Mehmetbey University for providing the necessary opportunities for this study. This study is produced from Emine Nişancı Babanoğlu's Master's Thesis data.

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