

The Pathology of the Dual-Career Couples: A Qualitative Study

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Abstract

Introduction: The structure of traditional family was now changing towards the dual-career ones and due to the impacts that dual-career couples have on the structure of the family, it was necessary to investigate these effects from a discovery perspective. On this base, the present study aims to investigate the pathology of the Iranian dual-career couples' life.

Method: In terms of methodology, the study was done qualitatively and it was validated by the grounded theory. The participants were dual-career couples in Yazd. The sampling was done purposefully with 24 participants in a half-organized interview. A theoretically codified method and grounded theory were used to analyze and validate data gathered in this respect.

Findings: The findings of the study showed that the pathology of the dual-career couples based on three issues and aspects include entity and conceptual and abstract contents. It included A: reasons and elements (career- family and family-career conflicts, the hierarchical order for power and influence, issues and management of financial and economic affairs), B: actions (the responsibility division, the problem of sexual and marital relations in, the issues of child raising and child rearing, decrease of intimacy and the time of being together), and C: consequences (lack of happiness and joy, decrease of the relations with the relatives, nutritional, spiritual and psychological issues).

Conclusion: Generally, the results of the study showed that dual-career couples' experience the pathology and conflicts influence their job and these pathologies were presented in the form of a conceptual model.

Keywords: dual-career couples, pathology, causes and factors, actions, consequences

1. Introduction

The phenomena of work and employment have been noticed from the beginning of human life. From the past to present, women like men have had life responsibilities and worked. By industrializing societies and technology development, it appeared the families could not depend on men anymore. In most of societies, women like men worked outside of the house as well (Voydanoff, 1985). The dual-career couples include the special population of the couples who take part in fulltime and family jobs (Rapport & Rapport, 1971). The term "dual-career" first coined by Rapport and Rapport (1971). They were one of the first researchers who showed that both couples' employment negatively influenced the relations between work-family conflict and marital satisfaction (Brabdry, 1995).

Disharmony in vocational and familial demands in some cases was one of the most important pathology facing these families since half of the couples' time and energy was spent in job. The couples' cooperation on the familial issues was of great importance. The couples who were devoted to their own traditional roles and did not consider the various life responsibilities as their own responsibility would experience the complex communication problems (Shelton, 1993).

The dual-career wife-husband relations could be defined based on job and life stages on this base, pathology and problems could be investigated and predicted as follow: first, those couples who sacrificed their job over their families when they initially started their work. Second, the conflict between work and family was defined as medium in the initial stages, higher in the medial years and lower in recent years (Nazari, 2009).

Greenhouse & Beutell (2000) classified the work-family conflict in three categories: the time - oriented conflict, it occurred since the time spent on the activities related to a role could not be spent on other roles. Pressure-oriented

conflict, it occurred when the roles were not adjusted to each other; that is, the pressure made by one of them made the responsibilities related to another role problematic. Behavior-oriented conflict, it occurred when the special behavior patterns that were internalized in the role were not adjusted to the related expectations in another role.

Work and employment among the women was one of the most important fields that change the structure of the family and couples' life quality. Due to the increasing development in the dual-career families and consequently their problems and issues, doing scientific studies could determine the procedures and structure of these families (interaction between couples, the patterns of child rearing, parents' patterns, financial management, etc.) and their specific pathology. In the dual-career couples' life style, there were many kinds of work-family conflicts that include job stress, high job stress, role conflict, problems related to child caring, the old caring, and the balance between works, family and personal needs. The psychological pressure has an issuable quality that could be transferred from one life aspect to another (Bolger, DeLongis, Kessler, & Worthington, 1989).

Based on the comparative studies to treat marital issues, Stoltz and Loike (1992) presented the following six subjects in relation to the effective efficiency of dual-career couples: 1) wife and husband should determine the boundaries between self and the other 2) couples should be able to utter their emotional and physical supports to another side 3) the couples' effective relations depended on their control over the basic communication skills and applications 4) the couples' effective relations depended on the control and application of conflict solving skills 5) the couples' inefficient patterns could appear in the form of problems that should be solved and presented 6) the couples' effective relations included the procedure of change that couples desired to fear from and resist against. The obvious performance of such strategies could increase greatly the dual-career couples' efficiency.

A review of the researches on the dual-career couples showed that no coherent study concerning the pathology to the dual-career couples' life style in the Iran's society was done. Since the Iran's societies especially the people and society in Yazd live with their own specific national, cultural, and religious beliefs, it was necessary that both couples work on the one hand but today the couples experience a conflict in this respect, on the other had. In fact, they had to sustain their traditional role in the family and they had to answer their vocational and professional needs as well. These conflicts influenced the structure of dual-career couples' life style that made recognition of such pathology and classifications greatly important. Therefore, the present study aimed to analyze and investigate the pathologies of dual-career couples in Iran.

2. Method

In terms of methodology, this study was done qualitatively by using the grounded theory. To assess the validity, three purposive methods (resources, texts and thesis, family expertise and counselor, dual-career couples) were used. The statistical population includes the dual-career couples in Yazd. The purposeful sampling method was used as far as it could meet the intended case categories (24 dual-career couples were chosen) in order to determine the pathology to the dual-career couples with similar conditions to take part in the study. These similarities could be summarized as being married and working for at least three years, having permanent job, being consciously aware of taking part in the study, no addictive record for using drugs and alcohol, no spillover or remarriage record.

2.1 Method of Data Gathering

In this study, the half-structured interview was used as an instrument. Using the qualitative questions in this kind of interview, it continued to discover pathology to the dual-career couples with questions ranging from the generally wide questions to discovery ones on these subjects. Time of interview was ranged from 40 to 60minutes based on the participants' conditions and desire. All the interviews were recorded digitally and immediately transcribed word by word after each record. In order to increase the reliability and validity, e.g. scientific strength of the findings in the qualitative research, the researchers' long-term involvement, contact, and communication with participants led to increase the confidence and understanding of their experiences. Moreover, using the participants with the highest degree of variety increased the validity of data. Furthermore, in order to be completely clear in coding, methods of data acceptance were used while the participants reviewed the manuscripts. For this purpose, the researcher provided the participants with some parts of interviews and coding so that the researcher could reach the similar concepts concerning the participants' statements. In addition, data saturation also was used to increase the validity of data.

The analysis of data was done while data gathering was conducted. In this method, the qualitative data from the interviews and other documents were analyzed in three coding stages including open, axial, and selective ones. In this method, data gathering and data analysis were done simultaneously. In open coding stage, the researcher reviewed and produced its main concepts line by line. Coding method in this stage included the use of language and terms used by the interviewees by whom the researchers produced key codes and concepts based on the

present concepts in the data. Then, in axial coding, the concepts derived from the heart of these data were classified. They also made connections between raw concepts that were apparently unrelated but potentially dependent on each other.

In this way, the primary codes were classified in secondary categories and basic lines in the data set were determined. Next, to be certain of the distinctiveness of each category, each group or category was compared and contrasted with other categories or groups. By recognizing the levels, the researcher attempted to find the extant relations between primary and secondary categories in the axial coding and organized the aspects and features of each category. In the third level, by using selective coding, the selection occurred regarding the recognized concepts, codes, and researchers attempted to unite and filter their analyses (Bazargan, 2008).

3. Findings

First, the results of the axial coding were conducted. By doing more detailed and accurate classifications and proportions, the axial categories for the pathology to the dual-career couples' life were determined conceptually. In the following, the results derived from the primary coding (basic concepts), secondary coding (open category), general category (Axial category), and core categories in the interviews with the dual-career couples were displayed. From the total 24 dual-career couples' interviews and analyses of their life problems, three dimensions were considered. These included 1) causes and factors, 2) actions 3) consequences.

A. Causes and factors :

It means all grounds that provided conditions and states of being pathology including work-family conflict, family-work conflict, the hierarchical problems of power and influence, financial and economic issues.

- Work-family conflict:

Work-family conflicts: the challenges that couples faced in the work environment influenced the structure of marital and familial life and caused problems for the couples. One couple said: "my vocational responsibilities caused problems in the family and job stress took most of my energy". An interviewee said, "Job hours avoided me from caring for my wife and children. Sometimes, I brought my vocational problems at home"

-Family-work conflicts:

These conflicts were related to the interference of couples' familial issues in the vocational responsibilities. This finally could cause problems for the couples' life. A couple said, "I could not make balance between familial and vocational responsibilities, I was not able to do my responsibilities at work due to my familial issues". One of the interviewees said, "I brought part of my home struggles to my job environment"

-The problem in dividing responsibilities and tasks:

That was the couples' position which was under changes due to vocational involvements, work-family conflicts, family-work conflicts, having many roles and jobs to fulfill. In the meantime, the couples reached a sense of equality in terms of responsibilities and each knew the other in charge of things. One of the interviewees said, "The increase of women's economic power at home caused role chaos. Another couple said, "The value system of the family was based on economy and work. The couples' appreciations of each other decreased and their decision-making, process ended up with disagreements. "Considering the financial issues of the family was my responsibility and I did not have any interest to household works".

-Economic problems and financial management:

That was the couples experienced conflict in terms of who should manage income and pay for home costs. A couple said, "I had saved money without telling to my husband and we always fought over costs, spending, and income with each other". A woman said, "I wanted to keep my income for myself and did not spend it".

-The problem of power, hierarchy, and influence

That was the couples were always in contact with each other in the family over the issues such as who had been in charge and made final decisions. In the interviews, the couples said, "In our family making decisions was difficult. Wife and husband were under conflict in deciding over things. A couple said, "In the family, we discussed who the boss was".

B. Actions

In the life of the dual-career couples, there were causes and grounds that caused to bring pathology and problems and these challenges changed the dynamic interactions of couples' life. In fact, actions had the very meaning of changes that happen in the couples' life in terms of task and responsibility divisions, lack of happiness and joy,

problems of sexual and marital relations, child rising and child rearing problems.

-The problem of task and responsibility division:

In this problem, the couples did not have the ability to manage task and responsibility divisions correctly. A couple said, "In our family everybody's responsibility was not defined and roles were not specified". Another interviewee said, "I could not determine everyone's role in the family".

-Lack of happiness and joy:

It meant the couples were not happy and festive and the couples mentioned this problem. A couple said, "Emotional festivity was blurred between us and happiness and entertainment was blurred as well". Another interviewee said, "My job took my chance for being happy and joyful. Job stress made me depressed. Fervor and vitality decreased in our life. I felt disappointed due to family and job stresses".

-The sexual and marital problems:

The couples who both worked outside of house evaded answering the sexual and marital needs due to job stresses and roles and constantly desired to postpone answering it. A couple said, "I did not feel good for having a relationship with my wife since I was very tired. I evade satisfying my wife's sexual needs". Another interviewee said, "I could not satisfy my wife's need in any time she desired. My sexual festivity and fervor decreased. The sexual relationship was mostly like a kind of committed love relationships". Another woman said, "I did not enjoy the sexual relationships".

-The problem of child educating and child rearing:

This meant the dual-career couples did not have much opportunity to pay attention to the children's needs due to their job occupation and several roles in life. In addition, this per se could be a problem uttered by the interviewees: a couple said, "I did not have time to look after and raise children. The children in our family did not have any responsibility. We were not in line with what was defined as a family in essence". Another interviewee said, the children in our family do not obey us. The couples did not accept their faults in rearing children. Grandfather and grandmother were exaggeratedly at the hand of by grandchildren".

C. Consequences

That meant the consequences and penalties occurred in the dual-career couples' life due to causes, factors, and actions. Moreover, this per se could cause pathology in terms of psychological, spiritual, and stressful problems, the problems of leisure time, decrease of intimacy and being together, decrease of relationships with the major family and relatives, nutritional problems, and needs. In the following, each problem was mentioned:

Psychological-spiritual problems and stress:

This field included spiritual problems and issues and psychological pressures that could be understood from the couples' interview. One of the interviewees said, "I knew myself, I am moody and vulnerable spiritually. Constantly I felt worried and stressed". The physical tiredness occurred especially among women. The psychological stress caused aggression. The couples became angry quickly. Another couple said, "We fought each other at home since we were stressed".

- Problems of leisure time:

The dual-career couples were in trouble in terms of how time and leisure time were spent. One of the interviewees said, "The leisure time for the family was limited". The participants said, "Our leisure time was restricted to special times. We did not have leisure time. One of the interviewees said, "Our life meant our work and we did not have leisure time".

-Decrease of intimacy and togetherness:

This field decreased the warm and intimate relations between the couples. A couple said, "I felt I was far away from my wife and the time of togetherness decreased. A couple said, "I wished my husband to make love to me".

-Decrease of relation with the major family and relatives:

The dual-career couples were in trouble in making relations with others in accordance with parents, relatives, and children's needs regularly due to their various roles and responsibilities. One of the interviewees said "the vocational issues caused to see my parents. My relations with relatives decreased". Constantly the relatives complained about not seeing them". Another couple said, "I felt guilty since I could not see my parent as much as I had to".

-Nutritional problems and needs:

This field referred to a group of problems and issues that dual-career couples faced in the family ranging from cooking food to other issues. An interviewee said, "Eating fast foods and low quality foods were increasingly developing". Another couple said, "My husband and I often always discussed the nutritional issues. The daily eating hours in the home were not routinized and regular". Another couple said, "We ate everything found at home".

The analysis of the data showed that the pathology in the dual-career couples' life were categorized in three dimensions: A. cause and factors (1-work-family conflicts 2-family-work conflicts 3-the problems in managing financial and economic affairs) B. actions (1-the problems in responsibility divisions, 2-the problem sin sexual and marital relations 3. lack of happiness and joy, 4. the issue of child rearing and child educating) C. consequences (1-spiritual and psychological issues, 2.leisure time problem, 3. Decrease of intimacy and togetherness 4-Decrease of the relations with relatives and 5.nutritional issues. The conceptual model of these three dimension presented in the table as follow:

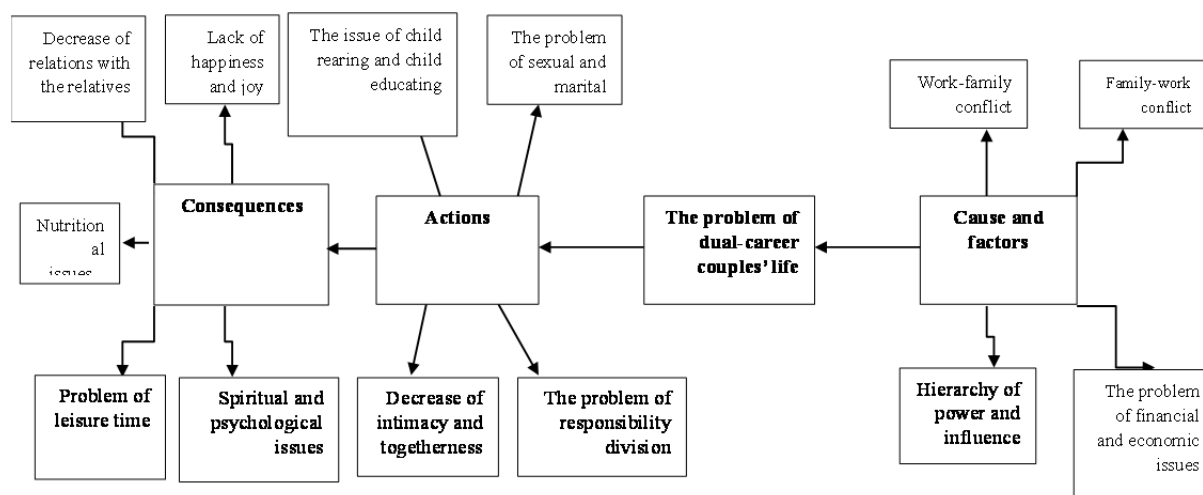


Figure 1. The conceptual model for the dual-career couples in life

4. Discussion and Conclusion

The results of the qualitative analyses of the study showed that the pathology of the dual-career couples' life had three aspects and thirty categories. The entity of these pathologies included cause and factors, actions and consequences. Moreover, these three aspects presented thirty categories in the form of the model for the pathology of dual-career couples' life. The model was compared and contrasted with the researches done in pathology of dual-career couples' life. However the model presented here was different from other investigations and pathological model of family in terms of aspects and numbers of the pathology and pathological subscales, generally it could be said that the model was somehow similar to the studies done by Carter & Carter (1995) to show the problems and challenges that the dual-career couples faced. The similar aspects in the present model and Carter & Carter (1995) model could be summarized as follow:

- 1.having many works to do (task and responsibility division)
- 2-being anxious about doing works (the problem of responsibility and task division)
- 3-being constantly aware of the children (the problem of child rearing and methods of child raising)
- 4- feeling guilty greatly
- 5-lack of time for being with each other (the problem of stress and spiritual and psychological problems)
- 7-suffernig a dropout in sexual relations (sexual and marital problems)
- 8-having financial stress (financial and economic problems)
9. Considering children a reason for familial maladjustment (the problem of child rearing and child raising).

Moreover, the findings of the present study was in line with the studies done by Higgins & Duxbury (1994), Strazdins et al. (2006), Nora et al (2007), Paul (2010), Rahmatollahi, FatehiZade and Ahmadi (2006), Nilforushan, Abedi & Ahmadi (2013) and Ahmadi (2007). Higgins & Duxbury (1994) showed that there would be a conflict between the dual-career couples in relation to the balance between work and demands in the family (work-family and family-work conflict and problems), fostering children (Raising and rearing children). Strazdins (2006) also

stated that the dual-career couples faced more challenges in the familial operation, experienced more depression signs (spiritual and psychological problems, and psychological stress), and had ineffective child rearing (the problem of educating children and rearing children). Compatible with the present study, the study by Nora and her colleagues (2007) illustrated that the family of dual-career couples only had to control the issues at home (problems of leisure time and being together) and they did not have time for entertainment activities (the problem of leisure time and how to spend it). Paul (2010) noted that the problem of the dual-career couples took energy and time more than it was supposed in caring children (intimacy pathology and the problem of lack of time for being together). Additionally, he mentioned that work-family demands and role conflict negatively influenced the spousal relations (work-family and family-work problems).

Furthermore, in Iran, Rahmatollahi, FatehiZade and Ahmadi (2006) determined and investigated the family pathology through four elements. These pathology in four elements were classified as 1.the intrapersonal element that included facial, physical and psychological problems, drug abuse and sexual problems (needs, physical problems, marital relations, psychological stress and pressures) 2.interpersonal elements that included the relational problems, the issues related to manage home (the problem of task and responsibility division) 3.transpersonal element that included the problems of leisure time (the problem of leisure time), the issues related to patrilineal, relative and friend families (the issues related to the relatives and major families), financial and economic problems (the financial and economic issues) 4. Transpersonal element included the problematic areas related to the problems of remarriage (sexual and marital problems), the issues related to the patrilineal family and issues related to children (child rearing and child educating) and the issues related to the stressful affairs (psychological stress and pressures and spiritual and psychological problems).

Finally, these findings were convergent with six axial classified models by Nilforushan, Abedi and Ahamadi (2013) six axial classified models. The axes of the model included: first axis: the disorder in the life cycle of family (the part was not congruent with the pathological model), second axis: the disorder in the family subsystems (the pathology of position, power and influence), third axis: disorder in the performance of family group (task and responsibility division), fourth axis: disorder in the internal environment of family (the problem of intimacy and leisure time), fifth axis: family stress (spiritual and psychological problems, psychological stress), sixth axis: level of family life quality (this axis of the model was kind of related to the whole pathologies mentioned in the model). In explaining the findings of the study, it could be mentioned that the dual-career couples were in conflict and pathology due to changes in roles, increasing the number of roles, several responsibilities, and inability in managing roles. These pathologies that were as the results of lack of couples' skills in making work-family and family-work balance decreased when wife and husband could make a balance between work-family and family-work environment and changed the structure and dynamicity of couples and parents' life. The fact that lack of happiness and joy was considered as a pathology in dual-career couples' life, it could be said that since the dual-career couples experienced many stresses and pressures and concerning the fact that it could not be impossible to manage correctly time and opportunities for leisure time, the structure of the family pathology could be concluded. Because the dual-career couples had independent income or two paper of checks along with the economic power of both in life, finally men and women were not dependent to each other in this respect and each decided in the field of economy independently in managing the financial affairs entering them in a destroyable compete. The dual-career couples had problems in spending enough time in rearing children and they were forced to take a nurse for caring children and put them in the kindergarten or keep them with their parents' family that consequently caused the duality in education and child rearing style. Moreover, the dual-career couples had many problems in meeting marital needs due to physical, spiritual, and psychological tiredness, and inadequate opportunities to make love and effective caressing between the dual-career couples. Relations with the relatives and major families were under evolution and it could cause pathology in the families that did not have strong program in satisfying the relations with relatives and the parents. The dual-career couples' enough time to prepare foods at home was a fundamental problem. As the result, each couple or one of them attempted to solve the problems by fast foods bought from shops. This issue also gradually interfered with the structure and cost of the family as well as the health of the members and gradually became pathology.

In a whole, the investigation of the studies done in the field of family and pathology to the dual-career couples' life displayed that the written model in the present study put comprehensively and completely the pathologies and challenges that these couples faced in a regular structure. Moreover, the findings of the study displayed that the specified model in the study, as a reliable model, was designed qualitatively and was based on the categories derived from the specialists, family counselors and dual-career couples' interviews and could be used to recognize the pathology of the dual-career couples' life and promote their problems in this respect.

One of the factors that increased the validity of the study was that the present study was validated based on the

grounded theory.

Some of the limitations of the present study could be mentioned as follow:

The researchers' character as the interviewer was the effective factor in interview sessions and discovery of the findings that their control would possible absolutely. 2. The coded data derived from the dual-career couples in other organizations were used by caution. 3. Data were only gathered from dual-career couples and if the data had been gathered from other family members, it would have helped to rich the findings of the present study 4.lack of the reliable study on pathology to the dual-career couples' life was one of the other limitations of the present study.

Regarding the fact that the present study was the fundamental one, it was suggested that using the theoretical view resulted from the findings of the present study and doing other researches in this field could help the researchers and theorists develop and enhance their knowledge in the field of the dual-career couples' life.

Due to novelty and newness of this subject and increasing need of the society in recognizing, preventing, and modifying the problems of the dual-career couples' life, it was suggested that the other studies similar to the present study should be done in other areas and wider environments. Furthermore, based on the findings of the study, it could be designed an educational and consulting package for the couples' problems and could be used to rich the dual-career couples' life. Moreover, it was suggested that the findings of the study could be evaluated in the future studies in order to investigate the predicting power of each category.

Competing Interests Statement

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interests regarding the publication of this paper.

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