

# Dual-Career Marriages and Child Well-Being: A Qualitative Study of Black-Collar Couples in Chawama

<sup>1</sup>Ruth Mesue Ayuk Epse Vuyof; <sup>2</sup>Dewin Arona Sikalumbi

<sup>1</sup>School of Social Sciences, ZCAS University Zambia; <sup>2</sup>School of Business, ZCAS University, Zambia

<sup>b</sup>[ORCID.org/0000-0003-2882-5517](https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2882-5517)

## ABSTRACT

This research examines the influence of dual-career arrangements on marital dynamics and the well-being of children within black-collar couples in Chawama, Zambia. Employing an interpretivist approach, we carried out semi-structured interviews with 18 dual-career couples (ages 26–50) and utilized purposive–snowball sampling to access information-rich households. Thematic analysis was conducted on the data. Research indicates a widespread work–family conflict characterized by time scarcity, role overload, and work-to-home spillover, often referred to as the “second shift,” with women disproportionately shouldering unpaid domestic labor. Communication breakdowns, financial pressures, and widespread digital distractions have significantly diminished marital intimacy. Reported outcomes for children included loneliness, decreased parent–child attachment, reduced supervision, and changes in behavior and school engagement. Despite these risks, certain families indicated adaptive benefits, including increased child independence and resilience, implying varied effects dependent on coping strategies and informal support systems. This study highlights specific contextual constraints, including limited childcare options, precarious incomes, and entrenched gender norms, that exacerbate dual-career strain in semi-urban environments. We advocate for interventions that are locally grounded, including gender-sensitive negotiations regarding household labor, employer flexibility for low-income workers, affordable after-school care, and community-based programs for parental communication. The findings provide detailed, context-specific evidence to the work–family literature and inform policies designed to enhance family stability and child well-being in resource-limited settings.

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Corresponding author email:

[ruthvuyof@gmail.com](mailto:ruthvuyof@gmail.com)

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## Introduction

Flashing across constant pressures from Social-Economic and Political changes around the globe, standards of life have become steadily unbearable as prices of goods and services keep rising

exponentially. Some scholars have emphasised how effects of inflation have ravaged most economies (Grigsby, 2024). Reasons why both couples sometimes are compelled to work to bridge the financial gaps that exist in most families. Even though these jobs go a long way to fulfil objectives

set by couples to a greater extent, they come with underling consequences to marriages with children being affected. In Zambia, data shows that most couples are either career or business oriented and their family sustainability depends on that. Researchers have explored how couples of dual-career family have higher risk of divorce compared to other family forms of marriages this is evident from the traditional gender role beliefs where women are still expected to cover almost 100% of household duties even though they also work (Christina M. Chako 2024). There are always inevitable conflicts radiating in most dual-career homes, making it impossible to enjoy marital peace and harmony among couples. In the semi-urban areas like Chawama, couples suffer emotionally due to many reasons. Salimi Bajestani. It is alleged that most juvenile delinquency, drugs and alcohol abuse among kids, early pregnancy among young girls, are some of the results gotten from unstable homes due to dual-career dynamics. Children's behaviour may rapidly change as soon as parents' attention cease for a while, talk more of a continuous scenario from dual-career parents. (Mubita Dr Mwaba, 2025). The "Attachment theory" of John Bolby and Mary Ainsworth also elaborates how children use survival mechanism clinging to other sources that ensure their emotional security and developmental health as parents limit their availability. Even though dual-career presents outstanding positive benefits to couples, this study is capitalised on visualising negative consequences of dual-career on marriage that may affect children as well. Therefore, the outcome of this study will provide psychological knowledge and insights that will educate couples, improve their well-being, alleviate marriage stigma and balance family life alongside work. Once this is fulfilled, the mental health and well-being of couples will be stabilised giving them ample opportunity to balance up on children's mental health enabling them pursue education rather than being in the streets. By so doing, the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> SDGs of United Nations Organisations will be sustained come 2030.

### Literature Review

This Chapter introduces different types of dual-career marriages and consequences that affect children. The life of work and home management have recently become a common phenomenon to most families in the globe, especially with dual-

career couples who find it difficult to strike a balance between pressures arising from work and that of the family. Dual-career being a situation where both parents are involved in demanding professions, pictures several advantages to the entire family. Even though it may serve as major marriage obstruction tool especially when children get involved. Time allocation and constrains have rendered most homes in a stressful position when navigating work calls and family calls nursing grounds for family tensions. Studies have shown how creating an equilibrium between marriage obligations, family care and work has never been feasible, highlighting how one of the sectors must feel the vacuum if not properly managed. (Chacko & Ranjith, 2024). It is therefore of prior importance to identify different types of dual-career marriages that will lure us to understanding the magnitude of work effects on couples. Studies have identified four types of dual-career marriages such as accommodators, adversaries, allies and acrobats (Dargahi et al., 2021). With the accommodator dual-career, one spouse becomes more involved in career than home management likewise the other spouse actively involved in home participation than career. This is typical with rural and semi-urban setups. The adversary Dual-career marriage views both spouses highly engaged in their work putting less energy on partners, children and marriage, with the ally dual-career marriage, both partners get busy with either career or family and home roles, but these roles are not highly executed same time. Lastly, the acrobat Dual-career marriage, both spouses are highly involved in family and work roles. (Chacko, 2023). She demonstrates how organisational stress and couples coping strategies intersect showing that among the dual-career marriage. The following paragraphs will demonstrate literature obtained from the studies.

### Family and work Obstacles

Recently, couples have been fully engaged with intense work demands finding it almost impossible to capture and balance up with other responsibilities especially within the family sphere and marital obligations. Be it business or career oriented and black-collar jobs, studies have shown that creating an equilibrium between marriage obligations, family care and work has never been completely feasible as couples return home exhausted failing to strive through their different obligations. (A. Thomas,

2023). Dual-career couples often struggle with how to allocate time for different work demands, meetings and enforcing career goals only to notice they have to still deal with family demands. (Chacko & Ranjith (2024). 2021). Research shows that disagreements and frustrations set in, as one spouse goes overboard in creating family stability and balance while the other gives in little efforts to that. Catherine R Allen's "The Work-Family Interface" highlights difficulties and challenges dual-career couples encounter in a bid to balance work and family responsibilities. She points out how dual-career couples always have work-family barriers, that bring tension in their marriages hence affecting the kids negatively. Emphasises have also been laid on the implications on family dynamics which impact marital satisfaction and parents-child relationships involved in career building and development. Workloads for both couples have been considered by most researchers as a hindering factor to a satisfactory marriage. Parents- child intimacy and relationship keep deteriorating as this habit persists. (Chacko & Ranjith (2024). 2021). Failure to assist in school assignments, engage in discussions that orientate children towards their well- being give a glimpse of irresponsibility from parents due to their poor work and time management abilities and sometimes negligence from parents. (Mubita & Dr Mwaba's study (2025) Some Dual-career couples especially the men do not return home on time to bond with kids, making the load weigh on their spouses who always sacrifice their time for family. (Mubita & Dr Mwaba's study (2025) Burnout and prevailing emotional gaps are the results of these unchecked behaviours cause marital tensions that may trigger divorce as they develop. Even though scholars have outlined barriers arising from dual-career couples, findings have also given directives on how these work family barriers could be resolved amicably such as defining and establishing clear boundaries, delegating tasks and using work arrangements that are flexible. (Patricia Marato 2025).

### **Work -Home Transfers.**

Another renowned effect to marital peace is the fact that couples take over their work demands to family arrangements almost becoming like a 24hrs arrangement. Couples with high roles at work and business-oriented couples always have the tendency of taking their work home and disrupt family

intimacy. (Bromfield, 2022). In his Labour Process Theory (LPT) during Covid-19, he indicated that working from home obstructed Work-Family balance causing emotional strains. When dual-career couples are charged with deadline tasks that could not be completed during working hours, this makes them to transfer these tasks home. By so doing, they detriment quality time that was supposed to be enjoyed with kids and spouses. Despite Jennifer Petriglieni highlighting how dual-career couples can thrive in and work putting communication as key, they situation is not practically feasible as some couples still work from home longer hours like in their normal jobs creating less intimate time among couples. (S. Hossain, 2024) Business couples are also tempted to continue business communications and transactions from home through several business calls and WhatsApp exchanges hence harnessing the gap with family life that may lead to marital issues. Findings have shown how parents' devotion at work and transferring home has created less quality time spent with family (S. Hossain 2024). Work to home affairs have been backed by research by Nicholas Bloom also indicates that 42% of US of labour force since Covid-19 work from home full time. Even though it may seem like couples stay home, but their active presence is also limited since they have to deliver as per job description. This also brings setbacks in communication with spouses and children as they tend to work for longer hours (Boll et al, 2024). Workloads at job side most often compel most couples to report late home, creating that gap between children and parents' communication. Leading to feelings of loneliness and depression from children.

### **Prevailing gender roles in dual -career families.**

Traditional gender roles have been spotted to linger in disguise around dual-career homes in the world at large. Despite widespread advocacies by international bodies (UNO) to maintain gender equality in all spheres in life, women are still undermined in certain areas but pioneer in others especially in the context of dual-career where there is always uneven division of household chores. (Jaquoya Carreiro, 2021). She made us understand how gender roles and beliefs alongside household division of work impact marital satisfaction negatively. We might be tempted to think that women of high calibre may be free from this gender

role dilemma, yet some scholars have mentioned how true gender equality has for years remained an illusion. Women who do not give 100% attention to household activities are considered misfits for marriages, thereby scaling conflicts in marriages as women struggle with this taboo leading to burnouts and marital stress and constant arguments. (Gilbert. A 2020s). Gender roles are also perceived in most situations in dual-career homes whereby women are the ones who compromise on their own careers to back-up for the family, thereby leaving them in a financially vulnerable position. When it comes to decision making power in dual-career homes, the one who always makes financial and other strategic decisions in the household (men) is always viewed as the family survivor by the kids. Especially in cases where the spouse's career had been undermined. exhibiting role confusion This helps to fuel marital problems and dissatisfaction that lowers intimate relationship and flow of emotions. Laura Doyle's "the State of Marriage" (2025) attests to this phenomenon. However, despite these intense role identifications in dual-career marriages, studies have still sought means of ameliorating on communication gaps and proper negotiation.

### Communication Lapses

Communication has been one of the major barriers Dual-career couples face as they navigate work-family life. Poorly communication such as being over defensive on a point, criticisms and ignoring partners when passing important messages spark tensions and fights leading to unhealthy marriages with high divorce risks that may affect children's psychology. Couples who do not unanimously agree on their marriage principles are tantamount to creating marital fights. Therefore, lapses in communication may narrow marital intimacy causing tension and eventual misconduct from spouses. Research shows that communication breakdowns such emotional absence, poor interpersonal skills and intruders' tendencies in most marital homes are primary causes of relationship degradation and divorce. (Kamal et al. 2023). Recent studies have demonstrated how dual-career couples spend more time either on phones or watching TV programs after coming back home. Most couples sometimes complain of tiredness and move straight to bed after work which leads to increased communication lapses that leave some

family conflicts unsolved and emotional needs unmet. (Nguyen, William & Bradley 2025). This amplifies relationship issues especially among couples and with children. An illustrated sample from some prominent research proves that dual-career couples spend 30 minutes less in total spousal intimate time than single career couples. and colleagues' piece of work testifies that couples who work in most organisations in the evenings, spend less time their spouses compared to those working during the day. Hence widening the gap that exists between couples and their children. at job side most often compel most couples to report late home, which create that gap between children and parents' communication. This eventually led to feelings of loneliness and depression on children. Spouses' communication gets deteriorated everyday as work takes over their time. Research findings show that 60%-70% of couples are affected by poor communication from spouses which often leads to marital dissatisfaction, conflicts and possible divorces. In a bit to fill the gap created by of lack of parents-child communication, children get addicted to social media consuming what they deem necessary. Some assimilate new cultures that cannot be reversed as they grow to adulthood. Since there is no parental guidance, children get retarded with mental and physical development and drop out of school or perform poorly. (Chacko & Ranjith (2024) Some follow and copy some ill manners from friends which end up derailing them as parents keep away from their lives. (Hossain, 2024). Findings also suggest that not every dual-career child gets to assimilate wrong cultures. On the contrary some of them tend to be more responsible, resilient self-innovative, and more independent in the absence of their parents. (Kevin, 2024). Therefore, communication and negotiation among couples is crucial for a satisfactory and long-lasting relationship.

However, poor communication among couples does not just scale on arguments, as it goes further to reduce trust in relationships erode emotional safety and reduce the ability to sail in marriage life effectively together. Once room is granted for this foundation to grow, the entire marriage becomes unbearable leading to divorce affecting children negatively.

### Financial Conflicts

Study shows that money issues have caused many couples to either separate or strain marital relationships. The fact that most couples especially the women become financially independent because of working, makes them to develop “swollen heads” and disrespect their husbands thereby bringing marital dissatisfaction at home, and affecting children psychologically. While some research point out that women’s financial independence can empower them to potentially reduce reliance on their husbands as well as help in building the family financially, others suggest that women financial independence can lead to conflicts and marital dissatisfaction. Insights from SOFI (2024) proved that 82% of newly wedded couples keep some of their money individually, indicating the extent to which financial strength is highlighted in marriages. Studies show that divorce is more likely when women get financially independent. According to Alirezanejad and colleagues, they believe that women’s income can affect the man’s role as breadwinner in the family. Findings also show that most dual career couples struggle with financial conflicts, especially when they must think of who should spend more than the other. Marriages conflicts always arise from high financial expectations from women, because they always expect their husbands to give them money even though they are working. And if this does not happen, it becomes a challenge at home causing mode swings and unhappiness in marriages. Research proves that women are more interested in a man’s earnings than the size of his wallet says Dr Peter Jonason. His results published in the journal “Personality and individual Differences” show how women place high importance on a man’s capacity to provide for a family. Meaning that a man’s financial incapability is never good enough to sustain marriage.

### Social Media distractions.

Social media engagements and frequent use of technology in marriages have caused far –reaching effects on couples in our society such as breaking communication, lowering marital intimacy and aggravating conflicts. In as much as we use social media for current updates globally, many have abused the usage of it. Scholars have shown rowing effects of social media on newly wedded couples

that lead to infidelity and emotional disconnect (Ehoro & Badey, 2021) causing addictive tendencies that deprive couples from fulfilling marital obligations that lead to conflicts. Studies show that couples sitting side by side with each other tend to communicate more with their phones other than their partners. A partner gets lost in social media zapping paying less attention to his/her partner, thereby increasing emotional distance, conflict and dissatisfaction in marriages. (Bukowski, 2020). Statistics from Institute of Family studies highlights that over 2000 married couples in America between ages 18-55 complain of phone usage in marriages, 37% lament how spouses get glued on their phones devaluing spousal and children attention. (Wang and M. Toscano, 2023). They explained that couples who get distracted by phones are 70% less satisfied with marriage, and four times more likely to engage in divorce. As parents get committed with social media, children also suffer mentally. Sometimes a child may want to pass a message to their parents, but both are glued on phone which ends up frustrating the child creating gaps between them. A study from *Frontiers Psychology* (2021) expressed how continuous social media cues can deviate attention from relevant tasks especially that of fulfilling marital duties. Marriages become bleak when partners tend to embrace their phone other than spouses. Social Media Apps like Facebook, You Tube, Instagram, and WhatsApp have drastically dismantled intimacy that existed among couples creating isolation and emotional malice among couples. Moreover, many misconceptions have been nursed by addictive couples who assimilate information from social media and want to replicate on their spouses, thereby increasing tension in the household. (Darren, 2024).

### Mode Swings among Couples

Mode swing is a situation where temperaments of any individual switches based on the situation they confront. Couples’ can change at any time leading to stale familiarity atmosphere that destroys the natural peace in Marriage. Studies have proven that sometimes emotional instability in one partner can ruin the other partner extending to children. Le Yang & Jingling in their study in 2023 pointed out how variation moods particularly connected to neurotic personality traits significantly led to increased depression levels and decreased marital satisfaction.

Sometimes mood swings can surface from social and economic factors. Cases where couples are unable to sort their bills or service pending loans or payment of children fees especially the men, can lead to withdrawal from family interactions which may become depressive as this persists. Thereby affecting marital harmony and children. (Qianhui, Yang et al, 2023). In their study - *Frontiers in Psychiatry*, they mentioned that patterns of behaviour that are associated to disorder in moods were traced from intense symptoms from depression. Reiterating that wives 'mood patterns having stronger adverse effects on their husbands than that of their husbands on them which suggested a gendered emotional contagion effect. Studies also surfaced from (Mohamed et al 2024) who proved that mood swings caused by discomfort physically, can determine couples' attitudes towards marriage especially among young married women, though supportive with each other. They also outlined that poor emotional regulation was linked negative marital expectations and low emotional resilience can be extended to long-term relationships. In essence, mood swings can damage marital satisfaction and lead to stale familiarity but can be fixed with a string support system.

### Gap in Literature

Scouting on numerous literatures developed around dual-career dynamics, most studies have been very representative, showing a geographical gap. Researchers have used samples studies to represent the entire population or carry out studies that deal on a particular population at a given time- which makes it difficult to figure out how dual-career dynamics do evolve over time. This can be viewed from some researchers like Hosain (2025) and Scurry & Clarke (2021) whose study limited in a particular geographical area Bangladesh and the UK without generalising on other cultures and socioeconomic contexts. More of this research magnitude needs to run through African Sub-Saharan countries especially in the rural and semi-urban areas. Same sex marriages have not been widely explored as many researchers focus only on heterosexual middle-class couples. (Ali et al, 2021). Studies have mentioned different factors contributing to tensions in marriages adversely with much attention to work dynamics and urban marriages. (Christina & Dr Ranjith, 2024) Little or almost no data has been

mentioned or recorded about marriages of the remote rural couples who both work black collar jobs, or one working white collar and the other a black collar job. Studies did not really expose if other factors contribute to marital imbalances other than dual-career in rural areas. Most peasant marriages all over the world suffer abuse especially on the women because of both couples working. It leaves room for this research to explore why these rural dual-career marriage upheavals do not get recognition from the world of knowledge. Reasons why this study targets Chawama in Zambia as a rural area to respond to this gap. Results will be focused on black collar dual-career couples revealing how they navigate work and family, and how children get affected by their career journey. Findings will illustrate if dual career serves as the main cause of marital issues, influencing deviant attitudes amongst children. Or factors beyond this study play a major role in triggering marital issues that lead to divorce affecting children. Further research needs to be done on factors like cultural norms, character traits religious influences and peer pressures could also contribute to this emotional malice among couples. Ample research also needs to be done on the effectiveness of intervention programs that support dual-career marriage therapy and parenting in rural communities should this study not fill the gap of dual-career in rural context influencing children's behaviour.

### Methodology

Philosophy used to guide this study is interpretivism where personal experiences how they feel working as a couple impacts their marriages, streaming through children. (Ma & Yingxin, 2022). Research method for this research englobed a qualitative approach involving semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions to understand why work causes more consequences on married couples rather than creating a favourable and enjoyable life. Even though it has been criticised by some scholars as one of the worst selection methods for interviews. (Mark Hoebertz 2024). A sample size of 36 couples was used to fulfil data collection (Lakens, 2022). Method of collecting data was one-on-one interview, Purposive and Snowball with probing. To succeed in collecting relevant data, some validating bodies like counsellors, chairmen, chiefs and other notables of these areas Chawama will be consulted

to obtain validation. Themes were established to understand the magnitude of tensions in dual-career homes, with thematic saturation carved at the 9<sup>th</sup> couple sufficient to generalise findings as highlighted by (Hennink & Kaiser, 2022). The most convenient sampling techniques used for this study is non-probability sampling with specific use of Purposive and snowball (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Since households of married couples may not be easily identified due to lack of terrain knowledge and limited information from the council, convenience sampling will help the researcher to identify dual career couples' homes. After collecting data from identified couples, referrals will be made by interviewed couples to other households having dual-career couples. Data analysis was basically qualitative thematic, where data was prepared, coded to identify different themes from respondents, recurrent themes were sourced and categorised into subthemes before interpreting and analysing themes obtained from findings.

#### **Time Horizon**

The choice of Chawama constituency for this study site was perfect to target dual career couples engaged in black collar jobs easily. The climatic condition is subtropical, summers are hot and humid due to its population density. Winters are cold with temperatures of 13 degrees yet sunny, making it friendly and enabling a good atmosphere for research. Data collected was cross-sectional, between May 15<sup>th</sup> to June 18<sup>th</sup> during winter in Zambia, without preceding or exceeding time mentioned (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016)

#### **Reliability Validity and Generalisation of Research Findings**

This research produced high validity because data collected was first-hand information from personal experiences of dual-career black collar couples. Validity was nonbiased as could be pictured from clear and well-defined research questions and objectives. This study will be very reliable in that; same research approach can be taken repeatedly with consistent results if test and retest reliability is done at different times. This paper ensured reliability and validity to prove its trustworthiness and accuracy in findings even though there may be limitations. Results obtained from the study sample size of 18 couples in Chawama, could be used to externally generalize how couples struggle with

work and household dynamics in other rural setups in Sub-Saharan Africa.

#### **Findings**

Results of this study offer valuable insights into the lived experiences of dual-career couples living in Chawama, a semi-rural community. Interview focused on 18 couples aging from 26-50 years, with findings revealing deep-seated challenges that cut across work and family balance, emotional gaps, communication lapses, financial stress, social media distractions and prevailing gendered roles. Far reaching effects hit on children who felt emotional gaps and loneliness. Data collected focused on black-collar dual-career couples from Health, Education, Business owners, technology industries whose careers were oriented towards black collar jobs. Results gave an overview to the fact that while dual career offers substantial benefits to the family, they also pruned outstanding strains to couples especially women who endure more to the stress domestically and emotionally.

#### **Respondents Overview**

In this chapter, findings of the study will be presented on negative consequences of dual-career on marriages affecting children. Through an in-depth analysis of data collection methods, it could be perceived that Dual-career couples passed through intense stress in a bit to navigate work pressures and home management. This study involved 18 dual-career couples who reside in Chawama, a rural community. Respondents had children between the ages 5-15. Different households represented a range of educational backgrounds – some respondents had reached grade 5 and others grade 12, with a variety of occupational roles. While some individuals worked in formal white-collar positions or managed small businesses, others were engaged in black collar jobs within local companies or informal sectors. Salary ranges were from ranges k1000- K3000 with most not being able to employ house helps/maids and foot family bills. Throughout the research, many couples outlined several benefits because of both partners working, but with far reaching challenges. Women consistently reported feeling overlaboured by double demands of formal employment and

domestic responsibilities. (Caluzzi et al., 2022). Many lamented of unequal division of labour at home, pointing to limited support from their husbands who were constantly occupied with their phones, keeping irregular hours and displayed disengagement from household routines. Complaints of financial irresponsibility, emotional distance and suspected promiscuity further contributed to emotional dissatisfaction in marriages. Several couples described their relationship as being stale, with intimacy diminishing over time due to the constant strain of balancing work and family life. Women frequently declared that after completing a full day of work, they returned home only to start a second shift of cooking, cleaning and childcare leaving little room for rest, emotional connection with spouses and kids. (Pan, 2025).

Most couples explained that their children were living in their absence “by the Grace of God” while others claimed that family members did the backup as they stayed long at work. On the other hand, most children expressed satisfaction from parents going out to work to give room for them to play and do what they wanted. Others felt loneliness and sought other means to distract themselves. The sections below present the themes in detail supported by illustrative explanations from participants that flash on the often-invisible load carried by peasant families as they try to manage marriage, work. These results have been classified into different themes that will explicitly demonstrate how couples feel the pain of working and taking care of their homes same time. Some quotes have been applied to show the magnitude of the situation couples and children in Chawama face.

### Work-Family Obstacles

Throughout the interview circle, there were no couples that said balancing work and family was easy to go by. Persistently, couples in Chawama advanced tensions that exist between balancing professional obligations and family responsibilities. Respondents especially women, recounted how it becomes challenging to cope with daily demands from their jobs and simultaneously handling household duties, such as childcare and taking care of husbands. They explained that at the end of the day, they get exhausted, and “unable to emotionally

*click to their husbands”* said female participant 6. Sometimes “*marital communication is also affected by this tiredness*” another respondent testified given that women get overwhelmed with chores at home and work. (Akiki, R. R. 2024)

Some women in the study frequently reported that their partners vehemently disengaged themselves from domestic life, portraying behaviours like avoiding chores, staying out late, and spending excessive time on their phones. These patterns not only intensified the physical workload for women but also created emotional distance between spouses. Many participants described their relationships as “stale” or “disconnected,” as intimacy and companionship gave way to constant routine and generated fatigue.

This maps together with expanded studies on work and family conflicts indicating how time constraints, role intensity and gender expectations act as major “bottlenecks” to dual-career homes. It is more intensified in the rural area of Chawama because couples confirmed that they lacked support systems that could offer services for children, counselling units and creating organised work plans for dual-career couples. Added to that, these obstacles didn’t just limit to parents but went beyond to affect the children emotionally. Many respondents testified how their children’s behaviour had changed due to their frequent absences from home. Some lamented that children they knew at ages 4-8 were no longer the same when they reached 12-15 years. Children’s behaviour subsequently changed as parental attention diminished. Some parents explained how their children especially the boys withdrew gradually from home and became more involved in neighbourhood activities especially as most children did not want to continue going to school. Pain could be perceived from the voices of 6 parents with same experiences, who wished they could change situations but to no avail because their livelihood depends on their occupations. This underscores the ripple effect of work-family strain, where unresolved tensions between partners can affect the developmental environment of the next generation. (A. Thomas, 2023)

In all, this study portrays a complex web of unachieved needs unbalanced roles and emotional fatigue that appeals for the re-enacting of how both

paid and unpaid labour is partitioned and valued within peasant households and how these families could be supported by social systems.

### Work-Home Transfers

This study showed a persistent pattern in the way participants responded to how emotional and physical toll moved to home environment. This was typical with business and professional respondents. From the interview, almost half the number of respondents (couples) explained how professional tasks did not just end at workplace but accompanied them home and extends to hours supposed to have been accorded to spouses and children. Four of the respondents all women restaurant owners emphasised how stressful it was to close from business, go home, prepare foodstuff for next day's business and the same time take care of their kids and husbands. *"Usually, my business ends at 16 hrs, I need to quickly rush to the market buy foodstuffs for next day, go home and start preparing, where is the time?"* Explained respondent 19 mother of three. Some business male spouses indicated how it was difficult for them to take part in home affairs when they got home, because that was the only time they had to do their balance sheets for the day. One of the respondents said *"my wife takes care of things like that my job is to provide"* when asked if he contributes to house chores and children's well-being. the course of doing this, attention is only focused on business, forgetting family obligations and responsibilities. Other respondents expressed frustrations how their work never ends from jobsite typical with black collar respondents *"my job ends at 17: 30hrs, I go home and start another shift of cooking, cleaning attending to my husband etc.' it gets me exhausted."* Respondent 8, black collar worker and mother of four.

Most couples complained they did not have enough time to connect emotionally with each other due to continuous role-switching, which always led to burnouts affecting intimate relationship.

*"Hmmm, this business has taken all my time. I get too tired to a point that I can't even speak well to my husband nor kids. Sometimes we sleep like brother and sister same bed. I feel like quitting but when I*

*think of how it sustains the family, I only continue."*  
Respondent 12, female business owner

This emotional remnant from work and lack of home support from male spouses, only amplify conflicts among spouses leading to gradual emotional withdrawal that turns bad as situations aggravate. Hence affecting children negatively. A good number of couples (women) complained how they quarrel with spouses almost all the time for not paying attention to their emotional demands, on account of being them tired and exhausted. This constant friction caused them to relay these frustrations to the children leaving them traumatised and psychologically tortured. *"My man gives me constant pressure emotionally; this makes me to just beat the kids for no just reason because I get frustrated with his ways."* Affirmed Respondent 6, black collar worker

These testimonies spotlights on how uncompleted business or workplace activities can obstruct peaceful family love and harmony. Which gives room for reinforcement and creating need for a better work and-life balance strategy in the rural dual-career household.

### Prevailing Gendered Roles

Results proved that traditional gender was still prevalent in most rural communities especially in Chawama where respondents (women) recounted how they embraced both home chores and work leaving them overwhelmed and fatigued. Some women expressed how after reaching home tired, they were still expected to bath the younger children, clean the house and cook food while their spouses communicate with friends in the yard.' double burden" Respondent a black-collar female expressed *"He is always on the table waiting for food"* This aligns with highlights from Nzasi (2023) on how societal and cultural expectations still dictating on both career and domestic roles. Some female couples reported to be emotionally and physically disengaged in marital affairs due to excessive exhaustion from imbalanced household responsibilities that make them unavailable to their spouses hence weakening intimacy that deteriorates marriage. Another black-collar female recounted how her career is not being valued by her spouse. *"He really does not care much if I go late to work*

*until I am done with what he expects from me*" highlighting disconnection and long marital dissatisfaction as this continues, leading to potential divorce. (Ridgeway. 2021). Results also demonstrated how men blatantly disengaged themselves from domestic scenes in the household and make women suffer with work alone. This also renders forums for emotional detachment and long-term emotional dissatisfactions with may lead to divorce if not well managed. Scholars have pointed out that most Dual-career households favor only men. Many female respondents complained of lack of facilities to support their children when they were at work, most had to lobby with their bosses for permission whereas some allowed the grown-up children to take care of their siblings while the men go to work hassle-free without bordering about the kids. One of the females lamented "*sometimes I miss work which can even cause me to be sacked because I don't anybody to leave my child to.*" These insights portray deep gender roles and human struggles that only harness intimacy gaps leading to spoiled.

### **Emotional absence in relationship with Spouses and Children**

Dual-career demands vested on Chawama couples notably shaped the quality of their marital and parental relationships. Findings demonstrated growing emotional distance between spouses stemming from fatigue, poor communication, behavioural discrepancies and mismatch. Most female spouses complained of their husbands reporting late all the time, and even when home, they busy with other personal activities paying less attention to their spouses and children. This made them feel like they are raising the children alone despite the fact that they also work. Some couples felt abandoned emotionally by their spouses as they described how their marriage debuts were enjoyable and satisfactory than then. Reactions from female respondents showed deep emotional gaps that existed in their spousal relationship. Five couples expressed they were at the verge of separation because marriage was no longer appetizing. "*He barely touches me, so what is the need we stick together?*" said respondent 24 female white-collar worker. Many female respondents expressed financial stabilities hence needed no stress from anybody. Results showed how most male respondents felt emotionally low when their spouses

felt emancipated. One of the courageous male respondents expressed his frustration picturing how his spouse saw herself as being superior. "*She thinks she is on top of the world because of the small change she brings home.*" There was a general overview of how women got stubborn as they start working, which made most men to withdraw emotionally seeking for ways to get that outside. "*We men change based on the attitudes of the women towards us*" said one of the black collar male respondents. "*With spouses and children.*"

Tensions most often spilled over to children affecting parents-child relationship. Analyzing respondents' views about their children regarding spousal loggerheads, most confessed that their children became withdrawn from sight always in their closet and emotionally distant themselves from parents due to lack of harmony home. Some female spouses narrated that children become more fun with them than their dads as fear had engraved the children. Some narrated as children disperse as soon as they find their parents returning home. This turns to aggravate social disconnections between parents and children leading them to some deviant assimilated behaviors. Some parents mentioned minimal relationship time they created with their children daily. Couples 10 and 16 mentioned how their boys aged 9 and 11 play football in the hood till 7:00pm. As soon as they come home, they move straight to their rooms without bothering if their parents were back from work or not. These outcomes mirror how children get deeply touched by the emotional climate of their homes. Unresolved marital upheavals do not only affect couples' bonds, but children's emotional well-being.

### **Communication Lapses**

As the study kept digging into why Dual-career marriages get affected, respondents repeatedly cited communication gaps among couples. As meaningful and open communication among couples became inconsistent. Couples reported that it has been long they held a conversation for up to one hour without any of the spouses getting distracted to do one or two things before returning to the conversation. Others said the most consistent communication revolved around logistics matters like bills, chores, or needs of the children. "*Sometimes my husband is speaking and texting messages of work misaligning with the*

*topic for discussion,” said a white-collar respondent.*

It was observed from respondents’ feedback that emotional attachment, peace keeping and reconciliation were virtually absent in their relationships due to poor communication skills amongst them. Others attested that their spouses hardly apologise for their wrongs thereby helping to stir more emotional stress in the relationship. Reports from couples highlight poor communication as a foundation to many nursed conflicts that often sparked to marital fights affected the children negatively. Spouse to respondent 17 quoted that *“as a couple it is rare to find us communicate intimately, except on money issues. And even when we are both homes, it seems like we are in separate worlds”* This tendency only ushered misunderstandings, assumptions and emotional distance amongst couples. Feelings of isolation deepened amongst couples especially when -partners failed to listen with empathy and interest. Some respondents especially female spouses grieved on how their husbands communicate with nods while browsing their phones *“I feel like talking to myself with communicating with my husband”* one of them explained. With this magnitude of communication gaps, intimacy, emotional safety and trust slowly erode. Lack of committed dialogue kept couples apart from each other even though they shared same space.

### **Social Media distractions**

Social media disruption was one of the striking themes that emerged among that emerged from respondents reprieving couples’ intimate time. Not only did couples return from work exhausted and burned out, but some couples also pointed out that social media apps like Facebook, TikTok, WhatsApp and Instagram had enormously disrupted the smooth flow of marital discussions and family engagements. Most women declared frustrations about their spouses’ abusive use of phones especially during times where they were required to engage with family and spend more time or support with household responsibilities. Complaints emerged from couples who felt their partners were paying more attention to their phones for online interactions than them. The wife to respondent 10 white collar, complained that even though her

husband sometimes stays home, but he is not present. *He always stays glued to his phone watching Facebook, WhatsApp and smiling over it while I prepare food for the family.*

Most complaints came from women who felt switch pitches from their spouses during discussions, only to realise their spouses were engaged with online activities before switching back. Sometimes she said, he even forgets the topic for discussion asking me to reiterate. Most women expressed a sense of neglect and emotional torture because their husbands devote more time online than to them. Other women complained that when speaking with their husbands they drop their phones to listen. But their husbands would not even pause to listen instead they kept asking for one more minute that never elapses. Scholars have called this Social Media displacement as digital engagement often replaces important engagements and interactions home. Addictive tendencies grow over time as couples keep scrolling leading to emotional disconnections, low empathy and conflicts in relationships. *“Phone has become my co-wife these days. His attention is more on phone than me”* said respondent 4 black collar feeling disappointed.

Findings demonstrate that even though social media acts as an entertainment industry connecting people, it has helped in destroying many relationships especially with couples who already get stretched thin with family demands and work. Couples face digital distractions that strained intimacy, communication barriers leading to unhappy marriage that affect children.

### **Financial Conflict**

Financial strains surfaced as a major source of tension in many of the dual-career households’ studies were conducted on. Despite both partners working, several men reported that their spouses were not contributing equitably to household expenses, leading to resentment and emotional damage to men. *“Everything in this house is on my head. I pay rents, buy food, pays fees yet I don’t rest with money issues.* Participant 8, black collar worker. Money conflict was reported in most household as a trigger to unsatisfactory marriage. Many spouses especially women from black collar jobs reported how their husbands virtually collect

their salaries through intimidations leaving them with almost nothing. Others expressed deep frustrations how spouses prefer to satisfy their personal needs rather than covering family needs on grounds that women are also working. Some women explained that their spouses are seen home only after paid salaries get finished. It was also recorded that most male spouses make financial decisions without informing their spouses until things go wrong, that is when spouses get to know. Meaning women only act as shock absorbers do not partner in financial decision making which always led to frustrations, resentment, sparking continuous marital problems that affect the children. Let's find out effects of dual-career on children.

### Effects on Children

#### Loneliness

As problems surround marriages, children are the first to suffer the impact besides couples themselves. Results from Chawama dual-career homes demonstrated how children got emotionally traumatised when staying back home almost the whole day without their parents. Parents recounted the withdrawal quietness and emotional distance of their children because of their absence and sometimes continuous hit-on arguments at home. Some children confirmed they almost do not see their parents before going to bed which was emotionally torturing. *"My parents argue all the time making me feel sad and I go to the room and cry"* said one of the couple's children aged 9. Burnouts from parents paved ways for frustrations and scolding of their children explained a couple. From this result, there is an alignment with a study on dual-career children suffering from reduced psychological well-being as parents' constant care diminishes. From study by Adenika & Kaloeti, 2024, they showed how limited parental time and emotional support impacted children's mental health negatively paving ways for isolation, behaviour issues and anxiety. Some parents complained of children's changes in moods all the time and how they refused even going to school Huda and Sa'diyah (2024) all portraying symptoms of loneliness. Results also proved that some Children of the Dual-career couples resorted to playing with friends when parents were absent, others stayed glued to phones while others watched TV.

Highlighting areas where different cultures could be assimilated easily.

#### Emotional Gap and Attachment barriers

In the study, there were increasing emotional gaps between children and parents in Dual-career homes in Chawama due to communication inconsistency from parents, limited quality time, disguised availability of parents' presence. Demanding work schedules deprived couples from having quality interactions with children confirmed some respondents. The fact that parents were home yet preoccupied by work, fatigue likewise digital distractions, caused children to distance themselves. One of the couples' daughter aged 16 happened to have been interviewed on how she felt about the communication with her parents. She specifically mentioned that her dad is always out and when he comes home, he is always on phone calling or browsing. *"My father and I are in the same house as two colleagues working in the same company but from different departments"* she said. This explains the magnitude to which some dual-career parents' distance from their kids. Many parents claimed they did not understand their children any longer, especially the older children as they turned to be more secretive doing things on their own without reverting for parental guidance. This situation as researchers term it generational gap depicts situations where children and parents battle to relate because of differences in expectations, experiences and communication styles.

#### Conclusion and Recommendations

This study has brought to light the complex and troubling realities existing within exurban dual-career household, particularly those in Chawama. Discoveries from this research highlight the widespread emotional, relational, and psychological toll which transgresses- not only on spouses but also onto their children, recording significant implications for family dynamics, as well as social upbringing in underrepresented contexts. This study portrayed enormous, gendered roles where women respondents pointed out of adopting professional roles and domestic responsibilities that deprived their emotional agility- as they constantly felt worn out to the extent of not being able to perform marital duties, thereby contemplations of divorce factor left

as the lone solution. As women stressed with “second shift” tendencies, men on their part worry about not relinquishing power and authority especially as they felt intimidated with the financial security of their spouses, thereby aggravating relentless pressures at home and widening emotional gaps between spouses and children. (Tayler,2025)

### Recommendations

Therefore, this study paves the way for a greater insight to broader literature on divorce factors and juvenile delinquency especially if that would be contextualised into rural and semi-urban areas in sub-Saharan countries like Zambia targeting rural communities suffering from limited and underrepresented information in the world knowledge. Room for further research on positive consequences of black-collar dual-career in rural communities. Address these digital behaviours that have grown rapidly in this age depriving one on one communication among people especially among couples by launching campaigns to sensitise on that.

There should be a development of a gender sensitive policies that obligate couples to share domestic chores equitably so long as both are working.

More research is required on causes of divorce and deviant behaviors in rural children.

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