

Family Cohesion of Dual Career Commuter Couples in Uyo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State

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Advancement in education and technology, specialized skills, and entry of women into the work force along with the male counterpart brought about dual career families – where both spouses pursue careers and at the same time maintain a family together (Sandow, 2012). Where couples cannot find employment in the same location, one partner may be forced to move to wherever the job is located, resulting in dual career commuting.

Dual career commuting is a long distance relationship in which intimate partners, committed to their relationship; live separately from each other due to the demands of work, education or family responsibilities (Sahlstein, 2000; Collins, 2012). When couples live separately from each other (dual career commuter couples), it is assumed that there may be difficulties maintaining family cohesion.

According to Rivera, Guarnaccia, Mulvaney, Lin and Alegria (2009), family cohesion is the emotional bonding and level of support and commitment that family members have towards each other. It measures the degree to which family members are connected to or separated from one another. There are four levels of family cohesion: disengaged, separated, connected and enmeshed. The two central levels – separated and connected, are considered to be the healthy or balanced levels of family cohesion and the two extreme levels – disengaged and enmeshed, are considered to be the unhealthy or unbalanced levels of family cohesion. Healthy cohesive family is characterized by open and clear communication, spending quality and quantity time together, commitment to each other and joint decision making. Previous researches have shown that dual career commuter couples have some challenges in achieving family cohesion including financial, social, emotional, relational, and others (Weisser, 2006; Fressle, 2010; Collins, 2012; Oyetunji, 2014). Observations and interactions with family members and friends reveal that most individuals employed or transferred to Federal establishments in the State are non-indigenes; who may or may not be married. This new status means that such couples do not only live apart but also manage two homes and this may have dire consequences on family cohesion.

Uyo has a number of Federal establishments with individuals who are dual career commuter couples although there are no known documented evidences of the influence of

this living arrangement on family cohesion. This study sought to provide information on these categories of persons, as well as bridge the gap in knowledge.

The main objective of this study was to assess Family Cohesion of Dual Career Commuter Couples in Uyo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State. Specifically, the study determined the

1. Demographic characteristics of dual career commuter couples in Uyo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State
2. Levels of family cohesion among the respondents in the study area;
3. Challenges faced by the respondents in the study area.

The study utilized the Expo-facto survey design. The research area was Uyo Local Government Area which is one of the thirty one Local Government Areas in Akwa Ibom State, and doubles as the State capital. The population comprised of married workers in the Federal Government Establishments within the scope who were not living together with their spouses, at the time of the study. The multistage sampling technique was used to arrive at the population which also served as the sample size. A structured questionnaire developed by the researchers was used for data. Descriptive statistical tools such as frequencies and percentages were used to analyse the research objectives, while Spearman's Rank Correlation Coefficient was used in analysing the hypotheses.

Results revealed that dual career commuter couples in Uyo are heterogeneous group. Family cohesion of the respondents was at separated level - considered to be the healthy or balanced levels of family cohesion; challenges mostly faced by the couples as a result of commuting were financial, emotional and work related problems amongst others.

The study recommended that couples should weigh the gains and losses in dual career commuting before embarking on it as what works for one family may not work for another; and should deliberately plan to spend quality time together, which can potentially close the gap that a long commuting created.

Introduction

Globally, the family is regarded as the oldest social institution which emerges as a social pattern whereby two or more persons grouped themselves to find and share emotional, physical and communal support, various tasks and economic resources through marriage (Olson & DeFrain, 2000). Although family structures across the globe may vary based on culture, the family performs basically the same fundamental functions - the most common living arrangement for adults, and a unit for socializing the children.

The family as the basic unit of the society has been undergoing transformations, and facing challenges over the years. Nwoke (2004) observed that the changing realities of time and place have greatly affected the family framework all over the world. The idealized image of a traditional family consisted of an employed husband and a wife who stayed home and took care of the family and children. When the family stays together, there exists a bond, as members see each other daily, interact with one another and spend time together in shared activities which make them have a sense of oneness (family cohesion).

Advancement in education and technology, specialized skills, and entry of women into the work force along with their male counterparts brought about dual career families – where both spouses pursue careers and at the same time maintain a family together (Sandow, 2012). Where couples cannot find employment in the same location, one partner may be forced to move to wherever the job is located, resulting in dual career commuting. Dual career commuting is a long distance relationship in which intimate partners, committed to their relationship; live separately from each other due to the demands of work, education or family responsibilities (Sahlstein, 2004; Collins, 2012). When couples live separately from each other (dual career commuter couples), it is assumed that they may have some difficulties in maintaining family cohesion.

According to Rivera, Guarnaccia, Mulvaney, Lin and Alegria (2009), family cohesion is the emotional bonding and level of support and commitment that family members have towards each other. It measures the degree to which family members are connected to or separated from one another. Olson and De-Frain (2000) identified four levels of family cohesion: disengaged, separated, connected and enmeshed. According to the curvilinear hypothesis, balanced level of cohesion tend to reflect more healthy family cohesion, while unbalanced level of cohesion (very low or very high) tend to reflect more problematic or low family cohesion (Kim, Oh & Parker, 2009). According to Olson and De-Frain (2000) the balance between separateness and togetherness is the essence of family cohesion. The two central levels – separated and connected, are considered to be the healthy or balanced levels of family cohesion and the two extreme levels – disengaged and enmeshed, are considered to be the unhealthy or unbalanced levels of family cohesion.

Disengaged family cohesion is associated with cold, controlling and withdrawn relationships (Hornwath, 2010). Couples share few interests, activities or friends;

affection and sexual satisfaction is low, and is also characterised by poor communication. Lee (2013) observed that in disengaged family relationships, members make no commitment to their family; it is low on support but very strong on their rules and control. There is little closeness, little loyalty and high independence and the family is less adaptive to change (Stoop and Masteller, 2008). Cutler (2014) noted that companionship – a very valuable component of marriage, is largely missing among dual career commuter couples on disengaged level of family cohesion and this may challenge the opportunity for intimacy (an important element in cohesive families).

Separated family cohesion is characterized by low to moderate closeness, some loyalty and interdependent with more independence than dependence (Hornwath, 2010), and members though emotionally separated, exchange their views with each other (Lee, 2013). According to Sahlstein (2004), and Lacy (2011) many dual career commuter couples though separated geographically and very independent, remain connected with their spouses, spending a great deal of time and expense to do so; and that the balance of these contradicting needs for autonomy and connectedness is considered an important aspect of success in dual career commuting relationship.

Connected Family is characterized by moderate to high closeness, high loyalty, interdependent with more dependence than independence. There is a sense of individuality without a loss of connectedness; and members show intimacy and loyalty toward each other (Lee, 2013). Couples enjoy being together and doing things together, but are able to relate to people and be active outside of the family as well; not feeling guilty or disloyal when away from the family, but are able to share outside experiences with other family members, knowing that other family members will understand and accept their choices. There is a mutual respect that allows for freedom of activity without any hidden agenda that triggers guilt; and support for individual uniqueness, coupled with shared appreciation for one another's accomplishments (Stoop & Masteller, 2008). Enmeshed families are characterized by an extreme sense of closeness, so much so that almost any expression of independence or separateness is seen as disloyalty to the family (Hornwath, 2010). Within the enmeshed family, boundaries are virtually non-existent as everyone experiences life as almost totally 'overlapping' with everyone else's. Symptoms of enmeshment in the family include one person answering for another, one person finishing another's statement and people interrupting each other. Enmeshed families may be emotionally involved and display some warmth, but experience 'high levels of hostility, destructive meddling and a limited sense of the family as a team' (Kim *et al*, 2012); and Lee (2013) maintained that over-involvement in each other's lives results in imbalanced (problematic) relationships.

Family cohesion is measured by focusing on the family as a group with regards to its listening skills, speaking skills, self-disclosure and tracking (Stoop & Masteller, 2008). Although researchers have devised a number of means to measure characteristics of family life, the characteristics considered to be important to the functioning of the family is built into one scale which measures 'total family functioning'. One such measure is

Family Adaptability and Cohesion Evaluation Scale (FACES) which was designed by Olson (1983) to test hypotheses derived from his Circumplex model. Family cohesion is operationalized in terms of measures of component construct such as communication, spending time together, commitment and joint decision making within the family (Olson & DeFrain, 2000). Families who score high on this overall assessment are considered strong and cohesive, and families who score low on the overall assessment are considered weak and less cohesive. Kim *et al.* (2009) confirmed that FACES is the most common tool used to assess family cohesion.

Researchers characterize communication patterns of cohesive families as clear, open and frequent. Family members talk to each other often, and when they do, they are honest and open with each other (Kim, Joh & Shin, 2012). Indeed the circumplex model developed by Olson and colleagues, identified communication as the facilitating dimension of a cohesive family (Krysan, Moore & Zill, 2009). Dollar and Dollar (2002) observed that effective communication between spouses produces a successful marriage whereas lack of it brings about anger, bitterness and resentment that thrive in relationships today which if they are allowed to escalate out of control, the family cohesion will be threatened. Other researchers have also discovered a strong link between communication patterns and satisfaction with family relationships (Ledbetter, 2009; Wood, 2013).

Fresle (2010) observed that maintaining a cohesive family is difficult for the dual career commuter couples who do not stay in a single residence, as the families become fragmented due to the long distance separating members. Based on this, various researches have shown that dual career commuter couples have some challenges in achieving family cohesion. These may include financial, social, emotional, relational, and others (Weisser, 2006; Fresle, 2010; Collins, 2012).

Dual career commuter couples encounter financial challenges which occur from managing two households in different locations (Jackson, Brown & Patterson-Stewart, 2000). Whereas couples in dual career commuting relationship may have two incomes, it may be costly to maintain two households; as there are two homes to maintain, phone bills to pay and costly visits (Scott, 2002). These items add up quickly and couples report that this lifestyle is financially draining. Research has shown that, dual career commuter couples incur financial challenges arising from payment for two sets of housing and utility bills, income taxes in two geographical locations and communication ((Weisser, 2006; Collins, 2012). Glotzer and Federlein (2007) also affirmed that dual career commuting entails more expenses on extra travel to be with the family and back to the second residence.

One of the costs of emotional challenge may come from simply not spending enough time with one's family. According to Scott (2002), couples are not only unable to see each other, but they cannot touch each other, which may be one of the aspects of emotional support commuter couples miss most. In addition, anxieties exist including fears about growing apart, divorce and sexual infidelity particularly among younger

couples (Jackson *et al.* 2000). Ben-zeev (2013) reported that older, more established couples experience the fear of growing apart, but much less about divorce and sexual infidelity compared to the adjusting couples (younger couples). Depression and anxiety are consistently raised as serious concerns for dual career commuter couples in most researches. According to Gallegos (2006), Fresle (2010), and Henry, Hamilton, Watson and MacDonald (2013), the return to home and departure to work points are times of stress as couples and families prepare themselves for the impending separation from the commuter partner in the days leading up to their departure, and subsequently adapting to having the couple home again. A study by Clifford (2009), found that both commuter and non-commuter partner were more likely to experience periods of depression and anxiety during the transition periods. Loneliness, boredom and emotional isolation for “non-commuters” were identified as significant issues in a number of studies (Fresle, 2010; Hoath & Haslam-Mckenzie, 2013).

Dual career commuter couples may have the problem of misperception from others, especially their social support network. Oluwole, Hammed and Awaebe (2012) explained that social support is the physical and emotional comfort given to individuals by family, friends, coworkers and others in difficult times to alleviate the stress. At times, family members may be confused about the commuter lifestyle, not perceiving the benefits to the partners and family, at times resulting in them expressing negative opinions about the commuter lifestyle to one or both partners (Holmes, 2004). Peers, friends, coworkers and employers may look at the partners in commuter marriages as ‘footloose’, ‘fancy free’ and ‘ready-to-play’, assuming that the couples are separated or getting a divorce, or that no serious relationship exists, simply because the couples are not living together as conventional or proximal relationships (Bearce, 2014).

Many dual career commuter couples may face psychological challenges. The study by Henry *et al.* (2013) discovered a high prevalence of psychological distress and a greater likelihood of a psychological disorder incidence amongst dual career commuters. Bergen (2006) also reported of wives in commuter relationships describing their situation as ‘torn between two worlds’ and feeling guilty about not being able to do it all. Dual career commuter couples may also face social challenges, as couples lack time to interact with and socialize with family and friends (Barbato & Flood, 2005). Upbringing of children may also pose a challenge to dual commuter couples. Gent (2004) noted that the greatest parenting challenge imposed by dual career commuting is transition from a single parent household (while the commuter is away), to a dual parent household (when the commuter is at home) and vice versa. The coming and going creates confusion as to who makes decision and which role each partner plays. This challenge may be reflected in Bradbury’s (2011) finding in which over 50% of the parents reported parenting conflict over child rearing issues. Parenting in the absence of dual career commuter partner presents challenges related to providing for the physical, emotional and intellectual needs of children without the presence or support of a partner at home (Gallegos, 2006). Various studies have shown that adolescents who live in an arrangement other than with two biological parents report more substance use than those

who live with both parents (Blum, Beuring, Shew, Bearinger, Sieving & Resnick, 2000; Barrett & Turner, 2006); increased rates of cigarette smoking (Miller & Volk, 2002); smoking initiation, promiscuity (Edelen, Tucker & Elickson 2007); and other delinquent behaviours (Derzon & Lipsey, 2000; Mack, Leiber, Featherstone & Monserud 2007; Wasserman & Seracini, 2010).

Other- work related challenges include hectic schedules, stress, work-family conflicts, etc. Weisser (2006) confirmed that one of the most pervasive drawbacks to dual commuter lifestyle is hectic schedule.

In Nigeria in general and Akwa Ibom State in particular, increased rate of unemployment and poverty has resulted in various individuals, including married persons accepting and taking up employment outside the geographical location where their families are resident. Observations and interactions with family members and friends reveal that many workers employed or transferred to Federal establishments in the State are non-indigenes; who may or may not be married. The married individuals in most cases prefer to allow their families remain in their former stations or homestead. This new status means that such couples do not only live apart but also manage two homes, and this may have dire consequences on family cohesion, although there are no known documented evidences of the influence of this living arrangement on family cohesion in the area. Many of the researches on dual career commuting lifestyle were conducted outside Nigeria in general and Akwa Ibom State in particular. Peculiar social, cultural, and economic conditions in the country may influence family cohesion of dual career commuter couples differently. There seems to be dearth of information about this in literature hence the need for this study. This study therefore sought to provide information on these categories of persons, as well as bridge the gap in knowledge. This study is relevant as the findings if well publicized will be of immense benefit to all married persons, who are engaged in gainful employment outside their homes, as they will gain insight on how to assess the level of their family cohesion. Moreover, couples who may be searching for employment will be acquainted with the challenges they may likely to face in case they are offered such employment outside their geographical stead, and how the commuting lifestyle may influence their family cohesion.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study was to assess Family Cohesion of Dual Career Commuter Couples in Uyo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State. Specifically, the study determined the:

1. Demographic characteristics of dual career commuter couples in Uyo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State;
2. Levels of family cohesion among the respondents in the study area;
3. Challenges faced by the respondents in the study area.
4. The relationship between duration of staying apart due to commuting and family Cohesion.

Research Questions

The study answered the following research questions:

1. What are the demographic characteristics of dual career commuter couples in Uyo Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State?
2. What are the levels of family cohesion among the respondents in the study area?
3. What are the challenges faced by the respondents in the study area?
4. Establish the relationship between duration of staying apart due to commuting and family Cohesion.

Research Hypothesis

The null hypothesis formulated to guide the study was tested at $P < 0.05$ level of significance.

HO₁: There is no significant relationship between duration of staying apart due to commuting and family Cohesion.

Methodology

Research Design

The study utilized the Expo-facto survey design. The Expo-facto survey design allowed the examination of the independent variable in retrospect for its possible relationship and

effect on the dependent variable. In other words, dual career commuter couples were examined and how their family cohesion as the dependent variable was affected.

Area of the Study

The research area was Uyo Local Government Area which is one of the thirty one Local Government Areas in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria, located on the coastal South Eastern part of the country, and lying between latitudes $4^{\circ}32'N$ and $5^{\circ}33'N$, and Longitudes $7^{\circ}25'E$ and $8^{\circ}25'E$ of the Meridian. The people of Uyo Local Government Area who are predominantly Christians are of the Ibibio ethnic origin having a very rich cultural background and common language also called 'Ibibio', with main occupations including farming, petty trading, civil servants, and local craft. However, the city is presently made up of migrants' population from other part of the state, other States in the country and foreigners. Uyo serves a dual role as the state capital and the local government headquarters; and by virtue of its geographical location is the commercial nerve-centre of the entire State, playing host to State and Federal Government Establishments hence, its choice by the researchers, since it has the potentials of having people from different geographical locations coming to work or school, and hence having a lived experience of dual career commuter relationship.

Population of the Study

The population of this study comprised all married workers in the Federal Government Establishments located within Uyo Local Government Area who were not living together in the same residence with their spouses, not because of marital strife or incarceration at the time of the study. The number of couples that met the population characteristic was 124, chosen because they would have had the experience of dual career commuting.

Sample Size and Sampling Technique

The total population of one hundred and twenty four (124) identified as dual career commuter couples from Federal Government Establishments located in Uyo was used as sample for the study. The multistage sampling technique was utilized to arrive at the sample size. The first stage involved purposive selection of 50 Federal Government Establishments located within Uyo Local Government Area. Next, subjects who met the description of dual career commuter couples were selected from each of the selected Federal Government Establishments using snow-ball sampling technique. This number serve as 'convenience sample' which according to Handcock *et al.* (2012) is used for documenting particular characteristics or phenomenon that occurs within a given group with unknown population. However, the findings reported herein are based on 105 respondents because the research team was able to retrieve 116 questionnaires from the 124 issued out, while 11 copies of the questionnaires were invalid.

Instrument for Data Collection

A structured questionnaire captioned, Family Cohesion of Dual Career Commuter Couples Questionnaire (FCDCCCQ) developed by the researchers was used for gathering the relevant data. It was divided into four sections (A – D). Section A consisted of multiple choice questions which sought for demographic information of the respondents. Section B adapted from Family Adaptability and Cohesion Evaluation Scale (FACES IV) by Olson, Gorall and Tiesel (2004), altered to suit the present study consisted of a four point rating questions ranging from Almost Never, Once in a while, Frequently to Most Frequently. These ratings represented levels of family cohesion of the respondents namely; Disengaged, Separated, Connected and Enmeshed Family Cohesion respectively. Section C sought answers to questions on the challenges faced by dual career commuter couples with a three point scale ranging from major challenge, minor challenge and not a challenge.

Validation and Reliability of the Instrument

The instrument was subjected to face validation by colleagues in the Department of Human Ecology, Nutrition and Dietetics, Sociology and Statistics in University of Uyo. The items were reviewed in terms of clarity, relevance and appropriateness of language to the respondents; with their suggestions and contributions incorporated into the final copy of the instrument.

To ensure the reliability of the instrument, it was subjected to split-half reliability test using 18 dual career commuter couples not included as samples in the study from other Federal Government Establishments outside Uyo Local Government Area. Copies of questionnaires collected from the respondents were randomly split into two groups. A score for each subject was then calculated based on each half of the scale using the Spearman rho correlation coefficient. The result obtained from the test analysis justified the use of the instrument for the main study since the reliability coefficient (0.7) was good (Cicchetti & Sparrow, 1981), and above 0.50 recommended by Gaskell, Wright & O'Muirheartaigh (2003).

Administration of the Instrument

A pre - field survey was first done to identify dual commuters in all the selected Federal Government establishments. For administration of the instrument, the research team on reaching the selected Federal Government Establishments met with heads of each of the establishments and obtained permission to administer the questionnaires. Copies of the research instrument were administered to the subjects who agreed to take part in the study with the assistance of three undergraduate students who were trained on how to administer the instruments. The respondents were guided and given sufficient time to

complete the questionnaire after which the researchers went back on agreed date to collect the completed questionnaires. Out of one hundred and twenty four (124) copies of the questionnaires that were given, one hundred and sixteen (116) questionnaires were successfully recovered. From the 116 questionnaires recovered, eleven (11) were excluded from the sample due to invalid or incomplete data. One hundred and five (105) copies of questionnaires were considered suitable and used for the study.

Method of Data Analysis

Descriptive statistical tools such as frequencies and percentages were used to analyse the research objectives, while Spearman's Rho Correlation Coefficient was used in analysing the hypothesis.

Results

The following findings were made:

1. Socio demographic characteristics of dual career commuter couples in Uyo Local Government Area (see Table 1).
2. Levels of family cohesion among the respondents in the study area (see Table 2)
3. The challenges faced by the respondents in the study area (see Table 3)
4. The relationship between duration of staying apart due to commuting and family Cohesion (Table 4).

Table 1

Percentage analysis of socio demographic characteristics of dual career commuter couples in Uyo Local Government Area

	Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Sex	Male	52	49.5
	Female	53	50.5
	Total	105	100.0

Age in years	< 20	1	1.0
	21-30	23	21.9
	31-40	39	37.1
	41-50	33	31.4
	51-60	7	6.7
	>60	2	1.9
	Total	105	100.0
Educational status	No formal education	0	0
	Primary	5	4.8
	Secondary	12	11.4
	Tertiary	88	83.8
	Total	105	100.0
Years in marriage	<1 year	8	7.6
	1-5 years	38	36.2
	6-10 years	25	23.8
	11-15 years	17	16.2
	16-20 years	15	14.3
	21 years and above	2	1.9
	Total	105	100.0
Number of children	No child	23	21.9
	1-3 children	53	50.5
	4-6 children	26	24.8

	7-9 children	2	1.9
	10 children and above	1	1.0
	Total	105	100.0
Respondents' residence	Within Uyo Local Government Area	105	100.0
	Outside UyoLGA	0	0.0
	Total	105	100.0
Respondents' Spouses' residence	Outside Uyo LGA	105	100.0
	Within Uyo LGA	0	0.0
	Total	105	100.0
Distance between spouses	Very far	20	19.0
	Far	20	19.0
	Near	57	54.3
	Very Near	8	7.6
	Total	105	100.0
Maximum duration of staying apart	Weekly	20	19.0
	Fortnightly	13	12.4
	Monthly	48	45.7
	Quarterly	13	12.4
	Yearly	11	10.5

Total	105	100.0
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Table 1 show that 53 of the respondents (50.5%) were females, while 52 respondents (49.5%) were males, indicating that both males and females were involved in dual career commuting in the study area. Age distribution was less than 20 years (1.0%), 21-30 years (21.9%), 31-40 years (37.1%); 41- 50 years (31.4%); 51- 60 years (6.7%), and above 61 years (1.9%); revealing that most of the respondents in this study were between the ages of 31 and 40. All the respondents had formal education with the majority (88.3) having tertiary educational qualification. On number of years in marriage the distribution show that eight respondents (7.6%) were under one year of marriage, 1-5years of marriage (36.2%), 6-10 years (23.8%), 11-15 years (16.2%), 16-20 years (14.3%), and above twenty years (1.9%); revealing that most respondents (36.2%) were married for between 1-5 years. On the number of children the respondents have, 23 respondents (21.9%) indicated that they had no child, (50.5%) had between 1- 3 children, (24.8%) had 4-6 children, (1.9%) had 7-9 children while (1.0%) indicated having 10 children and above; showing that most of the respondents (50.5%) had between 1 – 3 children.

The distribution of responses also shows that all the respondents resided within Uyo Local Government Area while their spouses lived in different locations from them at the time of the study. The distance between where the respondents and their spouses reside were described as very far 19.0%), far (19.0%), near (54.3%), and very near (7.6%); therefore showing that the distance between most of the respondents and their spouses in this study was near. On the maximum duration of staying apart before meeting their spouses, 19.0% reported staying apart weekly; 12.4% fortnightly; 45.7% monthly, 12.4% quarterly and 10.5% reported staying apart and meeting their spouses yearly.

Table 2: Levels of Family cohesion of Dual Career Commuter Couples in Uyo Local Government Area

Levels of Family Cohesion						
Components of Family Cohesion		Almost Never	Once in a while	Frequently	Most Frequently	Total
Communication	Freq.	1	42	56	6	105
	(%)	1.0	40.0	53.3	5.7	100
Time Together	Freq.	10	59	21	15	105
	(%)	9.5	56.2	20.0	14.3	100

Commitment	Freq.	0	13	62	30	105
	(%)	0	12.4	59.0	28.6	100
Decision making	Freq.	1	65	35	4	105
	(%)	1.0	61.9	33.3	3.8	100
Mean Family Cohesion	(%)	2.9	42.6	41.4	13.1	100

*(Almost Never = Disengaged; Once in a while = Separated; Frequently = Connected; Most Frequently = Enmeshed)

On levels of family cohesion, Table 2 shows the distribution on the different measures of family cohesion with 1.0% reporting almost never communicating with his/her spouse (Disengaged); 40.0%) communicating once in a while (Separated); 53.3% communicating frequently (Connected), and 5.7% communicating most frequently (Enmeshed).

On spending time together, 9.5% were at Disengaged level; 56.2% at the Separated level; 20.0% at the Connected level, and 14.3% at the Enmeshed level. On commitment, 12.4% revealed that they were Separated; 59.0% Connected, 28.6% Enmeshed, and non reported being disengaged. On decision making, 1.0% of respondents reported being at disengaged level; 61.9% were Separated, 33.3% Connected, and 3.8% Enmeshed. The summary of result presented on Table 2 therefore shows that family cohesion of dual career commuter couples in this study is at Separated level (low to moderate cohesion) as reported by a greater percentage of the respondents (42.6%).

Table 3: Challenges faced by dual career commuter couples in Uyo Local Government Area

	Major challenge		Minor Challenge		Not a Challenge	
	Freq.	Percentage	Freq.	Percentage	Freq.	Percentage
Challenges						
Financial	50	47.6	26	24.8	29	22.6
Emotional	45	43.0	21	20.0	39	37.1
Work Related problems	41	39.0	46	43.8	18	17.1

Poor children upbringing	28	26.7	34	32.4	43	41.0
Misperception from others	23	22.0	44	42.0	38	36.2
Increased marital problem	20	19.0	36	34.3	49	46.7
Psychological	13	12.4	35	33.3	57	54.3
Social	11	10.5	33	31.4	61	58.1

Table 3 above on challenges faced by dual commuter couples indicate that 50 respondents (47.6%) viewed finances as their major challenge, 26 (24.8%) as minor challenge, and 29 (27.6) as not a challenge. On emotional challenges, 45 respondents (42.9%) identified it as their major challenge, 21(20.0%) as a minor challenge, and 39 (37.1%) as not a challenge. 41 respondents (39.0%) reported work related challenge as their major challenge, 46 respondents (43.8%) as a minor challenge, while 18 respondents (17.1%) did not report work related challenges. Poor child upbringing was identified by 28 respondents (26.7%) as their major challenge, 34 respondents (32.4%) as a minor challenge, and 43 respondents (41.0%) as not a challenge. Misperception from others was a major challenge to 23 respondents (22.0%), minor challenge to 44 respondents (42.0%), and not a challenge to 38 respondents (36.2%). Increased marital problem was reported as a major challenge by 20 respondents (19.0%), minor challenge by 36 respondents (34.3%), and not a challenge by 49 respondents (46.7%). Psychological challenge was major challenge to 13 respondents, minor challenge to 35 respondents (33.3%), and not a challenge to 57 respondents (54.3%). Social challenge was major challenge to 11 respondents (10.5%), minor challenge to 33 respondents (31.4%), and not a challenge to 61 respondents (58.1%).

Hypothesis One

HO₁: There is no significant relationship between duration of staying apart due to commuting and family Cohesion

Table 4

Relationship between duration of staying apart due to commuting and family cohesion

	Duration of staying apart	Family
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			cohesion	
Spearman's rho	Duration of staying apart	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	0.12**
		Sig.(2 tailed)		
		N	105	105
	Family cohesion	Correlation Coefficient	0.12**	
		Sig.(2 tailed)	0.24	
		N	105	

** $r = 0.12$; $P < 0.05$

Table 4 above, on the relationship between duration of staying apart due to commuting and family cohesion among dual career commuter couples shows that the calculated r value (0.12) is greater than the P value (<0.05), meaning that family cohesion of the respondents is not dependent on duration of staying apart before meeting each other. The null hypothesis is therefore accepted.

Discussion of Findings

Socio-Demographic

The result shows that both men and women are involved in dual career commuting (See Table 1). This may be because both men and women are advanced in educational pursuit, and have specialized skills which warrant their working outside their home; moreover financial or economic pressure may push couples to work outside their home. This result is in agreement with an earlier report by Ben-zeev (2013) who observed that dual career commuting came about because both spouses have career goals that cannot be met in the

same geographic locations. Bearce (2014), and Landesmad and Seward (2013) also noted that women as partners and/or mothers have increasingly become more mobile as well; as evident in the greater percentage (50.5%) of the female respondents recorded in this study.

The result reveals that a greater percentage of the respondents are between the ages of 31 and 40 years, while only 1% being less than 20 years of age. The result is in line with that of Glotzer and Federlein (2007) who found that the mean age of dual career commuter couples was 35, and Ray (2008) who discovered that most of the dual career commuter couples were between the ages of 25- 65 years with the mean age being mid to late thirties. However, in the researchers' opinion the greater percentage of the respondents being within the 31 and 40 years bracket may be as a result of the fact that they are still in active service.

The result also shows that most of the respondents had tertiary educational qualification while the least had primary education, confirming previous researches by VanderKlis and Karsten (2009) and Justice (2009) that most dual career commuter couples have a high level of education, and have professional or executive careers. It also supports an earlier finding by Sadow (2012), that dual career commuting came about as a result of advancement in education and entry of women into the workforce along with the male counterpart. More so, since the respondents in the present study are workers in Federal Government Establishments, it is expected that they have higher educational qualification.

Results in Table 1 show that majority the respondents were in their first five years of marriage, reflecting the population who were Federal Government workers in active service and between the ages of 31 and 40. It is assumed that people in this age range should be in their first five years of marriage. This result however differs from the earlier study by Glotzer and Federlein (2007), and Landesmad and Seward (2009) whose respondents had been married for about ten years and nine years respectively.

Table 1 on the number of children may be attributed to the fact that the greater percentage of the respondents are in their first five years of marriage; and are not living in the same residence with their spouses. Moreover, the only respondent who reported having more than ten children may be a man from a polygamous family with many children. This finding is in support of a study conducted by Bolick (2012) which indicated that forty to fifty percents of dual career commuter couples have children, and Glotzer and Federlein (2007), who opined that dual career commuter couples may not be able to have many children since they do not live in the same geographic location.

Analysis on the distance between the respondents and their spouses shows that the distance between the respondents and their spouses was near as indicated by a greater percentage of the respondents while the least number of respondents reported that the distance between them and their spouses was very near. This result therefore revealed

that most respondents were staying in neighbouring states from their spouses hence the greater percentage.

Result on the duration that the respondents stayed apart before meeting their spouses indicates that a greater percentage of dual career commuter couples stayed apart and meet monthly while the least percentage of the respondents stayed apart yearly before meeting their spouses. The researchers opine that because the respondents in this study are civil servants they may have to depend on their monthly salaries to be able to travel home to be with their spouses/families. This finding is in support of an earlier finding by Scott (2002) that dual career commuter couples meet once every two weeks to once every month. Justice (2009) also stated that dual career commuter couples work away from home for up to a week or even longer. This result is also in agreement with those of other researchers which revealed that the commuting spouse return at intervals as frequently as every weekend or as infrequently as a few times a year, or spouses may remain in their residences and take turns in travelling to meet their spouses (Rhodes, 2002; Holmes, 2006; Bergen, 2012). The least percentage of respondents who reported that they stayed apart yearly before meeting their spouses/family may be because their spouses are not living within the country as indicated from their responses. According to Glotzer and Federlein (2007), the longer distance open-ended dual career commuter couples are the most difficult, as visiting home for the commuting spouse take longer, entail more expenses and are of shorter duration. These yearly meetings may be the hardest on emotional bonds, routines and intimacy of couples; and also hardest on children, pressing one parent into a 'super parent' role while the other parent struggles to make their parenting real to their children.

Levels of Family Cohesion of Dual Career Commuter Couples

The analysis in Table 2 shows that the level of family cohesion among the respondents was on separated level – (low to moderate family cohesion) as indicated by the greater percentage of the respondents while the least number of respondents were on disengaged level – (very low or unhealthy level). According to Olson and DeFrain (2000), the two central levels (separated and connected) are considered to be healthy or balanced levels of family cohesion while the two extremes (disengaged and enmeshed) are considered to be unhealthy or unbalanced levels of family cohesion. The result may be a reflection of the fact that dual career commuter couples do not live in the same residence and geographic location, as such their level of family cohesion could not be the same as those in geographically close relationships since they are different from the conventional family. More so, the level of their family cohesion in this study is considered healthy because dual career commuter couples are both independent of, and connected to their families. The finding agrees with the views of other researchers that dual career commuter couples though separated geographically and very independent, remain connected with their spouses, and that the balance of these contradicting needs for autonomy and connectedness is considered an important aspect of success in dual career commuting relationship (Sahlstein, 2004; Lacy, 2011). In the researchers' opinion, these

couples must have employed all available resources within the family to maintain their family cohesion, such as making use of information and communication technological (ICT) gadgets to keep in contact with their spouses which aid in achieving family cohesion.

Results in Table 2 on the component constructs that make up family cohesion reveal that dual career commuter couples frequently communicated with their spouses; and studies have confirmed that effective communication between spouses produces a successful marriage, whereas lack of it brings about anger, bitterness and resentment which could threaten family cohesion if allowed to escalate out of control. The Circumplex model developed by Olson and colleagues, identified communication as the facilitating dimension of a cohesive family (Krysan, Moore & Zill, 2009). Other researchers have discovered a strong link between communication patterns and satisfaction with family relationships (Ledbetter, 2009; Wood, 2013).

Table also shows that the least percentage of the respondents' family cohesion was at disengaged level. This may be that since some respondents described the distance between them and their spouses as very far; and the duration of staying apart before meeting their spouses stretching up to a year, their ability to cohere healthily could be affected. According to Hornwath (2010), couples on disengaged family cohesion share few interests, activities or friends; conflict, affection and sexual satisfaction is low and communication is also poor. There is little closeness, little loyalty and high independence (Stoop & Masteller, 2008). Cutler (2014) noted that companionship – a very valuable component of marriage, is largely missing among dual career commuter couples on disengaged level of family cohesion and this may challenge the opportunity for intimacy (an important element in cohesive families).

Challenges Faced By Dual Career Commuter Couples

Results in Table 3 show that dual career commuter couples in Uyo Local Government Area face a lot of challenges in their bid to combine outside employment and family related responsibilities coupled with the distance separating them. This result is in agreement with an earlier report by Fresle (2010) that maintaining a cohesive family is difficult for the dual career commuter couples who do not stay in a single residence as the families become fragmented due to the long distance, separating members. Financial challenge ranks first as a major challenge, followed by emotional challenges. This agrees with Weisser (2006); Glotzer and Federlein (2007); Collins (2012) who indicated that whereas dual career commuter couples may have two incomes, it may be costly to maintain two households as there are two income taxes to pay, phone bills to pay and costly visits, thus adding up, making the living arrangement financially draining. Result on emotional challenges ranking second as another major challenge supports Scott (2002) who observed that the strongest cost of emotional challenge comes from the couples not spending enough time with their spouses/family; as couples are not only unable to see each other daily but they cannot touch each other, which is one of the aspects of

emotional support they miss most. Moreover, Jackson *et al.* (2000) noted that these concerns are particularly salient for younger couples. The researchers feel that since a greater percentage of the respondents in this study are in their first five years of marriage (adjusting couples), this living arrangement impacts on their emotional wellbeing. Challenges reported as minor challenge in order of importance include work- related challenges, misperception from others, and increased marital problem. The finding is in support an investigation carried out by Collins (2012), which revealed that there are times when work interferes with the times the couples can spend together. Scott (2002) also confirmed that time together is sometimes neglected or postponed due to work responsibilities. Based on this, it can be concluded that stress from work can further add up to work related challenge faced by dual career commuter couples, although the respondents in this study reported that work related challenge was a minor challenge to them. The fact that misperception from others is reported as a minor challenge in this study reflects the confidence the respondents have on themselves. This however seems to be at variance with views of other researchers that couples in dual career commuting relationship are believed by their friends, families and social networks to be in trial separation or a precursor to divorce and this pose a challenge to the relationship (Levin, 2004). Other possible challenges faced by dual career commuter couple such as social and psychological challenges were not regarded as such by the respondents in the present study. This finding does not agree with the earlier findings by Barbato and Flood (2005), who reported that dual career commuter couples lack time to interact with and socialize with family and friends. It also disagrees with the findings of Groves and Horm-Wingered (1991) that 63% of the respondents in the study reported negative social attitude towards them. The researchers believe that the advent of ICT has helped dual career commuter couples to maintain social contacts with family and friends via tools such as web cams, Skype and other social networking sites, thereby not being socially excluded from the social world.

The finding that Psychological challenge was identified in this study as not a challenge to the respondents is also at variance with the study by Henry *et al.* (2013) who discovered a high prevalence of psychological distress and a greater likelihood of a psychological disorder incidence amongst dual career commuters. Bergen (2006) also reported of wives in commuter relationships describing their situation as ‘torn between two worlds’ and feeling guilty about not being able to do it all. The differences in the results of this study and others may be attributed to the fact that the couples are now able to remain connected to their spouses even though they stay in different locations, and the cultural background differences.

Relationship between Duration of Staying Apart Due To Commuting and Family Cohesion

The result of this study reveals no significance relationship between duration of staying apart and family cohesion as the r value (-0.12) is greater than P ($P < 0.05$), thereby upholding the null hypothesis. This means that cohesion of the couples is not influenced by length of time the couples stay apart. This finding disagrees with that of Beauvoir (2008) who reported that the long duration of staying apart leads to reduction in the quality of relationships as couples may rarely get to see one's partner and children in person and the day to day opportunities for physical closeness and intimacy are not available.

Conclusion :

Based on the objectives and the findings of the study, the following conclusions have been made.

1. Dual career commuter couples in Uyo Local Government Area are a heterogeneous group.
2. Level of family cohesion of dual career commuter couples in Uyo Local Government Area is at Separated level (low to moderate cohesion), considered to be healthy.
3. Dual career commuter couples in this study face major challenges being financial and emotional challenges, and minor challenges including in order of importance work- related challenges, misperception from others, and increased marital problem.
4. No significance relationship exists between duration of staying apart and family cohesion of dual career commuter couples in Uyo local government area.
- 5.

Recommendations :

Based on the findings of this study proffers the following recommendations:

1. Couples should weigh the gains and losses in dual career commuting before embarking on it as what works for one family may not work for another.
2. Dual career commuter couple should deliberately plan to spend quality time together, which can potentially close the gap created by a long commuting.
3. It is important that couples strive for a deeper emotional connection as this will increase the emotional bonding between them, thereby enhancing healthy cohesion.
4. Dual Career Commuter Couples should create time to help with household chores when they are around, to assist the non-commuter (who stays in the primary residence with family responsibilities). This will alleviate the stress for the non-commuters and make them feel loved and cared for.
5. Employers of labour should revise their organizational policies to be family-friendly such as allowing commuter couples to work two weeks and remaining home for two weeks as it would increase employee and organizational performance.

6. Employers of labour should be careful about scheduling activities on weekends and public holidays as these may be opportunities for the commuter to travel home.

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