

Role Conflict and Women in Organized Sector: A Sociological Inquiry

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Abstract: *The present research paper is to address role adjustment problems of women workers in organized sectors of Bangalore city, Karnataka State. It has been rationally hypothesized that women workers are at risk of experiencing role conflict by performing multiple roles both at work and family. Role conflict among women would cause negative implications for their functioning as employees and these tend to be addressed by the employer, in this case the organized sectors. In the recent past women in India are still lacking behind in gaining employment opportunities and adjusting with the existing working conditions in organized sectors in particular. It is fascinating to ascertain empirically the extent of role conflict among working women in the organized sectors. An attempt is also made in the study to ascertain the association between length of service, time spent with family and the extent of role conflict among working women. The present investigation is based on data collected from 280 working women, 70 each from teaching, banking, health and government departments in the city of Bangalore. The findings seem to suggest that working women do not get sufficient time to manage household duties on the one hand and increasing pressure at work is preventing them from taking care of their family on the other.*

Keywords: Family, Organized Sector, Role Conflict, Working women.

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I. Introduction

In contemporary Indian society, women at work generally tend to face adjustment problems while performing their required roles both at home and work place. While performing multiple roles working women encounter conflict of roles in the location of their time and energy. Thus, they find themselves under increasing pressure to reconcile, the dual burden of maintaining household and earning activities. In the wake of changing scenario in social and occupational structure, the number of women with multiple role responsibilities is on the rise in India. Social scientist in general and sociologist in particular has suggested that the more roles performed by a working women, the greater the likelihood that she will experience the harmful repercussion of role conflict, stress, depression and even physical illness. However, there is a need to study such phenomenon comprehensively by applying such perspectives as sociological, historical, economic and psychological. Sociologically speaking, women as a section of the wider societal structure play a significant role in almost all spheres of life. Hence, their contribution to the process of development is strongly felt. In the sense, working women participate in different economic activities by adjusting to the social and occupational world. In order to cope up with the situation, working women not only require the physical strength, a high degree of role adjustment and mental strength including intelligence but also require to simultaneously make necessary modifications in their expectations both at home and work organizations. Since the work organizations are the part of society, role conflict will have its negative effects on the society in the form of lower standards of performance, lower quality of products and services and a growing feeling of interpersonal conflict (Abdul and Roshan, 2010).

II. Review of Literature:

Numerous researches have been conducted and women in organized sectors in the Indian context. Twin roles of women cause tension and conflict due to the existing social structure which is still male dominant (Wentling, 2003). In her study on working women in Delhi, she has found that traditional authoritarian set up remains unchanged and hence women face problem of role conflict. However, change in attitudes of men and women towards new role of women in employment sector can help to overcome their problem. A strong association was found between work-life conflict and work load of full-time employees (Skinner and Pocock, 2008) and called for effective management of workload in order to maintain equilibrium in work-life and family-life relationship. Further, working women tend to get more disturbed from work interference with family than family interference with work (Ahmad and Aminah, 2007; Gunavathy and Suganya, 2007; Gordon and

Whelan-Berry, 2005). The impact of work on family was proportionately higher in the earlier stage of service than in the later stage (Ahmad and Aminah, 2007). The concept of role conflict was elaborated in a thorough manner by Kahn and his associates (1964) employing the framework of role theory. Long working hours in paid jobs would reduce the amount of time available for family responsibilities, thereby making it difficult for working women to discharge family responsibilities to the expectations of other members (Greenhaus and Beutell 1985; Judge Boudreau and Bretts1994; Netemeyer et al, 1996; Frone et al 1997; Moen and Yu, 2000; Voydanoff, 2004).

III. Scope of The Study:

The present study seeks to probe into the intricate realities pertaining to the occupational and family-life of working women, in the context of contemporary Indian society. It is of applied significance to the Indian work organizations particularly in gaining insights into the understanding of the working conditions of women workers. Thus, women workers themselves would find such study useful in facing the day to day problems of role incompatibility. This study on role conflict and women workers in organized sectors could certainly be of paramount significance to the society at large.

IV. Objectives:

In consonance with the scope of the study set out as stated above, following are the main objectives, the present study seeks to address itself to.

1. To ascertain empirically the extent of role conflict faced by the women working in the organized sector.
2. To measure the association between length of service and the extent of role conflict among working women.
3. To identify the impact of work on family life of working women.

V. Methodology

The sample for the present study is consisted of a total of 280 working women in organized sector. 70 working women were selected using simple random sampling technique from each setting, that is, school establishment, banking organizations, hospital setting and government departments. Data were gathered through interview schedule specifically designed to suite the objectives of the study. Chi-square test was applied to find the association between the extent of role conflict and other variables.

VI. Results and Discussion

In the present research article role conflict of the respondents is classified as 'low', 'moderate', and 'high' based on the responses of the respondents to the questions posed for the purpose. The respondents who feel at ease while discharging their duties both at family and work place are considered as undergoing low role conflict. The respondents who feel sometimes at ease but not all the time while performing duties both at home and job are considered those with moderate role conflict and the respondents who never feel at ease while discharging responsibilities both at home and on job are considered to be women with high role conflict.

Table-1 Extent of Role Conflict

Sl No	Extent of Role Conflict	Frequency	Percentage
1	High	148	52.8
2	Moderate	94	33.6
3	Low	38	13.6
Total		280	100

A majority of the respondents (52.8 percent) were of the opinion that they had to readjust work and family obligations that conflict with one another and give them a feeling of mental stress which is likely to persist quite often. Therefore, such respondents were categorized as those with 'high' level of role conflict. The moderate level of role conflict accounts for one-third (33.6 percent) of the respondents and a very small proportion (13.6 percent) of respondents are found to be relatively free from such role conflict.

In the beginning of occupational career, women face difficulties in balancing the family obligations and their work schedules. Over a period of time a woman's experience may enable her to acquire certain skills required for efficient balancing between family and organizational expectations. Therefore, an attempt is made in the present study to cross tabulate the data on length of service and extent of role conflict in Table 2.

Table-2 Length of Service and Extent of Role Conflict

Length of Service	Extent of Role Conflict				Chi-square Value
	High	Moderate	Low	Total	
01-05 Years	48 (77.4)	12 (19.4)	2 (3.2)	62 (100) 22.1	22.046*
06-10 Years	41 (59.4)	23 (33.3)	5 (7.3)	69 (100) 24.7	
11-15 Years	27 (56.2)	19 (39.6)	2 (4.2)	48 (100) 17.1	
16-20 Years	20 (44.4)	18 (40.0)	7 (15.6)	45 (100) 16.1	
21 Years & above	12 (21.4)	22 (39.3)	22 (39.3)	56 (100) 20.0	
Total	148 (52.8)	94 (33.6)	38 (13.6)	280 (100) 100.0	

Note: Figures in parenthesis are percentage to respective row total

** Indicate the significance at 0.01 probability level*

For the analytical purpose, the data on length of service could be categorized into three groups: women with 1 to 10 years of service could be classified as those with a ‘short’ span of career, those with 11 to 20 years ‘moderate’ and lastly women with 21 years and above experience as ‘long’. The data pertaining to the length of service of working women seem to indicate that significant proportion (46.8 percent) of the respondents have a short span of career. However, one-third (33.2 percent) of the respondents are with moderate span of career and finally one-fifth (20 percent) of the working women in the sample have a long span of career with 21 or more years of service. The proportion of respondents in the high degree of role conflict was found to be highest in the 1-5 years of length of service (77.4 percent), followed by 6-10 years of service (59.4 percent). Similarly, the proportion of respondents in the high degree of role conflict was found to be the lowest among those with 21 years of service or more. The respondents who have not faced or faced the problem of role conflict less were found to be having greater length of service.

Thus, respondents in the beginning years of service are more likely to experience high degree of role conflict and with the increase in the length of service the severity of role conflict would decrease. With increase in the length of service, there is shift in the proportion of respondents from high degree of role conflict to moderate degree of role conflict and ultimately to low or no role conflict as such. Therefore, there is significant association between the length of service and the extent of role conflict. Thus, it could be inferred that the extent of role conflict decreases with increase in the length of service. It may be argued that, those who are in employment for a longer period tend to adapt themselves to the conflicting demands placed by their domestic and professional roles. This could be owing to those in employment for a decade or two being able to adapt themselves well to the conflicting role demands and manage the responsibilities on both the fronts more efficiently. It may also be due to the fact that, the younger working women having recently married with children to look after and other elderly persons to take care of might be under greater stress to do justice to both domestic and professional obligations. Whereas, the elderly women who may have their children settled and not many elderly persons to be looked after could be at greater ease in being employed and in adapting themselves to diverse roles.

An attempt is made in the present study to ascertain how working women allocate their time in order to look after the interests of family members. The type of activities working women engage in is assumed to be directly related to life and work satisfaction. People experience different feelings of satisfaction, anxiety, nervousness, punishment or reward depending on the activity being performed and this affects their mental state as well. Keeping this point in view, the data on extent of role conflict and time spent with family of the respondents are cross-tabulated.

Table-3 Time Spent with Family and Extent of Role Conflict

Time Spent	Degree of Role Conflict				Chi-square Value
	High	Moderate	Low	Total	
Sufficient	21 (30.9)	23 (33.8)	24 (35.3)	68 (100) 24.3	39.434*
Insufficient	127 (59.9)	71 (33.5)	14 (6.6)	212 (100) 75.7	
Total	148 (52.8)	94 (33.6)	38 (13.6)	280 (100) 100.0	

Note: Figures in parenthesis are percentage to respective row total

** Indicate the significance at 0.01 probability level*

The data indicate that three-fourths (75.7 percent) of the working women do not find sufficient time to spend with their families. However, one-fourth (24.3 percent) of them appear to be having sufficient time to spend to meet their family affairs. Further, it could be observed from the data that a majority (59.9 percent) of

the working women who spend insufficient time on their household activities are on the higher side of experiencing role conflict compared to working women (35.3 percent) who are found with low degree of role conflict and finding sufficient time to look after family obligations. It is obvious that working women attending to household tasks and catering to husband, children and in-laws are left with insufficient time to accomplish these family tasks more comprehensively. Further, multiple roles such as care-taker, spouse, home-maker and employee would put her in the situation of 'no choice' and cause her difficulties to find sufficient time with family. On the whole, it may be stated that the working women in the present study do not get sufficient time to manage household duties. The association between extent of role conflict and time spent with family is found to be statistically significant at 0.01 level.

It is quite expected and logical that those women who spend sufficient time with their families or at least those who are thinking so are less likely to experience role conflict. It goes without saying that longer the time they spend with their family, greater is the involvement and performance of domestic roles. It may be noted that one of the main factors that contributes to the incidence of role conflict is not being able to devote or spare adequate time and efforts for their families or on their family responsibilities. Hence, the finding indicating to a negative association between the adequacies of time spent with family and the extent of role conflict is quite expected and logical. Further, an attempt is made in the present study to ascertain the impact of work or career on family life and its association with role conflict.

Table-4 Impact of Work on Family Life and Extent of Role Conflict

Impact of Work on Family Life	Extent of Role Conflict				Chi-square Value
	High	Moderate	Low	Total	
Work affected Family Life	139 (56.0)	87 (35.1)	22 (8.9)	248 (100) 88.6	40.981*
Work Not affected Family Life	9 (28.1)	7 (21.9)	16 (50.0)	32 (100) 11.4	
Total	148 (52.8)	94 (33.6)	38 (13.6)	280 (100) 100.0	

Note: Figures in parenthesis are percentage to respective row total

** Indicate the significance at 0.01 probability level*

The data presented in the table indicate that an overwhelming majority (88.6 percent) of the working women have acknowledged the negative impact of work on family life. However, it is heartening to observe that a small proportion (11.4 percent) of them say that work has nothing do with family. In the sense these have successfully managed work and family separately and independently and never mixed them together. Further, the data on impact of work or career on family life and degree of role conflict were cross-tabulated. It could be observed from the data that a majority (56.0 percent) of those were severely affected by their existing working roles in discharging household duties. Correspondingly, one-half (50 percent) of respondents who say that work has not affected their family life, experience low degree of role conflict. Further, role conflict was considered likely when women perceived their home and career roles as highly desirable but mutually exclusive. Increasing pressure found in the work place would have greater impact on caring of children and in-laws, and house maintenance. An attempt is also made to calculate the association between the impact and role conflict. The chi-square test suggests significant association between the two at 0.01 level.

It is quite natural and logical to expect women to be taking their responsibility toward family as of prime significance particularly in the context of Indian society. It is assumed that the sense of role conflict emanates from their realization that they are not devoting enough time, attention and efforts in discharging their family responsibilities owing to their being employed outside the family. The findings seem to support this assumption as those working women who feel that their work is not affecting their family responsibilities experience substantially lower levels of role conflict.

VII. Conclusion

The data obtained and analyzed for the present study suggest that more than one-half of the respondents are found to be experiencing high degree of role conflict. With regard to the length of service and the degree of role conflict, it is found that working women with a short span of career are burdened with high role conflict. Coming to the matter of spending time with the family, a majority of them state that they are not happy with the amount of time they are spending with their family members. Women workers in the present study have acknowledged the negative impact of work on family-life. In consonance to this finding, it is noticed that majority of the working women were severely affected by their existing work roles in discharging household duties.

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