Chapter 3

SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

This study primarily focuses attention on the phenomena of role conflict, role ambiguity and role overload experienced by the women executives of different sectors of Cochin – Alwaye industrial belt. Investigation of the interrelationship of these role dimensions with selected bio social variables and performance/behavior related outcomes are also included within the broad scope of this study. Variations in these role dimensions observed among women executives of Public and private sector companies and also of manufacturing, consultancy and service sector organizations are also a part of the study.

The dependent variables and independent variables under the study are as follows.

The dependent variables or the main phenomena under observation are:

- Role conflict
- Role ambiguity
- Role overload
Independent variables or factors which are likely influence and the outcomes of the dependent variables are:

A. Bio social variables or factors associated with role conflict, role ambiguity and role overload taken for this study are:

1. Male female or gender differences.
2. Age of women executives.
3. Job tenure (experience) of women executives.
4. Education of women executives
5. Span of control of women executives.
6. Family responsibilities of women executives.

B. Performance/ behavior related outcomes of role conflict, role ambiguity and role overload:

1. Job satisfaction
2. Job involvement
3. Job stress

C. Nature of organization (Where women executives work)

- Ownership pattern of the organization
  1. Public sector
  2. Private Sector
- Nature of work of the women executives.
  
  1. Manufacturing sector
  2. Consultancy
  3. Service

**CLARIFICATIONS OF THE CONCEPTS**

**Role conflict**

Role conflict is the experienced incongruity of the expectations associated with a role assigned by the organization. This may take the form of

(a) divergent role expectations. It exist when the expectations of a job related behaviours are mutually different or opposite and the individual cannot meet one expectations without rejecting the other

and/or

(b) incompatible requests received from role senders in carrying out job related responsibilities.

and/or

(c) incompatible multiple roles enacted by the incumbent.

In the present study, Role conflict is defined as the experience of incompatibility in role enactment due to any one of the above factors either in separation or in combination.
Role ambiguity

In this study, Role ambiguity is defined as the lack of clarity of role expectations and the degree of uncertainty regarding the outcome of one's role performance. Role ambiguity occurs when an individual is unclear regarding his job duties and responsibilities. As a result, the individual experiences difficulty in enacting the role.

Role overload

Role overload is defined as experienced time pressure for the completion of duties and responsibilities. It occurs when the role incumbent engages in several activities or several roles at the same time, all of which may be mutually compatible in the abstract but within too short a time period.

Job satisfaction

Job satisfaction is defined as a positive emotional state resulting from the performance of one's job. Job satisfaction determines the individual's attitude towards his/her job. Job satisfaction is a general attitude, which could be the result of many specific attitudes in three areas, namely specific job factors, individual characteristics and group relationship outside the job.

Job involvement

Job involvement refers to the degree to which the job is considered as an important aspect of one's self. Job Involvement defined as a psychological
identification with one's work, seems to be a distinctive job attitude that should be thought of as conceptually and empirically separate from job satisfaction. Enthusiasm in carrying out the role assigned by accepting the assigned role as the central theme in one's life is an indication of the degree of job involvement.

**Job stress**

Job stress is defined as the phenomenal state of the job performance exhibiting a set of physical and psychological syndrome characterised by tension, anxiety and physical exhaustion.

**Family responsibilities**

Family responsibilities is defined as the set of activities to be carried out by a person for the maintenance and development of the members of the family viz. Husband/wife, children, parents and others living in the same household under the care or patronage of that person.

**Job tenure**

Total number of years spent in enabling the present role or experience in the present job is taken as job tenure.
Education

Formal schooling at secondary and higher levels are taken as indication of education. The subjects in this study are classified into two educational groups as (i) Graduates and (ii) Post-graduates.

Gender

The subjects of the study are to be compared with the male counterparts for identifying the similarities and differences in various role dimensions and outcomes. This is done by comparing the responses of all women executives taken for this study with the responses given by a comparable male subjects selected on a random basis from comparable organizations.

Age

Age is chronological status in terms of date birth of the subjects selected for the study.

TYPES OF THE ORGANIZATION

Public sector

Large/medium manufacturing industry in the Cochin-Alwaye industrial belt controlled by the government of India and having more than 30 women executives.
Private sector

Large/medium manufacturing institutions in the Cochin-Alwaye belt controlled by Private management and having more than 30 women executives.

Consultancy type work

An organization with consultancy as the main line function and having more than 30 women executives.

Service oriented organization

Large/medium banking institutions both in the Public and Private sectors and having more than 30 women executives under each.

OBJECTIVES

The specific objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To understand gender difference in role conflict, role ambiguity and role overload experienced by the executives.
2. To find out the association of biosocial factors such as age, education, number of years of service, span of control and family responsibilities with role conflict, role ambiguity and role overload experienced by women executives.

3. To study job satisfaction, job involvement and job stress in relation to role conflict, role ambiguity and role overload experienced by women executives.

4. To find out differences in role conflict, role ambiguity and role overload experienced by the women executives in the manufacturing, consultancy and service organizations.

5. To find out the difference in role conflict, role ambiguity and role overload experienced by the women executives in the Private and Public sector organizations.

HYPOTHESES

Major hypotheses put forward in the study are:

1. Gender difference

   (1) The women executives experience significantly higher role conflict in comparison with that of male executives.

   (2) The women executives experience significantly higher role ambiguity in comparison with that of male executives.
(3) The women executives experience significantly higher role overload in comparison with that of male executives.

2. Public vs. Private sector difference

(1) There is a significant difference in the role conflict experienced by women executives in private and public sector organisations.

(2) There is a significant difference in the role ambiguity experienced by women executives in private and public sector organisations.

(3) There is a significant difference in the role overload experienced by women executives in private and public sector organisations.

3. Manufacturing vs. Consultancy difference

(1) There is a significant difference in the role conflict experienced by women executives in manufacturing and consultancy oriented organisations.

(2) There is a significant difference in the role ambiguity experienced by women executives in manufacturing and consultancy oriented organisations.

(3) There is a significant difference in the role overload experienced by women executives in manufacturing and consultancy oriented organisations.

4. Manufacturing vs. Service difference

(1) There is a significant difference in the role conflict experienced by women executives in manufacturing and service oriented organisations.

(2) There is a significant difference in the role ambiguity experienced by women executives in manufacturing and service oriented organisations.

(3) There is a significant difference in the role overload experienced by women executives in manufacturing and service oriented organisations.
5. Consultancy and Service difference

(1) There is a significant difference in the role conflict experienced by women executives in consultancy and service oriented organisations.

(2) There is a significant difference in the role ambiguity experienced by women executives in consultancy and service oriented organisations.

(3) There is a significant difference in the role overload experienced by women executives in consultancy and service oriented organisations.

6. Age

(1) There is a significant negative relationship between role conflict and age of women executives.

(2) There is a significant negative relationship between role ambiguity and age of women executives.

(3) There is a significant negative relationship between role overload and age of women executives.

7. Educational levels

(1) There is a significant negative relationship between educational level and role conflict experience of women executives.

(2) There is a significant negative relationship between educational level and role ambiguity of women executives.

(3) There is a significant negative relationship between educational level and role overload of women executives.
8. Job tenure/experience

(1) There is a significant negative relationship between number of years of service and role conflict experience of women executives.

(2) There is a significant negative relationship between number of years of service and role ambiguity of women executives.

(3) There is a significant negative relationship between number of years of service and role overload of women executives.

9. Family responsibilities

(1) There is a significant positive relationship between family responsibilities and role conflict experience of women executives.

(2) There is a significant positive relationship between family responsibilities and role ambiguity of women executives.

(3) There is a significant positive relationship between family responsibilities and role overload of women executives.

10. Span of control/supervision

(1) There is a significant positive relationship between role conflict and span of control of women executives.

(2) There is a significant positive relationship between role ambiguity and span of control of women executives.

(3) There is a significant positive relationship between role overload and span of control of women executives.
11. Job satisfaction

(1) There is a significant negative relationship between role conflict and job satisfaction of women executives.

(2) There is a significant negative relationship between role ambiguity and job satisfaction of women executives.

(3) There is a significant negative relationship between role overload and job satisfaction of women executives.

12. Job involvement

(1) There is a significant negative relationship between role conflict and job involvement of women executives.

(2) There is a significant negative relationship between role ambiguity and job involvement of women executives.

(3) There is a significant negative relationship between role overload and job involvement of women executives.

13. Job stress

(1) There is a significant positive relationship between role conflict and job stress of women executives.

(2) There is a significant positive relationship between role ambiguity and job stress of women executives.

(3) There is a significant positive relationship between role overload and job stress of women executives.
A PRELIMINARY STUDY

A preliminary study was conducted among forty cases dealing with role related problems experienced by four different categories of postgraduate women. The observations made in this preliminary study were relevant in formulating meaningful hypotheses for further detailed research on the role related problems of working women.

Observations in this preliminary study focussed attention on the following:

1. Role related problems among *women executives with their husband in the family but without much role clarity and role differentiation in managing the house.*

2. Role related problems *among women executives when there is role clarity and role differentiation between husband and wife in managing the family.* This is possible (a) when the women executives are managing the family in the absence of their husband (b) when there is role clarity and role difference in the family in the presence of the husband.

3. Role related problems of *non-working graduate and post-graduate married women* under the family environments described in (1) and (2) above.

This preliminary study with its findings/observations is briefly described in Appendix B of this report.
THE SAMPLE: (of the present study)

For the present study, Cochin-Alwaye industrial belt was identified as the study area. This is because there are a large number of industrial organizations in this area, which employ women in the executive cadre. Due to non availability of a significant number of women executives, all the units in the industrial belt could not be included and hence only four units with different work environment were selected for the study: One in the manufacturing, one in the Consultancy and two in the service oriented organisations. Manufacturing and consultancy oriented organisations were in the Public sector. Of the two service oriented organisations, one was a public sector bank and the other a private sector bank. The names of these units are kept anonymous due to the sensitive nature of the study. These four units were selected on the basis of availability of women executives in such organisations. All the women executives from these four organizations were selected for the study. A comparable number of male executives were selected at random from the public sector manufacturing and consultancy organisations. Comparison was made only for finding the gender difference in role dimensions and not on other variables. Selection of the male executives were confined to comparable levels in the organisation and age and the random sample was within this segment.

The investigator approached each of the subject in the sample with a prior appointment. The purpose of the study was explained to each of them and clear instructions were given. The data collected from the respondents were tabulated with the help of computer. Correlation, ‘t’ tests and other appropriate statistical techniques were adopted to draw conclusions and for arriving at meaningful generalizations.
Categories of institutions and the number of subjects under each category and their overall age are shown in the following table.

**Table No.3.1**

Distribution of women executive and sample male executive respondents by the type of organizations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Average age in years</th>
<th>Public Sector</th>
<th>Private Sector</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>Consultancy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male executives</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female executives</td>
<td>196</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TOOLS FOR DATA COLLECTION**

The necessary data are collected by questionnaire method in order to explore the differences, associations and inter linkages among variables of the study. An eight page questionnaire containing 84 questions include the following eight categories. The first part contains demographic details: age, education, experience, marital status, occupational status, type of organisations etc. The second part deals with questions related to family responsibilities. The data related to role conflict is obtained from the third section while the fourth and fifth sections contain questions related to role ambiguity and role overload respectively. Data regarding job
involvement, job satisfaction, and job stress are obtained from sections six, seven, and eight respectively. A copy of the questionnaire is given under Appendix A.

Specific scales used for the measurement of RC, RA, ROC, JS, J1, Jstress etc. are as follows:

ROLE CONFLICT SCALE

The role conflict scale developed by Johnson and Stinson (1975) was adopted with minor modification to suit the present purpose and was used for measuring role conflict and role ambiguity in the present study.

According to this scale, role conflict (RC) is defined as the extent to which the subject's job entails tasks that conflict with his values and job expectations and the incompatible requests the subject receives concerning his/her work. Totally ten items were presented in the role conflict scale.

The response categories to the items ranged from strongly agree to strongly disagree. A score of 5 was given to strongly agree and a score of 1 to strongly disagree. Thus a high score on these scales denotes high role conflict. The reliability of this scale ranged from 0.58 to 0.80.
ROLE AMBIGUITY

Role ambiguity scale developed by Johnson and Stinson (1975) was adopted with minor modification to suit the present purpose and was used for measuring role ambiguity in the present study. There are seven questions in the role ambiguity scale. The reliability of this ranged from 0.42 to 0.71.

ROLE OVERLOAD

The role overload index developed by Higgins and Duxbury (1991) was adopted for the study. Ten questions are related to how much time pressure an individual experiences to pursue personal interests. The reliability of this test ranged from 0.40 to 0.72.

FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES

Family responsibility scale developed by Higgins (1991) was used in this study. The questions are related to how much time they have to spent with family duties and family members or how much free time respondents spent with their families and how much they perceived that the most important things that happened to them involved their families. The test-retest reliability exceeds 0.59.
JOB SATISFACTION

The measuring instrument used in the present study was the Brayfield-Rothe scale (1959). The scale, measuring overall job satisfaction, consists of 18 items with Likert scoring system applied to each item. The reliability exceeds 0.71 to 0.84.

JOB INVOLVEMENT

The 20-item measure job involvement scale developed by Lodhal & Kejner (1965) was employed. The test retest reliability coefficient ranges from 0.72 to 0.89 (Lodhal & Kejner 1965).

JOB STRESS

Job stress scale developed by Higgins (1991) was used for data collection. Instrument contained 10 questions. The scale items were designed to tap the kind of stress related to internalised values and emotions. The reliability of this scale exceeded 0.7.

Bio social and background information

A performa was designed to collect information on the bio- social factors and background information of the respondents. Entries were to be made by the respondents. Most of the responses were to be in the form of tick marks in the appropriate space provided. These selected biosocial variables were considered for
the analysis. But a separate set of Performa for background information was used to know the nature and characteristics of the sample.

The selected biosocial variables considered for the analysis are age, length of service, education level and expected and span of control. These variables are included for analysis based on the literature survey and the preliminary study findings.

The information collected through the background information Performa provided a comprehensive profile of the sample of executives under the research study. The background information collected are marital status, educational and professional qualification, family responsibilities and other relevant information.

**Administration of the tools of data collection**

Permission was obtained from the management of each unit to conduct the study. Maximum co-operation could be secured from them. Each respondent was briefed individually on the procedure for filling up the questionnaires which would took about 60 minutes for completion. Some executives were found to hesitate to respond due to the sensitive nature of the study.

About 250 questionnaires were distributed among the women executives from whom 219 of them got filled up by the respondents. 23 questionnaires were either incomplete or distorted, which were later discarded. Hence a total of 196 filled in questionnaires were found to be complete and ready for data processing. The total
female executives at all levels in the four selected organizations were 219 out of which 196 women executives were accepted for the analysis.

Editing, coding and statistical analysis of data

The data generated through the responses from 123 male executives and 196 female executives were considered for data processing. All the items were appropriately coded and entered into a master chart manually, which were later on stored in the computer.

The data were processed through SPSS package. The analysis was done based on the objectives of the study. For testing the hypotheses, appropriate statistical techniques were used.

ANALYSIS

The "t" test was applied to find out whether there was any significant difference in the mean scores on role conflict, role ambiguity and role overload of respondents due to gender, nature of the organization such as manufacturing, consultancy, service etc.

Karl Pearson's coefficient of correlation was computed to find out the degree of relationship among role conflict, role ambiguity and role overload and also among job satisfaction, job involvement and job stress. The relationship of age, education,
experience, job satisfaction, job involvement, job satisfaction etc with role conflict, role ambiguity and role overload were also calculated and tested.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Comparative study on all possible role conflict related variables like general political and economic pressures, organizational climate, and personality style motivational factors etc could not be included.

The sample selected in this study only covers the limited women executives in the Cochin - Alwaye industrial belt; the study was not focused on other women workers.

Chapterisation scheme

The entire report is presented in the seven chapters. Chapter one gives the general introduction, where in the context, focus and conceptual background and significance of the study are provided. Chapter two presents the review of literature wherein relevant empirical studies are listed. Chapter three provides the scope and methodology adopted. Role Conflict, Role ambiguity and Role overload experienced by women executives are described in detail in chapters four, five and six respectively. Comparisons of the findings in the private and public sector and manufacturing, consultancy and service organisations are also given in chapters 4, 5 and 6. The main findings in the study are summarised in chapter 7.
A comprehensive reference list is given immediately after chapter seven.

Appendices include the following:

Appendix A: The tools for data collection used in this study.
Appendix B: Preliminary study.
Appendix C: Outputs from SPSS analysis software.
Appendix D: Inter correlations among Role conflict, Role ambiguity, Role overload and also among Job satisfaction, Job involvement and Job Stress.