Chapter - 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In this chapter, a brief appraisal of the studies on the issues surrounding women and employment – dual role perceptions and performance, the facilitators and constraints as well as the coping strategies women employ to achieve work-life balance – is presented with a view to unveil what has already been done on the issues related to the theme of the present study. Studies on women in the labour force, both in the professional sphere and in the non-professional field are examined with the consideration that although there will be certain issues that are unique to the professionals, the general patterns and trends will be analogous to the professional as well as the non-professional women. The first section of the chapter reviews the studies done outside India, the second section deals with the studies undertaken in India and the third section examines the studies in Kerala.

‘Whatever women do, they must do twice as well, as men to be thought half as good’-is a popular saying. Yet it is now common to find women in almost every scheme of human endeavor. Deftly handling even the toughest of jobs, ranging from bus conductors to astronauts, women have shown that they indeed are not the typecast weaker sex. But, studies across the globe have shown that women who join the unconventional occupations have to face many challenges at the personal, familial, and social realms. Many a time, women just give up the losing race and opt for a more ‘women-friendly’ job, or even opt out, occupational mobility, both vertical and horizontal.
2.1 Studies on the Challenges of Working Women

Judith Long Laws, in her book, “The Second X- Sex Role and Social Role” tried to trace the consequences of being born female. To her, “the genetic patterns – the female and the male- do not stand in the way for femininity and masculinity, but only for femaleness and maleness, while sex roles, or, the social significance attached to femaleness and maleness are social constructions to which members of the culture impute reality” (Laws 1979:1) Laws, attributes a master status to gender. To her, gender is consequential in all institutional relations, that the perceptions, expectations and reactions of others are likely to be organised around this than any other. The gender status impinges on the enactment of the achieved roles too; so much so, a woman worker faces an unequal probability of promotion in comparison with her male colleagues. Employers and even co-workers expect that her work motivation will be deficient, even before they see her perform.

Farmer et al (1971) pointed out that women faced unique challenges in the occupation arenas, because of their gender. Women were caught in a conflict between sex-role expectations and expectations of fulfilling one’s occupational potential. Due to this conflict woman often selected occupations that were more compatible with family roles. Wally Sylvia (1986) demonstrated the significance of patriarchal relations in employment for the explanation of the position of women in contemporary society. The author challenged the conventional division of labour and according to him; a social division of labour could not be understood without an understanding of the gender division of labour. Zaretsky (1976) gives a similar idea. According to him, the separation of the family and the economy under capitalism was central to women’s oppression. To him, this separation
was the basic cause of the confinement of women to the narrow sphere of occupational life.

2.2 Studies on Role-Conflict

The concept of strain or conflict among women’s life roles also has been delineated by scientific research. The focus of much of the work was on role conflict, which was conceptualized as an incompatibility between the demands of one life role with those of another (Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn, Snoek, & Rosenthal, 1964). Although occasionally, studies attempted to assess conflict between multiple specific roles, such as marital, parental, housekeeping, and outside employment (Ayree, 1992), the great majority of studies focused on conflict arising from the individual’s attempts to meet both, family life and employment obligations. Kossek and Ozeki (1998) reported that conflict between work and family roles was a stronger predictor of life satisfaction for women than men. Ismail and Ahmad (1999) remarked that women’s employment inevitably pose challenges to women themselves, the household and the society. To them, the challenges are in terms of the interface of work and family roles, women as individuals in male dominated organisations, striving to achieve their economic potential as well as gender equality.

Much of the research on work-family conflict has been based on the premise that roles inevitably create strain for the workingwomen. Baruch and Barnett (1985) pointed to the importance of role overload for women, which they defined as the general sense of having so many role demands or obligations that the individual felt unable to perform them all adequately. However, there is yet another growing body of research that has found evidence of positive spill over, both from home to work and from work to home. The results of such studies reveal that
multiple roles may prove to be self enhancing in that they result in increased skills, heightened self-esteem, and well-being and also provide additional sources of social support. Barnett and Hyde (2001) for example, found that women who had multiple life roles were less depressed and had higher self-esteem than women who had fewer life roles.

In recent years, there has been an increased interest in work-family interface in the human resource management literature, especially regarding the sources and outcomes of conflict between these two spheres. A number of studies have addressed this issue from different perspectives. Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) and Greenhaus, Parasuraman, Granrose, Rabinowitz, and Beutell (1989) examined the antecedents of conflict between family and work, Goodstein (1994) and Ingram and Simons (1995) presented an institutional perspective on organizations’ responses to work-family issues. In addition, Campbell, Campbell and Kennard (1994) have studied the effects of family responsibilities on the work commitment and job performance of women. The work-family issue is even further expanded to address the relationship of business-marriage partners (Foley & Powell, 1997).

Past research has consistently demonstrated that work-family interface is prevalent and, being an important source of stress, has negative impact on employees’ well-being and family relationships (Googins, 1991; Voydanoff, 1987; Wiley, 1987; Williams & Alliger, 1994). Given the common perceptions of appropriate roles for men and women, the demands for combining motherhood and marriage with career becomes an immense challenge for many female executives. One may expect that female executives, particularly those who are married and with children, are more likely to experience work-family conflict than their male colleagues.
Several researches have commented on the importance of understanding factors that are associated with work-family conflict. The first is career salience, that is, the psychological identification with work role. As argued by Greenhaus and Beutell (1985), work role salience may lead to a higher level of work-family conflict. They pointed out that when a person’s career sub identity grows, a person will become more ego-involved in that particular role and exhibit higher levels of motivation. This, in turn, may increase time commitment to that role and produce strain that may interfere with another role. As a result, role pressures and inter-role conflict emerge.

Another major determinant of work-family conflict is reported to be one’s involvement at work, that is, the degree to which a person actively participates in his or her work role (Lodahl & Kejner, 1965). It influences the time and effort one could spend in the job. It has been found that high work involvement is associated with higher levels of work-family conflict. While work involvement could be an outcome of career salience, objective characteristics in the workplace such as work conditions and job demands may also have significant impacts upon the amount of involvement put in one’s work. For this reason, it is believed that work involvement has an effect upon work-family conflict above and beyond one’s career salience.

According to another view, the more hours one expends in both the work and the family domains, the more conflict one will perceive. For example, a positive relationship has well been confirmed in past research between time commitment to work and work-family conflict (Greenhaus et al., 1989; Voydanoff, 1988). They further noted that, for working women, the time they spent in work activities is strongly associated with work interference with family, rather than family interference with work.
A job-related factor that has drawn increasing research attention recently is job flexibility. Job flexibility reflects the autonomy and/or control one has regarding time schedule and work location. It has been suggested that high flexibility at work facilitates job-family compatibility and thus reduces work-family conflict (Parasuraman et al., 1996). For example, a highly flexible job (such as working at home) may allow women to shift between their domestic and work roles easily and hence better manage their time.

Apart from factors in the workplace, family-related variables are also reported to have a significant impact on work-family conflict, particularly on family interference with work. While the effects of the job-related factors are generally not gender-specific, the influence of family-related factors on work-family conflict is expected to be different for the two sexes. Because of the traditional gender roles that place higher priority on domestic obligations for women (such as child care), factors associated with family life are likely to exert greater influence on women’s attitudes and behaviors (Voydanoff, 1988).

The foremost family-related variable that has drawn wide attention is number of children at home (Pleck et al., 1980). Given that child care responsibilities normally rest on women, working wives with more children are likely to experience greater work-family conflict (Beutell & Greenhaus, 1982; Voydanoff, 1988). As shown in previous research, having young children at home is consistently related to role strain and time shortage for women (Voydanoff & Kelly, 1984). A related variable is the age of the children. Younger children generally require more attention from working parents, and thus more time is needed to spend on them.
To Parasuraman et al. (1996), Family orientation is an attitudinal factor that may lead to work-family conflict. It is postulated that working women who have stronger identity with familial roles are likely to feel the incompatibility between work and family life. Owing to the traditional sex-role ideology, women are socialized to have a stronger orientation to and greater involvement in the family than men. For working wives, role strain and time conflict may occur more frequently as a result of dual commitments to employment and to the family.

Frone et al (1992) documented that employees with significant dependent care responsibilities like, employees with dependent children or dependent elders and employees with large families, tend to report higher levels of work-family conflict. Work-family conflict has been examined from the organisational perspective also. Galinsky et al (1996) have examined the impact of workplace culture on employees’ work–family conflict and demonstrated that dual role conflict to a great extent can be caused by the prevalent social norms and practices in the workplace.

Hock, McBride and Gnezda’s (1989) concept of maternal separation anxiety might represent another type of role strain that was particularly salient for employed women with young children. They defined maternal separation anxiety as a mother’s sense of worry and guilt over being separated from her child and the fear that others will not be able to care for her child as well as she could. Data presented by Hock and her associates (1988), suggested that maternal separation anxiety was significantly related to both mother’s employment and psychological wellbeing. More specifically, McBride (1990) reported significant correlations between maternal separation anxiety and
women’s experience of psychological spillover from work such as irritability, preoccupation and fatigue.

It is also possible that the satisfaction a woman derived from one of her life roles or an aspect of that role might alleviate some of her experience of role conflict. Barnett and Baruch (1985) demonstrated that the quality of a woman’s work role was a significant predictor of her role overload, whereas mere occupancy of the work role was not. Since then, other researchers also have reported significant inverse relationships between women’s satisfaction with their work and various measures of role strain (Ayree 1992) or well-being (O’Driscoll et al.1992). Adams, King, and King (1996), using separate measures of work interfering with family (WIF) and family interfering with work (FIW), found job satisfaction inversely correlated with the conflict in the former but not in the latter.

Several studies have examined the possible connection between a woman’s satisfaction with her child-care arrangement and her experience of role stress. Although child-care satisfaction was not analogous to job satisfaction in that it pertained to only one aspect of a person’s role as parent, research suggested that it might nevertheless have a significant impact on role strain, particularly for employed mothers. Erdwins et al (1998) reported a significant relationship between child-care satisfaction and satisfaction with work-family balance for a large sample of federal employees. Similarly, others reported that greater child-care satisfaction was associated with less intense feelings of role strain for their samples of employed women (O’Neill, & Hamill, 1989)
A number of studies (Jordan 1997) have suggested that the central or organizing principle of women’s lives is their relatedness to and mutual support and empathy with others. Banyard and Graham-Bermann (1993) pointed out that the giving and receiving of social support often has been viewed as women’s core or major strategy for coping with stress. It was possible to derive support from a variety of sources, however, to date; support from spouses has received the most empirical attention. Specifically, the effect of a husband’s support on his wife’s role conflict and related variables has been assessed in several studies with varied results. Elman and Gilbert (1984) first reported a significant negative relationship between role conflict and spouse support in their sample of dual-career women with preschool-aged children.

Others found greater support from husbands to be significantly correlated with lower conflict between roles (Aryee 1992; Suchet & Barling 1986), decreased role strain (Van Meter & Agronow, 1982), and fewer symptoms of depression (Ross et al 1983). In contrast, Parasuraman et al. (1992) did not find any significant effect of husbands’ support on a measure of life stress for women, and Reifman et al. (1991) found no confirmation for their hypothesis that marital support would buffer women from the negative effects of stress.

2.3 Studies on Discrimination at Work Place

Numerous studies have demonstrated that discrimination against women persisted globally even today, despite the widespread laws against it. Studies have documented discrimination in most arenas of occupational life. O’Neill. J, (1985) reported that women were paid less than men even when doing the same type of job, with
the same job status, title and the same level of education and experience. Idson and Prince (1992) found similar results in their study of public workers in Florida. They studied government employees with the same job title and educational qualification and found that women were paid only 74.8 cents for every dollar paid to men. Similarly, a 1991 report from the United Nations revealed that male-female salary differences could not be attributed to experience, skill or even personality differences between men and women.

Farmer and Bohn (1970) concluded that if women were unrestricted by the constraints of multiple roles, lack of finances or discrimination in the workplace, they would choose more prestigious and challenging careers. Previous researches also demonstrated that women were less likely to hold positions with authority over others, whether supervising other employees, having the authority to ‘hire and fire’, or having control over other’s pay. Economists Deborah and Dunlop (1996) found that there was a sex-gap in overall promotions. Women were promoted less frequently than similarly educated men. They attributed some part of this difference to family decisions; perhaps women would prefer to have less responsibility at work because of the responsibilities they already carry at home.

Hartmann (1981) also analysed gender inequality in terms of the interrelationship of patriarchy and capitalism. Job segregation by sex, she argued, is an important aspect by which patriarchy and capitalism had interacted. She argued that women were excluded from much of paid work mostly through the device of job segregation by sex. To Friedman (1992), stereotypes against women and biases of male decision makers prevented women’s career advancement. The barrier formed by these has been referred to as the glass ceiling.
2.4 Studies on Coping Strategies

Coping strategies are the devices, which allow one to manage the situations in which one finds oneself. These are learned patterns of behavior that make it possible to organise time and energy so that work-life balance become feasible. According to Hunt and Hunt (1977), the common coping strategies of working women include rationalisation, compartmentalisation, and adjudication. Rationalisation refers to the redefining of an unpleasant situation in order to make it acceptable. In compartmentalisation, the strategy is to keep the two roles distinct and to display two different sets of behavior in the roles. Adjudication is seeking the decision of a third party to decide a particular issue that leads to role conflict.

2.5 Studies on Women in Professions

This section documents the studies on women in the traditionally male dominated world of professions. It is presumed that although the past few decades have witnessed a striking increase in the number of women joining the professions, their position remains marginal in all the professions. Hence it will be interesting to probe into the studies on them with a view to gain information on the ‘why’ of the situation.

Brockman (2001) argued that although the legal barriers that historically prevented women from entering the legal profession have been removed, the informal and structural barriers that impeded their full participation in the profession still existed. According to her, gender bias and discrimination in the legal profession restricted women’s career advancement. The study revealed how sexual harassment and discrimination were used as a form of social control to exclude the full participation of women lawyers. Loy (2005) examined the career paths of women financial executives who had tried various
approaches to balancing career and family. The professional level these women had attained requires a huge commitment of time, energy, and emotion that looked natural to employers and clients, who assume that a career deserves single-minded allegiance. Meanwhile, these women must confront the cultural model of family that defined marriage and motherhood as a woman’s primary vocation. The above study focused on the social and cultural forces that created women’s identities and shaped their understanding of what made life, worth living.

Findings of the studies on the challenges of female medical practitioners in Australia, London, and Denmark revealed that the key issues that affected the professional and personal lives of women included job satisfaction, balancing work and personal life, autonomy, availability of flexible work hours, fair remuneration, and having a voice in decision making. Key personal issues included self-care, time for relationships with a partner, children, family and friends, and time management to allow pursuit of non-medical interests. These conflicting demands made on female professionals diminished their job satisfaction and led to stress and imbalance in their lives. A supportive family, an understanding work environment, and changes in culturally based self-expectations of female professionals could lead to more fulfilling and well-balanced professional and family lives for women. (Kilmartin 2002).

Another study (Rout 1995) identified specific pressures at work and at home experienced by general practitioners and their spouses and concluded that a female physician’s workload and decreased interest in her family were important stressors that affected her entire family unit. Other stressors included time pressure, hours on call, lack of support, and amount of paper work. Many women brought work home, and spend time away from home at meetings, and family life was constantly
interrupted by telephone calls. This study also identified role conflict as a major stressor for female general practitioners.

Women worldwide faced barriers in reaching top, executive posts,” Although women in the United States hold only a small percentage of executive management positions, they have made more progress than women in other countries, according to the International Labor Organization’s report, of the year 2001, titled, ‘Breaking Through the Glass Ceiling: Women in Management.’ The report examined the changing role of women in business and government in more than 70 countries, obstacles to their career development, and steps to improve opportunities for women and promote gender equality. According to the report, women in these countries were experiencing not just a ‘glass ceiling,’ but ‘glass walls,’ where women were not being trained for and offered mid-level positions that prepared them for the top positions.

“Another factor that prevented women from rising to the top in corporations is the predominance of ‘male values’ and ‘gender roles,’’ according to the above ILO report. In a 1995 survey of 355 personnel managers and female bank managers in the European Union, published in 1999, respondents ranked the dominance of male values as the biggest obstacle to recruiting and promoting women to management positions (68.8 percent) and family obligations as the second biggest (45.8 percent).

Shrestha Neeru (1989) in her study on ‘Women in Industry: Opportunities and Constraints- The Case of Nepal’ found the prevalence of gender discrimination in the industries there which lead to unfavorable attitude against women in recruitment and promotion, in spite of no perceived differences in their performance. Women were generally perceived as unable to do responsible and decisive work.
They were also thought to be unable to work effectively in a tense environment. ‘Women and Work-Challenges in Industrializing Nations, edited by Ismail and Ahmad (1999) discussed the participation of women in manufacturing, business, service and agriculture. The study found that participation of women in the paid sector of the economy; inevitably posed challenges to women themselves, the household, and society. The challenges were in terms of the interface of work and family roles, women as individuals engaged in male-dominated professions, and gender equality in the changing socio cultural environment.

Thomson (1966) remarked that unfavorable vocational stereotypes tended to steer young people away from certain professions, while favorable ones tended to attract them, even though they might be ill fitted for them by temperament, ability and interest. In Tolhurst and Stewart’s study (2004) on Australian medical students, titled, ‘Balancing in Work, Family and other Life style’, the respondents spoke of achieving a balance of work, family and lifestyle by ‘compromise’ and by making specific career and family choices. Regarding Career choice, many spoke of choosing specialties and locations where work with flexible and limited hours would be available, seeing these as ‘more family friendly’. Many felt discouraged from doing Obstetrics and Gynecology because of the long hours of work and had a perception that “it’s just not compatible with family life”. Others spoke of preferring work environments perceived as ‘flexible’. Van Fleet and Sourage (1984) in their research findings stated that although women can assume the role of a business, career, they do experience difficulty in shedding their role as housewife or mother.

Though there are arguments in favour of women in the IT sector, the ILO survey reports 2001, indicated that women professionals were
still a minority in this sector in India with a clear trend towards clustering at the lower ends of the job hierarchy leading to feminization of certain service activities. Issues related to mobility and growth of women professionals were caught up in the gender trap as in other service sector or in traditional sectors. The trade off for women who opted for a career vis-à-vis the gender roles ascribed to them as care givers in the absence of adequate social security measures and other support mechanisms left women professionals with an ‘either-or’ situation. It was observed that the IT industry’s attitude was one of benign statistical discrimination of women by accepting the gender constraints of women.

Research has indicated that women’s choices of specialty are determined in part, by a conscious attempt to manage their careers in order to minimise both internally and externally perceived conflicts between their roles as women and as professionals. According to Kosa (1971), women doctors tend to manage their professional career by selecting those fields of medicine, which are least likely to offer work duties incompatible with the female household task.

Studies on the discrimination of women in the Legal Profession highlighted that in most law schools, women often surpassed men in academic honors, yet they found it difficult to find a job. Even if law firms hire women, they are shunt into the estates and trusts as legal advisors. Practice as advocates as such is often denied to women for the men believe that there is something masculine about the practice of law.

Dinerman in her study on “Sex Discrimination in the Legal profession” (1969: 48) argued that, “the law is born of conflict, and its practice, almost by tradition must be aggressive and warlike in nature.
To be successful an attorney must have a fighting disposition. He should have mental alertness, unusual self-confidence, a logical mind and a non-retiring personality. These qualifications, many contend are not the type of traits normally associated with the feminine personality. Female attributes, such as softness, gentleness, and pacifism, just aren’t characteristics that make for effective lawyers.”

2.6 Studies in India

Studies on women in India are mostly descriptive studies on the status of women, particularly on the changing status of women. Most of them have a historical orientation, are narrative and trace the evolution of the status of women through different historical periods or in different religions. There are quite a few studies titled ‘women in modern India’ which focus on the position of women in contemporary times. Though titled as ‘women in India’, majority of these are regional studies, which concentrate on a particular village, a state, or, a particular religion.

2.7 Studies on the Status of Women in India.

Descriptive studies on the status of women are numerous. The study of Chitnis (1975) is worth mentioning. This study examined the different facets of life of women, like, household status, economic or political status and discussed the social issues affecting women’s status. Devi (2004) presented a perspective of the changing status of women, the prevalent sex-role expectations and sex-role definitions along with certain theoretical frame-works to understand the personality of women in employment. Studies on the status of women in different religions are in plenty. In this area, the studies on women in Muslim society are particularly significant. In the study on the ‘Status of Muslim women in North India’, Roy (1979) depicted the changing role
pattern of Muslim women. According to her, “many women are confronted with the difficult choice between personal liberty and the continuance of the comforting dependency, the promise of security and protection in the home. In trying to get the best of both worlds, she is tempted to compromise by satisfying herself with changes largely in the peripherally located roles”. (Roy 1979:129)

Batty (1980: 200) remarked that “women are not treated equal to men, the traditional attitude continue to regulate their lives, In the matters of marriage, taking up jobs or even in making their own choices or preferences, the traditional dictums play a great role.” Menon (1981) argued that the lack of meaningful role for educated women was the greatest hindrance to the progress of education among Muslim women. The community considered formal education as unnecessary for women and hence they refrained from availing of the educational facilities.

Analytical studies on the status of women emerged in India, after the publication of the report of the committee on the status of Women in India entitled ‘Towards Equality’ (1975) brought out by the Department of Social Welfare, Government of India. It documented the implications of the discriminations to which women have been exposed. It brought to light, the existing, demographic, legal, socio-cultural, economic, as well as the political perspective regarding women and the need to develop new perspectives, to achieve equality of status for women. Srivastav’s study (2004) entitled,” Women in India: Problems and Prospects” analysed and discussed the constitutional obligation of providing legal aid to the women, consequent to sex determination test status of women on one hand, and on the other equal remuneration for equal work and better working conditions for female workers.
2.8 Studies on Dual Role of Women in India.

Women in India are facing various problems; these problems encircle their lives, their livelihood, and their relationship with elders, their husbands and their colleagues when they work outside their homes. The workingwomen still find them in a very difficult position to adjust with the work and home, since each one demands greater attention. The problems regarding pregnancy and maternity leave still enrage many office bosses; sometimes they find it an excuse for sacking of their female staff. Sexual exploitation and harassment is also becoming a bigger problem in big and small cities of India. The raising of children, teaching and education of the children demands greater time and energy. The office going women is unable to cope with these demands. (Shukla, 2003)

According to Arora (2003: 250) “it can be said that merging a full time demanding job, with family and child care responsibilities is not a smooth sailing option. Even though the professionals hold a very positive opinion about themselves, in being able to manage all areas with relative success, the experience of role conflict is inevitable.” She remarked that the problems arising from the dual role of women originated from the patriarchal ideology of our society, where the demands of the family are expected to be the top most priority for women. Abraham (2002) stated that women, who work, carry a double load as employee and housewife. They are super moms playing varied roles and reconciling between tradition and modernity. According to Farhat (2004), the greatest danger resulting from woman being career-oriented was disharmony within her family. Even the so-called ‘modern husbands’ expected the wife to serve him and the household, irrespective of the fact that she was a workingwoman.
To Dahlstrom (1967) though Indian women have formally become equal to men, their most important role is still considered to be that of caring for the home and children, occupation are still secondary. Mahajan (1996) analysed the conflicts which, modern women in India have to encounter, if they decide to pursue a career along with their traditional domestic role. The social and cultural milieu of India was such that even today, it values for its women, the traditional family roles, and not the career roles. Hence even the educated women are in a dilemma, when they have to play both the roles simultaneously.

Mishra (1977) felt that what curbed the educated employed women was the dissonance between social expectations and her actual situation. The workingwoman was seeking a consistent frame of reference to anchor herself to a relatively stable set of values. According to him, the role-person- system complex is in a state of flux, essentially due to inevitable value lag. Discussing the relationship between gender and socialisation, Chanana (1988) in her work “Socialisation, education and women- explorations in gender identity” remarked that socialisation for women was heavily weighed in terms of tradition and the social institutions of family, marriage and kinship. “It is intertwined with the process of role socialisation of girls and boys that eventually leads to the dichotomizing of masculine and feminine roles.” (Chanana, 1988: 8).

According to Savitha (1999), the centuries of social conditioning regarding the secondary status of women makes it difficult for women even today to break the ice of the traditional roles she plays, no matter how educated she is, or what income she draws. Hiremath (2005) discusses the various issues women face in their march towards equality. According to the author, the prevalence of male attitudes, generally called male Chauvinism, still results in women being
relegated to a second-class status. Mukhopadyay and Seymour (1994) used the term ‘patrifocal’ to understand a family that was focused on the interests of the males. The male oriented families constituted a socio-cultural complex that profoundly affected women’s access to educational and employment achievements.

Rani (1971) studied the dual performance and the consequent dilemmas faced by working women. She focused on the interrelationship between role conflict and factors like, caste, income, education and occupation and found that these factors were not a cause for role conflict. To her, role conflict was entirely psychological issues, which emanates from the push and pull between the expectations of the domestic role and that of the occupational role. Singh (1972) pointed out that the motivation to work and role conflict were closely related. Her study revealed that those who worked because they had a special interest in it or because it gave them a sense of independence did not face conflict when compared to those who were forced by circumstances to work.

Mathur’s ‘Women Family and Work’ (2000) was a study on women professionals. She analysed the motivational level of the professionals, their decision to seek employment, the implications of dual role and the problems and conflicts they experienced. The study revealed that among the many problems faced by women professionals, the most common problems were: - Work overload, Burden of domestic chores, Inability to cope with both roles simultaneously and the consequent problem of Role conflict. It was found that role conflict was directly related to the pressure of young children and a ‘home oriented’ personality while, it was inversely related to level of motivation, spouse support and supportive attitude of colleagues. The study also found that women professionals curtailed
their occupational role in nearly 30 percent, domestic role in 18 percent and both roles in 15 percent cases due to role conflict.

Mishra’s study titled ‘Predictors of Work-Family Conflict among Indian Women’ (1998) traced the predictors of work family conflict among Indian women. Attempts were made to identify the area where maximum conflict was experienced and to analyze occupational difference with regard to role conflict. The study found that the patterns of predictors were not identical for different conflict areas, though they were similar. The strongest predictor was spouse-support. Profession vs. parent area exhibited maximum, though moderate conflict. Occupational type was found to have no significant impact on role conflict.

Ahmed (1984) observed that the low professional commitment and discrimination flowed from role perceptions and self images of imbibed through the process of socialisation. According to her, women face problems at work, because, they look upon work as an addition to her traditional role only, and, they do not perceive any discrimination and do not set any high career targets. According to Arora, (2003) “The low proportion of women in the higher ranks may be the reflection of either of prejudices and discriminatory recruitment policies or lack of career orientation and career commitment on the part of women”, (p.293)

Besides, there are studies, which are concerned with the changes in the lives of women by virtue of their employment. Chitnis (1975) in ‘Traditional Stereotypes and Roles of Women’ stated that despite the persistence of the limitations of the traditional roles of wife and mother, women had won larger space for themselves. Promila Kapur (1981) too highlighted the ability of women to manage dual roles. She observed
that generally working women accepted and managed both the roles, but those who felt torn between their loyalty towards family and job suffered role conflict. Conflict emerged when there was a clash between the two roles and their corresponding aspirations.

2.9 Studies of Women in Kerala

Changes in the structure and functions of the family in Kerala, have brought about alterations in marriage, inheritance and succession practices. Women’s education and employment have increased, but they have not played the transformative role expected of them. The persistence of a gendered work structure has limited women’s achievement of equality. Researches have made it clear that education alone will not enable women to challenge gender relations; nor will work, by itself, ensure women’s empowerment. Changes must be introduced in the social matrix, which, in fact, set aside women as an inferior group, both inside and outside the family. (Basu and Jeffrey, 1994)

Osella and Osella (2000) suggested that education, even higher education, did not appear to have motivated large numbers of women to challenge gender role assumptions. They argued that marriage being a social imperative, perpetuated gendered interest and identity and even the newly emerging norms of femininity too dictated that women use their education in the interests of the family. Duraisamy and Duraisamy’s (1997) study showed that the gender gap in earnings of highly qualified persons, measured by the ratio of female to male earnings was 0.78 in Kerala in the science and technology fields. About 18 per cent of the differential could be explained in terms of the occupational segregation, 50–60 per cent by productivity
characteristics, which suggests that almost a quarter is in terms of discrimination against women.

Eapen and Kodoth (2002) in their study titled, ‘Family Structure and Women, Education and Work, re-examining the high status of Women in Kerala’, stated that the persistence of gender differentiated family roles perpetuated the sexual division of labour. According to them, in spite of the fact that girls have made remarkable advances in education, their achievements are low in comparison with boys. In the field of professions, too, women are seen in the lower rungs of the hierarchy. Besides, even for the same jobs, women are often paid less. According to them, the above state of affairs clearly establishes that both occupational segregation and gender discrimination are a reality in Kerala.

2.10 Conclusion

In this chapter, the researcher has reviewed several studies on women at work in general and women in the professions in particular. The review of the issues related to female work force participation point to the following manifestations.

1. The dual role performance is in itself a potent source of conflict. The studies pointed out that women faced unique challenges in the occupation arenas, because of their gender. Women are caught in a conflict between sex-role expectations and expectations of fulfilling one’s occupational potential

2. The role-conflict arising from the dual role of women originate in the patriarchal ideology of our society, where the demands of the family are expected to be the top most priority for women
3. The position of women in the profession has been a marginal one and the root cause for this lie both in the gender discrimination and in the conflicting demands that are placed on them.

With this orientation, the present study attempts to appraise how far these issues manifest in the lives of women professionals of Kerala.