CHAPTER EIGHT

TOWARDS A THEORY OF ROLE STRESS, ROLE EFFICACY AND COPING STYLES IN WORKING WOMEN

Previous chapters have given a detailed profile of working women, in relation to their personal background, personality and organisational environment. We have also discussed types of role stresses they experience and coping styles they use to deal with such stresses, along with their efficacy. Further, we have examined the relationship between types of stresses, coping styles and role efficacy with demographic, personality and organisational variables. At this stage we can hazard some generalisations about stress in working women. This last chapter proposes a tentative theory of role stress, role efficacy and coping styles in working women.

Data on demographic variables revealed that the majority of women respondents are from Ahmedabad city. The major reasons for selecting a job are "to make use of education received", "to learn and grow intellectually" and "financial need" as well as "to be financially independent." Most of the women are between 26 to 35 years of age, highly educated, earning nearly Rs. 1500 p.m., are married, staying in nuclear families comprising of a maximum of five members and having not more than two children. Majority of women respondents have more than 8 years of work experience. Their organisations are somewhere
within 5 kms. distance from their residence and a majority of them use the city transport bus as their mode of conveyance to reach to their work place.

Personality variables are studied to understand personality profiles of working women in different professions. Their data on Locus of Control Inventory show that, these women are highly internal, and they do accept external control of chance but not external control of powerful others influencing them. This indicates that they believe that their own actions produce the outcomes and also that neither control is in their hand nor it is in others' power, i.e., controlled by chance. Internality is positively and significantly related to age, number of children and total work experience of these working women.

On contact personality factors, working women differ significantly according to their professions. Social workers' high score on these factors indicates, they are good natured, soft hearted, adaptable, dominant, talkative, cheerful, adventurous and group-oriented than other being professional women. While researchers are more withdrawn, aloof, silent, introspective and self sufficient. Women respondents with high education and higher income group are found to be adventurous and bold than other groups. Higher age show high scores on most of the dimensions of personality.
Women entrepreneurs and nurses have high fear of success compared to other professions. Researchers and university and college teachers have lowest fear of success. Women having low education and low income have high fear of success than highly educated and high income group, indicating that the concept of fear of success is more applicable to women living in traditional society than women having modern environment. Fear of success is positively and significantly related with the number of children. It is also positively and significantly related with total role stress, showing that women having high fear of success experience more role stress than women having low fear of success.

These professional women perceive the climate of their organisations as consultative and benevolent. Participative climate is not perceived by any of the groups; it is likely that these women might not be having a feeling of 'we-ness' for their organisation. They may not be taking initiative or active part in the activities of the organisation and their involvement may be low. Positively significant correlation is found between organisational climate and age and number of children. According to motivational analysis of organisational climate, women researchers perceive control and extension as the dominating climate of their organisations. Doctors perceive expert power and achievement dominating climate, while some organisations are perceived by nurses as having affiliation and control.
climate. Control dominating climate is perceived highest by social workers. Women in academic professions perceive the climate of their organisations as control dominating followed by achievement and expert power. They also perceive extension dominating climate, indicating their organisations have high concern to develop people and groups, or work for larger good, which is true for academic institutions. Control and affiliation dominating climate is perceived by gazetted officers which reflects government organisations' working process. Bank employees perceive their banks having control and achievement dominating climate. Age, income, number of children, education and promotion are found to play an important part in the perception of the organisation, by these professional women while other variables do not play significant role.

Job satisfaction results show, that academic professional women are more satisfied than other professional women. It has positive relationship with age, number of years of experience, and joint family system. Married women respondents and having less number of children, have more job satisfaction. Women who are working for their personal growth and to utilize time in doing interesting work also have more satisfaction than those who are working to satisfy financial need.

Working women differ significantly, according to their professions, on various dimensions of role stress and total role stress. Nurses and bank employees experience highest role stress than other professional women. It is likely, as these professional women have to
deal constantly with people, and therefore they experience more stress than other women who have to work independently. RO stress is experienced in more or less similar intensity by all the groups.

University and college teachers experience, role stress in least amount, as they have congenial atmosphere to work, in terms of socially prestigious job, working hours are comparatively less, frequent vacations and reasonable pay scales. Variance analysis show that age, education and income play an important part for working women in experiencing role stress. No family related variable show significant relationship with role stress. However, this is not true for women entrepreneurs. As women entrepreneurs who are married, have children within 4-10 years of age they experience more stress. Migrated women entrepreneurs also experience more stress compared to local inhabitants. Amongst types of stresses, these women experience Rein, RoI, RI, and ReI stresses more than other types. They do not experience role overload and challenge stress more, as it may be their inborn capacity to welcome and accept these stresses.

To understand the relationship of role stress with demographic, personality and organisational variables, stepwise multiple regression analysis was computed (See Table 8.1).

As regression analysis shows, no demographic variables are found to have significant relationship with role stress. However, some of the personality and organisational variables explain about 39% of variance.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Multiple R</th>
<th>Beta</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Internal locus of control</td>
<td>0.305</td>
<td>0.241</td>
<td>16.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominance-Submissive</td>
<td>0.361</td>
<td>0.118</td>
<td>5.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adventurous-Withdrawal</td>
<td>0.411</td>
<td>-0.204</td>
<td>16.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Identification-Self Sufficiency</td>
<td>0.422</td>
<td>0.102</td>
<td>4.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Satisfaction</td>
<td>0.476</td>
<td>-0.275</td>
<td>24.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role Efficacy</td>
<td>0.578</td>
<td>0.142</td>
<td>4.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisation Climate</td>
<td>0.592</td>
<td>0.148</td>
<td>3.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expert Power</td>
<td>0.613</td>
<td>0.096</td>
<td>2.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extension</td>
<td>0.624</td>
<td>0.154</td>
<td>6.34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Amongst personality variables which explain about 18% variance, Internal Locus of Control and Adventurous-Withdrawal dimension play significant role in determining the intensity of role stress. Internality is negatively correlated with role stress. If the person believes that external control is more powerful and a person does not have one's own control over any particular situation, is likely to experience more role stress. Kobasa (1979) also found that high stress/low illness executives had more internal locus of control than high stress/high illness executives.

This also correspond with personality dimension withdrawal. A person having withdrawing tendency is likely to be shy, having little interest in opposite sex, aloof, etc. A person holding this characteristic is likely to depend on others to solve the problems instead of finding out solution by oneself or feeling control of one's own on particular situation. Other personality dimensions are Dominance and Group Identification which contribute in experience of role stress. The more a person has dominant tendency as well as a tendency to work in a group and not having self confidence where independent decision making ability is required, there they are likely to experience more role stress. However, Harigopal (1980), found submissive subjects have more role ambiguity stress than the dominant subjects.

Job satisfaction and role efficacy have negative and highly significant correlation with role stress (See Tables 7.4 and 7.5). These together explain about 15% variance. Pestonjee and Singh (1981)
found a similar relationship. Women with high role efficacy and having high job satisfaction are likely to experience less role stress.

About 6% variance is explained by organisational variables namely, organisational climate and expert power as well as extension. Organisational climate is highly significantly and negatively related with role stress, indicating that non-participative climate leads to low job satisfaction and low role efficacy, consequently leading to experience of role stress. Expert power dominating climate is positively and significantly related to role stress. Such climate indicates that people with expertise and skills are encouraged and rewarded and they are recognised in the organisations. Here women might have feeling that they are not considered as experts or to get this consideration, they have to make double efforts which leads to the experience of role stress. As there is positive significant relationship also found between expert power and RA, as well as RIn stresses.

It is very strange that extension dominating climate is also positively and significantly related to role stress, as well as all types of stresses (See Table 7.4). Extension dominating climate indicates that there is concern for the development of people; the organisation works for larger good and people help each other. This might be creating stress in women with a feeling of insecurity in terms of permanent job, promotion, rewards, etc. The scores indicate high extension dominating climate prevailing in the organisations; however, in reality it may not be true and at action level there may not be
concern for others, which leads to the experience of stress with the fear, whether they will be benefited or not.

Thus a combination of personality and organisational variables lead to low job satisfaction and low role efficacy, which finally increase the experience of role stress. This is shown in Model 8.1.

Professional groups differ significantly on role efficacy. Social workers and gazetted officers feel most efficacious than other professional women. 'Social Workers', as the term itself explains they are likely to feel their role is important, holding value to a larger group, are able to do something for others by using their creativity and taking initiative, as everyday they attend different types of cases and deal with various problems and with such experience they feel and opportunity to grow and develop, thus they feel having high role efficacy. In the case of gazetted officers they are holding prestigious, responsible positions, have power to take initiative, to make influence and grow personally, to have tendency to confront the problems to find relevant solutions (as they have high frequencies on approach oriented coping styles, See Table 6.10), increase their role efficacy. This may be the reason that they experience low role stress compared to other professional women except university and college teachers (See Table 6.1).

Working women in academic profession as well as medical profession have high scores on role efficacy, as they feel that what they are doing in their role, has value to a larger groups and their work has
Model 8.1: A Model showing factors affecting Role Stress

- Personality
  - Low Internality
  - Dominance
  - Withdrawal
  - Group Identification

- Climate
  - Organisational Climate
  - Non-participative
  - Expert influence
  - Extension

Low Role Efficacy

Low Job Satisfaction

Role Stress
beneficial value to the society as a whole. This is lacking in resear-
chers and bank employees who feel an absence of most of the dimensions
of role efficacy in their professions.

Role efficacy increases with age, income greater work experience
and length of service in the organisation. Professional women who have
received promotion, and stay in nuclear families and have children
of more than 11 years of age, also feel themselves more efficacious.

The relationship of role efficacy with demographic, personality,
types of role stresses and organisational variables is presented in
Table 8.2, showing stepwise multiple regression analysis. These vari-
able explain about 59% variance.

Amongst demographic variables about 7% variance is explained by
age and length of service. Both these variables are positively and
significantly related with role efficacy. Role efficacy is likely to
increase with age and experience. Internality and job satisfaction
explain about 10% variance. Those who feel efficacious they are more
internals and have high job satisfaction. Internals are likely to
feel their role as central to the organisation, and feel more integrated
and are able to develop inter-role linkages, wield influence and take
the opportunity for personal growth as well as confront the problems
to find the solutions. The more these dimensions are present in the
person, the more job satisfaction one will have.
### TABLE 8.2

**Step-wise Multiple Regression Analysis of Demographic, Personality, Role Stress and Organisational Variables with Role Efficacy**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Multiple R</th>
<th>Beta</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>0.241</td>
<td>0.079</td>
<td>1.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of Service</td>
<td>0.262</td>
<td>0.120</td>
<td>1.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal Locus of Control</td>
<td>0.314</td>
<td>-0.081</td>
<td>2.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External Control by Others</td>
<td>0.315</td>
<td>-0.072</td>
<td>2.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Satisfaction</td>
<td>0.413</td>
<td>0.160</td>
<td>10.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Role distance</td>
<td>0.505</td>
<td>0.085</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inter-Role distance</td>
<td>0.533</td>
<td>0.143</td>
<td>7.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role Ambiguity</td>
<td>0.540</td>
<td>-0.138</td>
<td>5.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role Isolation</td>
<td>0.567</td>
<td>0.108</td>
<td>3.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role Inadequacy</td>
<td>0.567</td>
<td>-0.019</td>
<td>0.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisational Climate</td>
<td>0.750</td>
<td>0.501</td>
<td>88.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extension</td>
<td>0.763</td>
<td>0.096</td>
<td>3.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affiliation</td>
<td>0.766</td>
<td>0.062</td>
<td>1.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dependency</td>
<td>0.770</td>
<td>0.105</td>
<td>4.19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
About 15% variance is explained by various types of role stresses. Role efficacy has highly significant negative relationship with all types of stresses, indicating that a low efficacious person is likely to experience all kinds of stresses more than high efficacious person. As efficacious person would feel integrated, having linkages with other roles, developing helping relationship (likely to use approach coping styles more often), able to confront, therefore the consequence would be low experience of stress.

Organisational climate and extension, affiliation as well as dependency dominating climate, explain about 27% variance. Organisational climate is highly positively related at .001 significant level, with role efficacy. The more participative climate prevails in the organisation, the more a person would feel efficacious, as one would be able to take initiative, use creativeness and confront. Extension climate is significantly negatively related with role efficacy. Thus if low extension dominating climate is prevailing, the more efficacious a person would feel. It may be so, as a person feels more stress in a high extension dominating climate and therefore feels less efficacious. Dependency is significantly and positively related to role efficacy, indicating that women feel more efficacious in a climate of dependency.

Therefore as shown in the Model 8.2 role efficacy is affected positively by demographic variables like age and experience, i.e., higher the age and more work experience, lead to high role efficacy. High internality and high job satisfaction also increase role efficacy.
Model 8.2: A Model showing factors leading to high Role Efficacy

Role Strain (Low)
- Self Role Distance
- Inter Role Distance
- Role Ambiguity
- Role Isolation
- Role Inadequacy

Demographic
- Age
- Work Experience

Climate
- Participative Organisational Climate
- Low Extension
- Dependency

High Role Efficacy

Personality
- Internality

High Job Satisfaction
If experience of stress is low, particularly SR, IR, RA, RI and RIn stresses, then a person would feel more efficacious. If the organisation has a participative climate and low extension dominance as well as more dependency orientation, these contribute to an increase in role efficacy.

The calculations of percentages and coping styles used by professional women show that the Defensive style is not frequently used to cope with stress, followed by Intrapersisitive style. However, the difference in frequencies is large. This indicates that working women use avoidance oriented styles more often than approach oriented styles. The same pattern is also found in women entrepreneurs. However their dominating style of coping is Intrapersisitive style followed by Defensiveness.

The relationship of avoidance oriented styles and approach oriented styles with various personality and organisational variables as well as with role efficacy and types of role stresses are presented in Model 8.3.

As presented in the model internality is negatively related with avoidance oriented styles and positively related with approach oriented styles. While externality shows converse relationship. Therefore a person who is more internal would use approach oriented styles to cope with stress, while externals would try to avoid the problem or defend themselves in stressful situations. Adventurous personality dimension is also positively related with approach-oriented styles.
Values mentioned indicate levels of significance.
The name of this factor (Adventurous-Withdrawal) itself indicates withdrawal tendency, i.e., a tendency to use avoidance oriented styles.

Extension dominating climate is positively related with avoidance oriented styles while control dominating climate is positively related with approach oriented styles, though not significant. As extension dominating climate leads to more experience of role stress, where respondents are likely to accept the stress as it is or try to justify it. It therefore shows a positive relationship with avoidance oriented styles. Those who perceive the climate as control dominating, are likely to enjoy their positions, feeling powerful, controlling their subordinates by using action oriented styles are positively related with consultative and participative organisational climate, while it is negatively related with avoidance oriented styles. Those who perceive participative climate, are able to take action to solve the problem and have less tendency to avoid the problem or simply justify the stress and put blame either on oneself or others.

A highly efficacious person is likely to use approach oriented coping styles more often than avoidance oriented styles. High role efficacy implies that a person would be able to take initiative, confront and find out the solution for the problems instead of avoiding problems. Types of role stresses show significant negative relationship with approach oriented styles and positive relationship with avoidance oriented styles. This indicates that non use of approach oriented coping styles leads to experience of high role stress or
Thus highly internal persons, with adventurous personality dimension, perceiving participative climate, feeling high efficacious and experiencing low role stress are likely to use approach oriented styles more frequently than avoidance oriented styles of coping with role stress.

**Implications**

With the overall discussion, based on data analysis, as presented in the various tables of results, it can be concluded that some specific action oriented plans should be implemented, by the individuals (working women) as well as organisations, so as to reduce the experience of various stresses, and to improve the styles of coping with stressful situations.

According to the models presented earlier in this chapter, it has been observed that low internality and presence of tendencies like dominance, withdrawal, identification with the groups as well as non-participative organisational climate and expert and extension dominating climate leads to low role efficacy and low job satisfaction, as a result experience of role stress is more. This indicates that internality and role efficacy should be increased with some interventions.

Special short term training programmes should be arranged to increase internality. As suggested by Pareek, et al. (1981), with the help of transactional analysis exercise, their self awareness can
be increased, their basic attitudes can be changed in terms of risk taking and responsibilities by achievement motivation training, value clarification and assertion training, reinterpretation technique which helps the individual to develop a new cognitive world around oneself, experience success, i.e., they should be given chance to succeed by giving responsibilities and challenges, enough supportive demands, social awareness and collective actions, which develop a new sense of power. All these interventions help to develop high internality both for individuals and groups, which leads to higher job satisfaction (Mitchell, et al., 1975).

To increase role efficacy is as important as internality while dealing with role stress. Before taking any steps to increase role efficacy, it is necessary to diagnose, which dimensions of efficacy, it is necessary to diagnose, which dimensions of efficacy are present and which others are absent. This can be done by Pareek's (1980) scale which has been used in this study to measure role efficacy. As a second step necessary counselling and help can be produced to build the dimensions absent in the person. Inter-role Exploration can be used as an intervention to increase role efficacy. This is used for strengthening various roles in an organization through a joint effort of the role occupants. It works by increasing mutuality, creativity exploration, and confronting strategies (Pareek, 1977-a)

Along with the efforts made to increase internality as well as role efficacy of working women, they should also be made aware and
trained to use some strategies, so as to manage with the various types of stresses. As suggested by Pareek (1977) SR distance stress is managed, by analysis the various aspects of the roles which are causing this stress. An attempt should be made to grow in the role and make the role grow to use the special capabilities of the person which is likely to result in role integration, where the individual gets the satisfaction of occupying a role which is nearer to one's self concept. When one has to take the responsibility of a new role, one is likely to continue to play the previous role which one was able to play successfully and as a result cannot give proper attention and justice to the new roles. Role transition is the process by which a previous role, however successful and satisfying it may have been, is given up to take a new and more developed role. Preparation for the taking up of new role, role clarity, anticipatory socialization are some helpful processes for role transition.

In order to manage inter-role conflict and role isolation, Harrison (1971), has suggested role negotiation technique. The process of role negotiation is the process of establishing mutuality of roles and getting necessary help to play the roles more effectively, and giving help in turn to the other role. For example, a woman holding a responsible position in an organisation and does not find time for her children, may sit down and negotiate with husband and children on how best she can spend time meaningfully, within the given constraints. To resolve role ambiguity stress, a functional approach may be to seek clarifications
from various sources and to redefine the role in the light of such clarifications. Instead of accepting the role as it is which means 'role taking' a more creative way is to define the role according to one's own strength and some steps should be taken to make the role more challenging and effective, which is 'role making' process. To deal with role overload, stress one has to do 'role slimming'. This is the approach of redefining the role and aspects of the role area delegated to other persons who may be helped to develop take on these functions. The role does not lose its importance in the process of delegating some functions, in fact the importance increases with decrease in obesity. In general they should not feel that role expectations are unfair, as this type of attitude is likely to lead to dysfunctional consequences like low performance, high anxiety, tension, etc. (Mach, et al., 1979).

These above described strategies of coping suggests that confrontation strategies or functional approaches in dealing with stress are more useful than taking avoidance oriented approach. Working women should also be trained to use more often action oriented styles, by making them aware about their dominating styles of coping, and how it is related with their experience of stress.

Apart from these, time management is the most important issue, which working women should take into consideration. As studied by Ivanovitch (1974), those workers who had to work 4 days 40 hours were more satisfied and experienced less anxiety-stress than their counterparts.
who had to work 5 days 40 hours. This indicates that work gives more satisfaction if the proper planning is done for working in some fixed hours instead of stretching it for long hours and days. Spare holidays totally for family and social commitments or utilise them for doing other creative and interesting work, which in turn will provide more energy for coming week days of working. This is also suggested by women administrators to keep work and home separate by compartmentalizing (Villadsen, 1980). Mihailovic (1976) studied Yugoslavian women and found out that employed women tend to spend free time in more improving ways than do non-employed women, however they spend it in more recreative activities than creative ones. Thus proper and systematic planning of time for work as well as other activities, do help to perform various roles effectively.

Aanstad and Borders (1980), have designed 'life work planning', a course to help women evaluate their current job status and plan career changes commensurate with long range life goals. These programmes are developmental, helping women to accept changes in life plans as natural outcomes of developing needs and values, promote self-confidence, supportive, involving friends and family for feedback encouragement, emphasize to take responsibility for one's own life, offer strategies for gathering information about career options, interests, abilities and values, how to use available resources, they also teach such career related skills as assertive communication, stress and time management and goal setting.
Taking guidelines from this programme, similar programme may be
developed to help working women to understand their roles and role
stresses and to help them resolve it in a better way. Mental health
counsellors should be encouraged to help these women, as suggested
by Scarato and Sigall (1979).

Finally, these women should keep in mind, 'Don't let your success
go to your heart'. It is true that the percentages of women executives
who suffer heart attack is much lower than that for men, stress can
create serious problems (Ghosh, 1980). In her interview with Dr. Amita
 Mukherjea, she found that though the work stress is more for a female
executive she has access to diversions of various sorts whereas a
non-executive female has very few outlets for her pent up emotions.
This is also supported by Spreitzer (1979), that involvement in multi-
ple roles does not necessarily lead to role strain. Instead, well-
being increased with the number of roles enacted and satisfaction
in one role can help compensate for deprivation in another.

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