ABSTRACT

“Nature and Dimensions of Role Conflict in Working Women in Urban Kashmir: A Comparative Study of Two Communities”

The present study focuses on role conflict in working women in organized sectors in an urban context. The study among the other things seeks to examine and compare the social background of working women in two religious communities i.e. Hindu and Muslim communities with particular reference to Kashmir.

The sample comprises of 255 respondents selected from six urban settlements in Kashmir society namely, Anantnag, Baramullah, Budgam, Srinagar, Pulwama and Kupwara. The sample comprises of 121 respondents from Hindu community and 134 respondents from Muslim community.

The sectoral distribution of the respondents as per their professional specialization is that, 96 respondents are in teaching profession, 63 are in medical profession, 86 in social welfare profession and 10 are in banking sector. Out of the total sample of 255 respondents, 97 respondents are unmarried, 141 married, 12 are divorced/widows and 5 are single working women.

The study is designed as comparative study in view of the fact that the responses of Hindu and Muslim communities is known to be historically different towards modernization and adaptability of changing social status and roles. The study deals with the description of nature and dimensions of role conflict in working women, social background of working women, their
parental background, nature and role of role models and family background in relation to both Hindu and Muslim communities.

The whole study is divided into six chapters. The study begins with the introduction of the research problem followed by the debate in role theory and conceptualization, historical background of the area under study, socio-economic background of the working women, empirical analysis and finally ends with conclusion along with the limitations and suggestions of the study.

Although many sociological studies and other disciplinary studies have been made to understand the social background of working women and role conflict of working women, while, few studies have described about the comparative analysis of communities.

Various studies and review of existing literature regarding the research problem is presented in the chapter first. Proper research methodology have been adopted for building the research design and the use of sampling is being used to select the sample among the population of universe.

After going through the relevant literature on the problem of role conflict the following objectives are formulated for the study of research problem:

1. To study socio-economic background of working women.
2. To study the changes in the status – role set of working women.
3. To identify the factors of role conflict.
4. To identify the variables influencing the role conflict.
5. Identification of the nature of roles performed by working women in family domain.

6. To study the perception of working women about their role performance.

7. Attitude of in-laws towards working women.

8. Impact of job on family, conjugal relations and children in case of married working women.

9. To analyse the nature and degree of duality of role conflict.

10. To assess the influence of religious orthodoxy among working women on their role performance.

11. To study the nature and mechanism of role adjustment and accommodation in working women.

In order to verify the objectives some tentative generalizations (hypothesis) have been derived in chapter 1 as –

1. Socio-economic characteristics affect the nature and dimensions of role conflict in working women.

2. Role of religion is significant in determining the nature and extent of role conflict.

3. Instances of role conflict are higher in working couples of asymmetrical background.

4. Role conflict and mobility of working women are directly proportional.

5. Family size has an impact on the extent of role conflict in working women.
6. Role conflict is acute in married working women having immature children.

7. Muslim working women rather than Hindu working women are likely to come from large sized families.

8. Muslim women rather than Hindu women are more likely to be first generation earners.

9. Muslims as well as Hindu working women are equally likely to have role models.

10. The motivation of Hindu and Muslim working women for the professions is not likely to be different.

11. Hindu and Muslim working women are likely to have small sized families.

12. Working women from urban background held more modern attitude towards labour force participation.

13. Working women having working mothers have high degree of attitudinal modernity towards women's occupational role in both the communities.

In this study we have choosen many structural variables such as educational, occupational and income levels of parents/husbands which play significant role as role models and personal referents. The role of religion as a variable has been examined to ascertain the relative role of religious orthodoxy regarding working women in urban Kashmir. The study reveals that majority of the respondents (working women) come from the families in which at least one of the parents was educated. The study also notes that there is not any
significant difference in the two communities under study in so far as their parental educational background is concerned. The possible explanation to this conclusion lies in the history and culture of Kashmiri society. Out of the three significant religions communities – Muslim, Hindu and Buddhists, the first two have a long history of mutual co-existence, particularly in the valley of Kashmir. Buddhists are mostly at the high altitude of the Himalayan ranges (Laddakh) which is relatively isolated. Muslim and Hindu in urban Kashmir speak common language, share common culture and history. Though Brahmin by caste, most of the members of Pandit community are non-vegetarian in their dietary practices. Muslim in Kashmir valley contrary to the common belief do not observe traditional purdah. However the difference in educational qualifications of father and husband of the respondents is less compared to the difference in the education of mother and daughter (Roy, 1979). This indicates that respondents come from comparatively well-to-do-educated families. It also appears from the present study that the respondents emulate the role models. Moreover in majority of the cases the working women constitute the first generation earners as compared to their mothers.

The other variables such as occupation of parents and income level of parents and husbands of the respondents and size of the family are determinant factors in assessing the degree of role conflict. Quoting few studies, Boocock (1972) says that family size is very closely related to the educational attainment of the child as it is related to the socio-economic background.
On the theoretical level the present study makes it possible to formulate some generalizations in this area of study. These are given below:

The maximum conflict is not found in the working women whose mothers or mothers-in-law are also working. The women who have taken job out of gross necessity do not experience greater role conflict because such working women do not have a high perception of their two roles.

Conflict is not necessarily low where both husband and wife are working and posted separately.

Joint families do not have a higher incidence of role conflict. Wives employment does not necessarily put a strain on marital harmony.

There is no significant variation among Muslim and Hindu respondents because they belong to relatively similar social backgrounds.

Some of the findings confirm with that of other research workers and some did not. The most important of these are:

So far as decision to work is concerned this study finds that it depends upon personality factors and attitudes of husbands and other members of family (Hoffman, 1963).

In case of conflict between domestic role and professional role, the career always takes the second place. The finding agrees with that of Kelsall, Poole and Kuhu (1972) in U.K.

Working women are haunted by a feeling of guilt for neglect of household work. This finding agrees with that of Sullerot (1971) in France.
The working women belonging to both communities are faced with the dilemma of over work and conflict is in conformity with the finding of Rapaport (1971) in U.K.

The present study does not agree with Bradburn (1968-69), that there is less happiness in marital relations if woman works out of gross necessity.

The study agrees with Kapur’s (1970) finding that refusal of husbands to share household work and their hostility to employment leads to maladjustment and conflict. It also agrees with the finding of Nye (1963) and Kapur (1970) that employment of wives increases chances of marital conflict to some extent.

At methodological level the study reveals that the data can be collected by interview schedule and case studies.

The second chapter deals with the debate in role theory and conceptualization related to role and status. Moreover there is the description about changes and factors responsible for women’s employment and participation in work force.

Third chapter deals with the historical background of area under study in order to know under which conditions the respondents of the present study are working in urban Kashmir. The fourth chapter deals with the extensive study of socio-economic background of working women and its empirical interpretation. The fifth chapter deals with the study of structural continuity and change. It explores the possibilities of change in the traditional value system of the society to know whether the changes of rationality, equality and modernity
have perculated down the society or there is resistance in allowing the social structure to change.

Last chapter of the thesis deals with conclusion along with the limitations of the study. Findings of the study reveal that in all societies both men and women work, but not necessarily at the same task or to the same extent not only the conditions of work change over time owing to a wide variety of reasons, but the perception of what constitutes the work, also vary between people and over time. Historically women’s role has been closely associated with the home and that of men with the outside activities, but the recent times have necessitated a change in the women’s role. Entrance of women in the work force gave rise to the concept of working women and housewives. This drastic role change of women from that of domesticity to that of professionalism has evidently brought about a lot of change in women itself, family relationships and societal relationships as a whole. With this multiplicity of roles, women’s behaviour became complex in terms of expected and actual conducts as they face a lot of problems and confusion with regard to their roles and statuses.

The dual role performance by working women demand two different values. The problem of the role conflict arises because often these two roles make contradictory demands on the working women, whose physical capacity, energy, endurance and time have definite limits.

The fulfillment of these two roles require qualities of different and diverse sets, one demanding cooperation and self negation and the other calling
for competition and self cum career enhancement. The professional ethics require qualities like efficiency, determination, sense of responsibility and impersonal relations, while these characteristics come in conflict with the woman who is a wife, daughter and sister etc., is also expected to be soft, domesticated and yielding in most cases and not so intelligent in many cases. Hence a kind of conflict arises from the lack of adjustment between two competing expectations which is likely to be faced by those working women who have to comply with dual obligations at the same time.

This problem of role conflict would not arise if professional and home places are not considered as two mutually exclusive fields of life. Often the working woman is heard to make statements like a working woman cannot be an outstanding both in house and in job, she had to make a choice or it is heard to stay happily married while working or the quality of motherhood will suffer when the mother engages in a full time job outside the home. Further the religious rituals and customary practices especially in Hindu and Muslim communities are expected to be preserved and perpetuated by the women.

The matter of fact is that the role of employee and of a home maker are distant and different by nature and that there is wide possibility of role conflict and role strain being perceived by working women who want to reconcile them simultaneously.

In fact carrying out almost all responsibilities single handedly, the working women are over-strained and exhausted. The illusion of having new role experiences and variation from drudgery of the routine housework fades
away. The irritation on trivial matters, getting angry on children, husband and in laws disturbs the family atmosphere. Working women want to be committed house wives as well as efficient workers so as to maintain their status in the society. Their sincerity towards all these responsibilities is itself a cause of role conflict. Hence social background plays a key role in adjusting the dual role responsibilities.

After finishing the home chores, working women rushes to the office, if she is late, she is blamed by the office authorities on being insincere and she has to stay for some over time work, if she gets late for the home, she is worried about the children and family and the family in turn suspects about her late arrival.

Working women coming from joint, nuclear and extended families have their own share in role conflict. Even the atmosphere at the work place, attitude of fellow workers, attitude of boss, age of the working women, marital status, kind of work, duration of work, distance of work place from home and convenience facilities etc., are important factors of role conflict faced by working women.

The motivational pattern indicates that teaching and social welfare are the most favoured professions for women. The study belies the assumption that differences in religious backgrounds affects the family size of respondents. There is not any significant difference of family size between Hindu and Muslim respondents. It also shows that small family is becoming a norm in urban Kashmir.
The study also finds that there is an inverse relationship between working experience and the number of respondents: the larger the working experience, the lesser is the number of working women. Despite the religious differences, both Hindu and Muslim respondents share a common social outlook and awareness.

The dimensions and nature of role conflict among working women in urban Kashmir varies according to the social background characteristics and related variables. It can be inferred from the present work that role models play an important role in the motivation of women towards employment in different sectors.

In spite of being caught in the vicious problem of role conflict, working women claim that they succeed in managing the two roles because of their cooperation by family members especially their counterparts, role sharing and role substitution mechanisms, besides there is a growing tendency among the people to have working wives.

The nature of role conflict faced by working women is not because of profession, income or education but is largely a socio-psychological problem. It depends upon the personality factors as well as the social acceptability. Further the largest dimension of role conflict being economic dimension followed by cultural and familial dimensions. Despite the religious differences among the respondents, both Hindu and Muslim working women share a common social outlook and awareness as they are the part of same socio-cultural environment.
There is absolutely no doubt in the argument that women workers all over the world have to face the problem of adjustment among the varied role expectations. They are required by their positions to play a dual set of roles: one as home makers, wives, and mothers, and the other as employees. Being simultaneously confronted with dual demands of home and work, they are liable to face adjustment problem. In addition to the biological functions and psychological disorder, there are other duties which working women are expected to perform because of the prevailing cultural norms and values of our society. These new circumstances and prevailing circumstances require a redefinition and reallocation of roles, duties and responsibilities not merely for women but also for men and every member of the family, community and society as a whole.