

CHAPTER - VI
ROLE CONFLICTR AND ACCOMMODATION

Role conflict occurs whenever a person is required to perform two or more roles whose expectations are to some extent inconsistent. Role conflict is, therefore, a type of stress arising from a condition in which the player of focal role or roles perceives that he is confronted with incompatible expectations. Married women who take up jobs as outside employment increase their volume of duties as they have to perform dual functions, one in the home and the other outside. Home and work are two different worlds separated not only focally but in spirit, have own values and codes of conduct, which are not uncommonly in conflict with each other. Working being subjected to the dual demands of home and work is liable to face a crisis of adjustment. In addition to the biological functions she has to perform because of her sex and the culturally defined women's roles in which she has to act, she has to make many compromises, sacrifices and adjustments. Often she has to face conflicting situations and has to sacrifice the interest of her family for the sake of work career and at others her occupational career is jeopardised because of heavy family responsibilities.

The working wife is not yet clear about her roles. The changed context has created a role confusion for the working wife, to her established roles of mother and wife, a new role of working outside the home and earning a salary has now been added. The confusion arises because of a fit between old and new role. The present chapter is devoted to explore the various factors responsible for the role conflict among working women. Attempt is also made to find out how far the working women have accommodated themselves between the two roles.

SOURCES OF ROLE CONFLICT

In the transitional phase in which the dual career families in India find themselves, the tradition is not adhered too rigidly and the modern is not yet settled. This vacuum makes members of such families cling to the fulfilment of their own demands and claims. There is great uncertainty regarding husband, wife, and other relations in the family. In the absence of clear prescribed roles one is likely to be unmindful of one's duties while at the same time be unduly conscious of other obligation.¹

1. Rani Kala. 'Role conflict among working women chetna Publications, New Delhi 1976.

In the dual carrier families the exaggerated emphasis on individuality and individual gratification and the ambiguity and uncertainty of role make it difficult for both husband and wife to adjust to their marital obligations. The problem of adjustment may become more difficult for working wife's on account of husband's inability or unpreparedness to change himself in the light of new conditions. Most husbands even now believe that they need not share the household activities. In any case, they would be happy if the wife does not demand a more active participation. But if the wife is insistent, the husband may even resent this attitude. The wife has to make great sacrifices in a male dominated family. The parents-in-law and other relations living in the family do not have much sympathy with the working wife's new role and their demands and expectations from her remain more or less unchanged. A wife whose own image of her home role is extremely high will be best with more problems.

Acceptance of the goals of home and work simultaneously may lead to conflict for many, if not for all, educated women. The problem is likely to become more acute as fulfilment of the two goals requires qualities of different types. The demands made

by two situations not only add to her worry and fatigue but may create a problem in itself. It is usually true that when a married woman works outside the home she also assumes the responsibility for home making. Husband often help considerably with the housework, yet the larger part of it, specially the responsibility for planning and supervision, falls upon the wife even when there are servants. Tradition still makes housework less acceptable for men than wage earning for women. the wage earning wife has two sources of fatigue. Therefore, it may become excessive².

THE FIVE DILEMMAS:

Fogarty and the Rappaports³ have highlighted the five dilemmas confronted by couples in dual career families. the first dilemma is that produced by overload of work. The overload is a function of at least four factors:-

- (a) The degree to which having children and family is salient. The possible effects on their children,

2. Bowman H.A., 'Marriage for Moderns' (3rd ed.) McGraw Hill Book, Company, Inc, New York, 1954.

3. Fogarty MP, Rapport R. 'Sex, career and family, George Allen and Unwin, London 1971.

both husband and wife pursuing their careers, implied a limitation in degree to which couples were willing to delegate child care even assuming the availability of satisfactory sources. There is an element of psychic strain in allowing two major areas which are quite different in the demands and characteristics;

- (b) The degree to which satisfactory arrangement for reallocation of tasks in the household is possible;
- (c) The degree to which the sheer physical strain is enhanced by psychological strain. Couples vary enormously in the degree to which these other sources of tension feed into the family system and the degree to which they can manage them. It is therefore necessary that the couple should enjoy good health, the availability of domestic help or the presence of relations who may share the burden is also important in considering the issue;
- (d) The degree to which the couple aspire the higher is the standard of domestic living. Most couples aspire for a higher standard of living. This made the problem of managing the domestic side of their living more complex. Thus, the impetus to continue

work and career development is increased.

The second dilemma arises from the discrepancy between personal and social norms. Personal norms are what the couple felt was right and proper for themselves, while social norms are those held by people around them. In case of the conflict between the two roles it is the job role which is sacrificed, because of the importance given at the motherhood and the sanctity of the home and the housewife role.

The third dilemma is of personal identity and self esteem. The husband may make great personal and career sacrifices to help achieve the dual career structure for its value to both parties, but he may show irritation or resentment at having modified his won pattern against perishing internalised conceptions of himself in relation to masculine role. Some couples sharply segregate their work and home roles. Many women when they return home become cooks and devote themselves completely to housewife roles.

The fourth dilemma faced by the dual career families is the social network dilemma. In general, they tend to make their network of relationships on a couple basis rather than on individual basis. This is

partly a matter of sharing ideology, but it also functions to insulate them from the environmental sanctions. Such families have a larger network as it includes both husbands and wife's acquaintances.

The fifth dilemma as reported by Fogarty and Rapaport is the role cycling dilemma which arises from a conflict between roles that may be variable in their demands at different points or periods of time e.g., the marital role demands in relation to the work demands of each partner at different points in the life cycle.

TABLE 6.1

ROLE CONFLICT EXPERIENCED IN DUAL ROLE PERFORMANCE

Responses	Number	Percentage
Yes	234	58.5%
No	102	25.5%
In-different	64	16%
Total	400	100.00%

An attempt was made to know the opinion of the respondents about the performance of their dual roles. It was found as revealed in Table 6.1 that majority of the respondents 58.5% experienced conflict in performing their dual roles of home and job. 25.5% of

the married working women in the sample, however, opined that they do not experience any conflict in performing their two roles; 16% of the respondents were not clear in their opinion.

TABLE 6.2
OCCUPATION AND ROLE CONFLICT

Occupation	Sample strength	Role conflict experienced	Percentage
University Teacher	20	7	35%
College Teacher	100	45	45%
School Teacher	110	67	60.90%
Bank Employees	40	30	75%
Office Employees	60	39	65%
Nurses	30	23	76.66%
Doctors	30	20	66.66%
Administrative Officers	10	3	30%

An effort was made to find out whether the extent of role conflict experienced by married working women is related to the nature of their occupation. As is evident from the analysis (Table 6.2) the highest incidence of role conflict is found in Nurses (76.66%),

Bank Employees (75%), Doctors (66.66%) and office Employees (65%). On the other hand, role conflict is experienced to a lesser extent by University teachers (35%) college teacher (45%) and Administrative Officers. This indicates that role conflict is experienced by married working women whose profession demand more and hectic job house from the employee. Thus there is a direct relationship between nature of occupation and role conflict experience.

TABLE 6.3

EDUCATION AND ROLE CONFLICT EXPERIENCE

----- Educational level	Sample strength	Role of conflict experienced	Percentage
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Post-graduate	187	91	48.66%
Graduate	117	80	68.37%
Under-graduate	42	24	57.14
Matric	24	19	79.16
Medical Graduates	30	20	66.67
----- Total	400	234	100.00%
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Attempt was made to find whether role conflict experienced by married working women varies according to their educational qualification. It was found as

relected from Table 6.3 that highest incidence of role conflict is found in respondents with educational qualification of Matric (79.16%), Graduates (68.37%), Medical-Graduate (66.67%). On the other hand role conflict is experienced to a lesser extent by married working women with higher educational qualification of post-graduate and above. The fact being that working women with low educational qualification are engaged in hectic and strenuous jobs, there are experience more role conflict as compared to working women with higher educational qualificattion.

TABLE 6.4

AGE OF RESPONDENTS AND ROLE CONFLICT EXPERIENCED

Age-Group	Sample strength	Role Conflict experienced	Percentage
21-25 Years	60	52	86.66%
26-30 Years	90	76	84.44%
31-35 Years	120	70	58.33%
36-40 Years	80	26	32.5%
41-50 Years	35	10	28.54%
50 & above Years	15	X	X
Total	400	234	

The role and responsibilities of women vary significantly in different periods of their life. Young working women experience greater problems in carrying out their dual roles. An effort was made to locate the relationship between age of the working woman and role conflict experience. It was found as indicated in Table 6.4 that younger women between age groups 21-25 years and 26-30 years show highest incidence of role conflict (86.66% & 84.44%) respectively. Women in upper age groups 36-40 years & 41-50 years experience comparatively less role conflict (32.5%, 28.54%) respectively. This indicates that role conflict decreases with the increase in age. The reasons may be the unfamiliarity of younger women with the domestic atmosphere of in-laws, the younger age of their children and lack of understanding with husband and parents-in-laws. However, such factors disappear with the passage of time resulting in the decrease in role conflict experience.

TABLE 6.5

INFLEXIBLE ATTITUDE OF HUSBANDS AND ROLE CONFLICT EXPERIENCE

Responses	Number	Percentage
Yes	85	27.78%
No	146	62.40%
In-different	23	9.82%
Total	234	100.00%

The attitude of husband is very important for a working woman in order to carry out her dual role responsibilities. In the absence of this, the working wife is dogged by a feeling of guilt for not having done her duties effectively.

As revealed from the Table 6.5, a substantial proportion of respondents 27.87% attributed to inflexible attitude of their husbands as an important factor behind their role conflict experience. Majority of the role conflict riddled respondents 62.40% however, do not experience role conflict due to the inflexible attitude of their husbands 9.82% of the role conflict confronted respondents were in-different in their opinion.

TABLE 6.6
NON-COOPERATIVE BEHAVIOUR OF IN-LAWS AND ROLE CONFLICT
EXPERIENCED

Reponses	Number	Percentage
Yes	105	44.88%
No	98	41.88%
In-different	31	13.24%
Total	234	100.00%

The unsatisfactory dual role performance of the respondents was further augmented by the non-cooperative behaviour of the in-laws. This is indicated in the Table 6.6 where majority of the respondents 44.88% see it as a reason for their role conflict experience. While for 41.88% of the respondents the behaviour of the in-laws do not affect their role performance. 13.24% of the respondents were not clear in their opinion. From this it may be concluded that non-cooperative behaviour of in-laws plays a significant role in role conflict experienced by married working women.

TABLE 6.7
NON-AVAILABILITY OF SERVANTS OR DEPENDABLE PERSONS TO
LOOK AFTER HOUSEHOLD AND CHILDREN

Responses	Number	Percentage
Yes	92	39.32
No	125	53.42
In-different	17	7.26
Total	234	100.00%

In some families especially in the nuclear families, there is heavy burden on working wife if there is non-availability of servant or some dependable person who would look after the household and children in her absence. The respondents were asked to report if the above mentioned factor was a reason for the ineffective performance of their dual roles. The analysis (Table 6.7) reveals that for a distinct proportion of respondents (39.32) non-availability of servants or some other dependable persons was a factor behind their unsatisfactory management of dual roles. For 53.42% of the respondents, this was not a factor while 7.26% respondents were in-different in their opinion.

TABLE 6.8
AGE OF CHILDREN AND ROLE CONFLICT

Responses	Number	Percentage
Yes	132	56.41%
No	74	31.62
In-different	28	11.97%
Total	234	100.00%

An attempt was made to find out the relationship between the age of the children and the role conflict experienced by the Married working women. It was observed (Table-6.8) that in majority of the respondents (56.41) younger age of the children affected the satisfactory dual role performance of the respondents. For 31.62% the respondents this was not a factor behind their unsatisfactory dual role performance. 11.97% respondents were indifferent in their opinion. It is , therefore concluded that age of children has a direct relationship with role conflict experienced by working woman: Younger the age of children, higher is the role conflict experienced by working mother.

TABLE 6.9
ILL-HEALTH OF RESPONDENTS AND ROLE CONFLICT

Responses	Number	Percentage
Yes	19	8.12%
No	215	91.88%
Indifferent	x	x
Total	234	100.00%

For working woman health is very important for carrying out her various roles effectively. In the study, majority of the respondents 91.88% (as revealed from Table 6.9) confronted with role fonflict did not complain of any health problem. Only 8.12% of the respondents complained of ill health affecting their dual role performance.

TABLE 6.10

PERCEPTION OF THE TWO ROLES AND ROLE CONFLICT

Responses	Number	Percentage
Yes	130	55.56%
No	58	24.78%
Indifferent	46	19.66%
Total	234	100.00%

Role conflict is to same extent related to the psychological factor. It has something to do with the image of the roles in the mind of the individual.

The analysis (Table 6.10) reveals that most of the respondents 55.56% riddled with role conflict have high expectation regarding their roles. They are not able to achieve these expectations, so they are dissatisfied with themselves. Sometimes they feel that their home role is neglected and at toher times the job role is affected adversely. The result is that they are worried resulting in self role conflict. 24.78% of the role conflict confronted respondents did not experience role conflict on account of psychological factor. Whereas 19.66% of the respondents were not clear in their opinion.

TABLE 6.11
KEYS TO ACCOMMODATION

Responses	Number	Percentage
Pride and Interest in respective roles	257	64.25%
Low expectations of the two roles	239	59.75%
Availability of domestic helper	231	57.75%
Cooperative attitude of husband	186	46.5%
Favourable attitude of In-laws	164	41.0%
Favourable attitude of employer	103	25.75%
Facility of child care centers	99	24.75%
Transport Facility	91	22.75%

For a working women it is very essential to make efforts to achieve adjustment and resolve the conflict inherent in two roles. In a male dominated society as we live in at present, the woman has to make greater sacrifices. The combination of the two roles is not an easy or smooth task. It need not only skill but also physical and psychological acceptance of an adjustment

to the changes brought about by this combination. An attempt was made to investigate the opinion of the entire sample of 400 respondents with regard to the keys which could minimize the conflict inherent in dual roles and lead to adjustment & accommodation.

Various keys which in the opinion of respondents contribute to the minimization of role conflict are given in Table 6.11.

A vast majority of the respondents in the entire sample 64.25% (Table 6.11) opined that it is possible to minimize role conflict by taking pride and interest in both the job and home role. 59.75% of the respondents feel that by keeping low expectations of the two roles can result in the minimization of role conflict experienced by married working women.

Most of the working women are by and large responsible for carrying out the domestic responsibilities 57.75% of the respondents in the entire sample feel that it is essential for a working woman to be assisted by domestic helper which consequently can scale down the role conflict experienced by her 46.5% and 41% of the respondents attribute to cooperative attitude of

husband and in-laws respectively as keys for scaling down the role conflict inherent in the dual role responsibilities of married working women. For 25.75% of the respondents favourable attitude of the employer can play significant role in minimizing role conflict experienced by married working woman.

As revealed from analysis 24.75 of the respondents believe that role conflict can be to some extent eradicated if there is the facility of child care centers where the married working women can put in their children especially infants during their job hours.

22.75% of the respondents feel that role conflict can be scaled down to some extent if married working women are provided with the transport facility so that they can overcome the problem of time conflict to some extent.

succeeded in managing their two roles to their satisfaction. They have not resolved that conflict inherent in the two roles. A detailed study showed that this conflict is to a greater extent, a function of the profession, education and age of the respondent. The role conflict is also largely an individual matter. It has something to do with the image of the two roles in the mind of the respondent. Inflexible attitude of in-laws, lack of positive support from husband, non-availability of domestic helper, ill-health all contribute to make role conflict a reality. Young age of children significantly contribute to the role-conflict experience.

Role conflict inherent in the two roles can not be totally eliminated, however, it can be minimized or its intensity can be scaled down through different keys to accommodation.