ABSTRACT

The role of women in the Armed Forces was limited to the medical profession i.e. doctors and nurses till 1992 when they were inducted as regular officers in the Army followed by the Air force and Navy. They are excluded from combat, and serve for a maximum of 14 years on a short service commission. This study was the first empirical investigation of women in the Indian Navy with the aim of studying eight areas: Work Related Attitudes, Gender Equality Attitudes, Motivation, Organizational Role Stress, Self Actualization, Personality, Gender Role Identity and Social Support for Married Women.

Women face different conditions in the Army, Navy and Air Force. Studying all three services was beyond the scope of this study, being a Naval officer’s wife for 20 years it was inevitable that the focus of this research would be women naval officers. A comparative gender paradigm was used, the sample being 70 women naval officers and a matched group of 60 short service commissioned male officers. The participants were invited to answer, “Work Attitudes and Motivation Inventory for Naval Officers”, “The Navy Gender Equality Questionnaire”, “Open Ended Questions”, “The Revised NEO Personality Inventory”, “Organizational Role Stress”, “Bem’s Sex Role Inventory”, and “The Personal Orientation Inventory”.

The results indicate that women and men naval officers are a homogenous group on many variables. There are no gender differences on work related attitudes i.e. overall job and naval life style satisfaction as well as morale. There are no gender differences on the five domains of personality however women are higher on the time competence dimension of self – actualization, they are more frequently androgynous and gender reversed than men.

In terms of gender equality attitudes, expectedly women have more favourable attitudes than men naval officers do. When asked to evaluate attitudes of male officers towards women officers, men participants always evaluated male attitudes higher than women participants did.

Regarding combat roles for women 98.57% of women felt it should be voluntary and 67.14% of women were willing to volunteer. The main reasons given as to why women should not be in combat were ‘pregnancy’, ‘motherhood’ and ‘sexual abuse’. Women willing to volunteer for combat differ from those not willing to volunteer on extraversion, spontaneity, lifestyle motivation and satisfaction with naval lifestyle.

In terms of motivation for joining the Armed Forces, results indicate that core motivation was the highest, followed by lifestyle motivation, economic
motivation was the least important. Women were higher than men on core and lifestyle motivation.

On total Organizational Role Stress, men tend to be higher, as well as on dimensions of Role Expectation Conflict, Role Erosion and Resource Inadequacy. Amount of social support had no effect on job satisfaction, morale or organizational role stress of married women. In fact, marriage and children had no effect on job satisfaction, morale and ORS. However, satisfaction with Naval Lifestyle reduced with marriage and with lower social support for women officers. As length of service increased women’s job satisfaction decreased and organizational role stress increased while for men the reverse was true. Core motivation of Naval officers increased with length of service.

Naval officers desiring extension of service were higher on all job related attitudes and motives. Women desiring extension had lower organizational role stress than those not desiring extension. The reverse was true for men. There was a tendency for Naval Officers classified masculine in gender role identity to have higher work related attitudes and lower organizational role stress.

Certain personality variables, masculinity/femininity and self-actualization dimensions were found to be significantly correlated with job satisfaction, naval lifestyle satisfaction, morale, motivation, and organizational role stress.
It was concluded that men and women in the Navy are the same on many psychosocial variables, however women who join are more motivated and time competent, as length of service increases job satisfaction for women decreases and organizational role stress increases, the reverse is true for men. There is evidence that officers with a masculine gender role identity have better job satisfaction and lower ORS. Finally there are “miles to go” before women are totally accepted and integrated in the Indian Navy.