CHAPTER-VIII
CONFLICT RESOLUTION STRATEGIES

The work-life balance is a pertinent issue at present. The work-life balance debate seems to focus on a number of assumptions and perceptions that work is experienced negatively, with long hours of work as a problem that affects employees’ well-being and commitment to family institutions. Research on work-family conflict and its negative impacts on employees have been explored extensively in Western industrialized countries (Allen, Herst, Bruck & Sutton, 2000).

The ability to balance work and family roles is a challenge for women and men in the 21st century workforce (Eby et al., 2005). During the past two decades, there has been an increasing interest in the conflicting demands of work and family roles, and the effect of that conflict on both organizations and employees. Nowadays, in many developed and developing countries, working men and women experience problems balancing their work and family domains. However, the impact of multiple roles at work and in family lives may be culture bound in different countries. As the modern world begins the third millennium, the significance of work and family is clearly visible in the daily challenges faced by employed parents who are combining work and family roles (Fallon, 1997).

Most employees attempt to use different strategies to cope with conflicting family roles and work demands, and there are many researchers interested to study the methods of dealing with work-family issues in a variety of environments and their relationship to some variables. Lazarus and Folkman (1988) found social support,
transition from subject, self-control and plans of problem-solving as a coping strategy to deal with pressing conditions. Also some researchers say religiosity and self-efficacy have important roles in the prediction of satisfaction with work and life.

Coping strategies are the ways an individual, group or organization use to minimize the effects of stress (Belal et al., 2009). Coping strategy is also defined as “any activity, in thought or deed, which has as its goal the removal or modification of a threat to identity” (Breakwell, 1986). Two common types of coping strategies can be distinguished: problem-focused coping strategies and emotion-focused coping strategies. Problem-focused coping strategies are used to tackle the problem directly and emotion-focused coping strategies are used to handle feelings of distress, rather than the actual problem itself.

Personal coping with work-family conflict coping is defined as the cognitive and behavioural efforts of individuals to manage taxing demands appraised as exceeding their personal resources it is the things people do to reduce harm from life's stressors. According to the Conservation of Resources Theory (Hobfoll, 1989, 2001), when stress levels rise, individuals expend internal or external resources to manage the distress. Internal resources are resources that the person possesses; they encompass personal characteristics, such as efficacy, optimism and coping styles. External resources do not belong to the person but are available from his/her external environment. Utilizing family-friendly organizational supports available in one's work environment pertains to reliance on external resources. Because work-family conflict has been commonly grounded in the theories of role
stress and inter-role conflict, most previous studies of personal coping in this domain have examined the role of personal coping as a moderator variable in the relationship between work-family conflict and stress, wellbeing and health. These studies typically addressed work family conflict as a stressor, and demonstrated how various coping strategies can moderate the stress to strain relationship. Nevertheless, the beneficial effect of personal coping on strain may occur also via its influence on the appraisal process. That is, the way the individual perceives his/her environment and its stressors become positively changed. Moreover, the various types of coping efforts that an individual makes show some similarities, so he or she can be said to use a particular coping style. Effective coping styles, therefore, should also be associated with lower levels of work family conflict. If an individual copes effectively, his or her work family conflict should be lower because it is under control.

Surprisingly, however, only scant research has focused on coping strategies as antecedents of work-family conflict. One line of research into coping as directly easing work-family conflict adopted Folkman and Lazarus’s typology of problem solving coping as compared with emotion-focused coping. The former depicts active coping, and focuses on exerting control and resolving the stressful situation; the latter is passive coping and involves regulating emotions to make the stressful situation more tolerable (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Overall, research has typically demonstrated conflicting findings. Problem-focused coping has been found to decrease FIW but proved less effective in decreasing WIF. The authors concluded that individuals may have greater control and opportunity for positive
change in the family domain than in the work environment (Rotondo & Kincaid, 2008). Moreover, several studies actually found problem-focused coping ineffective, namely associated with higher levels of WIF or FIW (Rotondo & Kincaid, 2008). As for emotion-focused coping strategies, their use has been typically found less effective, as they were not positively related or even related at all to WIF and FIW conflict levels (Rotondo et al., 2003). Yet some studies (e.g., Rotondo & Kincaid, 2008) pointed to the superiority of emotion-focused coping under certain circumstances. Hence, adapting Lazarus and Folkman’s typology of general coping styles to the arena of work family conflict yielded mixed results. Moreover, the predictive power of these general coping styles was somewhat modest (Rotondo et al., 2003; Somech & Drach-Zahavy, 2007).

Three types of coping strategies are identified for the present study. These are as under:

1. Structural Role Redefinition
2. Personal Role Redefinition
3. Reactive Role Behaviour

Hall (1972) has identified above given three types of coping behaviour for dealing with inter role conflict.

The three types of coping behaviour are logically derived from three role components by Levinson (1959) – structurally imposed demands, personal role conception and role behaviour.
**Type I Coping (Structural Role Redefinition)**

Type I coping (structural role redefinition) involves an active attempt to deal directly with role enders and lessen the conflict by mutual agreement on a new set of expectations. One way of changing structural demands would be to relocate and share one's role tasks (cleaning, washing, and child care, for example).

It is very important to delegate the work to others. Especially in the case of working women, as they have to go to their workplace, they cannot manage the household work themselves. They should take some outside help to minimize the work load. After working from nine to six, it becomes difficult for women to manage household chores also. So, it is advisable to keep a helper or maid rather than overexerting oneself.

**Type II Coping (Personal Role Redefinition)**

Type II coping (personal role redefinition) involves changing one's personal concept of role demands received from others. It entails changing the expectations themselves. An example is setting priorities among and within roles, being sure that certain demands are always met (for example, the needs of sick children), while others have lower priority (such as dusting furniture).

In our busy lives, there is so much work to be done. From office to home, work has to be divided and priority has to be set so that no important work is left. Working women should prioritize the pending work and complete that which is more important. By doing this activity, women can even get to know which one is the fruitless
exercise and what is least important to be done. Doing the important
tasks keeps the women stress free and has the sense of
accomplishment.

**Type III Coping (Reactive Role Behavior)**

Type III coping (reactive role behavior) attempts to improve the
quality of role performance with no attempt to change the structural
or personal definition of one’s roles. Implicit in coping through role
behaviour is the assumption that one's role demands are
unchangeable and that the person’s main task is to find ways to meet
them; this coping strategy involves a passive or reactive orientation
towards one’s roles.

To understand how the coping strategies are being used by the
working women, sector wise adoption of different coping strategies by
the respondents is shown in Table 8.1.

**Table 8.1**

**Coping Strategies adopted by the Working Women**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coping Strategy</th>
<th>Public Sector</th>
<th>Private Sector</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Structural Role Redefinition</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>SD</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>2.35</td>
<td>0.58</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>2.94</td>
<td>1.22</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>2.70</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td>3.00</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>2.07</td>
<td>0.47</td>
<td>2.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.80</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>2.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>2.42</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>2.34</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>3.10</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>3.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>2.47</td>
<td>0.57</td>
<td>2.48</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>2.03</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>2.22</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>2.44</td>
<td>0.74</td>
<td>2.47</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>2.41</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>2.28</td>
<td>0.53</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Personal</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Role</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Redefinition</strong></td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td>3.17</td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>1.17</td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>2.44</td>
<td>0.73</td>
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<tr>
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<td>2.59</td>
<td>0.70</td>
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<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>2.41</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>3.42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A perusal of Table 8.1 indicates that to manage the work-family conflict all three types of coping strategies are used by the working women. Among public sector respondents, within the Type I coping (structural role redefinition), the strategies "Get moral support from a member of the family" (Mean=3.10, SD=1.06) is most frequently reported as a means to reduce role conflict, followed by “get help from someone outside the family (e.g. home maintenance help or child care)” (Mean=2.94, SD=1.22) and to “engage in problem solving with family members to resolve conflict” (Mean=2.80, SD=0.82). The least frequently reported strategy is "negotiate or plan with someone at work, so their expectations of you are more in line with your own needs or requirements’ (Mean=2.04, SD=0.73) and “Get help from someone at work” (Mean=2.07, SD=0.47). On the above analysis we can deduce that women do not seek much help from their counterparts at work rather they prefer to take help from family member to reduce work-family conflict. This helps them to feel stress free and comfortable at work. When they know that someone is there at home to take care of children or elderly member, they are relaxed. Household activities like cleaning, dusting, cooking etc is also a
burden for working women as they feel difficult to do all these activities when they go back after a long working day. So, taking help from someone to do these activities help the working women to relax after going home and they can enjoy family outings as well when they know that they are free in the evenings.

Among women working in private sector banks, the strategies "Get moral support from a member of the family" (Mean=3.96, SD=1.24) is most frequently reported as a means to reduce role conflict, followed by to “get help from a member of the family” (Mean=3.00, SD=1.32) and to “engage in problem solving with family members to resolve conflict” (Mean=2.97, SD=0.89). The least frequently reported strategy being used by women working in private sector banks is “Get help from someone at work” (Mean=2.09, SD=0.82) and "negotiate or plan with someone at work, so their expectations of you are more in line with your own needs or requirements” (Mean=2.22, SD=0.67) which is same as in the case of women working in public sector banks. This may be because of the reason that working women rely more on family members and feels that if any problem is there they should engage in problem solving to resolve the conflict. Working women will feel stress free when they have good relations with their family. This will ultimately boost the confidence level and productivity at work place also.

Therefore, the overall results reveal that the use of coping strategy of “Decide not to do certain activities that conflict with other activities” and “Get help from someone outside the family e.g. home maintenance help or child care” is significantly higher in case of women working in public sector banks than that in case of women
working in private sector banks. On the other hand, the use of coping strategy “Get help from member of the family”, “Engage in problem solving with family members to resolve conflicts”, “Get moral support from a member of the family”, “negotiate or plan with someone at work, so their expectations of you are more in line with your own needs or requirements” and “negotiate or plan with members of your family, so their expectations of you are more in line with your own needs or requirements” is significantly higher among private sector respondents as compared to that among public sector respondents. The calculated t-values conveyed this message.

Within the Type II coping (personal role redefinition), the women working in public sector banks tended to report most frequently the use of the strategy “Partition and separate your roles. Devote full attention to each role when you are in it” (Mean=3.33, SD=1.17), followed by “Establish priorities among your different roles, so that you are sure the most important activities are done” (Mean=3.00, SD=0.91). The least frequently used strategy is “Develop self and own interests (e.g. spend time on leisure or self development)” (Mean=2.41, SD=0.89) and “Overlook or relax certain standards for how you do certain activities (let less important things aside a bit sometimes, such as dusting or lawn care) (Mean=2.44, SD=0.73). The above elucidated data leads us to conclude that women working in public sector banks set their priorities and make sure that the important activities are done. They do multi tasking and make sure that all the important work has been done. And in this process they do not give time to themselves, they do not indulge in any activity in which they can develop themselves. Working women should devote some time to their
hobbies also. They should indulge in any of the activity that gives them happiness and relaxation, for example, swimming, reading book, cooking etc.

The women working in private sector banks reported the most frequently used strategy “Partition and separate your roles. Devote full attention to each role when you are in it” (Mean=3.52, SD=1.17), followed by “Develop self and own interests (e.g. spend time on leisure or self development)” (Mean=3.42, SD=1.28). The least frequently reported strategy is “Establish priorities among your different roles, so that you are sure the most important activities are done” (Mean=3.17, SD=1.17) and “Overlook or relax certain standards for how you do certain activities (let less important things aside a bit sometimes, such as dusting or lawn care) (Mean=3.19, SD=1.33) which indicates that women working in private sector banks give full attention to whatever role they are in and they do manage to spend time on leisure and self development also which helps them to reduce their stress. However, they do not set the priorities among their different roles and that may be a reason why they feel WFC.

Therefore, the results reveal that the use of strategies like “Overlook or relax certain standards for how you do certain activities (let less important things aside a bit sometimes, such as dusting or lawn care)”, “Modify your attitudes towards certain roles or activities (e.g. coming to the conclusion that the quality of time spent with a spouse or children is more important than the quantity of time spent)”, “Rotate attention from one role to another. Handle each role in turn as it comes up” and “Develop self and own interests (e.g. spend time on leisure or self development)” is significantly higher among
women working in private sector banks as compared to that of women working in public sector banks. However, the use of strategies like “Establish priorities among your different roles, so that you are sure the most important activities are done” and “Partition and separate your roles. Devote full attention to each role when you are in it” is at par with each other.

The women reported frequent use of both the strategies for Type III coping (reactive role behaviour) although "Work hard to meet all role demands. Devote more time and energy so you can do everything expected of you" (Public Sector: Mean=3.60, SD=1.06; Private Sector: Mean=3.76, SD=1.39) is more frequently used than "Plan, schedule, and organise carefully" (Public Sector: Mean=3.52, SD=1.08; Private Sector: Mean=3.73, SD=1.42) which indicates that working women try hard to meet all the expectations with the help of planning, scheduling and organising all the activities which ultimately helps them to reduce the work-family conflict. However, the difference in the use of these two strategies remained non-significant between public sector and private sector respondents. Figure 8.1 represents the diagrammatic representation of the coping strategies adopted by the organisations and the working women.
By and large, the use of different types of coping strategies is significantly higher among the women working in private sector banks than that of women working in public sector banks. This may be in the proportion of work-family conflict prevailing in both the sectors as it is earlier found that work-family conflict is found to be more in private sector banks as compared to public sector banks.

The combination of heavy work commitments and extensive family responsibilities has required individuals and families to cope effectively with the stresses of this demanding lifestyle. It has also posed a challenge to employers to develop "family responsive" policies and practices or risk losing their competitive edge in attracting and
retaining talented women and men. During the survey, following work-life balance policies have been identified which are being implemented by the banks to help their employees resolve their work-family challenges.

1. Trainings and Workshops

   It has been found that trainings on stress management and time management is being organised by the banks. However, it is more in case of private sector banks. It corresponds with the fact that more work-family conflict is being felt by women working in private sector banks. More such trainings should be organised in public sector banks also.

2. Maternity Leave

   It has been found that almost all the banks taken under study provide the benefit of maternity leave. However, it is found that except ICICI Bank all other private sector banks provide three months maternity leave with pay and if women want to extend it, they can do it for another three months but it will be without pay. It is found that all other public sector banks and ICICI Bank give six months maternity leave with pay. Banks not following this provision should start following this as it will help to reduce the work-family conflict faced by the employee as it will help in increasing the level of job satisfaction.

3. Paternity Leave

   Almost all the banks have started giving paternity leave. This extends emotional as well as physical support to the mother. This helps the women to come back to their normal routine life
as soon as possible which helps in reducing work-family conflict.

4. Child Care Leave

Public sector banks provide their employees with the option of child care leave. This helps the women to stay with their newly born for a longer period if they do not have any other support to take care of their child. Private sector banks should also start with this as more conflict is faced in private sector banks as compared to their counterparts in private sector banks.

5. Work Place Crèche Facility

Only few banks from public sector provide with the facility of crèche at the work place. Private sector banks should also give this facility to the women so that they can work stress free which will definitely reduce the work-family conflict.

6. Leave Travel Concession

It is found that almost all the banks provide their employees with leave travel concession which gives employees the opportunity to go for vacations with their families which is very important to release the stress.

7. Summer Camps for Children

Only few banks from private sector organises summer camps for the children of their employees. It is very useful as working mothers cannot take their children for any co-curricular activity as they get free late in the evenings. Such initiatives help to reduce the work-family conflict faced by the women.
8. Leisure Activities for Employees and their Families

Almost all the banks provide some kind of leisure activities for their employees like excursions, parties etc. This helps the families to spend some quality time together which definitely helps in reducing the work family conflict.

9. Job Rotation

Some profiles are such in the bank that they give mental tension and stress viz. the job of a teller; employee cannot go home till the time cash is not closed. It causes stress and gives rise to work-family conflict. Job rotation helps in changing the profile after some time which ultimately helps the working women to reduce work-family conflict. It is found that almost all the banks follow the practice of job rotation.

10. Transportation Facility

It is found that only few public sector banks provide with the facility of transportation to their employees. All the banks should start giving the facility of transportation as commuting from far areas is always a stress for working women especially in case of private sector banks where timings are not fixed and late evening travelling gives rise to work-family conflict.

11. Strict Timings

HDFC Bank has started the practise of sending all the employees back home at six which helps the employees to be free at a proper time. This practise should be followed by other private banks also so that the problem of long extended hours
can be eliminated which definitely reduces the work-family conflict.

12. Welfare Services

It is found that public sector banks are giving more welfare services like health care, subsidised education, petrol expenses etc which increases the level of job satisfaction and it is found that more the level of job satisfaction less is the level of work-family conflict. Public sector banks should also start giving more of welfare services which can ultimately help in reducing the work-family conflict.

The whole discussion made above leads to the fact that in order to reduce work-family conflict a sincere effort is required to be made by the banks to curb work-family conflict among the working women in the banking sector. It is found that banks under study are working towards providing work-life balance to its employees. However, there is always a scope for betterment.

**MAIN FINDINGS**

All the three types of coping strategies mentioned below are used by the women to manage the work-family conflict:

- **Type I (Structural Role Redefinition)**

  In both public and private sector banks, the strategy followed most is aimed at getting moral help from a member of the family, while the least planned strategy is to ‘negotiate and plan with someone at work, so their expectations of you are more in line with your own needs and requirements’.
**Type II (Personal Role Redefinition)**

In public sector banks, the strategy followed most is ‘partition and separate your roles. Devote full attention to each role when you are in it’, while the least planned strategy is to ‘develop self and own interests’. However, in private sector banks, the strategy followed most is ‘partition and separate your roles. Devote full attention to each role when you are in it’, while the least planned strategy is to ‘establish priorities among your different roles, so that you are sure the most important activities are done’.

**Type III (Reactive Role Behaviour)**

In both public and private sector banks, the strategy followed most is to ‘work hard to meet all the role demands. Devote more time and energy as you can do everything expected out of you’, while the least planned strategy is to ‘Plan, schedule and organize carefully’.

By and large, although the women working in both public and private sector banks adopt different types of coping strategies to keep a balance between work-family conflict, yet the use of these strategies is more significant in the case of those working in private sector banks. This may have been for the reason that work-family conflict as observed during this study is more among the women working in private sector banks.

**Coping Strategies adopted by the Banks**

The data provides that all the banks taken under study are adopting the strategies to help the employees to resolve the work-family conflict being faced by them. However, the strategies adopted by the banks are more or less different in nature. It is found that all
the banks are keen and regular in organizing time and stress management workshops for their employees and employees feel that such workshops are practically helpful for them. Banks are organizing leisure activities for their employees and their families like party, theatres etc. For children, summer camps are also being organized. Public sector banks have even started providing the facility of crèche also, so that mothers can see the child whenever required. Almost all the banks are giving maternity and paternity leave with pay, however, duration of the leave differs among public and private sector banks. Public sector banks provide with child care leave also to its employees. All the banks under study are giving leave travel concession to its employees so that employees can spend some quality time with their families. It is found that all the banks are adopting job rotation so that work does not become monotonous. It is found, that banks have started giving the transportation facilities also with many other welfare services like reimbursement of medical expenses, petrol expenses, mobile bill reimbursement etc.