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## **Role Conflict and Working Women of Different Job Strata**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Women in India have marked their significant presence in the world in various fields. But in India, women's occupational status has been closely associated with the family domain. By taking up employment, women have to play a dual role of housewife and career woman. They are prone to have conflict between the roles they play as housewives and mothers and as productive workers on the other. Family duties overlap on their employment. They experience the dilemma of contradictory role perception. Hence, the present study is focusing on role conflict of working women of different job strata. For this sample of 300 working women (50 from higher job strata, 150 middle and 100 from lower job strata) from different government organizations were undertaken by purposive sampling techniques from Chandigarh. Critical analysis of the data reveals that role conflict of working women of middle job strata is lower on role conflict than lower and higher job strata. There is also a significant difference within the groups (higher/middle/lower) job strata. But further analysis by Post hoc test no difference is found in higher and middle as well as higher and lower job strata but only difference is found in lower and middle job strata.*

**KEY WORDS:** *Role conflict, working women, job strata.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

The term 'role' denotes a set of expectations and obligations associated with a particular status within a group or social situation. According to Katz and Kahn (1978), the role conflict occurs when there are incompatible demands placed upon an employee such that compliance with both would be difficult. We experience role conflict when we find ourselves pulled in various directions as we try to respond to the many statuses we hold (Macionis *et al.* 2010). Role conflict can be something that can be for either a short period of time, or a long period of time, and it can also be connected to situational experiences.

According to Khan, *et al.* (2010) conflict among the roles begins because of the human desire to reach success, and because of the pressure put on an individual by two imposing and incompatible demands competing against each other. The effects of role conflict are related to individual personality characteristics and interpersonal relations. Individual personality characteristic conflicts can arise within personality role conflict where "aspects of an individual's personality are in conflict with other aspects of that same individual's personality." Interpersonal relations can cause conflict because they are by definition "having an association between two or more people that may range from fleeting to enduring, which can cause that conflict."

On the other hand effect of work and family roles on individual well-being has received some suggestions, that the inter-domain conflict is generally experienced to a greater extent by women, as compared to men. Changes in household structure are occurring partly as a result

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of recent employment developments, most noticeably the emergence of dual-career partnerships and increased opportunities for female career participation within the workplace (Rudman, 1999). These developments are expected to continue as more women attain tertiary qualifications (Eagle, Miles and Icenogle, 1997; O’ Driscoll, 1996). For most women however, their participation in paid employment has not meant the abandonment of their traditional familial role as the primary caregiver to children and other dependents (Hammer, Allen and Grigsby, 1997). Indeed, it has been suggested on numerous occasions that women generally continue to spend more time working within the household as compare to their male counterparts (e.g. Burke and McKeen, 1992; Parasuraman, Greenhaus and Granrose, 1992; Skues, and Kirkby, 1995).

The interdependence of an individual’s work and non-work roles and especially the conflicting demands between these roles, has become known as inter-domain conflict: “...in which the role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect” (Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn, Snoek and Rosenthal, 1964, cited in Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985, p. 77). There are three major forms of inter-domain conflict; time-based conflict, strain-based conflict, and behavior-based conflict (Carlson, Kacmar and Williams, 2000). Time-based conflict refers to the individual’s inability to perform a task in one role, either physically or due to a cognitive preoccupation, as a result of time demands in another role (Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985). For example, an approaching work deadline may result in more time spent at work, and thus less time with a partner/family similarly, high levels of personal family demands may also contribute to absenteeism from the work place. Strain – based conflicts is experienced when a pre-occupational with the demands from one role, interferes with the ability to perform adequately within a second role. Thus, the anxiety caused by an approaching work deadline may result in the ‘carryover’ of stress reactions to the home domain, adversely influencing performance within the second domain. Finally behavior –based conflict refers to the display of specific behaviors in one domain which are incongruous with the desired attributes of the second domain. Thus e.g., supportive and loving parents may exhibit contrasting behavior when involved with the hostile work situation.

The basic models of inter-domain conflict argue that stressors from one role (e.g. work) have adverse ‘strain’ effects on the individual in their other role (e.g. family/ non-work) based on any one or a combination of these three forms of inter-domain conflict. Furthermore most research in this area has suggested that women generally report greater inter-domain conflict than their male counterparts primarily due to high levels of family demands (Aryee and Luk, (1996); Aryee and Luk, Lung and Lo (1999); Hammer *et al.* (1997).

Super (1980) identified six common life roles. He indicated that the need to balance these different roles simultaneously is a reality for most individuals at various stages throughout their lives. Rather than following a transitional sequence from one role to another, women are required to perform an accumulation of disparate roles simultaneously, each one with its unique pressures. According to Kopp and Ruzicka (1993), multiple role-playing has been found to have both positive and negative effects on the mental health and well-being of working women. In certain instances, women with multiple roles reported better physical and psychological health than women with less role involvement. In other words, they cherished motivational stimulation, self-esteem, a sense of control, physical stamina, and bursts of energy. However, according to Doress-Wortes(1994) multiple roles have also been found to

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cause a variety of adverse effects on women's mental and physical health, including loss of appetite, insomnia, overindulgence, and back pains (Hughes *et al.* 1994).

Reviewing the various definitions of role conflict, one can sum up that role conflict includes incomparability between roles, within a specific role, between role expectations and personality dispositions of the individual between the personal needs and demands of role; a felt difficulty in meeting the norms of the roles that are one accepts; pressures stem when one plays two or more roles concurrently. In the present investigation, role-conflict has been studied in the form on inter-role conflict, i.e., when conflict arise between different roles occupied by a person. And further comparative study is done in three different job strata in government sector.

### **Objectives**

1. To study the role conflict of working women of varied job strata.
2. To evaluate the different level of role conflict among working women of varied job strata.

### **Hypotheses**

There would be significant difference between lower, middle and higher job status of working women in terms of role conflict.

### **Sample**

The sample in the present study consisted of 300 working women (100 from lower, 150 from middle and 50 from higher job strata.) in the age range from 25 to 45 years. A purposive sampling technique consisting of working women in different types of organizations were taken from the Chandigarh. Exclusion criteria: Divorcees, widows, or women living apart from the husband and of having contract or temporary job were not included in the study.

Working women of higher job strata were taken who are of group A services from Government organizations. Working women of middle job strata were taken form group B jobs. Whereas, working women of lower job strata means group C and below category. All the respondents working in State/ Center Government on permanent Job in prescribed pay scales as per Government norms.

### **Scale used**

**Role Conflict Scale for Working Women:** This scale was developed and standardized by Verma and Vinayak (1999). It is four point rating scale having 26 items with responses categories, viz. 'always', 'often', 'something' and 'never'. Split half reliability of the scale is 0.93 after applying the SB formula. This scale can be used to measure role conflict in working women irrespective of age, education, and years of married life. Scoring of all items are in the direction of 4,3,2,1 except items 18 and 19 which has negative scoring in the opposite direction, i.e., 1,2,3,4. Highest scores of the scale is 104 and the least score is 26. High score indicates high is role conflict.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The present study was conducted to see the comparative difference between lower, middle and higher job status of working women in terms of role conflict. For analysis of the data ANOVA and Post Hoc test was applied.

**Table-1: Comparison between higher, middle and lower job status of married working women on role conflict**

Role Conflict								
Job Status	N	Mean	SD	SE	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Min.	Max.
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
High	50	49.70	13.69	1.93	45.80	53.59	27.00	76.00
Middle	150	46.72	13.31	1.08	44.57	48.86	5.00	93.00
Lower	100	51.93	13.02	1.30	49.34	54.51	26.00	78.00
Total	300	48.95	13.44	.776	47.42	50.48	5.00	93.00

Table-1 shows the comparison on higher, middle and lower job status groups on role conflict on descriptive values i.e. N (total number of samples), mean, standard deviation, standard error, 95 percent confidence interval of mean, minimum and maximum score obtained of married working women. Study reflects the result as N=50, mean (49.70) and standard deviation (13.69) of married working women of higher job strata, N=150, mean (46.72) and standard deviation (13.31) of married working women of middle job strata, and N=100, mean (51.93) and standard deviation (13.02) of married working women of lower job strata whereas N=300, mean (48.95) and standard deviation (13.44) of total sample.

**Figure-1: Bar diagram (mean scores) of ‘role conflict’ of married working women of different job strata**

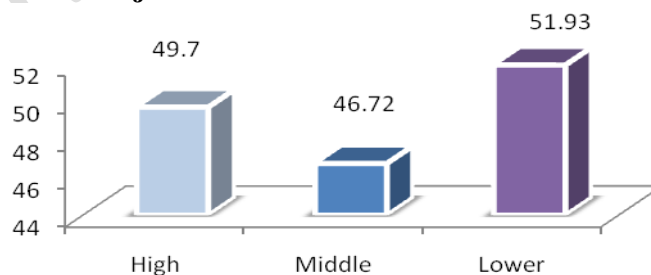


Figure-1 shows bar diagram of mean score of ‘role conflict’ of married working women of higher, middle and lower job strata. Mean score of ‘role conflict’ of higher job strata is 49.7, middle job strata is 46.72 and lower job strata is 51.93. Mean score of married working women of lower job strata is higher than high and middle job strata on ‘role conflict’. In role

conflict Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) have noted that work/family conflict is the result of role pressures from both family and job demands.

**Table-2: F-Value (ANOVA) of role conflict of married working women of different job strata**

		Sum of Sq.	df	M. Sq.	F value
<b>Role Conflict</b>	Between groups	1662.09	2	831.04	<b>4.713**</b>
	Within groups	52373.25	297	176.34	
	Total	54035.34	299		

\*\*p < 0.01

Table-2 shows F-value for 'role conflict' of married working women of different job strata, i.e., (higher, middle and lower). F-value for 'role conflict' is 4.713. This shows that there is a significant difference within the groups (higher/middle/lower) job strata on 0.01 level of significance. Thus, our hypothesis is accepted, i.e., there is a significant difference in married working women at lower, middle and higher job strata on role conflict.

Pandit and Upadhyya (2012) reported that middle working class working women is major victim of role conflict. Researcher further added that middle class families make the most of the adjustment in life but these adjustments should not become the part of any ones identity. Multiplies roles, deadlines, family pressure are part of today's life. But these hurdles are becoming rocks in path of healthy life. On the other hand Aryeet *al.* (2005) found that Lady Doctors had more role conflict than other professional. When doctors perceive their work load to be more than they handle, they are likely to experience exhaustion and fatigue, which may negatively influence their motivation to respond to the demands of the other domains such as family. This reflects difference in role conflict in different job strata.

**Table-3: Post-hoc test on higher, middle and lower job status of married working women on role conflict**

Role Conflict						
Job Status		Mean Diff.	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
<b>High</b>	<b>Middle</b>	2.98 NS	2.16	.356	-2.13	8.08
	<b>Lower</b>	-2.23 NS	2.30	.597	-7.64	3.18
<b>Middle</b>	<b>High</b>	-2.98 NS	2.17	.356	-8.08	2.13
	<b>Lower</b>	<b>-5.21**</b>	1.71	.007	-9.24	-1.17
<b>Lower</b>	<b>High</b>	2.23 NS	2.30	.597	-3.18	7.64
	<b>Middle</b>	<b>5.21**</b>	1.71	.007	1.17	9.24

\*\*p < 0.01



Post hoc test (multiple comparison) as shown in table-3 of 'role conflict' shows that difference between higher and middle job class is 2.98 which is not-significant at any level, same difference between lower and higher job strata is 2.23 which is also not significant at any level, i.e. there is no difference between higher and middle, lower and higher job strata. On the other hand difference between low and middle class is 5.21 which are significant at 0.01 level of significance. This shows that there is difference within lower and middle job strata of married working women. Results are supported by the findings of Begum, and Tesneem (1984) who found women in low income group to be high on role conflict than women in high income group.

## CONCLUSION

In the analysis of role conflict, married working women of middle job strata is lower on role conflict than lower and higher job strata. There is also a significant difference within the groups (higher/middle/lower) job strata. But further analysis by Post hoc test no difference is found in higher and middle as well as higher and lower job strata but only difference is found in lower and middle job strata.

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