

Role Conflict of Women Working in Police Department

Abstract

The present research looks into all the factors of role conflict arising out of occupancy of dual role by police women and also discussed about the various coping strategies adopted by these women to handle this role strain. Working women are required to perform multiple tasks and multiple roles, which at times conflict with each other. While so many conflicting roles are impending together, time and energy act as a great barrier to overcome such conflicts. While women who joined police wanted to prove themselves their expectations were very high but due to unfavorable environment in police profession their expectations didn't match with their real performance that ultimately resulted into intra-role conflict. Simultaneously, there varied roles came in conflict with each other which resulted in dilemma and put them in a situation of constraint. The sample of the study is collected from the two wings of the police department were selected which had maximum dealing with general public. Out of these 200 women posted in district Jammu, 100 women respondents were selected, out of these 100, 20 from Traffic and 80 from Executive were selected purposively as per their proportion in the target population. The present research is empirical in nature and is based on both primary and secondary data. The primary data have been collected through fieldwork. In order to collect the primary data, the structured interview with the help of interview schedule was carried out.

Keywords: Role Conflict, Role Strain, Police Women.

Introduction

Working women in the present world are required to perform multiple tasks and multiple roles, which at times conflict with each other. Generally, there are two main types of role conflict i.e. Intra-role conflict and inter-role conflict. Intra-role conflict is the role conflict where personal expectations are above than actual. And Inter-role conflict arises where person performing many roles often faces conflict among the roles. Police women face both these types of role conflict. As they are in a profession which was considered as predominantly masculine and the very entry of women in this profession is not received well by the society whole heartedly. While women who joined police wanted to prove themselves their expectations were very high but due to unfavorable environment in police profession their expectations didn't match with their real performance that ultimately resulted into intra-role conflict. Simultaneously, there varied roles came in conflict with each other which resulted in dilemma and put them in a situation of constraint.

According to Baron (1983) role conflict theory suggests that individuals experience role conflict when others' expectations for their behavior are inconsistent with the individual's own expectations. Chusmir and Koberg (1986) propose that such conflict may arise from intra-personal, intra-role or inter-role incongruities. When such conflict, irrespective of the source of the incongruity, results largely from quite different expectations based on gender, the conflict is sex role conflict. Sex role conflict is the degree of conflict expressed between an individual's treatment based on gender versus that person's treatment as an individual (intra-role or inter-role incongruity). It also involves the impact of the private self-concept of the person's sex role versus the self defined by one's society and work organization.

The changing situation in present society also changes the power equation. Now a days woman also perform those jobs which were earlier restricted for them. Earlier policing was designated as masculine job but in present age women prove this thing wrong and equally perform their duties as male police personnel perform.

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Martin (1991) in his early study drew attention to the occupational role dilemmas based on gender stereotypes faced by female police. Policewomen emerge as tokens in a male-dominated occupation. They confront a number of dilemmas which arise from the apparent conflict between sex role norms and occupational role norms. These dilemmas include performance pressures, isolation from co-workers, tests of loyalty and entrapment in stereotypic roles. Further he argued that policewomen rigidly conform to formal and informal occupational

norms, and overachieve in order to prove themselves as exceptions among women and many times they accept stereotypic roles, display low work commitment and seek non-patrol assignments. Wilson and McClaren (1963) also stated that gender diversity in police organization has increased over time but policing remains a male-dominated occupation. Early police administrators are against full female integration into all aspects of policing especially street patrol.

**Table 1.1
Family Relation and Employment**

Response	Mother in law		Father in Law		Other relatives	
	Number	%age	Number	%age	Number	%age
Favorable	11	14.10	42	53.84	22	28.20
Unfavorable	33	42.31	16	20.51	17	21.79
Indifferent	24	30.76	14	17.94	28	35.89
Can't say	10	12.82	06	07.69	11	14.10
Total	78*	100	78*	100	78*	100

Note: The number of responses were shown in the table are 78 percent as the no. of married women was 78.

It was asked about the reaction of their relatives regarding their service in the police department. 42 percent of the women stated that their mother-in-law had unfavorable attitude towards them. They expressed that mother-in-law didn't like their job profile and become a major hurdle in the performance of job. She further stated that due to the conflict at home she faced severe mental tension and was not able to concentrate on her job fully. She further expressed that while going out for duty, they first need to complete all the household tasks so that their mother-in-law should not feel bad. Majority of the respondents i.e. 53 percent stated that their father-in-law was supportive and didn't become a hurdle in their profession. There were 22 percent of the respondents who informed that their relatives from in-laws home are not in favour of their job particularly husband's sister. There were 83 percent respondents who stated that their husbands were very much cooperative and always supported their decision of working outside. Similarly, attitude of relatives of unmarried women working in the police force was also taken into consideration.

Aim of the Study

The study was conducted with the following aim and objectives;

1. To study the socio-economic profile of police women.
2. To find out the different reasons of women joining and not joining the police force.
3. To study the different types of works which women are expected to perform within the families and in the police force and the role conflict they face as consequences of these dual works.
4. To explore the difficulties women face while enforcing the laws as part of the police force.
5. To understand the coping strategies which the police women adopt to handle the role conflict.
6. To understand how the fellow policemen and the society perceive police women.

7. To study to what extent the participation and performance of women in the police force change the traditional image of women in society.

Domestic Work and Police Women

Kavita Mishra (2006) in her book stated that given the condition that women work in addition to their household responsibilities, the question of how they handle the domestic chores becomes a question of considerable importance. Although employed women may feel that it is much harder to combine the dual responsibilities and they may also be quite aware of the negative influences that their work has on their family life, yet once they already are in the department, they may evolve some method by which they are able to adjust their household responsibilities with their outdoor work. When women take on paid jobs, then some sharing of domestic tasks with households members often develops. Certain duties may be off-loaded on to husbands, children and occasionally other adults of the family but for the most part women themselves continue to take the responsibility for and indeed to perform most of the labour of childcare and household work. Husbands were often crucial, however, in enabling wives to take part-time jobs when there were young children at home.

Further an attempt had also been made to look into an important question that who helped women police personnel in carrying out the domestic duties.

The study reflected that 45 percent of the respondents used hi-tech electronic appliances in their home. So that burden of work should be lessened. 9 percent of the respondents are those who are at higher ranks and hired domestic help. 27.27 percent stated that their parents especially mother do the household task and they only assist their mother in household work. 18.18 percent stated that their siblings helped them in doing household tasks but many of the respondents were earning member of the

family as a result of which they faced the work burden more.

This information indicates that on the one hand police women help family members in supplementing the family income and on the other hand household responsibility also rests on their shoulders as they have not been fully relieved off from their mothering responsibility of home making and childcare.

Popular notion of a society is that woman who neglects her household duties becomes an object of disrespect. The girl children are socialized in this manner right from their childhood. Hence from the very beginning the girl child knows her role would be only to perform domestic duties. As a result of which girl child from the very beginning of her life imbibe the role of doing household work, which is also reflected in her later life for example many a times women preferred to do some household tasks themselves which they say gives them immense satisfaction.

Constraints on Maintaining Social Relationships

With the widening of opportunities for women for gainful employment and the need to support the family, women's employment has assumed sociological significance. Addition of a responsibility affects relationships with husband, children and other relatives and requires woman to go out of home which becomes an issue of concern for society. As a result of all this women ignore themselves and are not able to maintain proper social contact. Further an effort was made to get the opinion of women police personnel regarding whether they feel constrained to continue with their social contacts and relations. It was found that majority women police personnel agreed that they feel constrained to maintain social contact, most of respondents replied positively about being constrained and they stated the main reason for this being their dual work responsibilities. They explained that as they are in the police job, which is 24 hour job and that demands tough duty from them which led to considerable amount of criticism from the family members that they become over conscious regarding their job.

Beside other social constraints, the unfriendly environment towards women is the main problem they faced in the police department. Male colleagues many a times make women an object of ridicule. Male colleagues and senior rank officers think that police women are not appropriate for tough duties and because of this reason no prime posting is given to them. And if women become more friendly with male colleagues than society raises fingers at their character. Many of the respondents stated that people draw conclusion on their character not accepting their role as police women. Barnett (1997)²⁷ expressed that professional women and stress go together. According to him, women are assumingly more prone to stress due to their active dual roles and competing in a male dominated environment. Some of the respondents stated that lack of support of senior officers, patriarchal mindset in office is some of the problems they faced often. In order to know the responses of the women police personnel question

was asked from them that whether there senior officials listened to their problems carefully.

Coping Strategies

Working women faced tremendous amount of workload as a result of which they face many psychological and mental tensions. As already discussed that police role demands time and full time engagement in work which is somehow difficult for women because women found themselves in bundle of roles and simultaneously perform varied roles. All these things lead to stress and their stress level increases day by day which affects their physical health. In order to cope with stress various methods are adopted by working women. In order to know how police women lessened their stress level. They were asked about the coping strategies they employed when they felt overburdened with work or felt stressed.

There were 38 percent of the respondents who stated that they often suppress the competing spirit and activities which mean they accept the stereotypical role of women. They stated that job for them is just to draw salary and nothing more than that, they don't think beyond it. Many of the respondents stated that they prefer posting which has less workload and has a certain time table. 22 percent stated that whenever they feel stressed they seek social support from their colleagues, friends etc. Many a time male colleagues allow them to go home even without leave. 12 percent of the respondents strictly denied that the problem of role conflict exists, but it was observed from their behaviour that they use kind of defense mechanism by stating there is no such problem in order to keep them motivated. 8 percent stated that they mentally disengage themselves from many stress producing things. 6 percent stated that whenever they feel stressed they usually lock themselves in a room and release their pent up feelings by crying out aloud. 14 percent stated that they took the help of religion to reduce their stress level. Therefore, it can be inferred that women in police profession found themselves overburdened in work and in order to lessen the stress level they used many coping strategies.

According to one of the studies which was conducted on professional women in Delhi, Poonam Arora (2003) expressed her view by stating that the professionals were faced with the demands of marriage, career and family, it is likely that they curtail by not responding to the demands of any one role at a given point of time. This pattern gets established. It is presumed that the role that has been accorded a higher priority shall be given the due attention and the other considered as less important shall be underplayed. This depends on the dynamic interplay of various factors, such as situational demands, predisposition, personality patterns and individual needs and the findings suggested that at such times, women are the ones who revert to traditional role arrangements, at the expense of their careers.

An study conducted by Wentling, R.M. (2003) has shown that the twin roles of women cause tension and conflict due to her social structure which is still more dominant. In her study on working women in

Delhi, she has shown that traditional authoritarian set up of Indian social structure continues to be the same which doesn't allow women to work outside for long hours.

Conclusion

The above discussion shows the employment of women in police, reaction of relatives, domestic work and the police women, constraints of maintaining social relationships, child care, problems faced by police women and various coping strategies adopted by women police personnel to handle the dual work stress. Further it was observed that it is the women members of the family who mostly oppose the decision to join the police force. It was also observed that married women face more work role conflict than unmarried working women. It was also observed that hectic job schedule didn't allow police women to maintain social contact with their relatives or friends. child care also becomes a big problem for working women.

It was also observed from the above discussion that for the working women the double burden of the work represented a delicate balance of factors. If she showed too little interest in work she was not taken seriously and was seen as a nuisance to her organization due to her lack of commitment. On the other hand if she showed too much interest and pursued her career single-mindedly she was accused of neglecting home responsibilities and her own femininity.

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