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MANAGING ROLE CONFLICT: NEW CHALLENGES BEFORE WORKING WOMEN

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Abstract

Modern, globalized society is characterized by successful attempts by women to gain gender equality in occupations enabled by a number of interventions: education, affirmative action and economic empowerment policies. Yet, large numbers of working women encounter conflict in performing dual roles of housework and paid-work. Their work life is a constant effort to strike a balance between domestic duties and paid-work related demands both in rural and urban contexts. In India, caste, class, religion and region play a significant role in contributing to these conflicts.

This paper looks at the role conflict situation of women working in three different sectors- Information Technology, Shopping Malls and Public Transport Department. This is based on an explorative study sponsored by the UGC, New Delhi and conducted in the city of Bengaluru.

The findings of the study show many dimensions of women's balancing act to manage dual roles. Contrary to expectations, these are positive and success oriented. Women were found to have greater problems in the work place alone which have more importance than child care and household responsibilities, which are increasingly being shared by the husband

and parents-in-laws, with the economic status of the woman held valuable, adding to household income & social mobility of the family as a whole.

Work related problems are dominant in the context of gender discrimination in promotions, wages/salary and work environment.

The paper calls for wider discussion across scholars to arrive at a global gender policy on new dimensions of Role conflict and gender, keeping social security and sustainable livelihoods for vulnerable women (Tribal, Dalit and Muslim) in focus.

Keywords

Gender, Role Conflict, Globalization, Empowerment

1. Introduction

In recent times, not only the work roles of women are increasing with diversity and complexity but also leading to an inherent conflict in managing the different roles. The two spheres of women's activity, viz., home and work are the subject of a number of sociological and gender - based studies on women's work roles and the conflict emanating from them. Even prior to globalization, women's labour came to be valued in the developing countries, due to an unprecedented increase in the pressure of household poverty that made their income essential for day-to-day survival of the household. Besides this, the long drawn exclusion and deprivation suffered by women traditionally in our society due to patriarchal norms led the women's movement to compel the government to devise and implement a number of policies and programmes in their favour – for their empowerment and entitlement. The present study entitled “Managing Role Conflict: New Challenges before Working Women”, has looked at the occurrence, or otherwise, of possible conflicts in roles between the two spheres of home and work, supposed to be encountered by large numbers of women, especially in the modern urban milieu.

2. Women and Work Roles in India

Over the past 10 years, professional women in India have witnessed a quiet revolution in gender relations at work and family relations at home. The role of the family is critical in the modern and global world, where also patriarchal values and norms have been reinforced in all their activities. The role of the family continues to be important despite changes all around, as it has even today in a number of its aspects perpetuated stereotypes of masculinity and femininity as essentially social constructs and internalized by both the sexes.

2.1 Literature Review

Understanding 'Work' is one of the chief concerns of Sociology of Occupations. It helps in capturing the complexity of work and tries to see how it leads to wider social structures and processes. Blau (1984), for example, argues that structural parameters cause differentiation between individuals and in turn affect social interaction, role relation and so on. This is true of working women in two spheres of their life, viz., home and office.

By 1980s women in India had entered formal work institutions in large numbers and at almost all levels. There was also the continuous rise in the numbers of migrant women entering into towns and cities both following husbands and on their own (Sandhyarani 2010). Urbanization, coupled with new developments in the market, acts as the pull factor. Women are part of this migratory wave. Economic compulsion was the major reason for males while for women marriage was also instrumental for migrating from native homes towards a city (Kundu and Gupta 1996; Lewis 1954; Hariss and Todaro 1970). Women not only joined work force but succeeded, in course of time, in adding new value to their companies in the global competitive market. The workers had a dual aim in working: to obtain progress in their economic and social standing, as well as to contribute to the company's growth (Peters and Waterman, 1982, p. 238).

The other side of the women's entry into the work force was the way it was flooded with a number of problems and challenges - all unique to the working woman. She had to 'deal' with pregnancy and child birth, on the one hand, and possible sexual harassment at work, on the other, given here as extreme examples. Being in the 'public sphere', women continued to face or experience continued denial of equal pay for equal work and equal access to mobility and opportunities at work and management. Thus, exploitation and marginalization was twofold: at home and at work.

The situation with women and work in relation to role conflict is best explained with the help of three conceptual models describing the relationship between work and the family of the worker. The first one is called as the *Separate Sphere Model*. The second is *Spill-over Effects Model* and the third is called as the *Interactive model* of system interdependence.

The Separate Sphere Model addresses family and work as two distinctive systems: conceiving the family as the place for women while work is where men should be, in the public arena. The model sees family as characterized by different domains and associated with sex-specific traits. Parsons (1970) also identified in his understanding of the social system, separate gender roles (instrumental and expressive). He regarded work as a public sphere, mainly for men and fulfilling instrumental and materialistic needs; while family is a private sphere, mainly for women, providing expressive and emotional support. This model suggests

that for 'societal stability, family and work should remain separate in order to function properly and the division of labor by sex should be maintained in order to avoid conflict'. The separate sphere model regards women's family work as not adding to productive labour or work with exchange value in the labor market (Benston, 1969). The model shows men frequently as the only link the family has with the economic system as producers. Productive activities in the public sphere are more highly valued by society than reproductive and domestic activities in the private sphere (Sokoloff, 1981; Zaretsky, 1976).

The Spill-over Effect model is one where the system is recognized as having spill-over effects on the other. If individuals are forced to undertake work in both the systems, what entails is strain and overload for individuals, families, and work units. This model seldom considers the reverse relationship, i.e., the impact of family on work life (Crouter, 1984). The Spill-over Effect model argues that when men and women hold simultaneous memberships in both family and work systems, the perception of employed men and women varies. For example, married men who are employed usually are called working men; they are seldom referred to as "working husbands" or "working fathers." In contrast, married women who are employed are often called "working wives" or "working mothers." Outside work by women is considered as secondary to caring and household duties. Thus, women had to encounter many constraints to have choices in the labour market (Presser & Baldwin, 1980). As a proverb goes, 'unemployed man and the employed woman are a problem to society as they have marital problems and their children turn delinquent (Kanter, 1977).

The third model is critical of the above two and considers relationship between family and work as 'one-sided, biologically given, functional, pathological, static, natural, dichotomized, universal, and timeless'. In this Interactive Model we find feminists in favor of integrating the study of work and family. They have expressed that one should move beyond an understanding of women and their families or of men and their work, to an understanding of the intimate relationships between family and work. Instead of considering one as less or more important than the other, the interactive model recognizes the mutual interdependence between family and work, taking into account their reciprocal influences. It also acknowledges their independent as well as joint effects, directly and indirectly, on the psychological state and social conditions of individuals.

The interactive model has been applied in two ways to describe system interdependence between family and work in two main ways or approaches, viz., Marxist and non-Marxist. The first group (Marxists) treats the family and work as economic units and study their general linkages with the larger economy. The Non-Marxist feminists tend to see family and work as social systems or structural units and examine the specific circumstances under

which occupational and familial roles intersect. More specifically, they consider how the work context (e.g., work environment, job characteristics etc) influences family relationships, mechanisms of coping, and life style and, in turn, how the family context can affect work life.

Furthermore, the interactive model acknowledges that the effects of maternal employment can be either negative or positive depending on work and family conditions, reactions to work, effectiveness of coping, the use of resources, networks, and other factors (Acock, 1982). Simultaneous membership in multiple systems can create stress, conflict, and other problems for some individual workers. This model indicates that these consequences are not always dysfunctional but rather may be functional under certain circumstances (Marks, 1977).

2.2 Role Conflict

Role conflict is typically important and stressful for women. Their familial roles have continued to rest on them despite that they are equal to men in almost all spheres of economic activity and socio-political life. Women's work, though so essential for the family's maintenance, is undervalued and informal work is invisible even today. There is the strong belief that men are traditionally required to earn and take care of the family while women have to care for the family, cook and bring up children. It is the beginning of gender discrimination because women face violence, discrimination, injustice and exploitation due to their vulnerable status. However, there are certain changes coming about in the modern world as women have moved out of their homes and joined the formal work force in large numbers. The distinction between the private and public spheres is breaking down speedily and women are managing both roles - at home and at work (outside home). Although women joining the work force are common, remuneration and class based inequalities persist. The remuneration they obtain and the skills and capacities they possess vary across their age, education, caste, religion, class and place of employment. Yet, one can say with confidence that all women who thus contribute to family's income face challenges while balancing the two - personal and professional lives. Although the process of including women in the work force is quite fast and wide, the other supporting mechanisms such as crèches, childcare support, assistance from husband and other members of the household in housework, gadgets to cook, etc., are not always available and even if available, may not be dependable. Long and continued suffering due to stress generated out of this balancing act by most women in senior jobs with high status and responsibilities are often resulting in health related risks to them. Heart ailments, cancer, high blood pressure are some of these common ailments that women nearing menopausal age suffer from. Managing dual roles and responsibilities have had a dent on the capacity of women to perform their role of a primary caregiver. The ability to absorb and re-

duce tensions has been greatly compromised. To add to her woes, the structure of the family has changed from joint to nuclear placing more burdens on working women to have huge reserves of energy and capacity to manage the two worlds of home and work. The double challenge of holding on to their familial responsibilities and also trying to balance their personal and professional lives is leading to a lot of trouble associated with their work, family, children and household responsibilities. Secondly, the dual responsibilities are also affecting the working women by making them suffer from a lot of psychological stress caused by trying to balance family roles and work roles. This is in addition to the inequity in the work place such as unequal wages, work environment etc. common to most organizations.

2.3 Impact of Liberalization, Privatization and Globalisation

As the scientifically advanced and technologically complex job economy arrived in the last 70 years, not just men's but even women's jobs have come to be influenced by the new waves of globalization and privatization. Liberalization has led to a market-led economy where competition marks both the entry and survival of workforce whether male or female. The Information Technology sector more or less dictates the way people live their lives today. Not just the IT, but the entire globalised employment sector has had its structure shaken with the influence of the new situation caused by the globalised economy. Irrespective of the sector (IT, government or private) women employed in a variety of these jobs have a great challenge to encounter i.e., to handle both domestic responsibilities as well as official duties. In addition to these, the work in the modern times is also characterized by late working hours, stress and strain, job related competition, sedentary lifestyles, etc. However, it is also true that the sector in which she is employed plays a significant role in determining the amount of stress and modes or strategies of managing them.

3. Objectives of the Paper

The paper is based on a study with the following objectives:

- To examine the social and economic background of women in the study sectors
- To look into the motivational factors for taking up such employment
- To understand the role of the family and work environment in facilitating outside work by women
- To trace the possible linkages, compatibilities and conflicts between household work and paid/outside work
- To understand the cooperative and conflicting factors in managing the dual roles of Household duties and outside work, and

➤ To offer a few policy suggestions

4. Methodology

4.1 Universe of Study

The study, on which the paper is based, was located in the city of Bengaluru, the capital of the state of Karnataka, India. Three sectors of work where women worked were purposefully chosen keeping in view the differences in them with regard, to high educational qualifications, odd hours of work, and permanency of job as the main factors. Information Technology related jobs formed the first sector, middle and lower level workers in shopping malls formed the second and women conductors in state-owned transport service were the third group.

4.2 Data Collection Methods

Understanding the sensitivity of the study where women workers have to be questioned about personal lives, interview schedules (as quantitative data methods) were supplemented with focused group discussions and case studies as qualitative tools to elicit primary data from the women.

4.3 Sampling

Using random sampling method, 100 women workers from each of three sectors were selected as the sample for the study. Totally 300 women were interviewed eliciting information about a large number of aspects of their lives, both in the family and at work.

4.4 Data Analysis

Quantitative data was analysed using suitable statistical package. The notes from interviews, focused discussions and case studies were used to further interpret the findings.

5. Scope for Future Research

Research on women's role conflict taking different sectors of work is rather limited. The findings of the study presented in this paper are significant contributions to the body of knowledge in gender studies as well as sociology of family. Further research is needed to support or negate the outcome which will go a long way in enriching the available knowledge base and help better policy making, particularly in the developing countries.

6. Limitations of the Study

The study being undertaken or set in a cultural context (country, caste and class), its findings cannot universally applied. It is a micro research; Comparative research across dif-

ferent regions and more sectors of work are likely to present useful results. The findings are, therefore, restricted in their application universally.

7. Findings of the Study

The paper now discusses the key findings of the study:

7.1 Demographic, Social and Economic Profile of the Respondents

Demographic, Socio-economic and Cultural factors characterizing the background of women have particular influence upon their achievements in familial educational and occupational/professional lives. The societal values, traditions and norms dictate their lives even in societies under modern, global influences and carve the life "choices and traits". Some of these are discussed as under:

7.1.1 Age

Irrespective of the sector, respondent-women were distributed between three age categories, viz. less than 20 years, 21 to 30 years and 31 to 40 years. Among them, majority (59.7) were from the age category of 21 years to 30 years. Of the remaining 121 women, again a majority of (85) women (28.3 per cent) were in the age category of 31 years to 40 years. Those who were above the age of 41 years formed a small minority of 9 women forming 3 per cent.

We found that commercial malls had attracted women from the younger age group than elderly women. The next major groups in the younger age category were bus Conductors.

7.1.2 Constitution of the Family

The place of stay is categorized into six types based on the responses, viz., staying with parents, with parents-in-law, independent residence with husband, staying with friends or relatives, staying alone in a room and other forms of stay. The largest group (50 per cent) to stay with parents was Mall Working Women constituting 62.5 per cent of the total. Bus conductors formed the largest group to stay with parents-in-law (48 per cent). IT professionals were the largest group from all women respondents from all the three sectors to stay independently with husband (53.3 per cent).

7.1.3 Place of Birth/Native Place

Migration from place of birth is a critical factor in understanding one's socio-economic status. But interesting is the inter sectoral differences in the place of origin of respondents. Obviously, the IT professionals were largely from urban origin. Barring 46.3% who were from rural origin, the rest of women (from all sectors) were from cities and towns..

While the bus conductors were largely from rural areas, the women from the Malls were largely of urban origin.

Among the migrant respondents, there were those new to the city, having migrated for education or job (or for both), i.e., women hailing from the same city having been born here and those who had migrated to the city after marriage. Women who were urban-born formed 53.7 per cent of the total while among them, and as expected, IT professionals were the majority (23 per cent), with bus conductors forming the largest group to have been born in villages (23 per cent).

7.1.4 Education

Expectedly, it is the women in the IT sector who have obtained higher education than their counterparts in the other two sectors. Having hailed more from urban areas, it is also expected that they could make use of the infrastructure for higher learning than the bus conductors who are largely from rural areas (69%).

7.1.5 Caste

Caste being an important indicator of socio-economic status in India, the women in the IT sector were, for the most part, from upper caste groups that occupied a higher status in the society. This finding collaborates with the finding of earlier studies (Singh and D'Souza, 1986; Rao, 1991) which found that the weaker sections, that too from the lower and other disadvantaged castes find it hard to get into better jobs and better residential areas in the urban areas.

7.1.6 Religion

Nearly 92 per cent out of total 300 women respondents were Hindus. Of them, 32.8 per cent were in the IT profession, which sector had 15.4 per cent of its women from Islam and 3 per cent from Christianity.

7.1.7 Marital Status

Across sectors, we found that majority of our respondents were married (64.3 per cent). Very less number were separated (0.3 per cent) and divorced women (0.7 per cent); which holds good for widows also (0.3 per cent). Unmarried women were found more in the Mall sector (48.5per cent) followed by the IT (27.2 per cent).

7.1.8 Age at Marriage

There was only one worker married when she was still below 20 years old. Otherwise, the preferred age at marriage appears to be above 20 years and between 21-30 years. At the same time, the largest numbers of those who are yet to be married were also in the same age group (of 21-30 years).

7.1.9 Place of Birth of Parents of Respondents

Taking the place of birth of the parents of the respondents, it was found that not all of them were born in the urban areas, and in metropolitan cities. About 53.5 per cent of the respondents' parents hailed from urban areas and it was most common in the case of IT professionals. It also supports the hypothesis that a majority of women were able to obtain good education and grooming by virtue of this fact i.e., their father being born and brought up in the city. 25.5 per cent of respondents' parents hailed from the rural areas. The remaining 21 per cent hailed from semi-urban areas.

7.1.10 Place of Origin and Migration

Upon questioning about the place of origin, 34 per cent (168 respondents out of 210 who were migrants replied that they came from other districts within Karnataka State . 21 per cent of migrants were from other states like Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, and Kerala etc. When questioned about the causes of migration, out of the total 210 immigrants, 32 per cent replied that they came to Bangalore city only upon obtaining the current job in the BMTC or IT sector. The remaining 23 per cent mentioned education as the cause of their family's immigration into Bangalore.

7.1.11 Age and Migrant Status

The data has shown that the immigrants are from other districts of Karnataka and some are from outside the state. But the age at which they have undertaken this migration is notable. A large number of them working in IT sector are from outside the district and state, and have adjusted to the life in the city with its different cultural and other differences, in order to obtain a career in the IT companies. For some, it is the dream-come - true to work in the multi-national company. Most of these women have joined the company after their education either in Bangalore itself or in some other city. The younger generation (18 years to 25 years), in particular, have migrated to the city in order to get into a job in the IT sector. They form 57.8 per cent of the total respondents from that age group of immigrants and 51.6 per cent of the total number of immigrants to Bangalore. Likewise those who have migrated to Bangalore for either job or who came much earlier for education and later obtained a job hailing from the next higher age group of 26 years to 35 years constitute 59 per cent of the total from this age group and 44.5 per cent of the total migrants. 22.2 per cent of the respondents who have migrated hail from the much higher age group of 36 + years. They form the least quantum of those who have migrated (3.6 per cent).

7.1.12 Family Size

Barring the 103 women who are still unmarried, out of the remaining 197 respondents forming 65.7 per cent, 42 per cent of the married women have children. It includes the one

separated woman, one widow and 2 divorcees who are from Bus Depot, Mall and IT sector respectively. 7.4 per cent of women did not have sons; 22 women with a single son were also those with total 3 children with the first two being girls. This shows the desire or craving for the birth of sons and in the process, ending up with having a large family. There are some women in our sample who even after 2-3 years of marriage have preferred to postpone motherhood. 139 of them are from rural areas. Further, of the 100 sampled bus conductors, 69 hail from rural background. 58 among them are yet to be married. Of the 11 married among the 69 women, 8 are waiting to beget children (not planned delay). 2 bus conductors have not yet conceived as they are suffering from disease. One woman has stated that hers is a planned delay. In the case of 39 mall workers hailing from rural areas, a majority (33) is yet to be married; 3 are waiting to beget a child and 2 have planned their time of becoming mothers. Even among the IT professionals who are from rural background (31 women), 24 are yet to be married and 7 have reported planned delay. 161 women (from all the three sectors) have hailed from urban areas. Of them the largest group is that of the Mall workers (81) followed by 69 from IT companies and 31 from BMTC. Even here a majority are from the category of unmarried (133) women. Barring them, 14 women have stated planned delay as the reason for remaining childless till now. But the next large number of 6 women has mentioned occupational stress as the reason for being childless.

7.1.13 Economy of the Family

Majority of respondents (95%) have stated that their husbands contributed to the household income. Keeping in view the class character of the sample, i.e., the possible income variations in the case of IT professionals, bus conductors and Mall workers, suitable income categories were made. As expected, the Mall workers have turned out to be the poorest in terms of both individual income and total income of the family. Most of them stay in rented premises and have good access to basic amenities; but the rent towards the house takes away much of their earnings, including that of the IT professionals.

7.2 Work Related Issues and Challenges

7.2.1 Mode of Transport to Work

Role conflict is related to a number of issues and challenges that the working woman faces in the course of her professional or career period. It includes her mobility to work, sharing of household work by husband, freedom towards decision-making and access to resources (to her own earnings), etc. The class character of the work of the sampled women is glaring in just one context: mode of transport to place of work. The maximum numbers of workers in our sample who travel to work by Bus (public transport bus) are the Mall workers (36 out of 191 such commuters by bus). There are 91 bus conductors who also travel by bus, and it is

their own BMTC pick up vehicle. 7 conductors walk to reach their point of work, which is also true of 8 Sales Assistants who walk to the Malls. Some IT professionals travel by luxury buses fitted with AC and WIFI facilities. 19 of our respondents are engineers and travel to work by such buses. 8 engineers have stated that they travel by scooter, 11 of them by tempo/van and 12 of them even walk to work. These women IT professionals stay close to work in Paying Guest accommodations or they have rented a house and do not want to risk traveling long distance to reach office.

7.2.2 Access to Salary

Freedom to spend their salary has got varied responses. The table below tells us that large numbers of affirmative answers are given by the IT professionals. As many as 50.7 per cent of the total 152 respondents who have said „yes“ to the question hailed from this sector. Among those who do not have any freedom to spend their earnings on matters or items of their choice - the Mall workers - are the largest group with more than 50 per cent saying „No“ to the question. The bus conductors have replied that they have such freedom only sometimes (46 per cent); but an almost equal number (42.3) have replied that they do not have that freedom.

7.2.3 Decision-Making

The IT professionals are markedly different from the other two sectors in the degree of empowerment. They form the largest group (41 out of total 51) to say that they take decisions jointly with their husband. This is in contrast with the bus conductors and Mall workers who have stated that the decision maker at home is their husband (refer to the table above). Decision making all by them is found to be lowest among bus conductors and mall workers or for that matter, even among the IT professionals.

7.2.4 Reasons to Take Up the Present Job

219 respondents (and 10 women solely) have opted for this job due to the family's dependence upon their earnings. But most of them have done so on independent decision. The next largest group is of those who have listened to their father/husband and chosen this job/sector. Poverty of the family, absence of any alternative job, reservation of seat in the sector for women (like for bus conductors) are the other reasons put forth by the respondents that have motivated them to join the concerned sector for employment.

7.2.5 Age at Joining Work and Length of Service

At least 10 years is mentioned as the length of service by the majority of women in the study. Of them, out of the total 100 bus conductors studied, 25 per cent have been working for less than 10 years in the BMTC. 65.57 per cent are employed for the last 11-20 years.

Likewise, nearly 39 per cent of the Mall workers are also working for the last 10 or less years.

7.2.6 Satisfaction with Earnings/Salary

Only the Mall workers (41.77 per cent) and the IT professionals (40.7 per cent) were satisfied with their earnings than the bus conductors who felt that they earn very less. Their worry was that their jobs were not regularized.

7.2.7 Social Status Associated with Job

Nearly 53.4 per cent have stated that the job has nothing to do with their social status in terms of leading to any improvement in it. Most of the Mall worker women also do not find the job adding to their social status.

7.2.8 Suitability of Job

The women, irrespective of sector have expressed that the work is quite strenuous and they felt much stressed out. Physical and mental stress is mentioned by many. Among those who have felt the strain of the job on their health and wellbeing, the IT professionals stand out with 79.20 per cent of the total IT company-working women in the sample. On a comparison, the two other sectors also have similar complaint (of physical and mental strain), but it is only to a limited extent of around 10 per cent of women feeling so. The major worry for these two categories is something different. Both of them have to stay standing for a long time as their nature of work demands such posture. The bus conductors hardly get a chance to sit down and issue tickets. The Mall workers also have to be standing the whole day and evening, till their shift time gets over, attending to customers. 45.68 per cent and 54.31 per cent of the two categories of women, respectively, have felt that the job is not suitable to them.

7.3 Perceptions about Work

7.3.1 Workload

Among all the three sectors, it is the bus conductors who have felt that their workload is heavy and stressful (nearly 60 per cent) while the mall workers feel their workload is normal (44.73 per cent). Not just that - the latter have even stated that they are enjoying their work (44.82 per cent). For the IT professionals, the work is perceived as heavy no doubt, but they think it is normal and hence enjoy it too. 48.38 per cent of women have felt that the work is heavy but a little more than that number (49.12 per cent) felt that it is normal to be so in IT companies. Thus, the women here do not regret joining this sector as they knew well that it is a stressful job. 27.58 per cent of them even enjoy the work indicating thereby that they have made compromises to the work at home and at office.

7.3.2 Perception about Leisure

The free time, respondents get is generally ranging from as less as 20 minutes to 2 hours. On the whole, do the women have any happy feeling about their work environment? 75 per cent have felt happiness carrying out their work, but it is not even across sectors. The women bus conductors seem to be very poor as far as their opinion about happiness in work is concerned. Only 24.33 per cent felt happy while more than 60 per cent expressed unhappiness about work environment.

7.3.3 Adjustment with Male Colleagues

We find that as compared to the women in the two other sectors, the IT women have least difficulty in adjusting with male colleagues. The difficulties include such reasons like (a) men paying less respect towards these women (b) these women given heavy workload (c) men being quarrelsome (d) nature of work given to women being difficult (e) trouble from customers (f) trouble from colleagues and customers (g) Loud talk and (h) mischief by males. Rude behaviour by males (may be higher ups, customers and colleagues) and night work is the greatest problems for them. Only a marginal number of women (9 women/15 per cent) have stated that they are dissatisfied with the work environment among IT workers. This is against 65 per cent of bus conductors (39 number) expressing dissatisfaction.

7.3.4 Gender Discrimination

Of the women from the three sectors, it is the bus conductors who are more in number to report a high degree of discrimination (54.83 per cent) as well as greater degree of subtle discrimination as compared to women in the other two sectors. Both IT professionals and Mall workers do not have much problem in this regard. The women from the IT sector have not accepted that there is any discrimination. If at all, they have identified subtle discrimination. This often takes the shape of sexual advances and exploitation by males.

Whether it is by colleagues or customers, 56 respondents forming 18.7 per cent of the respondents have stated that there is no such harassment at work place by males. Here, we do find a difference between the sectors where these women work, because while mall workers and bus conductors have replied in similar terms that there is much exploitation (41.07 per cent of bus conductors and 42.85 per cent of mall workers), the IT professionals do not think so. Only 9 women from this sector (16.07 per cent) have mentioned that there is such exploitation. We also have to note that the women have not reported any form of exploitation meted out to them by colleagues. The 23 (41.07 per cent) bus conductors and 22 (52.38 per cent) Mall workers have responded that they have trouble from passengers (in the first case) and customers (mall workers). It gives us the signal that a woman working in BMTC as conductor has been accepted by the fellow male workers and outward misbehaviour is not much

prevalent. Likewise, the unconventional forms of work timings, dress etc., of mall workers is also understood as a need of the present times by fellow male workers. There is no such exploitation by them of the women workers in the Malls according to our respondents.

However, we cannot ignore the responses by 56 women who have mentioned that there is advancement towards them by males. Those working in the IT sector are a minority here (with only 9 respondents) while the other two sectors are more in number (23 and 27 respectively of BMTC and Malls).

7.4. Work related Problems

For women who have to take care of multiple responsibilities, managing both home and office or place of work, transport to one's work place is a critical matter. Lack of transport arrangements has affected most of the women including the IT professionals. Secondly, absence of maternity leave and other social security arrangements, crèche and baby care facilities has also further complicated the balancing act of household and official work.

7.4.1 Impact on Health

There are some specific ailments that the women have mentioned to us, but these are related to the type of work they do and the sector they are employed in. Allergy stands out as the most common complaint by the bus conductors. Their work takes them close to the public and to the dusty roads, vehicular smoke etc., that cause allergic reactions on their body. Skin allergy, bronchial allergy affecting the lungs and allergy causing irritation in the eyes have been mentioned by the conductors. Of the three types of workers (BMTC, Mall and IT sectors), the Mall working women are least affected by such allergies (see table 5.32). It is comparatively less among the IT workers too. But they have mentioned about neck pain (88 out of 100 sample women) caused by continuous use of computers and sitting posture.

7.4.2 Views about Work by the Company

The study has brought to focus the views of the respondents about appreciation of work ability by the organization. Although the respondents hold themselves in high esteem by stating that they work with dedication to the company, they do not feel that the company or firm reciprocates the contribution that they are making towards its growth.

7.5 Presence of Role Conflict

The study has shown that work has impacted almost every facet of these women, irrespective of the sector they were working in. Many of them who were mothers, juggled child care and work in the sector, and with household responsibility for cooking, cleaning and elderly care, thereby adding to the burden. The main challenge was lack of support at work for child care. About 35 per cent of our respondents have reported that they were working with highly developed organisations which actually enabled overcoming these challenges. They

had also learnt and adopted certain time-management skills, which were practiced often with the support from their spouse. In yet another 30 per cent of cases, the women tried to meet the challenge of multiple tasks by sacrificing sleep, rest and their recreation time. The motivation behind these types of surviving in job despite pressure of work at home and at office (mall or bus depot) was the desire for personal achievement. The other major desire was also to create a good future for their children.

For most women in the study, work has offered great opportunities to grow and develop their personal capabilities. This is true of the women in the IT sector and the BMTC. The respondents have mentioned a few social benefits for themselves and their families, available because of their jobs - that today women are recognized for their contribution to the national income, unlike before when they were invisible and unrecognized. Those with better education and better jobs (as a consequence of their skills and qualifications), have opined that they are far better than other women in the unorganized sector. The latter, according to them, suffer from greater risks to health as they work in unhygienic circumstances. Their work is hazardous and more stressful. The IT sector offers better job prospects and high social status both of which will spin-off societal benefits. Higher education, according to the women in this sector, leads to lower unemployment levels, higher earnings and more prestigious social standing. The well earning working women felt that child care is manageable. It was the women working in the Malls who gave a negative opinion as they ill afforded such child care centers or pre-schools. The residential areas from where the Mall workers hailed from were generally slums and other low lying areas. Poor are more in their neighbourhood who cannot send the children to costly play homes. The government-run child care centres are the only resort for these poor mothers. But the working of the centres being for half a day and facilities available there not being up to the mark, many of these poor and middle class families from where some of our respondents have hailed, leave the young children at home while they go to work. The stand taken by the women in the IT sector (especially) is that working interfered with good mothering. Nearly 50 per cent of our respondents in this sector are unmarried. Of those who are married, 35 per cent of them are working at a lower cadre with less salary than what their husband is working for. This was disclosed to be purposeful, because these women workers were aware of the role clash if they took equally or more than the type of responsible job that their husband had opted for. Those who were still unmarried felt that by being so they could become good workers. This view was expressed across sectors. They were worried that there was no definite way of managing both family responsibilities and those at work.

7.6 Role Spill-Over

A further aspect of role conflict was “role spill- over”. This is acknowledged by other studies too. Role spill- over refers to the result of role burden or role overload. This is especially true of the women working in the IT sector, which is under private management and highly target-oriented. Women have complained of a lot of constraints working in this sector where time is also money, not just the money that they get as salary. Often, work load led to role conflict as jobs are uncertain and depend on clear performance. Thus, unable to face the role overloads due to constraints imposed by time, women in this sector have stated that they have (if not in their own case, they have seen it among other female colleagues) adopted strategies to counter chances of poor performance at work. Most of these strategies are against their own wellbeing and stature as women. Postponement of marriage is one such strategy. Another is to move out of home and stay in a paying guest accommodation closer to work place, despite having parents in the same city. Applicable to those who are married, was to postpone motherhood till a time when they have achieved a reasonably good target at work and obtained promotions or incentives. Otherwise, role obligations increase for women leading to time barriers. These would force women to choose between roles and honour only some at the cost of the others. There is need to support these women with suitable interventions and strategies to assist them. The support that they obtained from husband was supreme. It was the permission to work. More than 76 per cent of our respondents, irrespective of sector, opined that support from family helped them to manage crises and challenges at work. Emotional support was most helpful. This was true of all sectors but in their own different ways. The study showed that women combined two roles: household work and outside work. Employment and work were dichotomous words for them whereas for men, employment was part of their everyday activity. They were bread winners to support their children and other dependents. Yet, even in women’s case we find that they combined two roles, namely, wife and mother at home and worker outside.

Irrespective of the sector, the fact remains that the women do not get sufficient time for household work. 183 women out of total 300 have felt so. There are differences across sectors also. For example, women from the BMTC are the largest group to feel this problem. The nature of their work determines the time allocated for household work. The conductors have a rigorous life at workplace as the shift starts early in the morning. They have to leave home by 6-7 am and return by late afternoon or evening. Non-completion of household tasks is heightened in their case also because of the class character of the cadre. They are temporary employees and live on their salary that is very much needed for the family’s survival. Secondly, amenities like access to drinking water, food supply (ration) etc. also matter a lot

in completing the household tasks - both on time and efficiency. It is true that the bus conductors and mall workers who are from lower middle and middle class families find it hard to access these amenities on an independent basis. One can refer to the details in chapter- 4 where their access to public versus private taps is discussed. Added to this, some of these conductors and Mall workers are also immigrants from outside. They do not own their residence/house. All these factors are directly and indirectly responsible in affecting the playing of both roles efficiently by the respondents, in particular, the conductors and mall workers. The respondents have different forms of assistance depending upon tasks to be completed. Taking domestic work, we find that the bus conductors carry out all domestic work by themselves and with support or assistance from parents-in law. The second large number is of those who receive assistance from husband. An almost equally large number of them are still unmarried who skipped answering to this question. Taking the responses of Mall working women in the study, we find that they relied for the most part on the help provided by their in-laws (46 out of 100 women). 19 women receive assistance from husband and the remaining 20 (barring the 15 unmarried women) carry out work alone or with support from others like hired maids. The IT professionals, given their economic superiority of high salary, status and education, are married to persons in whose homes their job is recognized as a status symbol. Thus, in their case, we find that the need to carry out domestic chores all alone is minimized and they receive help from husband (20 women), in laws (20 women) and other sources (25 women). It is the IT professionals who find managing dual or multiple roles as highly and always difficult. On a comparison, they have felt the problem more than the women workers in the two other sectors. One reason for this is that many of them live in nuclear families with only husband for support. But more often than not, with the husband also working in multinational company the work load or pressure is equal and sometimes more for him. The second reason for the situation is that the mall workers hail from families where they live along with the parents of their husbands or with their own parents. This is more or less true of the bus conductors also. Joint families offer support to take care of household work and child care. Parents, husband, parents in law, friends and relatives, hired workers/maid etc., are these agencies from whom the respondents are obtaining assistance in managing their dual roles. Of these, the maximum extent of satisfaction has been derived out of receiving assistance from parents by all the respondents, irrespective of their sector (73.7 per cent).

8. Critical Conclusions

Good mothering and practice of established routines have helped some women respondents to balance work at home and outside and avoid friction and conflicts. But class dis-

inctions based on educational attainments that have dictated type of job taken by the woman have also decided the nature, type and extent of such role conflict. The three sectors studied have portrayed different forms of conflicts on the same issue but women working in the three different sectors with varying statuses and emoluments. In the Indian context, the situation is still one where mothers are able to balance both worlds. This is true of even the most challenging sector like medicine, IT, business management, public relations, engineering and so on. The support of the in-laws and parents is something that cannot be ignored in the management of home and children by the working mother. Hiring a maid to take care of the child, buying gadgets for household work are some of the solutions that they have initiated.

8.1 Suggestions and Recommendations

A few policy recommendations arise from the studies which are summed up as under:

- The Government should extend help to working women by providing better transport services during peak hours of work.
- New social security programs for women must be planned to support them to remain at home till at least the baby is one year old.
- Concessional prices for some of the household gadgets that will minimize the dependence and drudgery of work.
- Introduce stringent punishment against those who indulge in sexual offences against women.
- Equal wages for equal work by men and women and equal opportunities to access work by women and
- Organise awareness programs to empower women and sensitise men towards women's problems and challenges of role conflict.

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