

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY, FINDINGS AND SUGGESTIONS

Globally, women represent half of the population, have always been part of the economy, family and social set up, but their existence, efforts and contributions to the family and society remain invisible. Their role changed continuously from home maker to bread winner outside home, and reached today's executive and managerial positions proving their efficiency equally with men. While internalizing the new roles and becoming the earning member, men's traditional role was shared, while the traditional role of women as family maker is not shared by men. Along with the biological functions, women have to perform all the household chores, due to the prevailing norms and values. Divergent and contradictory roles of efficient, bold and promising manager at the work place to loving and caring wife and mother at home demands a lot from the women managers, leading to dual role conflict of women managers.

Since the thesis has been constructed on the basis of theoretical postulates of eminent theorists and feminist thinkers, it is imperative to explain the theoretical aspects regarding role assumptions of men and women in society. Many of the feminist theorists have deliberated upon the need for restructuring of the role concepts of men and women in family and society. Rescheduling of roles in many aspects have already occurred but the enigma

of roles related to family as caring and nurturing duties still remain with women themselves and all societal institutions ascertain the need for women performing such roles for the overall welfare of the society. While defining gender roles, role conflict, spill over, etc. social scientists comfortably ignore the need for restructuring gender roles in society and reallocating the roles, even though need for increased economic participation and empowerment of women has been preached by many of them. Thus the available theoretical pool of social sciences lack proper theoretical support for the restructuring of society in favour of women, except feminist theories.

Existing research on role conflict among women managers in Kerala especially in the higher education field has failed to study the art of managing the conflicting roles and the pain and dedication behind, with a gender perspective. Previous research has proved how the variables that have taken key roles in determining the professional and personal lives of women managers from higher education field interfere with one another (Brock wood, Hammer & Neil, 2001). But research in the direction of the effects of gender roles on women and proper studies on the need to eliminate the gender role perceptions in society, practical methods to ensure egalitarianism and thereby contribute to women's social, psychological and emotional wellbeing has not been documented in the available literature.

A brief overview of the research conducted along with the findings,

suitable recommendations and suggestions for further research are included in this chapter.

6.1 SUMMARISING AND DISCUSSING THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The present study was conducted with the intention to determine the extent of role conflict, to explore the challenges faced, to identify the effects of family responsibilities and familial support on role conflict and to identify the various coping strategies adopted for ensuring work-life balance by women managers in higher education field in Kerala. Based on the findings and conclusions arrived at, the answers to the research questions are sought.

1. Do women managers in higher education face dual role conflict?

The first research question was to identify whether women managers in higher education experience dual role conflict while combining work and family roles. Data collected using Role Conflict Scale was used to analyze the dual role conflict of women managers. Results of the analysis reveal that all of the respondents experience dual role conflict subject to variations. 87% of the respondents are experiencing high or medium level of role conflict.

2. Whether the experience of dual role conflict related to age, experience, nature of work and religion of women managers?

It is evident from the results of analysis that the women managers in

higher education field in Kerala are facing role conflict in varied intensities, irrespective of their religion, age or designation. Realisation of the two polarised type of roles make women prone to role conflict. Poor representation of women from Muslim community itself shows the conservative religious traditions and taboos in going out for job and insisting on stereotyped jobs. Higher rates of role conflict of women managers from Muslim community than those from the other two religions are also thus explained. Significant variations are found in the experience of dual role conflict on the basis of age, experience in work, managerial experience, religion of the respondents and nature of work. Teaching staff(academic staff) holding the posts of Principals of colleges and HOD's of teaching departments face more role conflict than the administrative staff. For women managers of earlier ages parenting of small children and maintaining family along with tight work schedule boosts up the stress and strain and thus the role conflict. Work experience in general and that in the managerial position help the women managers to tackle the situation well and lighten the decision making process.

There is significant difference among the role conflict of women managers having different managerial experiences. Respondents having managerial experience of five years or more are seen to have the lowest role conflict. Experience in the managerial position enable the women managers sharpen their decision making power, taming the subordinates and other do's

and don'ts related to the position which polish their supervisory capacity.

3. *What are the challenges faced by women managers in the family domain, work place and in maintaining personal, psychological and emotional well-being?*

Women managers are facing various challenges while performing their dual roles at family and work domain.

A. *Challenges related to Family Domain*

Women managers face many challenges related to family domain. Most of them could reach home only late after work. Many of them admit that they often carry work home due to urgency of the work which in turn affects the performance of homely duties. Only a quarter of them could spare energy to entertain children on reaching home after office hours. Amidst such over burden of official and personal duties, maintaining family relations by attending family functions and get together, visiting relatives, friends, etc. were performed properly by about one third of the women managers. Most of them agreed that they could not perform their duties well as wife and mother and are unable to maintain family relations properly. Many of them even used to avoid visitors at home just because they were too tired of the over burden of work.

B. Challenges at the Work Front

About half of the women managers opined that they have to work continuously for more than 16 hours a day juggling between the office and household duties. It is a serious issue which has to be discussed in detail. The respondents face much difficulties since their male subordinates hesitate to obey them, which was a common problem prevalent in female managed institutions. Rushing to workplace after finishing household chores is a common incident for women managers. Work is sometimes affected by family demands and this reduces their job satisfaction. Few respondents have even thought of resigning their job.

C. Challenges related to Personal Wellbeing

Findings from the analysis reveal that women in managerial positions face challenges affecting personal and psychological wellbeing like stress, guilty feeling of not able to perform family duties properly, out bursting to family members, sleeplessness, etc. In the traditional family structure, there is no question of selective involvement in the duties and responsibilities to be performed for the family members. Women managers feel that they are failing in their duties as mothers despite the fact that they have no proper time for themselves. Lack of sharing of household works by family members intensifies the dual role conflict of women managers. This again, is under strong influence of religion which ascertains that this social setup is to be well

maintained. Physical ailments like chest pain, shoulder pain, headache, back pain and other psychosomatic disorders were widely found among women managers. The findings thus reveal that the tension between family and work roles become a source of stress for the respondents which diminishes physical, psychological and personal well-being of women managers.

4. What is the extent of family responsibilities of women managers?

The fourth research question was with regard to the extent of family responsibilities of women managers. Since women have been considered as home makers traditionally, majority of the family responsibilities are assigned to women and this remains unaltered in society. Lack of time is a major problem for the women managers when the double responsibilities of job and family are to be performed. This becomes source of pressure and stress for the women managers along with varied life situations. Responsibility towards the dependents like children or elderly also affects the role conflict. Even though women in Kerala are allowed to attain higher education, and employment, they are expected to give top priority to family. Any lag with regard to fulfilling family responsibility is condemned not only by the family and society but also by the woman herself. This in turn becomes the basic source of conflict and stress. Women from Muslim community are found to experience higher role conflict and those from the Christian community are having the lowest rate of role conflict. Analysis results also confirm that higher rate of family responsibilities increases the role conflict experienced by

women managers.

5. *Do women get enough support from the family members in performing their familial roles?*

Findings regarding the family support of women managers reveal that only few women managers get sufficient support from the family in performing their familial roles. Women receive support from different units of family like husband, parents or in laws, children or house maid and of course with the use of modern home appliances. Support from husband in sharing household responsibilities considerably reduces the role conflict of women managers. Findings from the analysis reveal that higher level of family background and support reduces the dual role conflict of women managers. Modern home appliances are being used for house hold chores by almost all of them as a supporting system in performing family roles. Assistance by a house maid was also practiced by more than half of the sample. Women from Muslim community were found to get lesser family support than their counterparts in Hindu and Christian communities indicating the traditional norms being followed more strictly by the Muslims.

6. *What are the strategies adopted by women managers to ensure work-life balance?*

Women managers were adopting various coping strategies to reduce dual role conflict and thus ensure work-life balance. The coping strategies

used were identified using the inventory on coping strategies in which the strategies were grouped into three types. They were Structural Role Redefinition, Personal Role Redefinition and Reactive Role Behaviour. It was found that the women managers with low role conflict were largely using the Type I methods of coping strategies like delegation of work among subordinates in the office and maintaining good relationship with them, sharing responsibility of child rearing, household chores with spouse/ family members, hire help for care of elderly, etc. Then comes the use of Type II strategies where by finding time for recreation, leaving job tensions at the office itself, praying, visiting holy places, etc. Thirdly, Type III methods were used by them, like effective use of home appliances, proper planning and time scheduling, update themselves, etc. and thus equipping themselves for performing the dual roles. On the contrary, the respondents with high role conflict were largely using the Type III coping strategies, where the women managers have to act as super women, performing all the responsibilities in proper time schedules with perfection without necessary rest or recreation.

7. *Are the coping methods effective in alleviating their role conflict?*

Most of the women having high role conflict were found to use the Type III coping strategies i.e. equipping oneself with measures to overcome role conflict where no sharing of responsibilities takes place. The responsibilities will be performed by them properly, but they will have to

sacrifice their physical and mental health in compensation. Those women managers most commonly using Type I strategies most combined with Type II strategies were found to be most effective in reducing role conflict. The women managers were not even aware of the types of coping strategies and the need for restructuring the roles for effecting proper work life balance.

6.2 SUGGESTIONS FOR MANAGING THE DUAL ROLE CONFLICT OF WOMEN MANAGERS

Women have been increasingly entering into the labour force and likewise in managerial positions across the world which is inevitable for the overall development of any society. Women are equally intelligent and capable of performing their roles as that of men. Their abilities are not to be burned inside the house amidst the household work and their service cannot be denied in the productive arena. But while they are ensuring economic participation, it is the societal responsibility to ensure their physical and psychological well-being. To reduce the over burden of familial and job related responsibilities and thus reduce dual role conflict, sincere and rigorous interventions from the part of administrative units, state and other socialisation agencies are required. Several of the suggestions have been put forth by the respondents of the present study.

6.2.1 Changes at Individual Level

- The real change should begin in the mindset of women themselves who are taught to accept the male dominance and their own lower position in the social structure from childhood days. If women can convince themselves of the need for sharing of responsibilities at home, they can convey the message to their children as well as other members of the family and gradually a silent revolution will take place in the whole society. Only through such socialisation process the gender division of labour can be eradicated from the society.
- Development and progress of any society depends upon the development of women in that society. Hence along with equal opportunities for education and employment, women must be provided with conducive circumstances at the home front. Equal sharing of household chores and equal parenting by husband and wife are practices called forth by feminists as inevitable solutions to minimise role conflict of women. But in a few cases the respondents of the study themselves were found reluctant to accept these practices wholeheartedly. Such an impact of socialisation need to overcome in capacity building workshops for women managers.

6.2.2 Academic Interventions

- Awareness classes in schools and colleges to facilitate change in

socialisation practices of parents whereby gender division of labour at the home front could be eliminated. Parents are to be given awareness to treat their boy and girl children as equals and make them aware of the need for equal parenting and equal sharing of household chores.

- Gender sensitization among men and women employees are to be conducted at regular intervals in the Universities to make them aware of the relevance of women's academic leadership, need for sharing of responsibilities, respecting each other and ensuring teamwork.
- Motivation and capacity building programmes (academic leadership, management skills, familiarizing with new technologies, etc.) must be conducted for women managers to make them aware of their capabilities, enable them overcome their drawbacks and become efficient managers.
- The scholarship regarding best coping strategies to ensure work –life balance needs to be spread among the women managers and proper sensitisation is required to enable them accept the appropriate strategies.
- Gender Studies components must be included in school and university curriculum for generating awareness among youngsters on the relevance of gender equality, especially related to women's economic participation and leadership in all spheres of life.

6.2.3 Government and Social Responsibilities

- Provide maternity leave of 2 years duration for all women employees.
- Parents to provide training to children to be independent from early childhood onwards.
- All efforts at individual and collective levels to be augmented to end up the gender division of labour whereby women's active participation in the economy will be facilitated. A total change in the mindset of men and women is to be brought about to facilitate acceptance of women in managerial and decision making positions.
- Media must take up campaigns on equal parenting and equal sharing of household chores as a means for ensuring peace, harmony and happiness of all family members.
- Religion was found to be a major classificatory variable with its strong influence on socialisation, gender role perception and discourses on gender division of labour. In the present study significant difference was found in the extent of role conflict, nature of family responsibilities, extent of family support and the nature of challenges faced by women managers belonging to the different religious communities. Hence religions must take a proactive role in bringing about progressive mindsets among the masses, both men and women,

so that gender division of labour that places an unfair burden on women could be eliminated, democratic relationships in families could be promoted, women's talents and capabilities could be accepted and respected in families and workplaces and above all the need for women's leadership in every sphere of life could be recognized and promoted in the society.

6.2.4 Administrative Responsibilities

- Ladies rest room must be ensured in all centres of higher learning with proper facilities for rest in case of any health problems.
- Ensure that gender friendly canteens that provide healthy food are available for women near higher education institutions.
- Ensure the institution of crèches near colleges and universities to provide best child care so that working women at the younger age can ensure their children's safety and avoid unnecessary breaks in career required for child care.
- Preference must be given to women while allocating institutional residence facilities among employees.
- Yoga, meditation and counseling sessions that facilitate stress management to be organized for women employees in higher education institutions.

- Regular health check-ups and free medical aid must be provided to women employees.
- In the age of ICT, flexible timings and facilities to work from home must be provided to young mothers and those who are compelled to take up old age care in a manner that won't disturb normal office functioning.
- Internal Complaints Committees must be effectively instituted in higher education institutions so as to ensure gender friendly campuses.

6.3 SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Dual role conflict of women managers is a phenomenon existing in the Kerala society and it continues to be a major problem unresolved till date. It is an important area of research with new dimensions of conflict at work and family fronts. The present study is confined to women managers in higher education in the three Universities in Kerala, even though they represent faculties from all around the state. The study can be extended to other Universities also to get a wider knowledge in the field.

Only married women are included in the present study. Problems of unmarried women managers also need to be studied in detail.

Comparison of the role conflict of male and female managers in the same work field will give a better picture of the enigma of working women

and especially women managers. Comparison of the role conflict experienced by male and female managers in higher education can also be done.

Dual role conflict of women workers in the unorganised sectors and in other organised sectors need to be studied. The study can be extended to women managers and executives in corporate sectors also.

Studies on coping strategies used by women managers may be conducted on a wider level with emphasis on well-being of women. Innovative studies for reducing stress level of women managers also need to be conducted so that scholarly works on the entire working women population will add to the available literature on women's issues.