



Women into Police Profession: A Sociological Study of ‘Role Conflict’ And ‘Gender Discrimination’

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Abstract: This study is examined the Merton’s concept ‘Role Conflict’ among Women Police, who are discharging their duty in the Gurugram District of Haryana. This is field based primary study and used descriptive-explorative research design. The nature of study is both qualitative and quantitative. There were about 150 policewomen selected for this study and using Interview Schedule, data has been collected. There were several Focus Group Discussion (FGD) organized for knowing their opinion at depth. The field area for present study was chosen in Gurugram through random techniques. The selected respondents were posted at different location of workplace and ranked differential into Police Organization. It was found that being policewomen that "they have to face conflict between the roles assigned to them, namely ‘occupational role being a policewoman’ and ‘household role being a female’. Such role-conflict is occurring due to inability to perform household responsibility, while discharging duty at workplace. The inability can be observed into several occasions and events. Although, this study has limitation that 'it not able to make a distinction between roles, which one role would supersede to other? Gender Discrimination is also another aspect lived by Women Police into this profession.

Keyword: Social Functions, Caring and Rearing, Role-Conflict, Police Profession, Discrimination.

I. Introduction

To understand about the ‘role conflict’ among employed individual, is an inevitable and important subject matter of ‘Sociological Discourse’. It is common to observe role conflict among the employed individual (Dick & Cassell,2004). Women’s intrusion into education and autonomy to profess employment has given opportunity to enter into the work force for personal satisfaction, along with enhance income in family. There is drastic change took place into ‘Gender Roles’ (Pope & Pope,1986), females who were engaged into ‘household roles’, now entering in the labour and working into professional roles. While working into variety of profession, police in particular, women are facing challenges while performing those roles. It is evident by Krishnamurthy (1996), that “while playing several roles simultaneously with inadequate time and energy every so often creates conflicts in the role performance of working women”. Earlier there was a notion that men can only be fit for the role of strength, power, and defense (Ghosh,1981). There was no recognition given to women in the form of protecting the society, they were considered as inferior, weak, and polite. The stereotype exists in the society, that makes division of work based on the gender of individual. The duty of protecting someone is a matter of strength and power that only symbolize to male only.

In this paper, an attempt has been made to explore about ‘How the multiplicity into familial and professional roles are creating conflicts among women who working into police organization?’. This paper also tries to investigate ‘How these women are trying to balance their ‘domestic/private’ roles and ‘professional’ roles?’. It is true that women in police are expected to play an entirely different role as compared to any other profession. Natarajan (1996a, 1996b) argued that, Women Police are concerned in performing an ‘integrated role’ (performance of same duties as men), rather than following the traditional role (specialized duties) and modified role (same duties except in violent situations).

II. Role Conflict Among Policewomen:

Merton (1968) defined Role Conflict that it is where incompatible expectations are held explain in his Role Set. According to Parsons (1951) Role Conflict “is the exposure of the actor to the conflicting sets of legitimized role expectations that complete fulfilment of both is realistically impossible”. While interpreting the role of a female as Policewomen, there is a dichotomy occurred between ‘what a female supposes to do work and what she performing as a Policewoman’ (Ghosh,1981). In a patriarchal community, there is sharp division of work being made between men and women. According to such ‘sexual division of work’, men are considered as breadwinner of family, while a woman has to performing duty like caring of children, cooking, cleaning etc. She never supposed to work outside from the family in the public domain. There is an unavoidable question raised that ‘What would be happen when a female work outside the family into a public domain that is considered ‘men space’ and performing the duty that was earlier performed mostly by male only?’ Such instances lead to strain into the community, and conflict took place in the roles that were designated by the community for the males and females.

For the policewomen, sometimes it may come down to leave her police career to save her marriage. Police profession is an incredibly old organization, and it condones to a strongly masculine work culture (Bell,1982; Hiremath,2005). The image of police force is also constructed in a ‘machismo’ and ‘valor’ form. The imaginative structure about a policeman, we have that “He has a prominent moustache, serious and grim expression, loud and coarse voice, tall and muscular, aggressive body language, and who does not listen rather put orders.” This is the ‘stereotypical image’ that the community have created through shared consciousness. While the role of women to bear children, cleaning house, cooking food etc. They were seen inferior, passive, loving i.e., attributes of femininity (Mirkin,1984). Thus, their work balance between family and workplace get imbalance and bring challenges for women.

III. Gender Discrimination with Policewomen:

Gender Discrimination is another aspect for the concern of policewomen. It is common aspect that being experienced by every policewoman in multiple ways in their day-to-day life. Sahgal (2007) stated that “The pervasiveness of workplace gender differences influences hiring practices, salaries and career growth opportunities for women. Such Gender based differences are perceived to be much greater in male dominated professions like the police (p.135).” Such discrimination can be observed via following dimension:

1. Negative attitude towards policewomen by the family, community and the ‘male officials’(Balkin,1988). In contrast to this, male police personal received more respect and privileges while entering into police force.
2. Differential allocation of task and duties to male and female.
3. Less proximity to rewards, recognition, and appraisal to the policemen for same kind of task performed by male police personal (Tripathi,2020; Rani,1976).
4. Lesser job stratification among policewomen than the policeman.
5. Less promotional avenue to female police officials to reach higher post than the male.
6. Sexual Harassment, abusive behaviour at workplace by senior officials, co-worker, and senior official of Police Department.

IV. Field Area and Research Methodology:

The Gurugram district of Haryana, had been purposively selected for field work. A sample of 150 respondents was drawn from the 275 universe of women police personnel of different ranks. Women police are selected randomly from police department of various wings (Traffic, Control Room etc.). In the District Gurugram for example, Women’s Police Station, Districts Police Lines, Police Control Room, Women Police Stations etc. The data has been collected through interview schedule for better response from the policewomen. Interview Schedule consists set of question which are open ended as well as close ended, is used for collecting information. Before operationalized the interview schedule, a pilot study was also conducted to be identify the associated shortcoming in the designed interviews and certain minor modification being made.

Table 1 Perception of Community towards Policewomen.

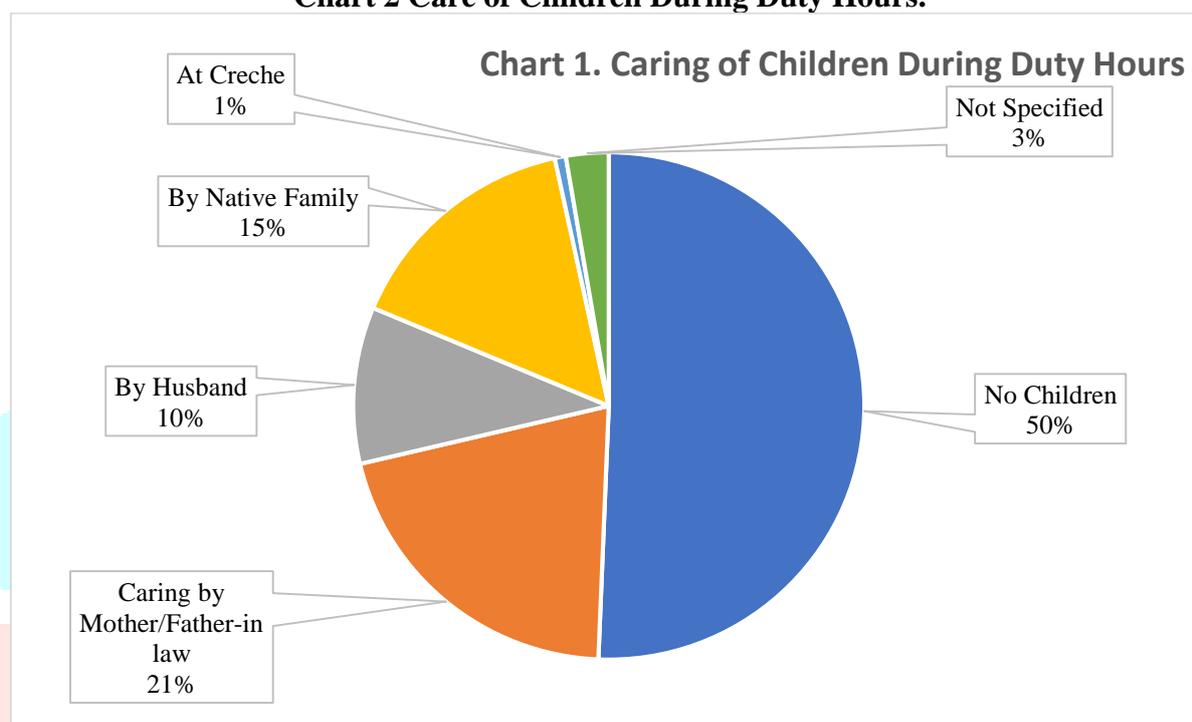
Categories of Women Police	Perception of Community towards Women Police				
	Very Respectable	Moderate	Remain Natural	Not Respectable	Total
Constable	-	15 (10.00)	39 (26.00)	25 (16.67)	79 (52.67)
Head Constable	-	9 (6.00)	14 (9.34)	7 (4.67)	30 (20.00)
Assistant Sub-Inspector	5 (3.34)	5 (3.34)	9 (6.00)	3 (2.00)	22 (14.67)
Sub-Inspector	2 (1.34)	4 (2.67)	5 (3.34)	4 (2.67)	15 (10.00)
Inspector/Station house officer	-	2 (1.34)	2 (1.34)	-	4 (2.67)
Total	7 (4.67)	35 (23.34)	69 (46.00)	39 (26.00)	150 (100)

*Figure inside the bracket shown Percentage of the total Respondents.

It is observed from the Table 1 that there are only a few respondents i.e., 4.67 percent who find that community people provide or view them with respect because of their job. Around are fourth of the respondents are feed that they find the attitude of community towards them as moderate. About 46 percent of respondents agreed on that fact that community members are neutral for showing respect for their job. There are 26 percent of the respondents who find that community members have a disrespect towards them being a Policewomen and the kind of task they are performing. There can be variation seen regarding the rank wise of the respondents as shown in (Table 1)

The policewomen (also most working mothers), who have children experience a dilemma. That what roles she should prefer being a mother or being a policewoman. Oakley (1974) argued that “Employed mothers often feel guilty. They feel inadequate, and they worry about whether they are doing the best for their children” (p. 211). The desire to spend time with their children is more difficult for police mothers, this is because due to repeatedly changing shifts duties and compulsory overtime work. Unmarried women on the police force who choose to be single or married women who do not want children, may be viewed as deviant (Veevers,1977). The women who do not have children are taunted and ridiculed in the family as well as in the society and often results in conflict. There is lot of pressure on women to have an experience of motherhood.

Chart 2 Care of Children During Duty Hours.



***Figure inside the bracket shown Percentage of the total Respondents.**

From Chart 2, There are 50 percent who of respondents did not have children because either they are unmarried or did not decide to have their children after they got married. Apart from this, there are 21 percent of the respondents who reported that their children are looked after by their Father-in-Law and Mother-in-Law (see table 8.3). These respondents have stated that she leaves her children at the marital house to be cared by the marital family members. It helps them to work outside of their marital house and stay there for long duration of time. It is practically difficult for them to look after their children during duty hours of their job. 15 percent of the respondents stated that their children got care from the native family, as their children are staying with the native family house from birth and constantly cared by them (Mangaleswaran,2012).

In such situation, native families are offering support to their married daughter who is engaged in Police as their career. 10 percent of respondents stated that they are getting assistance from husband for caring of children at the time when they are performing duty hour. There is only one respondent who stated that their children are being cared for at Creche during their duty hours (**Chart 2**). Through all this instances, it is evident that a policewoman faced dilemma between what she can do as a Policewomen and what the community has expectation from her as a female. The inability to perform expected gender role leads to her in a situation of role conflict.

A Sub-Inspector Policewomen (34 Years) reported the following sentence:

“I am managing my duty at workplace. But now it become complex to maintain my family life...” (feeling sad)

Table 2 Participation in Social Function.

Categories of Women Police	Participation in Social Function			
	Always Attend	Seldom Attend	Depends on Situation	Total
Constable	-	39 (26.01)	40 (26.67)	79 (52.67)
Head Constable	1 (0.67)	13 (8.67)	16 (10.67)	30 (2.00)
Assistant Sub-Inspector	1 (0.67)	13 (8.67)	8 (5.34)	22 (14.67)
Sub-Inspector	-	8 (5.34)	7 (4.67)	15 (10.00)
Inspector/Station house officer	-	3 (2.00)	1 (0.67)	4 (2.67)
Total	2 (1.34)	76 (50.67)	72 (48.00)	150 (100)

*Figure inside the bracket shown Percentage of the total Respondents.

It is observed from table 2 that there is variation in attending various social functions such as birth ceremony, marriage ceremony etc. It is difficult for the women police to combine her work and social functions. She has to perform many social roles at home. Social Functions have imperative role in the society. These social functions performed by the members by following certain rules and obligations. A Policewoman, due to her nature of work, may have to skip all these social functions happening in her social circle and kinship network. Being a female, it is necessary for her to be active performer during social functions. Such roles are obligatory in nature, if any female avoid such social functions it is being considered as deviant.

Table 3 Celebration of festivals and Rituals with the family members.

Categories of Women Police	Celebration of Festivals and Rituals with Yours Family Members			
	Always celebrate	Seldom celebrate	Depends on Situation	Total
Constable	-	36 (24.01)	43 (28.67)	79 (52.67)
Head Constable	-	14 (9.34)	16 (10.67)	30 (20.00)
Assistant Sub-Inspector	1 (0.67)	13 (8.67)	8 (5.34)	22 (14.67)
Sub-Inspector	-	7 (4.67)	8 (5.34)	15 (10.00)
Inspector/Station house officer	1 (0.67)	-	3 (2.00)	4 (2.67)
Total	2 (1.34)	70 (40.67)	78 (52.00)	150 (100)

From Table-3, depicts that 52 percent of the women replied that the possibility of being a part of celebration of various festivals such as Holi, Diwali etc. and other rituals, depends on the circumstance and situation. There are only 2 percent who reported that they never miss any celebrations and rituals. The dichotomy exists what the role a policewoman 'perform' and what she was supposed to do for being a female as well. The Brahmanical patriarchy keeps female insubordination to male, and certain

responsibility and tasks to them. Womanhood carries certain task that are to be performed to make their identity as 'good woman', while deviant from such responsibilities lead to metaphorized as 'bad woman'.

Table-4 shows opinions of women police about insecurity About Marital relation

Categories of Women Police	Insecurity About Marital Relation				Total
	Yes	No	Cannot Say Anything	Currently Unmarried	
Constable	13 (8.70)	6 (4.00)	1 (0.70)	59 (39.30)	79 (52.70)
Head Constable	11 (7.30)	5 (3.30)	3 (2.00)	11 (7.30)	30 (20.00)
Assistant Sub-Inspector	7 (4.70)	7 (4.70)	5 (3.30)	3 (2.00)	22 (14.70)
Sub-Inspector	5 (3.30)	4 (2.70)	6 (4.00)	-	15 (10.00)
Inspector/SHO	2 (1.30)	1 (0.70)	1 (0.70)	-	4 (2.70)
Total	38 (25.30)	23 (15.30)	16 (10.70)	73 (48.70)	150 (100.00)

From table 4, It is observed that there are 25.30 percent of policewomen insecure about their marital relationship with their husband. This is because the kind of duties and tasks they are performing at workplace being a police official. These policewomen can do other household activities and not able to not give adequate time to their spouse and children. About 15.30 percent of policewomen who believed that they are not insecure for their marital relationship with spouse. About 10.70 percent of policewomen who not said anything about this. There are about 48.79 percent of policewomen who are unmarried and not worrying about this. The level of insecurity in marital changed along with rank into Police Department as shown in Table 4.

Table 5 shows the opinions about the Discrimination at Workplace by Women Police.

Categories of the Women Police	Discrimination at Workplace			Total
	There is a discrimination	No Discrimination	Cannot Say	
Constable	29 (19.34)	23 (15.34)	27 (18.00)	79 (52.67)
Head Constable	17 (11.34)	4 (2.67)	9 (6.00)	30 (20.00)
Assistant Sub-Inspector	7 (4.67)	3 (2.00)	12 (8.00)	22 (14.67)
Sub-Inspector	1 (0.67)	9 (6.00)	5 (3.34)	15 (10.00)
Inspector/Station house officer	1 (0.67)	2 (1.34)	1 (0.67)	4 (2.67)
Total	55 (36.67)	41 (27.34)	54 (36.00)	150 (100)

*Figure inside the bracket shown Percentage of the total Respondents.

From table 5, it is seen that there are 36.67 percent of the women who finds that they are being discriminated as a female at the workplace. They observed that they are seen as inferior at the workplace. Their male colleagues think that they are not suitable for this profession. The discrimination at workplace occurred in the form of inequality in allocation of type of duty, restriction for the inter-communication with others, marginalize while take some suggestion on certain issues. 27.34 percent of the respondents find that they are not feeling any kind of discrimination at their workplace. A significant portion of respondent did not respond on this

issue. They are either hiding the truth or ignoring this issue of discrimination at workplace. The feeling of discrimination varied along with rank wise in the Police Department which is shown in **Table-5**.

V. Conclusion:

It can be concluded from this paper that there is prevalence of the role conflict among the Policewomen, that they have to experiences while performing their duty at workplace. There are 26 percent of the respondents who find that community members have a disrespect towards them being a Policewomen and the kind of task they are performing. About 52 percent of the women replied that the possibility of being a part of celebration of various festivals such as Holi, Diwali etc. and other rituals, depends on the circumstance and situation. The inability to perform expected gender role leads to her in a situation of role conflict. In such situation, they have to face dilemma between 'expected role' and 'performing role'.

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