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**AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF ROLE CONFLICT AND ADJUSTMENT
PROBLEMS AMONG WOMEN POLICE IN ASSAM**

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Abstract:

Police work involved lots of physical work and frequent physical mobility at different places. As being a police woman she has some responsibility towards her work and society side by side towards her family members and there she faces role conflict in maintaining an equal balance between them. This paper examines what kind of role conflict and adjustment problems faces by women in police profession. The study has covered about 371 samples covering from the rank of CONST. to INSPR which were purposefully selected from nine important districts of Brahmaputra Valley of Assam, India. The data has collected both from primary and secondary sources.

Key words: Role conflict, women police, family, responsibility,

Introduction:

The entry of women in the traditionally considered masculine job of police is strongly felt due to the following reasons such as – a) with the rise in the number of women accused, criminals and victims of crimes and, b) to strengthen the quality of policing by providing a human face policing and maintaining a police station.

After independence, not only the crime and violence against women are significantly increasing in India but, also there is significant increase in the number of women criminals. In Assam, the practices such as dowry deaths, bride burning, child marriage, and prostitution all these were not rampant like the other parts of India. But the present scenario has been changed. In 2005, Assam became topped with regard to list of crimes against women in North-East India with 6,027 cases was registered in police, in 2006, 6,801 and in 2010, total 11,197 cases of crime against women were registered in Assam Police. (http://assampolice.com/crimes_women.html). By keeping in view the increasing rate of crime against women and women criminals the number of women police personnel in Assam Police Force is not increasing. In Assam, women first entered into police profession in 1969. In 1993, a separate police station was constituted at Panbazar, Guwahati. This is the one and only women police station in Assam. In 01-01-2003, the number of women police personnel in Assam was 332, and as on 01-01-2010, the number of women police in Assam was 828 (Source - IGP office, Ulubari, Guwahati).

Women's entire life is supposed to be spent in maintaining and sustaining the family physically; emotionally and psychologically. While working as a police, women need to modify traditional social and psychological set up created by society to suit and to adopt policing work. At the same time, they have to care for their "so called" natural, inheriting qualities (*Deshpande, 2007*). So, in that sense a woman police faces many challenges and more work-family conflict in fulfilling both the traditional expectations and maintaining professional duties and responsibility equally. She has to perform her multiple role side by side by avoiding the interference of one role to the other. Higgins, *et al.* (1994), in a comparative study of working women and men, stated that in so far as women are concerned, the work-to-family and family-to-work interference is greater than for men. Work and family roles occur sequentially for men while they are simultaneous for women. Work and family roles are independent choices for men and, therefore, men do not face conflict (*Dibenedetto and Title, 1990*).

In this paper an attempt has been made to provide a lucid picture of women police personnel with regard to their role conflict and adjustment problems in maintaining family as well as their professional life.

Objectives of the study:

(a) To interpret the problems of adjustment and role conflict among women police in maintaining family as well as their professional life.

(b) To provide some possible measures to minimize the problems of women police personnel in playing their role significantly.

Methodology:

The study is based on the women police personnel's working and deployed under DEF i.e. District Executive Force of the selected nine districts of Brahmaputra valley of Assam viz, Guwahati (Kamrup Metro), Kamrup (rural), Darrang, Sonitpur, Lakhimpur, Golaghat, Sivasagar, Dibrugarh and Tinsukia. These districts were purposefully selected by keeping in view the rate of crime against women and women criminals; to represent the northern bank as well as southern bank of the river Brahmaputra; and to represent the lower and upper parts of the administrative division of Assam. The field of the study constitutes all the police stations, district head quarters i.e., SP's office, district court, police reserve office of the above mentioned districts of Brahmaputra valley of Assam. The respondents of the study constituted all the permanently employed women police personnel occupied different ranks and deployed in different fields under the nine districts of Assam. The respondents of the study were selected through survey method. As on 01-01-2010, there was total 371 women police personnel deployed in these nine districts of Brahmaputra valley of Assam and all of them were purposefully selected for the study. The data for the study were collected from the primary as well as secondary sources. The primary data were collected through personal interview with the respondents with the help of interview schedule and observation method.

Background of the respondents:

The findings revealed that out of 371 respondent majorities (84.09%) of them belonged to the lower rank i.e. the rank of CONST. While, only one respondent belonged to the higher rank of INSPR. Moreover, the percentage of the women police belonged to the rank of SI and ASI also consisted only 3.50% and 1.62% respectively.

Regarding personal background of the respondents the study reveals that out of 371 respondent majorities (72.51%) of them were married, 13.21% were unmarried, 10.24% were widowed and 4.04% were divorce. Moreover, out of 322 married, divorce and widowed respondents 309 had children. Besides this, majority consisting 78.97% of them belonged to the nuclear family, while 21.02% of them belonged to the joint family.

With regard to their educational qualification the study reveals that 54.44% were under matriculate, whereas 29.91% of them matriculate, 9.70% were H.S passed, 5.39% and 0.54% were graduate and post-graduate respectively.

Data analysis and results:

Overloaded duties and problems of women police in managing family life

In police job the works of the women police like their male counterparts involves field work, frequent physical mobility at different places, which is often inconvenient and contrary to the traditional norms of seclusion for women. There is

round the clock duty where no regular work timing and holidays. Such constraints interfere with the routine household chores (Singh, 2007). The findings reflected that majority of the respondents consisting about 57.41% did not face any problems in managing their family life when they called for 24 hours duty. They were of the view that they somehow manage their family life and did not want to mix up the family and professional life together. They stated that, 'a woman police should possess the capacity to manage their family life as it is a tough profession and not like the other job'. However, the respondents who expressed such view major proportion of them consisting 54.72 % (out of 57.41% that expressed 'no') lived in the quarter and barracks which were near to their workplace. It is therefore one of the important reason for which they did not face any problems in managing family life when they called for 24 hours duty.

Women police and their sincerity and punctuality at workplace:

As being police women she not only bears stress regarding her household works but also she has the constant pressure for maintaining punctuality and discipline at workplace. So, in order to reveal whether they could maintain well their punctuality and discipline at workplace after performing their daily households tasks a question was asked to them that, "Did you get late in arriving office at time?" The data reflects that the proportion of respondents who expressed 'no' (i.e. 68.46%) in this regard is significant because, out of 68.46% of such respondents 45.55% lived in quarter and 9.2% lived in barracks which were located near to their workplace. But at the same time, the respondents who answered negatively [(yes) 9.97% + 21.56 % (*sometimes*) = 31.54%)] it did not signify that they were not punctual at their workplace. As they were staying in their own and some of them in rented house which were located far away from their workplace they face sometimes problems in maintaining sincerity and punctuality at workplace. Basically, the respondents those who were living in city areas like Guwahati they faces much problems during the rainy season as it creates artificial flood in the city.

Problems in taking care of the children:

The present study reveals that out of 309 respondents (including married, widowed and divorce who had child /children) 22.97% of the respondents had stated that there was nobody to take care of their children when they were at workplace whereas, 15.21% had stated that their child/children were matured enough to take care of themselves. Again, 13.92% of the married respondents had mentioned about their husbands and 21.35% of respondents had stated the names of their in-laws in this regard. The respondents who had stated this they basically belonged to the joint family. Moreover, 10.35% of the respondents stated that sometimes their neighbors helped them to look after their children.

In joint family due to presence of many members in the family a working women gets some relief that there are other members to take proper care of their child/children. Whereas, in nuclear family either she has to depend on a servant, or sometimes on her husband, relatives or neighbors.

Could give sufficient time to children? :

In most of the societies the care of the infants and children is associated with the women folk especially with the mother. And when mother takes up employment outside the home, the care of children especially the infants becomes a problem if there is no other female in the household (Deshpande, 2007). In order to know whether the respondents of the present study could give sufficient time to their child/children a question was asked to them. Their findings reflected that 40.13% expressed 'no' and 40.77% had express not always' in this regard, while; only 19.1% of them were able to give sufficient time to their child/children.

Problems in taking care of the teaching and learning of their children:

Generally, every parent wishes more achievement and success in the life of their children. In the present age, competition in every field is significantly increasing. All most, all the parents are now conscious to provide better education to their children. And those who are financially sound they give admission to their children in well known schools and other higher educational institutions. Regarding the education of their children a question was asked to them that, 'Who taught their child/children?' Their findings revealed that a significant proportion of the respondents children consisting about 53.4% of them study by themselves. While only, 7.12% of them however managed time because out of 7.12%, 4.53% had two children, 1.62% had one and only 0.97% had three children. In other words, we can also say that the respondents who had three and more than three children they face much difficulty in looking after the teaching of their children.

During face to face interview with the respondents an important fact was revealed with regard to their children's education. Many of the married, widowed and divorce respondents stated that, normally the children's of police personnel could not show good results in educational field. Due to the pressure of their work and tight working schedule they were unable to give proper attention towards the education of their children. They again stated, "Sometimes we blame ourselves when they show very poor performance in their exam results".

Feeling of negligence towards the children:

A police woman bears constant pressure of their professional work. So, obviously as being a mother she will blame herself as irresponsible if their children will fail to make them as an independent and good human being. To reveal further information from the married, widowed and divorce respondents a question was asked to them that, "Do you feel that your children have been neglected due to your work?" The findings showed that about 60.2% expressed their negligence towards their children's. They stated that specially during the time of children's examination they as being mother could not take proper care of their studies and nutrition. And especially during that period of time they got very upset.

Besides this, 31.1% stated that they did not feel any negligence towards their children. It is because out of 31.1% about 22.0% belonged to the joint family where the other members took proper care of their children. And, the remaining 9.1% had matured sons and daughters who can take care of themselves and their family.

The tabulation was also done according to the number of children of the respondents to examine which category of respondent felt more negligence towards their children. It is observed that the respondents who had one and two children they did not feel negligence to their children due to their pressure of work. While, against this 38.51% of the respondents had three children and out of 38.51%, 33.33% had expressed their feeling of negligence. And, 18.12% had more than three children and out of 18.12%, about 10.35% had expressed the feeling of negligence.

Availability of crèche facility for women police near to their work place:

Performance of duty at odd time in necessary situation, force a police woman to encounter stress and tensions with regard to their small child/children. And these stress and tension would create obstacles in smoothly performing their duty. In order to decrease these problems in all the national conferences (1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th) for women police the availability of crèche facility near to their work place has given much emphasis. The findings of the present study revealed that majority of the respondents consisting 86.02% of them gave positive reply on that. According to them, the availability of creche facility would help to minimize their stress and tensions regarding their small child/children. They were of the view that the availability of such facility would help them to perform their duty without any mental pressure and depression.

Intension to change the present job in future:

By taking in to consideration about their pressure of workload and family responsibility another question was asked to them that, "Do you have any intension to change the present job in future?" Their findings revealed that about 2.43% of the respondents expressed 'yes' in this regard. And out of 2.43%, the married respondents constituted 1.1% while the unmarried constituted about 1.35%. The respondents who had express (2.43%) the intension to change the present job; about 0.26% of the married had stated the reason of not suiting to their temperament. While, 0.81% of the married had stated two reasons viz., 'hours of working' and 'lack of adjustment'. Again, 0.81% of the unmarried had stated 'bossism' and 0.54% had stated that it does not suit to their temperament. However, majority of the respondents consisting about 87.87% did not have any intension to change the present job in future.

Moreover, 9.70% of the respondents did not give any comment on that. During the course of interview it was observed from their facial expression and gestures that they had also the intension to change the present job. But they hesitated to express due to several factors such as fear from their superior officers, their growing age, their poor educational qualification etc.

Preference of women police with regard to same profession of the spouse: Majority of the respondents consisting about 54.95% did not want the same profession of their husband. Out of 54.95%, the married constituted 48.65%, the unmarried and divorce constituted about 5.41% and 0.90% respectively. The married respondents (48.65%) were of the view that if both husband and wife would spend busy life than proper care and attention of their children would not be possible. But against this, a significant percentage of the unmarried (6.91% out of total 14.71%) and divorce respondents (2.10% out of total 4.50% of the divorce) expressed positive reply with regard to the same profession of their husbands. They expressed the view that, in police job they had to frequently perform late night duty. So, if the husband were in the same profession then they would understand their nature of work and duty very well. And when there were the absence of such understanding arises then it would lead to create gap between the spouses for which conflict and family disputes will take place.

Moral support of the women police and their family: Generally, a man does not have to answer or face questions when he comes late at night. But a woman has to face lots of questions when she comes late at night. In this profession a woman has to work at odd time also when the necessary situation arises. They have to work under heavy strain and pressure. So, it is essential that their family members especially their husband should provide moral and emotional support to their wife. Such supports are very essential because it gives them mental spirit to work effectively in their job. The study reflects that 35.31% of the respondents got moral support from their own 'self' and out of that the married constitute 22.64% (out of total 72.51% of them), unmarried 5.4% (out of 13.21% of them), widowed 5.12% (out of 10.24% of them) and the divorce respondents constitute 2.15% (out of 4.04% of them).

Again, 9.97% of the married respondent had stated that, they got moral support from their 'husband' and 'self', while, 12.93% of the respondents stated the name of their parents and others that includes their relatives, brothers, sisters etc. Besides this, 11.05% of them had stated that, their parents gave them support in working in such a stressful job. However, 10.78% stated that the other members such as their relatives, brothers, sisters etc. gives them moral support while, only 6.74% of the respondents including married (5.66%) and widowed (1.1%) had stated the moral support of their in laws. From the above discussion it is evident that majority of the women police personnel were working under heavy pressure. They were facing stress in fulfilling their dual roles. Specially, the married, widowed and divorce respondents encounters much problem with regard to performing dual role then the unmarried ones.

Problems of women police in performing responsibility for their children:

Like all other mothers women police have to play the role of a responsible mother. She has the caretaking responsibility to socialize their children and for that she has to give sufficient time for them. The responsibility of imparting primary education to the child by inculcating norms and values of the society is in the hand of a mother. But for a woman police

it is a very difficult task due to their nature of work. Women police have to face several problems in performing the responsibility towards their children.

Conclusion: Traditionally in our society women are assigned special responsibility for the maintenance of the family in specific and society at large. In our patriarchal society, the women folk supposed to be spent their entire life in the management of different needs and expectation of the family members. Due to several socio-economic and cultural forces the conditions of women gradually improve and they are now entering into the field of paid work. But for a large section of society expectations from the female remain same as it was expected in the traditional society. Now the situation is that the women who are engaged in paid job they have to give their time for their professional as well as for maintaining and sustaining the family physically; emotionally and psychologically. Though they manage all these responsibilities somehow with their hard labor and sacrifice, but in profession like police it cannot be expected.

Keeping in view this fact, an inquiry was made to understand how the women police have handled their professional and family responsibility at the same time. Role conflict is obvious in such situations. They were asked many questions to reveal this fact such as how they have distributed the time for family and work; whether they have to perform the household activities or not before going and after coming from work; how they have managed the responsibility towards family when they call for 24 hours duty; whether they have to face more problems than the male counterparts in handling such situation; whether they are sincere and punctual or not in their workplace; how they have taken care of their children's education and other needs of their children in spite of busy schedule; whether they have to neglect their family members due to work load etc. Besides these quarries they were asked regarding the selection of spouse; continuity of their jobs and transfer matters; problems in maintenance of their social relationship etc. All these quarries were made to have an interpretation of the problems of adjustment in job and family life of the women police.

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