

ROLE CONFLICT OF WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS IN ASSAM

R.K. Talukdar¹ & Ms. Monica Bannerjee²

The term 'role' can be defined as a set of expectations applied to the incumbent of a particular position by the incumbent and by role senders within and beyond an organisation's boundaries (Neiman and Hughes, 1951; Gross *et al.*, 1958; Barton, 1965). It is for the role incumbent of a particular position to perform on a given role without experiencing role stress and strain. Kahn *et al.*, (1964) referred to role conflict as the situation in which individuals frequently may be required to play two or more roles which are in conflict with each other. Role conflict has been defined by Sell *et al.* (1981) as incongruity of expectations associated with a role. The types of role conflict identified by Sell *et al.* are : (a) intra sender role conflict-incompatible expectations from a single role sender; (b) inter sender role conflict-expectations from one role sender which are incompatible with those from another role sender; (c) person role conflict-incompatibility between the expectations otherwise associated with his/her position; (d) inter role conflict-role pressures stemming from one position incompatible with the role pressures arising from a different position; and (e) role overload-expecting the role incumbent to engage in several role behaviours, within too short a time period.

In the present study, role conflict has been defined as those situations confronting a woman entrepreneur where she has to play two more roles which conflict with each other or role pressures stemming from one position (entrepreneurs) becomes incompatible with role pressures stemming from different positions (as housewife, mother, daughter-in-law, daughter etc.).

A woman's role refers to the way she is expected to behave in certain situations. Indian women find it increasingly difficult to adjust themselves to the dual role that they have to play as traditional housewives and compete with men in the field of business and industry (Azad, 1989). Role conflict is reportedly high among housewives with part time employment outside the home (Hall and Gorden, 1973). This often leads to a conflict situation where the negative feeling of not being able to cope with dual role playing starts developing among them. The present study has been undertaken to measure this role conflict, if any, among the women entrepreneurs in Assam and to determine its effect on their extent of entrepreneurship.

METHODOLOGY :

The study was conducted in four purposively selected districts of Assam-Kamrup, Sonitpur, Jorhat and Dibrugarh having more number of women entrepreneurs. Women running agricultural enterprises like nursery raising, cut flowers raising and potted plants raising were purposively selected owing to the vast potential of these units for flourishing in the state. Out of 80 such women entrepreneurs, 60 of them were selected randomly as respondents. Data were collected by personal interview technique with help of questionnaire. The frequency, percentages, mean, coefficient of variance, correlation and regression statistics were used to analyse and draw conclusions from the data.

Measurement of Role Conflict : For measuring the 'Role conflict' among women entrepreneurs, as defined before, the self report questionnaire developed by Rizzo *et al.* (1970) was used in this study. To suit the purpose, the statements (22) were slightly modified after administering with summated rating technique and testing reliability-validity of the scale. The

1. Prof. & Head, 2. Ph.D. Scholar, Deptt. Extn. Edu. AAU Jorhat. Assam.

total possible score which a respondent could get ranged from 0 to 88.

Other Independent Variables and their Measurement : After a thorough review of literature on profile of women entrepreneurs and discussions with behavioural scientists, some other socio-economic and psychological factors were also selected as independent variables. The measurement indicators and techniques used to measure these independent variables are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Operational definitions and measurement techniques of selected independent variables

Sl. No.	Variable	Indicator	Measurement technique	Scoring technique
1.	Total Annual Income of the family	Total earnings of family members from all sources in a period of one year	Questionnaire	1 score for each Rs, 1,000-00 (rounded off)
2.	Job. Involvement	Psychological identification with the enterprise (Lodahl and kejner, 1965)	Job involvement scale (Lodahl and Kejner, 1965 : Kalita, 1991)	Maximum score=68 Minimum score = 0
3.	Family type	Nuclear/Joint	Questionnaire	—
4.	Achievement motivation	Concern to excel in ones own field	Scale developed r tt = 0-91	Maximum score=80 Minimum score = 0

Measurement of Extent of Entrepreneurship : Extent of entrepreneurship was operationalized as extent of qualitative and innovative activities carried out by a women entrepreneur in her respective enterprise to increase production spontaneously where her activities are also a manifestation of internal mental events and processes like ideas (knowledge) and attitude. These 'activities' were taken as dimensions on which the respondents were measured. The extent of entrepreneurship was calculated as the percent of total sum of scores obtained by the respondent on each of the selected dimension. These dimensions were knowledge about the enterprise (production operations), attitude towards the enterprise, reason for venturing into entrepreneurship, market strategy adopted (in terms of distribution channel, consumer segmentation, price fixing criteria), forward integration (in terms of promotional activities and special arrangements), need for achievement, need for influencing others, need for independence, risk taking calculation, problem recognition ability, managerial ability, decision making ability and position assigned to the enterprise in life.

On the basis of scores obtained under 'extent of entrepreneurship' by the respondents, the top 25-00 per cent and bottom 25-00 per cent were identified and put separately under HIGH (high extent of entrepreneurship) and LOW (low extent of entrepreneurship) groups, respectively. After the respondents were categorized as HIGH (top 25-00%) and Low (bottom 25-00%), the individual scores on various socio-economic and psychological characteristics, taken as independent variables, were computed against the individual scores on extent of entrepreneurship of HIGH and LOW groups and the dominant characteristics in the two groups were identified.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION :

Role conflict among women entrepreneurs : Table 2 shows the distribution of respondents according to their role conflict.

Table 2. Distribution of respondents according to their role conflict

Characteristic	Category	Score range	Frequency	Percentage	
Role Conflict as an Entrepreneur	Less	21-29	33	55.00	$\bar{X} = 29.13$ C. V = 19.05
	Moderate	30-35	15	25.00	
	More	36-41	12	20.00	

n = 60

The data reveals that a substantial majority (55.00%) fell under the 'less' category of role conflict. The mean role conflict was 29.13 which suggests that respondents on an average faced less conflict in their role as entrepreneurs. The coefficient of variance was found to be low (19.05) which suggests that the sample was homogeneous with regard to their role conflict.

Role conflict and other characteristics among HIGH and LOW group entrepreneurs : Table 3 indicates the significant differences in various socio-economic and psychological characteristics including that of role conflict between respondents possessing HIGH or LOW extent of entrepreneurship.

Table 3. Testing for significance of mean differences on selected characteristics, between 'HIGH' and 'LOW' groups.

N = 60 - $n_1 = 15$, $n_2 = 15$

Sl. No.	Characteristics	Mean Values		't'
		HIGH group ($n_1 = 15$)	LOW group ($n_2 = 15$)	
1.	Role conflict as an entrepreneur	24.50	32.60	3.879**
2.	Total Annual Income of the family	171.60	95.60	6.84**
3.	Job Involvement	56.20	44.07	4.48**
4.	Achievement motivation	71.00	58.50	6.439**

** significant at 0.01 probability level.

It was revealed that when respondents ($n = 60$) were grouped into HIGH and LOW categories (top 25.00% and bottom 25.00%, respectively) on the basis of their extent of entrepreneurship, the respondents of 'LOW' group were found to face more conflict in their role as evident from the higher mean value of the variable under 'LOW' group respondents when compared to the corresponding mean value of role conflict variable under 'HIGH' category.

Further, contrary to the higher mean values of Role conflict variables, the respondents under 'LOW' extent of entrepreneurship category had lower mean values of Total Annual Income of the Family, Job Involvement and Achievement Motivation when compared with the corresponding mean values of these variables among the respondents under HIGH extent of entrepreneurship category. This implies that the women entrepreneurs who faced more role conflict also exhibited lower achievement motivation, lower job involvement and belonged to families with lower annual income when compared to respondents with less role conflict.

All the mean differences were found to be significant by Fisher's 't' test.

Distribution of 'HIGH' and 'LOW' group respondents according to yet another variable, their family type, is shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Distribution of respondents of HIGH and LOW entrepreneur groups according to their family type.

N = 60, $n_1 = 15$, $n_2 = 15$

Sl. No.	Characteristics	Category	Frequency		Percentage	
			HIGH group	LOW group	HIGH group	LOW group
1.	Family type	Nucler	6	15	40.00	100.00
		Joint	9	0	60.00	00.00
		Total	15	15	100.00	100.00

Data reveals that all women under 'Low' extent of entrepreneurship (and more role conflict) category belonged to nuclear families (100.00%) whereas Majority of women under HIGH extent of entrepreneurship (and less role conflict) category belonged to joint families (60.00%).

It seems that probably more manpower availability and responsibility sharing among members of a joint family system leads to less incompatible situations regarding role conflict faced by the woman entrepreneur in everyday life.

Similar findings have been reported earlier on certain issues. Azad (1989) observed that the reason for 'low' reach in Indian women is the conflict or the difficulty in managing both the home and the job as experienced by married women. Tosi and Tosi (1970) found a negative relationship between role conflict and job satisfaction for teachers. Surti and Surupriya (1983) reported that married, migrated women coming from nuclear families experienced greater role stress than the unmarried, local women entrepreneurs coming from joint families. Azad (1989) further reported that role conflict between employment and burden of household responsibility falls very heavily on that small section of women from lower middle and lower class who have no domestic help for care of small children.

Correlation between role conflict and extent of entrepreneurship : To establish the relation between extent of entrepreneurship and role conflict, Pearson's coefficient of correlation (r) was calculated as shown in table 5.

Table 5. Correlation and regression coefficients of role conflict faced by women entrepreneurs with their extent of entrepreneurship.

Sl. No.	Characteristic	Correlation coefficient		Regression coefficient	
		' r '	' r '	' r '	' r '
1.	Role conflict as an entrepreneur	- 0.255	- 2.010*	- 0.474	- 1.969*

* Significant at 0.05 probability level.

Data presented in table 5 indicates negative and significant correlation between extent of entrepreneurship and role conflict as an entrepreneur ($r = - 0.255$). This implies that with the increase in role conflict between entrepreneurial work and household responsibility, the extent of entrepreneurship tends to decrease.

Further, the regression coefficient (b), worked out to determine the contribution of role conflict variable to the variation in extent of entrepreneurship was also found to be significant as indicated in table 5. This suggests that the role conflict variable can be safely considered as a good predictor of the variation in extent of entrepreneurship.

Although no literature showing relationship between entrepreneurship behaviour and

role conflict was available to the researcher, a similar study by Haas (1964) indicated role conflict to be correlated with lower performance. Sell *et al.* (1981) also suggested that role conflict causes lower productivity.

CONCLUSION :

The correlation and regression analysis revealed that the variable, Role conflict as an entrepreneur, had negative significant correlation with extent of entrepreneurship and was an important predictor for any variation found in the extent of entrepreneurship behaviour among women entrepreneurs in Assam running agricultural enterprises. Further 'role conflict' was found to be more in as many as 20.00 per cent respondents.

The role of the socio-sphere system of the woman entrepreneur becomes important here as it is the family of the woman entrepreneur, particularly, her husband who as the closest member of her social system has a firm role in reducing the role conflict occurring in his wife's life. The support system (development and promotional organisations) should not only make more systematized and productive efforts towards resource mobilization and infrastructural arrangements to make entrepreneurial work environment more stress free but also must play an active part in making the society and socio-sphere system of the entrepreneur aware of their role in manipulating the conditions, so that a greater extent of entrepreneurship behaviour becomes operative amongst the woman entrepreneurs in the society.

REFERENCES :

1. Azad, G.S., 1989., Development of Entrepreneurship among Indian Women. A psychological Analysis, SEDME, 16 : 63-81.
2. Banton, M., 1965. Roles : An introduction to the study of social relations. New York : Basic Books, Inc.
3. Gross, N., Mason, W.S. and Mc. Eachern, A.W., 1958, Explorations in role analysis : Studies of the school superintendency role. New York : John wiley and Sons, Inc.
4. Hass, J.E., 1964, Role conception and group consensus, Columbus, ohio : Bureau of Business Research.
5. Hall, D.T. and Gorden, F.E., 1973, Career choices of married women : Effects on conflict role behaviour and Satisfaction, Journal of Applied Psychology, 58 : 42-48.
6. Khan, R.L., Wolfe, D.M., Quinn, R.P., Snoek, J.D. and Rosenthal, R.A., 1964; Organisational stress : Studies in role conflict and ambiguity, New York, wiley.
7. Kalita, J., 1991, A study on the Motivational climate as Perceived by the Scientists of an Agricultural University, unpublished M.Sc. (Agri.) Thesis, C.A., A.A.U., Jorhat
8. Lodahl, T.M. and Kejner, M., 1965, The definition and measurement of job involvement. Journal of Applied Psychology, Vol. 49 : 24-33.
9. Neiman, L.J. and Hughes, J.W., 1951, The problem of the concept of role : A resurvey of the literature. Social Forces, 30 : 141-149.
10. Rizzo, J.R.; House, R.J. and Lirtzman, S.I. 1970, Role Conflict and Ambiguity in Complex organizations, Administrative Science Quarterly, 15 : 150-163.
11. Sell, M.V., Brief, A.P. and Schuler, R.S. 1981, Role Conflict and Role ambiguity : Integration of the Literature and Directions for Future Research, Human Relations, 34 (1) : 43-71.
12. Surti, K. and Surupriya, B. (1983). "Psychological Factor affecting Women Entrepreneurship", Abstract—Indian Journal of Social Work.
13. Tosi, H. and Tosi, D. (1970). Some correlates of role conflict and ambiguity among public school teachers, Human Relations, 18 : 1068-1075.