

# CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK ON ROLE EFFICACY IN WORK-LIFE BALANCE: WORKING WOMEN PERSPECTIVES

**Dr. Sree Jyothi Valiveti**

Associate Professor,  
Aurora's PG College, Hyderabad

## **Introduction**

The concept of work-family (life) balance has emerged from the acknowledgement that an individual's work-life roles and personal/family life roles which may exert conflicting demands on each other. Conflict is a normal part of life and is a natural result of the conflicting demands arising from multiple roles, such as that of a mother, daughter, daughter-in-law, wife, friend, and employee. In order to manage the negative spillover of conflict, it is important to balance the demands from both the domains. Work-life balance is about adjusting work patterns to achieve overall fulfillment. A good work-life balance enables business to thrive and at the same time facilitates the employees to easily combine work with other aspiration and responsibilities. A positive work-life balance involves achievement and enjoyment. A good working definition of work-life balance may be meaningful if daily achievement and enjoyment in each of the four quadrants of life-work role, family role, friend's role, and self role are attained.

## **The Role and the Individual**

When a person becomes a member of a social system, he or she 'receives' certain expectations from other members and responds to these, at the same time projecting his or her own expectations onto the role. One may react very positively and with great satisfaction to others' expectations and fulfils them to the best of one's abilities. Such a 'reactive' (responsive) approach will help the individual take on the role effectively. In contrast, another individual may use the expectations he or she has from the role-what Kahn and Quinn et. al., (1964) calls reflexive role expectations to develop a role - behaviour. This is a 'proactive' approach to role performance.

The other aspect of role taking is concerned with the identification of the self with the role. If the role expectations are congruent with the self- concept, there is role acceptance. However, if the expectations conflict with the self-concept, it may result in self-role distance. Even when there is no evident self-role distance, the degree of role acceptance can be defined in terms of the intensity with which an individual is able to get into the role- the intensity may vary from casual to a morbid identification with the role.

## **Role Systems**

An organization is considered as a role system in which the individual is part of a role system comprising a role space and a role set. A role is a useful concept in understanding the integration of an individual within a social system and in planning organizational effectiveness.

## **Role space**

The concept of the role is central to the organization, so the concept of the self is central to the several roles of a person. The term 'self' refers to the interpretations made by a person about the term 'I'. Self can be defined as the experience of an identity, arising from a person's interactions with external reality-things, persons, and systems. Role space is a dynamic interrelationship between the self and the various roles an individual occupies and also amongst these roles.

## **Role set**

The individual's role in the organization is defined by the expectations of other significant roles and those of the individual himself or herself. Role sets are sub-systems or interrelationships between a particular role and the other roles in an organizational system. Role linkage is an important concept in role satisfaction and role conflict.

A role is a very useful concept in understanding the dynamics of integration of an individual with a social system. It also helps in understanding the problems which arise in this individual-organization interaction and integration. The concept of roles goes beyond the individual employee and indicates a need to involve other significant persons in defining role requirements. A focus on roles can be useful in planning organizational effectiveness (Pareek, 1997 and Luthans, 2005).

## **The Concept of Role Efficacy**

The performance of a person working in an organization depends on his own potential effectiveness, technical competence, managerial experience, etc, as well as on the design of the role that he performs in an organisation. It is the integration of the two

(the person and the role) that ensures a person's effectiveness. Unless a person has the requisite knowledge, technical competence and skills required for the role, he cannot be effective. Equally important is how the role, which he occupies in the organisation, is designed. If the role does not allow the person to use his competence, and if he constantly feels frustrated in the role, his effectiveness is likely to be low.

The integration of a person and a role comes about when the latter is able to fulfil the needs of the individual, and when the individual in turn is able to contribute to the evolution of the role. The more we move from role taking to role making, the greater is the likelihood of the role being effective. The effectiveness of a role occupant in an organization, therefore, depends on the individual's own potential effectiveness, the potential effectiveness of the role, and the organization climate. This potential effectiveness can be termed efficacy. Personal efficacy would mean the potential effectiveness of a person in both personal and interpersonal situation. Role efficacy means the potential effectiveness of an individual occupying a particular role in an organisation. Role efficacy can be seen as the psychological factor underlying role effectiveness.

Role efficacy has several aspects. The more these aspects are present in a role, the higher the efficacy of that role is likely to be. These aspects can be classified into three groups or dimensions.

#### Role Making:

1. **Self-role integration** every person has strengths, experience, technical training, special skills, and some unique contribution to make. When his role provides him with greater opportunity for using such special strengths, his role efficacy is likely to be higher. This is called self-role integration. The self, or the person, and the role get integrated through the possibility of a person's use of his special strengths in the role.
2. **Pro-activity:** A person who occupies a role responds to the various expectations that people in the organisation have from that role. While this certainly gives him satisfaction, it also satisfies others in the organisation.
3. **Creativity** It is not only initiative that is important for efficacy. An opportunity to be creative and try new and unconventional ways of solving problems is equally important. The opportunity it gives people to be creative and try out innovative ideas increases their role efficacy.
4. **Confrontation** In general, if people in an organisation avoid problems or shift those on to others, their role efficacy will be low. The tendency to confront problems and find relevant solutions contributes towards efficacy.

#### Role Theory perspectives on work and family (Barnett and Gareis, 2006)

The Role enhancement approach yields work and family as separate, conflicting spheres, was reinforced by the then dominant corporate culture that explicitly required family matters to be left at the work-place door. To be taken seriously on the job, women would have to conform to the traditional one-dimensional view of men as worker thrones. This bifurcated model is still unfortunately a part of the corporate landscape. Similarly, the traditional **sex-role assumptions** underlying this model still have a hold on our thinking. In addition, the scarcity model of energy is consistent with the then (and still) dominant management fixation on "face time" as a reflection of employee commitment and productivity. Because it is believed that family roles deplete employees' energy reserves, the best way to get the most out of employees is to keep them working long hours so that they will be unavailable for such activities.

Because of the dominant assumption that work and family are separate and in competition for such scarce resources as time and attention (Barnett, 1998), the work-family interface has been characterized as involving constant tension and perpetual conflict, especially for employed married women with children. Each employee is viewed as caught in a zero-sum game in which resources expended in one sphere deplete those available for the other, leading inevitably to diminished role quality in the deprived sphere (Gutek, Searle, & Klepa, 1991). Time is the resource most often dealt with in this literature, and this conceptualization has received some empirical support. For example, excessive work hours have been related to increased marital tension (Hughes & Galinsky, 1994). Although most studies of work-family conflict focus on competing time demands, such other aspects as energy, strain, and behavior (Greenhaus, 2010 & Beutell, 1985; MacDermid et al., 2000) have also been identified.

Roles played by married working women can be distinguished based in the settings viz., the family, the work and the sociable setting. A familial setting is one in which the individual is accepted by the others and can be at ease in the sense of not having to prove himself or herself. A work setting is usually focused on the job to be done. A sociable setting is one in which the individual shares less formal social relationships but still tries to display his or her roles as a member of the society.

The married working women have roles both in and out of the family. Within the family they play the roles of a spouse, a daughter-in-law, sister-in-law, an employee, an owner and other roles. Together with these primary roles, they also play the roles of a guide, friend, supervisor, advisor, and counselor and so on, in times of need, with their family members. In work place, women play the roles of a worker, colleague, subordinate, supervisor, friend, leader, guide, and so on. In the society, women also play the role of a citizen; they may also be a member of the women's organization, health-club member, recreation club member, and so on.

## CONCLUSION

The Present study highlighted on married working women play a number of roles in the family, work and society. Through lack of effective co-ordination among different roles sometimes leads to conflicts and tensions but from Indian context it is an accepted fact that in the family, women are responsible for a greater number of activities like cooking food, arranging clothes, monitoring, scheduling and coordinating among family members. Besides the daily domestic duties and pressures on her time and temperament, a working woman has to face a number of other stresses like commuting long distances in overcrowded buses and trains. Enacting multiple roles means that the person in some way should be able to allocate her time and resources among the roles and see that she performs effectively.

## References

1. Kahn, R. L., Wolfe, D. M., Quinn, R. P., Snoek, J. D., & Rosenthal, R. A. (1964). *Organizational stress: Studies in role conflict and ambiguity*, New York: Wiley.
2. Pareek, U. (1997), *Training Instruments For Human Resource Development* Tata McGraw-Hill Publishing Company Limited, New Delhi, ISBN0-07-462339-X
3. Luthans F. (2005), *Organizational Behaviour*, Tenth Edition, New Delhi: Tata McGraw-Hill Publishing Co. Ltd.
4. Barnett, Rosalind Chait and Gareis. Karen C (2006), Role Theory Perspectives on Work and Family, In Catsopoulos, Marcie Pitt, Kossek, Ellen Ernst and Sweet Stephen (Eds). *The Work and Family Handbook: Multi-Disciplinary Perspectives and Approaches*, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers Mahwah, New Jersey, London.
5. Barnett, R. C. (1998). Toward a review and re-conceptualization of the work/ family literature. *Genetic, Social and General Psychology Monographs*, 124(2), 125-182.
6. Gutek, B. A., Searle, S., & Klepa, L. (1991). Rational versus gender role explanations for work-family conflict. *Journal of applied Psychology*, 76 (4), 560 – 568.
7. Hughes, D., & Galinsky, E. (1994). Gender, job and family conditions and psychological symptoms. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 18, 251 – 270.
8. MacDermid, s. M., Barnett, R., Crosby, F., Greenhaus, J., Koblienz, M., Marks, S., et al. (2000). *The measurement of work/life tension: Recommendations of a virtual think tank*, Boston: Alfred P. Sloan Foundation
9. Greenhaus J. H. (2010), A study of full-time managers and professionals, *Academy of Management Journal*, Vol. 53, No.3, pp. 513-534.
10. Srivastava Abhishek, Bartol (2006). Empowering Leadership in Management Teams: Effects on Knowledge sharing, efficacy, and performance. *Academy of Management Journal*, 49(6).