Role Stress and Coping with Role Stress among Indian Women Executives

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Abstract.
In an effort to extend theory & research on the effect of role stress on individuals and their coping ability, the relationship between Role Stress and Coping with Role Stress among women executives was examined. In today’s world more women are taking up managerial responsibilities which require them to balance multiple roles both at work and at home. This automatically gives rise to some amount of stress. In the present study, the sample consists of 200 adult women executives. The research examines the different role stressors encountered by women executives and the coping style used by them, to deal with these stressors. Results showed that executives tend to use more of proactive style of Approach Mode of Coping with Role Stress wherein they deal with Role Stress through own efforts, seeking help from significant others and using organizational resources to reduce role stress.

Keywords: Role Stress, Coping with Role Stress, Women Executives/Managers

Introduction:
An increasing number of women are becoming career conscious and professional in their outlook. Earlier women preferred jobs like nursing, teaching, clerical but now the number of women executives is on the increase. The reasons for such a change are: increase in women's education, changing socio-cultural values, increasing awareness and consciousness in women and the rise in economic independence. The working woman, regardless of whether she is married or single, faces higher stress levels. Women performing dual role are under stress and several factors at home and at the work place cause it. Hence, it is important to understand the role transition of women over the years and the challenges that they are facing in coping with the stress of handling multiple roles.

Role stress is the stress experienced by the person because of their role (job) in a social system. They assume a role based on the expectation of the self and others at work place. Role has two subsystems: Role Space and Role Set. Role, Role Space and Role Set have a potential for conflict and stress. Role Space Stress has three main variables: self, the role under question, and the other roles he occupies. Any conflicts among these are referred to as role space conflict or stress. Role Space Stress has the following dimensions Self-Role Distance, Intra-Role Conflict,
Role Stagnation, Inter-Role Distance and Role Irrelevance. Role Set Stress has the following dimensions Role Ambiguity, Role Expectation Conflict, Role Overload, Role Erosion, Resource Inadequacy, Personal Inadequacy, Role Isolation, Result Inadequacy, Role Inadequacy and Challenge stress Pareek (1997).

In today’s dynamic world, a certain amount of role stress is always present. It is important for a person to effectively cope with role stress by gaining awareness, balance and achieving control over the stressful situation. According to Pareek (1997); there are primarily two modes of dealing with stress. First is the, the Dysfunctional / Reactive / Avoidance Mode of Coping with Role Stress. This person adopts a behavior of aggression and blame, helplessness, denying the presence of stress or finding an explanation for it. Such behavior helps a person who is not doing anything in relation to the stress. The Avoidance Mode has the following dimensions; Impunitive [M] which is characterized by low internality, low externality and avoidance. This is a fatalistic attitude. Intropunitive [I] characterized by high internality, low externality and avoidance. Blame and aggression are directed by the respondent against himself. Extrapunitive [E] is characterized by low internality, high externality and avoidance. The former occurs when “the presence of the frustrating obstacle is insistently pointed out” and the latter when “blame, hostility, etc are turned against some person or object in the environment.” Lastly, Defensive [D] is characterized by the high internality, high externality and avoidance. A person avoids aggression or blame with the help of defense mechanisms. Second mode of coping with role stress is the Functional / Proactive / Approach Mode of Coping with Role Stress. The approach mode is characterized by hope that things will improve, effort made by the subject will help to solve the situation, expectations that others will help, or asking for help in relation to stress, and jointly doing something about the problem. The Approach Mode has the following dimensions; Impersistive [m] is characterized by low internality, low externality and approach. The hope that time or normal circumstances will bring about the solution of a problem; patience and conformity are characteristic.” Intropersistive [i] is characterized by high internality, low externality and approach. Extrapersistive [e] is characterized by low internality, high externality and approach. Lastly, Interpersistive [n] is characterized by high internality, high externality and approach. It is the opposite of the defense (D) style.

**Literature Review**

Role Stress has been studied in relation to a number of variables such as age, gender etc. When role stress was studied with respect to age, it was found that generally, people in the younger age groups report higher stress scores than the oldest age groups. (Gadzella et al 1990) The role conflict areas found to be most affected by age were Relations with Husband, Child Care, Guilt, and Financial (Nevill & Damico, 1977). Shaw & Krause (2002) noted that as respondent age increased, the association between salient role stress and adverse changes in health strengthened significantly. These results support the idea that the old may be particularly vulnerable to the effects of stress. Mishra & Bose (1997) have studied the influence of age and gender on organizational role stress, coping behavior, and parental Interactional styles (PISs) while managing children’s stress. Both age and gender do influence all the 10 dimensions of organizational role stress, coping behavior and PISs of career couples.
Study of Role Stress with respect to gender and marital status has revealed that Role stress was the second best determinant, of organizational commitment in working women (Bhagat & Chassie, 1981). Findings also suggest that role conflict decreases both sexes’ job satisfaction and men’s marital satisfaction and increases women’s psychophysical symptoms. Gadzella, et al (1990) investigated differences in stress by sex and suggested that women reported more stress than men did. In another study, female executives showed greater stress, suggesting that the difference in work stress was a consequence of work-family conflict, societal expectations, and behavioral norms that women face as they occupy a combination of roles (Beena & Poduval 1992, McDonald & Korabik 1991). Babin & Boles (1998) suggested that role stress affected female service providers’ job performance more negatively than it did to that of males’, and that job satisfaction was related more highly to quitting intent among males. Eckman (2004) study indicated that there were differences between female and male high school principals in their personal and professional attributes as well as in role conflict. There were similarities between female and male high school principals in terms of role commitment and job satisfaction. On the contrary, Aziz (2007) found similar level of stress for male and female employees on the overall organizational role stress. Similarly, Van-der-Pompe & De-Heus (1993), did not find that the women experienced more stress and strains than men did, which contradicts the findings of McDonald & Korabik (1991). There has been research conducted to understand specifically the concept of Role Stress and women. It is found that Role involvements and conflicts are generally greater for working women than housewives, although full-timers differ greatly from part-timers and seem to be the most satisfied of the three groups (Hall & Gordon, 1973). Also, multiple roles are associated with competing demands that can lead to role overload and the resulting strain. Role strain has been measured in such terms such as somatization, depression, anxiety, obsessive compulsiveness, discomfort, anger/hostility, and dissatisfaction (McBride & Barron 1988). Individual differences within the group are brought out by this study. In relation to organizational commitment, women may feel particularly conflicted about trying to be a good organizational citizen, while at the same time, still fulfilling their obligation to their spouse or family (Bolino & Turnley, 2003).

A study conducted to make the workplace friendlier and effective for women states that more flexible workplace rules for female executives to eliminate stress associated with work-family conflict as well as improved effectiveness of social support and person-organization fit based on individual bureaucratic orientation would help dealing with the problem of workplace stress (Conner & Douglas, 2005). Also according to Khetarpal & Kochar (2006), the key stressors which affected maximum number of women were poor peer relations, intrinsic impoverishment and under-participation. On the contrary, Holahan & Gilbert (1979) compared role conflict experienced by career and non-career women. Contrary to prediction, greater role conflict was reported by the non-career group than the career group. Similarly, successful professional women did not exhibit higher levels of anxiety, depression and hostility, nor did these outcomes increase for women in higher-level executive positions in this study. Negative outcome measures were not higher for women with children, nor did work stress and work-family conflict interact to produce more negative health outcomes (Beatty, 1996). Kahn & Cuthbertson (1998) found that working Mothers and mothers who are full-time homemakers when tested on 3 aspects of
mental health: free-floating anxiety, somatic anxiety, and depression, and stress-coping strategies utilized, were measured, few differences were found between the 2 groups of mothers. Another study by Karve & Yuvaraj (2005) concluded that on the dimension of high and low stress, the entrepreneurs and executives had similar patterns on role space stress and total role stress.

Role Stress has been found to be related to a few Psychosocial Variables. Intolerance of ambiguity does moderate the impact of role ambiguity (Frone, 1990, Das 1984). Occupational demands in the form of interpersonal conflict, work overload, and role conflict contributed to the experience of emotional exhaustion (O'drwascoll, et al, 1990). Pandey & Kumar (1997) conceptualized role conflict as consisting of 4 dimensions: intra-sender, inter-sender, inter-role, and person-role conflict, respectively.

Cartwright & Cooper (1997) highlighted the everyday stressors likely to impact managers and employees, such as working with difficult people and managing increased workloads. On similar lines, Wilson (1999) demonstrates that physical environment, role conflict, work overload and poor relationships with supervisors were some of the factors which contribute towards job stress. Floyd & Lane (2000) found that dissensus in managers’ perceptions about the need for change created strategic role conflicts within individual managers and between managerial roles. Similarly, discrepancy of the role requirements leads to inter-role conflict (Lui et al, 2001). Employees believing, that the job matched their initial perceptions, that they were adequately trained, and that peer supervision was available, reduced role stress among the group (Culbreth et al 2005).

When focusing on families, results indicate that high emotional workloads in the family and at work were associated with increased psychological distress, goal loss and role overload and these effects added up (Strazdin & Broom, 2003). Another analysis revealed that employees with higher role overload and greater family support, but lower levels of organizational support were more likely to report that their own health had been adversely affected by their place of work (Mendelson et al 2000). When analysing psychological aspect, it was noticed that increases in role overload were positively related to both depression and conflict (Perry-Jenkins et al 2007). Turning to the impact of work-role characteristics on adjustment domains, role novelty was positively correlated with work adjustment. Both role ambiguity and role conflict are negatively correlated with work adjustment (Michael & Mary, 2003).

Interesting studies have been conducted on Role Stress and Personality factors. According to Sales (1970), Role over-load was stressful to the overloaded persons and that the effects of this stress are most severely experienced by individuals with specific personality constellations. Perrewé et al, (2002) examined the relationships among role stressors, general self-efficacy (GSE), and burnout across nine regions. Findings indicated GSE had a universally negative association with burnout across all regions. Further, self-efficacy mediated the relationship between role conflict and/or role ambiguity and burnout across eight of the nine cultures. Abraham (2000) concluded that person-role conflict and personality cynicism may be related to innate hostility.
Work-family Conflict also has a profound effect on role stress. Literature on conflict between work and family roles suggested that work-family conflict exists when: (a) time devoted to the requirements of one role makes it difficult to fulfill requirements of another; (b) strain from participation in one role makes it difficult to fulfill requirements of another; and (c) specific behaviors required by one role make it difficult to fulfill the requirements of another (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). Boles and Babbin (1996) have tested the hypotheses that role conflict and role ambiguity are positively related to work family conflict. According to McKay & Tate (1999), higher levels of role conflict and work overload result in higher levels of family conflict. Strazdins & Broom, (2003) concluded that high emotional workloads in the family and at work were associated with increased psychological distress, goal loss and role overload.

Role stress also has an impact on certain organizational variables such as job satisfaction and commitment. Role stress was defined in terms of features of the work environment, whereas role strain generally refers to an individual's feelings about, or reactions to, aspects of the work environment, this definition of role stress was backed by research done by Veloutsou & Panigyrakis, (2004). Their study revealed that increased role stress was associated with lower levels of job satisfaction, but its influence on the intention to leave was not significant. In addition, higher lower levels of satisfaction were generally associated with higher intention to leave. Similarly a study conducted by LeRouge, et al (2006) concluded that role stress was positively related to both job satisfaction and organizational commitment and that self-esteem significantly moderated the relationship between role stress fit and job satisfaction.

Barnes et al (2006) concluded through their studies that a strong culture leads to higher levels of value congruity, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment, and lower levels of role stress. On similar lines, Jaramillo et al (2006) offered empirical evidence a high ethical climate lead to lower turnover intention and higher job performance and lower role stress. Howell et al, (1987), Scheib, (2006) concluded in their studies that role stress can be at the heart of job dissatisfaction and occupational stress. Fogarty et al (2000) proposed that burnout was capable of separating the functional and dysfunctional aspects of the role stressors on these job outcomes satisfaction, performance, and turnover intentions.

O'Drwascoll & Beehr (1994) concluded that supervisors can influence the degree of role stress and uncertainty which their subordinates experience, which in turn may affect levels of satisfaction, strain and turnover intentions. Babin & Boles, (1998) proposed a model that predicted effects of role stress and work/non-work conflict on customer-contact employees' job performance, job and life satisfaction, and quitting intent. According to Johnston & Parasuraman, (1990), Gaertner & Nollen (1989), role ambiguity and job satisfaction are significant contributors to the development of organizational commitment during early employment and on propensity to leave. Mohr & Puck, (2007), found that managers experiencing a high level of role conflict also report lower job satisfaction and higher job stress. A study by Veloutsou & Panigyrakis, (2004) revealed that increased role stress was associated with lower levels of job satisfaction, but its influence on the intention to leave was not significant.
Role Stress is also related to organizational culture and structure. Senatra (1980); Beehr (1981) concluded that the people, who experience job stress, blame the social system in the organization, resulting in their dissatisfaction with co-workers, who are the elements of that system. Keenan & Newton, (1987) stressed the relevance of personal, interpersonal, and organizational predictors to role stress. Cravens et al (2004), suggested that sales people who work under a more visible control system performed better, were more satisfied, and displayed lower burnout and role stress, compared to salespeople working under bureaucratic, clan, and low control combinations. Agarwal, (1999), found that formalization caused salespersons to experience negative attitudes such as higher role stress and lower organizational commitment. Evidence indicated that organizational climate, role stress, and social support all contributed to the level of environmental frustration (Keenan & Newton, 1984). Lee & Ashforth, (1993) observed that autonomy over various aspects of work and social support from the organization and supervisor were each inversely related to role stress.

With respect to culture, Ming-Tien Tsai & Chia-Mei Shih (2005) revealed that the more ethical culture the firm has, the lower role conflict the marketing managers will experience. Foote et al (2005) revealed that attitudes and role clarity positively influenced policy commitment, and that policy commitment positively influenced conscientiousness and civic virtue. Lait, and Wallace, (2002) Gamble & Gibson, (1999) suggested that bureaucratic conditions of work that reflected role conflict led to role stress. Chia-Mei Shih & Chin-Yuan Chen (2006) reveal that marketing managers who work in more ethical organizations experience lower role conflict and role ambiguity than those who work in less ethical ones. According to Pool (2000) a constructive organizational culture would be associated with low levels of role stressors and a passive or aggressive organizational culture with high levels of role stressors. Posner & Randolph (1979) suggested that variations in organizational structure may be an important strategy for reducing the negative impact of role ambiguity.

Extensive Research has been conducted on Role stress and Performance. Snyder et al (1984) found that role conflict, role clarity, and multiple measures of competence had lesser, but still significant, effects with performance feedback reactions. Lyonski & Woodside(1989); Fried et al (1998) concluded through their study that performance was hindered by environmental uncertainty, role conflict, role ambiguity, tension and dissatisfaction. In a study conducted by Lusch & Jaworski (1991) it was found that role stress was directly linked to store manager performance. Tubre et al (2000) found that role ambiguity was negatively related to performance, with a range of moderators such as job complexity and conscientiousness. Fried et al (1998) asserted that whereas individuals may be able to cope and function successfully with a single role stressor at work, it was when there are a number of concurrent role stressors that cognitive resources are overloaded and individual work performance starts to suffer. Fogarty et al (2000) hypothesized that role stress was negatively related to professionalism. On the contrary, Nygaard & Dahlstrom (2002) presented alternative perspectives that examined the relationship between stress and performance. Their view frames role stressors as linear, negative antecedents to organizational outcomes. The authors contrast this perspective with theories that espouse triphasic, parabolic, and interactive influences of stressors on organizational outcomes.
The type of Industry and Management level may also be a reason for role stress as research shows. Hamner & Tosi (1974) suggested that organizational level be taken into account when studying the relationship of role stress factors with job involvement measures. Schuler (1975), Szilagyi (1977); Szilagyi Jr et al (1976) supported the hypothesis that role ambiguity was a source of causal inference with satisfaction with work at the higher organizational level, while role conflict was a source of causal inference with satisfaction with work at the lower organizational level. Dhillon & Sharma (1992); Schieman et al (2006) revealed a significant effect of hierarchical level of management on overall role stress with the lower level managers perceiving the maximum amount of role stress, followed by the middle and upper level managers. Staff and midlevel managers reported greater stress than executives did. (Gadzella, et al 1990; Mohanty & Mishra 1998) examined and found positive correlation between the extent and dimensions of occupational stress among frontline and middle line, private and public sector executives. Public Sector and Private Sector were found to have differential effects on job stress experienced by frontline and middle line executives. Bacharach et al (1990) concluded that in contrast with some of the assumptions of recent job design theory, their findings indicated that for public sector professionals, managerial strategies that reflected professional ethos may not reduce role conflict and role overload. Menon et al (1994), revealed that eight of the nine stressors were dependent on the functional area and not on age of the manager, hierarchical level or tenure in the organization. Similarly, Dhar & Arora (1996) in their study investigated the nature of the relationship between convergent-divergent thinking, job experience, and job stress in the service industry. Analysis revealed that job stress does not increase with experience, that thinking, independent of the type, demotes job stress, and that job stress inhibits thinking. Role stress could be co-related to a number of factors such as Role Ambiguity, Role Clarity and Role Overload. According to Caplan & Jones (1975) role ambiguity was positively associated with anxiety, depression, and resentment. Also, environmental factors contribute to a high degree of role ambiguity and job tension which tend to limit the satisfaction derived from the work (Blalack & Davis, 1975). Another study by Igbaria & Guimaraes (1993) showed that role ambiguity was the most dysfunctional variable for employees in relation to job satisfaction. Similarly Pitt et al (1995), found that organizational commitment was strongly tied to role ambiguity.

Role overload correlates positively with organizationally valued outcomes, but also with three adverse individual outcomes: job dissatisfaction, fatigue, and tension. Two other role stresses, role ambiguity and non clarity of role, have adverse effects on both individually and organizationally valued psychological states (Beehr et al 1976). Similarly, Wunder et al (1982) supported the hypothesized sequence from role ambiguity, conflict, and overload through job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and intention to resign, to employee turnover. A body of empirical research on role stress has proved that high levels of role conflict and role ambiguity resulted in unfavorable outcomes for both the individual and the organization (Nicholson, et al 1983). This also correlates with the research by Snyder et al (1984) which supports the finding that role conflict, role clarity, and multiple measures of competence had lesser, but still significant, effects with performance feedback reactions. Role clarity has been showed to be positively associated with performance and job satisfaction and negatively associated with propensity to leave. Rahim (1996) concluded that role overload and role insufficiency positively
influenced psychiatric symptoms and that role insufficiency, role ambiguity, and role conflict positively influenced propensity to leave a job. Results indicate that role conflict contributed to emotional exhaustion, and participation in work teams diminished it. Job ambiguity, low co-worker support, and low job ability contributed to feelings of low personal accomplishment (Elloy et al 2001). Inconsistent with earlier research, the study by Jones, Lawrence and Roberts (2007) found that role overload has displayed inconsistent relationships with many job attitudes, turnover intentions, and performance measures in studies of salespeople.

Coping with Role Stress as a subject is also a wide area of study which has been studied with relation to various variables. For example, there have been studies relating role with a few demographic variables. It has been found that gender is an important variable that affects role stress. Study by McDonald & Korabik (1991) concludes that women are more likely than men, to report that prejudice and discrimination and work/family interfaces as sources of stress. According to Greenglass (1993), support from one's boss was a significant contributor to preventive and instrumental coping in women only. Additional findings were that relative and friend support was a significant negative contributor to palliative coping strategies also in women only. Kirchmeyer & Catherine (1993) suggested that employers should be less concerned with how active women were in non-work, and more concerned with how well both men and women managed their various life domains. Women reported encountering more work stressors, and coping with general stressful situations through self-blame (Korabik et al, 1995). Research indicated that gender has a moderating role on the relationships between role ambiguity and self-efficacy, and role conflict and job satisfaction. (Kartape et al, 2006) Aziz, (2007), suggested that while designing and implementing any stress management program, the information technology organizations should ensure that they factor in the differences in stress patterns among female and male employees.

Exclusive Studies have been conducted to study Coping with Role Stress and Women. Three studies examined how perfectionism, humor, and optimism moderated the deleterious effects of DHs on self-esteem, burnout, and physical health (Fry, 1995). High levels of perfectionism were associated with instrumental coping strategies and self-restructuring or preventive coping orientations. High levels of humour and optimism were associated with the use of strategies that relied on practical social support. Karve & Yuvraaj (2005) in the study, explore coping with stress styles among 200 women entrepreneurs and executives. The findings indicate that there was no difference in preference for approach or avoidance mode by entrepreneurs and executives, when compared with each other. Thompson et al (2005) deduced that work stress affects police women's and interventions designed to reduce stress in policewomen should include supervisor training in social support. Another research studied a sample of working mothers their analysis found that there was a significant inverse relationship between inter-role conflict and life satisfaction (Diraz et al 2003). Aaron-Corbin (1999) made suggestions for organization and how HR professionals could find a balance between the individual and the organization itself and that this process would yield positive results for long-term career planning for female managers, as opposed to the new job postings that resulted when multiple-role conflict became unavoidable. Taking this study further was the study by Conner & Douglas (2005), whose implications included more flexible workplace rules for female executives to
eliminate stress associated with work-family conflict as well as improved effectiveness of social support and person-organization fit based on individual bureaucratic orientation.

On Coping with Role Stress and some psychosocial variables, Van-den-Berg & Schalk (1997) investigated that work overload partially mediates the relationship between Type - A behavior and well being, and that role-related stress and work overload strongly affect well-being in this type of work. Endler & Norman (1997) found out that task-oriented coping was most efficacious in a controllable situation, while emotion-oriented coping was most efficacious in an uncontrollable situation.

Similarly, it was found that high levels of psychological distress were related to a reliance on informal sources of information, high appraised stress, low appraised certainty, and the use of avoidance rather than problem-focused strategies, whereas poor social functioning was associated with low self-esteem, high levels of disruption across the period of change, a reliance on informal sources of information, and the use of avoidance- coping strategies (Terry & Callan, 1997; Carol et al 1996). Research also indicated that role stress fit was positively related to both job satisfaction and organizational commitment and that self-esteem significantly moderated the relationship between role stress fit and job satisfaction (LeRouge et al 2006)

Marginson (2006) suggested that role ambiguity may be countered or avoided through the acquisition of clear information about expected role behaviours. The results showed that both role conflict and role ambiguity completely mediated the relationships between psychosocial support and role modeling with job attitudes (Lankau et al 2006; Elloy et al 2001). Valcour (2002) examined the strategies managers use, to resolve role conflict in a multiplex role system. Managerial effectiveness required responding to the demands and expectations of both sets of roles through a process of adaptive self-regulation. Taking forward the researches mentioned earlier was the research by Tidd, & Friedman (2002). Their findings suggest that individuals may be able to reduce the negative individual impact of role conflict in their environment by adopting positive behavioral styles while avoiding negative ones. Jaskyte (2005) found that individual, investiture, and fixed tactics lead to lower role ambiguity, whereas investiture tactic leads to lower role conflict. Social support was linked with lower role stress, more positive feedback and less negative feedback at post-restructuring (Swanson et al 2001; Stamper & Jholke 2003). Career stage moderates the effect of time on organizational commitment and role overload (Alien 1995). Russ et al (1998) suggested that managerial variables also affected role stress, satisfaction, and performance, both directly and as moderators. Krayer (1986) recommended the use of personnel training to reduce role conflict and ambiguity. Results of a similar research indicated that job dissatisfaction was the primary cause of psychological withdrawal (Keaveney & Nelson, 1993).

Considering the effects of role stress on job satisfaction brings into focus, the research by Brooke et al (1989), which indicated that job satisfaction completely mediated the effects of routinization and work involvement, and partially mediated the effects of centralization and role ambiguity. Also, the benefits of role accumulation tended to outweigh any stress to which it might give rise, thereby yielding net gratification (Sieber, (1974). Validating the earlier findings
were the results of the study by Keller & Holland (1981). They found that job change group to have greater increases in performance, innovativeness, and job satisfaction, as well as a greater reduction in role ambiguity. Also the relationships between goal setting content and satisfaction and between leader initiating structure and satisfaction are reduced when the effects of role conflict and ambiguity are removed (Lee & Schuler 1980).

A specific research on salespersons suggested that self-regulatory training could enhance salesperson self-regulation capabilities, decrease role ambiguity, and thereby aid sales performance (Leach et al 2005) Also Salespeople who perceived high role conflict employed assertiveness and upward influence tactics more frequently. (Nonnis et al 1996) Another specific research on nurses concluded that (Lyons,1971) the correlations of role clarity with voluntary turnover, propensity to leave, and work satisfaction were not significant for nurses classified as low on a need-for-clarity index; the correlations were significantly higher for nurses with a high need for clarity.

With respect to coping strategies used by employees in situations of overload and stress the research by Jex & Gudanowski, (1992) stated that collective efficacy moderated the effect of work hours and mediated the relation between situational constraints and strain measures. Individuals with high self-esteem stood a better chance of dealing with role ambiguity (Jex & Elacqua, 1999). Employees with high ability were less affected by role ambiguity than employees with low ability. (Schuler, 1977). A contrary research by Bacharach et al (1990) suggested that managerial strategies appropriate for minimizing role conflict were not necessarily appropriate for minimizing role overload. Also Beehr (1976) studied that group cohesiveness moderated not only the relationship between role ambiguity and two of the role strains, but also the direction of its moderating influence was inconsistent.

Coping with role stress is related to certain organizational variables. Perceived role clarity was related negatively to voluntary turnover, propensity to leave, and job tension, and positively to work satisfaction (Lyons, 1971). Validating this research was further research that found that organizational work facilitation moderated the relationships among inter-sender-role conflict and the outcome variables, job performance, and propensity to leave, as well as the relationships between person-role conflict and job satisfaction and between predictability of behavioral outcomes and propensity to leave (Bedeian et al, 1983). Also the net effect of formalization was to reduce alienation. (Organ & Greene, 1981)

Posner and Randolph (1979) suggested that variations in organizational structure may be an important strategy for reducing the negative impact of role ambiguity. Answering the question of turnover was the research by Scheib (2006) which stated that clear communication of expectations and realities was the remedy to prevent attrition due to role stress. Results also showed that the amount of interdependency between jobs was positively associated with role conflict, and clarity of interdependency was negatively associated with role ambiguity (Wong et al, 2007). In a study conducted by Thomas (2005), leader-member Exchange and mentoring had significant direct and indirect effects on reports of burnout through influences on organizational socialization and role stress. Research suggested that socialization practices affect professional
role adjustment. Specifically, institutionalized socialization tactics lead to a custodial role orientation and individualized socialization tactics produce an innovative role orientation (King & Sethi, 1998).

With respect to the strategies that organizations could use to reduce to effects of stress, the research by McCleese & Eby (2006) was significant. They suggested that job content plateau employees reported greater job satisfaction and organizational commitment if they were not also experiencing a hierarchical plateau. Also Chang et al (2005) included use of stress education and management strategies, team-building strategies; balancing priorities; enhancing social and peer support; flexibility in work hours; in their experience of coping with role stress. Yih-Ming et al (2003) suggested that increased job standardization diminishes job burnout indirectly. Increased methodology usage was found to be associated with less role stress. Computer-aided systems engineering tool usage, however, did not have a statistically significant impact on role stress (Nelson & Teng, 2000).

The impact of organizational support on role conflict was fully mediated by job self-efficacy (Erdwins 2001). Another strategy suggested to reduce organizational stress was the culture of an organization. According to Pool (2000), a constructive organizational culture would be associated with low levels of role stressors and a passive or aggressive organizational culture with high levels of role stressors. Reducing the impact of organizational variables on stress was the research by Smeltzer (1987) which concluded that group and individual level communication variables were more closely related to work and role stress than were organizational communication variables.

**Scope for the Study**

This Study has attempted to understand certain role stresses as psychological variable which impact role of women executives in their work arena. It can help understand the challenges that women face in their role, the coping mechanisms that women have in their role and in turn help in strengthening the role by gradually changing where required or learning new interventions.

The researchers have attempted to verify the following hypotheses:

1. Role Stress will positively influence Coping with Role Stress.
2. Coping with Role Stress will positively influence Role Stress.
3. Role Space Stress and its Dimensions will positively influence Avoidance and Approach mode of Coping with Role Stress.
4. Role Set Stress and its Dimensions of will positively influence Avoidance and Approach mode of Coping with Role Stress.
5. Avoidance mode of Coping with Role Stress and its Dimensions will positively influence Role Space Stress, Role Set Stress.
6. Approach mode of Coping with Role Stress and its Dimensions will positively influence Role Space, Role Set Stress.
Sample

The present study has examined the types of role stress, coping ability of women executives with respect to Role Stress, and their Role Efficacy. In the present study the sample consists of adult working women namely “executives”. 200 respondents in the age range of 25-60 years have been studied. This age group has been selected because in this age group, individuals would have settled in their chosen vocation and career path. Primary source for women executives will be women employed in public sector, government and private sector enterprises. Purposive sampling technique was used.

Methodology

The present study aims to examine the types of role stress and coping ability of women executives with respect to role stress, and their typical mode of coping, functional/ proactive/ approach or dysfunctional/ reactive/ avoidance, level of coping high or low, and sources of coping internal / external / joint.

The tests were administered in a group setup and were scored as per the scoring procedure described by Pareek (1997). The respondents were given instructions and doubts if any were clarified. The time taken to answer the questionnaires was around 40 minutes. The tests were scored as per the scoring procedure described by Pareek (1997). Satistica software was used to compute the results of correlation analysis and multiple regression analysis (MRA).

The instruments / scales used in the study by the researcher to measure the above variables are:

1. Organizational Role Stress Scale (ORS) (Pareek, 1997)
2. Role Pics (O) (Pareek, 1997)

Results and Discussion:

To study the relationship between various dimensions, subscales and total scores of all the variables, inter-correlations were worked out.
Table 1: Correlations between Organizational Role Stress and Coping with Role Stress for women executives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role Coping</th>
<th>Impunitive</th>
<th>Intrapunitive</th>
<th>Extrapunitive</th>
<th>Defensive</th>
<th>Impersistive</th>
<th>Intropersistive</th>
<th>Extrapersistive</th>
<th>Interpersistive</th>
<th>Avoidance</th>
<th>Approach</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inter Role Distance</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>-0.04</td>
<td>-0.15*</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>-0.07</td>
<td>0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RS</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
<td>-0.04</td>
<td>-0.07</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>-0.06</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>-0.08</td>
<td>0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role Expectation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role Erosion</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>-0.08</td>
<td>-0.13</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>-0.10</td>
<td>0.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role Overload</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
<td>-0.09</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>-0.06</td>
<td>0.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role Isolation</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>-0.04</td>
<td>-0.10</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Inadequacy</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
<td>-0.09</td>
<td>-0.06</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
<td>0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role Ambiguity</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>-0.04</td>
<td>-0.10</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>-0.09</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>-0.08</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self Role Distance</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
<td>-0.11</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.16*</td>
<td>-0.08</td>
<td>0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Result Inadequacy</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
<td>-0.10</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>-0.08</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role Space</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
<td>-0.13</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.15*</td>
<td>-0.09</td>
<td>0.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role Set</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>-0.06</td>
<td>-0.12</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>-0.09</td>
<td>0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Role Stress</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>-0.06</td>
<td>-0.13</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>-0.02</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>-0.09</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Significant at p<0.05, df= 199

Table 1 shows that there is a significant negative correlation between Inter Role Distance (-.15) and Defensive avoidance mode of CORS, in case of women executives, it indicates that even when executives feel that there is a distance in their roles they refrain from using defense mechanisms for coping with stress, it may result in Role Partition and Role Elimination, the executives may attempt to Role Negotiation or Redefining their role. Results show that there is a significant and positive correlation between Self role distance (0.16), Role Space Stress (0.15) and Interpersistive approach mode of CORS, this shows that executives will personally take actions and also take help from others to resolve these stresses, this will result in Role Integration.

Further the data was treated to a MRA wherein dimensions of both the variables of Organizational Role Stress and Coping with Organizational Role Stress were treated as both independent and dependent variables.
Table 2: Results of MRA between Dimension of Organizational Role Stress and Coping with Role Stress

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent Variable</th>
<th>Intercept</th>
<th>Beta (significant)</th>
<th>R²</th>
<th>t value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Role Expectation Conflict</td>
<td>Defensive</td>
<td>-0.17</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>2.17*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self Role Distance</td>
<td>Interpersistive</td>
<td>0.199</td>
<td>0.049</td>
<td>2.24*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001, df= 199

In Table 2, MRA is done, taking every dimension of ORS as DV and all eight dimensions of CERS as IVs. MRA was done, taking Role Expectation conflict and Self Role Distance (dimension of Role Stress) as dependent variable and all eight dimensions of CORS as Independent variables. From table 2, it can be inferred that 4.29% (R²: 0.04) of times Role Expectation Conflict is explained by all the eight dimensions of CORS. As can be seen from table 2, Defensive style of coping (-.17) has negative Beta weight which suggests that executives, who have high internality and high externality, when feel stressed out because of conflicting expectations or demands of various role senders avoid aggression or blame with the help of defense mechanism. Probably because they always deny that there does exist any kind of stress, due to which they will never be able to resolve and satisfy conflicting expectations of various roles. Interpersistive style of coping (.199) has positive Beta weight which means that executives who have high internality and high externality when feel stressed out because of the conflicts between the self-concept and the expectations from the role as perceived by them try joint efforts to resolve the problems. This means these executives rather than rejecting self or role try to integrate with the role. They analyze various aspects of the role which cause self role distance and try to acquire skills which will help them bridge the gap. This is an approach strategy to deal with this stress.

Therefore hypotheses 5, Avoidance mode of Coping with Role Stress and its Dimensions will influence Role Space Stress, Role Set Stress and 6, Approach mode of Coping with Role Stress and its Dimensions will positively influence Role Space, Role Set Stress are marginally sustained.

Table 3: Results of MRA between Level of Stress and Coping Styles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent Variable</th>
<th>Intercept</th>
<th>Beta (significant)</th>
<th>R²</th>
<th>t value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low Role Stress</td>
<td>Impunitve</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>.28</td>
<td>2.72*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Role Stress</td>
<td>Defensive</td>
<td>-0.83</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>2.06*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interpersistive</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>2.66*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001, df= 199
MRA was done, taking Level of Stress as dependent variable and all the dimensions of Approach Coping independent variables. There was no significance found between High Role Stress and Approach Coping and Avoidance Coping. From table 3 it can be inferred that 28% (R2 0.28) of times Impunitive style of coping characterizes by low internality and low externality i.e. leaving everything to fate is explained by Low Role Stress. However, from the Beta values, it can be inferred that among all eight variables only Impunitive style (β= 0.45, p< 0.05) of coping significantly affects Low Role Stress. As can be seen from table 2, Impunitive style of coping (.45) has positive Beta weight which means that executives who have low internality and low externality when under low stress do not take efforts by themselves or from outside to resolve Low Role Stress. This is an avoidance strategy to deal with this Low Role Stress.

MRA is done, taking Low Role Stress as dependent variable and all dimensions of Avoidance Coping as Independent variables. From table 3, it can be inferred that 24% (R2 0.24) of times Defensive and Interpersistive is explained by Low Role Stress. However, from the Beta values, it can be inferred that among all eight variables only Defensive style (β= 0.83, p< 0.05) and Interpersistive style (β= 0.58, p< 0.05) of coping significantly affect Low Role Stress. As can be seen from table 3, Defensive style of coping (.83) has negative Beta weight which means that executives who have low internality and low externality when under low stress do not take efforts by themselves or from outside to resolve Low Role Stress. This is an avoidance strategy to deal with this Low Role Stress. As can be seen from table 3, Interpersistive style of coping (.58) has positive Beta weight which means that executives who have high internality and high externality when under low Role Stress will try to resolve low role stress through joint efforts by themselves and from outside to resolve low role stress. This is an approach strategy to deal with this Low Role Stress.

Therefore it is evident that under low role stress some coping styles are adopted but under high level of role stress there is no relationship with coping styles. Hypothesis 2, Coping with Role Stress will positively influence Role Stress is partially sustained.

**Table 4: Results of MRA between Dimensions of Coping with Role Stress and Organizational Role Stress.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent Variable</th>
<th>Intercept</th>
<th>Beta (significant)</th>
<th>R²</th>
<th>t value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Defensive</td>
<td>Inter Role Distance</td>
<td>-0.16</td>
<td>0.027*</td>
<td>2.33*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Role Expectation Conflict</td>
<td>-0.14</td>
<td>0.021*</td>
<td>2.07*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Role Space Stress</td>
<td>-0.14</td>
<td>0.019*</td>
<td>1.97*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpersistive</td>
<td>Role Erosion</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>0.023*</td>
<td>2.18*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Role Overload</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>0.022*</td>
<td>2.18*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Self Role Distance</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>0.029**</td>
<td>2.47**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Role Space Stress</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>0.027**</td>
<td>2.37**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Role Set Stress</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>0.021*</td>
<td>2.06*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001, df= 199
MRA was done, taking Defensive (dimension of Coping with ORS) as dependent variable and all ten dimensions of ORS as Independent variables. From table 4, it can be inferred that 2% (R^2 0.027) of times Inter Role Distance and 2% (R^2 0.21) of times Role Expectation Conflict is explained by all the ten dimensions of ORS. As it is evident from table 4 that Inter Role Distance (-.16) and Role Expectation Conflict (-.14) has negative Beta weight suggests that women Executives may experience stress because of distances between the various roles and feels that there are too many expectations from the significant others from her role may resort to defense mechanisms by avoiding aggression or blame.

Role Space Stress impacts 1% (R^2 0.019) is explained by the two subscales of ORS. As it is evident from table 4 that Role Space Stress (-.14) has negative Beta weight suggests that women Executives may experience stress due to their self concept, their work role and the varied expectations from others from their role and they tend to cope with it by using defense mechanisms by avoiding aggression or blame. This is an avoidance mode.

MRA was done, taking Interpersistive (Subscales of CORS) as dependent variable and all ten dimensions of ORS as Independent variables. From table 4, it can be inferred that 2% (R^2 0.023) of times Role Erosion Stress, 2% (R^2 0.022) of times Role Overload Stress and 2% (R^2 0.029) of times Self Role Distance Stress is explained by all the ten dimensions of ORS. As it is evident from table 4 that at times Role Erosion Stress (.15), Role Overload Stress (.15) and Self Role Distance Stress (.17) has positive Beta weight suggests that women Executives may experience uncertainty if they experience that their role is becoming lack luster because of erosion, or it is bursting due to too much load and the executive perceives a distance between herself and her role the executive may resort to interpersistive style of taking responsibility on self and expect both themselves and the Organizational to resolve stress through rationalizing the demands of her role and helping her integrate with her organizational role.

From table 4, it can be inferred that 2% (R^2 0.021) of times Role Space Stress and 2% (R^2 0.027) of times Role Set Stress is explained by all the ten dimensions of ORS. As it is evident from table 4 that times Role Space Stress (.16) and Role Set Stress (.14) has positive Beta weight suggests that women Executives may experience uncertainty if they lack a risk taking profile and cannot deal with the unexpected may resort to interpersistive style of taking responsibility on self. This is an approach style because in both Role Space Stress and Role Set Stress the executives expect both themselves and the Organizational to resolve the conflicting demands within self, the Organizational role the other roles that she plays and the varied expectations of others within her role set.

Therefore, hypothesis 3, Role Space Stress and its Dimensions will positively influence Avoidance and Approach mode of Coping with Role Stress and hypothesis 4, Role Set Stress and its Dimensions of will positively influence Avoidance and Approach mode of Coping with Role Stress is partially sustained.
Table 5: Results of MRA between Level of Coping and Role Stress

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent Variable</th>
<th>Intercept</th>
<th>Beta (significant)</th>
<th>R²</th>
<th>t value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>: High Avoidance Coping</td>
<td>Self Role Distance</td>
<td>-0.70</td>
<td>0.34</td>
<td>2.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Resource Inadequacy</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>0.34</td>
<td>3.24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001 p<0.1, df= 199

MRA was done taking High Approach Coping; Low Approach Coping and Low Avoidance Coping. There was no significance found between High Approach Coping and Role Stress. There was no significance found between Low Approach Coping and Role Stress. There was no significance found between Low Avoidance Coping and ORS. MRA was done, taking High Avoidance Coping as dependent variable and all dimensions of Role Stress as Independent variables. From table 5, it can be inferred that 34% (R²= 0.34) of times Self Role Distance and Resource Inadequacy Stress is explained by all the High Avoidance CORS. However, from the Beta values, it can be inferred that among all ten variables only Self Role Distance (β= 0.70, p< 0.05) and Resource Inadequacy (β= 0.93, p< 0.01) dimension of role stress significantly affect High Avoidance CORS. As it is evident from table 5 that Self Role Distance Stress (-.70) has negative Beta weight suggests that women Executives may experience a distance between self and their role and may resort to high avoidance CORS. As it is evident from table 5 that times Resource Inadequacy (.93) has positive Beta weight suggests that women Executives may experience stress if they lack resources and may resort to High Avoidance CORS. Therefore under the influence of certain dimensions of role stress executives prefer a high level of avoidance mode to deal with role stressors.

Hypothesis 1, Role Stress will positively influence Coping with Role Stress is marginally sustained.

Conclusions and Implications:

On examining the relationship between Role Stress and Coping with Role Stress among women executives, results shows that there is a significant negative correlation between Inter Role Distance (IRD) and Defensive (D) avoidance mode of RS, in case of women executives, and that there is a significant and positive correlation between Self role distance (SRD), Role Space Stress (Role Space) and Interpersistive (n) approach mode of RS. Executives, who have high internality and high externality, when feel stressed out because of conflicting expectations or demands of various role senders avoid aggression or blame with the help of defense mechanism. Probably because they always deny that there does exist any kind of stress, due to which they will never be able to resolve and satisfy conflicting expectations of various roles. Executives who have high internality and high externality when feel stressed out because of the conflicts between the self-concept and the expectations from the role as perceived by them try joint efforts to resolve the problems. This means these executives rather than rejecting self or role try to
integrate with the role. Executives who have low internality and low externality when under low stress do not take efforts by themselves or from outside to resolve Low Role Stress. This is an avoidance strategy to deal with this Low Role Stress. Executives who have high internality and high externality when under low Role Stress will try to resolve low role stress through joint efforts by themselves and from outside to resolve low role stress. This is an approach strategy to deal with this Low Role Stress. Role Erosion Stress, Role Overload Stress and Self Role Distance Stress significantly affect Interpersitve style of Coping. Role Space Stress of ORS significantly affects Defensive style of Coping. At times Role Erosion Stress, Role Overload Stress and Self Role Distance Stress suggests that women Executives may experience uncertainty if they experience that their role is becoming lack luster because of erosion, or it is bursting due to too much load and the executive perceives a distance between herself and her role the executive may resort to interpersitve style of taking responsibility on self and expect both themselves and the Organizational to resolve stress through rationalizing the demands of her role and helping her integrate with her organizational role. Executives may experience uncertainty if they lack a risk taking profile and cannot deal with the unexpected may resort to interpersitve style of taking responsibility on self. Most of the times, Self Role Distance and Resource Inadequacy Stress is explained by all the High Avoidance CORS. Under the influence of certain dimensions of role stress executives prefer a high level of avoidance mode to deal with role stressors.

It appears that executives in Coping with Organizational Role Stress prefer to use more of Approach Mode wherein all efforts, self-help; help from significant others and organizational help, is expected by the executives. This is a healthy sign and it would be a step in the right direction if organizations help executives to be more self reliant in resolving own role stress.

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