

Research Paper

Measuring Role Stress Among Working Women: Development, Reliability, and Validity of a Context-Specific Scale

Dr. Madhuri Rawat¹, Dr. Taresh Bhatia^{2*}

ABSTRACT

This study aims to develop and validate a comprehensive Role Stress Scale specifically designed for working women who simultaneously fulfill the roles of employee, mother, and wife. Drawing on existing literature and theoretical frameworks, the scale was constructed to measure multiple dimensions of role stress including role overload, conflict, ambiguity, inadequacy, stagnation, erosion, and isolation. An initial pool of 60 items was administered to a sample of 300 married working women aged 20 to 55 years. After item analysis, 45 items with the highest discriminative power were retained across three domains. The scale demonstrated high test-retest reliability (0.83) and strong validity (0.79) with an external criterion. Findings highlight the distinct role stress patterns experienced by working women and underscore the impact of societal expectations and occupational demands. The Role Stress Scale serves as a valuable tool for researchers, counselors, and organizations to assess stress and develop targeted interventions for women's mental well-being.

Keywords: Role Stress, Working Women, Development, Reliability, Validity

Role stress refers to the stress experienced by individuals due to the demands, expectations and responsibilities associated with their roles particularly in the workplace. For working women, role stress often arises from balancing professional duties with personal and family responsibilities, compounded by societal expectations and cultural norms.

The working women have multiple roles to play as a wife, a mother and an employee. Being subject to the dual demands of home and work place, they are liable to face a crisis of adjustment (**Kapoor, 1970**), which may cause role stresses.

Major Components

i) Role Overload:

Occurs when the demands of the job exceed the individual's capacity to perform them. The role over load is defined as having so many demands related to one's roles. When an individual accumulates more roles, the supply of time and energy is increased, the result is that expenditure of this supply is at a faster rate than recovery.

¹Head & Associate Professor, Department of Psychology, Dayanand Vedic College, Orai (Jalaun) U.P.

²Former Principal & Associate Professor, Department of Psychology, Dayanand Vedic College, Orai (Jalaun) U.P.

*Corresponding Author

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Measuring Role Stress Among Working Women: Development, Reliability, and Validity of a Context-Specific Scale

The workers felt that their work is too much and by performing this too much work, they are doing injustice with their body and mind so the consequences is that they feel role stress by this over load.

Involvement in multiple role of paid worker, wife and mother- a working women have to perform the responsibilities of job and family both. No doubt, the overload may be a major factor causing stress among working women.

ii) **Role Conflict**

Happens when there are incompatible demands from different roles, such as work and family. Role Conflict in which individual finds himself concurrently in two or more positions requiring contradictory for role enactment. Two type of role conflict may be identified, inter-role conflict and intra-role conflict. The role conflict of working women while performing multiple roles, as paid worker, as a mother and as a wife for example. One day a working woman's son is ill and the same day there is an important meeting in her office, now she is at dilemma whether to go office or not.

iii) **Role Ambiguity**

Results from unclear job expectations, leading to confusion and stress.

iv) **Role Inadequacy:**

When an individual feels they lack the necessary skills or resources to fulfill their role effectively.

v) **Role Isolation**

Feelings of being left out or unsupported by colleagues and supervisors.

vi) **Role Stagnation**

The perception of lack of growth or advancement opportunities in one's role.

vii) **Role Erosion**

When the significance or scope of one's role is diminished or undermined.

Types of Role Stress

a) **Work-Family Conflict**

Stress arising from the competing demands of work and family responsibilities.

b) **Interpersonal Conflict at work:**

Stress due to difficult relationships with colleagues, supervisor or subordinates.

c) **Workload Stress**

Stress from having too many tasks to complete in a limited time.

d) **Career Development Stress**

Concerns about career progression, Job security and professional development.

e) **Organizational Stress**

Stress related to the organizational culture, structure and policies.

Influencing Factors of Role Stress

1. Work Environment

Organizational culture management style and support systems.

2. Personal Characteristics

Personality traits, coping mechanisms and resilience.

Measuring Role Stress Among Working Women: Development, Reliability, and Validity of a Context-Specific Scale

3. Social Support

Support from family, friends and colleagues.

4. Job Characteristics

Nature of the job, level of autonomy and clarity of job roles.

5. Work-Life Balance

Ability to balance work responsibilities with personal life.

6. Societal Expectations

Cultural norms and societal expectations about women's role in the workplace and family.

7. Economic Factors

Financial stability and job security.

Some Important Studies

In a study on women doctors, engineers, college teachers, clerks, nurses and peons (**Nigam and Bhatia, 1995**), it was found that not all women experienced the same degree of role stress. Women belonging to high status and high education groups experienced significantly less role stress than their counterparts the low socio-economic status and low education groups. **Chand and Sethi (1997)**, examined organizational factors contributing to work family role stress among working women. **Sandhu and Mehta (2006)** investigated the relationship between occupational stress, work-family conflict and the coping strategies employed by working women. **Kaur and Garg (2008)** explored the various dimensions of role stress among working women and its impact on their mental health. **Singh and Singh (2009)** compared work stress and job satisfaction levels among women working in the Government and Private Sectors.

Bhattacharya and Mukherjee (2009) Studied role stress among women working in the Information Technology and Information Technology Enabled Services sectors in India. **Rani and Singh (2012)** investigated the role stress experienced by working women in India and the coping strategies they employ. **Goyal and Arora (2012)** studied role stress and role erosion among women working in the banking sector.

Jayaseelan and Ganesan (2014) examined role stress among women in the teaching profession in India. **Pradhan and Jena (2018)** explored the effect of work-life balance on organizational citizenship behaviour among working women in India, highlighting the stress related to balancing work and family responsibilities. **Nair and Nair (2019)** compared work-life conflict and stress among married working women in public and private sector organizations in India. **Sarkar and Jha (2020)** examined role stress and its impact on work-life balance among women professionals in the IT sector in India. **Aggarwal and Chandra (2020)** examined the impact of work-family conflict on role stress among women working in the IT sector in Bangalore. **Patel and Bhakta (2021)** studied the occupational stress among women employees in Government and Private Sector in Gujarat.

Singh and Kumari (2021) explored occupational stress and the coping mechanisms employed by working women in the healthcare sector in India. **Bhat and Dhar (2021)** studied the relationship between role stress, job satisfaction and psychological well-being among women working in the banking sector. **Sharma and Sharma (2022)** explored the

Measuring Role Stress Among Working Women: Development, Reliability, and Validity of a Context-Specific Scale

relationship between work stress and job satisfaction among female bank employees in India. **Rao and Patel (2022)** investigated the relationship between work stress and well-being among Indian working women in the education sector. **Kaur and Suri (2022)** examined role stress and work-life balance among women employees in the education sector in Delhi. **Desai and Patel (2022)** studied the impact of work stress on job performance among women in the corporate sector in India.

Recently, **Kumari and Devi (2023)** studied the stress and coping strategies among working women in the healthcare sector in India. **Gupta and Chaturvedi (2023)** studies role stress among women entrepreneurs in India, examining the challenges they face and the coping mechanisms they employ. **Reddy and Reddy (2023)** studied a qualitative analysis of role stress and coping strategies among women entrepreneurs in India. **Sharma and Mehta (2023)** investigated how organizational culture influence's role stress and job satisfaction among female employees in various industries.

Development of the Scale

The present 'Role Stress Scale' measures role stress of working women as paid worker, as mother and as wife. Role stress among working women often arises from the multiple roles they are expected to perform simultaneously-each with its own set of demands, expectations and challenges. These roles typically include being a paid worker, a mother and a wife. The interplay between these roles can lead to significant stress.

a) Role Stress as a paid worker

As a paid worker, a women is expected to fulfil her professional responsibilities, which often include meeting deadlines achieving targets, managing interpersonal relationships at work and maintaining a high level of performance. The pressure to excel professionally can lead to stress, particularly when combined with the responsibilities of other roles. **Kaur and Singh (2020)** explored how the high demand of jobs in the IT sector, particularly in fast-paced environments, contribute to significant role stress. The researcher found that role overload and the need to balance work with personal life are major contributors to stress among women in this sector. **Gupta and Sharma (2023)** found that women in high pressure jobs, particularly in urban areas, experience significant stress due to the need to balance work expectations with family responsibilities.

b) Role Stress as mother

As a mother, a woman is often responsible for the emotional, educational and physical well-being of her children. This role can be particularly demanding due to societal expectations of motherhood, the need to provide constant care and the emotional labor involved. Stress can arise when the demands of motherhood conflict with the demands of paid work. **Bhatnagar and Gupta (2021)** found that working mother often experience significant stress due to the need to manage both profession and parental responsibilities. The study highlighted that the lack of support systems such as reliable childcare, exacerbates this stress. **Rao and Verma (2022)** highlighted that working mothers often experience role conflict and guilt due to the perceived inability to fully meet their children's needs while also fulfilling job demands.

c) Role Stress as a wife

As a wife, a women is expected to maintain the household, manage family relationships and often take on the emotional labor of maintaining harmony in the family. These responsibilities can be especially stressful when combined with the demands of work and

Measuring Role Stress Among Working Women: Development, Reliability, and Validity of a Context-Specific Scale

motherhood, leading to role conflict and stress. **Patel and Desai (2019)** investigated the stress that arises from the dual role of being a wife and a working professional. The researchers found that the expectation placed on women to maintain a traditional role in the household, even when they are working leads to high level of stress, particularly when these expectations are not aligned with their professional roles. **Patel and Shah (2023)** found that women who feel unsupported by their spouses or who carry the majority of domestic responsibilities experience higher levels of role stress, which negatively impacts marital satisfaction.

Item Analysis

An initial pool of 60 items were ready for the entire scale (18-22 items under each area). The Scale was administered to the 300 married working women from different job for the purpose of item analysis. The age range of the subjects was 20 to 55 years. The subject was asked to respond in terms of their agreement or disagreement with the items in a five point continuum namely strongly agree, agree, uncertain, disagreement and strongly disagree. Employing 75 percent upper and 25 percent lower criterion groups item analysis was done. The researchers selected the first 45 items with the largest discriminating value for the final scale out of which each area has 15 items.

Reliability

The coefficient of reliability was determined by test-retest method. The test was administered twice with a time interval of 30 days to a sample of 200 subjects. The test-retest reliability coefficient of the scale was found 0.83, which is high and significant.

Validity

The validity of the test was found out by correlating the scores of the present scale with the external criterion as the scores of 'Role Conflict Inventory for Married Women' by B.A. Parikh, on 200 subjects, correlation was found 0.79.

Administration

It is a self administrating scale. There is no time limit for answering it. However most of the groups should finish it in about 15 minutes. It should be emphasized that there is no right or wrong answers to the statement. Your responses will be kept completely secret.

Scoring

It is a five point scale. The scoring of which has been objectified by assigning five to one scores respectively for five alternatives of positive items rated Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree. For the negative items the scores assigned to each of the alternatives have been reversed.

For Positive Item

Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
5	4	3	2	1

For Negative Item

Strongly Agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	2	3	4	5

Measuring Role Stress Among Working Women: Development, Reliability, and Validity of a Context-Specific Scale

The following table shows items distributors in the three parts

Different Roles	No. of Items	Positive Items	Negative Items
a). As Paid Worker	15	1,4,7,10,13,16,19,22,25 28,31,34,37,40,43	
b) As Mother	15	2,5,8,11,14,17,20, 23,29,32,35,38,41,44	26
c) As Wife	15	3,6,12,18,24,27,30 36,39,42,45	9,15,21,33
Total	45	40	05

Higher scores on scale reveals the greater degree of role stress.

Norms

A qualitative description of the scores obtained of scale is as follows-

Different Roles	Role Stress Level				
	Very High	High	Average	Low	Very Low
a) As Paid Worker	58 & Above	49-57	31-48	21-30	20 & Below
b) As Mother	65 & Above	51-64	35-50	24-34	23 & Below
c) As Wife	62 & Above	52-61	33-51	22-32	21 & Below
Total	190 & Above	143-189	119-142	75-118	74 & Below

A high scores indicates high role stress level. In case of very high or high role stress level, psychological counseling would be suggested.

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Measuring Role Stress Among Working Women: Development, Reliability, and Validity of a Context-Specific Scale

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Measuring Role Stress Among Working Women: Development, Reliability, and Validity of a Context-Specific Scale

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Conflict of Interest

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