

## **Role Conflict among Women Police: A Sociological study in Nagaon and Golaghat Districts of Assam**

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### **Abstract**

The status of women has undergone tremendous changes in the last few decades. Earlier, the number of women working in positions of power and authority was very less. Most of jobs done by women were concentrated in nursing, elementary school teaching and other traditional female occupations. Due to the spread of modern education in India families began expecting women not only to continue with higher education but also to pursue any career of their interest. As a result of which Indian women have entered into different profession which were previously considered male dominated. Woman are now employed in different professions like in aviation sector, in judiciary, doctors, engineers, military services or as a police officer which proves that modern day women establish their independent identities and move beyond the traditional identities as daughter, wife and mother. The nature of police system is altogether different from work in the other departments such as banks, schools, hospitals, or business organization. The police work demands to work more hours, to work at late night and to work in dangerous and uncongenial place. Such a situation poses many problems for women police. This article focuses on the various aspects of women police like family status, family attitude, societal attitude, family conflict, and time management.

**Keywords:** Police, Women Police, Role Conflict, work life balance, household work.

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### **I. INTRODUCTION**

From time immemorial women has been utilized as a work force either at home or outside home or both places by the society and the economic system. The first condition for the liberation of women is to bring the whole female sex back into the public industry (Engels, F. 1942). Previously a woman working outside home was looked down due to some religious taboos, family norms or social customs. But these norms or customs are weakening fast and women are moving out of their domestic life in search of employment outside like teaching, nursing, administration, etc. When women enter into work outside home, they face challenges in balancing between their household work and professional work. In this balancing household gains in terms of economic resources and loses in terms of loss of care and concern for the family members. This burden heavily falls on women because our society is still tradition bound. Therefore, a detailed portrait of women's work is necessary to reveal women's economic activities, recognize the extent of their contribution to family work, fully understand the distinction of their social position, and make informed development interventions (Tinker, I. 1990). A middle class woman working outside in different jobs is post-independence phenomenon in India. It is only in recent past, women have been working in police department. Until then, it was a male dominated profession that requires lot of physical stamina, power, wisdom, rational thinking, capability to control the situation and confidence.

Many women in today's generation feel torn between the traditional expectations as a woman and the expectations of modern working conditions. The traditional expectation of being a women demands to be a good housewife, a mother, cooking, cleaning and looking after the household duties which often clashes with the roles outside the household as an employee. A role is "a set of socially expected and approved behaviour patterns consisting of both duties and privileges, associated with a particular position in a group" (Ogburn W.F. and Nimkoff, M.F. 1958). Roles are socially defined expectations that a person in a given social position follows. It is the expected behaviour of an individual occupying a particular position (Giddens, A. 2000). In this light, a role may be understood as a set of norms and expectations applied to the incumbent of a particular position. Comparing these traditional roles of women to men, the roles of women does not bring money or prestige in the

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society; due to this there have been reactions that these established traditional women roles to be the source of men-women inequality.

### **Women Police in Assam**

Women had shown their capabilities in maintenance of peace, safeguarding the lives and properties of the people, courage and decision making abilities from the earlier days during the rule of Ahoms to the freedom movements in India. The emergence of women into the police force began in the year 1969 (Dutta, D.N, 2000). Since then the women of Assam began to consider police as a profession.

The Assam Police has grown from strength to strength during the last two decade. In 1980 it had a force of 40,290 and at the end of the 20th century its numerical strength stands at 61,263. As on 1/1/2017, according to the annual statistics published by the Bureau of Police Research & Development (BPR&D), the total strength of police in Assam stood at 55,403, with actual strength of women police comprising of only 3,033 i.e., 5.47 percent in state police. Unfortunately, Assam ranked one of the lowest in India in terms of representation of women in its police at just about 2.16 Percent.

**Table 1: Number of Police in India and Assam**

	Actual strength of police (Armed Branch +Unarmed Branch)	Actual strength of women police (Armed Branch +Unarmed Branch)	Percentage of women police in state.	Percentage of women police in total.
ASSAM	55,403	3,033	5.47	2.16
INDIA	1,926,247	140,184	7.28	7.28

**Source:** Bureau of Police Research & Development (BPR&D)

## **II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

The paper includes various literature reviews from Indian and International context on the multifarious aspects of women in policing. These researches have come a long way from descriptive studies to philosophical, speculative studies to scientific studies. From these studies various aspects have been analysed.

The role of the police force is to promote the welfare in the society, and for this they continuously have to perform their duties without fail. This burden heavily falls when it comes to women in policing in a male dominated work sphere. Arain, S. (2014) conducted a study on Perspective, Status and Prospective of women police in where she discussed about the male operational mode, which is based on material reliance, power and chauvinism and is the basis of evils such as greed for money and domination, and the female operational mode which is based in affection, sharing distress and constructive activity, where she concludes that female talent is still untapped. Maheswari, S.K. (2017) has conducted a study on women Police Constables difficulty in performing job, family support, working conditions, social acceptance, stress, health, psychological issues and working efficiency. The study revealed that women constables are assigned with variety of tasks which normally include tasks at public meeting or functions, natural disaster, handling strikes, mobs, patrolling, respond to calls, make arrest etc. Chakraborty, A. (2006) found that majority of the women police in Calcutta have accepted the job of police to be self-dependent and it affords government relate job securities. It was further observed that irrespective of ranks all the woman personnel experienced encouragement, discouragement, surprise, adulation from their relative, friends and neighbours. Women personnel of higher ranks feel that they possess more status is community and woman constable rank experience low status is community.

Alem, S. (1991) revealed that women police are give less functions to operate and are found useful in the cases relevant to rape, unnatural deaths of women, family disputes, juvenile delinquency and immoral trafficking in women. Mohamed, A.P. (2006) did an empirical study where he evaluated the performance of women police in Tamil Nadu in respect of the problems in their families and society, increasing trends of crimes against women and women criminals and the strategies. Balking, J. (1988) did a study spanning 14 years on the involvement of women in police work where he found uniformly that women not only perform the job of policing effectively, but are better able to defuse potentially violent situations: "Policemen see police work as involving control through authority," he wrote, "while policewomen see it as a public service." Maheswari, S. K. (2016) in his study stated that majority of the women constables do not get family members support which directly have an influence on their job performance and wellbeing. Roy, I. (1979) concentrated on the study on the police of the developed countries where he highlights the aspects of dress and weapon of police men and women. Sabat, S. et. al (2010) in their work studied the impact of gender on police services and the leadership roles among female police officers which revealed that there is a positive change of attitude among people towards the police women and the media has contributed to it. The study recommended to provide training in diversity and equal opportunity issues for all staff, creative recruitment campaigns, and same gender as well as

cross gender mentoring relationship and comprehensive strategies for recruiting, integrating and retaining women.

### Objective of the Study

- To study the role conflict confronted by women police in their domestic and professional life.

### III. METHODOLOGY

The methods used are both primary and secondary data for the purpose of this research paper. The primary data was collected through Structured Interview Schedule. The sources of secondary data are collected from books, journals, theses and concerned websites. The sample taken by the researcher for the study was 50 respondents, selected on the basis of convenient sampling. The women police respondents were Sub-Inspector, Women police constable, Women Traffic police.

### Area of Study

Assam is a state in Northeast India, situated south of the eastern Himalayas along the Brahmaputra and Barak River valleys and covers an area of 78,438 kms (30,285 sq. mi). The state is bordered by Bhutan and the state of Arunachal Pradesh to the north; Nagaland and Manipur to the east; Meghalaya, Tripura, Mizoram and Bangladesh to the south; and West Bengal to the west via the Siliguri Corridor, a 22 kilometres strip of land that connects the state to the rest of India. There are 33 districts in Assam and the present study was conducted in 2 districts i.e., Nagaon and Golaghat district of Assam. The numbers of women police in Nagaon and Golaghat district of Assam are represented in the table below:

**TABLE 2: Number of women police in Nagaon and Golaghat**

Districts	Actual strength of police (Armed Branch + Unarmed Branch)	Actual strength of women police (Armed Branch + Unarmed Branch)	Percentage of women police in district.
GOLAGHAT	621	72	11.59
NAGAON	1,284	145	11.29

**Source:** Official data collected from Police Reserve, Nagaon and Golaghat as on 21/05/2018.

The above table indicates the number of women police in Golaghat and Nagaon districts of Assam. The actual strength of police force in Golaghat district is 621 out of which the number of women police is only 72, i.e., 11.59 percent of the total police force in Golaghat. The total number of police force in Nagaon district is 1,284 out of which women police is 145 constituting of 11.29 percent of the total police force in Nagaon district.

### Theoretical approach

The theoretical basis for understanding women in workforce can be clustered into two main paradigms- 1. Structural Functionalism and 2. The Feminist Framework. There are various analytical and empirical studies attempted to explain women in workplace but quite often the theoretical basis is gender neutral which have failed to capture diversity in women's work situations. Here an attempt has been made to understand and explain the theoretical perspective to women in workplace.

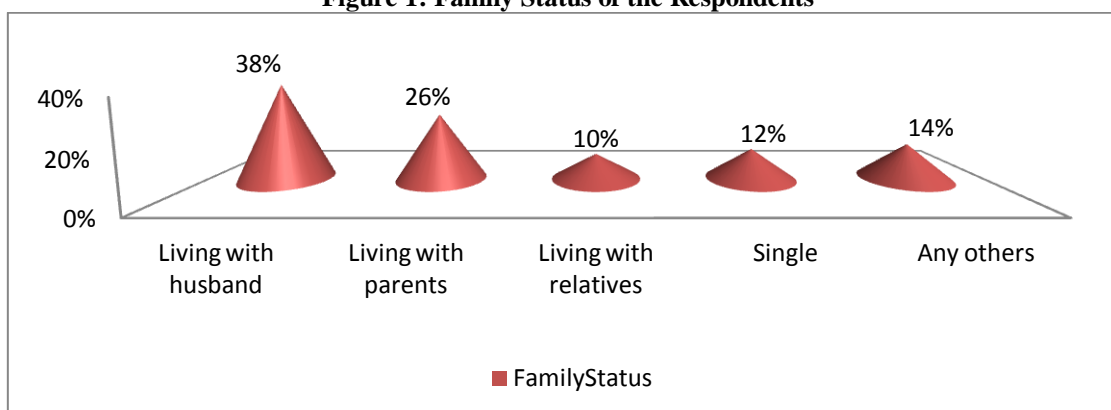
### Analysis

The present paper looks into all the factors of role conflict arising out of the dual roles played by women police personnel such as, family status, family attitude, societal attitude, family conflict, time management, etc.

### Family Status

Family status is important factor to see the aspect of role conflict faced by women police. Responsibilities of women increase when they have more pressure to look after their household duties along with the work life. The number of people living in same household can increase family life workload on the other hand it can also decrease by dividing the work among different members of the family depending upon various physical and mental circumstances of the family members.

**Figure 1: Family Status of the Respondents**

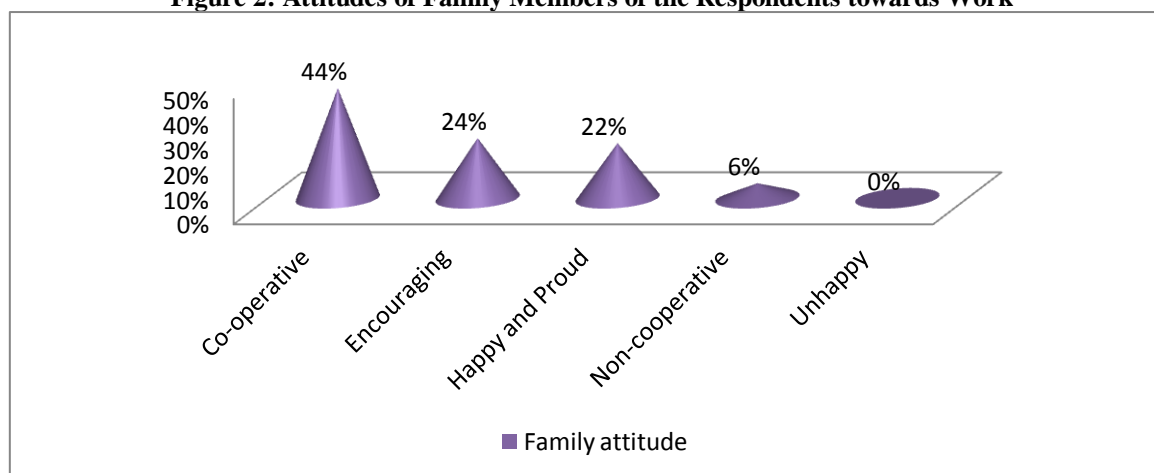


The figure 1 shows the present family status of the respondents. It has been observed that out of 28 married women police 38 percent of the respondents are living with their husbands. 26 percent are living with their parents and 10 percent respondents are living with their relatives. 12 percent of the respondents are living single far from their family as they are posted in different place and 14 percent of the respondents said that they are sharing place with other women of the same department and also with women working in other departments.

#### Attitude of Family Members

The socially prevalent attitude is that a father or a husband feels undignified to live on earning of her daughters and wife respectively. Such attitude had been responsible for discouraging many women for joining various vocations despite having the qualifications (Ali, M. et al, 2005). Family attitude towards the work of women have both positive and negative impact. When the family attitudes are positive, it helps women in the work profile and if it is negative it hampers the work life.

**Figure 2: Attitudes of Family Members of the Respondents towards Work**

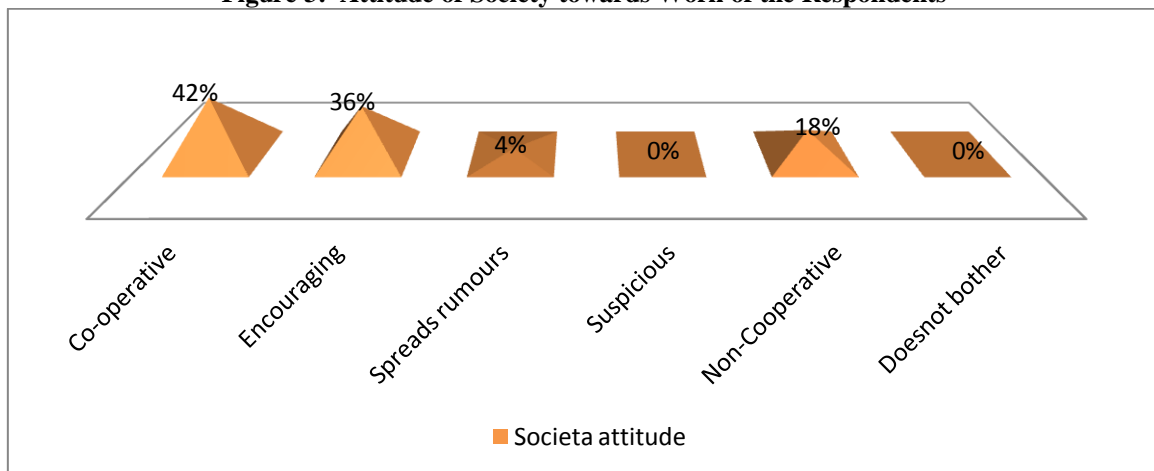


As illustrated in the figure 2, the attitude of family of the respondents towards work 44 percent respondents said that their family was co-operative towards their work. But it was also found that 06 percent respondent's families were non-cooperative towards their work. It was found in the cases of married respondents. They were non-cooperative sometimes if they failed to fulfil their household responsibilities.

#### Attitude of Society

Women entry into law enforcement always criticizes by patriarchal society not in India but also in world over. But as the feminist movement began, it started criticizing the patriarchal structure of the society and their mind set on the division of job on the basis of gender. Brown (2000) stated that such social attitudes resulted in the struggle of women against prejudice, conservative thinking and patriarchal stereotypes, obstacles to women's integration into certain professions, especially the police.

**Figure 3: Attitude of Society towards Work of the Respondents**

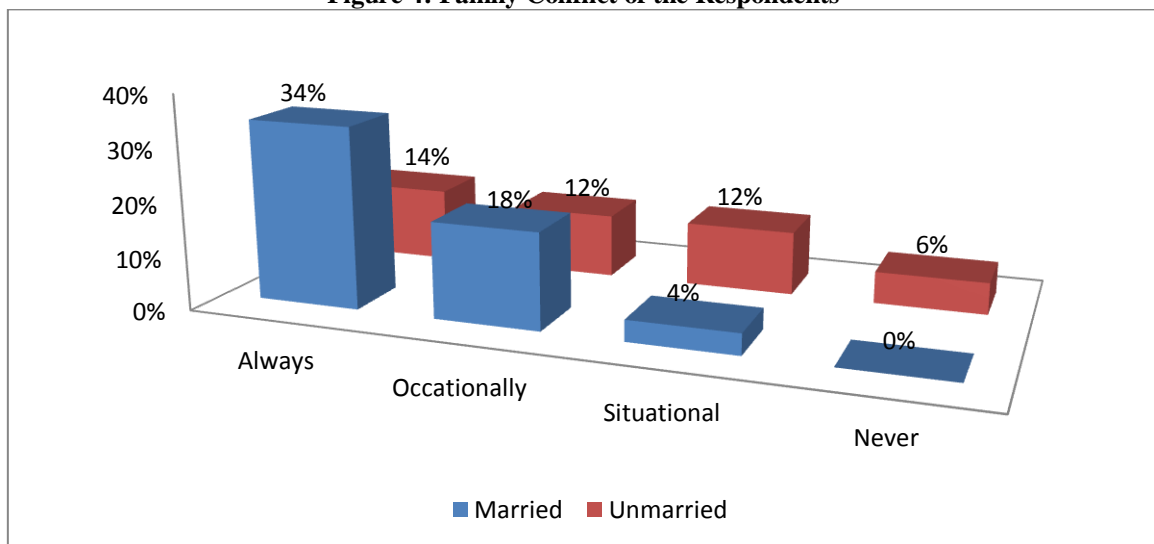


The above figure 3 shows the responses of the societal attitudes of the respondents towards their work. 42 percent responded that their society was co-operative of the fact that they were working in the police department and 18 percent of the respondents said that some people of the society were non-cooperative of the fact that they were working in the police department as they considered it dangerous and challenging for women and also they have to work at odd hours.

**Family Conflict**

When women are not able to manage the demands of their family life due to professional life then they experience family conflict. Work-family conflict occurs when demands from work and family are mutually incompatible. Family conflict can be stressful and damaging to relationships and can create an imbalance in work-family life.

**Figure 4: Family Conflict of the Respondents**

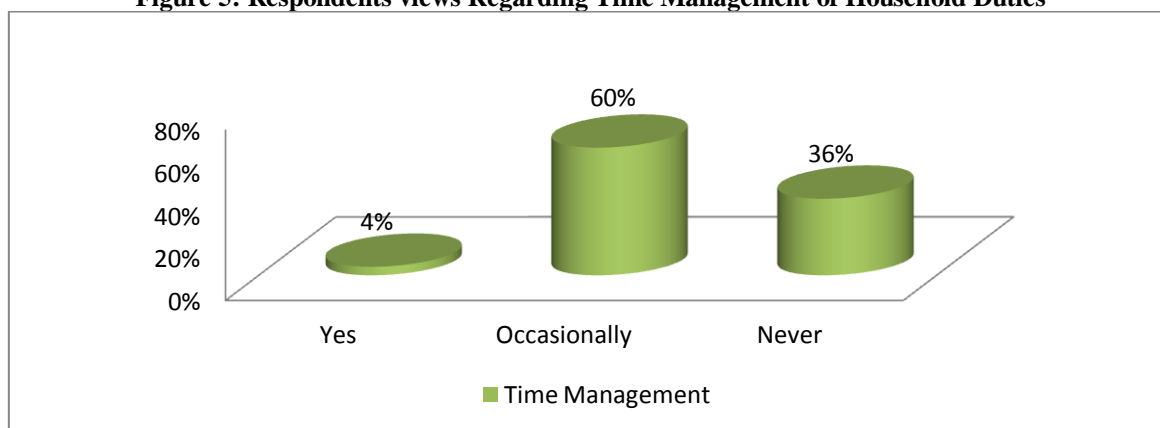


The above figure 4 illustrates the aspects of family conflict while discharging their work related responsibilities and family responsibilities. It was found that 34 percent of the married respondents and 14 percent unmarried respondents always encountered family conflicts. And none of the married respondents and 06 percent of the unmarried respondent said that they never enter into any familial conflict because of their work. From this it can be said that the aspect of familial conflict can be seen more in case of the married respondents then the unmarried respondents.

### Time Management

The management of the household requires doing certain kinds of work and hard labour. The household responsibilities are generally taken care of by women, but when it comes to working women, the time management fall short as they have to manage both household as well as professional duties. This can be more profoundly seen in women working in law enforcement as the police work demands long working hours, travel, out station training etc. that make it difficult for women to work equally in home as well as in police occupation.

**Figure 5: Respondents views Regarding Time Management of Household Duties**

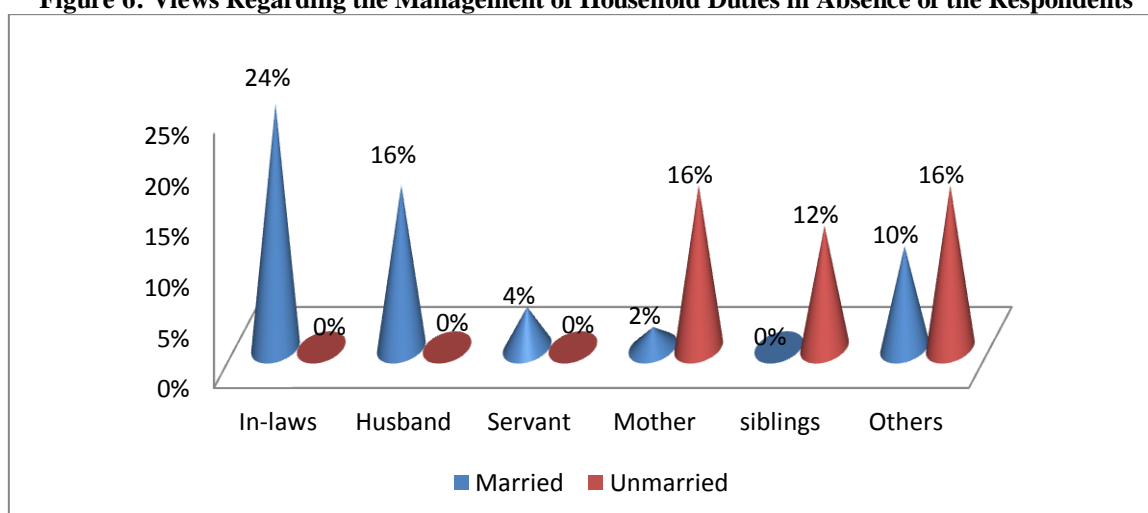


The figure 5 illustrates the sample respondent’s availability of time to manage the household duties. 04 percent of the respondents said that they find sufficient time to manage their household duties. Majority of the respondents, i.e., 60 percent of the respondents said that they are only occasionally able to take out time to manage household duties. And 36 percent of the respondents said that they are never find sufficient time to manage their household duties.

### Management of Household Duties

Household work requires a lot of time and energy. In any family, the women are responsible for managing the household responsibilities. Women working in different professions outside home face various challenges in managing household duties. At times they need an extra help to manage those duties and those help may come from their husband, in-laws, parents, siblings or from domestic workers.

**Figure 6: Views Regarding the Management of Household Duties in Absence of the Respondents**



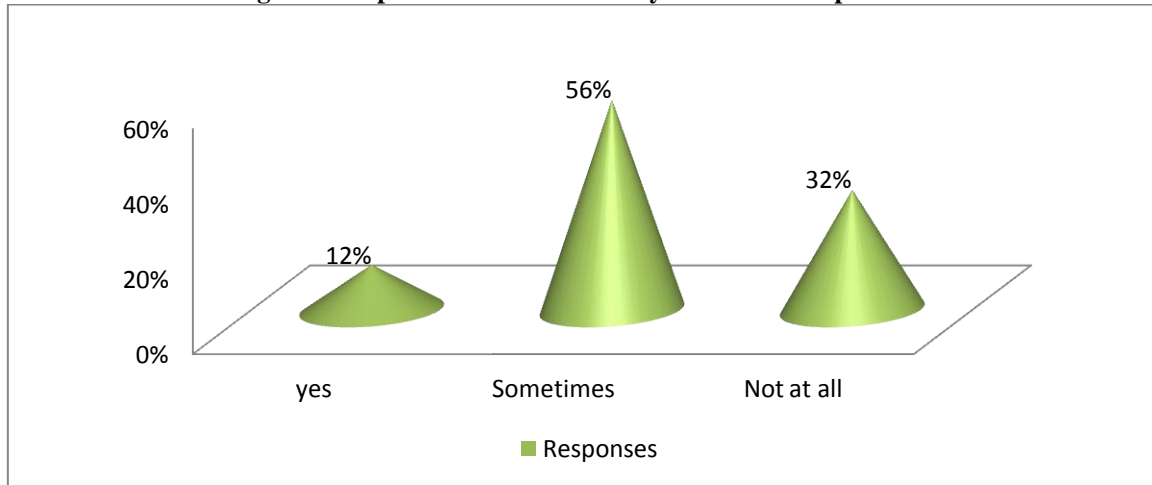
The above figure 6 shows the role substitute referring to the help the sample respondents receives while discharging their household work. 24 percent of the married respondents get help from their in-laws while discharging their household duties. 16 percent married respondents said that they receive help from their husbands while doing the household work and 04 percent married respondents have domestic help. 02 percent married respondent and 16 percent of the unmarried respondent responded that they get help from their mother while doing the household work. 12 percent unmarried respondent also said that they get help from their siblings

and 10 percent respondent who were married and 16 percent unmarried respondents said that they sometimes get help from their roommates and neighbours wife discharging their duties.

**Career and Family Life**

Women usually face the challenge of decision of pursuing a successful career or staying at home as a full-time homemaker or as possibly even working only on a part time basis. Women working outside home can create positive as well as negative impact on the family, and this impact can be seen especially in case of married women. Here, an attempt has been made to study the responses of the respondents regarding how often they face the negative impact of career on family life.

**Figure 7: Impact of Career on Family Life of the Respondents**

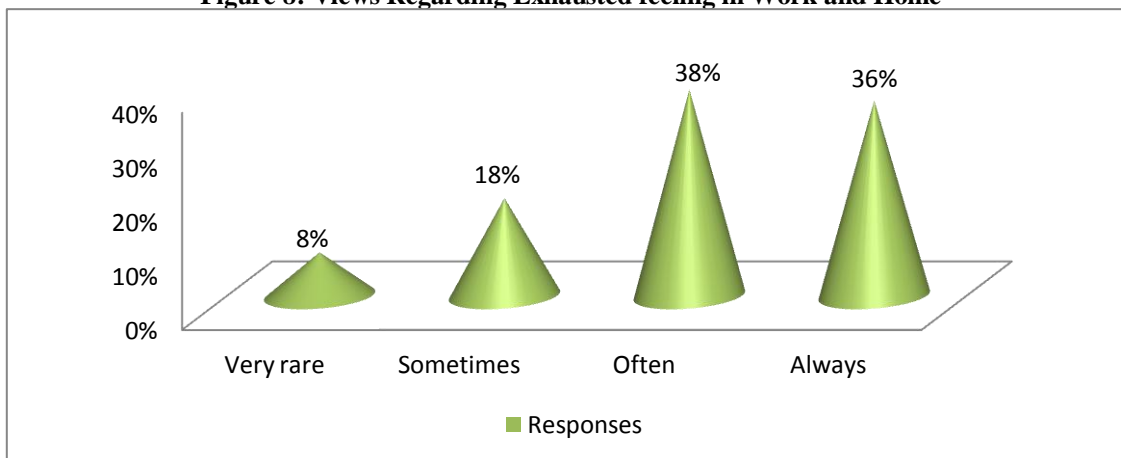


The above figure 7 shows the negative impact of career on family. 12 percent respondents said that they always feel negative impact on the family. 56 percent respondents said that they sometimes feel the negative impact such as when they have to work at odd hours and 32 percent said that they never feel that their career has given any negative impact on the family.

**Exhaustion**

Exhaustion is one of the central aspect of human life which refers to a feeling of being overextended and depleted of one’s emotional, mental and physical resources (Maslach, C. and M.P. Leiter, 2008). The work of policing need lots of physical as well as mental stamina and for the women police looking after both the household and work life may feel exhausted many times. Here, the researcher attempted to study how often they feel exhausted managing both the responsibilities.

**Figure 8: Views Regarding Exhausted feeling in Work and Home**

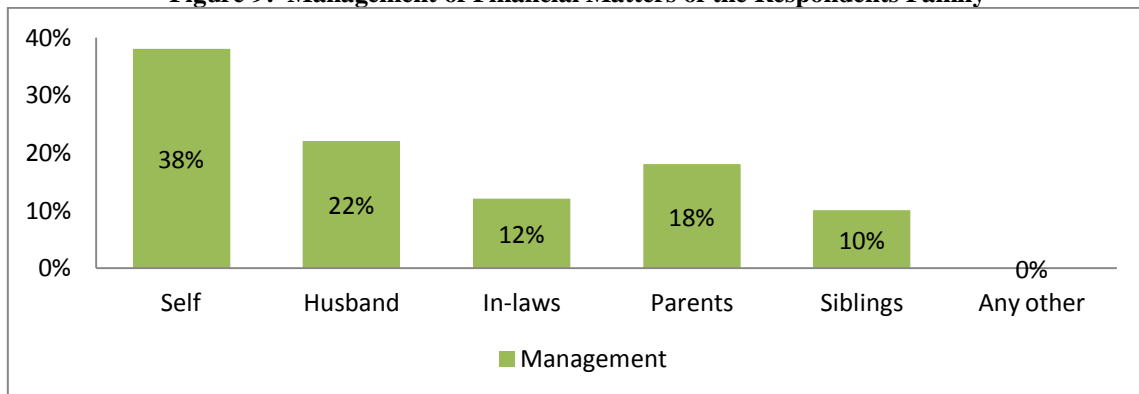


The figure 8 illustrated above shows the views of the respondents if they feel exhausted working both at home and workplace. It was found that 08 percent of the respondent said that they very rarely feel exhausted while managing both household and workplace duties and 36 percent said that they always feel exhausted while managing both household and workplace duties.

**Financial Management**

Financial management is performed in every family to make the optimal use of the available money. In the present day society, men and women try to play their best role in the financial management of the family and society (Sushma, R. 2012). Generally, financial matters were taken care of by the patriarch head of the family but with the changing times these management are taken care of by all the earning as well as non-earning members of the family.

**Figure 9: Management of Financial Matters of the Respondents Family**

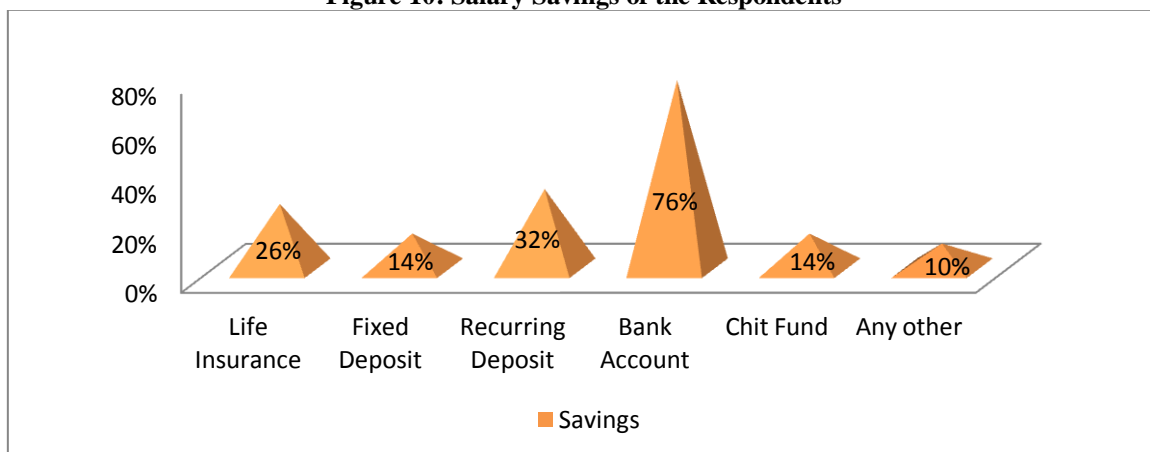


The figure 9 shows the management of the financial matters of the family. It was found that 38 percent respondents themselves managed the financial matters of the family. 22 percent respondents responded that their husbands looked after the financial matters of the family. 12 percent said that the financial management of the family was done by their in-laws. 18 percent respondents said that their parents took the financial decisions of the family and 10 percent of the respondents said that their siblings manage their financial matters.

**Salary Savings**

Saving salary is very important factor of life. It come handy in different situations such as, accumulating property, education of children, health issues etc. There are different policies which helps individual save money such as, life insurance, fixed deposit, mutual funds etc.

**Figure 10: Salary Savings of the Respondents**



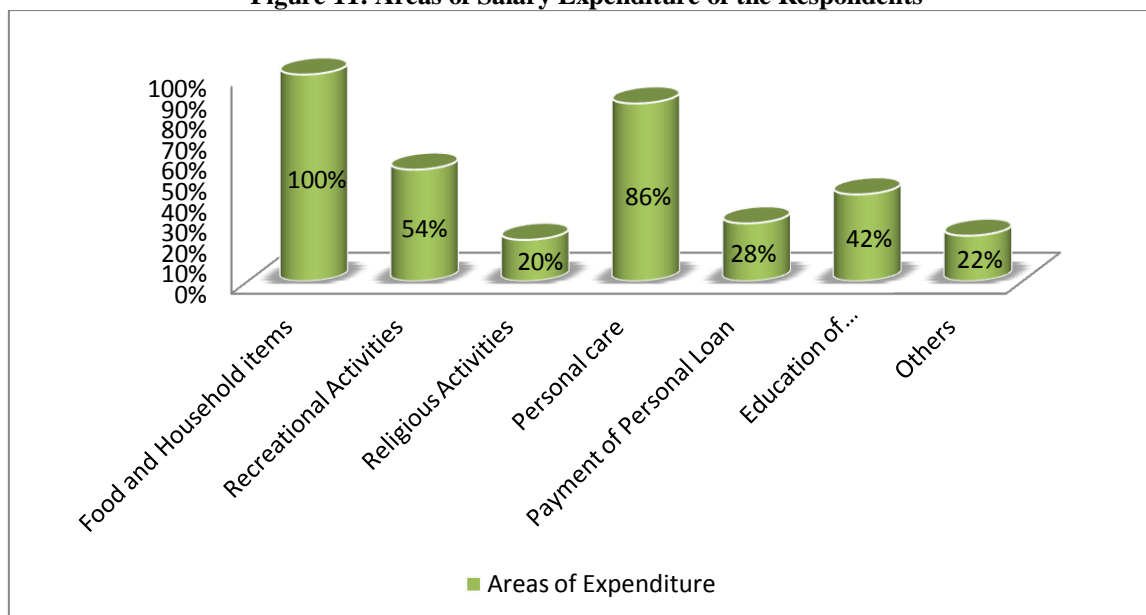
The above figure 10 shows the salary savings in different sources. 26 percent respondents had done life insurance. 14 percent respondents said that they had done fixed deposit and 32 percent said that they save in recurring deposit. Majority of the respondents i.e., 76 percent say that they save in their bank accounts alone whereas 14 percent respondents invested in some chit funds and 10 percent said that they invested in some mutual funds.



### Areas of Salary Expenditure

Expenditure refers to spending the income on goods and services necessary for the household sustenance. The basic areas of salary expenditure focused on this study are on recreational activities, personal care, repayment of personal loan education, food and household items etc.

**Figure 11: Areas of Salary Expenditure of the Respondents**



The above figure 11 shows the area of expenditure of the respondents. The study revealed that 100 percent of the respondent spent on the food and other household necessities of the household. It was found that 54 percent respondents said that they spend their salary on recreational activities such pursuing their hobbies and 20 percent respondents spend on religious activities. 86 percent of the total respondents spend their salary on their personal care such as medicines and consumer products. 28 percent of the total respondents spend on repayment of their personal loans. 42 percent spend on the education of their children and/or siblings and 22 percent respondents said that they have some other expenditure along with some of the mentioned.

### Theoretical Implications

The structural functional approach can be incorporated in this paper. Functionalists argue that gender roles considers women work in the domestic sphere as most important but with women joining in different workforce apart from household duties created an imbalance in the society which lead to change in the family structure. Women police being a part of family and workforce, have multiple roles to function for the smooth running of the family and the society at large. The women police have the greater responsibility to see the functions of the family and job in order to maintain the structure of the society and balance their family-work relationship. Structural functionalists thus, posit that gender roles arise from the need to establish a division of labour that will help maintain the smooth running of the family and concomitantly contribute to the stability of society.

Further, according to socialist feminist theorists the emancipation of women will be possible only when women can take part in production on large social scale and domestic work claims only an insignificant amount of her time. The women police are emancipated as they have involved themselves with joining the paid labour market but it has also created significant problems while discharging their dual roles in the public and the private sphere because of the patriarchal ideology associated with women's work within the household.

### IV. CONCLUSION

This paper deals with the roles played by the women police personnel and their responsibilities while discharging their household as well as work place duties. As a working woman belonging to the police department brings additional problems while maintaining their responsibilities of household and professional work. The women police try to cope up role conflict by providing some role substitute which often comes in the form of help from their family members or from domestic help. This paper showed the aspects of family conflict, role substitute, impact of career on family, etc. The main challenges that confront female law enforcement officers are those rooted in prejudices regarding distinctions between genders. Women police are expected to play completely different roles as compared to the women working in other professions. Police job

is characterised by tough, complex and stressful nature of job. Women police while discharging this unique job role are more prone to conflicts and tensions. Thus, the present study focused on the insights into the problems of women police with special emphasis on role conflict experienced by women in performing their roles as police personnel and fulfilling their traditional family roles.

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