

Influence of Role Conflict and Role Ambiguity on Job Satisfaction: A study among Executives

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Abstract

The purpose of the study was to examine the influence of role conflict and role ambiguity on job satisfaction of executives. A total of 87 executives were randomly selected from two different service organizations. Role conflict scale developed by Rizzo, House and Lirtzman (1970), Role ambiguity scale developed by Rizzo, House and Lirtzman. (1970) and Job satisfaction scale developed by Spector (1985) scales were used in the study. Data analysis was conducted using the multiple regression. Results indicated that role conflict and role ambiguity are significant predictors of job satisfaction. This paper concludes with suggestions based on the results of the research study.

KEYWORDS: Role conflict, Role ambiguity, Job satisfaction and Executives

Introduction

Role theory states that when behaviors expected of an individual are inconsistent he or she will experience stress, depress, become dissatisfied, and perform less effectively than if the expectation imposed did not conflict. Thus, it can be seen that role conflict can adversely affect an individual's state of mind. Stated in another way, role conflict can decrease individual commitment. Role ambiguity is a concept that explains the availability of role-related information. Certain information is required for adequate performance, that is, for a person to conform to the role expectations held by the role senders. The role incumbent must know what the expectations are: the rights, the activities and the responsibilities of his or her position. Additionally, he or she must know what activities will fulfill the responsibility of the position and how those activities are to be performed. Potential consequences of role performance or non-performance for the individual and the organization are also considered. Lack of information can result from two causes. First, the required information does not exist and, second, it does exist but is not available to the person who needs it. Thus, ambiguity in a given situation may result either because information is non-existent or because existing information is inadequately communicated. Like role conflict, Kahn et al. (1964) postulate that role ambiguity should increase the probability that a person will be dissatisfied with his or her role, will experience anxiety, will distort reality and thus perform less effectively. Kahn et al. (1964) also suggest that role ambiguity increases when organizational complexities exceed the individual's span of comprehension. Accordingly, an internal auditor who has to deal with role ambiguity is likely to find it more difficult to maintain a commitment to acting with independence.

A Review of Literature

The literature on role conflict began from two different schools of role theory, namely, structural-functional and interactions (Stryker and Macke, 1978). Following Stryker and Macke (1978), the expansion of structural role theory has identified five

forms of role conflict: structurally competing demands of various roles; structurally competing demands arising from different parts of a given role-set; conflicting reactions of the same individual to the same kinds of behaviors; differences or lack of clarity in the expectations of others; and conflict between role expectations and individual's self-concepts. Put colloquially, role conflict occurs when two or more demands arise simultaneously and compliance with one demand would make compliance with the other more difficult or even impossible (Pandey and Kumar, 1997; Kahn et al., 1964). When role conflict occurs, the individual is unsure how to perform tasks, which task should be completed and when to execute the task (Tidd and Friedman, 2002). For instance, a purchase staff reporting administratively to the factory supervisor and functionally to the head of the purchasing division may experience incompatible expectations as the former may emphasize availability of raw materials while the latter may stress cost effectiveness (Pandey and Kumar, 1997). Because some studies (Beauchamp and Bray, 2001; Rizzo et al., 1970) have reported difficulties in differentiating between various forms of role conflict, this study has treated role conflict as a one-dimensional concept.

Job satisfaction, which is defined as “a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one’s job or job experiences” (Locke, 1976, p. 1304), covers a wide range of conceptual domains. To avoid the limitations of global measurement of job satisfaction, previous studies developed several multifaceted job satisfaction measurements (Churchill et al., 1974; Smith et al., 1969; Wood et al., 1986).

Hypotheses

- There will be a negative relationship between role ambiguity and Job satisfaction
- There will be a negative relationship between role conflict and Job satisfaction

Methodology

Research Design

The present research study is a descriptive research study, and used a survey research design, in which questionnaires were used to collect data from the sampled executives from two service organizations.

Sample

A sample of 87 executives was randomly selected from two service organizations. Executives who had at least five years of service were included in the study.

Measures

Role conflict and Role ambiguity Scale: To measure role conflict and role ambiguity, role conflict and ambiguity scale developed by Rizzo et al. (1970) was used, the role conflict scale consisted of eight items and the role ambiguity scale consisted of six items. Respondents indicated their responses on a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 “strongly disagree” to 5 “strongly agree”. Coefficient

alphas for the scale were found to be 0.80 and 0.71 for role conflict and role ambiguity, respectively.

Job Satisfaction Scale: Job Satisfaction Scale developed by Spector, (1995) was used in the study. This scale has been widely used in Indian context to assess the job satisfaction. The job satisfaction scale consisted of 36 statements with six alternative responses e.g., 6 for agree very much, 5 for agree moderately, 4 for agree slightly, 3 for disagree slightly, 2 for disagree moderately, 1 for disagree very much. This scale measures job satisfaction on nine different facets, however for the purpose of the present study, the total score on all the 36 items was taken as the measure of job satisfaction. Several studies have employed this job satisfaction scale and have obtained satisfactory internal consistency-reliability coefficients. This scale has also demonstrated construct validity and reliability (Spector, 1985, 1997).

Results and Discussion

To examine the relationship between Role Conflict, Role Ambiguity and Job satisfaction of executives the product moment correlation coefficients were computed and is presented in table 1.

Table 1

Means, Standard Deviations and Correlation Coefficients between Role Conflict and Job satisfaction; Role Ambiguity and Job satisfaction

Variables	Mean	SD	Correlation Coefficient
Role Conflict	18.31	6.7934	-0.252**
Role Ambiguity	26.19	7.1360	-0.182**

**p<0.01

From table 1 it can be observed that the correlation coefficient computed between Role Conflict and Job satisfaction, and Role Ambiguity and Job satisfaction is negative and found to be significant ($p < 0.01$). This indicates that there is significant negative relationship between Role Conflict and job satisfaction; and Role Ambiguity and Job satisfaction. To further examine whether Role Conflict scores, and Role Ambiguity scores of executives would predict their job satisfaction multiple linear regression analysis were carried out. Job satisfaction scores were treated as criterion variable and Role Conflict scores, and Role Ambiguity scores were treated as predictor variable. The results thus obtained is presented in table 2.

Table 2

Results of Regression Analysis with Role Conflict and Role Ambiguity predicting the Job satisfaction of executives

Model	F	df	Adj. R ²	β
Dependent Variable: Job satisfaction	7.270	2,118	0.110	
Role Conflict				-0.279**
Role Ambiguity				-0.216**

**p<0.01

It can be observed from table 2 that the F value is significant ($p<0.01$), this indicates that there exists a linear relationship between Role Conflict, Role Ambiguity and Job satisfaction, and the model of regression is found to be appropriate. Approximately eleven percent (Adjusted $R^2 = 0.110$) of the variation in the Job satisfaction scores of service organizations executives can be explained by the changes in the Role Conflict, and Role Ambiguity scores of the executives. The last column in table 2 indicates both the standardised regression coefficients (β) to be significant ($p<0.01$), this indicates that there is a significant influence and impact of Role Conflict, and Role Ambiguity on Job satisfaction of executives. The negative and significant correlation between Role Conflict and Job satisfaction; and between Role Ambiguity and Job satisfaction and the emergence of Role Conflict and Role Ambiguity as significant predictors of Job satisfaction indicates that Role Conflict, and Role Ambiguity of executives influences and predicts their job satisfactions. This result confirms and proves both the hypothesis formulated in the study. The major goal of this study was to examine the relationship between role conflict and job satisfaction and role ambiguity with job satisfaction of executives. The study found role conflict and role ambiguity to be having a significant predictor and correlate of job satisfaction of executives. This demonstrates the importance of role conflict and role ambiguity for developing positive work attitude namely job satisfaction among executives. The results of the present study suggest that executives should be clearly made to understand the concept of role conflict and role ambiguity. Executives with high role conflict and high role ambiguity seem to have to negative work attitudes. These results suggest the need for role conflict and role ambiguity interventions on executives. Further studies may be carried out by conducting an intervention, to minimise the influence of role conflict and role ambiguity on the job satisfaction of executives.

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