



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF RESEARCH IN COMMERCE, IT AND MANAGEMENT

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EXECUTIVE ROLE CONFLICT AND ITS CONSEQUENCES**SELVARANI SHANKER****PROFESSOR****DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS MANAGEMENT****OSMANIA UNIVERSITY****HYDERABAD****ABSTRACT**

Organization being a structure of inter-related roles which to certain extent also tend to be overlapping, role conflict and role ambiguity inevitably occur. Though conflict and ambiguity when they arise to a moderate degree tends to be motivational, however, above the optimum level they have a detrimental influence for the employee and for the organization. The incidences of role conflict and role ambiguity have their basis in the structural aspects of the organization, employee and also how he relates to the organization. Some of the structural aspects are span of control, professional growth in the organization etc.. The consequences of conflict can be both for the organization and the employee. The present study aims to investigate the relationship between role conflict and role ambiguity and certain antecedent and consequent variables. While antecedents are causes that lead to and result in the arousal of role conflict and role ambiguity, consequences refer to the effect of role conflict and role ambiguity. The antecedents examined in the study include age, job tenure, span of control and professional growth in the organization. The consequences studied are job, satisfaction job performance.

KEYWORDS

Conflict, Executive, Organisation, Roles.

INTRODUCTION

Among the antecedent variables studied it is years of experience and professional growth that are found to be related to role conflict consistently. As people acquire more experience they tend to experience less of role conflict in their job. This is explained in the following para. Familiarity and experience with situations tends to be more for experienced people, hence conflict may not be that stressful to them. Having resolved similar conflicts in the past they are used to these stressful situations. Moreover in terms of experience their experience they might be well tuned to the expectations of their role set members. And interpersonal relations built overtime may induce the role set members to time their expectations inconsonance with focal person's own expectations.

HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

1. If the span of control is large, will the executive experience more role conflict and role ambiguity?
2. If the years of experience are less will the executive experience more of role conflict and role ambiguity?
3. If the professional growth is less in the organization will the executive experience more of role conflict and role ambiguity?
4. Is the age related to role conflict and role ambiguity?
5. If the role conflict and role ambiguity are more will the satisfaction with one's job be less?

THE MEASURING INSTRUMENT**ROLE CONFLICT SCALE**

Role conflict is defined as the extent to which the subject's job entails tasks that conflict with his values and job expectations and the incompatible requests the subject receives concerning his work. In other words, role conflict is the degree of incongruity of expectations associated with roles. Role ambiguity is defined as the lack of clarity of role expectations and the degree of uncertainty.

Regarding the outcome of one's role performance. The scale developed by Johnson Stinson with minor modifications to suit the present purpose was used to measure Role Conflict and Role Ambiguity. Role Conflict and Role Ambiguity items were mixed randomly and presented. A total 15 items were presented. The items of role conflict were 8 and role ambiguity were 7.

The response category of items ranged from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree". A score of 5 was given to "strongly agree" and a score of 1 was given to "strongly disagree". Thus a high on these scales denotes high role conflict. In the present study internal consistency estimates were computed for each of the organization studied. Pooled data concerning public sector organizations and also for the total sample. It can be noted from table -I that the consistency estimates for intersender Role Conflict ranged from .61 to .84, for Person Role Conflict from .25 to .42, for Role Conflict, From .54 to .73 for Role Ambiguity – task from .10 to .39, for Role Ambiguity-feedback from .58 to .70 and for Role Conflict from .44 to .75.

JOB SATISFACTION SCALE

Six different aspects of job satisfaction were considered for the study. They are:

1. Pay
2. Supervision
3. Colleagues
4. Working Conditions
5. Opportunities for Promotion
6. The Job as a whole

Four of these aspects were taken from the job descriptive Index (Smith, Kendall and Hulin). They are pay, supervision, colleagues and opportunities for promotion.

The subjects were asked to report the extent to which they are satisfied with each of these aspects. Their evaluations are based on a seven-point response category ranging from "Extremely satisfied" to "Extremely dissatisfied". A score of 7 was given for extremely satisfied, with intermediary scores for other response categories. A high score on each of the aspects indicated high satisfaction. Scores on all these aspects were summed to obtain a measure of total job satisfaction. Internal consistency was computed for this scale. The consistency was found, to range from .72 to .98.(Table-I).

JOB PERFORMANCE SCALE

In self rated performance scale, the subjects were asked to rate his present job performance on a 9-point scale. Ticking 9 indicated maximum while ticking 1 indicated the minimum, ticking 5 indicated neutral or average, ticking 6, 7, 8, indicated the progressive amounts from average to maximum and ticking 2, 3, 4, indicated intermediate position between minimum to average. While all the above scales constituted Part II of the questionnaire, Part I of the questionnaire obtained information from the respondents with regard to Age, Job Tenure, Span of Control and Professional Growth in the organization. Job Tenure was measured in terms of the years of experience the respondent had in his/her present organization and also in his/her present position. Span of control was

measured in terms of the number of subordinates under the focal person's immediate control. The response alternative included: (1) 1-5, (2) 6-10, (3) 11-15, (4) More than 15, (5) none.

SAMPLE

A sample survey of 160 Executives of the middle and lower management levels were selected randomly from three different organizations. Two of them were in Public Sector and the third one was from a private sector. The Public Sector organizations are referred to as X and Y and the Private sector as Z. The investigator approached each of the subjects in the present sample by a prior appointment. The purpose of the study and the questionnaire was explained to each of the respondent. The respondents were allowed to complete the questionnaire at their leisure. For this purpose 10 days time was given and the questionnaires were collected back from the respondents. The nature of the sample and its characteristics are presented in Table-2.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The hypotheses formulated were tested on the basis of data collected from the Executives of the organizations. The present study was intended to examine the relationship between Role Conflict and Role Ambiguity and some of the antecedent and Consequent Variables. Hypotheses were formulated concerning these relationships. With regard to Role Conflict and Role Ambiguity their homogeneity concerning the experienced conflict and ambiguity among all the three organizations studied. Differences worked out between the managers of the Public and Private Sectors suggest that two tend to differ only with respect to intersender Role Conflict and Role Ambiguity. Executives of the Private Sector report more of role conflict, while public sector executives experienced more of role ambiguity. In the private sectors, getting along with the expectations of the superiors, perhaps, is more important in one's job for the focal person, than in the public sector. This is because of the particular kind of and culture that prevail in the private sector, that one's own superiors tend to be an important force to reckon with in performing one's job. Job formalization than the public. This is because of the differences in organizational culture and work environment. Hence, it is more likely that role ambiguity tends to be relatively more among the public sector Executives.

ROLE CONFLICT, ROLE AMBIGUITY AND ANTECEDENT

Among the antecedent variables studied it is years of experience and professional growth that are found to be related to role conflict consistently. As people acquire more experience they tend to experience less of role conflict in their job. This is explained in the following para. Familiarity and experience with situations tends to be more for experienced people, hence conflict may not be that stressful to them. Having resolved similar conflicts in the past they are used to these stressful situations. Moreover in terms of experience their experience they might be well tuned to the expectations of their role set members. And interpersonal relations built overtime may induce the role set members to time their expectations inconsonance with focal person's own expectations. The negative relationship between Role conflict and experience is supported by other studies. Chonko finds that less experienced sales people often find themselves in new situations, requiring new information, whereas for experienced sales people, certain aspects of the job tend to become routinized and less time is required to learn aspects of the job. As such less experienced sales people face more of role strain than more experienced sales people. Peltit observed that role conflict and role ambiguity were both negatively related to various forms of organizational tenure. When similar studies were carried out in educational institutions, role strain was found to be greater among less experienced persons (Simpson, Schwab).

How an individual perceives his professional growth in the organization might influence the conflict experienced by one's role. Generally professional growth in terms of how fast one moves up the ladder. That is the number of promotions that one receives. Those grow in the organization are generally those who are also competent. In terms of their competence they might resolve conflicts to their advantage. Chances of rapid growth might also induce them to have positive attitudes towards their job and organization. A consequence of which they might, cope with conflicts in their style or perceive these situations as affording them an opportunity to exhibit their competence. Even, they might perceive the conflict situations, as those that afford them an opportunity for interaction with their superiors. Cognizing conflict situations in such a way, they might perceive role conflict less stressful. A significant relationship was observed between age and role conflict. With increase in age people tend to experience less role conflict. Pelit also supported negative relationship between age and role conflict. Similar findings were also obtained in studies done under school background (Simpson and Schwab). Span of control is not found to relate significantly to role conflict. Hence, the hypothesis formulated earlier that larger the span, more the role conflict has not been supported. Though one may hypothetically presume larger span of control to be associated with more role conflict, the relationship may not be one to because of a number of intervening variables that tend to influence the relationship. These variables are such as, complexity of the job, the type of technology employed in the organization, competence of the subordinates, interpersonal relationships between the focal person and subordinates and others. Only when such relevant variables are taken into consideration and controlled for, the exact nature of relationships between role conflict and span of control may be clearly established. None of the antecedent variables were found to relate significantly with role ambiguity for the executives of the public sector and for the pooled sample. However, in the case of executives of the private sector, ambiguity was found to increase with increasing age and decrease with increase in span of control. With increase in age people tend to become accustomed to perform their job in certain habitual patterns. The job over time may change in the way it is to be performed in terms of modifications that take place from time to time. Moreover the role set members may change and hence the focal person may be exposed to varied role expectations. In terms of the established patterns of behaviour the focal person may not be able to meet the changes arising either out of modifications in the job or the expectations of new role set members. Such situations tend to give rise high role ambiguity.

Role Conflict, Role Ambiguity and consequent variables. The results of the present study support our earlier stated hypothesis, concerning the relationship between role conflict and job satisfaction. Subjects with low role conflict are found to exhibit a higher degree of satisfaction with their pay, supervision they receive, working conditions, colleagues, opportunity for promotions and job as a whole. From the analysis we come to know that there is a significant negative relationship between job satisfaction variables and role conflicts. These findings are consistent for the public sector and the pooled samples. In the case of private sector, those executives with low role conflict are found to experience more of satisfaction with supervision, working conditions, opportunity for promotions and job as a whole. The analysis also suggests a significant negative relationship between role conflict and working conditions, opportunity for promotions and satisfaction with colleagues. Conflict on one's job thus tends to influence one's attitude not only towards job related factors but also job as a whole.

Role conflict is not found to influence satisfaction with pay only for the private sector. The factor being, generally executives in private sector are paid better in terms of salaries and perks. Executives experiencing low role ambiguity are found to report a higher degree of satisfaction with pay, supervision, working conditions, opportunity for promotions and job as a whole. Since pay and opportunities for promotions tend to be generally high in private organizations, role ambiguity may not influence executive satisfaction with respect to these variables. When the role is ambiguous the focal person is not clearly aware of his duties and responsibilities, and this may lead to dissatisfaction with the job. Rosenheim, Organ, Greene, and Coldwell also supported this finding in the studies. Keller finds that both role conflict and role ambiguity were associated with low levels of job satisfaction that is dissatisfaction with supervision, pay and opportunities for promotion. Schuler and Khan report that job level plays an important role in the relationship between role conflict and job satisfaction. Schuler suggests that ambiguity is less at middle and higher levels than at lower levels.

The negative relationship between role conflict, role ambiguity and job satisfaction has been supported in a number of other studies. Similar studies carried out in educational institutions also essentially yielded a negative relationship between role conflict, role ambiguity, and job satisfaction.

ROLE CONFLICT, ROLE AMBIGUITY AND SELF RATED PERFORMANCE

Both the role stress variables, role conflict, and role ambiguity are observed to have a negative relationship with self-rated performance. That is Executives high in Role Conflict, and ambiguity was found to rate their performances lower than executives low in role conflict and ambiguity. This observation was noticed with regard to the executives of the public and the pooled samples. High Role Conflict and ambiguity tends to influence performance adversely. Beehr observed that role ambiguity was found to have greater negative relationship, than role conflict with job performance at higher levels in an organization. Role conflict was found to have negative relationship, than role ambiguity with performance at lower levels in an organization. This can be because, the jobs employees perform at lower levels might be simpler in nature compared to higher level employees. The source and direction of causal influence with respect to role perceptions and

performance was supported only at the higher management levels. Because, at lower, tasks are well defined and structured and employees can more easily obtain information to reduce ambiguity than they can change rules, procedures and resources in order to reduce role conflict. The negative influence of the role stress variables on job performance was not significant for the executives of the private sector. In a private organization the emphasis is more on performance. Job security depends upon achieving optimum performance consistently. Hence, employees are expected to achieve the desired level of performance in spite of the conflict or ambiguity being present in their job situations. Negative attitudes generated because of role stress may not be reflected on the job performance for executives of private industries while it is not so for executives of public sector.

IMPLICATION OF THE STUDY

The findings of the study brings out the relevance of organizational socialization, which not only minimizes the experienced Role Conflict and Role Ambiguity but also helps in adjustments of the focal person to the work environment, role set and the organization are found to influence the experienced role conflict to a certain extent role ambiguity also. Retaining employees with larger experience in the organization facilitates the process of socialization and one's adjustment. Organizations should try to retain their employees within the organization. Organization should be concerned with career and professional growth of the employees. This concern on the part of the management not only builds in positive attitude and loyalty in the employees towards organization, but also brings commitment to work, apart from developing self-confidence to handle situation of the role conflict. Employee training to build up the necessary technical and job skills, which may be required because of changes in job design resulting from technological advancements, is necessary to reduce role ambiguity. Developing inter-personal skills, by suitable training programs such as sensitivity training helps in fostering better rapport with the role set members, thus minimizing situations of role conflict. Organizational socialization carried out effectively might help to reduce personal role conflict. The consequences of role conflict and role ambiguity for job satisfaction and job performance have been evidenced clearly. Job satisfaction and job performance are also clearly related, more so when satisfaction results from better job performance and minimizing conflict and ambiguity, thus tend to have positive consequences both for the individual and for the organization. Developing role clarity in terms of clear definition and specification of tasks, responsibility and authority of a given job can minimize Role conflict and Role ambiguity. Better communication methods and more of cooperation between focal person and members of role set need to be developed.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The present study was intended to examine the relationship between role stress variables and certain antecedent and consequent variables for middle and lower level Executives. Role conflict is significantly and negatively related to the following antecedent variables – job tenure, professional growth in the organization and age for the Executives of the public sector and the pooled sample. Role ambiguity was not significantly related to any of the antecedent variables for the Executives of the public sector and the pooled sample. Only for the executives of the private organization, role ambiguity was found to be related significantly positive to age. Role ambiguity was found to be negatively and significantly related to the satisfaction variables – pay, supervision, working conditions, colleagues, opportunity for promotions, job as a whole and self-rated performance for the public and pool sample. However, for the executives of the private organization significant and negative relationship was obtained only after concerning satisfaction with supervision and job as a whole.

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TABLES

TABLE 1: INTERNAL CONSISTENCY RELIABILITIES FOR ROLE CONFLICT & ROLE AMBIGUITY

Organization	Internal Consistency						Job Satisfaction
	RIC	RP	RC	RAT	RAF	RA	
X (N = 30)	.84	.25	.54	.10	.58	.44	.85
Y (N = 90)	.67	.42	.73	.39	.59	.62	.98
Z (N = 40)	.61	.32	.65	.30	.70	.73	.75
X+Y(N=120)	.68	.45	.70	.35	.61	.62	.97
X+Y+Z(N=160)	.66	.41	.68	.33	.65	.68	.90

TABLE: 2

Name of the Industry	Job Level	Age	Experience	Number
X	OE	30 – 60	5Yrs – 25 yrs	30
Y	STO	25 – 50	3 yrs – 15 yrs	90
Z	AO	25 - 50	3 yrs - 15 yrs	40

Note :

X&Y represent public sector industries
 Z represents private sector industry
 OE represents Officer-Executive
 STO represents Senior Technical Officer
 AO represents Accounts Officer.

TABLE: 3 CORRELATIONS BETWEEN ROLE CONFLICT AND THE ANTECEDENT VARIABLE

	Age	Years of Experience	Experience in the present position	Span of Control	Number of positions
X+Y N(120)	-.290**	-.216*	.151	-.036	-.118
Z (Private) N(40)	-.009	-.249	-.045	-.178	-.367*
X+Y+Z N(160)	-.193*	-.280**	-.077	-.098	-.196*

Note:

*P<.05

**P<.01

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Hoping an appropriate consideration.

With sincere regards

Thanking you profoundly

Academically yours

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