

THE INFLUENCE OF ROLE AMBIGUITY, ROLE CONFLICT, WORK OVERLOAD, AND RELATIONSHIP CONFLICT ON JOB PERFORMANCE

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Abstract

This research is conducted to examine the role of ambiguity, role conflict, work overload and relationship conflict in Malaysian Public sector. The study employed descriptive statistics and used a total of 108 sets of questionnaire were randomly distributed among the employees specifically at the Malaysian Automotive Lighting Sdn Bhd in Batu Kawan, Penang, Malaysia as private sector. Based on the findings, the role ambiguity showed the highest score (mean=4.11), followed by relationship conflict (mean=3.85), work overload (mean=3.75) and the average score is role conflict (mean=3.00). The result of the study gave an insight that all the factors have medium to high level in organizational conflict context.

Keywords: Role ambiguity, role conflict, work overload, relationship conflict.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Conflict may occur anywhere when two or more people interact with each other. It can either energize an organization or generate conflict by words and actions. In an organization interface, conflict plays an important role to ensure the organization operates effectively and efficiently. According to Suhaili Sarif (2004) too few conflicts will cause employees in a comfort zone and hinder them from better performance. In addition, too many conflicts will weaken their bonds and unity. Organizational objectives can hardly be achieved without unity. It can be hardly achieved without unity between the employees. Furthermore, conflict may also affect job performance. The good news is that conflict can be extremely productive and useful for organization, community and individuals. Though conflict is often viewed as negative, it is capable of increasing organizational innovativeness and productivity, thereby improving organizational performance.

According to the research that has been conducted by Iroegbu Manasseh N. (2013), there were the organizational factors that affect an employee's level of job performance. The role ambiguity, the role conflict, works overload and relationship conflict variables were some of the factors that influence the rate at which the employee works. A study done at Malaysian Automotive Lighting Sdn. Bhd. was to look at the problem arising between the supervisor and the employees in dealing with their role ambiguity, role conflict, work overload and relationship conflict.

Many unpredictable incidents and problem has been reported from time to time in this organization regarding employees' performance. This study was intended to find out whether the problem of employees performance has to do with conflict arising from various reasons. Therefore, this study focuses on which element gives most influence towards job performance.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Role Conflict

According to Muhammad Rizwan and Muhammad Adeel Tariq et al. (2013) stated that role conflict concerns with incompatible role expectations. Such conflicts are nothing except conceptual differences among the employer and the employee about the required organization activities or task and job performance. Some researchers have suggested that in order to prevent role conflict, organization should be functional according by identify the conflict of their employee and should be supervised by a single superior and word according to their conflict. Despite the potentially negative effects of role conflict, contrary evidence suggests that role conflict might enhances creativity and productivity of the organization. Importantly, other studies have suggested that a negative affect might increase the job performance.

The information provided by negative affective states can influence an individual effort and performance at work. Second, some studies adopt a positive view towards role conflict. For instance, when individuals engage in multiple roles, it also might create positive affect. Interestingly, some researchers suggest that a positive affect leads to cognitive variation that stimulates creativity. In sum, role conflict seems to enhance or reduce the organizational conflict that will gives an impact to job performance that has been examined by Yung Tai Tang and Chen Hua Chang (2010). In addition, Robbins and Coulter (2003) has been stated when two or more employees have different views regarding their work which makes them experience conflicting demands or expectations and lead them to make incompatible decisions, a situation of role conflict exists. Role conflict is a feeling of being torn in multiple directions, unable to find a way to make every role partner satisfied. They read their job descriptions, get suggestions from their manager, and watch what their co-workers do. When that individual is confronted by different role expectations, he or she wills experiences role conflict.

Furthermore, Mahfuz Judeh (2011) has stated beyond a certain point, however, conflict can lead to organizational ineffectiveness. There are many coping strategies that can be designed by management to avoid organizational conflict, such as creation of a supportive organizational climate, enriching the design of tasks, reducing conflict and clarity organizational roles, and planning career paths and providing counseling since individuals are left to decide career moves and strategies on their own or get advice once in a while from a supervisor. Fajar Saranani (2015) says that when humans are being interact, incompatibility and conflict are often unavoidable. Mismatches and this conflict have caused human beliefs, opinions, and knowledge is different from each other. The basics of conflict can be divided into two types, namely the internal conflict and external conflict. Internal conflicts related to what is believed, principles or handle individual life itself. External conflict occurs when dealing with other people and the environment.

Although, Murat Yesilintas (2014) said the role conflict occurs when many requests come from multiple stakeholders such as customers, colleagues or a manager at the same time and the employee cannot fulfill all of them. Especially in the accommodation establishments, individuals encounter demands more than their capacities resulting in role conflicts; therefore, results in experiencing role stress which is dependent on their role and tasks. In the organizations, appointing conflicted duties to the employees or expectations beyond the duties by the managers cause role conflicts, thus role ambiguities. In addition, taking orders from multiple managers and conflict of these orders may cause role conflicts in the organizations.

2.2 Role Ambiguity

Rizzo and Lirtzman (1970) contended that role ambiguity exist when an employee is not equipped with good understanding about his their responsibilities and having little knowledge if what is expected pertaining to their job performance. Role ambiguity is commonly associated with employee work performance. Yung Tai Tang and Chen Hua Chang et al. (2010) found that the role ambiguity refers to the lack of specificity and predictability for an employee job or role functions and responsibility. Unclear role-related information may lead to role ambiguity. Exactly how role expectations or goals affect performance has received considerable interest. Goals are an important factor in job performance because they are often ambiguous, and ambiguity may induce stress. Management must establish clear organizational goals to achieve high creativity. The roles are the situation that the individual does not know his job description and what is expected from him or her clearly.

In the organizations, the role ambiguity means that the employee does not know what his or her job requires and cannot show the requested performance. In addition, a situation of role ambiguity for the duties and achievements related to job requirement are not fully understood and the consequences of role behaviors cannot be presumed. However, role ambiguity includes non-specific expectations resulting negative work experiences because in organizations, the situation of not knowing exactly what to do causes individuals to face stress stated by Madare (2013).

In addition, Mahfuz Judeh (2011) said that clear job descriptions and obvious authority relationships can contribute to solving ambiguity problems. When people know all details of their position in the organization, they find it comfortable to take responsibility for their actions and to interact with others. Individuals experiencing role ambiguity lack adequate information about what their responsibilities are and insufficient information about the process to accomplish these responsibilities. The expectations need to be known, and knowledge of activities required to fulfill those expectations is also needed.

2.3 Work Overload

Jungwee Park (2007) stated that work overload is defined as the harmful physical and emotional responses that occur when job requirements do not match the worker's capabilities, resources, and needs (National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health 1999). This research study showed that work overload lead to poor performance of the employees which has ultimately lead toward the employee job dissatisfaction. If effective incentives plans and proper training is given to the employees than their performance can be increased and employees become more satisfied from his job by Tahir and Kaleem et al. (2012).

As work overload is a major problem almost every organizational sector is suffering from this and with the increase in working hours, duty timings and pressure from supervisor to accomplish competitiveness, and achieve goals, it has become an important area of focus. Conflict occurs when the level of demand exceeds from resources of a person as there are too many tasks that require attention and other factors in person's environment that has investigated by Tajmal Farooq Abbasi (2014). Muhammad Rizwan and Muhammad Adeel Tariq et al. (2013) found that work overload plays as independent variable role in this survey. It often seems that the burden of official work activities may cause the conflict condition. Work overload has a positive relation or correlation with organization conflict.

Based on the research that was done by Sobia Ali and Yasir Aftab Farooqi (2014) found that conflict is the big issue in the organization which occur due to tension work overload. Employees have tendency towards high level of conflict regarding work overload, time, working for longer hours which reduces employees urge for performing better.

Management support helps in reducing organization conflict among employees that has been examined by Usman Bashir and Muhammad Ismail Ramay (2010).

2.4 Relationship Conflict

Guerrero, Andersen, and Afifi (2001) define conflict as a disagreement between two interdependent people who perceive that they have incompatible goals. Conflict plays an important part in relationships, not only possibly affecting the relationship duration but also relationship satisfaction and quality. The conflict affects power dynamic between couples by forcing them to negotiate and renegotiate the extent to which they share power. Essentially, no relationship can exist without conflict. In fact, satisfied couples are more likely to discuss issues of disagreement, whereas dissatisfied couples are more likely to minimize or avoid conflict that was examine by Guerrero et al. (2001). AdjeiDanquach and Wison Kwaku Nimsahd (2015) stated that on this type of conflict can be defined as tensions, annoyances, disagreements and personal incompatibilities over matters such as beliefs, values, habits, and personalities. This form of conflict involves personal issues such as dislike among group members and feelings such as annoyance, frustration, and irritation. This definition is consistent with past categorizations of conflict that distinguish between affective and cognitive conflict. Interpersonal conflict can antagonize productivity since it arouses hostility among group members.

Hasan Afzal and Muhammad Aslam Khan et al. (2009) examined by enhance performance of employees of the organization, it is imperative to improve harmony, develop favourable relationship and alleviate relationship conflict among them. Conflict occurs due to difference of perception, difference of ideas, difference of behaviours, difference of interest, different attitudes, religious differences, political differences and unjustified distribution of national resources. Conflict is not always negative. It depends how to handle the conflict. If you handle properly it can become source of development, otherwise it creates hostilities Kigali (2006). In addition, Patricia L. Costa and Arnold B. Bakker (2015) said it can be conceptualized as a hindering job demand for all types of outcomes. Concerning task conflict, it may lose its negative influence if perceived as a challenging job demand. According to Demerouti and Bakker (2011), challenging demands can be seen as “rewarding work experiences well worth the discomfort involved” with positive implications for the outcomes of the work.

3.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study employed descriptive survey design. A sample size comprising 108 employees were selected using random sampling techniques. Questionnaires were used to collect data which was validated through a pilot test while reliability was measured using the Cronbach’s Alpha. The data was analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistics.

4.0 FINDINGS

Table 2.0 Reliability Test

Variables	No. (question)	Reliability	
		(Pilot Test) (30 workers)	(Actual Test) (108 workers)
Components Organizational Conflict:			

Role Conflict	5	0.744	0.733
Role Ambiguity	5	0.763	0.721
Work Overload	6	0.837	0.827
Relationship Conflict	5	0.648	0.765

Table 3.0 Demographic Analysis

No.	Background Demography	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
1	Gender		
	Male	55	51
	Female	53	49

Table 4.0 Classification Analysis of Mean

Category of Mean	Level
1.00 – 2.00	Low
2.01 – 3.00	Medium Low
3.01 – 4.00	Medium High
4.01 – 5.00	High

Source: Norasmah Othman (2002)

Table 5.0 Data of Mean for all of the variables in organizational conflict

Variables	No. Questions	Mean	Level
Role Conflict	5	3.00	Medium Low
Role Ambiguity	5	4.11	High
Work Overload	6	3.75	Medium High
Relationship Conflict	5	3.85	Medium High
Total Mean	21	3.67	Medium High

The highest – level mean score is role ambiguity factor (mean = 4.11), the relationship conflict is the second highest level (mean = 3.85). Thus, the mean score for the work overload is (mean = 3.75) and variables for role conflict (mean = 3.00). The overall mean for each variable majority is medium high level.

Table 6.0 Multiple Regression Result Analysis

Independent Variable	Beta	Significant
Role Conflict (X1)	0.141	0.048
Role Ambiguity (X2)	0.565	0.000
Work Overload (X3)	0.102	0.198
Relationship Conflict (X4)	0.245	0.003

Based on the table above, job performance model = $1.003 + 0.141 X_1$ (Role Conflict) + $0.565 X_2$ (Role Ambiguity) + $0.102 X_3$ (Work Overload) + $0.245 X_4$ (Relationship Conflict). The result of this research received alternate hypothesis ($p = 0.001$, $p < 0.05$).

Furthermore, the results of multiple regression analysis (multiple regressions) show $R^2 = .503$ (50.3%). These values can give an idea of the variation dependent variable (DV) as shown as multiple regression models above. Therefore, based on the research question the first domain factor is the role ambiguity ($Beta = 0.565$, $P < 0.05$) then followed by a factor relationship conflict ($Beta = 0.245$, $p < 0.05$). Next, continue by role conflict ($Beta = 0.141$, $p < 0.05$) and the lastly is the work overload factor ($Beta = 0.102$, $p < 0.05$).

In addition, the role ambiguity was the domain factor that affects organizational conflict and its impact on job performance. It also could lead to the conflict at the organization. So, when the role ambiguity is increase it shows that variable could give an impact on job performance among the employees.

Thus, employees in Malaysian Automotive Lighting Sdn. Bhd. need to improve the role ambiguity among their colleagues, employer and the organization as well. The dominant role ambiguity can affect the job performance and productivity of employees in carrying out task and responsibilities to work become excellence in a job performance.

5.0 CONCLUSION

This conclusion is drawn from the fact that the findings from the study pointed out that the function of each role did play a role in determining all of the factors in organizational conflict. It was noted that role ambiguity has given the highest level in completing a task. Secondly, the harmony of a relationship between a supervisor and an employee is also important contributor to good performance. In organisational setting everyone plays the role of a superior and subordinate. Whenever there is a different expectation in relation to himself and others, conflict ought to arise. Finally, work overload may contribute to role conflict in completing a task when an employee has many roles to play at once. Similarly, conflict may also arise whenever there is overlapping of the two roles played simultaneously by the same person and the expectations associated with these different roles are incompatible.

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