

Relationship between Role, Conflict and Work Life Balance – Mediation of Job Satisfaction

Poonam Vatharkar

Doctoral Scholar, Management Studies (Arts), University of Mumbai, Mumbai.

Abstract: *Individuals are involved in multiple roles in their daily life. With finite amount of resources like energy, attention, money and time, the demands coming from various roles tend to cause stress and role conflict for people. Role conflict is incongruity of the expectations associated with a role. The constant feeling of role conflict may diminish the perceived work life balance of individuals. Job satisfaction is pleasurable experience about one's job. The present study discusses the relationship between role conflict, work life balance and job satisfaction of 150 employees from manufacturing sector. The findings of correlation analysis and hierarchical multiple regression analysis supports the hypothesis that if role conflict is high work life balance and job satisfaction will be low. It further suggests the mediation of job satisfaction on a relationship between role conflict and work life balance.*

Keywords: *Role conflict, Work life balance, job satisfaction.*

1. Introduction

Some studies contend that involvement in multiple roles is advantageous for individuals as it enhance their well being (Thiots, 1986). There is another stream of research which believes that having to fulfil the demands and expectation of multiple roles simultaneously may actually cause conflicts for individuals and diminishes their well being (Batnett & Baruch, 1985)

Role is defined as "the set of prescriptions defining what the behavior of a position member should be" (Biddle & Thomas, 1966, p. 29). Although roles can be functional for the individual and the organization, they can also be extremely dysfunctional (Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn, Snoek, & Rosenthal, 1964). Kahn et al. (1964) elaborated upon the dysfunctions of roles using the concepts of role conflict.

"Role conflict refers to an extent to which a person experiences pressures within one role that is incompatible with the pressures that arises within another role". (Kopelman et al.1983 p.201)

Thus, role conflict is the incompatibility or incongruity of expectations with in and/or between role(s). This incompatibility may take place when expectations of job are opposite and it is not possible for individual to meet one expectation without rejecting another; when the expectations of role senders form the individual for performing a job are incompatible or when multiple roles individual is involved in, are incompatible with each other. When any one or combinations of these conditions are present individual experience role conflict.

Kahn et al. (1964) and Gross et al. (1958) reported that the dysfunctional consequences of role conflict were tension, turnover, dissatisfactions, anxiety, and lower performance.

Extant research in this area suggest that role conflict affects individual physically and psychologically, causes psychosomatic disorders, lethargy and emotional exhaustion and individuals might feel frustrated (Beena C, 1999). This may also affect the way individual balance their work and personal life.

While, organization related consequences of role conflicts like job tension, job threat, low morale, absenteeism, low job performance (Beena C, 1999) may lead to feeling of low job satisfaction.

"Work life balance is an extent to which an individual is engaged in – and equally satisfied with – his or her work role and family role" (Greenhaus, Collins & Shaw 2003).

Perceived balance between work and social roles usually is conducive to life satisfaction. Work–family balance was found to predict well-being and the overall quality of life (Fisher, 2002; Greenhaus, Collins, & Shaw, 2003). Conversely, failure to achieve balance was associated with reduced job and life satisfaction (Allen, Herst Bruck, & Sutton, 2000; Kossek & Ozeki, 1998), decreased well-being and quality of life (Aryee, 1992; Grant-Vallone & Donaldson, 2001; Noor, 2004; Rice, Frone, & McFarlin, 1992), as well as with some others outcomes related to well-being, such as increased stress (Burke, 1988), impaired mental health (Grzywacz & Bass, 2003), and family conflict

(Higgins, Duxbury, & Irving, 1992; Kofodimos, 1990).

Keeping this balance is extremely important for the health and well being of the employee, his / her family, for commitment to job, for meeting family and work role expectations and enjoying the social life. To be able to deal with the various role expectations a balance has to be created between the expectations coming from the work and the personal life.

In terms of role conflict, work life balance is also defined as "Satisfaction and good functioning at work and at home with a minimum of role conflict". (Clark 2000).

Job satisfaction comprises people's feelings about their jobs. It is defined as "a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job or job experiences" (Locke, 1976). Accordingly, job dissatisfaction occurs when individuals find their job as frustrating or blocking the attainment of one's values (Locke, 1976).

Thus, if individuals feel higher sense of job satisfaction it may reduce the negative impact of role conflict on their perceived work life balance. This study is undertaken to understand the impact of role conflict and job satisfaction on work life balance of individuals.

2. Hypothesis & Research Model

Role conflict is the incompatible expectations with in and/or between role(s). Role conflict is considered as one of the major source of work family conflict (Greenhaus & Butell, 1985). Studies have identified role conflict as a major source of stress and job tension (Ivancevich & Matteson, 1980; French Caplan & Harrison 1982).

Role conflict has negative impact in individual in terms of emotional exhaustion (Schwab, 1981) and also has impact on low job performance and low morale (Parasuraman, 1978). Role conflict also results in job related tension. Previous research suggests that when individuals experience high role conflict, it reduces their job satisfaction (Burke, 1988). Other studies also suggest negative correlation between role conflict and job satisfaction (Keeton *et. al.* 2007).

Theory of role dynamics (Khan *et al.*, 1964) posit that incompatible job expectations results in role conflict which causes reduced sense of job satisfaction.

When role conflict reduces and there is inter role facilitation, people experience higher level of work life balance (Carlson & Frone, 2003)

Therefore we propose that,

H1 - If role conflict is high, work life balance will be low.

H2 - If role conflict is high, job satisfaction will be low.

H3 - If job satisfaction is high, work life balance will be high.

H4 - Job satisfaction will mediate between role conflict and work life balance such that if job satisfaction is high negative impact of role conflict on work life balance will reduce.

The proposed research model is presented in Figure 1.

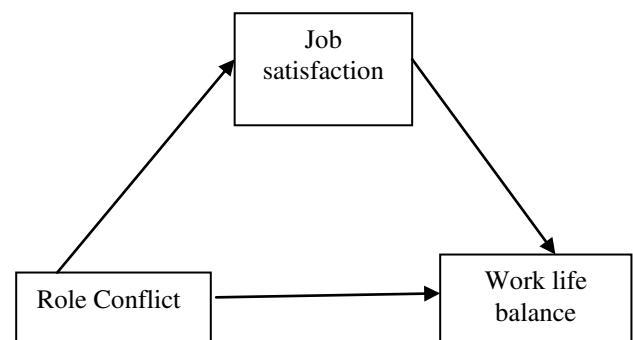


Figure 1: Research Model

3. Methods

Sample – Data was collected through a survey of 150 respondents from manufacturing from sector. Respondents were contacted either personally or via email and were explained the purpose of the questionnaire and assured confidentiality of responses. Of the 250 questionnaires that were distributed/ emailed, 150 usable responses were received by the data analysis deadline.

The sample was 65 % male, with an average age of 40 years. Approximately 80% of the respondents were graduates and post graduate. Average work experience was around 15 years.

Measures

Role Conflict: Role Conflict was measured using items from the scale developed by House, Schuler &

Levanoni (1983). There were 11 items in role conflict sub-scale. Each item was rated on 5-point

Table 2 – Regression Results

	Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Unstandardized β	t	R ²	ΔR^2
H1	Role Conflict	Work Life Balance	-.369	-2.329*	.126	.053*
H2		Job Satisfaction	-.615	-3.976**	.282	.132**
H3	Job Satisfaction	Work Life Balance	.453	4.755**	.252	.188**
H4	Role Conflict	Work Life Balance	-.310	-1.278	.275	.127**
	Job Satisfaction		.462	4.742**		

scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Sample items include s “My power matches up the assigned responsibilities”, and “I do not know what I am expected to do”.

Job Satisfaction: A short form of Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire, (MSQ) developed by Weiss, Dawis, England and Lofquist (1977) was used to measure job satisfaction. The questionnaire comprised of 20 items. Each item was rated on 5-point scale from 1 (highly dissatisfied) to 5 (highly satisfied). Sample item include, ‘The feeling of accomplishment I get from my job’ and ‘the way my job provides for steady employment’.

Work Life Balance: Work - life balance will be measured with a 15-item scale adapted from an instrument reported by Fisher-McAuley et al. (2003). Respondents were asked to indicate the frequency with which they have felt in a particular way during the past three months using a seven-point time-related scale (e.g., 1-not at all, 4-sometimes, and 7-all the time). Sample items include “neglect personal needs because of work,” “My work suffers because of my personal life,” “My personal life gives me energy for my job,” “I am happy with the amount of time for non-work activities.”

4. Analyses and Results

Table 1- Mean, Std. Deviation and Zero Order Correlations among study variables

Variables	M	SD	RC	JS	WLB
Role Conflict	3.85	.73	0.92		
Job Satisfaction	3.80	.79	-.605**	0.80	
WLB	3.55	.79	-.472**	.652**	0.93

** $p < .01$

Control variables – Age, Education, Gender

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$

Mean, standard deviations and correlations for all the variables are reported in table 1. All scales have accepted reliability. Alpha reliabilities are reported along the diagonal in the table. Strong correlations are found between role conflict, job satisfaction and work life balance. Role conflict is significantly negatively related with job satisfaction and work life balance.

We used hierarchical multiple regression to test hypothesis. Age, education and gender were controlled for and entered in model 1. The results in table 2, controlling for age, education and gender shows support for hypothesis 1 and 2 which states that if role conflict is high, work life balance and job satisfaction will be low. Hypothesis 3 which assumes that if job satisfaction is high, work life balance will also be high also gets supported from the data.

Mediation (H4) can be tested only if all the variables have significant bivariate correlation with each other (Baron and Kenny, 1986). We tested for mediation of job satisfaction in the link between role conflict and work life balance. We regressed role conflict on work life balance and then added job satisfaction to the regression equation. On adding job satisfaction, role conflict became insignificant indicating complete mediation.

5. Discussion

In the present study role conflict is studied as independent variable, work life balance as dependent variable and job satisfaction as a mediator.

The objective of this study was to assess the relationship between role conflict with work life balance and job satisfaction. As expected results suggest that role conflict has significant negative relationship with work life balance and job satisfaction. This finding is in line with the previous

research which suggests that if inter role conflict is high, work life balance of individuals will reduce (Carlson & Frone, 2003). Role conflict creates incongruence of demands from various roles and thus also diminishes the sense of job satisfaction (Keeton *et. al.* 2007).

Work life balance denotes least role conflict that brings individual satisfaction and good functioning at work and at home (Clark, 2000). Work life balance is extremely crucial as it brings mental and physical well being to individuals.

Job satisfaction gives individuals sense of gratification. Job satisfaction enhances employee performance, reduces the probability to leave job, increases the organizational commitment (Brown & Peterson, 1993) and hence individuals are in a better position to manage their work life and their personal life.

The study further explored the mediation of job satisfaction on the relationship between role conflict and work life balance. As per our expectation, job satisfaction completely mediates the relationship between role conflict and work life balance. This suggests that even though role conflict is high, if individuals are satisfied with their jobs, they will still experience better work life balance.

References

Allen, T. D., Herst, D. E., Bruck, C. S., & Sutton, M. (2000). Consequences associated with work-to-family conflict: a review and agenda for future research. *Journal of occupational health psychology, 5*(2), 278.

Aryee, S. (1992). Antecedents and outcomes of work-family conflict among married professional women: Evidence from Singapore. *Human relations, 45*(8), 813-837.

Beena, C. (1999). Role conflict, role ambiguity and role overload of women executives in organizations.

Barnett, R. C., & Baruch, G. K. (1985). Women's involvement in multiple roles and psychological distress. *Journal of personality and social psychology, 49*(1), 135.

Baron, R. M., & Kenny, D. A. (1986). The moderator-mediator variable distinction in social psychological research: Conceptual, strategic, and statistical considerations. *Journal of personality and social psychology, 51*(6), 1173.

Brown, S. P., & Peterson, R. A. (1993). Antecedents and consequences of salesperson job satisfaction: Meta-analysis and assessment of causal effects. *Journal of marketing research, 30*(1), 63.

Burke, R. J. (1988). Some antecedents of work-family conflict. *Journal of Social Behavior and personality, 3*(4), 287.

Burke, R. J. (1988). Some antecedents of work-family conflict. *Journal of Social Behavior and personality, 3*(4), 287.

Caplan, R. D., & Harrison, R. V. (1993). Person-Environment Fit Theory: Some History, Recent

Developments, and Future Directions. *Journal of Social Issues, 49*(4), 253-275.

Carlson, D. S., & Frone, M. R. (2003). Relation of behavioral and psychological involvement to a new four-factor conceptualization of work-family interference. *Journal of business and psychology, 17*(4), 515-535.

Clark, S. C. (2000). Work/family border theory: A new theory of work/family balance. *Human relations, 53*(6), 747-770.

Ernst Kossek, E., & Ozeki, C. (1998). Work-family conflict, policies, and the job-life satisfaction relationship: A review and directions for organizational behavior-human resources research.

Fisher, G. G. (2002). *Work/personal life balance: A construct development study* (Doctoral dissertation, ProQuest Information & Learning).

Fisher-McAuley, G., Stanton, J., Jolton, J., & Gavin, J. (2003, April). Modeling the relationship between work life balance and organizational outcomes. In *Annual Conference of the Society for Industrial-Organizational Psychology, Orlando* (pp. 1-26).

Grant-Vallone, E. J., & Donaldson, S. I. (2001). Consequences of work-family conflict on employee well-being over time. *Work & stress, 15*(3), 214-226.

Greenhaus, J. H., Collins, K. M., & Shaw, J. D. (2003). The relation between work-family balance and quality of life. *Journal of vocational behavior, 63*(3), 510-531.

Greenhaus, J. H., & Beutell, N. J. (1985). Sources of conflict between work and family roles. *Academy of management review, 10*(1), 76-88.

Gross, N., Mason, W. S., & McEachern, A. W. (1958). Explorations in role analysis: Studies of the school superintendence role.

Grzywacz, J. G., & Bass, B. L. (2003). Work, family, and mental health: testing different models of work-family fit. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 65*(1), 248-261.

Higgins, C. A., Duxbury, L. E., & Irving, R. H. (1992). Work-family conflict in the dual-career family. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes, 51*(1), 51-75.

House, R. J., Schuler, R. S., & Levanoni, E. (1983). Role conflict and ambiguity scales: Reality or artifacts?

Ivancevich, J. M., Matteson, M. T., & Preston, C. (1982). Occupational stress, Type A behavior, and physical well being. *Academy of Management Journal, 25*(2), 373-391.

Kahn, R. L., Wolfe, D. M., Quinn, R. P., Snoek, J. D., & Rosenthal, R. A. (1964). Organizational stress: Studies in role conflict and ambiguity.

Keeton, K., Fenner, D. E., Johnson, T. R., & Hayward, R. A. (2007). Predictors of physician career satisfaction, work-life balance, and burnout. *Obstetrics & Gynecology, 109*(4), 949-955.

Kopelman, R. E., Greenhaus, J. H., & Connolly, T. F. (1983). A model of work, family, and interrole conflict: A construct validation study. *Organizational behavior and human performance, 32*(2), 198-215.

Kofodimos, J. R. (1990). Why executives lose their balance. *Organizational Dynamics, 19*(1), 58-73.

Locke, E. A. (1976). The nature and causes of job satisfaction. *Handbook of industrial and organizational psychology.*

Noor, K. M. (2011). Work-life balance and intention to leave among academics in Malaysian public higher

education institutions. *International journal of business and social science*, 2(11).

Rice, R. W., Frone, M. R., & McFarlin, D. B. (1992). Work—nonwork conflict and the perceived quality of life. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 13(2), 155-168.