Full Length Research Paper

EXPLORING THE ROLE OF STRESS ON ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT AMONG EMPLOYEES IN HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF JOB SATISFACTION

[1]Hashemi, S. M., [2]Jamil Jusoh, [3,*]Kiumarsi, S. and [4]Shno Mohammadi

[1,2]School of Housing, Building and Planning (HBP), Universiti Sians Malaysia
[3,*]Graduate School of Business (GSB), Universiti Sains Malaysia
[4]School of social sciences, Universiti Sains Malaysia

*Corresponding Author

Abstract

This study explores the role of stress on organizational commitment, focusing on employees in the hospitality industry. Work stress has become one of the most widely studied topics in research, mainly because of its importance to employees' psychological health, which in turn affects service quality and organizational effectiveness. Stress at the workplace can cause job-related dissatisfaction. Hence, needful steps to reduce job stress are suggested based on results of the study, which will improve employees' commitment. This study developed a new conceptual framework that considers role stress as the independent variable (IV), the job satisfaction as the mediating variable (MV), and organizational commitment is a dependent variable (DV). Using individual employees in hotel industry as the unit of analysis, the conceptual framework can be used to analyse the direct effect of the relationship between role stress and organizational commitment in the hospitality industry. Furthermore, it can be applied to determine the indirect effect of job satisfaction on the relationship between role stress and organizational commitment.

Keywords: Role Stress, Job Satisfaction, Employees, Hospitality Industry, Organizational Commitment.

INTRODUCTION

In the current global hostile environment, the hotel industry is selective as regards areas to concentrate on providing excellent service quality and making customer satisfaction. This will ensure the hotels a steady stream of successful loyal customers for their survival and achievement. Frontline hotel employees are certainly the most significant links in this process (Karatepe *et al.,* 2006). However, the hotel industry is challenged with the demanding task of developing effective approaches to guarantee that the behavior and attitude of frontline employees are consistent with the goals of management and expectations of customers (Hartline and Ferrell, 1996). Therefore, hotel managers need to discern completely the wellbeing of their frontline employees. However, regardless of the implementation of management goals, frontline hotel employees are faced with several issues associated with inadequate coaching and advancement possibilities, low pay, excessive workloads, and unsocial work hours (Babin and Boles, 1998; Karatepe and Sokmen, 2006; Kim *et al.,* 2009). They are often predisposed to role stress, comprising role conflict and role ambiguity (Hartline and Ferrell, 1996; Karatepe and Sokmen, 2006). Role conflict

occurs when the qualifications or experiences of individuals are inconsistent with the demands of ajob, thus they discover they are unable to satisfy the job requirements. Role ambiguity happens when individuals are vague about the anticipation or demands of their roles in a job or organization (Churchill *et al.,* 1976). Based on concise reviews, this study explores the concept of role stress, its relationship with job satisfaction, and the effect of this relationship on the commitment of employees in an organization.

Literature Review

Stress endured in the office may have both positive and negative effects on individuals, along with the organizations in which they work. It influences organizational output and individual dispositions towards a given role by promoting adaptable behavior. Studies have observed that work connected to stress is associated with negative outcomes such as untrustworthiness, low morale, exhaustion, malingering/truancy, job seeking, or voluntary proceeds (Glazer and Beehr, 2005; Hamilton *et al.,* 1993), which are detrimental to the stability of organizations. Several researchers also asserted that job stress influences employees' job satisfaction and their general performance in their work.

Besides, it is a well-known fact that majority of organizations are currently more challenging as regards the positive aspects of job, with some referring to the present times as the "age of anxiety and stress" (Coleman, 1976), where stress affects stress itself. Nonetheless, Beehr and Newman (1978) defined stress as a situation that compels a person to depart from normal performance because of changes (i.e., disrupt or enhance) in his/her psychological and/or physiological condition. Based on the definition put forward in previous researches, it is important for individuals to identify the stress they face in their careers. The workplace has the potential to have a considerable impact on the level of stress individuals experience because a substantial amount of one's life occurs in this environment.

Furthermore, there are features of work-related measures that could improve their stress factor efficiency. Given that the individual's sustenance is reliant on his or her performance in the work area, any function considered as displaying inadequacies in performance can raise stress levels. Similarly, their recognition and confidence subjective to workplace status and proportion of social interactions are usually workplace based. Notwithstanding, relationships in non-work scenarios can also exacerbate problems in the work situations and vice versa (Hart and Wearing, 1995). Several studies have analyzed stress-creating features in hotels (Dann, 1990; Hales and Nightingale, 1986; Brymer et al., 1991; Zohar, 1994). Brymer et al. (1991) examined stress and strategies for dealing with it among 400 middle and upper management staff in 23 hotels using a 14-item checklist of job stressors and a checklist of problem management measures. The study affirmed that the identified job related stressors resulted in emotional, physiological and behavioral pressures, and the measures taken to deal with the stress were shown to be ineffective. The authors concluded that better stress management measures to allow them greater control over their work duties were required. Zohar (1994) reviewed line employees, middle management and upper management in a Canadian hotel chain utilizing a range of scales created to determine several elements of work induced stress. The elements comprise role conflict and ambiguity; workload and decision latitude, psychological stress related to unpredictability, uncontrollability and overloading in the work condition; and an indication of worldwide satisfaction (Zohar, 1994). The study established that employee empowerment is a key element of job related stress at all three levels between employee stress, empowerment and service quality. In tandem with empowerment, role ambiguity and workload are very relevant elements. In addition, Meta analytic studies performed to examine the relationship between stress (conflict/ambiguity) and job satisfaction revealed a negative impact of role conflict and ambiguity on job satisfaction (Brown and Peterson, 1993; Jackson and Schuler, 1985; Ortqvist and Wincent, 2006).

Role stress

Job stress is referred to as the individual's reaction to stress resulting from a specific work environment (Dowden and Tellier, 2004). Psychologists, sociologists and scientific experts have theorized role stress from various points of view (Kahn et al., 1964; Lazarus, 1967). Role stress may occur through diverse designs of disparity in expectations, resources, ability and values concerning the role. Hardy and Conway

(1988) categorized role stress, particularly for healthcare specialists into three dimensions comprising role conflict, role ambiguity and role overload. The outcomes that justify morale, sense of wellness, social performing and somatic health are the implications of role stress. Role stress is a condition of emotional arousal when an individual encounters role related stress events stemming from social requirements. Hence, combined social demands might be crucial in structuring human ideas, emotions and actions (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984), such as job satisfaction, frustration or the intent to give up.

Overload

Role overload began to manifest in 1990s. In order to manage and adapt to greater work demands, employees are sometimes obliged to take work to home and use their private time to contend with workload (Duxbury and Higgins, 2001). According to a study by Jones et al. (2007) role overload is theoretically distinct from role stressors, role conflict and role ambiguity. Several studies consider role overload to be a form of individual role conflict, such as boundary-spanning roles, often viewed in a form of inter-sender conflict, in which an individual is expected to meet the demands of various role senders (Singh et al., 1994; Singh, 2000; Jones et al., 2007). Jones et al., (2007) revealed that role overload is the level of pressure to which an employee finds him/herself because of the numerous duties and responsibilities. Organizations undergo constant negative effects of role overload such as low performance, absenteeism, low enthusiasm and satisfaction for the job, low organizational loyalty, high intention to resign and eventually drop in organization's overall profitability (Duxbury and Higgins, 2001; Jones et al., 2007).

Furthermore, role overload undoubtedly has an inverse effect on employee activities within and outside the organization (Malik et al., 2013). Role overload is one of the most crucial and rapidly growing phenomena faced by organizations (Paoli and Merllie, 2001; Murphy and Sauter, 2003). Jones et al. (2007) assert that a few researches isolate the effect of role overload, since scholars tend to replace role overload with role conflict and role ambiguity. The earlier research studies found role overload to be negative predictor of employee productivity (Campion, 2005). Conversely, a different study by Malik and Usman (2011) found a positive correlation between role overload and productivity.

Role Ambiguity

Role ambiguity defined as being uncertain or vague about the task requirements of a specific job attributable to lack of information, imprecise organization directives and unclear goals and responsibilities (Larson, 2004; Karatepe et al., 2006; Jones et al., 2007). House and Rizzo (1972) had previously defined role ambiguity as the absence of precision or clarity and predictability of the outcome of one's behavior. In addition, Rizzo et al., (as cited in Rageb et al., 2013) defined role ambiguity in terms of inputs from the environment, which would serve to guide the behavior and provide knowledge that ensures the behavior is appropriate. According to Zhao and Rashid (2010), role ambiguity is the lack of satisfactory information required for person to perform his/her role in an acceptable manner. In addition, Brun et al., (2009) revealed

pointed out two types of ambiguity: subject and resource ambiguities. The subject ambiguity comprises product, market, process and resources of organization while the resource ambiguity covers multiplicity, novelty, validity and reliability. Furthermore, Flaherty *et al.,* (as cited in Vazifedust, 2014) showed that role ambiguity affects profitability negatively. Wetzels *et al.,* (2000) performed a study to analyze the impact of the negative relationship between role ambiguity and commitment on quality of services rendered by vendors. The study deduced that it seemed logical that a vendor with little understanding of his/her powers and responsibilities will reduce the incentives for customers. Randall and Procter (2008) showed that employees of civil service and employees of private sector draw from the experiences of their previous jobs to make future decisions, hence the their perceived ambiguity is between rhetoric and reality. The ambiguity is attributable to interpreting the change to fit with their expectations of transform. A point of conflict (ambiguity) arises when they are unable to reconcile the changes with their expectations.

Job satisfaction

Job satisfaction denotes an employee's affective or emotional response to his/her job (Cranny, Smith, and Stone, 1992). It is basically the degree to which people take pleasure in their job (Spector, 1996). Similar to job stress, several work environment factors are linked to job satisfaction. Role conflict, role ambiguity, role overload, dangerousness, and anxiety over medical issues were linked with low levels of job satisfaction (Lambert *et al.,* 2005). On the contrary, participation in decision-making, job autonomy, integration, array of available jobs, satisfaction with wages, accessibility of incentive programs, training, perception of unbiased treatment, and quality of supervision, and formalization were shown to lead to higher levels of job satisfaction (Griffin, 2001). High employee satisfaction is vital to managers who consider that an organization has a duty to provide employees with jobs that are demanding and inherently satisfying (Robbins, 2001). Oshagbemi (2000) defined job satisfaction as individual's positive emotional response to particular job. Gill (2008) pointed out that employees in the hospitality industry laden with high level of trust will have higher levels of job satisfaction. Job satisfaction ultimately affects several other variables such as turnover intentions. Price and Mueller (1981) stated that job satisfaction has an indirect influence on profitability via its direct control over intent to leave.

Organizational commitment

Organizational commitment refers to employee's loyalty to the organization; recognition of the organization's tenets; satisfaction with the organization and complying with organizational objectives, and involvement in the organization's activities. An example of this commitment is personal endeavors carried out by employees for the benefit of the organization (Mowday, Porter, and Steers, 1982). Organizational commitment is a relationship that involves the entire organization and not just specific work, teamwork, or perception of the job (Lambert, Barton, and Hogan, 1999). Porter *et al.,* (1976) defined organizational commitment as the relative strength of an individual's recognition and engagement in a specific organization. A number of studies

assert that building and improving employees' commitment is possibly a significant approach to averting some of the adverse effects of job stress on both employees and organizations (Jacob *et al.,* 2007; Schmidt, 2007). Mowday *et al.,* (1982) asserted that an individual must adhere to specific targets and aspirations of the organization as well as maintain a desire to be part of the organization in order to demonstrate commitment. A similar study contended that dedication often establishes a mutual relationship wherein individuals attach themselves to the organization in return for specific rewards (Vakola and Nikolaou, 2005). Individuals come to organizations with certain desires, capabilities, expectations and a viable work environment where they can effectively apply their abilities and accomplish their goals. In a case where an organization can provide these possibilities, the probability of increasing commitment is high. However, this exchange does not indicate exploitation of employees. In a nutshell, the commitment comprises at least three related aspects; a strong approval of the organization's values and goals, a determination to work considerably hard on behalf of the organization, and a solid incentive to maintain a regular membership in the organization. Thus, organizational commitment varies depending on an array of organizational and individual aspects such as individual features, strength features, job experience and role relevant functions (Mowday *et al.,* 2013).

Moderating Role of Gender

Several studies have disputed on whether gender moderates the effects of role stress on employee behavior (Babinand Boles, 1998; Boles *et al.,* 2003; Fogarty, 1996; Karatepe *et al.,* 2006). According to Ptacek *et al.* (1994), females are stereo type das emotional, sympathetic and dependent, while males are seen as independent, instrumental and rational. Fielden and Davidson (2001) demonstrated that females are inclined to use behavioral coping (e.g., using direct and positive actions) more actively than males to manage problems and handle stress by working longer and harder (Gianakos, 2001). Similarly, Karatepe *et al.,* (2006) confirmed a significant moderating effect of gender differences on the relationship between roles overload and job satisfaction, but failed to identify a moderating role between role ambiguity and job satisfaction. They concluded that the inconsistent findings are due to cultural differences, and thus further investigations on the subject should be carried out. It theorized that women have a tendency to be satisfied with their jobs when they can interact with others who recognize their roles in the organization, while men tend to be satisfied when others appreciate their performance itself. As a result, females are more prone to experience dissatisfaction with their jobs compared to males without role expectations. Moreover, there are disparities between males and females in terms of coping with stress. Nonetheless, Eagly (1987) earlier opposed this recurring view, stating that females possess a socializing-oriented communal behavior while males displayed a task-oriented agnatic behavior (Eagly, 1987).

Underlying Theories

Maslow's Needs Hierarchy theory

Shajahanand LinuShajahan (2004) categorized the theories of job-satisfaction into Content theories (Maslow's Needs Hierarchy, Herzberg's two factor theory, theory X and theory

Y, Alderfer's ERG theory, and McClelland's theory of needs) and Process theories (behavior modification, cognitive evaluation theory, goal setting theory, reinforcement theory, expectancy theory, and equity theory). This study applies the theory of Maslow's needs hierarchy as a principle theory of job satisfaction. Maslow's Needs Hierarchy or Motivation/Satisfaction theory (1943) is the most widely recognized theory of motivation and satisfaction (Weihrich and Koontz, 1999). Maslow's theory of hierarchy of needs laid the foundation for subsequent theories of job satisfaction. Hence, the several theories proposed so far are premised on Maslow's ideas.

Based on humanistic psychology and clinical experiences, Abraham Maslow stated that an individual's motivational requirements may be arranged in a hierarchical order. Once a specified level of needs is fulfilled, it no longer aids motivation. Thus, the next higher level of need is activated in order to motivate and in this manner satisfy the individual (Luthans, 2005). Maslow (1943) proposed five levels of needs' hierarchy as follows in ascending order: physical needs: (food, clothing, shelter, sex), safety needs (physical protection), social needs (developing close relations with others), esteem/Achievement (prestige given by others), self-Actualization (self-fulfillment and accomplishment through personal growth) (Maslow, 1943).However, individual needs are dependent on the significance given to different needs and the level to which an individual wants to accomplish these needs (Karimi, 2007).

Organizational Commitment Model

According to Joolideh and K.Yeshodhara (2008), a number of alternative commitment models were proposed in the 1980s and early 1990s (Meyer and Allen, 1991). All reflecting the common theme of multidimensionality. Feinstein (2002) described organizational commitment as consisting of two constructs: affective and continuance (Allen and Meyer, 1990). The common three-component dimension comprised affective, continuance, and normative commitment (Gunlu, Aksarayli and Percin, 2009). According to Meyer and Allen (1997), affective commitment denotes psychological attachment to organization; continuance commitment refers to costs associated with leaving the organization, while normative commitment is the perceived obligation to remain with the organization. These different dimensions have implications for the enduring participation of the individual in the organization (Ayeni and Phopoola, 2007).

Affective Commitment Dimension

Affective commitment represents the individual's emotional attachment to the organization. Affective commitment is the kind of commitment, where there is a positive relationship between the employee and the organization because they both have similar values (Shore and Tetrick, 1991). Therefore, employees with strong commitment retain their position not only because he/she needs the occupation, but also wants it (Meyer *et al.,* 1993). Mowday, Porter, and Steers (1982) posited that affective OC is a strong principle and recognition of the organization's aim and values; a willingness to exert considerable effort to represent the organization; and a strong desire to sustain membership on the organization.
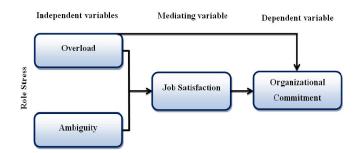
Continuance Commitment

Continuance commitment is the counterpart to affective organizational commitment. It considers the notion that employee do not resign from an organization for fear of losing their benefits, taking a pay reduction, and being unable to find a replacement job (Murray, Gregoire, and Downey, 1991). Therefore, continuance commitment relates to the individual's experience, and service she/he offers to the organization (Norizan, 2012). Hence, there is difficulty in relinquishing the job and the uncertain "opportunity cost" of leaving the company or having a handful or no alternatives. Continuance commitment reflects employees' financial ties to the organization based on the cost relevance of leaving the organization (Norizan, 2012). Besides, Meyer *et al.* (1993) showed that skill and knowledge are not easily transferable to other organizations, which also tends to increase employees' loyalty to their organizations. In simple words, employees who stay in the current organization with a strong continuance commitment are there because they have no other viable or better options.

Normative Commitment

Employees with strong normative commitment would remain with an organization because of their perception that it is the right thing to do (Meyer and Allen, 1991). Wiener (1982) deliberated that normative commitment to the organization develops based on a compilation of pressures that employee feel due to their attachment to the working environment and socialization as newcomers to the organization. Therefore, normative commitment generally increases when an individual is loyal to his employer or feels the responsibility to work or compensate for the benefits and favors received from the organization (Meyer *et al.,* 1993). Thus, the normative component of commitment is based on the individual's perception as regards one's responsibility to the organization. In addition, Meyer *et al.* (1993) stated that skills and education are not simply transferable to other organization, which tends to raise workers' commitment to their current organizations.

Conceptual Research Framework

Based on the variables described in previews sections a partial conceptual framework was developed (Figure. 1). The framework consists of role stress as the independent variable (IV), job satisfaction as the mediating variables (MV), and organizational commitment as a dependent variable (DV).

Figure 1. Conceptual Research Framework

The framework can be used to study the direct impact of the relationship between role stress constructs on organizational commitment on the hospitality industry.

It can also be applied to determine the indirect effects of job satisfaction on the relationship between role stress constructs and organizational commitment. The unit of analysis for the study is the individual employees in the hotel industry.

Conclusions

This study explored the concept of role stress in terms of role ambiguity and overload, and its relationship with job satisfaction. It then provides an evidence base for the impact of role stress/job satisfaction relationship on organizational commitment. Most of the studies reviewed indicate that stress has important effects on personnel and organizational outcomes. Stress at the work place may result in unfavourable outcomes such as low level of performance and resignation from the job. Therefore, identifying the job stress's factors in an organization will significantly improve job satisfaction, which in turn strengthens staff's loyalty to the organization. Moreover, organizations need to acknowledge the contribution made by each employee in order to instill loyalty and a strong sense of belonging as well as reduce the tendency to resign from the organization.Based on the review of existing studies, the relationship between job stress and organizational commitment was identified. The research also provided a new framework for the relationship of job stress and organizational commitment. Implementing this framework will benefit studies conducted on hospitality industry management to review role stress (role overload and role ambiguity), and its effect on job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

Acknowledgements

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