Mediating Role of Career Satisfaction on Relationship between Role Conflict and Work Life Balance

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Abstract

In today's social environment individuals have to play multiple roles in their personal and professional lives. Constant demands coming from various role senders may lead to experience of role conflict for working individuals, giving way to feeling of work life imbalance. The current study focuses on impact of role conflict on work life balance of working individuals and the role of career satisfaction in mitigating this impact. Career satisfaction was expected to mediate on a relationship between role conflict and work life balance. Hierarchical regression analysis was used to test this mediation. The results of this study show strong correlation among role conflict (RC), work life balance (WLB) and career satisfaction (CS). CS was found to completely mediate between RS and WLB. The results focus on the importance of career satisfaction for working individuals. Even though, it is not within the control of organizations (employer) to reduce number of roles individuals have to play and also reduce role demands, organizations can take measures to increase the career satisfaction of individuals. This will certainly help individuals to maintain healthy work life balance.

Key Words: *Career Satisfaction, Role Conflict, Work Life Balance*

Introduction

Role conflict takes place when there are various psychological demands placed upon individuals from personal and professional life role senders. Wherein, they are supposed to make choices and have to opt one at the cost of other. Due to which compliance with both personal and professional life becomes difficult.

Individual feels trapped in a conflict when he tries to run in various directions to respond and satisfy the needs of these both statuses/ roles. This abstract phenomenon is usually connected to situational experiences of life. Satisfying all the obligations/demands simultaneously hampers personal growth, self-motivation, and development. This is because complying with needs of dual role requires high level of mental stability, patience and understanding capacity.

When individuals can satisfy multiple demands coming from various life roles, they experience work-life balance.

Work life balance levels can change as per specific and situational events that take place as people live in a dynamic environment. Individuals have to keep juggling as per the respective needs of roles and adjust themselves accordingly over the period of employment.

It is difficult to numerically specify how much time a particular person should allocate to his work or personal life roles. This is because work life balance is a personal perception and every individual has to; on his own determined how much of his time has to be given to various activities. What is more important is individuals should perceive that their professional and personal lives are balanced and they are happy with it.

Work life balance is important factor for individual as individuals can stick to work commitment when they have healthy personal life and are fully involved in family life when they have healthy professional life. With healthy work life balance individual can play both personal and professional roles satisfactorily.

Career satisfaction is individual's overall satisfaction with his/her current career. It relates to level of happiness one feels in their chosen occupation and with the work they perform as part of the responsibilities of that occupation. The concept of career can be understood as "positive psychological and work-related outcomes accumulated as a result of one's work experiences" (Sieber and Kraimer, 2001).

From the traditional lookout concept of career satisfaction was confined up to only the top professionals and well established personnel. However, contemporary world starts measuring career satisfaction right from the initial stage irrespective of the level of the organizational hierarchy to which a particular individual belongs and it is a long time measurement sequence right up to an individual's retirement (Hall, 2002). Career satisfaction measures the degree to which individuals believe their career development is in harmony with their own personal goals, principals and choices. (Seibert and Kraimer, 2001, Heslin, 2003, Erdogan et al., 2004).

Career satisfaction is an important concept that captures an individual's opinion of their satisfaction with their overall career goals, goals for monetary achievements, goals for advancement and goals for the development of new skills (Greenhaus, Parasuraman and Wormley, 1990).

Therefore, this study was conducted to understand the impact of role conflict on work life balance of working individuals and explore the role of career satisfaction in mitigating this impact.

Literature Review & Hypothesis
An Individual's personal and organization life is equally important tohis/her overall satisfaction. Due to role conflict, the individuals lack a sense of taking rational decision and fail to maintain a healthy works life balance. It gives rise to the feeling of dissatisfaction and conflict among personal and professional life.

Therefore we propose that,

H 1- If role conflict is high, work life balance will be low.

Role conflict also causes mental and emotional strain for individuals. It makes it difficult for them to cope up with daily life demands. Further it gives rise to negative emotions such as low content in job, less

dedication and determination. As a result person starts losing interest in everything, giving rise to the feeling of dissatisfaction (Fisher and Gittelson,1983 ;Jackson and Schuler,1985).

Therefore we propose that,

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

When individuals are satisfied with their career they become less susceptible to the negatives of life like financial instability, low self-confidence, being introvert, not accepting changes, illness etc. They become open to accepting more opportunities and increase their development, allow setting priorities and giving proper time to work and personal requirements.

Therefore it is proposed that,

H3 – If career satisfaction is high, work life balance will be high.

Career satisfaction plays a vital role in maintaining work life balanced by reducing the conflict of roles. When individuals are satisfied with their careers; there is a sense of being successful within them which makes them be high on achievement. Through this feeling of success and achievement they are able to give reasons to their decisions and meaning to his life. Career satisfaction assures mental, financial and psychological stability and thus individuals are able to maintain a proper balance between work and personal life.

Therefore it is proposed that,

H4 – Career satisfaction will mediate between role conflicts and work life balance such that if career satisfaction is high negative impact of role conflict on work life balance will reduce.

Research Model

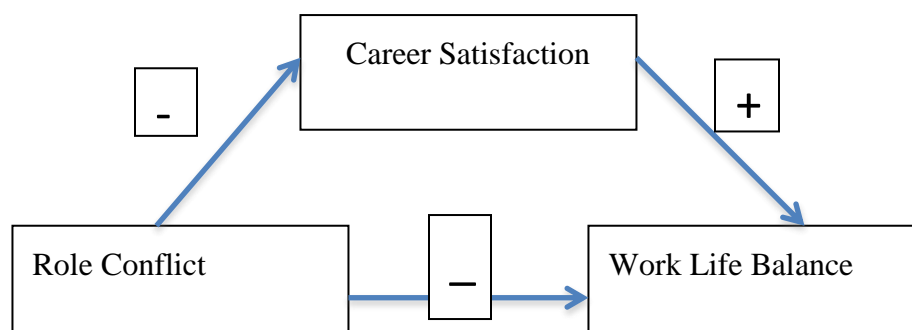The proposed research model is presented in Figure 1.

Figure -1: Research Model

Methods

Sample –Survey method was adopted to study the impact of role conflict andcareer satisfaction on work life balance of employees. Data was collected through a survey of 116individuals working in IT, Banking and Healthcare sectors in Pune city of Maharashtra state. Respondents were contacted personally and

152

were explained the purpose of the questionnaire and assured confidentiality of responses. Of the 200 questionnaires that were distributed, 116 usable responses were received by the data analysis deadline.

The sample has 59% male and 41% female respondents with an average age of 32 years. Approximately 47 % of the respondents were married, while 58% are staying in joint family system. Average work experience was around 7 years.

Measures

Role Conflict*:* Role Conflict will be measured using items from the scale developed by House, Schuler & Levanoni (1983). There will 11 items in role conflict sub-scale. Each item will be rated on 5-point 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*".

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 will be 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*."

Career Satisfaction: Career Satisfaction will be measured using the career satisfaction scale of Greenhaus et al. (1990). The participating managers will be instructed to indicate to what extent they agree or disagree with given statements. Sample items include, *'I am satisfied with the success I have achieved in my career, 'I am satisfied with the progress I have made towards meeting my overall career goals' etc.* Each of the items will be scored on 5-item scale ranging from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'.

Analysis and Results

Cronbach's Alpha – The validity and reliability of the survey instruments used was tested with Cronbach's Alpha. Past studies recommend using Cronbach's Alpha to validate the survey instruments (Prosad, Kapoor and Sengupta, 2015; Wood and Zaichkowsky, 2004). Cronbach's Alpha was tested for all the three variables, role conflict, career satisfaction and work life balance. The results in Table 1 show alpha reliability of role conflict as 0.85, career satisfaction as 0.89 and work life balance as 0.76. The alpha reliabilities of scales used in the study are reported along the diagonal in the table. All scales have acceptable reliabilities.

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

Variables	M	SD	RC	CS	WLB
Role Conflict	2.58	.88	**0.85**		
Career Satisfaction	4.73	.79	-.605**	**0.89**	
Work Life Balance	3.72	.68	-.472**	.652**	**0.76**

** p< .01

Table 2 – Regression Results

*p<.05**p<.01   *Control variables – Age, Education, Gender*

	Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Unstandardized β	t	R^2	ΔR^2
H1	Role Conflict	Work Life Balance	-.238	-3.482**	.126	.096**
H2	Role Conflict	Career Satisfaction	-.366	-2.752**	.062	.051**
H3	Career Satisfaction	Work Life Balance	.274	6.591**	.276	.270**
H4	Role Conflict Career Satisfaction	Work Life Balance	-.277 .317	-3.980 4.742**	.275	.127**

Mean, standard deviations and correlations for all variables are reported in Table 1. Strong correlations were found between role conflict (RC), career satisfaction (CS) and work life balance (WLB).

Multiple regression analysis was used to test the hypotheses. Variables like age, education and gender were controlled for and were entered into model 1 to nullify any impact these variables may have in prediction of dependent variable. The results in Table 2 (Controlling for age, education and gender) show complete support for H1 to H3 and also for H4.

While testing the mediation of CS on the relationship between RC and WLB, we regressed RC on WLB and added CS to the regression equation. When CS was added, the relationship between role conflict and work life balance became insignificant in this analysis, indicating complete mediation.

Discussion

The present study claims that higher level of role conflicts leads to reduced work life balance. These findings are consistent with the findings of previous research which claims that Higher the role conflict, lower will be the work life balance (Carlson and Frone, 2003).

Role conflict is a complex situation a person finds himself in when he is supposed to take responsibility of two major spheres in life like his personal life and professional life. This makes it difficult for him to focus on one and maintain an equitable balance between them. This is because of presence of difference in each role's then requirement, beliefs, and discord in emotional attachment with the individual (kahn et. al., 1964; katz and kahn, 1978).

Further, it was found that role conflict is significantly negatively related with career satisfaction.This can be justified with the outcomes of prior studies which asserts that role conflict makes room for

154

contradictory demands from the two statuses simultaneously and also causes a downfall in the sense of belongingness towards one's organisation and job satisfaction (Kecton et. al., 2007)

As expected, it was found that career satisfaction have significant positive association with work life balance.

The prime finding of this study is a full mediation by career satisfaction, which suggests that career satisfaction may help working individuals to deal with the role conflict and reduce its negative impact on work life balance .It is because satisfaction with career gives individuals confidence and sense of self determination that can help them to reduce conflict of multiple roles and its negative impact on work life balance.

Recommendations
The recommendations are based on the key finding of this study which highlights the importance of career satisfaction in minimizing negative impact of role conflicts on work life balance of working individuals.

Many middle aged individuals today are part of paid labour force. And as a result are responsible to carry out multiple roles on personal and professional front. This role accumulation comes with multiple role senders; these role senders have various demands from the role holder. As there are limited resources of time, energy and attention available to individuals, they find it difficult to deal with this incompatible role demands and as a result face role conflicts.

It may be out of the scope of organizations to reduce the role demands that employee face in their lives, organizations can take measures to increase career satisfaction of their employees. As this study claims, increased level of career satisfaction helps individuals deal with role conflict and thus reduces its negative impact on work life experience of individuals.

Individuals need to 'feel a sense of professional and personal fulfilment in his career'. Career satisfaction refers to the aftermath of an individual's professional status, level of income , how much he is content with his work and professional life, whether his expectations of professional goals have been satisfied, and whether his current position is on track and in sync with the his ultimate self-actualization goal (Seibert and Kraimer,2001)

Organizations should provide opportunities for individuals to achieve their goals related to advancement in career, income, learn new skills and opportunities that give them sense of self fulfillment.

Career satisfaction inculcates a sense of fruition in working people, enhances their performance, reduces resignations and increases a sense of organizational devoir among them.(Brown and Peterson,1993) and therefore puts individuals on the front seat and aids them to maintain a healthy balance between work and professional life.

A healthy work life balance depicts minimal role conflict which further paves way for satisfaction of an individual from his corporate position and due to which he shows better performance at work. Healthy work life balance is of great significance for the overall wellbeing of people.

The study thus depicts the mediating role of career satisfaction in mitigating the negative effect of role stress on the work life balance and as per the findings it can be said that if an individual is satisfied with his career the impact of role conflict on the work balance would not be severe.

Conclusion

With increase in the level of education in India and more women opting for professional education, entering the paid workforce and occupying higher level responsibilities in organizations, the number of individuals engaged in paid work has increased drastically. Today both men and women play multiple roles in their lives on personal as well as professional front. This role accumulation leads to creation of conflicts when individuals try to satisfy demands of various role senders. This conflict further leads to imbalance of work and personal life. Career satisfaction gives individual a sense of fulfilment and control over one's life. Therefore, opportunities created by organizations for individuals for career growth will help them achieve not only their career satisfaction but also to reduce role conflict and thereby maintain balance of professional and personal life.

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