

Role Overload: A Cause of Diminishing Employee Retention and Productivity

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Abstract: Retaining employees and maintaining a satisfactory level their productivity are crucial concerns in the organizational studies. The aim of this study is to examine the impact of role overload at work place on retention and productivity of layoff survivors. Data comprised of 450 responses from layoff survivors working in two giant organizations in Pakistan. Stratified random sampling was employed with a cross-sectional research design. The results of the Pearson's correlation and regression analysis helped in analyzing the data and reveal that role overload has a strong negative and significant relationship with both dependent variables that are employee retention and productivity. Role overload accounts for 85.3 % change in employee retention and 87.2% change in employee productivity. Additionally it is assessed that whether the difference among male and female layoff survivors with respect to role overload, retention and productivity exists or otherwise. The results are discussed in comparison with previous research studies.

Key words: Role overload • Employee retention • Employee productivity • Layoff survivors and Pakistan

INTRODUCTION

In the current era workplace stress (role ambiguity, role conflict, role overload) has become a common problem for human resource managers [1]. In this scenario employee retention and productivity has an enormous effects on the successful operations of the organizations. The organizations are trying hard to retain their employees and sustain a required level of productivity for better organizational outcomes. Work stress is thought to affect individuals' psychological and physical health, as well as organizations' effectiveness, in an adverse manner. Workers who are stressed are also more likely to be dissatisfied from their work [2] and they tend to be unhealthy, poorly motivated, less productive and less safe at work.

In the service industry it is mandatory for the organizations to have highly motivated and satisfied staff to gain the competitive advantage over others [3]. [4] found that role overload and job satisfaction both positively predicted job retention and productivity. They recommended that the study concerning role overload and its relationship with other variables may

result in different results. The researchers who examined the relationship of role overload and job retention were of the opinion that these variables have an inverse relationship [5, 6].

This study aims to test the relationship of role overload with layoff survivors' retention and productivity with out adding the effects of job satisfaction. Additionally the study also provides few recommendations to cope up with role overload.

Literature Review

Role Overload and Employee Retention: The researchers have time and again carried out research on role overload [4, 7-10]. turnover intentions and its causes but in service providing organizations like PTCL and HBL the great need is still there to study these factors.

[11], examined the relationship of the work life policies and job stress and their effect on turnover intentions of customer service representatives (CSRs) in Pakistan. After gathering responses from 118 CSRs working in call centers they revealed a negative relationship of turnover intention with work life Policies and positive relationship with job stress, that may be due to role overload.

[4] examined the effects of role overload on employee retention and productivity in the presence of job satisfaction among 450 layoff survivors and found that even having role overload the layoff survivors tend to retain their jobs and were productive in the presence of the factors that lead to job satisfaction.

In another study the authors revealed that role overload is the core factor responsible for job dissatisfaction [7] and job dissatisfaction encourages the employees not to retain their jobs [4].

[8] stated role overload as the degree to which persons are overburdened cognitively as a result of being under time pressure and having too many commitments and responsibilities. They carried out study in a sample of salespeople and expected that they would be expected to exhibit some degree of role overload, because of the oftentimes high-pressure nature of their jobs.

The authors found that role overload had displayed inconsistent relationships with many job attitudes, turnover intentions and performance measures in studies of salespeople. Work experience explained inconsistent findings, because experienced salespeople cope better with feelings of role overload. After reviewing the career stages literature, they found the direct influence of role overload on traditional job attitudes, turnover intentions, salesperson performance and the impact of work experience on these relationships.

[9] used a latent growth modeling (LGM) approach and examined the trajectories of change in role stressors (ambiguity, conflict and overload), job attitudes (affective commitment and job satisfaction) and turnover intention and psychological well-being among neophyte newcomers, as well as the relationships among these changes. The authors carried out a study by considering a sample of 170 university alumni surveyed three times during the first months of employment.

The authors found that role conflict and role overload increased, affective commitment and job satisfaction declined and turnover intention increased over the course of the study. Role ambiguity and wellbeing did not change. The initial levels of affective commitment, job satisfaction and well-being were positively related to the increase in role overload, while the initial level of turnover intention was related to a reduced increase in role overload over time.

They also found that the increase in role overload and role conflict was associated with a decline in affective commitment and job satisfaction, respectively and that the decrease in affective commitment and satisfaction was related to an increase in turnover intention.

[12] investigated the role that social support may play

in the translation of employees' role overload and job satisfaction on their intentions to leave the organization. After conducting a cross-sectional survey with a random sample the authors found that job satisfaction was the most significant predictor of turnover intention, but that collegial support played an important role in moderating the effects of role overload on turnover intention.

[10] integrated two theories of job satisfaction to investigate relationships among workplace support, role overload and job satisfaction. They gathered responses of 984 direct care workers in 108 assisted living facilities. After employing multilevel hierarchical linear models (HLM) the authors revealed that job satisfaction varied both within and among facilities. Job satisfaction was negatively associated with role overload and was positively associated with institutional support, supervisor instrumental and emotional support and coworker emotional support.

Role Overload and Employee Productivity: Role overload is found to be one of the most serious and rapidly growing phenomenon in the organizations [13, 14] and is a cause of health problems [15] which definitely means low productivity.

In an study while examining a relationship of perceived work load increase and its effects on organizational commitment and layoff survivors' productivity [2] found that work loads are dangerous for layoff survivors' productivity.

The earlier research studies found role overload as a negative predictor of employee productivity [16]. But in another study by Malik and Usman the authors found that there is a positive relationship of role overload and productivity. They also mentioned that either that is the family pressure on the layoff survivors to retain their jobs or the unemployment level prevailing in the country that enforce them to retain their jobs and to be productive.

Besides effecting employee health overload stress also affects the way in which tasks are performed and feelings employees have about themselves and their jobs. Research in organizational settings has mentioned that overload is a stressor that also has important consequences for productivity, quality of task performance and anxiety [17].

[18] revealed that role stress is inversely related to individual productivity.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Sample: Sample for the study constitute 450 responses from two main organizations working in Pakistan namely Pakistan Telecommunication Company Limited and Habib Bank Limited. One providing the telecommunication services to the nation whereas the other is offering the financial services. The data was gathered via stratified sampling technique across main cities of Pakistan.

Instruments: Questionnaire was produced subsequent to literature review. The literature consulted for producing role overload includes the research contributions of [19], employee retention [20-25, 26].

The questionnaire comprised of 36 items in all. In which 13 items related to role overload, 04 items related to employee retention and 19 to employee productivity. All the items were rated at five point rating scales. The questionnaires were distributed keeping in mind the importance of stratified sampling.

RESULTS

Pearson’s Correlation: Results of table show the relationship of the variables.

Crrrelations		RO	ER	EP
RO	Pearson Correlations	1	-.924**	-.934**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000
	N	450	450	450
ER	Pearson Correlations	-.924**	1	.952**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000
	N	450	450	450
EP	Pearson Correlations	-.934**	.925**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	
	N	450	450	450

Table 1: Regression Model Regression coefficient, st. error in parenthesis, t-values in brackets and p-values in italics

Constant	RO	R ²	F-Statistic
5.650 (0.068) [82.648] 0.000	-0.891 (0.017) [-51.081] 0.000	0.853	2609.230

*Dependent variable: Employee Retention (ER).
*Independent variables: Role overload (RO).

Table 2: Regression Model Regression coefficient, st. error in parenthesis, t-values in brackets and p-values in italics

Constant	RO	R ²	F-Statistic
5.762 (0.066) [86.680] 0.000	-0.937 (0.017) [-55.231] 0.000	0.872	3050.446

*Dependent variable: Employee Productivity (EP).
*Independent variables: Role overload (RO).

Regression Analysis: The results of the linear regression analysis show that role overload (independent variable) has a strong negative and significant relation (-0.891, 0.000) with layoff survivor’s retention (dependent variable). The R square explains that independent variable is highly (8536%) responsible for changing the dependent variable. The overall fitness of the said model is explained by the value of F statistic that shows the reasonably high value (2609.230).

The results are somehow contrary to the actual situation the actual situation that is despite the role overload the layoff survivors still remain with the organization and have not opted to leave the organizations. It means that there are certain other factors that influence this relationship.

Results of table show the relationship of role overload and layoff survivors productivity.

The results of the linear regression analysis show that role overload (independent variable) has a strong negative and significant relation (-0.937, 0.000) with layoff survivor’s retention (dependent variable). The R square explains that independent variable is highly (87.2%) responsible for changing the dependent variable. The overall fitness of the said model is explained by the value of F statistic that shows the reasonably high value (3050.446).

The results of the independent sample t-test shown in table reveal that

Based on the responses of 379 male layoff survivors and 71 female layoff survivors the results of independent sample t-test show that there is no significant difference among male and female layoff survivors with respect to role overload that they experience while at work, retention (willingness to stay and work in the organization) and their productivity.

Table 3: Independent sample t-test

Variables	Category	Mean	S.D.	t-value	P-value
RO	Male	3.72	1.23	0.463	0.644
	Female	3.65	1.63		
ER	Male	2.32	1.19	-0.660	0.510
	Female	2.42	1.27		
EP	Male	2.26	1.24	-.477	0.633
	Female	2.34	1.31		

DISCUSSIONS

The results of the statistical tools employed in the study leaves no doubt about the relationship of role overload, employee retention and productivity. The study reveals that role overload has an adverse effect on both the dependent variables that are layoff survivors' retention and their productivity. Additionally it is clear by looking at the results of the independent sample t-test that both male and female layoff survivors' experience role overload in the same way and it affected their retention and productivity in the same manner. The results provide similar evidences as discussed by other researchers.

CONCLUSION

Role overload no doubt has an inverse effect on the employee activities with in an organization as well as out side the organization. There is a need to over come such factors for better individual and organizational performance. Well formulated plan to carry out work activities proves to be a light house for the organizations to overcome role overload. Another way by which the organizations can achieve relax work environment and avoid role overload is by developing a well organized support team. Developing and following the priority list can be another way to avoid role overload. All the above mentioned suggestions help to maintain a satisfactory number of employees for organizational operations with required level of productivity.

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