

Role Clarity and Job Performance among the Employees in Small and Medium IT Industries

Anbarasu Thangavelu*

Karunya School of Management, Karunya University
No.5, Amman Kulam Road, Pappanaickenpalayam, Coimbatore – 641 037. India

Dr. Clement Sudhahar

Professor and Head, Karunya School of Management, Karunya University
No.5, Amman Kulam Road, Pappanaickenpalayam, Coimbatore – 641 037. India

Abstract

The Indian IT industry faces many challenges in managing their employees in the context of fast changing technology landscape. Defining roles and responsibilities, identifying skills for the employees' development, providing performance feedback to the employees, performance management etc. Large IT companies have more employees and can have an advantage of defining clear roles for their employees in various groups and providing a structured feedback mechanism for their employees. However, the small and medium IT companies may not have that advantage. The authors in the present research paper investigated the relationship between employees' role clarity, performance feedback and the employees' perception on their performance. A survey was conducted in small and medium sized IT companies in Coimbatore city of Tamil Nadu, India. The relationship between role clarity related dimensions and various demographic characteristics of the employees and their perception of their performance was analysed. The data for the survey was collected using self-administered questionnaire which was based on COPSOQ and industry employee effectiveness surveys covering role clarity and job satisfaction. The data was quantitatively analysed using Z-test and Chi-square test. The analysis results indicate that there is a significant correlation between role clarity, performance feedback, and employee satisfaction on the perception of performance. Also, a significant correlation was found to be existing for the performance feedback and the perception on their performance. There is a significant correlation existing between the age group, experience of the employee and the performance feedback. Further, this paper presents the limitations of the study and suggestions for the improvement they're performance perception amongst the small, medium IT industry in defining the roles and responsibilities and performance feedback system.

Keywords: Perception of Employee Performance, Role Clarity, IT Industry, Performance Feedback.

1. Introduction

Role clarity specific to various industries has been researched as far back from 1955 (Neel, McGregor, Likert, Burns). Ambiguous roles brought out greater anxiety and tension among employees and reduces employees' productivity. Setting role expectations is an important first step when employers hire people for their organization.

With the emergence of Information and Communication Technologies, the pace at which the technological changes are taking place in the Industry brings a unique challenge for IT industry. The IT industry innovate daily to stay competitive and relevant. This creates a range of changing work situations under which the employees need to perform their work and it necessitates a constant change of responsibilities of the roles of their employees. Role ambiguity, which is absence of clarity for the roles, is considered to be one of the great bottlenecks for the effectiveness of the team. Also, role conflict, which is different and incompatible roles at the same time, causes work related stress for the employees.

When the employees know what is expected of their role, then they tend to perform better. It is important for the employer to clearly highlight the roles and the responsibilities for their employees, what aspects are important, how they will be evaluated and how delivering the responsibilities of the roles will help the organizations achieve their goals and success. The role clarity will improve the job satisfaction and in turn their job performance. Having a structured role definition for their organization becomes very instrumental in improving the employee and the organizational performance.

Large IT companies have more employees and can have an advantage of defining clear roles for their employees in various groups and providing a structured feedback mechanism for their employees. However, the small and medium IT companies may not have that advantage. This research paper investigated the relationship among role clarity and the related dimensions indicated by job satisfaction, performance feedback, and the employees' perception on their performance.

2. Literature Review

The concept of role clarity has been explained by Thomas Lyons (1971) as the presence of role-relevant

information due either to restriction of this information or to variations of the quality of the information. According to Vasudha Nandal and Venkat R. Krishnan (2000), roles serve as the boundary between the individual and the organizations and represent the expectations of the individual and the organization. According to the role theory (Rizzo et al, 1970), role clarity is defined as the degree to which required information is provided about how the employee is expected to perform his or her job.

Role clarity adds positivity to the job satisfaction and job satisfaction in turn produces positive effect towards one's roles and responsibilities (Ify Diala and Rao Nemani, 2011). In operationalizing the job satisfaction, Hettiarachchi (2014) include the work responsibilities as one of the job satisfaction dimensions and found that job performance and the work responsibilities have a significant relation.

Dimitrios Beliasa et al (2015) have, based on the study they conducted in a banking organization, found that the higher the role conflict, the lower the levels of job satisfaction. Lower levels of job satisfactions due to role conflict and ambiguity have been found by Kahn et al (1964). Studies by Um & Harrison (1998) found that role conflict increased the levels of job dissatisfaction. Studies also have shown that role conflict has created positive impact in making employees become more open, flexible in adjusting to their roles (Jones, 1993).

Hemantkumar and Premchand Babu (2017) have found that the vague boundaries in the organization structure and the job categories exist and role clarity, continuous change, diversified workforce were the reasons quoted mostly by the IT employees that leads to complexity in work place, whereas the role clarity and autocratic leadership leads to complexities in Non-IT companies.

Mohit Yadav and Anil Kumar (2017) in their study of role clarity vs organizational citizenship behaviour found that both genders have a significant role in the organization's growth and the role clarity played a mixed role in organizational citizenship behaviour. Role clarity of the employees has been found to increase the consistency and perception of their job performance (Gashtasb Azarpira et al, 2013, Punia Punita, 2011), improve psychological empowerment (Rajaeipour and Bahrami, 2008) and better performance (Bray and Brawley, 2002). Gary and Faruk (2015) found that while a strong vision improves the team performance, role clarity does not have a significant correlation with the team performance.

Supervisory feedback to the employees on their favourable behaviours improves their performance in achieving the goals (Ashford, 1986). Feedback seeking by employees is a valuable resource to manage role ambiguity. Ashford and Cummings (1983) have suggested that individuals are active seekers of feedback. People who seek feedback are viewed positively by others (Ashford & Northcraft, 1992) and exhibit a better job performance. Srikanth and Jomon (2013) studied the role ambiguity and the role performance effectiveness with the personal feedback seeking behaviour of the employees and found that the effect of role ambiguity is reduced on their role performance.

The perceptions of role clarity and job satisfaction increases significantly, when the frequency and predictability of the performance feedback for employees is increased (Tichaona, 1992). Fatma Abed (2016) found a significant correlation between employees' job satisfaction and the clarity of their job expectations, feedback provisions and accuracy of performance rating.

3. Rationale for this study

There is lot of research done on the role clarity / role conflict of employees from various industries / governments, it has not been studied in-depth in small and medium IT industries. This was the trigger for this research. Coimbatore is a major city in the state of Tamil Nadu, India and is home to most number of IT companies after Chennai and the second largest software exporter in Tamil Nadu. Out of the total number of IT / ITES companies in Coimbatore, approximately 90% of them are SME (based on the number of employees). Based on the above data, the researchers have set the scope of this research to the Small and Medium sized IT companies in Coimbatore.

3.1 Objectives of this study

The objectives identified for this research paper are:

1. To examine the perception of the respondents on their performance and role clarity, role conflict and feedback (dimensions linked to job satisfaction).
2. To find out the significant differences, relationship, associations between gender, age group and total IT experience and the job satisfaction perceived by the respondents

3.2. Research Methodology

For this research, explanatory research method was followed and a self-prepared interview schedule has been developed with questions covering the demographic and perception related data from the employees of the IT companies. Validated questions from COPSOQ (2003), industry employee effectiveness surveys have been used to prepare the questionnaire. The questionnaire covers 5 demographic variables, feedback (5 questions) and 3 job satisfaction related dimensions (15 questions) with a 5-point Likert type scale (Strongly Agree to Strongly

Disagree).

The authors used published databases like NASSCOM Naukri.com, VCS and Fundoo databases to draw out the IT Companies in Coimbatore and shortlisted 127 Small and Medium sized IT companies based on the published employee count. The European Commission definition of Small and Medium enterprises based on the number of employees has been considered. The survey request has been sent out to 127 companies and 14 companies have allowed their employees to participate in the survey. The validated questionnaire has been given to a total of 553 employees of these companies and 271 valid responses have been received. Demographic variables used for this research are gender, age group of the respondents, size of the company, experience of the respondent in the industry and income of the respondents. Role clarity, Role Conflict and Job Content are the Job Satisfaction dimensions and performance feedback was the other dimension for which the data was collected.

4. Analysis

The data collected from the 273 respondents were encoded and analysed using the SPSS tool. The reliability coefficient of the questionnaire was assessed to be at 0.862 (Split half reliability method) and 0.862 (Cronbach Alpha test). Z-test was used to find the relationship between the gender, job satisfaction dimensions, feedback & perception of the respondents' performance. Chi-square test was employed to analyse the relationship between the variables age group, total experience, job satisfaction, feedback and perception of the performance.

From the data collected and analysed, it is found that 20 % of the respondents were from Small IT companies and the rest of them were from Medium IT companies. The male / female split of the respondents is 66.3 % and 33.7%. 42% of the respondents fall in the age group of 18-24 years, 48% of them in the 25-30 years and the rest in 31-40 years. While 60% of the respondents had IT experience in the range of 2-5 years, 16% of them in the range of 5-10 years, the rest of them had experience below 2 years.

The role clarity and role conflicts were found to be low among 55% of the respondents and high among the remaining respondents. Job content was found to be low among 58% of the respondents and high among the 42% of them. The Job Satisfaction was found to be low with 52.7% of the respondents and high with 47.3% of the respondents which was aligning with the job satisfaction dimensions considered for this study (Role clarity, role conflict and the job content). The performance feedback dimension was found to be low among 64% of the respondents and high among 36%. 52.4% of the respondents had a low perception while the rest of them had high perception of their performance.

4.1 Major Findings

Table 1. Difference between the Gender, Job Satisfaction, Performance Feedback and the Employee Perception of their performance.

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Statistical Inference
Job Satisfaction (Role Clarity, Role Conflict and Job Content)	Male	181	57.403	6.26789	0.46589	Z=.024 Df=271 P>0.05 Not Significant
	Female	92	57.424	7.48806	0.78068	
Performance Feedback	Male	181	9.0663	2.31325	0.17194	Z=.314 Df=271 P>0.05 Not Significant
	Female	92	9.163	2.586	0.26961	
Employee Perception of their Performance	Male	181	132.32	11.05477	0.82169	Z=.757 Df=271 P>0.05 Not Significant
	Female	92	133.47	13.2229	1.37858	

It is found from Table 1 that there is no significant difference between the gender of the employees and the employee perception of their performance. Gender differences do not make any significant impact on the job satisfaction dimensions and the performance feedback dimension. This could be due to the fact that role clarity and role conflict are needed for effective performance irrespective of the gender of the employees.

Table 2. Relationship of Age Group of the respondents with Job Satisfaction, Performance Feedback, and the Employee Perception of their performance.

	Age Group	Low	High	Statistical Inference
Job Satisfaction (Role Clarity, Role Conflict and Job Content)	18-24 Years	52	63	x ² =4.534 Df=2 P>0.05 Not Significant
	25-30 Years	76	55	
	31-40 Years	16	11	
Performance Feedback	18-24 Years	59	56	Z=.314 Df=271 P>0.05 Not Significant
	25-30 Years	83	48	
	31-40 Years	20	7	
Employee Perception of their Performance	18-24 Years	53	62	Z=.757 Df=271 P>0.05 Not Significant
	25-30 Years	74	57	
	31-40 Years	16	11	

The results shown in Table 2 indicate that the age group of the respondents does not have any significant relationship with either the job satisfaction dimensions or the employee perception. However, there is a highly significant relationship with the performance feedback for the different age groups.

Table 3. Relationship of Total IT Experience of the respondents with Job Satisfaction, Performance Feedback, and the Employee Perception of their performance.

	Age Group	Low	High	Statistical Inference
Job Satisfaction (Role Clarity, Role Conflict and Job Content)	18-24 Years	52	63	x ² =4.534 Df=2 P>0.05 Not Significant
	25-30 Years	76	55	
	31-40 Years	16	11	
Performance Feedback	18-24 Years	59	56	Z=.314 Df=271 P>0.05 Not Significant
	25-30 Years	83	48	
	31-40 Years	20	7	
Employee Perception of their Performance	18-24 Years	53	62	Z=.757 Df=271 P>0.05 Not Significant
	25-30 Years	74	57	
	31-40 Years	16	11	

The results shown in Table 3 indicate that the total IT experience of the respondents does not have any significant relationship with either the job satisfaction dimensions or the employee perception. There is a highly significant relationship with the performance feedback for the variable total IT experience. This can be due to the fact that in the Small and Medium IT industry, feedback about the employees' performance is more important which could indirectly improve the role clarity.

5. Recommendations

The authors would like to provide the following recommendations with respect to improving the job satisfaction dimensions, performance feedback and the employees' perception of their performance:

1. The small and medium IT companies can define clear roles and responsibilities for their employees.
2. They should define a periodic performance feedback process for their employees and should encourage the supervisors to provide objective feedback to their subordinates.
3. With the chance of more roles played by one employee in small and medium IT companies, the management should try to bring the role conflicts to the minimum by setting clear objectives for each of the roles.

6. Conclusion

The results of the analysis suggest that the job satisfaction dimensions, and performance perceived by the employees are not significantly related in Small and Medium sized IT companies contrary to the research in IT industry in general and other industries. However, there is a significant relationship found between the age group and the total IT experience variables with the performance feedback. However, implementing a structured performance management process with clear roles and responsibilities for the employees in the small and medium IT companies could result in a different analysis.

References

- Ashford, S. J., & Cummings, L. L. (1983). Feedback as an individual resource: Personal strategies of creating information. *Organizational Behavior and Human Performance*, 32(3), 370–389
- Ashford, S. J., & Northcraft, G. (1992). Conveying more (or less) than we realize: The role of impression-management in feedback-seeking. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 53(3), 310-334
- Bray, S. R., & Brawley, L. R. (2002). Role efficacy, role clarity, and role performance effectiveness. *Small Group Research*, 33: 233-253
- Dimitrios Beliasa, Athanasios Kousteliosb, Labros Sdroliasc and George Aspridisd (2015). Job Satisfaction, Role Conflict and Autonomy of employees in the Greek Banking Organization. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 175, 324 – 333, 2015
- Fatemeh Samiel, Leila Riahi and Seyed Jamaledin Tabibi (2015). The Relationship between Role Clarity and Efficiency of Employees in Management & Resource Development, Department of Ministry of Health and Medical Education of I.R.Iran, 2014. *Biosciences Biotechnology Research Asia*, December 2015
- Fatma Abed, Sahar Hassan Aly EL Banan. (2016). The relationship between quality of performance appraisal process and nurses job satisfaction as perceived by staff nurses at selected hospitals. *International Journal Of Nursing Didactics*. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.15520/ijnd.2016.vol6.iss12.178>
- Gary S. Lynn and Faruk Kalay (2015). The effect of Vision and Role Clarity on Team Performance. *Journal of Business, Economics & Finance*, Vol 4 (3)
- Gashtasb Azarpira, Ali Yaghobi, Mohammadbagher Forghani and Ghasem Soleimani (2013). The Relationship between Role Clarity and Job Compatibility in the Sport and Physical Education Office. *International Journal of Sport Studies*, Vol., 3 (2), 194-198
- Hemanth Kumar V and Premchand Babu P. (2017). Workplace Complexities and Job Satisfaction in Current Corporate Scenario – A comparative study on IT and Non-IT sector. *IOSR Journal of Business and Management*, PP 33-38
- Hettiarachchi H.A.H. (2014). Impact of Job Satisfaction on Job Performance of IT Professionals with special reference to Sri Lanka. *International Journal of Research in Information Technology*, 2(4), 906- 916
- Ify Diala and Rao Nemani (2011). Job Satisfaction: Key Factors influencing Information Technology (IT) professionals in Washington DC. *International Journal of Computer Technology and Applications*, 2 (4), 827-838
- Jones, M. L. (1993). Role Conflict: Cause of Burnout or Energizer? *Social Work*, 38, 2.
- Kahn, R., Wolfe, D., Quinn, R., Snoek, J., & Rosentbal, R. (1964). *Organizational stress: Studies in role conflict and ambiguity*. New York: Wiley.
- Mohit Yadav and Anil Kumar (2017). An Indian Outlook on Role Clarity, Organizational Citizenship Behavior, and Gender Relationship: Multiple Group Confirmatory Factor Analysis (MGCFA) Approach. *Jindal Journal of Business Research*, 6 (1)
- P. B. Srikanth and M. G. Jomon (2013). Role Ambiguity and Role Performance Effectiveness: Moderating the effect of feedback seeking behavior. *Asian Academy of Management Journal*, 18(2), 105–127
- P.Ramachandran, M.Kannan, B.Balaji and G.Ulaganathan (2011). Behind the lines: A survey of IT job satisfaction in India. *International Journal of Computer Science and Engineering Technology*, 1(2), 67-69
- Punia Punita (2011). Relationship between Role Clarity, Job Perception and Performance of Employees in a Scientific Research Organization. *Journal of Psychosocial Research*, 6(2)
- Rajaeipour, Hassan; Bahrami, Susan.(2008). The relationship between role clarity and job commitment of the employees of the schools of Isfahan University of Medical Sciences. *Shahrekord University of Medical Sciences Journal*, 10(2), 30-36
- Rizzo, J. R., House, R. J., and Lirtzman, S. I. (1970). Role Conflict and Ambiguity in Complex Organizations. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 15, 150-163
- Teas, R.K., Wacker, J.G. and Hughes, R.E. (1979). A path analysis of causes and consequences of salesmen's perceptions of role clarity. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 16(3), 335-69
- Thomas F Lyons (1971). Role Clarity, Need for Clarity, Satisfaction, Tension, and Withdrawal. *Organizational Behavior and Human Performance*, 6, 99-110
- Tichaona J Nhundu (1992). Self and Supervisor appraisals of Job performance and their relationship with role clarity and job satisfaction. *Zimbabwe Journal of Educational Research*, 4(2), 131
- Um, M. & Harrison, D. F. (1998). Role Stressors, Burnout, Mediators, And Job Satisfaction: A Stress-Strain-Outcome Model and an Empirical Test. *Social Work Research*, 22(2)
- Vasudha Nandal and Venkat R. Krishnan (2000). Charismatic Leadership and Self-efficacy - Importance of role clarity. *Management and Labour Studies*, 25(4)