DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS OF ROLE CLARITY IN INDIAN PHARMACEUTICAL ORGANIZATIONS

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Abstract

The present study focused upon analyzing demographic properties of Indian Pharma organizations with respect to role clarity. Data of 375 personnel working in Indian Pharma Organizations spread across India was collected. The three parameters were gender, position and type of organization. Data was analyzed using SPSS and methods deployed were t-test and ANOVA. Variations were seen in different demographic fronts and further discussion were carried out to make sense of them. Role clarity was also considered as an important work trait in pharma sector employees.

Keywords: Role Clarity, gender, position, type of organization, ANOVA, t-test.

Introduction

The concept of role was given by Kahn et al. (1964). Kahn used the concept of role episodes to clarify the field of role study, which emerged in 1930's. While defining role episodes, he stated:-

"A Role episode . . . [implies] a causal sequence. Role pressures are assumed to originate in the-expectations held by members of the role set. Role senders have expectations regarding the way in which the focal role should be performed. They also have perceptions regarding the way in which the focal person is actually performing. They correlate the two, and further exert pressure to make his performance congruent with their expectations" (p.12).

This study became the basis of role studies henceforth. The coverage of the definition given is quite broad and covered all the stakeholders of the role to be performed by the employee. The term role sender is extended towards not only the supervisor/ manager, but also juniors, seniors, co-workers who get affected directly or indirectly by the performance of the role by the employee. The expectations/ perceptions developed are the result of the past performance or expected output from the focal person, which becomes the basis of the comparison of the output. The incongruence, if found between the expected output and the actual output in performance is tried to be filled in by exerting pressure through sources like performance appraisal, 360 degree feedback system etc.

Hoy and Miskel (1982) tried to capture the essence of roles in four characteristics: "(1) Roles represent positions and statuses within the institution; (2) Roles are defined in terms of expectations, or the normative rights and duties, or the position. The expectations specify the appropriate behaviour for a specific position; (3) Roles are variable. Many roles are not precisely prescribed; in fact, the role expectations associated with most positions are wide-ranging; (4) Roles derive their meaning from other roles in the system, and in this sense they are complementary". By this definition, Hoy and Miskel (1982) extended the role clarity concept by adding variable nature of the roles. This is the reason why researchers are struggling to come up with a standard method of valuing

role clarity. The definition given by Hoy and Miskel (1982) is found to be most elaborate and is considered to define role clarity in the present study.

Role clarity was defined as "an understanding of the following role components: (a) goals of role performance, (b) behaviour and attitudes necessary for goal achievement, (c) role boundaries, and (d) behaviour expected of those in counter roles" (Bramwell, 1985). Bramwell (1985) became the first to focus upon the behavioural nature of role clarity. Where previous definitions focused upon the tasks expected to be performed by job incumbent, he raised the important points like understanding the goal of performing a role, the attitude and behaviour required to perform a role, the constraint in the surrounding environment of the role. It also touched upon how the role is related to the role of other co-workers. The clarity of the contribution of the role performed and the surroundings add to the effective performance of the role.

Other definitions also made distinct observations. As per Lyons (1971), role clarity can be looked from two perspectives: from an objective prospective, absence or presence of relevant information regarding role can be considered as role clarity; from a subjective prospective, role clarity is "feeling of having as much or not as much role-relevant information as the person would like to have". Lyons (1971) made distinction between the information provided and the information received and understood by the incumbent regarding the role to be performed; which was later clarified by Ivancevich and Donnelly (1974) by defining role clarity as "the extent to which required information is communicated and understood by . . .employees.". They also stressed on the importance of role clarity in understanding job innovation opportunities, job interest, job stress, job satisfaction and job tension.

The crux of all the above definition is that- if the employee holds a clear view of the expectations and duties involved with the role he is assigned, it may lead to lesser chances of stress, mistakes and dis-satisfaction. In the absence of clearly defined roles, employees may assume those responsibilities that are not actually theirs and will be ignoring what they are supposed to do or work upon. This difference between what one is supposed to do or work and what is actually does, creates role conflict and role ambiguity (Fields, 2002). Role clarity has been considered as an important ingredient in crucial individual and organizational outcomes like job satisfaction (Zheng et al., 2013), organizational performance (Fried et al., 2003) and organizational commitment (Nqubane, 2008).

Role Clarity and Role overload

As per Kahn et al. (1964), role overload is a conflict of priorities. It generally happens with the existence of the lack of role clarity i.e. role conflict and role ambiguity. In multiple expectation existence, the worker has to choose from expectations and arrange in priority basis, failing in effective arrangement, role overload is created. Role overload does impact the quality of work and output as well (Kahn et al., 1964). According to Ivancevich and Matteson (1980), role overload can be differentiated into quantitative and qualitative overloads. Quantitative overload takes place when an employee "perceives that they have too much work to do, too many different things to do, or insufficient time to complete assigned work" while qualitative overload "occurs when employees feel they lack the ability to complete their jobs or that performance standards are too high, regardless of how much time they have". Role overload can be thought as reasonable amount of work to be accomplished in an unreasonable amount of time. Role overload leads to increase turnover, decreased organizational commitment, decreased job satisfaction (Jones et al., 2007), decreased leisure satisfaction, decreased psychological health (Pearson, 2008).

Role clarity dimensions

The dimensions of role clarity as per the contemporary research are as follows:

Role Ambiguity

As per classical theory, each and every position in the organization has predefined tasks and responsibilities, which define a role. If these tasks and responsibilities are not clear to the individual, it will result to role ambiguity. Literature witnesses use of the term role clarity and role ambiguity (which are considered as opposites of each other) interchangeably to explain the level of understanding of roles by employee (Bray & Brawley, 2002). Role ambiguity can also be seen as lack of role clarity and visa-versa. However, Blumenthal et al. (2001) suggested that a certain level of role ambiguity is necessary so as to allow employees to shape their roles. Role theory advocates that high level of role ambiguity results in coping behaviour by role incumbent, which may be followed by problem solving attempts by job incumbent to avoid various sources of strain or even the use of certain defense mechanisms leading to distortion of the real situation (Kahn et al., 1964). On the other hand, a rise in role clarity will lead to reduction in job strain, the need for problem solving and coping attempts, and the potential to distort the reality of the situation (Rizzo et al., 1970). Kahn et al. (1964) threw light on consequences of role ambiguity like low job satisfaction, high tension, low self-confidence, and sense of futility also.

Role Conflict

As defined by Katz and Kahn (1966), a situation when two or more role expectations occur simultaneously and compliance with one role makes compliance of other role more difficult, is known as role conflict. Role conflict reduces role clarity of the employee. In the model given on role episodes by Katz and Kahn (1978), role conflict, stated as a disagreement between two or more role-senders, multiple expectations of role-senders with that of focal person with himself/herself. As per Kast and Rosenzweig (1979), there are four types of role conflict: (1) Person-role conflict- the conflict occurred because of mismatch between role requirement and the values, needs and capabilities of the focal person; (2) Inter role conflict- person performs multiple roles in different setups like at work or at home. Many a times these roles will be in conflict with each other; (3) Inter sender conflict- a role set has various members; these members have different and conflicting expectations of the particular role person. The complex environment is created with different senders trying to influence focal person's behavior; (4) Intragender conflict- messages sent from the role sender at different time periods may have conflicting expectations, or impossible expected behavior with present as well as earlier directives. The implications of role conflict are reduced trust and self-esteem, decreased satisfaction, dysfunctional coping behavior (Kahn et al., 1964). Almost all the definitions on role clarity pointed onto the importance of clear information. Information about which role is to perform first will help in reducing the role conflict to a great level.

Dimensions of Role clarity in present study

Based on the findings of past studies, hindrances faced by job incumbent and the expectations by co-workers, we have decided to measure role clarity by keeping in mind three dimensions:

Co-worker related Role clarity

While defining role clarity, Bramwell (1985) mentioned that an important component of role clarity is based on the behaviour expected of those in counter roles of the job incumbent. This includes both expectations co-workers have from the job incumbent and also employee's expectations from other job holders. Hoy and Miskel (1982) also highlighted that "Roles derive their meaning from other roles in the system, and in this sense they are complementary". Roles are variables, and they are not bound by written job descriptions. Constant dependence of role to be performed effectively depends upon successful completion of task performed by other employees in the systematic flow of work setup now days. Role episode's concept given by Kahn et al. (1964) also advocates that role sender can be co-workers or employees holding other roles. Therefore, it is really important for our study to look at role clarity from this point also. This dimension helps in understanding various role senders and provides a solution to inter-sender and intra-sender conflict.

Work related role clarity

As already discussed, roles are symbolic of status and positions held by employees in organization. The expectations, rights and duties and the position are used to define the roles. These are the ingredients which makes one role different from other roles. Since, roles are variable and sometimes become very difficult to define; complete understanding of these expectations is quite important for performing the role satisfactorily.

This dimension considers the importance of understanding the role expectations from the sender or senders. Job incumbent need to have full understanding of the jobs, duties or responsibilities he/she has to perform assigned to him. Clarity of work demand helps in reducing role ambiguity and role conflict. In a multiple role expectations setup, clarity of work to be performed help employee to assign adequate amount of time and priority based upon the importance of work done. Clarity regarding work helps in reducing Person-role conflict and inter-role conflict (Kast & Rosenzweig, 1979).

Appraisal related role clarity

The bases of all the role theories are the expectations sender has with the job incumbent. As noticed by Kahn et al. (1964) and later on by Shoemaker, M. E. (1999); role senders comprising of seniors, bosses, co-workers, juniors have their own understanding of the roles to be performed and expectations from the output. They also have awareness about the role has been carried out by the focal person who is handling the role. They correlate the two, and further exert pressure to make his performance congruent with their expectations. The congruence of expectations and performance is possible only if the job incumbent is aware about how the role will be measured; otherwise, all efforts of the employee may go in the wrong direction and in unnecessary tasks. Appraisal clarity becomes more crucial in multi role setup, so that employee can weigh his/her efforts to reward and can prioritize the work. The appraisal can be performed by a manager only, or in the contemporary systems peer rating or 360-degree feedback is also considered. Just awareness about the various stakeholders/ job senders will not bring the clarity of appraisal criteria but knowledge about how they are going to evaluate the performance will bring meaningfulness.

The objective of the study was to assess the level of Role Clarity in the Indian organizations; particularly with respect to demographic traits (gender, position and type of organization). In total, three hypotheses were framed to fulfill the objective. Various tests were conducted to analyze the hypotheses made.

Hypothesis 1: RC (co-worker related role clarity, work related role clarity, appraisal related role clarity) varies with male and female employees

Hypothesis 2: RC (co-worker related role clarity, work related role clarity, appraisal related role clarity) varies with position held by employee (lower, middle & senior) in the organization

Hypothesis 3: RC (co-worker related role clarity, work related role clarity, appraisal related role clarity) varies in public and private organizations.

Research Method

Sample

The population of the study was employees of large Indian Pharma organizations, having size worth more than INR 100 crore. The study involved male and female employees from junior, middle and senior positions from private and public organizations mainly from western, northern and central parts of India. In total, 480 questionnaires were administered personally; 410 were returned filled. 35 questionnaires were found to be

incomplete and therefore dropped, leaving 375 suitable filled questionnaires for further analysis, giving a total of 78.12 percent acceptance rate.

Demographic information

The demographic information sections comprised of age, gender, position, type of organization and tenure. The responses were taken on categorical scales. Measurement of gender was done on a 2-point scale with female represented by 1 and male by 2. Scale with options varying from 1 (21-25 years) to 6 (above 45) was used to measure age. Tenure was also measured with a range from 1 (0-5 years) to 5 (Above 20 years). Type of organization was measured using a 2-point scale with private organization represented by 1 and public organization represented by 2. Position was measured on 3-point scale with 1 representing junior level position, 2 representing middle level position and 3 representing senior level position.

Role Clarity (RC) Scale

Role Ambiguity: Role Clarity Questionnaire by Pareek (2002) with 15 items was used to measure the level of role clarity in executives. It is a 5-point Likert scale with responses varying from 1 for 'very little clarity' to 5 for 'quite clear'. The sample items include "clarity regarding what your colleagues/peers expect from your role"; "clarity regarding rules, regulations and procedures relevant for your role" and "clarity regarding appraisal system to assess how well you perform in your role".

Hypothesis 1

Hypothesis 1 proposed that role clarity (RC) varies with male and female employees. The Independent sample t-test indicated presence of a significant difference in the mean scores of male and female employees for Co-worker related role clarity ($t(373)=-2.999$, $p=0.031$ ($p<0.05$)) with male having higher mean than females; work related role clarity ($t(373)= -0.855$, $p=0.029$ ($p<0.05$)) with male having higher mean than females; Appraisal related role clarity ($t(373)=-0.619$, $p=0.017$ ($p<0.05$)) with male having higher mean than females. Hence, hypothesis 1 of our study was supported. The results are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Independent sample t test (Gender as IV, RC as DV)

	Gender	N	Mean	SD	SE Mean	t value	df	p value
CWRC	Female	100	3.98	0.63	0.07	-2.999	373	0.031
	Male	275	4.19	0.52	0.03			
WRC	Female	100	3.89	0.73	0.08	-0.855	373	0.029
	Male	275	3.96	0.61	0.03			
ARC	Female	100	3.74	0.90	0.10	-0.619	373	0.017
	Male	275	3.80	0.75	0.04			

Source=primary data; SE= Standard Error; SD= Standard deviation; df= Degree of freedom; *p<0.05; CWRC= Co-worker related role clarity; WRC= Work related role clarity; ARC= Appraisal related role clarity

Hypothesis 2

Hypothesis 2 proposed that Role Clarity varies in employees of public and private organizations. Here also, independent sample t-test was used to test the hypothesis. The results can be seen in Table 4.11. No significant difference was found between the mean scores of private and public organization's employees for Co-worker related role clarity; Work related role clarity; and Appraisal related role clarity. Therefore, hypothesis 2 of the study was not supported by the result.

Table 2: Independent sample t test (Type of organization as IV, RC as DV)

	Organization	N	Mean	SD	SE Mean	t value	df	p value
CWRC	Private	126	4.24	0.54	0.05	2.046	373	0.655
	Public	249	4.11	0.55	0.03			
WRC	Private	126	4.15	0.60	0.05	3.971	373	0.483
	Public	249	3.86	0.63	0.04			
ARC	Private	126	3.95	0.82	0.08	2.448	373	0.500
	Public	249	3.72	0.76	0.04			

Source=primary data; SE= Standard Error; SD= Standard deviation; df= Degree of freedom; *p<0.05; CWRC= Co-worker related role clarity; WRC= Work related role clarity; ARC= Appraisal related role clarity

Hypothesis 3

Hypothesis 3 states that Role Clarity varies with position held by employee (Junior, Middle, senior level). This hypothesis was tested using one way ANOVA, which compared the mean RC scores of employees at different hierarchical levels in the organization. Table 3 shows the results of the test conducted. ANOVA results pointed absence of significant difference between the mean scores across positions for co-worker related role clarity; work related role clarity; and appraisal related role clarity. Thus, hypothesis 3 of the study was not supported.

Table 3: One way ANOVA (Position as IV, RC as DV)

	Level	N	Mean	SD	SE Mean	F value	df	p value
CWRC	Junior	102	4.10	0.50	0.05	2.340	372	0.098
	Middle	200	4.13	0.60	0.04			
	Senior	73	4.30	0.43	0.05			
WRC	Junior	102	3.86	0.65	0.06	1.149	372	0.318
	Middle	200	3.97	0.64	0.04			
	Senior	73	4.00	0.57	0.07			
ARC	Junior	102	3.78	0.89	0.08	1.724	372	0.180
	Middle	200	3.74	0.75	0.05			

| | Senior | 73 | 3.97 | 0.67 | 0.09 | | | |

Source=primary data; SE= Standard Error; SD= Standard deviation; df= Degree of freedom; *p<0.05; CWRC= Co-worker related role clarity; WRC= Work related role clarity; ARC= Appraisal related role clarity

Accomplishment of objective two

Variation in Role Clarity due to gender

Present study's second objective was to understand the role of demographic variables i.e. gender, position and type of organization in role clarity. The first hypothesis i.e. hypothesis 1 was to understand function of gender in role clarity dimensions.

On using t-test, significant difference was found between male and female employees in co-worker role clarity, with male employees having higher mean (Mean= 4.19) as compared to female employees (Mean= 3.98). Even studies like Major and Adams (1983) and Greenglass et al. (1998) have found existence of gender related difference in interpersonal orientations with co-workers. As already mentioned, Indian workplaces are male dominated and women get less chances of communication with the co-workers as compared to male employees. Although co-worker role clarity is high in both the genders, it is somewhat higher in male employees. Less number of females at workplaces is also one of the reasons. If the number of females at Indian workplaces increases, the scores can get equal also. Opposite genders cannot express themselves and their expectations fully to other because of fear of being considered as rude or crossing the line while doing so. Gender sensitivity programs may help in bridging this gap in communication at workplace.

Work related role clarity was also found to be significantly different in male and female employees with male employees having higher means score (Mean = 3.96) as compared to female employees (Mean = 3.89). Johnson et al. (1996) found that although most of the role behaviours of male and female employees are same, however, female employees have more agreements and male employees have more counterarguments. Present study partially supports these results with although high score in the gender category but slightly higher score in male than female. This can be because of females have to shift between different roles in a day; employee at workplace, wife and mother at home. All these roles require lot of effort and energy on the part of women and a slight reduction in clarity is expected when this process is repeated every day. Which is also the reason of burnout sometimes.

Just like co-worker related role clarity and work-related role clarity, appraisal related role clarity is also found to be significantly different in male and female employees with mean score higher in male employees (Mean= 3.80) as compared to female employees (Mean = 3.74). Beyer (1990) gave a compelling argument on gender difference on assessing appraisal system by using self-consistency theory. In masculine-gender-typed tasks men have high expectations from themselves and also perform overly positive self-evaluation on its clarity; whereas, in the similar kind of tasks, women holds low expectations and generally an overly negative self-evaluation. These behaviours by both the genders leads to self-perception biases. It has been observed that female employees have lower expectations from themselves and from performance appraisal system because of the reference points. Here also, gendered biased behaviour is followed by male and female employees. Male employees use males as their reference points and female uses females as reference points for checking for equity in the system. Since, female employees have historically been paid less, female employees place themselves at higher level compared to reference person. Hind & Baruch (1997) mentioned that female and male employees also vary on the terms of career motivation and evaluation. Female employees uses subjective criteria like job satisfaction, work life balance etc. while appraising their work and role; whereas male employees uses objective measures like salary, benefits, position attained, power while appraising their work and role.

Variation in Role Clarity due to type of organization

Hypothesis 2 was to find out the significant difference between type of organization i.e. Private and public organization in role clarity dimensions. On using t-test, results signalled that there exists no difference between employees of private and public organizations on co-worker role clarity. The results show high level co-worker clarity in both the type of organization. Our results are in not in confirmation with the result of comparative study conducted by AbuAlRub et al (2009) on hospital nurses. Although the expectations of co-workers may vary in public and private organizations, but they are equally important part of employees' work life. In private organizations, the expectations and communications between co-workers may be more of work related, formal and direct. In public organizations the expectations and communications can be more of indirect. The employees are aware about the culture and style of working of organization when they join the organization, whether it is private or public. If He/she is mentally ready to be a part of the system, it becomes easy to follow on the expectation and demands of co-workers including seniors, juniors and peers.

Work related role clarity was also found to be indifferent in employees of public and private organizations. The mean score of both public and private organization employees were on higher side. Modern organizations follow hybrid structure of hierarchy and control because they have work on projects and the reporting relationships as well as the job descriptions keeps on changing. The ever-evolving competition forces organization to new systems of control of work (Mahdavi et al., 2007). Therefore, it becomes important for modern day workforce to have clear understanding of their changing role and work expectations. Since, roles are interdependent employee cannot be lenient on his part and let entire team suffer. He/she needs to be pro-active in approach. The observations by Boyne (2002) that structure of public organizations makes them less agile; is slowly getting diminished with public organizations restructuring themselves and also using disinvestment to allow private partnerships.

Appraisal related role clarity also gave insignificant difference between public and private organization. Both public and private organization employees' mean score was falling in moderate level. Abu-Doleh and Weir (2007) found that in private organization, performance appraisal has more value and seriousness as compared to public organizations. In present study, both public and private organization's employees have similar kind of clarity regarding appraisal system. It means that they are aware about how the performance appraisal is conducted and how much value it has in promotions and other kind of increments. In private organization, promotions are merit based and are quite objective in approach. Employees are moderate to highly clear about the parameters on which they are going to be evaluated. On the other hand, in public organizations, promotions are not totally based upon the merit but other subjective factors like duration of service and reservations are also considered. This leaves employees is a bit of non-clarity. That is why we received a moderate score from public organizations. Both private and public organizations have a long way to go to make employees fully aware about the measures of their evaluations.

Variation in Role Clarity due to position

Hypothesis 3 dealt with understanding the difference in role clarity between employees on various hierarchical position i.e. junior, middle and senior positions. Co-worker related role clarity was not found significantly different across position in the study. The scores were high across all positions showing position holders at all levels knows the importance of having and understanding the co-workers. Co-workers are necessary part of a healthy workplace satisfaction. Human beings are social in nature and cannot work in solitude always. They need to have people around to share emotions about work and about personal life as well. Ferres et al. (2004) mentioned that importance of co-worker in work life and also stressed on the importance of co-worker relationship in increasing commitment and reducing the turnover in employees. Not mere knowing the expectations of co-workers is enough, an employee's co-worker's role clarity also includes arranging those expectations from peer, seniors, juniors etc. in according to priority. It shows which task is more important than others. Employees must balance between importance given to seniors, peers and juniors because if he/she gives too much importance to one, the other groups will get offended easily and employees can be out casted from group. Organizations should continue investing in activates which increase the trust and bond between employees, which is necessary for a healthy workplace.

Insignificant results were also found between the positions held while analysing work related role clarity. Work related role clarity was between moderate to high, which is a good sign for the organization. Since, the employees are clear of the expectations organization have from them. Work related role clarity includes the functions surrounding a specific role like accountability, financial authority, material authority, reporting relationships etc. clear work relationships are important since, the work is inter-related in organizations; output of one unit is input for another one. Therefore, glitch or misunderstanding can sabotage the entire operation. Rules and regulations followed should be clear and on tips on the employees of all the levels since they are useful for uniform output and reaching organizational goals. In doing so, every employee's mush know his/her level of authority and should not overstep on another employee's authority. He/she should be clear about whom to give orders and from whom to take orders. In modern organizational structures, where there can be more than one boss, employee need to be extra careful of what and whom to give priority to otherwise it could lead to disputes and misunderstandings (Nickerson, 1999).

Appraisal related role clarity showed non-significant difference between various position levels in the organizations. Also, all the levels were having moderate to high mean scores showing presence of understanding of process of and expectations from the appraisal system in the organization. Three important points can be raised considering importance of clear appraisal system. First, is it measuring the output of the employees in unbiased manner? Appraisal system is there in place in almost all organizations, but what distinguishes them is the effective utilization of it. Old appraisal systems were not able to capture many of the efforts of employees but contemporary appraisal systems like 360-degree feedback system, management by objectives, behaviorally anchored rating scale (BARS) accounts all aspects of employee's jobs and efforts with respect to not only organizational goals but also with co-workers and behaviors they exhibit to accomplish the work. Second, is appraisal system rewarding the employees appropriately? If the performance review do not provide the expected output to employee for the work they have performed throughout the period, then employees will not have trust on the appraisal system and hence on the organization. Management should provide the right incentive and reward to the right employees at right time. Third, are the deserving employees getting promotions? Performance appraisal works on the policies and procedures of promotions laid down by the management. These procedures and policies should be fair and equitable in nature. All these points discussed should be provided to the employees on time to have clear understanding of the job. What organization expect from them and what they can expect from the organization in return.

Conclusion

The objective of the study was to analyze the level of role clarity in the Indian organizations with respect to demographic traits. All the three dimensions of role clarity i.e. co-worker related role clarity, work related role clarity and appraisal related role clarity were found significantly higher in male employees as compared to female employees. But there was no difference in the dimensions of role clarity due to type of organization and position.

- Indian organizations, being male dominated provide more opportunities to learn and explore the role as compared to female employees who are working hard to change the historical perceptions.

- Both private and public organizations have developed process and environment to provide employees with high level of clarity regarding role expectations.

- Though the parameters of evaluation of roles for various positions vary, Indian employees possess high clarity on design, performance and appraisal of the roles assigned.

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