

## A study on impact of Job role stressors on Frontline employee role performance towards the customers

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### Keywords

Role conflict; role ambiguity; frontline employee; departmental stores; customers; stress

### Abstract

*Rapid developments in the Indian Economy post-liberalization in 1991 have prompted institutions like the World Bank to forecast that India would be the fourth largest economy in the world by 2020 (Budhwar and Bhatnagar, 2009). Following globalization this has attracted a large numbers of foreign investors and companies to India. HRM in India has evolved as a specialised function (Budhwar and Bhatnagar, 2009). According to Budhwar and Bhatnagar, 2009 India had a long history of labour legislation and industrial relations and there are many challenges to the HRM systems in India, due to the diverse nature of India's society which is marked by regional, sectoral, socio-cultural and political variation. In such a climate it is extremely difficult to have a uniform HR system.*

*According to Wheatherly and Tansik (1993) employees have to deal with the demands from superiors as well as the needs and wishes of customers. Because of such a boundary spanning role, the retail frontline employees are in dilemma whether to customize the retail services as per customers needs or to obey the organizational guidelines and procedures (Bitner, 1990). This dilemma often leads to job role stress. There are different types of job role stress (Pareek, 1993) of these the research under study deals with the two job role stressors prominent in retail industry job role conflict and job role ambiguity ( Kahn et.al, 1964). According to Heskett et al. (2003) front line employee's behavior and perception affects the customer satisfaction and intent of buying behavior which in turn have impact on service productivity.*

*There have been many studies conducted on job role stress and its impact on employee job performance but hardly any with respect to organized Indian retail sector. In the prior research studies it can be noted that employee point of view is hardly taken into consideration. Hence as an attempt to fill in this gap the research focuses on understanding how job role stressors (role conflict & role ambiguity) have significant impact on frontline employee role performance towards the customers with special reference to departmental stores located in central, western and harbor suburbs of Mumbai. The study starts with investigating whether frontline employee role performance towards the customers is dependent on job role stressors i.e. role conflict and role ambiguity by means of non-parametric chi-square test. Then it is investigated whether there is negative or positive relationship between job role stress i.e. role conflict and role ambiguity and frontline employee role performance by using Spearman correlation coefficient.*

*The research is explanatory in nature. The sampling design used is stratified random sampling. The research focuses on the dynamics of human element, especially employee engagement, which is key contributor of success with respect to service sector, especially in retail in India.*

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### 1. Introduction

Experts point out that continued high growth in an industry can be an issue because it strains systems and governance processes that needs time to mature and to be institutionalized. The Retail industry constitutes the fastest growing industry in India and is facing the above mentioned problem.

Retail Industry is likely to be the next big thing for services in this decade. The industry is very diverse, with several sub-segments, each displaying its own unique characteristics. The retail players need to be excellent in every facet of operations as the market is highly competitive at every level and re-defining itself every day. It is mainly service oriented industry so employees especially frontline sales people who do have influence on customers purchasing decision are the key people to its success.

The scenario however, is not as rosy as it looks, for this sector with enormous potential. Like any other industry during its growth phase, this industry is also going through its share of turbulence.

In this era of globalization there is increased service industry competition, coupled with more demanding customers, the service profit chain "helps managers target new investments to develop service and satisfaction levels for maximum competitive impact, widening the gap between service leaders and their merely good competitors" (Heskett et al, 1994). The service profit chain framework used as a base model for the research under study focuses on creating both employee and customer loyalty - recognizing that each is reflected by the other if the employee is satisfied he will deliver service excellence resulting in customers satisfaction so employee first customer second should be the key mantra for success when it comes to service industry.

The stress related to role performed by the employee at the workplace is the most important determinant of performance of the employee (Sharma,Devi 2011). According to Pareek (1993) the performance of employee in the organization can lead to conflict, which can result in stress among the employees. Such stress can have negative impact on employee performance along with many other dysfunctional outcomes (Behrman and Perreault, 1984). In such circumstances, efforts to sustain a high level of work performance over a long time can be a tedious task for organizations as well as employees which in turn will affect the organizational productivity.

According to Wheatherly and Tansik(1993) employees have to deal with the demands from superiors as well as the needs and wishes of customers. Because of such a boundary spanning role , the retail frontline employees are in dilemma whether to customize the retail services as per customers' needs or to obey the organizational guidelines and procedures (Bitner, 1990; Bitner et al., 1990; Goodwin and Radford, 1993). This dilemma often leads to job role stress.

According to Goodwin and Radford (1993) job role stress is particularly relevant in retail services because there is high level of customer participation and frontline employees are bound by organizational rules and regulations. According to Dubinsky et.al (1984) job role stress is very important determinant of employee's loyalty to the organization and hence his/her intention to leave the organization, especially in case of employees in service sector who are in direct interaction with the customers.

It can be seen that over the last few years India has been experiencing a revolution in retail market. Retail is one of the highly manpower intensive industries. According to Budhwar et.al (2009) estimations 8 million people will be required in organized retail by 2011. But so far, the HR factors in retail management are largely ignored (Aneja, 2006). According to Heskett et al. (2003) front line employee's behavior and perception affects the customer satisfaction and intent of buying behavior which in turn have impact on service productivity. Retailers over the years have developed and used various methods for their performance measurement as well as development of strategy.

There have been many studies conducted on job role stress and its impact on employee job performance and service effectiveness in different sectors but hardly any with respect to

organized Indian retail sector. Also in most of the studies the employee point of view is hardly taken into consideration. This study is an attempt to fill in this gap.

The study starts with examining whether frontline employee role performance towards the customers is dependent on job role stressors i.e. role conflict and role ambiguity by means of non-parametric chi-square test. Then it is investigated whether there is negative or positive relationship between job role stressors i.e. role conflict and role ambiguity and frontline employee role performance by using Spearman rank correlation coefficient. This is followed by the limitations, future scope and implications of the study.

## **2. A Brief Survey of Literature**

In the first section the two forms of frontline employee role performance relevant to this study are introduced (prosocial role performance & non role performance). Second section explains the theoretical and empirical literature on job role stressors i.e. role conflict & role ambiguity are discussed. The third section focuses on theories linking internal service quality to employee role performance setting up the premise for the fourth section which deals with the relationship between employee role performance and Job role stressors.

### **2.1. Employee performance**

Employee role performance for the purpose of the study refers to behaviors of frontline employees towards the organization, individual and group that can be broadly categorized as – prosocial role performance & non-role performance (Bettencourt and Brown 1997). The focus of this research is on frontline employee role performance towards the customers.

#### **2.1.1. Frontline employee role performance towards the customers**

Prosocial role performance can be perceived as to helpful behaviors of employees directed toward the organization or toward other individuals (Bettencourt and Brown 1997). Frontline employee role performance may be directed towards either co-workers or customers (Brief and Motowidlo 1986; George and Bettenhausen 1990). Co-worker directed prosocial behaviors are organizational citizenship behaviors directed toward co-workers and performed by employees. Customer-directed prosocial behaviors or the prosocial role performances are directed towards and perceived by the customer. These behaviors are of particular interest in this study as they enable to understand the impact of frontline employee role performance towards the customers on the service effectiveness i.e. the gap between the customer expectations & customer perception of service quality. For the purpose of the study the customer -directed prosocial behaviors will be called as “frontline employee role performance towards the customers”.

Customer-directed prosocial behaviors, or the prosocial role performances that are directed towards and perceived by the customer, called as “Frontline employee role performance towards the customers” are of particular interest in this study as they have direct implications for customer perceptions of service quality. Two types of frontline employee role performance towards the customers can be viewed as being beneficial to the firm: role-prescribed performance or in-role performance and extra-role performance (Bettencourt and Brown 1997). First, role-prescribed performance refers to expected employee behaviors during provision of service to the customers or behaviors specified as a formal part of an individual’s role or job (Bettencourt and Brown 1997; Brief and Motowidlo 1986). According to Borman and Motowidlo, 1993 these behaviors can also be known as employee in role performances. It comprises of core job responsibilities of the employees included in employee’s formal job description. For e.g.: (1) having knowledge about the firm , firm’s and competitors products and services and the customers (2) performing in-role tasks as specified in formal job description ,such as proper

processing of customers orders and conducting mandated checkout procedures (3)conducting proper product displays ,store signage and opening/closing procedures

Second, extra-role performance refers to the discretionary behaviors in which employees engage that benefit the firm in some way and when such performance are targeted towards the customers they are called as extra -role performances towards the customers (ERPC) (Borman and Motowidlo,1993) . According to Bettencourt et al. (2001) ERPC includes participation and service delivery. Participation means voluntary initiatives that add on to service while communicating with the customers and service delivery means extra efforts to respond to customer queries .For this research ERPC can be defined as the extra efforts taken by the employee to meet the needs of customers during employee-customer interface.

It is employer's belief that customers will stay loyal when they are given personal attention in this mass customer market driven technology (Brief and Motowidlo, 1986). Extra-role service behavior of employees is dependent on the self-emotional appraisal & employees control of emotional responses of the customer (Tsai, 2009).

**The focus of this study is on frontline employee role performance towards the customers and following service effectiveness parameters will be used to measure the same:**

- Extra-assistance beyond Job Responsibilities
- Timeliness
- Ease of service
- Prompt service
- Behavior instills confidence & safety
- Politeness
- Consistent service
- Willingness to help customers
- Multitasking attitude
- Knowledge about the product

## **2.2. Job role stressors**

Kahn et al. (1964) define role stress as a composite construct consisting of two role stressors which include role conflict and role ambiguity. There have been many studies conducted on relationship between role ambiguity ,role conflict and many other correlates since the first introduction of theory of organizational dynamics ((Kahn, Wolfe, Quin, Snoek, & Rosenthal, 1964).Most of the studies indicates that role stress is accompanied by anxiety and nervousness and affects job performance(Behrman & Perreault, 1984).

### **2.2.1. Role conflict**

Role conflict is defined as "The simultaneous occurrence of two (or more) sets of pressures such that compliance with one would make more difficult compliance with the other" (Kahn et al., 1964, p. 19). For the purpose of the study role conflict is defined as conflict resulting due to clash of expectations of the organization and expectations of customers. For instance, when a superior expects that an employee serves as many customers as possible, a customer at the same time may demand personal attention.

The following parameters will be used to measure role conflict:

- Job responsibilities are situation based
- Inadequate resources to complete the assignment
- Work-group conflict
- Foregoing of rule & policy

- Incompatibility of orders
- Clash of Job responsibilities
- Importance of job done

### 2.2.2. Role ambiguity

Kahn et al. (1964), Walker et al. (1975) mentions that role ambiguity occurs when employee has incomplete information about the job to be performed. For the purpose of the study role ambiguity is defined as the confusion regarding the actual job responsibilities due to lack of well define job description (Chenet, Tynan, & Money, 2000; Matterson & Ivancevich, 1987; McLean, 1979; Sutherland, & Cooper, 1991).

The following parameters will be used to measure role ambiguity:

- Clarity of authority
- Clarity of objectives
- Time Management
- Clarity of responsibilities
- Clarity of expectations from management
- Clarity of communications
- Training provided

The two theories that can be studied to understand the relationship between internal service quality & employee satisfaction, include social exchange theory (Homans, 1961; Blau, 1964) and the inducements/contributions framework (March and Simons, 1958). The reason to understand these theories before reviewing job role stress is that they help to establish relationship between internal service quality & employee satisfaction. Internal service quality can be defined as "feelings that employees have towards their jobs, colleagues, and companies" (Heskett et al, 1994). Thus outcome of inefficient internal quality can be job role stress. So reviewing these two theories after job role stress will give better understanding of job role stress. Both the theories originate in social psychology where they were used to explain relationships among individuals; over the last forty years, they have found their way into economic and business management literature as methods of understanding the relationships between individuals and business organizations.

### 2.3. Job role stressors & Employee role performance

According to Hochschild, 1983; Mohr *et al.* 2007 job role stress is uni-dimensional construct exclusively concerned with the intensity and frequency of emotional displays which have impact on employee performance and others like Kruml and Geddes, 2000; Morris and Feldman, 1997; observed it as a multi-dimensional construct .Kahn et al. (1964) define role stress as a composite construct consisting of two role stressors which include role conflict and role ambiguity

There have been many studies conducted on relationship between role ambiguity ,role conflict and many other correlates since the first introduction of theory of organizational dynamics ((Kahn et. al. 1964).Most of the studies indicates that role stress is accompanied by anxiety and nervousness and affects job performance(Behrman & Perreault, 1984).

According to Dubinsky and Mattson (1979) and Abramis (1994) there is a negative relationship between role stress and job performance. According to Yousef (2000) who investigated 397 employees from several manufacturing and service organizations in the United Arab Emirates, found that low perceptions of both role conflict and role ambiguity would predict better job performance. Behrman and Perreault (1984) found a negative relationship

between role ambiguity and job performance and a positive relationship between role conflict and job performance (see also Michaels, Day, & Joachimsthaler, 1987). Thus it can be seen that there is inconsistencies in impact of job role stressors on employee performance (Schuler, 1975)

Though, substantial numbers of empirical studies (Hochschild, 1983; Kahn, 1993; Morris and Feldman, 1996) so far were able to demonstrate negative effects of job role stressors but few other studies exhibited different results. Adelman (1995) carried out a study on table servers and found no relationship between job role stressors and job outcomes while Kahn, 1993 found an independent effect of job conditions and job role stressors on job strain, job satisfaction and psychological distress. Van Maanen and Kunda (1989) focused on the constraining consequences of being employed at Disneyland, whereas Shuler and Sypher (2000) mentioned the positive aspects of job role stress. Hochschild (1983) mentioned that high-emotional demands had negative effects on psychological and physical health. Rutter and Fielding (1988) reported that job role stress is negatively associated with job satisfaction.

However, other studies did not uniformly find these negative effects, and some even found positive effects of job role stressors. According to Putnam and Mumby (1993), job role stress reduces the discretion exercised by the workforce in performing their jobs, whereas, stress free environment enable them to manage their emotions so as to enhance organisational effectiveness (Van Maanen and Kunda, 1989). Further, it was disclosed by Wharton (1999) that the consequences of job role stressors may be highly contingent upon other characteristics of the job and the organization. Pugh (2001) found that the display of positive emotions was related to customer satisfaction and customers' positive affect which may be indicators of successful service interactions. These processes may contribute to feelings of personal accomplishment. Wharton (1993) found a positive relation between job role stress levels and employee performance. Kruml and Geddes (2000) contended that job role stressors can benefit an employee depending on the employee strategy utilized.

But there is hardly any previous research focusing on impact of job role stressors on frontline employee role performance towards the customers and service effectiveness from the frontline employee perspective who are the actual service providers in organized Indian retail sector. To fill this major gap the research is undertaken.

### 3. Data & Research Methodology

#### 3.1 Research Design

The research design used is explanatory

Sr.No.	Research Questions	Research Objective	Hypotheses	Questionnaire	Tools Used
1.	Do Role conflict have significant impact on frontline role performance towards the customers(ERPTC)	To investigate the significance of role conflict on ERPTC	Hypothesis 1 Null Hypothesis( $H_0$ ) : Role conflict is not significant in influencing the frontline employee role performance	A seven - item , seven - point scale that measures the level of job role conflict faced by frontline employees (Rizzo et.al, 1970)	Non-parametric Chi-square Test

2.	Do Role ambiguity have significant impact on frontline role performance towards the customers	To investigate the significance of role ambiguity on ERPTC	Hypothesis 2 Null Hypothesis(H <sub>0</sub> ) : Role ambiguity is not significant in influencing the frontline employee role performance	A seven - item , seven - point scale that measures the level of job role ambiguity faced by frontline employees (Rizzo et.al, 1970)	Non-parametric Chi-square Test
3.	Is relationship between role conflict and ERPTC negative or positive?	To examine the direction of relationship between role conflict and ERPTC	Hypothesis 3 Null Hypothesis(H <sub>0</sub> ) : There is no negative relationship between role conflict and ERPTC	A one-item ,seven point scale that measures role conflict & ERPTC	Spearman's correlation coefficient
4.	Is relationship between role conflict and ERPTC negative or positive?	To examine the direction of relationship between role ambiguity and ERPTC	Hypothesis 4 Null Hypothesis(H <sub>0</sub> ) : There is no negative relationship between role ambiguity and ERPTC	A one-item ,seven point scale that measures role conflict & ERPTC	Spearman's correlation coefficient

**Table 1 Research Methodology Flow**

### 3.2. Sampling design

The basic purpose of sampling is extrapolation from the part to the whole—from “the sample” to “the population.” (The population is also referred to as “the universe.”) There is an immediate corollary: the sample must be chosen to fairly represent the population. Methods for choosing samples are called “designs.” There are 2 studies involved in this research

**Study 1:** Significance of Job role stressors on frontline employee role performance towards the customers

**Study 2:** Direction of relationship between job role stressors and frontline employee role performance towards customers

The sales personnel of Departmental stores located in 5 strata (Table 2) of Mumbai having experience of at least 1 year and more with the present store constitute the sample for the field study with respect to survey questionnaire comprising information regarding frontline employee role performance towards the customer, job role stressors i.e. role conflict and role ambiguity and service effectiveness factors. The sales personnel were chosen because they are majorly in direct contact with the customers and have an influence on their purchasing decisions. 5 Strata of Mumbai were chosen for sampling on basis of these areas being highly populated in Mumbai with respect to departmental stores density as well as population density.

Sr.no.	Zone	Number of department stores	Number of sales personnel
1	Nariman point, Haji Ali, Worli , Lower Parel,Dadar, Mahim	80	1600
2	Bandra,Santacruz,Andheri,Goregoan,Malad,Borivali,	75	1400
3	Matunga,Chembur,Ghatkoar,Bhandup	53	800
4	Mulund,Thana,Kalwa,Kalyan	45	680
5	Airoli,Vashi,Nerul,Kharghar	35	520

**Table 2 Selected Strata's for Sampling design**

The sampling method used for sales personnel is stratified random sampling. First of all departmental stores located in 5strata's of Mumbai are selected and sales people are randomly sampled from these strata.

The following equation is used to calculate the sample size (S) :

Total population = 5000

Sample selected is 10% of the total population i.e. 500

So Sample weightage point is  $500/5000= 0.1$

So from each stratum following number of employees will be selected on random basis:

Strata 1 = 160

Strata 2 = 140

Strata 3 = 80

Strata 4 = 68

Strata 5 = 52

Prior to questionnaire administration ,several meetings were held with sales personnel and HR managers to (1) become more familiar with the specific language and job responsibilities of the respondents (2) review and discuss the data collection procedures (3) identify relevant context –specific role performance and service productivity measures with special emphasis on frontline employee role performance towards customers and service effectiveness and (4) to assure the appropriateness of the various survey measures and instructions. These also helped to guide survey development, improvement and implementation.

A large sample of frontline employees and customers is required to reduce the error variance of the sample and to increase the power of the statistical tests (Cohen 1992; Kerlinger and Lee 2000).

#### 4. Data analysis and Interpretation

The tabulated data has been analyzed by using SPSS 17.0 consisting of the following statistical techniques:

- **Bivariate Analysis** - It has involved only two variables and the methods related to this analysis include Spearman correlation coefficient.
- **Multivariate Analysis** - It has involved more than two variables at a time. It has explained the associations among more than two variables simultaneously. Non-parametric test is used.
- **Hypothetical Analysis** - The hypothesis which is formulated has been tested by using meanvalue analysis, Spearman Correlation Coefficient and Non parametric test.

##### 4.1. Influence of role ambiguity on Frontline employee role performance

The following hypothesis is tested to know the influence of Role Ambiguity on the Frontline Employee role performance

**Hypothesis 1**

Null Hypothesis( $H_0$ ) : Role Ambiguity is not significant in influencing the frontline employee role performance towards the customers

Alternative Hypothesis( $H_1$ ): Role Ambiguity is highly significant in influencing the frontline employee role performance towards the customers

Role Ambiguity	SD	DA	DS	UND	SWA	A	SA	TOTAL
AUTHORITY	50	59	54	40	87	74	136	500
OBJECTIVES	35	43	64	41	93	119	105	500
TIME	50	66	40	40	125	67	112	500
RESPONSIBILITIES	56	50	40	45	83	129	97	500
EXPECTATIONS	58	45	45	42	75	127	108	500
COMMUNICATION	45	56	50	42	70	118	119	500
TRG & DEV	59	42	61	42	96	76	124	500
Total	353	361	354	292	629	710	801	3500

**Table 3 Role Ambiguity\* Employee Responses [Cross Tabulation]**

Description	Value	df	Asymp. Sig.
Spearman rank Chi-Square	1.053E2	36	.000
Likelihood Ratio	106.088	36	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	.041	1	.840
N of Valid Cases	3500		

**Table 4 Chi-Square Analysis for Role Ambiguity \* Employee Responses**

**4.1.2. Interpretation (From Table 4)**

It can be seen from the table 4 that the significance (0.00) is less than the assumed value (0.05). So we reject  $H_0$ . This means that Role Ambiguity is highly significant in influencing the employee role performance. It shows that there should be no ambiguity in the role performed by the employees.

**4.2. Influence of role conflict on the frontline employee role performance**

The following hypothesis is tested to know the influence of Role Conflict on the frontline employee role performance

**Hypothesis 2**

Null Hypothesis( $H_0$ ) : Role Conflict is not significant in influencing the frontline employee role performance towards the customers

Alternative Hypothesis( $H_2$ ): Role Conflict is highly significant in influencing the frontline employee role performance towards the customers

Role Conflict	SD	DA	DS	UND	SWA	A	SA	TOTAL
JOB	41	50	43	41	80	130	115	500
INADEQUATE	43	60	45	40	70	122	120	500
WORK-GROUP	48	47	43	42	78	136	106	500
RULE & POLICY	45	55	47	40	74	101	138	500
INCOMPATIBILITY	50	45	51	42	78	104	130	500
EXPECTATIONS	52	45	42	41	96	106	118	500
IMP.JOB	41	48	57	43	81	107	123	500
Total	320	350	328	289	557	806	850	3500

**Table 5 Role Conflict \* Employee Responses [Cross Tabulation]**

Table 6 Chi-

Description	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig.
Spearman rank Chi-Square	1.453E4	36	.000
Likelihood Ratio	10781.985	36	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	2732.040	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	3500		

Square

#### Analysis for Role Conflict \* Employee Responses

#### 4.2.1. Interpretation (From Table 6)

It can be seen from the table 6 that the significance (0.00) is less than the assumed value (0.05). So we reject  $H_0$ . This means that Role Conflict is highly significant in influencing the employee role performance.

#### 4.3. Job role stressors and Frontline employee role performance towards the customers

Relationship between job role stressors i.e. role conflict and role ambiguity and frontline employee role performance towards the customers

#### Hypothesis 3

Null Hypothesis ( $H_0$ ): There is no negative relationship between role conflict and frontline employee role performance towards the customers

Alternative Hypothesis ( $H_3$ ): There is negative relationship between role conflict and frontline employee role performance towards the customers

#### Hypothesis 4

Null Hypothesis ( $H_0$ ): There is no negative relationship between role ambiguity and frontline employee role performance towards the customers

Alternative Hypothesis ( $H_4$ ): There is negative relationship between role ambiguity and frontline employee role performance towards the customers

#### 4.3.1. Spearman rank correlation coefficient at ( $\alpha$ ) 0.01 level of significance

For hypothesis 3 and hypothesis 4, Spearman rank correlation coefficient at ( $\alpha$ ) 0.01 level of significance is used

Factor	Frontline employee role performance
Role Conflict	-0.983
Role Ambiguity	-0.984

Table 7 Spearman rank correlation coefficient at ( $\alpha$ ) 0.01 level of significance

#### 4.3.2. Interpretation (From Table 7)

Table 7 shows that a negative correlation and significant relationship exists between frontline employee role performance towards the customers and role conflict with ( $r = -0.983$ ) and role ambiguity with ( $r = -0.984$ ) Thus null hypothesis 3 and null hypothesis 4 is rejected and alternate hypothesis 3 and alternate hypothesis 4 is accepted, stating that there is negative relationship between job role stressors i.e. role ambiguity and role conflict and frontline employee role performance towards the customers

#### 4.4 Background information of Frontline employees

Out of 500 respondents surveyed, 29% are male and 71% are female. In general it can be inferred that there are more female employees in departmental stores than the male counterpart. On further questioning to HR department it was found that the reason behind this is females are preferred over male employees as they are more service oriented in general. With respect to age factor out of 500 respondents surveyed 96% of employees are 35 yrs & below. This finding can be explored by the HR managers to design motivational strategies catering to the needs of this

age group like providing home loans, marriage loans, sabbaticals for studies , tie-ups with educational institutes for further education , on the spot incentives, medical benefits etc. to increase performance & reduce stress. With respect to educational background out of 500 respondents surveyed only 8.4 % of employees are masters. Thus it can be inferred that majority of frontline employees can be motivated by providing scope for further education by tie-ups with educational institutions , providing sabbaticals etc. This may also enable to decrease attrition rate prevalent in retail industry and increase employee performance.

With regards to marital status out of 500 respondents surveyed 55.2 % are single & 44.8 % employees are married. With regards to annual income , out of 500 employees surveyed 85.4 % employees have annual salary 1 lakh (USD \$1462) & below. On further questioning the employees it was found that the current salary levels were not adequate to meet the basic requirements of the employees & thus revising the salary levels is essential to motivate the employees. Out of 500 employees surveyed 44.4% and 20.4% employees feels most stressed on weekend evenings & weekend afternoon .On further questioning it was found that the reason for the same was departmental stores are crowded during weekends especially evenings and also during festive seasons & sale offers in the departmental stores. So some measures like increasing the number of employees during this time by adding part time or contract employees or providing added trainings & incentives for handling multiple customers etc. should be undertaken to increase employee performance and reduce stress.

With respect to work experience out of 500 employees surveyed 47.2 % of employees have work experience of more than 4 yrs in the retail industry. With respect to work experience with present employer, out of 500 employees surveyed only 6.4 % of employees have worked in the given departmental stores for more than 4 yrs. as against 47.2% employees who have work experience of more than 4 yrs. in the retail industry. From this it can be inferred that employees are not moving outside the retail industry but within the industry, thus innovative employee engagement measures can help to curb the attrition rate in the retail industry.

## 5. Discussion & Summary

According to the findings of the studies job role stressors i.e. role conflict & role ambiguity have significant influence on frontline employee role performance towards the customers. Also both the job role stressors i.e. role ambiguity and role conflict are negatively related to frontline employee role performance towards the customer i.e. the presence of job role stressors have negative impact on frontline employee role performance towards the customers.

The results of this study indicate that the effect of job role stress must be considered in the management of an organization. A negative relationship was found between role ambiguity and job performance, and between role conflict and job performance. Behrman and Perreault (1984) also found a negative relationship between role ambiguity and job performance, and a negative relationship between role conflict and job performance. Michaels et al. (1987) also came to the same conclusion. Thus the retail managers should focus on methods of easing role conflict and role ambiguity by redesigning of the HR environment in the department stores. Role ambiguity among frontline employee can be reduced by giving them empowerment, clarity with respect to their personal and organizational objectives and alignment of the two, training in time management, clarity with respect to job responsibilities and expectations from the stakeholders of the department stores along with transparency and clarity in communication and last but not the least frequent, up to-date continuous training and development programs (Carlzon, 1987; Chenet et al., 2000; Schlessenger & Heskett, 1991, Rizzo et al. 1970).

White and Williams (2000) indicated that education and training are important for maintaining competitive advantage – training courses emphasizing problem-solving techniques could be tailor-made for frontline employees to deal with the stakeholders of the department stores.

Role conflict among the frontline employees can be improved by giving decision making powers, provision of adequate resources to meet the requirements of the customers, resolving grievances with regards to interpersonal and group conflicts and focusing on promotion of team work, clarity with respect to flexibility of rules, regulations and policies allowed with respect to meeting customer requirements, focusing on unity of command and providing insight to the frontline employees with respect to the importance of job done by them.

Leader Member exchange (LMX) theory which is best understood within the “leadership making model” proposed by Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995) suggest that having a high-quality relationship with one’s leader can affect the entire work experience in a positive manner, including reduction in job role ambiguity, increase in performance and improved service effectiveness (Gerstner & Day, 1997). Thus it can be learning for the managers that instead of treating leadership as a role it can be treated as a process and the leaders should be sensitized by the organizational training with respect to the impact their behaviors and decisions have on followers and organizations growth.

Thus the findings of this study comprise of useful reference information for optimizing the application of organizational management and human resources with respect to departmental stores which can be generalized to organized retail environment.

## **6. Limitation of empirical study**

This dissertation provides insight into both theoretical and managerial implications. However, as is true with any study, the findings of this dissertation should be viewed with caution due to the following limitations. The current study is limited by the use of a single format of organized retail, homogenous sampling organizations, length of the survey instrument, social desirability, and confidentiality with respect to names of departmental stores and frontline employees from which data is obtained as the topic of service effectiveness is sensitive.

## **7. Direction for Future research**

Frontline employees’ role performance towards customers plays a crucial role with regards to service effectiveness experienced by the customer which in turn is a deciding factor with respect to customer retention and customer loyalty. Job role stressors i.e. role conflict and role ambiguity have significant influence on frontline employee role performance towards the customers. While adding to the body of research already conducted in the area of frontline employees, this study lays the groundwork for future research on Job role stressors and its impact on motivation levels of frontline employees, attrition rate etc. There is also future scope to investigate the impact the quality of Leader member exchange have on job role stress i.e. job role ambiguity, job role conflict etc. and service effectiveness which can provide insights into the leader’s role in reducing stress and increasing service effectiveness delivered by frontline employees in organized Indian retail context (Slattery et al, 2008)

This study provides an insight into significance of the influence and relationship of job role stressors i.e. role conflict and role ambiguity on frontline employee role performance towards the customers. The results of this dissertation suggest that both job role stressors i.e. role conflict and role ambiguity have significant influence on frontline employee role performance towards the customers. Role conflict as well as role ambiguity was found to have negative relationship

with frontline employee role performance towards the customers. Future research could investigate further into the relationship that the other forms of job role stressors i.e. personal inadequacy, job role erosion, role stagnation, role overload etc. have on frontline employee role performance towards the customers.

### Conclusion

The nature of HRM is known to be 'context specific' (Brewster, 2005). Budhwar and Khatri (2001) argue that the HRM system varies from country to country and can either be universal or context specific, like in India's case where there is a strong relationship between the social contacts and Human resource management practices like career development, leadership etc. which presents the context-specific nature of such a practice. Thus according to the findings of the research major HR issues that exists with respect to retail sector include presence of job role stressors i.e. role conflict and role ambiguity that have negative relationship and significant impact on frontline employee role performance towards the customer. To conclude if these issues are handled tactfully by combined effort of the HR department and management team the contribution of retail sector to Indian economy would continue and multiply in the year to come.

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