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The Effects of Role Ambiguity and Role Conflicts Experienced by Employees of the Hotels on Their Customer Oriented Pro-Social Service Behaviors

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to examine the impact of the role conflict and the role ambiguity on customer-oriented prosocial service behaviours. A survey was administered to 300 hotel employees in Turkey, and 220 questionnaires were returned and 200 questionnaires were usable for statistical analysis. Convenience sampling techniques was applied for the survey. In the study, descriptive statistics, correlations and structural equation model were used to test the hypotheses. According to the study result, role ambiguity impacts employees' in-role behaviours and extra role behaviours negatively. Based on the findings, role conflict has no impact on customer-oriented prosocial service behaviour. Due to the some limitations of the study, further research was needed to examine large sampling, different establishments (travel agency, fast food restaurants etc.) and different variables as a mediator (negative affectivity, work engagement etc.).

Keywords: Role conflict, Role ambiguity, In-role behaviour, Extra-role behaviour, Hotel employees

1. Introduction

Nowadays, stress is one of the factors that negatively affect employees' working lives, which is encountered by them frequently and needs to be handled. Stress is an individual-based process that causes tension by a particular source. There are multiple factors involved as source of stress in organizations. Role conflict and role ambiguity are two of these sources that affect both psychological and behavioral processes negatively, which are most common factors (Bettencourt and Brown, 2003; Jackson and Schuler, 1985). These factors result in positive emotions like organizational commitment (Idris, O'Driscoll and Anderson, 2010: 404), as well as some negative emotions such as burnout (Karatepe and Uludağ, 2008) and some other negative attitudes (Madare, Dawson and Nael, 2013). At the same time, role conflict and role ambiguity are two significant determinants as source of stress in the organizations, which have many individual and organizational consequences (Rizzo, House and Lirtzman 1970).

In today's competitive business environment, the hotels are aware of that providing excellent service and creating customer satisfaction are necessities to create loyal customers for their survival and success (Karatepe and Uludağ, 2008:111). Because of pro-social organizational behaviors importance in global working area, it is considered as an interesting, important subject and positive organizational behavior by many researchers and practitioners during decades. Researchers and practitioners have been dedicated to exploring these behaviors, antecedents and consequences (Kanten, 2014: 257). The antecedents of these behaviors, which are performed voluntarily, are gathered in four groups as follows: Individual characteristics, task-related characteristics, organizational characteristics and the leader's behaviors (Limpanitgul, Jirotmontree, Robson and Boonchoo, 2013: 5).

There are not many studies investigating the effects of role stress sources on discretionary behaviors in the literature. In the literature, there are some studies investigating the effects of role conflict and role ambiguity on the burnout (Ghorpade, Lackritz and Singh, 2011), locus of control (Basım, Erkenekli and Şeşen, 2010), organizational commitment (Lankau, Carlson and Nielson, 2006; Bettencourt and Brown, 2003), job satisfaction (Lankau et al., 2006; Bettencourt and Brown, 2003) and tension (Idris et al. 2011). In addition, Jain and Cooper (2012) have investigated the effects of organizational-based stress on organizational citizenship behaviors, which are also voluntary behaviors. Bettencourt and Brown (2003) have examined the effects of role conflict and role ambiguity on the costumer orientated pro-social behaviors. In the literature, there are a limited number of studies investigating the effects of role conflict and role ambiguity on the voluntary behaviors. In this regards, the main purpose of this study is investigating the effects of role conflict and role ambiguity, which are described as sources of role stress, on the costumer orientated pro-social behaviors.

The main purpose of this study is investigating the tasks (defined as role) of the "human" component, which is today's main element of service enterprises such as hotels, in the service processes and the effects of role ambiguity and role conflict on the voluntary behaviors, which are not defined under their job definitions.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Role Ambiguity

Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn, Snoek and Rosenthal (1964) define role ambiguity as; the situation that the individual does not know his job description and what is expected from him/her clearly. In the organizations, the role ambiguity means that the employee does not know what his/her job requires him/her to do and cannot show the requested performance (Ceylan and Ulutürk, 2006: 48). In addition, in a situation of role ambiguity, the duties and achievements related to job requirement are not fully understood and the consequences of role behaviors cannot be presumed (Sinha and Subramanian, 2012: 70). Beauchamp, Bray, Eys and Carron (2004) present role ambiguity in four subtitles as follows: a) the lack of clear identification of individuals' roles, b) the lack of determination of responsibilities in line with the roles, c) behavior ambiguity related to roles of an individual, d) not telling the unfulfilled responsibilities, which are required by the role of the individual, to employees.

Role ambiguity includes non-specific expectations resulting negative work experiences; because, in organizations, the situation of not knowing exactly what to do causes individuals to face stress (Madare et al.2013). Organizational and individual factors are effective in the emergence of role ambiguity. Organizational factors occur in the absence of full disclosure of individuals' roles and not knowing exactly what to do. The large size and complex structure of organizations are some

organizational factors that affect the employers in the organizations (Basım et al., 2010). Another reason affecting the role ambiguity is the lack of communication. In particular, the lack of role definitions or insufficient transmission of role descriptions to the employees leads to role ambiguity (Adıgüzel, 2012). Especially in the accommodation establishments, giving multiple tasks to the workers and unclear job descriptions cause role ambiguity. Thus, unclear job descriptions result in role ambiguity, which results in facing stressful situations in organizations.

2.2. Role Conflict

Role conflict occurs if employees face multiple and incompatible job requirements in their jobs (providing quality services or dealing with more customers than his/her capability at the same time) and if their job requirements are not consistent with their value judgments (Ghorpade et al. 2011: 1278). Role conflict occurs when many requests come from multiple stakeholders such as customers, colleagues or a managers at the same time and the employee cannot fulfill all of them (Karatepe and Uludağ, 2008: 111). Especially in the accommodation establishments, individuals encounter demands more than their capacities resulting in role conflicts; therefore, results in experiencing role stress which is dependent on their role and tasks.

In the organizations, appointing conflicted duties to the employees or expectations beyond the duties by the managers cause role conflicts, thus role ambiguities. In addition, taking orders from multiple managers and conflict of these orders may cause role conflicts in the organizations (Adıgüzel, 2012).

2.3. Customer Oriented Pro-Social Service Behaviors

In the organizations, the behaviors not in the job description of an individual, or in another word non-formal involvements increase due to the increased cooperation and teamwork among units. In the literature, these types of behaviors are classified under different names. Pro-social behaviors are one of these behavior types (Özdevecioğlu, 2009: 49). It can be said that the pro-social behaviors are expanded in the organizations; because, the public demands such behaviors. Pro-social behaviors are "correct" behaviors according to social beliefs; therefore, these behaviors are considered as desired and wanted behaviors (Barauch, O'Creevy, Hind and Gadot, 2004:401).

Pro-social service behaviors can be expressed as the activities performed by employees in favour of the organization, individuals or any group while carrying out their duties or performing such behaviors in line with this idea (Kelly and Hoffman, 1997: 409). Pro-social service behaviors can also be defined as going out of formal job description and engaging in related activities by the employees (Kanten, 2014: 257). Pro-social service behaviors refer to the belief of being part of a community and performing helpful activities in this framework or being in supportive groups and loving each other. Thus, this kind of behaviors may reduce if individuals feel themselves marginalized from the organization or under pressure (Twenge, Baumeister, DeWall, Ciarocco and Bartels, 2007: 56).

Pro-social service behaviors include customer-oriented behaviors exhibited by employees as well as their behaviors toward colleagues in the organization in accordance with their job descriptions or even further (Yeşiltaş, Kanten and Sormaz, 2013: 337). These two types of behaviors are most commonly seen classifications in the literature (Tsaur, Wang, Yen and Liu, 2014: 131: Kim and Lee, 2009). In addition, it is possible to indicate that the concept of "cooperation", which is

defined as helpful behaviors towards others in the literature, is also within the scope of pro-social service behaviors (Bettencourt and Brown, 1997: 41-42; Kanten, 2014: 257).

In-Role Pro-Social Behaviour: Pro-social service behaviors within role description are behaviors, which are determined by the organization and part of an individual's job description. Pro-social service behaviors within role description can be considered some behaviors that the organizations expect from individuals to accomplish (Kanten, 2006: 28). Service behaviors within role description also emerge in the context of tasks in the reward and compensation systems of the organization, or in their basic tasks fulfilled formally. There are some behaviors assessed as pro-social service behaviors within role description in the organizations such as; giving accurate information related to rules and policies of the company, being polite to all costumers most of the time, learning costumers' names and calling them with their names or saying "thank you" all the time, answering the phone before letting the phone rings three times or fulfilling the request of a customer gladly (Tsaur and Lin, 2004: 472; Tsaur et al., 2014: 131).

Extra-Role Pro-Social Behaviour: These behaviors can also refer to service-oriented organizational citizenship behavior in an organization (Tsaur et al., 2014: 131). In contrast with defined role behaviors, these behaviors are social behaviors not included in formal behaviors (Özdevecioğlu, 2009: 49; Tsaur and Lin, 2004: 172). Service behaviors beyond role description can be considered as giving some gifts to the costumers, giving an extra blanket or paying extra attention to fulfill the requests of the costumers for a hotel business (King and Wan, 2010).

2.4. The Effect of Role Conflict and Role Ambiguity on Customer-Oriented Pro-Social Service Behaviors

Classical organization theories and role theories are involved in role ambiguity (Rizzo et al., 1970) and role conflict (Jain and Cooper, 2012). In the classical organization theories; it is stated that the employees, who work in formal organizational structures, have job descriptions and specific responsibilities. These show the necessities of the role in a sense (Rizzo et al., 1970). According to Role Theory, the individuals act in accordance with their role descriptions. In case of a role conflict, there are some conflicts caused by different and uncompleted two roles. This situation causes stress in individuals. The role conflict, which is an organizational-stress based factor, creates negative effects on the role behaviors of individuals, who normally perform beyond expectations. However, the role conflict and assuming additional roles may cause individuals to experience time pressure or some problems due to the feeling of not being strong enough. Thus, role conflict and experiencing stress-related problems may prevent employees to perform behaviors beyond their job descriptions (Jain and Cooper, 2012:157).

Role conflict and role ambiguity are among the most effective factors that may cause setbacks on professional and organizational levels of the employees as well as their psychological and behavioral levels. Role conflict and role ambiguity are two important factors as source of stress in an organization that lead individuals to be psychologically affected in a negative way and evaluating their past and current statutes in the workplace (Bettencourt and Brown, 2003: 396). Jackson and Schuler (1985) consider role conflict and role ambiguity as two factors that cause negative outputs in an organization. Although the existence of role conflict and role ambiguity increases the number of negative outputs in a workplace, in the absence of these two factors, employees perform positive behaviors. Role conflict and role ambiguity may affect employee's behaviors. If employees stress increase, it makes them more difficult to function effectively in the

workplace. This mean that stressful working conditions and workplaces affect work attitudes and performances, which are likely to be deteriorated (Hing and Nusge, 2012: 147).

The existence of complications and uncertainties in a workplace environment fully affect the emotions of employees. Customer-oriented pro-social service behaviors are also affected by emotions and knowledge levels of the employees. In addition, it can be said that personal factors also have some effects on customer-oriented pro-social service behaviors (Lee, 1995: 198). Lui, Perrewe, Hochwarter and Kachmar (2004) point out the sources of stress in a workplace as source of negative affectivity of individuals. Similarly, Van De Vliert and Van Yperen (1996) imply that stress in a workplace has direct effects on negative affectivity. On the other hand, having positive emotions also positively affect customer-oriented pro-social service behaviors (Kelly and Hoffman, 1997). Thus, it can be claim that the presence of positive mood (Kelly and Hoffman, 1997) and the absence of work-based stress sources in a workplace (Lui et al, 2004) are considerably effective on the formation of customer-oriented pro-social service behaviors. In this context, it is expected that role conflict and role ambiguity, considered as source of work-based stress, to be effective on customer-oriented pro-social service behaviors. In this line, the hypotheses are developed given at below:

H₁: Role ambiguity effects in-role behaviour negatively.

H₂: Role ambiguity effects extra role behaviour negatively.

H₃: Role conflicts effects in-role behaviour negatively.

H₄: Role conflicts effects extra role behaviour negatively.

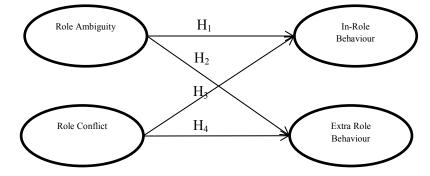


Figure 1: Research Model

3. RESEARCH METHOD

3.1.Sample and Procedures

The population of the research composed of the five star hotel employees in Istanbul and Muğla. The data get from different hotel department staff, who have been working in six different private hotels which are determined via convenient sampling method. However, in this study questionnaire survey method is used for data collection. Questionnaire form contains two different measurement related to research variables. From the 300 questionnaires that have been sent out, 220 have been returned, representing response rate of 73.3%. After elimination of cases

having incomplete data and extreme values 200 questionnaires have been accepted as valid and included in the evaluations.

3.2.Measures

Measures used in the questionnaire forms are adapted from the previous studies in the literature. All items were scored on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Confirmatory factor analysis was conducted by LISREL 8.80 for all scales. Goodness of fit indexes is presented in the scale results. All the fit indexes have acceptable value (Schermelleh-Engel, Moosbrugger and Müller, 2003: 52; Meydan and Şeşen, 2011: 35). For the reliability of the study Cronbach Alfa values were evaluated.

Role Conflict and Role Ambiguity Scale: Role conflict and role ambiguity scale were measured using two separate scales originally developed by Rizzo et al. (1970). The scale consisted of 14 items. Six items consist of role ambiguity scale and 8 items for role conflict scale. Adaptation of the scale to the Turkish language and culture was carried out by Kara (2010). Confirmatory factor analysis was used for the scale to check fit index. As a result 3 items were dropped out because of insufficient factor loading.

Pro-Social Behavior Scale: In the study pro-social behaviour were measured 10 items to measure in-role and extra role behaviour from Bettencourt and Brown (1997). The 5 items were role-prescribed behaviour and 5 items for extra role behaviour. Adaptation of the scale to the Turkish language and culture was carried out by Kanten (2006). Confirmatory factor analysis was used for the scale to check fit index. Result of confirmatory factor analysis 1 item was dropped out. An item scale for in-role behaviour "Performs all those tasks for customers that are required of him/her." An item scale for extra-role "Voluntarily assists customers even if it means going beyond job requirements".

Both of two scale were subjected to confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), and goodness of fit indexes are presented at Table 1.

Variables	χ²	df.	$\frac{\chi^2/\mathrm{df}}{\leq 5}$	GFI ≥ .85	IFI ≥.90	CFI ≥.90	RMS EA ≤ 0.08
Role Conflict/Role Ambiguity	52.03	39	1.33	0.90	0.94	0.94	0.041
Prosocial Behaviors	56.24	25	2.25	0.94	0.97	0.97	0.079

Table 1. Goodness of fit indexes of the scales

3.3. Data Analysis

SPSS for Windows 20.0 and Lisrel 8.80 programs were used to analyze the obtained data. In the first step, confirmatory factor analysis has been conducted all scales. Then, respondent profile and descriptive statistics such as means, standard deviations and pearson correlation analysis of the study variables have been examined. Finally, structural equation modelling (SEM)

has been used to conduct a test of the variables in the hypothesized model to examine the extent to which it is consistent with the data. However, data were analyzed using the two-step approach that consisted of CFA and SEM (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988). The overall measurement quality was evaluated through CFA.

4. Research Findings

4.1.Respondent Profile

Descriptive statistics were preformed to profile the respondents' demographic and job-related responses. The sample also consisted of 113 (57.7 %) male and 83 (42.3%) female respondents. In terms of educational achievement, half of the respondent had secondary and high school education. The sample included 19 (%9.5) respondents who had two-year college degrees. Of the respondent 27 (%13.5) had four year college degrees. 8 respondents had a master and doctorate degrees. Rest of respondent had primary school education level. The sample also consisted of 44 (%22) food and beverage department, 27 (%13.5) front office department, 51 (%25.5) housekeeping department, 41 (%20.5) cuisine department and rest of them human resource, security, accounting etc. department employees. Years of service among employees are 65.5% less than 5 years and rest of them upper than 5 years in the hotel establishments.

4.2.Descriptive Analysis

Correlations, standard deviations and means were computed, related with role conflict, role ambiguity and prosocial behaviors. According to Table 2, it can be said that employees' perception of role ambiguity are relatively lower than their perception of role conflict levels. However it can be interpreted that employees have a tendency to exhibiting prosocial behaviors. In addition to this, it is possible to see that hotel employees willingness to show an in role behaviors more than extra-role behaviors. Correlation analysis results revealed that role ambiguity negatively related with employees (r=.-214, p<0.01) in-role behaviors and (r=.-258, p<0.01) extra-role behaviors. In addition to these findings, role conflict has no relationships with employees' in-role and extra-role behaviors.

Table 2. Means, standard deviations and correlations of the study variables

Variables	C.Alf a	Mean	S.D.	1	2	3	4
Role Ambiguity	0,730	1,70	0,62	1			
Role Conflict	0,728	3,31	0,85	-,101	1		
In-Role Behaviour	0,797	4,23	0,70	-,214**	-,047	1	
Extra Role Behaviour	0,748	4,11	0,70	-,258**	,059	,644	. 1

4.3.Measurement Results

First, a confirmatory measurement model was tested. For the verification of the research model two step approaches by Anderson and Gerbing (1998) were used. According to this approach, prior to testing the hypothesized structural model, first the research model needs to be tested to reach a sufficient goodness of fit indexes. After obtaining acceptable indexes it can be proceeding with structural model (Yüncü, 2010: 86). The results of the measurement model are; χ^2 :233.05; df: 159; χ^2 / df; 1.46; RMSEA: 0.048; GFI: 0.90; IFI: 0.96; CFI: 0.96; NNFI: 0.98. These values indicate that measurement model has been acceptable (Schermelleh-Engel et al., 2003: 52; Meydan and Şeşen, 2011: 37).

4.4. Structural Equation Model

After the correlation analyses and measurement model, the study applied a structural equation model to verify hypotheses for the causal relationships between variables in the research model. The results of the structural model are; χ^2 : 333.01; df: 162; χ^2 /df: 2.05; RMSEA: 0.073; GFI: 0.86; IFI: 0.90; CFI: 0.90. These results indicate that structural model has been acceptable. As can be seen the parameters and overall structural equation model in Figure 2.

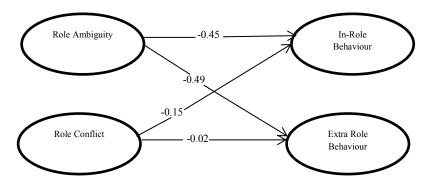


Figure 2. Structural model and path coefficient

According to the results of structural equation model, the path parameter and significance levels show that role ambiguity has a significant negative effect on employees in-role behaviors (γ =-0.45; t-value=-3.95) so H₁ hypothesis was supported. In addition to this, role ambiguity has a significant negative effect on employees extra role behaviors (γ =-0.49; t-value=-3.37), thus H₂ hypothesis was supported. However, role conflict has no significant effects (γ =-0.15; t-value=-1.60) on employees in-role behaviors and (γ =-0.02; t-value=-0.27) extra-role behaviors. Therefore, H₃ and H₄ hypothesis were not supported. Accordingly, it can be said that perception of role ambiguity in hotels effects employees' in-role behaviors toward to their work roles and extra-role behaviors to their organizations and colleagues. On the other hand, it is possible to express that employees' perception of role ambiguity have more affect in-role behavior in organization than the extra-role behaviors.

5. Conclusion

In the study, the effects of role conflict and role ambiguity, which are referred to sources of strees in the organizations, on customer-oriented pro-social service behaviors are investigated. This study is conducted on low-level workers of five star hotels in Istanbul and Mugla. The busy and stressful structure of the hotels causes many behaviors as well as both positive and negative organizational behaviors. The taken roles and works done in an organizational process by the individuals are the determinant factors that affect their behaviors in their lives. Therefore, it is expected that role conflict and role ambiguity can be considered as source of work-based stress. Long working hours, working on multiple tasks and taking orders from different managers cause uncertainties at the hotel managements. This shows that the work in the hotels is very stressful (Kusluvan and Kusluvan, 2000). However, it can be expressed that the stress, caused by organizational ambiguity, is one of the barriers for additional role behaviors beyond expectations (Jain and Cooper, 2012). The results of this study show that role ambiguity has negative effects on behaviors within role description and beyond the description.

In the hotel managements, some problems such as ambiguities of the roles and especially unsettled organizational practices, which are encountered frequently, increase the uncertainties in the organizational processes. Increases in role ambiguities cause individuals to experience stress in the organizations. In such a case, the individual will continue to work, but he/she will not spend any effort in order to deliver an outstanding performance. However, customer-oriented pro-social organizational behaviors require spending extra effort in organizational processes. Besides, it is not expected pro-social behaviors to be performed in organizations, in which there are role conflicts and role ambiguities, beyond the role description.

Contrary to role ambiguity, no negative effect is detected between role conflict of the employees and customer-oriented pro-social organizational behaviors. However, according to a study conducted by MacKenzie, Podsakoff and Ahearne (1998) focusing on sales staff, it is concluded that role conflict negatively affects the performance within job description. However the findings of this study are not consistent with the findings of the study conducted by MacKenzie et al. (1998). In this study, the emergence of such a result may be caused by that the employees of the hotels included in this research are not affected by role conflict in terms of behaviors within job description or beyond job description. Despite experiencing role conflicts in the hotel managements, the behaviors of the employees within job description or beyond job description are not affected, which shows that these employees find solutions on their own when they experience problems. In another word, the employees of hotel managements act solution-oriented when they face problems or multiple role expectations.

Managerial Implications

We have two managerial implications related to the managers within the results of this study. First, the role conflict caused by appointing two or multiple incompatible roles to an individual does not affect the customer-oriented pro-social organizational behaviors; which shows that the intrinsic motivation of the employees is high. Furthermore, it is important to show that the employees of hotel managements act solution-oriented when they face problems. Thus, the guidance of the managers or providing conditions that motivates employees will positively help to eliminate some problems to be occurred such as role conflict and role ambiguity at the hotels. Role ambiguity is experienced when individuals do not clearly know the roles of their position. The managers need to get assistance from human resources and give importance to their practices

in order to prevent problems such as role conflict and role ambiguity. In addition, creating job description forms will help to eliminate role ambiguities at the hotel managements.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

The study has some limitations. First of all, the customer-oriented pro-social organizational behaviors are evaluated in the scope of two components. The "cooperation" concept of customer-oriented pro-social organizational behaviors is not included in the study. The secondly limitation is related to the use of a convenience sample of hospitality employees and on Turkey. It should be cautioned here that other research studies might produce different results if done in a different industry or region. Third, all variables were measured using self-report data, which results in common method variance (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee and Podsakoff, 2003). In future studies, the data must be obtained from multiple resources to eliminate such problems. Evaluating individuals by their colleagues or managers to measure their pro-social behaviors would be effective to solve such problems.

A fourth limitation is use of a semi-homogenous sample and that could contribute to a possible results bias, since all respondents work for a five star hotels. To counter that and enhance generalizability of findings, future research should have a heterogeneous population sample that comprise of employees of various hotels' levels (as measured by different stars).

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