The Effects of Perceived Co-Worker Involvement and Supervisor Support on Service Provider Role Stress, Performance and Job Satisfaction

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Barry J. Babin and James S. Boles, "The Effects of Perceived Co-Worker Involvement and Supervisor Support on Service Provider Role Stress, Performance and Job Satisfaction," *Journal of Retailing* 72 (Spring, 1996), 57-76. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0022-4359(96)90005-6

Abstract:

Clearly, retail employees affect retail performance. Yet, organizational theory shows disproportionately little interest in retail employees. This research addresses key aspects of a retail employee's work environment, or 'climate,' and how these perceptions influence work-related outcomes. Specifically, a causal modelling approach tests relationships among front-line service providers. Results suggest that employee perceptions of co-worker involvement and supervisory support can reduce stress and increase job satisfaction. Other results indicate a positive relationship between role conflict and job performance, a positive relationship between job performance and job satisfaction, and that job performance mediates effects of role stress on satisfaction.

Keywords: retail performance | supervisors | role stress | job satisfaction

Article:

No expression illustrates the important role played by retail service providers better than the adage, "nothing of value happens until someone sells something." Yet, effects associated with key organizational and control variables among retail service providers remain understudied (Bush, Bush, Ortinau and Hair, 1990; Lusch and Jaworski, 1991). Retailers trying to influence employee attitudes and behavior by manipulating work settings must consider the conflict and ambiguity resulting from front-line service providers' continual interface with both customers and superiors. Like other boundary spanners, retail service providers are likely candidates for significant stress (Dubinsky and Skinner, 1984; Singh, Goolsby and Rhoads, 1994).

Retail food service providers have been singled out specifically as experiencing high levels of stress (Stern, 1993). Their job requires accurate performance during intense work periods while resolving the often conflicting expectations of managers and customers. Additionally, restaurant service providers commonly receive relatively little formal training in performing their job duties creating increased uncertainty regarding their work role. Thus, the restaurant environment creates a significantly stressful work climate.

The research described here addresses the importance of a supportive work environment in affecting subsequent employee work-related attitudes and perceptions. This paper reports empirical results testing a theoretical model representing relationships between work environment perceptions and important job outcomes. Specifically, perceptions concerning the general level of work involvement and supervisory support, and the ensuing role conflict (RC) and role ambiguity (RA), are investigated with respect to their interrelations and their effects on employee performance and job satisfaction.

I. CONCEPTUAL DEVELOPMENT

The Retail Work Environment

The retail setting is particularly appropriate for examining employee attitudes and job outcomes. Retail service providers work in a setting where both internal (i.e., employee/employer; employee/employee) and external (employee/customer) interfaces are experienced simultaneously. Thus, from an organizational behavior standpoint, retail workers are similar to workers in other "boundary spanning" occupations.

Work environment perceptions fall under the realm of emotional cognitions given their essential nature in appraising whether or not a workplace is beneficial or detrimental to one's personal well-being (Lazarus, 1984; James and James, 1989). Such variables are sometimes labeled psychological or organizational "climate" variables among industrial/organizational psychologists and are defined as "meaningful interpretations of a work environment by the people in it . . . [that] are somewhat unique to different individuals" (Kopelman, Brief and Cuzzo, 1990, p. 290). Although different authors have reported varying dimensionalities to this space, four dimensions appear relatively pervasive (James and Sells, 1981; Billings and Moos, 1982). These interrelated dimensions center around: (1) the intrinsic motivation exhibited by employees; (2) leadership facilitation and support; (3) Workgroup friendliness and warmth; and (4) role stress. Employees inherently scan their environments along these dimensions in assessing their own work-related well-being.

A supportive work environment is characterized by employee perceptions that co-workers are highly involved in their work and that supervisors support and facilitate employees' work efforts (Moos, 198 1). Supportive work environments are associated generally with improved work-place attitudes and more productive behaviors (Day and Bedeian, 1991). Specifically, research indicates that a supportive workplace reduces role stress and its negative effects (Schaubroeck, Cotton and Jennings, 1988). This study operationalizes supportive retail work environments as characterized by employee perceptions along the interrelated dimensions of work involvement, supervisory support, and two personal role stress dimension–RC and RA. Each construct and its role in influencing performance and satisfaction is discussed below.

Work Involvement

Work involvement, as used here, refers to employee perceptions of the concern and dedication coworkers show for their job (Billings and Moos, 1982). Generally, a workplace appraised as consisting of motivated employees, willing to do more 'than just put in their time,' is apt to be

interpreted as beneficial (James, James and Ashe, 1990). In a retail setting, employees who perceive other workers as doing an inadequate or lackluster job may well interpret this as a threat since the business' well-being, and thus their own, depends upon the service quality they deliver.

Links between work involvement perceptions and role stress are expected. An intrinsically motivated (i.e., involved) workforce exhibits high job knowledge both with respect to performance expectations and behavior (Weitz, Sujan and Sujan, 1986), leading to reduced role stress. An employee perceiving coworkers as lacking adequate motivation and knowledge may experience RC due to the variance in the performance of duties. Also, an environment where employees understand expectations, responsibilities, and objectives is less ambiguous than one where workers lack the motivation to acquire or act upon this knowledge.

> H1: *Employee perceptions of work involvement are related negatively to: (a) role conflict and (b) role ambiguity.*

Closely related variables have shown similar effects. From a marketing control perspective, self-control, which assesses one's own intrinsic motivation rather than perceptions of coworkers, has been posited to reduce role stress (Jaworski, 1988; Lusch and Jaworski, 1991). In a retail setting, work values, operationalized as the perceived personal importance of one's work, has been associated with reduced RA (Darden, Hampton and Howell, 1989).

Research in non-marketing areas, such as public employees and factory workers, also suggests a direct positive relationship between supportive components of the work environment and job satisfaction (Kirmeyer and Lin, 1987). Even among mundane occupations such as mop making, a dedicated workforce that concentrates on working to the best of their abilities shows high job satisfaction compared to noninvolved workers in similar occupations (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). A potential rationale may be based upon the affective nature of job satisfaction. Since perceptions of involved coworkers are interpreted as beneficial, these emotional cognitions will produce congruent reactions in the more emotional satisfaction response. Simply put, environmental appraisals are the basis for emotional responses (Lazarus, 1984). Some have even argued that general perceptions of organizational or personal work-related well-being cannot be distinguished empirically from job satisfaction itself (James and James, 1989).

> H2: *Employee perceptions of work involvement are related directly and positively to job satisfaction.*

Supervisor Support

Supervisor support is the degree to which employees perceive that supervisors offer employees support, encouragement and concern (Burke, Borucki and Hurley, 1992). The degree of supervisor support may affect employees' performance, however, the effect may be mediated by role stress. For example, an important way in which supervisors facilitate employee performance is by providing key resources (e.g., equipment and training) Guzzo and Gannett (1988). A workforce that is perceived as lacking facilitation in this manner is indicative of generally high RC (Rizzo, House and Lirtzman, 1970). That is, even if workers know what to do, they may not be able to execute tasks because supervisors have not provided material support. Further, if a

service provider perceives supervisors as generally over-critical, he/she may be unwilling to risk some unconventional solution aimed at meeting customer desires, increasing the potential for RC (Michaels, Cron, Dubinsky and Joachimsthaler, 1988). Likewise, nonsupportive supervisors may also fail to communicate well with subordinates (Burke, Borucki and Hurley, 1992). If an employee perceives that important information concerning performance expectations, methods for fulfilling these expectations, and other day to day events relating to performance (menu changes, specials, etc.) is not distributed widely, RA becomes likely (Rizzo et al,, 1970).

> H3: *Employee perceptions of supervisoryy support are related negatively to: (a) role conflict and (b) role ambiguity.*

Although little marketing research addresses supervisory support in a retail service provider setting, comparable variables have been examined in other settings. Previous research suggests that supervisor characteristics such as consideration and feedback can reduce role stress (Dubinsky and Skinner, 1984). Consistent with this finding, the extent to which supervisors rely on output controls, such as emphasizing performance standards, or otherwise having a "results orientation," has been related negatively to role stress among' retail store managers (Lusch and Jaworski, 1991). In general, closeness of supervision reduces role stress although the results are sometimes mixed (see Rubinsky, Yammarino and Jolson, 1994 for a review).

Perceptions of a supportive management team, like perceptions of involved co-workers, also are likely to influence job satisfaction directly (Kirmeyer and Lin, 1987). If an employee perceives that supervisors show concern for workers and provide socioemotional support in general, this will lead to a positive appraisal of the environment and increase job satisfaction directly (Kopelman et al., 1990). Supervisors that are perceived as generally supportive of the workforce help increase job satisfaction among employees.

> H4: *Employee perceptions of supervisory support are* related *directly and positively to job satisfaction.*

Role Stress

Employees' job-related role stress continues to be a topic of concern across multiple disciplines. Job-related role stress is composed of two major related components: RC and RA (Jackson and Schuler, 1985). Both RC and RA are particularly problematic among boundary spanning occupations (Michaels et al., 1987). Professional salespeople, for instance, express feelings of RC and RA quite frequently (Behrman and Perreault, 1984). One reason for this may be that salespeople, as boundary spanners, are faced with conforming to customers' and supervisors' conflicting demands, as well as potentially ambiguous guidance from coworkers or management concerning resolution of differing expectations. This scenario occurs often in retailing jobs where customer interfaces are common. Unfortunately, research on possible antecedents of role stress has been labeled insufficient (Jackson and Schuler, 1985; Singh, 1993).

Many studies address the relationship between role stress and job performance (see Brown and Peterson, 1994, for a review). RA can result from a service provider either lacking information concerning appropriate actions in a given situation or not understanding management

expectations. Findings generally indicate a negative relationship between RA and job performance (Dubinsky and Hartley, 1986). Explanations for this negative relationship with performance include a physiological rationale (Fried, Rowland and Ferris, 1984) and the possibility that ambiguity reduces effort, thus, reducing performance (Brown and Peterson, 1994).

H5: *Role ambiguity relates negatively to* job performance.

The direction of the relationship between RC and performance is less clear. Some research indicates a negative link between RC and performance (Schuler, 1977) and some reports a positive RC/performance relationship (Behrman and Perreault, 1984). Various confronting and coping explanations have been offered to explain this relationship. For example, some salespeople may thrive on conflict and actually perform better when confronted with conflict (Dubinsky and Hartley, 1986). In other instances, an outside salesperson may cope with RC by reducing calls-affecting performance deleteriously (Brown and Peterson, 1994).

In a retail service providing setting, 'escape' from customers who may contribute to RC is not as easy. Given little escape opportunity, RC may be resolved by performing consistent with customer requests rather than some perceived conflicting demand. Such behavior would be consistent with the helping literature which suggests that an inability to escape increases helping behavior compared to situations where escape is easy, even if helping is inconsistent with some previous belief or demand (Fultz, Batson, Fortenbach, Mcarthy and Vamey, 1986). A tendency to side with the customer may result in improved performance as indicated by mechanisms such as sales commissions, tips, and customer evaluations.

H6: *Role conflict relates positively to job performance.*

A direct relationship between performance and job satisfaction is also posited. Relevant empirical evidence provides some support for this view. For example, Darden et al. (1989) found that job performance was a direct antecedent of job satisfaction. Other studies also support a performance → satisfaction causal ordering, with performance expected to have a moderate, positive effect on satisfaction (Iaffaldano and Muchinsky, 1985; Michaels et al., 1987).

H7: *Job performance* is *positively related to job satisfaction.*

II. RESEARCH METHODS

Sample

The sample consists of commissioned service employees from full-service restaurants located in a major southern metropolitan area. The food-service industry is a large and growing segment of the retailing sector. Since few studies have examined antecedents and consequences of role stress among employees in non-professional positions, a restaurant setting offers a new context to test the generalizability of existing evidence concerning this matter.

Surveys were distributed at the workplace and returned in postage-paid envelopes. Usable surveys were returned by sixty-nine percent of potential respondents (261 out of 380). Ninety-nine percent were high school graduates and 80 percent had some college education (many were currently students), with 38 percent holding degrees. While the nature of the sample somewhat inhibits generalizability, the sample profile appears similar to that of the retail industry in general (i.e., educational levels, tenure, number of part-time employees, etc.).

Measures

The major constructs included in the survey were: work involvement, supervisor support, role stress--operationalized as RC and RA, performance, and job satisfaction. Scales were prescreened for appropriateness to this particular setting and preliminary scale analyses led to the preclusion of several items from further analyses (Brown and Peterson, 1994; Gerbing and Anderson, 1988). The Appendix contains a description of items used in testing the model. Responses were assessed using a five point Likert format.

Items from subscales forming the Work Environment Scale (WES) were used to assess work involvement and supervisory support (Moos, 198 1). The statements assess the general level of job involvement exhibited by co-workers (work involvement) and the degree to which supervisors support and show concern for employees. These scales have displayed acceptable measurement characteristics across a wide range of employment settings (Billings and Moos, 1982; Kirmeyer and Lin, 1987). Role stress, operationalized as separate but related RC and RA constructs, was assessed using items from Rizzo et al's (1970) measure. This scale has seen previous use in research involving retail positions (Dubinsky and Skinner, 1984).

Nine items from Brayfield and Rothe's (195 1) measure assessed job satisfaction. This scale has demonstrated acceptable characteristics across a wide variety of employee domains (Moorman, 1989). Example items include "I feel fairly well-satisfied with my job" and "I definitely dislike my work" (reverse scored).

Seven self-report items form the performance measure. These items focus on the respondent's view of their performance relative to their co-workers. Comparisons of one's own work quality against others' work provide an important standard for assessing performance (Bandura, 1986). Similar self-report measures have been used in other marketing studies (Sujan, Weitz and Kumar, 1994). Since the respondents worked at several different firms, self-report measures may be more valid than some objective assessments owing to differences among employers (e.g., average bill amount, etc.). Items addressed behavioral lob aspects (e.g., "I know more about the menu items...") as well as overall performance assessments (e.g., "I am good at my job").

In all, 34 items were used in further analyses. Table 1 shows individual item correlations. All scales were valenced positively so that high scores reflect high levels of a construct.

Table 1. Individual Inter-Item Correlations

	WI1	**WI2**	**WI3**	**WI4**	**WI5**	**S1**	**S2**	**S3**	**S4**	**S5**	**RC1**	**RC2**	**RC3**	**RC4**	**RA1**	**RA2**	**RA3**	**RA4**
WI1	1.00																	
WI2	0.49	1.00																
WI3	–0.35	–0.27	1.00															
WI4	–0.41	–0.32	0.46	1.00														
WI5	–0.35	–0.37	0.35	0.40	1.00													
SS1	–0.24	–0.12	0.25	0.22	0.17	1.00												
SS2	0.28	0.21	–0.21	–0.21	–0.29	–0.42	1.00											
SS3	–0.18	–0.11	0.24	0.15	0.19	0.47	–0.30	1.00										
SS4	–0.25	–0.17	0.24	0.23	0.23	0.41	–0.30	0.33	1.00									
SS5	0.30	0.25	–0.27	–0.23	–0.21	–0.36	0.31	–0.37	–0.35	1.00								
RC1	–0.27	–0.18	0.20	0.18	0.22	0.29	–0.26	0.28	0.26	–0.25	1.00							
RC2	–0.22	–0.16	0.12	0.16	0.15	0.17	–0.29	0.24	0.22	–0.23	0.52	1.00						
RC3	–0.32	–0.21	0.24	0.29	0.28	0.25	–0.34	0.27	0.27	–0.33	0.48	0.48	1.00					
RC4	–0.29	–0.17	0.17	0.20	0.07	0.22	–0.21	0.26	0.07	–0.21	0.42	0.31	0.45	1.00				
RA1	0.10	0.16	–0.16	–0.15	–0.12	–0.20	0.26	–0.12	–0.22	0.34	–0.20	–0.18	–0.24	–0.19	1.00			
RA2	0.15	0.13	–0.09	–0.11	–0.12	–0.16	0.20	–0.13	–0.21	0.22	–0.26	–0.24	–0.21	–0.05	0.38	1.00		
RA3	0.02	0.06	–0.16	–0.11	–0.10	–0.02	0.09	–0.05	–0.20	0.18	–0.06	–0.09	–0.23	–0.08	0.51	0.31	1.00	
RA4	0.13	0.31	–0.22	–0.20	–0.19	–0.12	0.23	–0.09	–0.19	0.29	–0.19	–0.27	–0.32	–0.21	0.48	0.33	0.46	1.00
JS1	–0.32	–0.24	0.33	0.28	0.29	0.35	–0.26	0.24	0.39	–0.37	0.37	0.26	0.40	0.24	–0.31	–0.27	–0.24	–0.26
JS2	–0.25	–0.22	0.23	0.18	0.25	0.28	–0.19	0.25	0.24	–0.32	0.26	0.16	0.25	0.17	–0.24	–0.14	–0.18	–0.17
JS3	0.23	0.18	–0.22	–0.20	–0.23	–0.29	0.16	–0.18	–0.25	0.30	–0.21	–0.09	–0.16	–0.12	0.26	0.23	0.17	0.24
JS4	–0.31	–0.16	0.35	0.33	0.26	0.32	–0.26	0.31	0.22	–0.32	0.31	0.31	0.30	0.20	–0.24	–0.22	–0.16	–0.21
JS5	–0.29	–0.20	0.33	0.30	0.32	0.30	–0.23	0.23	0.30	–0.33	0.24	0.16	0.26	0.16	–0.24	–0.18	0.75	0.58
JS6	0.29	0.24	–0.25	–0.25	–0.33	–0.27	0.23	–0.17	–0.26	0.29	–0.22	–0.16	–0.27	–0.14	0.31	0.26	0.21	0.18
JS7	–0.30	–0.27	0.28	0.21	0.33	0.31	–0.23	0.24	0.28	–0.32	0.24	0.14	0.28	0.14	–0.19	–0.25	–0.19	–0.18
JS8	0.31	0.25	–0.33	–0.28	–0.30	–0.30	0.15	–0.16	–0.26	0.27	–0.25	–0.10	–0.26	–0.17	0.24	0.19	0.19	0.17
JS9	–0.35	–0.29	0.28	0.32	0.34	0.27	–0.28	0.24	0.28	–0.32	0.30	0.28	0.34	0.23	–0.23	–0.27	–0.16	–0.16
P1	–0.05	–0.01	–0.06	0.01	0.06	–0.02	–0.05	0.14	0.05	–0.08	0.04	0.04	0.04	0.04	0.10	0.18	0.12	0.04
P2	–0.09	–0.09	0.06	0.00	0.10	0.07	–0.02	0.14	–0.03	–0.07	0.06	0.17	0.11	0.16	0.09	0.12	0.03	0.01
P3	–0.05	–0.07	0.05	0.01	0.11	–0.03	–0.12	0.11	0.04	–0.07	0.03	0.11	0.09	0.16	0.06	0.23	0.09	0.07
P4	–0.09	–0.04	0.04	0.00	0.04	–0.07	0.03	0.03	0.01	–0.09	–0.05	0.00	–0.02	0.03	0.10	0.18	0.04	–0.07
P5	–0.05	0.00	–0.01	0.04	0.12	0.03	–0.01	0.17	0.04	–0.11	0.08	0.16	0.07	0.13	0.04	0.17	0.05	–0.01
P6	–0.10	–0.05	–0.01	–0.02	–0.01	0.05	–0.01	0.11	0.12	–0.10	0.05	0.08	0.07	0.09	0.02	0.09	0.11	0.01
P7	–0.06	–0.06	0.06	–0.01	0.06	–0.02	0.03	0.13	0.03	–0.14	–0.02	0.10	0.09	0.09	0.07	0.19	0.07	0.03
Means	3.75	3.78	3.00	2.90	2.20	2.44	3.48	3.25	2.29	3.09	3.19	3.12	2.53	3.36	4.15	3.80	4.44	3.99
Std.	0.88	0.82	0.78	0.90	0.84	0.94	1.03	0.98	0.86	1.01	1.24	1.09	1.12	1.18	1.02	1.06	0.82	0.94

Note: All items reversed scored prior to further analyses so that higher scores reflected higher amounts of each construct.

Table 1. Individual Inter-Item Correlations (continued)

	JS1	JS2	JS3	JS4	JS5	JS6	JS7	JS8	JS9	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8
WI1																	
WI2																	
WI3																	
WI4																	
WI5																	
SS1																	
SS2																	
SS3																	
SS4																	
SS5																	
RC1																	
RC2																	
RC3																	
RC4																	
RA1																	
RA2																	
RA3																	
RA4																	
JS1	1.00																
JS2	0.60	1.00															
JS3	–0.60	–0.56	1.00														
JS4	0.65	0.47	–0.50	1.00													
JS5	0.75	0.58	–0.62	0.60	1.00												
JS6	–0.56	–0.47	0.54	–0.55	–0.61	1.00											
JS7	0.65	0.64	–0.53	0.51	0.69	–0.58	1.00										
JS8	–0.66	–0.53	062	–0.60	–0.67	0.66	–0.68	1.00									
JS9	0.63	0.47	–0.43	0.53	0.63	–0.52	0.58	–0.49	1.00								
P1	–0.10	–0.04	0.00	–0.09	–0.15	0.16	–0.10	0.16	–0.12	1.00							
P2	0.00	0.06	0.01	–0.01	–0.03	0.12	–0.02	0.03	–0.03	0.43	1.00						
P3	–0.03	0.03	–0.01	–0.11	–0.07	0.10	–0.10	0.13	–0.03	0.59	0.60	1.00					
P4	–0.13	–0.11	0.06	–0.15	–0.12	0.21	–0.15	0.11	–0.16	0.42	0.30	0.39	1.00				
P5	–0.05	–0.02	–0.05	–0.04	–0.05	0.07	–0.06	0.04	–0.03	0.42	0.49	0.49	0.48	1.00			
P6	–0.05	0.00	–0.02	–0.06	–0.04	0.10	–0.06	0.08	–0.05	0.41	0.32	0.40	0.47	0.45	1.00		
P7	–0.06	–0.02	0.03	–0.03	–0.05	0.19	–0.07	0.05	–0.03	0.42	0.59	0.51	0.44	0.52	0.46	1.00	
Means	2.38	2.66	3.34	2.52	2.04	3.73	2.46	3.42	1.85	4.25	4.11	4.01	3.97	4.37	4.53	3.92	
Std.	1.17	1.23	1.21	1.20	1.20	1.06	1.09	1.05	1.12	0.72	1.00	0.85	0.94	0.69	0.61	0.84	

Table 2. Measurement Parameter Estimates

Indicator	Work Involvement	Supervisor Support	Role Conflict	Role Ambiguity	Job Satisfaction	Job Performance	Item Reliability
WI1	0.68						0.46
WI2	0.58						0.34
WI3*	0.59						0.35
WI4*	0.63						0.40
WI5*	0.61						0.37
SS1*		0.67					0.45
SS2		0.57					0.33
SS3*		0.59					0.35
SS4*		0.58					0.34
SS5		0.62					0.39
RC1			0.71				0.50
RC2			0.65				0.42
RC3			0.75				0.56
RC4			0.57				0.32
RA1*				0.78			0.61
RA2*				0.66			0.44
RA3*				0.64			0.41
RA4*				0.62			0.38
JS1*					0.85		0.72
JS2*					0.70		0.49
JS3					0.71		0.50
JS4*					0.72		0.52
JS5*					0.85		0.72
JS6					0.73		0.53
JS7*					0.80		0.64
JS8					0.80		0.64
JS9*					0.71		0.50
P1						0.68	0.46
P2						0.73	0.53
P3						0.60	0.36
P4						0.72	0.52
P5						0.63	0.40
P6						0.70	0.49
P7						0.73	0.54
Phi Estimates							
WI	1.00						
SS	0.58	1.00					
RC	–0.51	–0.61	1.00				
RA	–0.36	–0.44	0.41	1.00			
JS	0.57	0.58	–0.45	–0.44	1.00		
PR	0.10	0.12	0.14	–0.11	0.16	1.00	
Construct Reliability	0.80	0.75	0.77	0.77	0.93	0.86	
Variance Extracted	0.38	0.37	0.45	0.46	0.59	0.47	
Coefficient Alpha	0.76	0.71	0.80	0.85	0.93	0.88	

Note: * Items reverse scored.

III. RESULTS

Measurement Results

A confirmatory factor model was fit using the 34 items constrained congenerically and representing each construct as described above. Maximum likelihood estimation of the measurement model resulted in a χ^2 residual of 723.3 with 512 degrees of freedom ($p < .001$). The goodness of fit index (GFI) is .861 and the comparative fit index (CFI) is ,940. The x2 to degrees of freedom ratio is 1.41, and the root mean squared residual is .053. All are in line with acceptable standards given the nature of the data.

Table 2 displays loading estimates and overall statistics resulting from this analysis. The loading estimates and construct reliabilities provide evidence of convergent validity (Gerbing and Anderson, 1988; Bagozzi and Yi, 1988). Further, the proportion of variance extracted in each construct exceeds the square of the Q coefficients representing its correlation with other constructs providing evidence of discriminant validity (Fornell and Larcker, 198 1). Finally, subsequent model testing revealed no problems with interpretational confounding as evidenced by the stability of measurement parameters and their standard errors across numerous model structures. These results suggest the appropriateness of the measurement model for drawing theoretical inferences (Anderson and Gerbing, 1992).

Theoretical (Structural Model) Results and Discussion

Figure 1 displays the theoretical model structure corresponding to the hypotheses and also shows individual structural path estimates. The χ^2 residual resulting from estimating this model is 729.5 with 516 degrees of freedom. The CFI is .939, the RMSR is .054, and the parsimony normed fit index (PNFI) is ,754. Further, the χ^2 difference statistic (6.19, df = 4, $p > .25$) between this model and the confirmatory model is insignificant. All are consistent with a relatively good fit.

Direct Effects. Hypotheses one and two suggested that work involvement affects role stress and job satisfaction directly. Consistent with these predictions, the path estimate between work involvement and role conflict is significant and negative (-.24, $p < .05$). However, the path representing **Hlb** is supported only in terms of the direction of the relationship (-.11, $p > .05$). Thus, **Hl** is supported partially. Hypothesis two is supported by a significant and positive relationship (.36, $p < .01$) between work involvement and job satisfaction.

Hypotheses three and four concern outcomes resulting from varying levels of perceived supervisory support. Consistent with H3, the paths predicting both RC (-.49, $p < .01$) and RA (-30, $p < .01$) are significant and negative. Further, the direct relationship between supervisory support and job satisfaction {the path representing H4) is supported (.41, $p < .01$). Thus, increased perceptions of a supportive management team reduce role stress and increase job satisfaction.

Hypotheses five and six predict different outcomes from increased RC and RA. **H5,** predicting decreased performance with increasing RA, is supported by a corresponding path estimate of -

.20 ($p < .05$). The path estimate representing **H6** (.24, $p < .01$), is also consistent with predictions suggesting that as RC increases so does performance.

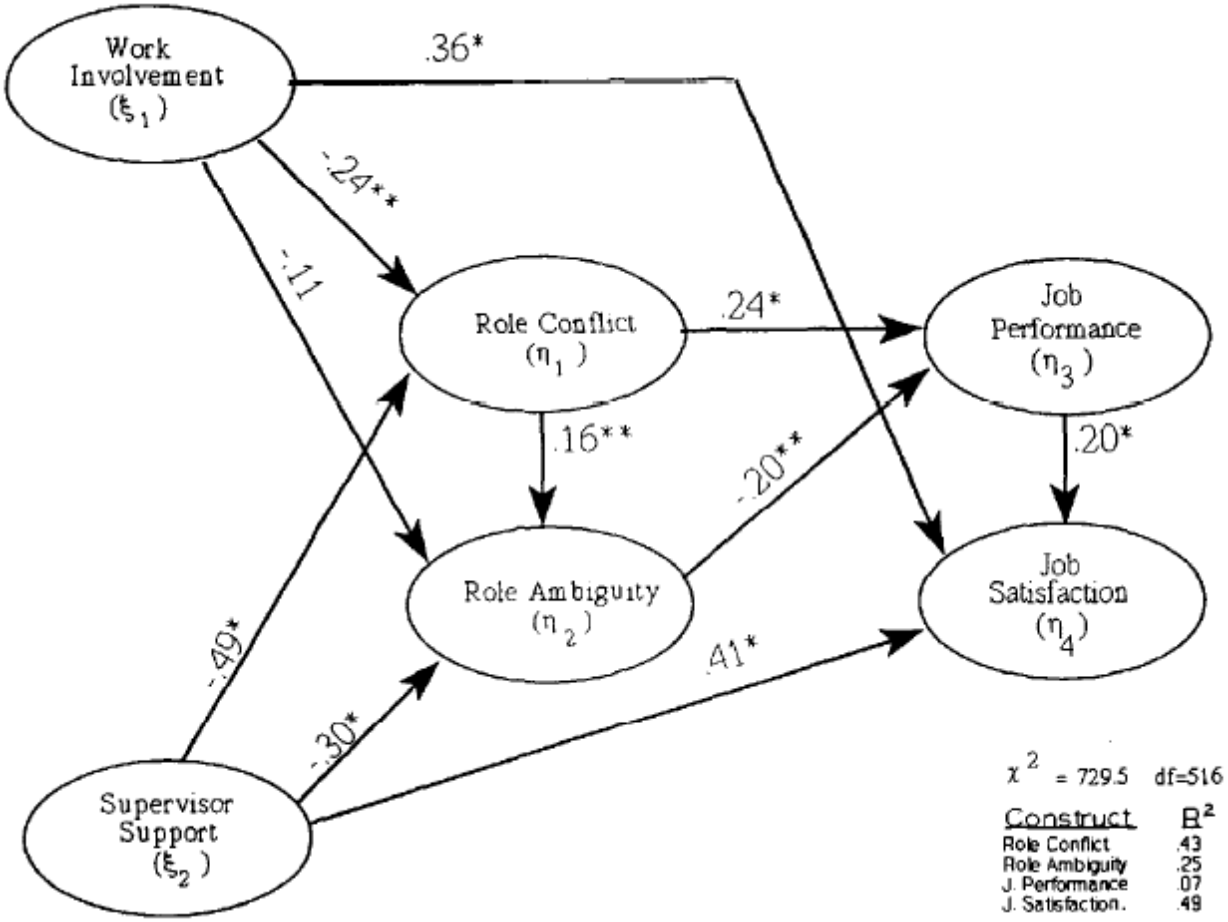

Figure 1. The Effect of Work Environment Perceptions on Job Satisfaction
Note: *p < .01, **p < .05

Other Results. Model estimations produced other significant results. First, the path from RC to RA suggests a significant positive relationship (.16, $p < .05$) consistent with previous studies (Berman and Perreault, 1984). Second, the path from job performance to job satisfaction is significant and positive (.20, $p < .01$) as predicted by H7. Third, several significant indirect effects augment the effects of some work environment perceptions. For example, significant indirect effects exist from both work involvement (IE = .04) and supervisory support (IE = .08) on RA, and both RA and RC affect job satisfaction indirectly (IE = -.04 and .05, respectively). Therefore, the model implies that role stress mediates relationships between the perceived work environment and job performance (Baron and Kenny, 1986). Likewise, job performance serves in a mediating role between role stress and job satisfaction. This finding was tested further by estimating a model including direct effects of RC and RA on satisfaction. The addition of these paths failed to improve fit significantly ($\chi^2_{df=2}$ difference = 4.9, ns).

IV. DISCUSSION

Model results presented here suggest that perceptions of the work environment can affect employee outcomes. Service providers' cognitive appraisals of the work involvement exhibited by coworkers, the general level of support offered by supervisors, and the role stress felt on the job have significant and nontrivial effects on performance and satisfaction. Specific results have potential theoretical and practical implications.

Hypotheses suggesting that increasing the appearance of worker involvement and/or dedication to their work can decrease role stress and increase job satisfaction were supported with one exception. While results indicate that increased perceptions of work involvement reduce RC significantly, corresponding reductions in RA are not significant. The relatively stronger negative effect on RC may be due partially to the more latent nature of RA. That is, performance expectations may be more affected by personal intrinsic motivation rather than on perceptions of others' motivations. In contrast, constant conflict between desires of alternative parties are more visible and may be more common from one service provider to another. Additionally, path analysis suggests that an employee who perceives that other workers are highly involved is likely to be a more satisfied employee. Each of these results points to benefits associated with a workforce where employees appear relatively dedicated in their work efforts.

Hypotheses concerning direct effects of supervisory support were supported in a more convincing fashion. Results suggest that both RC and RA are reduced with increasing perceptions of a supportive and concerned supervisory staff. These findings are consistent with research conducted in other industries (Schaubroeck et al., 1988). Further, the relatively strong and positive supervisory support-job satisfaction relationship is consistent with the climate literature, suggesting that environmental perceptions of supportive management practices influence feelings of personal well-being directly. Thus, retail management may benefit from developing and rewarding supportive and considerate supervisory practices.

Results presented here also suggest different outcomes arising from RC and RA. While increased ambiguity affects performance detrimentally, increased conflict enhances performance (Behrman and Perreault, 1984; Dubinsky and Hartley, 1986). Comparing results across studies suggests that job type (i.e., industry) characteristics not directly assessed here may moderate the relationship between RC and performance. However, a positive RC-performance link is consistent with the nature of conflict to the extent that action is required to produce a positive outcome. Feelings of conflict (being somewhat similar to anger) are more intense than feelings of ambiguity (which is more like disgust) and thus, may be more likely to precipitate, rather than suppress, activity.

In our case, a retail service provider can not easily escape potentially troublesome customers which may actually contribute to a positive RC-performance relationship. If a customer perceived as difficult sits at a waiter's table or approaches a service counter, an employee is left with few options for avoiding that customer compared to their industrial counterparts (Brown and Peterson, 1994). While this may create a situation filled with feelings of conflict, evidence from the helping literature suggest the customer is likely to be treated well nonetheless (Fultz et al., 1986). Though the waiter in this instance may not follow store rules or policies specifically in performing his/her job, higher order goals of the company (i.e., customer satisfaction) may well be addressed and the employee perceive that he/she has performed effectively.

RC's role in mediating the supervisory support-job performance relationship is also intuitively plausible. While increased supervisory support reduces conflict, too much support might diminish an employee's performance creativity since he/she becomes unwilling to breach any management procedures in fulfilling his/her perceived role. Thus, the indirect effect of supervisory support on job performance is negative.

The model also suggests that job performance mediates relationships between role stress and job satisfaction. This may be unexpected given previous research findings suggesting direct relationships. However, the majority of studies investigating the stress-satisfaction relationship have not included work environment perceptions as direct satisfaction antecedents (Dubinsky and Hartley, 1986). If these studies had included the influences of a supportive work environment, the direct effects of RC and RA on satisfaction may have been attenuated. The positive direct effect of performance on satisfaction is consistent with the notion that boundary spanning employees rely on performance feedback, including that given by customers, as an indicator of job-related well-being and thus, as a source of job satisfaction. While appraisals of RC and RA also may affect perceived well-being, their effect on satisfaction is felt only through the impact of performance.

Limitations

The findings should be tempered by several limitations. First, the sample is regional in nature and represents only service providers working in full service restaurants. Thus, it does not allow direct comparisons between line employees and management or between these employees and other types of retailing industries (e.g., department stores, hotels, etc.). Second, no replication using an additional sample is included. Third, the choice of variables could be criticized. Clearly, there are other variables and constructs that could be added to this model. This is a common criticism of organizational research since it would be very improbable that one could test a complete model of satisfaction, performance, organizational commitment or other relevant constructs, However, given the limiting conditions of the survey setting and analytical capabilities, the constructs are representative of important perceived work environment or 'climate' variables and important organizational outcomes.

Future Research

The study is suggestive of further research. Clearly, the limitations suggest adding other constructs and conducting research in multiple settings or industries. Along these same lines, it would be interesting to change the level of analysis from an individual analysis (individual perceptions of the general work environment) to an organizational or industry level of analysis. This approach would tie into research on organizational culture (see Kopelman, 1990) and would require objective indicators of work environments that have not been biased by subjective perceptual filters. Further, given the similarities between the work involvement measure used here and previous studies of work alienation (Michaels et al., 1988), the reciprocal nature of relationships should be examined. While the current study viewed employee perceptions of a dedicated workforce as antecedent to role stress, previous research viewed personal work alienation as a result of stress. How alienated does an employee feel if he/she perceives everyone

else as just "putting in their time?" Thus, the results presented here, along with studies in these and other related areas, may help retailing practitioners and academics understand better how the work environment affects employee performance and satisfaction.

APPENDIX. DESCRIPTION OF SCALE ITEMS USED 1N ANALYSES

Supervisory Support:

SSI Supervisors tend to talk down to employees.
SS2 Supervisors usually give full credit to ideas contributed by employees.
SS3 Supervisors often criticize employees over minor things.
SS4 Supervisors expect far too much from employees.
SS5 Supervisors really stand up for people.

Work Involvement

WI1 People seem to take pride in the organization.
WI2 People put quite a lot of effort into what they do.
WI3 A lot of people here seem to be just putting in their time.
WI4 It's hard to get people to do any extra work.
WI5 Few people ever volunteer.

Self-report Job Performance (Prefaced with, "Relative to other servers here, . .)

Perf1 I average higher sales per check than most.
Perf2 I am in the top 10% of the servers here.
Perf3 I manage my work time better than most.
Perf4 I know more about the menu items.
Perf5 I know what my customers expect.
Perf6 I am good at my job.
Perf7 I get better tips than most of the others.

Role Ambiguity

RAl There are clear, planned goals and objectives for my job.
RA3 I know what my responsibilities are.
RA2 I know exactly what is expected of me.
RA4 The explanation is clear as to what has to be done.

Role Conflict

RC1 I sometimes have to bend a rule or police in order to carry out an assignment.
RC2 I receive incompatible requests from two or more people.
RC3 I do things that are apt to be accepted by one person and not accepted by others.
RC4 I receive an assignment without adequate resources and materials to execute it.

Job Satisfaction

JS1 I consider my job rather unpleasant.
JS2 I am often bored with my job.
JS3 I fell fairly well-satisfied with my present job.
JS4 Most of the time I have to force myself to go to work.

JS5 I definitely dislike my work.
JS6 Most days I am enthusiastic about my work.
JS7 My job is pretty uninteresting.
JS8 I find real enjoyment in my work.
JS9 I am disappointed that I ever took this job.

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