

Interrelationships of Role Conflict, Role Ambiguity, and Work–Family Conflict with Different Facets of Job Satisfaction and the Moderating Effects of Gender

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Abstract:

The effects of role conflict, role ambiguity, and work–family conflict on overall salesperson job satisfaction have been examined in previous studies across work settings. Less attention has been given to the interrelationships between role conflict, role ambiguity, and work–family conflict with various facets of job satisfaction. The moderating role of gender has also received relatively little attention in the sales force management literature than it may warrant. In a study of 129 business-to-business salespeople, it was found that the relationships of work-related role stress and work–family conflict were different for the various facets of job satisfaction. Further, there were significant differences among these relationships between male and female salespeople. Sales management implications of these findings are presented and topics for future research are identified.

Keywords: salespeople | gender | job satisfaction | role stress

Article:

Role stress, as originally theorized by Katz and Kahn (1966), results from an employee’s role conflict and role ambiguity. The existing literature on role stress is extensive and ranges across almost all types of work environments (Fisher and Gitelson 1983; Jackson and Schuler 1985; Johnston et al. 1990). In particular, the area of professional selling has seen an extensive exploration of stresses resulting from work roles and the work-related effects of stress (e.g., Behrman and Perreault 1984; Sager 1994). Over the past 20 years, research has also explored employee outcomes resulting from another type of stress. This additional type of stress occurs as a result of trying to reconcile demands arising from an individual having obligations in both work and family roles.

There is evidence that stress arising from trying to simultaneously resolve the conflicts between the duties of all of these roles can affect an employee's job satisfaction (e.g., Higgins and Duxbury 1992; Kossek and Ozeki 1998). Further, the ambiguity that arises from being uncertain as to how much latitude in behavior a salesperson has in resolving these conflicts can also reduce job satisfaction (Behrman and Perreault 1984; Fisher and Gitelson 1983). Findings have demonstrated that work–family conflict (WFC)—a form of inter-role conflict where the role pressures from work and family domains are mutually incompatible to some degree—negatively affects satisfaction within the family system (Netemeyer, Boles, and McMurrian 1996). In addition, other studies also indicate that WFC and its resultant stress can affect employees' attitudes toward work and their job satisfaction (Good, Sisler, and Gentry 1988; Greenhaus and Beutell 1985).

However, there appear to be limitations within the existing literature examining the interrelationships between role conflict, role ambiguity, WFC, and job satisfaction. Most earlier studies that include all three of these measures of stress use measures of job satisfaction that are global, measuring an employee's overall job satisfaction without considering that there may be multiple facets of employee satisfaction that could be differentially affected by work-related stress or WFC (Behrman and Perreault 1984; Boles, Johnston, and Hair 1997; Sager 1994). These global job satisfaction measures fail to account for the multiple dimensions of satisfaction such as satisfaction with coworkers, satisfaction with pay, satisfaction with supervision, and so on, demonstrated by the scales such as the INDSALES measure (Churchill, Ford, and Walker 1974). Using an overall measure of job satisfaction can result in job satisfaction scores, implying that all employees with similar scores are equally satisfied with all facets of the job. This limitation is particularly true for the more limited literature examining the WFC → job satisfaction relationship.

It appears that previous studies of the relationship between role stress and job satisfaction for salespeople presume similarity of expectations and outcomes across individual personality traits and characteristics. As noted by Schul and Wren (1992), many of these studies may have presumed that salespeople, regardless of gender, react similarly across all facets of job satisfaction. No clear evidence exists to support the assumption of homogeneity of role expectations and job satisfaction across gender. In fact, some existing research suggests that there may be differences between men and women regarding the interrelationships between role conflict, role ambiguity, WFC, and job satisfaction (e.g., Babin and Boles 1998; McNeilly and Goldsmith 1991).

The current study will extend the understanding of three key elements of role stress—WFC, role conflict, and role ambiguity—and their relationships with the multiple facets of job satisfaction. This research will explore if each dimension of job satisfaction is differentially predicted by some or all of the stresses resulting from the salesperson filling multiple roles including: internal employee of the firm, boundary-spanner bridging the gap between her or his firm and customers, and participant in nonwork relationships involving friends and family members (e.g., Boles, Johnston, and Hair 1997; Singh 1998). In addition, the current study will examine gender as a specific individual characteristic that differentially affects reported levels of each of the dimensions of job satisfaction.

To summarize, this study extends the current sales literature in two ways. First, the research examines the effects of WFC and work-related role stress on various facets of job satisfaction. Second, it examines employee gender as a moderator of the relationships of role conflict, role ambiguity, and WFC with various facets of job satisfaction.

LITERATURE

Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction is an important work-related attitude among salespeople for several reasons. First, satisfaction with the job is directly related to organizational commitment (Brown and Peterson 1993). In addition, job satisfaction is either directly (Netemeyer, Johnston, and Burton 1990) or indirectly (Brown and Peterson 1994) related to a salesperson's turnover intentions. Turnover intentions are a good indicator of future turnover (Futrell and Parasuraman 1984).

Although some research has found a link between WFC and job satisfaction (Boles and Babin 1996; Good, Sisler, and Gentry 1988), other studies have not found a direct relationship between those constructs (Bedeian, Burke, and Moffet 1988). These earlier studies—both those reporting a significant relationship between WFC and job satisfaction and those that did not support that linkage—used a global measure of satisfaction as opposed to assessing employee job satisfaction across its multiple facets. To accurately measure “job satisfaction,” a number of characteristics of the job may need to be evaluated if one hopes to obtain a broad measure of employee beliefs and attitudes about the job (Churchill, Ford, and Walker 1974). These characteristics or facets may not be of equal importance to various individuals. Thus, it is possible that different types of role stress do not equally influence these different facets of an employee's job satisfaction.

This research explores two complementary explanations of why outcomes of job satisfaction may differ across respondents. Evidence for the differential effects of role stress will come from tests of the significance of the relationship of each of the role stress constructs with each dimension of job satisfaction. In addition, individual characteristics of the salesperson may influence role expectations and thus the outcome of the evaluation of each facet of job satisfaction. Whereas many individual characteristics may influence the above evaluation process such as career-stage or job tenure, this study uses the individual characteristic of gender. Gender is chosen based on the extensive theoretical foundation on gender roles as well as the body of empirical research supporting these perspectives.

Work–Family Conflict

In modern, developed nations, most individuals participate in multiple roles in their lives. Increasingly, for both men and women, the two primary roles as an adult are work and family (Zedeck 1992). Frequently, expectations from these two major life roles can be incompatible, resulting in a form of inter-domain conflict called work–family conflict (Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985; Netemeyer, Boles, and McMurrian 1996). For this reason, interest in WFC and its impact on employers as well as employees is growing, as evidenced by articles from the disciplines of sociology, psychology, and management (Conger and Rueter 1999; Livingston and Burley 1996; Martins 2002; Phillips-Miller, Campbell, and Morrison 2000). Discussion concerning the

importance of conflict between work and family domains has even expanded into the popular press. An article in *Business Week* (Hammonds 1996) rated businesses on how well they address issues in the work/family role system.

It appears that occupations involving some form of boundary-spanning activity are more likely to face work-related role stress and to also have negative work-related outcomes associated with WFC (Bacharach, Bamberger, and Conley 1991). For example, salespeople, as boundary-spanners, are subjected to a variety of demands from multiple sources, including internal work roles and external expectations of customers, in addition to their family roles (Boles, Johnston, and Hair 1997; Goolsby 1992). Previous studies suggest stress from role conflicts affect the job satisfaction of salespeople (e.g., Behrman and Perreault 1984; Netemeyer, Boles, and McMurrian 1996).

The failure of many previous sales force studies to consider the interrelationship between family as well as work domains may have resulted in research findings that do not fully account for the salesperson's perception of the existence of conflict. Employee stress is a "perceptual phenomenon resulting from a comparison between the demand on a person and his ability to cope. An imbalance in this mechanism, when coping is important, gives rise to the experience of stress, and to the stress response" (Cox 1979, p. 25). This transactional view highlights the importance of perception and the relationship of the individual to the environment (i.e., work setting, family setting). If there is an improper fit between an individual and his or her environment, the individual experiences stress.

For WFC to occur, it appears that an individual must perceive role demands from both the work and family domains as legitimate. In an employee's work/family roles, conflict is interchangeable along both the work and family dimensions. Previous research has demonstrated that conflict between the work and family domain is correlated with attitudes about the workplace and job (e.g., Bacharach, Bamberger, and Conley 1991; Boles and Babin 1996; Netemeyer, Boles, and McMurrian 1996). The role member must believe that because of the existence of mutually exclusive role demands a resolution to the conflict does not exist. In the person's perception, the conflict must strain their values, desires, or goals.

The existing academic literature examining potential conflicts between the work and family domains is based on research examining a wide range of occupations. Results of these studies consistently demonstrate that stress can result from conflicts between work and family roles (e.g., Lynagh and Murphy 1996; Phillips-Miller, Campbell, and Morrison 2000). Conflict between work roles and family roles has been related directly or indirectly to job outcomes such as job dissatisfaction, employee burnout, and turnover (Bacharach, Bamberger, and Conley 1991; Burke 1989; Frone, Russell, and Cooper 1992; Good, Sisler, and Gentry 1988). Thus, WFC is an issue that may provide some additional insight into stress among members of a firm's sales force (Wilson 1997).

Given that the perception of stress will only occur when role expectations are perceived to be incompatible, it is not suggested that WFC will affect all dimensions of job satisfaction. Rather, the nature of the role expectations will control the conflicts. For example, the employment role naturally creates time constraints on nonwork or family roles. Present financial reward in the

form of pay or potential rewards from a promotion may mitigate this temporal conflict given sufficient enumeration. However, if the reward is perceived as insufficient to compensate for time demands then the satisfaction with pay will decrease. The above framework suggests the following:

H1a: Work–family conflict will be negatively related to satisfaction with pay.

H1b: Work–family conflict will be negatively related to satisfaction with promotion.

Similarly, perceived conflict between family and work is primarily the result of the structural requirements of the job. Policies and the individual that administers the policy are perceived as the arbitrators that can resolve the conflict. However, as the stress from WFC increases, the flexibility of the policy and the ability of the supervisor to alleviate conflicts may be limited. Unresolved stress results in a decrease in reported satisfaction with both policy and supervisor.

H1c: Work–family conflict will be negatively related to satisfaction with policy.

H1d: Work–family conflict will be negatively related to satisfaction with supervisor.

Role Conflict and Role Ambiguity

The importance of role conflict and role ambiguity in boundary-spanning positions is evident from previous research (e.g., Behrman and Perreault 1984; Sager 1994) and it is not the purpose of this paper to provide an extensive review of that body of literature. Certainly, the existence and influences of role conflict among boundary-spanning positions is well documented (e.g., Netemeyer, Johnston, and Burton 1990). Research indicates that employees in boundary-spanning positions, whose jobs involve direct interaction with customers or clients, will face conflicting demands from customers, supervisors, and coworkers (Churchill et al. 2000). These conflicting role expectations appear to be a major component of work-related role stress (Behrman and Perreault 1984). Since previous research suggests not all of the dimensions of job satisfaction will involve conflicting expectations the following hypotheses are tested.

H2a: Role conflict will be negatively related to satisfaction with work.

H2b: Role conflict will be negatively related to satisfaction with coworkers.

H2c: Role conflict will be negatively related to satisfaction with supervisor.

H2d: Role conflict will be negatively related to satisfaction with customers.

Role ambiguity, another aspect of work-related role stress, results when the duties and actions required of an employee are unclear to the employee. Research indicates the strain associated in dealing with issues of unclear responsibility is strongly related to job stress (Behrman and Perreault 1984). A direct relationship between role conflict, role ambiguity, and job satisfaction has been widely reported in the organizational literature (Fisher and Gitelson 1983; Jackson and Schuler 1985) as well as the sales literature (e.g., Netemeyer, Johnston, and Burton 1990). For

role ambiguity to exist, a perceived lack of clarity must exist for the salespersons. This is likely to occur in situations involving interpersonal relations, which indicate the following hypotheses. In addition, the nature of boundary-spanning positions requires salespeople to satisfy multiple expectations in an uncertain environment.

H3a: Role ambiguity will be negatively related to satisfaction with work.

H3b: Role ambiguity will be negatively related to satisfaction with coworkers.

H3c: Role ambiguity will be negatively related to satisfaction with supervisor.

H3d: Role ambiguity will be negatively related to satisfaction with the customer.

Employee Differences Based on Gender

Previous work in nonmarketing settings finds that gender differences exist in job attribute preferences (e.g., Mason 1995; Wiersma 1990). These studies indicate that male and female employees may well have different perceptions of their roles. Consequently, men and women can experience different levels of role conflict and role ambiguity from the work domain. For example, cultural and societal expectations of parental responsibility are strongest for mothers who may, therefore, feel more obligated to deal with family matters even at the expense of the job—possibly resulting in the perception of greater WFC—whereas men may tend to put the job first (Gilbert 1992; Marsiglio 1993).

There are at least two possible theoretical explanations for different outcomes of role stress for male and female salespeople. First, there is the concept of a physio-biological difference leading to different desired attributes in the work environment. This position suggests females seek work roles that do not interfere with family roles, especially motherhood (Brown 1970; Browne 1998; Mackey and Coney 2000). The second perspective predicts women are socialized into communal behaviors and men into more agentic or instrumental values (Eagly 1987). These different theoretical perspectives suggest men and women will have different expectations of job conditions and to report different work-related outcomes based on role demands from both work and nonwork settings.

A recent theoretical perspective suggests a convergence of these two theoretical perspectives as they relate to career. This recent perspective, the dual-impact model (Abele 2000), suggests that psychological role adaptations can be, but are not necessarily, based both on biological differences as well as adaptations to those domains requiring social role adjustments such as careers. As an example, the biological necessity of childbearing by the female in conjunction with societal expectation of female child-rearing creates expectations of and by the female salesperson that the female will focus on family roles. These expectations can result in ambiguity in both family and career roles. However, for men, a societal expectation as “breadwinner” does not have biological necessity, but does impact both job and family roles.

The issue of possible differences in the work-related outcomes and attitudes of male and female salespeople has become of greater importance in recent years due to the increasing numbers of

women filling professional sales positions. Whereas previous studies of differences in perceptions of the workplace between male and female salespeople were expected to provide clear differences, results have generally shown few differences in mean ratings between the perceptions and attitudes of the two sexes (Busch and Bush 1978; Schul and Wren 1992; Sigauw and Honeycutt 1995). The differences that have been discovered have often been inconclusive or contradictory, and possibly indicate that these different levels of reported perceptions may be, at least somewhat, sample-specific. However, a recent study of service employees found only one small difference in means between men and women, but reported substantial differences in how the constructs related to one another (Babin and Boles 1998). That finding has yet to be replicated in sales research, but may offer an indication that the outcomes of various stressors differ for male and female salespeople.

Despite the lack of conclusive evidence in differential cognitions about career by gender, other research suggests that there are systematic differences in the job-related values of men and women. Specifically, Mason proposes that “women are satisfied with jobs in which they can interact with others in a supportive and cooperative way . . . whereas men’s agentic orientation is manifested in self-assertion, self-expansion, and the urge to master” (1995).

Based on the perspective that men and women have contrasting expectations of jobs, it is proposed that role conflicts, ambiguous roles, as well as WFC will result in different evaluations of each facet of satisfaction. Therefore, it is hypothesized that:

H4: For men and women there is a structural difference in the effect of the three role stressors on satisfaction with:

H4a: type of work;

H4b: coworkers;

H4c: pay;

H4d: supervisor;

H4e: promotions;

H4f: policy;

H4g: customers.

It appears from the perspective of the dual impact model, an important predictor of satisfaction is role stress related to WFC. The two most salient societal views that also support the agentic versus communal dichotomy of men and women are that men are the primary source of family income and that women are the primary source of familial cohesiveness, including child rearing. From this perspective, the following hypothesis are tested.

H5: For males:

H5a: Work–family conflict will be negatively related to satisfaction with pay.

H5b: Work–family conflict will be negatively related to satisfaction with promotion.

H5c: Work–family conflict will be negatively related to satisfaction with policy.

Previous research into the societal as well as personal expectations of women suggests a particular susceptibility to stress related to conflicts between work and family. The limitations of time to satisfy both work and family obligations will lead to the occurrence of coworkers “covering” or substituting for a time-constrained salesperson. This resolution of a WFC will result in obligations to coworkers. The dual impact model mentioned previously suggests the following hypothesis.

H5: For females:

H5d: Work–family conflict will be negatively related to satisfaction with work.

H5e: Work–family conflict will be negatively related to satisfaction with coworkers.

H5f: Work–family conflict will be negatively related to satisfaction with policy.

Eagly (1987) suggests that men’s agentic or instrumental work roles are “status asserting.” This perspective implies that men will experience significant role stress with those facets of job satisfaction closely associated with agentic role expectations. For men, facets not salient to the agentic role will not be significantly related to role stressors. Therefore, for men, perceptions of role ambiguity as they relate to interpersonal interactions will negatively relate only to satisfaction with coworkers and supervisors.

H6: For males:

H6a: Role ambiguity will be negatively related to satisfaction with coworkers.

H6b: Role ambiguity will be negatively related to satisfaction with supervisors.

In addition, for men, the impediment of “status asserting” or instrumental goals of achievement will result in dissatisfaction with job facets related to status.

H6: For males:

H6c: Role conflict will be negatively related to satisfaction with promotion.

H6d: Role conflict will be negatively related to satisfaction with policy.

The desire of women to achieve communal goals suggests that interpersonal interactions are the “means” to relieve ambiguity. For women, perceptions of role ambiguity as they relate to interpersonal interactions will positively relate to satisfaction with coworkers and supervisors.

H7: For females:

H7a: Role ambiguity will be positively related to satisfaction with coworkers.

H7b: Role ambiguity will be positively related to satisfaction with supervisor.

However, conflict will result in a negative relationship with the interpersonal facets of satisfaction. The betrayal of the expectation of support from the communal group will lead females to exhibit a stronger or higher level of a negative relationship to each facet of job satisfaction.

H7: For females:

H7c: Role conflict will be negatively related to satisfaction with coworkers.

H7d: Role conflict will be negatively related to satisfaction with supervisor.

H7e: Role conflict will be negatively related to satisfaction with policy.

METHODS AND MEASURES

Surveys were distributed to all 149 sales employees of a regional promotions firm. Thus, the study represents a census of one firm’s sales force. Of those, 129 completed responses were received, for a response rate of over 80 percent. The high response rate was due in part to the firm endorsing the study and helping distribute the surveys directly to the salespeople. The completed survey instruments were returned directly to the research team in postage-paid envelopes. Results from the study were only reported to the sponsoring firm in aggregate so salespeople knew that their individual responses would remain confidential. Salespeople for this firm could be viewed as fulfilling the role of institutional seller (Moncrief 1986).

Compensation was based on both salary and a bonus for meeting the quota established by the firm. Respondents averaged slightly over 32 years of age and had approximately five years of sales experience. Approximately 60 percent of the salespeople had a four-year college degree. Sixty percent indicated they were married or had children living at home. Statistical tests of other demographic variables as indicators of either the dependent or independent variables are not significant. Additional tests of these demographic variables, such as marital status, presence of dependents, education, or job tenure, do not suggest any confounding effects. All measures used in the current study have seen previous use in organizational research. Role conflict and role ambiguity were assessed using the Rizzo, House, and Lirtzman (1970) instrument. This measure has been used in many different work settings to measure these constructs. Role conflict was measured with eight items and role ambiguity with six items. Reliability for these measures was 0.81 for both scales.

Table 1. Results of Linear Regressions and Chow Test

		Mean	R-square	Role Ambiguity	Role Conflict	Work-Family Conflict	Chow Test	
							F	p
Satisfaction with Work (combined group: H3a, H2a)		5.58	0.245	-0.325*	-0.307*	-0.103		
H4a	Males	5.50	0.289	-0.466*	-0.313*	0.077	2.973	0.022
	Females (H5d)	5.83	0.245	-0.147	-0.099	-0.841*		
Satisfaction with Coworkers (combined group: H3b, H2b)		5.24	0.14	-0.207*	-0.199*	-0.193		
H4b	Males (H6a)	5.17	0.122	-0.362*	-0.102	0.004	2.927	0.023
	Females (H7a, H7c, H5e)	5.27	0.356	0.122	-0.303	-1.004*		
Satisfaction with Pay (combined group: H1a)		4.42	0.074	-0.01	-0.164	-0.334*		
H4c	Males (H5a)	4.33	0.078	-0.022	-0.084	-0.435*	0.973	0.424
	Females	4.68	0.064	0.012	-0.271	0.094		
Satisfaction with Supervisor (combined group: H3c, H2c, H1d)		4.98	0.141	-0.086	-0.189	-0.59*		
H4d	Males (H6b)	4.94	0.175	-0.357*	0.011	-0.552*	2.602	0.039
	Females (H7b, H7d)	4.91	0.247	0.595*	-0.798*	-0.476		
Satisfaction with Promotion (combined group: H1b)		4.55	0.283	-0.446*	-0.35*	-0.398*		
H4e	Males (H6c, H5b)	4.73	0.368	-0.541*	-0.388*	-0.452*	3.563	0.009
	Females	4.02	0.276	-0.088	-0.800*	0.163		
Satisfaction with Policy (combined group: H1c)		4.87	0.398	-0.236*	-0.306*	-0.714*		
H4f	Males (H6d, H5c)	4.90	0.424	-0.376*	-0.327*	-0.649*	1.120	0.350
	Females (H7e, H5f)	4.82	0.389	0.048	-0.379*	-0.841*		
Satisfaction with Customer (combined group: H3d, H2d)		4.84	0.045	-0.101	-0.076	-0.121		
H4g	Males	4.74	0.041	-0.145	-0.036	-0.113	1.739	0.145
	Females	5.12	0.031	-0.083	0.029	-0.192		

* Significant at the 0.05 level one-tail.

The various facets of job satisfaction were measured using a reduced version of the INDSALES scales (Comer, Machleit, and Lagace 1989; Lagace, Goolsby, and Gassenheimer 1993). The scales assess satisfaction with work, coworkers, pay, promotion, supervisor, policy, and customers. Reliability for these scales is 0.85, 0.75, 0.75, 0.80, 0.83, 0.74, and 0.68, respectively. Salesperson responses were given on 1–7 point scales where smaller numbers indicated less job satisfaction. These reduced scales were used in an attempt to keep the survey instrument to a reasonable length since these scales have a total of 28 items as opposed to the 95 items of the full INDSALES measure (Churchill, Ford, and Walker 1974).

WFC was assessed using an adaptation of the Burke, Weir, and DuWors's (1979) scale assessing the influence of work activities on home responsibilities. It has been used in other research studies across a wide range of work settings (e.g., Bedeian, Burke, and Moffet 1988; Burke 1989). Items from this scale are worded so that they are valid for both married and unmarried employees. Previous research suggests that unmarried individuals also experience conflict between their work duties and nonwork responsibilities (Babin and Boles 1998). Responses were based on a five-point scale where greater numbers reflect increasing levels of conflict between the two domains. Reliability for this measure was 0.80. Gender was self-reported on a single item as one of many demographic items included in the survey.

The relationship of the independent variables—role conflict, role ambiguity, and WFC—with the various facets of job satisfaction was assessed using linear regression. Responses for each role stress construct are mean-centered to avoid multicollinearity, whereas gender is dummy coded with one for males and zero for females. The results of these fitted regressions are presented in Table 1. Then, to determine if gender suggests a specific structural difference, each gender has the same regression fitted for each facet of job satisfaction. Results for each gender as well as the *F*-statistics generated using the Chow test (1960) are calculated and also included in Table 3. The *F*-statistic is calculated by examining the ratio of the unexplained variance or error (sum of squares of the residuals, SSRcombined) from regression line undifferentiated by gender to the unexplained variance from fitted regressions that are differentiated by gender (SSRfemale and SSRmale). The formula for calculating the *F*-statistic is

$$F = \frac{SSR_{combine} - (SSR_{female} + SSR_{male})}{K} \bigg/ \frac{SSR_{female} + SSR_{male}}{M + N + 2P}$$

The results from the Chow test examines if specific structural difference exists in a regression model (Bleaney 1990) between men and women using all the constructs of role stress. Significant *F*-statistics indicate more variance is explained by differentiating the groups than by analyzing them as a homogeneous group.

The use of moderated regression to examine the specific influence of each role stress construct for each gender allows for interpretation of differential effects of gender with each role stressor by interpretation of the significance of the interaction. The reported *t*-test for the coefficient is interpretable as indicative of each construct's relationship to each facet of job satisfaction. The results of the following fitted moderated regressions are presented in Table 2.

$$JS_i = B_0 + B_1(RA) + B_2(RS) + B_3(WFC) + B_4(\text{Gender} * RA) + B_5(\text{Gender} * RS) + B_6(\text{Gender} * WFC) + e,$$

where JS_i is each of the facets of job satisfaction.

Correlations between the constructs and reliability measures for the constructs included in the study are presented in Table 3. Correlations between the constructs for men and women are presented separately in Table 4.

Table 2. Results of Moderated Regressions

	Mean	R-square	Role Ambiguity	Role Conflict	Work-Family Conflict
Satisfaction with Work (interaction effects)	0.327*	0.308	0.319	0.213	-0.919*
H2a Males	5.50	0.289	-0.466*	-0.313*	0.077
Females	5.83	0.245	-0.147	-0.099	-0.841*
Satisfaction with Coworkers (interaction effects)	0.068	0.211	0.484*	-0.201	-1.008*
H2b Males	5.17	0.122	-0.362*	-0.102	0.004
Females	5.27	0.356	0.122	-0.303	-1.004*
Satisfaction with Pay (interaction effects)	0.27	0.101	0.003	-0.186	0.529
H2c Males	4.33	0.078	-0.022	-0.084	-0.435*
Females	4.68	0.064	0.012	-0.271	0.094
Satisfaction with Supervisor (interaction effects)	0.003	0.205	0.952*	-0.810*	-0.007
H2d Males	4.94	0.175	-0.357*	0.011	-0.552*
Females	4.91	0.247	0.595*	-0.798*	-0.476
Satisfaction with Promotion (interaction effects)	-0.711*	0.353	0.452	-0.412	0.615
H2e Males	4.73	0.368	-0.541*	-0.388*	-0.452*
Females	4.02	0.276	-0.088	-0.800*	0.163
Satisfaction with Policy (interaction effects)	-0.077	0.418	0.424*	-0.052	-0.192
H2f Males	4.90	0.424	-0.376*	-0.327*	-0.649*
Females	4.82	0.389	0.048	-0.379*	-0.841*
Satisfaction with Customer (interaction effects)	0.368*	0.092	0.062	0.065	-0.078
H2g Males	4.74	0.041	-0.145	-0.036	-0.113
Females	5.12	0.031	-0.083	0.029	-0.192

* Significant at the 0.05 level.

RESULTS

As the results in Table 1 indicate, each of the role stressors (role conflict, role ambiguity, and WFC) is differentially related to the various facets of job satisfaction. The results in Tables 1 and 2 indicate that the gender of the salesperson does moderate the relationship of role conflict, role ambiguity, and WFC on the various facets of job satisfaction. In fact, the signs of the coefficients are different for male and female salespeople for some facets, with females experiencing a significant positive relationship between role ambiguity and satisfaction with supervisor. Each of the sub-hypotheses will be examined in detail below.

Table 3. Pearson Correlations Between Job Satisfaction Facets and Role Measures for All Respondents (Cronbach's Alpha on the Diagonal)

Variable	Satisfaction with Work	Satisfaction with Coworkers	Satisfaction with Pay	Satisfaction with Promotion	Satisfaction with Supervisor	Satisfaction with Policy	Satisfaction with Customer	Role Ambiguity	Role Conflict	Work-Family Conflict
Satisfaction with Work	0.85									
Satisfaction with Coworkers	0.466*	0.75								
Satisfaction with Pay	0.187*	0.132	0.75							
Satisfaction with Promotion	0.393*	0.212*	0.298*	0.80						
Satisfaction with Supervisor	0.254*	0.477*	0.127	0.265*	0.83					
Satisfaction with Policy	0.422*	0.432*	0.31*	0.468	0.363*	0.74				
Satisfaction with Customer	0.211*	0.276*	0.012	0.025	0.242*	0.219/	0.68			
Role Ambiguity	-0.436*	-0.286*	-0.168*	-0.455*	-0.208*	-0.435*	-0.133	0.81		
Role Conflict	-0.403*	-0.276*	-0.226*	-0.431*	-0.241*	-0.516*	-0.106	0.543*	0.81	
Work-Family Conflict	-0.27*	-0.256*	-0.218*	-0.363*	-0.354*	-0.58*	-0.161*	0.353*	0.449*	0.80

$N = 129$; * $p < 0.05$ (one-tailed test)

Table 4. Pearson Correlations between Job Satisfaction Facets and Role Measures by Gender (Males Are Above the Diagonal and Females Are Below the Diagonal)

Variable	Satisfaction with Work	Satisfaction with Coworkers	Satisfaction with Pay	Satisfaction with Promotion	Satisfaction with Supervisor	Satisfaction with Policy	Satisfaction with Customer	Role Ambiguity	Role Conflict	Work-Family Conflict
Satisfaction with Work	—	0.363*	0.137	0.541*	0.188*	0.42*	0.118	-0.505*	-0.38*	-0.195*
Satisfaction with Coworkers	0.62*	—	0.152	0.247*	0.432*	0.368*	0.247*	-0.318*	-0.172	-0.147
Satisfaction with Pay	0.214	0.022	—	0.347*	0.13	0.371*	-0.067	-0.178*	-0.204*	-0.253*
Satisfaction with Promotion	0.225	0.211	0.307*	—	0.298*	0.551*	0.072	-0.523*	-0.452*	-0.428*
Satisfaction with Supervisor	0.361*	0.555*	0.092	0.330*	—	0.369*	0.262*	-0.339*	-0.19*	-0.387*
Satisfaction with Policy	0.413*	0.581	0.051	0.426*	0.342*	—	-0.19*	-0.469*	-0.477*	-0.552*
Satisfaction with Customer	0.271*	0.284*	0.071	0.059	0.171	0.234	—	-0.117	-0.03	-0.154
Role Ambiguity	-0.322*	-0.222	-0.133	-0.382*	0.023	-0.371	-0.139	—	0.466*	0.36*
Role Conflict	-0.372*	-0.421*	-0.198	-0.522*	-0.312*	-0.606*	-0.115	0.669*	—	0.433*
Work-Family Conflict	-0.484*	-0.567*	-0.072	-0.241	-0.277*	-0.682*	-0.163	0.361*	0.531*	—

$N = 91$ for males and $N = 38$ for females; * $p < 0.05$ (one-tailed test).

Sub-Hypotheses Results

The results of the tests of H3a and H2a indicate that role ambiguity and role conflict are significantly and negatively related to satisfaction with work for the total sample. However, WFC is not a significant predictor of satisfaction with work. When examining males and females separately, role ambiguity and role conflict are negatively related to satisfaction with work for males. Conversely, WFC is negatively related to satisfaction with work for females, H5d, but not for males. A Chow test supports H4a, which shows that there is a significant difference between males and females in role conflict, role ambiguity, WFC, and satisfaction with work.

Analysis of H3b and H2b indicates that role conflict and role ambiguity are significantly and negatively related to satisfaction with coworkers for the total sample. WFC is not a significant predictor of satisfaction with coworkers. When examining males and females separately, role ambiguity is negatively related to satisfaction with coworkers for males, supporting H6a. Evidence for differential effects based on gender is also indicated by the significant interactions for WFC and role ambiguity between men and women, as shown in Table 2. As suggested, WFC is negatively related to satisfaction with coworkers for females, H5e. Role conflict is not a significant predictor of satisfaction with coworkers for either males or females. A Chow test supports H5b, which indicates a significant difference between males and females in role conflict, role ambiguity, WFC, and satisfaction with coworkers.

The results of H1a indicate that WFC is significantly and negatively related to satisfaction with pay for the total sample. However, role ambiguity and role conflict are not significant predictors of satisfaction with pay for the full sample for either gender. When examining males and females separately, WFC is negatively related to satisfaction with pay for males, H5a, but not for females. Results of the Chow test do not support H4c, indicating that there are no significant differences between males and females in the relationships of role conflict, role ambiguity, and WFC with satisfaction with pay.

The results of H1d indicate that WFC is significantly and negatively related to satisfaction with the supervisor for the total sample, whereas role conflict, H2c, and role ambiguity, H3c, are not significant predictors of satisfaction with the supervisor. When examining males and females separately, role ambiguity, H6b, and WFC are negatively related to satisfaction with the supervisor for males. For females, role ambiguity, H7b, is positively related to satisfaction with the supervisor. Evidently, men see role ambiguity as a problem related to their supervisor whereas females look to their supervisor as a potential source of resolution of ambiguity. Role conflict is also a significant negative predictor of satisfaction with the supervisor for females, H7d. The Chow test of H4d is supported, which suggests that there are differences between males and females in the relationships of role conflict, role ambiguity, and WFC with satisfaction with the supervisor. The results of the moderated regression indicate that the significant differences occur with role ambiguity and role conflict.

The results of H1b indicate that WFC is significantly and negatively related to satisfaction with promotion for the total sample. Role conflict, H6c, as well as role ambiguity are significant predictors of satisfaction with promotion for males. Support for H5b indicates that males may view promotion as a form of compensation that mitigates WFC. The negative relation between

role conflict and satisfaction with promotion by females may indicate issues of time constraints or issues with lack of promotion opportunities. The outcome of the test of H4e again suggests a structural difference between men and women. However, results in Table 2 do not indicate a significant interaction for any of the role stressors and gender, rather the significant result is with the intercept. This suggests overall females are less satisfied with opportunities for promotion than males.

The result of H1c indicates that WFC is significantly and negatively related to satisfaction with policy for the total sample, as well as for males separately, H5b. WFC is the only significant predictor of satisfaction with policy for females. H4f is not supported, which suggests that there are no differences between males and females in role conflict, role ambiguity, WFC, and satisfaction with policy.

The lack of support for H3d and H2d indicates that role conflict, role ambiguity, and WFC are not significantly related to satisfaction with the customer for the total sample, or for males or females separately. H5g is not supported, which suggests that there are no differences between males and females in role conflict, role ambiguity, WFC, and satisfaction with the customer. These results may indicate that these respondents as boundary-spanners by nature have a customer orientation. The lack of support suggests that, for both men and women, a significant relationship between role stress and satisfaction with customers does not exist.

DISCUSSION

This study indicates that the relationship between work-related role stress, WFC, and job satisfaction is more complex than previously reported. In earlier research, role conflict, role ambiguity, and WFC were found to be negatively related to job satisfaction. The current study indicates that each of the various dimensions of job satisfaction may have different (even nonsignificant) relationships with role conflict, role ambiguity, or WFC. Moreover, these relationships may be, and frequently are, moderated by the sex of the salesperson.

Summarizing the findings of the study, role ambiguity or role conflict are negatively related to males' satisfaction with work, satisfaction with coworkers, satisfaction with supervisors, satisfaction with promotion, and satisfaction with policy. However, role ambiguity or role conflict are only negatively related to females' satisfaction with supervisors, satisfaction with coworkers, satisfaction with promotion, and satisfaction with policy. However, for females, a positive relationship exists between role ambiguity and satisfaction with supervisor. Conversely, WFC for women is negatively related to satisfaction with work, satisfaction with coworkers, and satisfaction with policy. For men, decreased WFC is related to increased levels of satisfaction with pay, satisfaction with supervisor, satisfaction with promotion, and satisfaction with policy. These findings indicate that there is no one "best" policy that will positively influence all types of job satisfaction.

At first glance, it appears that management should take efforts to reduce role stressors so that they could increase employee job satisfaction. Results of this study indicate this type of management action could lead to erroneous decisions. Role stressors differentially affect each facet of job satisfaction. The gender of the salesperson plays an important role in both the level

of satisfaction on the different facets of job satisfaction and their relationships with role conflict, role ambiguity, and WFC. Activities undertaken to relieve a stressor and thus improve the employees' satisfaction with a particular facet of job satisfaction may create counterproductive effects in another dimension of job satisfaction. Further, some research suggests that there may be a positive relationship between moderate levels of role conflict and performance for some marketing employees (Babin and Boles 1998). Thus, completely eliminating salesperson role conflict may result in an unintended decrease in performance.

Although employers cannot make significantly different policies for men and women, employers need to recognize that the outcomes of policy changes will have different effects on males and females. In order to improve satisfaction with work, coworkers, supervisor satisfaction, promotion satisfaction, and policy satisfaction, employers need to determine those aspects of the work environment and home environment that generate role conflict, role ambiguity, and WFC. They then need to selectively develop policies and procedures aimed at reducing levels of role conflict, role ambiguity, and WFC for specific groups of employees based on those factors that cause these negative perceptions.

Clearly, any attempt to reduce work-related role stress or WFC will have to balance differential affects on each gender. Consider, for instance, a specific attempt to lower males role ambiguity as it relates to the supervisor, which is related positively to female salespeoples' satisfaction with the supervisor. Currently sales managers may limit their variability of responses to specific stressors in an attempt to provide a sense of clarity. Males may welcome such clarity in role interactions, whereas females may experience an inverse response as they welcome managers' ability to customize responses to individual situations.

As another example, perhaps the company intervention in handling stress is a weekend retreat managed by a sensitivity trainer. For some females, this approach may actually increase the level of WFC because it would take them away from their family activities and responsibilities for the weekend. Likewise, a supervisor sensitive to the results of this study would not use an appeal tailored to promotion as a means to mitigate the immediate conflict. Instead, he or she might allow additional future vacation time (even unpaid) to help decrease perceptions of WFC among this group of employees.

A way to reduce role stress is by providing supervisors with training on how to give clear and accurate guidance to employees. Using the information from this study, clear objectives for the whole sales force can be integrated with agreed upon objectives for each salesperson, along with an action plan to accomplish those objectives. Clearly defined job expectations would assist this process. Moreover, supervisors should be provided training so that they have contacts in the company to assist the salespeople when they are engaged in conflicts that result from their boundary-spanning activities.

Whereas making changes discussed above should help male employees to be more satisfied with most aspects of their jobs, the impact of these changes on female job satisfaction appear to be more modest. Reducing WFC will produce better results in making women satisfied with the dimensions of the job than would efforts at easing role conflict. Women are often stressed from trying to be a "good employee," a "good wife," and a "good mother." Part of this stress is

associated with cultural expectations, and part of this stress is a result of women carrying more responsibility than their spouses for maintaining the family life (Crosby and Jaskar 1993). One way to address this concern is to offer training to help salespeople learn to better manage the interface between work and personal life. This training could address some of the root causes of WFC and how to avoid those problems when possible.

Employers could accommodate the demands on working people in a variety of ways. One way to help reduce WFC is by providing on-site day care as well as care for sick children. Another approach might involve offering a job-sharing option where two part-time salespeople could share account management duties—thereby providing full-time coverage by using two part-time salespeople instead of one full-time salesperson. Of course, sharing account management tasks would require excellent communication skills, team skills, and infrastructure to ensure that accounts being managed jointly would receive satisfactory service. It would also involve providing training to the salespeople in such a program to ensure that they understood their responsibilities toward one another and to customers.

Family friendly policies aimed at alleviating the negative influences of WFC could help increase women's satisfaction with work, coworkers, and policy. Whereas these benefits should also be extended to men, the reduction in their WFC is likely to be related to different results—making men happier with their supervisors, or happier with their prospects of being promoted. Overall, helping all employees learn how to manage their time and responsibilities better, both at work and at home, should help to reduce WFC and work-related role stress.

Satisfaction with pay has another useful managerial outcome based on gender. It appears that management may successfully use compensating pay as a tactic for alleviating WFC for males, but this particular tactic may have little impact on females. One reason for this may be that, in many families, men are expected to conform to the “breadwinner” stereotype. By making more money, men may feel less conflicted about the possibility of spending less time with their wife and children. However, pay satisfaction is not related to female salespeople's perceptions of conflict that results from working outside of the home. In some instances, such as for employees who are feeling high levels of WFC, it may be more effective from an organizational standpoint to hire additional salespeople instead of adding accounts to each salesperson. Conversely, for some salespeople, the opportunity to make more money by working longer hours on additional accounts may reduce the negative effects of WFC because of the orientation of those salespeople toward making more money—allowing them to do more for their families financially. If a salesperson does exceed performance expectations, acknowledging their efforts formally in an award ceremony, attended by the spouse and family, may also help eliminate some WFC by demonstrating to the family the importance of the employee's work to overall firm success.

FUTURE RESEARCH AND LIMITATIONS

Results from this research suggest a number of avenues for future research. First, future sales force research should examine the effects of family–work conflict (FWC) as well as further examine the work and nonwork effects of WFC. This is important because FWC has been demonstrated to have different relationships with a number of constructs when compared to

WFC. An additional step would involve determining if male and female salespeople react differently to FWC.

Another avenue of study could include specific analyses (possibly via qualitative analysis of diary information) concerning daily events that trigger perceptions of WFC and FWC among professional salespeople and other boundary-spanning employees. Since boundary-spanners appear particularly susceptible to WFC and its effects, analyzing diaries from salespeople might provide valuable, managerially actionable information for sales managers. Finally, examining the moderating effects of gender in models of salesperson behavior might uncover other differences regarding how men and women respond to various aspects of the sales environment that could help improve sales force management practices.

This study is limited by its sample. A larger study may provide a more “balanced” test of the interrelationships between the constructs. However, the study does represent a census of all salespeople of one firm who were willing to participate. Finally, the results of this study are not necessarily relevant for other types of sales positions. Future research needs to be conducted in other sales environments to determine if the results reported here are generalizable to a broad range of sales settings.

CONCLUSION

Findings from this study indicate that employers need to take steps to reduce role stress and WFC in order to increase employee’s satisfaction in the different dimensions of their jobs. Reductions in role stress and WFC will have different effects on men and women’s satisfaction with the various dimensions of job satisfaction. Moreover, changes that will improve one dimension of job satisfaction may not be related to increases in job satisfaction in a different dimension. Consequently, management should take the demographics of their workforce into consideration, along with the potential dimensions of job dissatisfaction before making policy changes aimed at reducing role stress and WFC. This is very important, given the role job satisfaction plays in generating organizational commitment and reducing quitting intentions.

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