

IMPACT OF WORKLOAD AND WORK DUPLICATION ON EMPLOYEE'S PERFORMANCE

Kamna Anam, Saad Zafar and Muhammad Qaiser Shafi, Quaid e Azam University, Islamabad.

JSPM

JOURNAL OF STRATEGY &
PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

Citation: Anam, K, Zafar, S & Shafi M.Q. (2018). Impact of workload and work duplication on employees performance, Journal of Strategy and Performance Management, 6(2), 65-76.

ABSTRACT

Purpose: *The purpose of this study is to measure the levels of workload & work duplication among employees in Telecom Sector of Pakistan. In addition, the impact of workload & work duplication on employee's performance has been analyzed.*

Design/Methodology/Approach: *Structured close ended questionnaires were used. Around 80 questionnaires were distributed in the head offices and franchises of three telecom companies i.e. Telenor, PTCL & Huawei; 58 were returned back. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 17.0 was used to analyze the data collected through a survey.*

Findings: *Results show that both workload and work duplication have significant and negative influence on employee's job performance. The study also found that lack of job clarity, ineffective job design and role ambiguity/conflict are the primary causes of overlapping of work in Telecom companies (i.e. Telenor, PTCL & Huawei) of Pakistan.*

Research Limitation/Implications: *This study covered the few organizations of Telecom sector which don't validate the research results over the whole telecom industry.*

Practical Implication: *This study provided further guidance to organizations for making strategies to cope with these prevailing*

Originality/value: *This study is important to overcome the problem of work overload & work duplication which affects the employee performance.*

Keywords: *Workload, Work duplication, overlapping of work, Role ambiguity, Role conflict and Employee performance.*

INTRODUCTION

The workload and work duplication particularly in Telecom Sector, has not been a subject of study for any significant research work. To become competitive worldwide, many business organizations in Pakistan like other countries are striving to attain high performance. Success of an organization entirely depends on the human resource of that organization. Collis and Montgomery (1995) in their research concluded that employees play the vital role behind the success of giant organization. Mostly in the countries like Africa, Asia, Oceania, and Central/South America, people have high percentage of workload. In Europe, Eastern European countries percentage of workload is relatively low. Workload raises stress level among employees. Workload results in increase of rational anxiety in employees: as consequence, perceived performance get hammered (Robbins, 1999).

Workload, work duplication and role ambiguity can affect an employee's physical and mental health, performance and productivity. Firth and Loquet (2004) thus suggested that to reduce stress and enhance employee's performance, managers should actively control the workloads of employees.

This research work is imperative because if this issue is not resolved, it may generate problems for the organization and employees in the future. Thus this study measures the effect of workload and work duplication on employee's performance in Telecom sector of Pakistan.

Workload and work duplication are the pervasive problems of an organization. It is essential for an organization to provide workload free environment to employees if it wants to get flourish. Workload causes decline in employees' performance, increase in absenteeism and turnover. In organizations, if the workers work without any load/ stress, they can deliver better.

Therefore, it is important to study the relationship between workload, work duplication and employee performance. This research will help the telecom sector of Pakistan in formulation of policies and strategies in order to cope with workload and work duplication.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The focus of study is to examine the effects of workload on employee performance in Telecom sector of Pakistan; and to investigate the relationship between work duplication/ role ambiguity and employee performance in Telecom sector of Pakistan; and to suggest strategies and best practices to Telecom operators of Pakistan to deal with workload and work duplication.

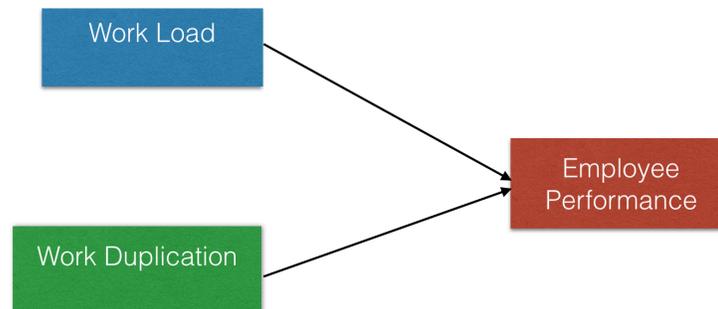
RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- How is employee performance affected by workload in Telecom sector of Pakistan?

- What is the relationship between work duplication and employee performance in Telecom sector of Pakistan?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework of this study shows that workload and work duplication are independent while employee performance is dependent variable as follows:



LITERATURE REVIEW

Workload is defined as intensity of job tasks. It creates mental stress among employees. As defined by Robbins & Judge (2014) change in workload tends to change the stress level of employees, which in turn affect the performance of employees. Stress is a mental states in which human being encounters both the constraint and an opportunity (Robbins, 1999). Khuong & Yen (2016, p.02) said that if assigned job duties exceed one's potential then it may cause work overload.

Workload is a situation in which the different roles, tasks or work required of a role occupier exceed the time assigned, energy & resources available to the individual for their execution (Iroegbu, 2014). This results in dissatisfaction, anxiety, stress and poor work performance.

Any system that is subject to excess workload will break ultimately. This is as true for people as it is for equipment. Rising demands, without enough opportunities for control, result in physical, mental and emotional fatigue, and also causes increase in strain and stress. This has a negative impact on performance. Emotionally fatigued employees also have a diminished sense of personal achievements and an increased sense of inadequacy. One of the main reasons employees feels negatively about their jobs and their employers are excessive workload.

Work load assessment is a tool used in planning future work and skill requirements based on historical performance to set the baseline for specific job. Because of technological advancements, innovations and the wide range of computers usage, a major portion of work is now cognitive. Consequently, there is an urge need to assess the workload a system imposes on a person. To assess workload, three techniques are generally used:

Performance measures, physiological measures and subjective measures. (Luximon & Goonetilleke, 2001)

Major Types of Workload Assessment Measures

Performance based measures. Performance is defined as the effectiveness in accomplishing a particular task. (Pass & Vanmerrinboer, 1993) Performance measures in workload assessment include recording performance scores using these as pointer or indicator of task demand. Although certain versions of this technique are highly effective but they are difficult to use, especially in a working setting due to their intrusiveness. The development and acceptance of performance measures may be difficult, but they should be attainable and defensible within the boundaries of industry context.

Physiological measures: Physiological measures use the physical movement and reactions of the body to objectively measure the amount of mental work a person is experiencing.

Heart rate: Heart rate is an accurate measurement because the signals can be measured in the form of beats. Generally, as workload increases heart rate also increases (Hankins & Wilson, 1998)

Eye Blink: It is generally accepted that eye blinks are good at measuring visual workload. Eye blinks & blinks duration decline with increase in visual workload (Brookings, Wilson & Swain, 1996)

Blood pressure: Ups and downs in BP also indicates workload pressures.

Subjective measures. Subjective measures are used to indicate the amount of information used in working memory (Yeh & Wickens, 1985). A realistic way to look at workload assessment is that if a person feels as burdensome with work, then there is a lot of workload (Johannsen, 1979).

Work duplication/ overlapping of work occur when same nature of task is being done by more than one individual, which results in wastage of human and monetary resources.

Work Duplication is another factor that has influences on job stress. When employee lacks information about the requirements of their job and role, how to meet those role requirements, and the evaluating process to make sure the role performed successfully, role ambiguity will happen (Khuong & Yen, 2016). Based on Muchinsky (1997) study, role ambiguity results in “reduces confidence, a sense of hopelessness, depression, and anxiety.” Classical role theory defined role ambiguity as the lack of information available to perform one’s duties effectively.

Researchers (Burney & Widner, 2007; Marginson, 2006) have found role ambiguity to be associated with a lack of information on goals, conditions in which the job is to be performed, responsibilities, and duties to perform one’s responsibilities effectively.

Sword (2010) found that, when the roles and responsibilities lack clarity, there are two risks. The first is that gaps in who is accountable for certain tasks exist where it's no one's job to do that task. No one steps forward to do it or to take responsibility as it's no one's job. Blaming and fault finding are the outcomes of having gaps.

The second risk is in overlapping, where the tasks and responsibilities fall into more than one person's tray; it results in inconsistent messages or skews the capability to evaluate the results. The frequent outcome of overlaps is hostility and jealousy that one's 'turf' is being disrespected, the work is being second-guessed and people tend to feel undermined or their competence questioned. Otherwise, they reason, the other person would not have been doing work that is mine to do.

Employee's performance is the understanding and capacity of the employees to work effectively and efficiently in order to achieve the organizational goals and objectives (Kovach, 1987). Employee performance sheds light on the effectiveness of employee's specific tasks that contribute towards attainment of organizational goals (Qureshi, Toor & Zeeshan, 2012). Performance is the total expectation of organization from separate behavior samples of each person during specific period of time (Motowidlo, 2003). Job performance shows person's efficiency in his job according to his legal tasks, standards and depicts the effort of that person (Babu, et.al., 1997).

In another meaning employee performance can be described as the ability of individuals to achieve their respective work aims, then meet their expectations, achieve benchmarks or attain their organizational goals (Jamil, Ahmad & Ghouse 2016).

Several studies have been performed to analyze the effect of role overload on performance. Vanishree (2014) did a research on small & medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to examine the effect of work stressors over job stress. To carry out the study, random sampling technique was used to select 200 employees who have worked at least 03 years in an SME. The results showed that work overload, role ambiguity and work conflict brings about job stress among employees resulting in poor attention, mental block and poor performance/decision making skills.

Dorota and Annekatrin (2014) carried a research on, a meta-analysis of work demand stressors and job performance i.e. examining main and moderating effects. They took a sample size of 265 employees to interrogate the relationships of the following 7 job stressors with job performance: role ambiguity, role conflict, workload, job insecurity, work-family conflict, environmental uncertainty, and situational constraints. Overall, a negative mean correlation was obtained between each job performance measure and each stressor included in their analyses.

Work duplication has been associated with anxiety (Katz & Kahn, 1978). Cohen (1959) found that ambiguously defined tasks with inconsistent guidance from supervisor results in anxiety and decreased productivity. Kahn et al. (1964) mentioned that duplication originates from complexities exceeding an individual's degree of comprehension and from the outcomes of changes associated with increased demands. Therefore, it is quite

understandable that individuals experiencing role overlapping will also face challenges in meeting performance expectations.

Similarly, other researchers (Fried, Ben-David, Tiegs, Avital, & Yeverechyahu, 1998) found that role ambiguity influenced supervisor rated performance and that those employees with high levels of role ambiguity were associated with lower levels of performance effectiveness. Fisher (2001) found that role ambiguity was negatively related to auditors' job performance, while Burney and Widener (2007) found that role ambiguity was negatively related to managerial performance in strategic planning and decision making areas.

Kahn et al. (1964) proposed that in situations characterized by a high level of task interdependency, role ambiguity should prove to be more dysfunctional. In other words, when the employees' responsibilities are closely linked to other co-workers, the impact of role ambiguity should be greater compared to that of employees whose work is largely independent. Role ambiguity is expected in interdependent teams, as seen in sports (Beauchamp, Bray, Eys, & Carron, 2001; Bray & Brawley, 2002) as well as in large scale product development companies, such as the automotive industry, and in the field of IT software and hardware (Ganesh & Gupta, 2010; Hoegl & Weinkauff, 2005).

Khuong and Yen (2016) investigated the impact of job stress on employee job performance. Questionnaire was sent to 378 respondents to collect the primary data. They applied Quantitative approach with statistical techniques, including multiple regression and path analysis. They concluded that all working factors i.e. workload, work duplication and role ambiguity have significant and positive influence on job stress and negative impact on employee job performance.

Past research (Bauer & Green, 1994; Szilagyi, 1977 Williams, Podsakoff, & Huber, 1992; Sluss, van Dick, & Thompson, 2011) indicates that role duplication/overlapping is detrimental for employee's performance. Rizzo et al. (1970) posit that role ambiguity should increase anxiety and dissatisfaction with one's role and ultimately lead to diminished performance.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study population consisted of employees from different departments of aforementioned organizations from managerial and officer level, so as to get a holistic approach. This research site included Telecom companies i.e. Telenor, PTCL & Huawei working in Islamabad. A total of 80 respondents were targeted by the study out of which 58 responded giving a response rate of 72.5%. 72.4% of the respondents were male and 27.6% were female. The participants' age varied from 23 to 50 years old, with an average of 32.53.

Simple random sampling technique is used to sample the study respondents. As simple random sampling is one in which each unit in the accessible population has an equal chance of being selected in the sample.

Data was obtained from primary sources with the help of close ended questionnaire i.e. all questions were intended to restrict respondent's answers.

We developed this questionnaire from validated scales i.e. De Bruin and Taylor (2006), Rizzo, House & Lirtzman (1970) & Weiss et. all (1976). Some changes were done to fit Telecom context. The questionnaire had two sections. In the part I of the questionnaire, the general demographic data of participants were asked for, including name, gender, age, and designation. Second part of the questionnaire consisted of 20 items and included 8 items for workload, 7 items for work duplication/ role ambiguity and 5 items for employee performance. Likert-5-point scale was used for measuring survey questions, ranged from minimum scale number 1 (strongly disagree) to maximum scale number 5 (strongly agree).

The statistical analysis is carried out with the help of the MS Excel & Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 17.0. Cronbach’s alpha co-efficients is used to assess the reliability of the constructs that are measured in this study. Correlation coefficients are used to specify the relationship between the relevant variables.

FINDINGS

The sample of the present study consisted of 58 employees of Telecom Sector (Telenor, PTCL & Huawei). 48 of them were male (72.4%) and 16 were female (27.59%). The participants’ age varied from 23 to 50 years old, with an average of 32.53.

The alpha coefficient for the eight items of “Workload” is 0.876, suggesting that the items have relatively high internal consistency. The alpha coefficient for the seven items of “Work Duplication/ Overlapping” is 0.714, suggesting that the items have relatively high internal consistency. The alpha coefficient for the five items of “Employee Performance” is 0.725, suggesting that the items have relatively high internal consistency. Since the values of all variables i.e. “Workload”, “Work duplication” & “Employee Performance” were higher than 0.7, so the measurement tool is considered to be reliable.

Responses against Questions

Following figures show a graphical representation of responses against each question:

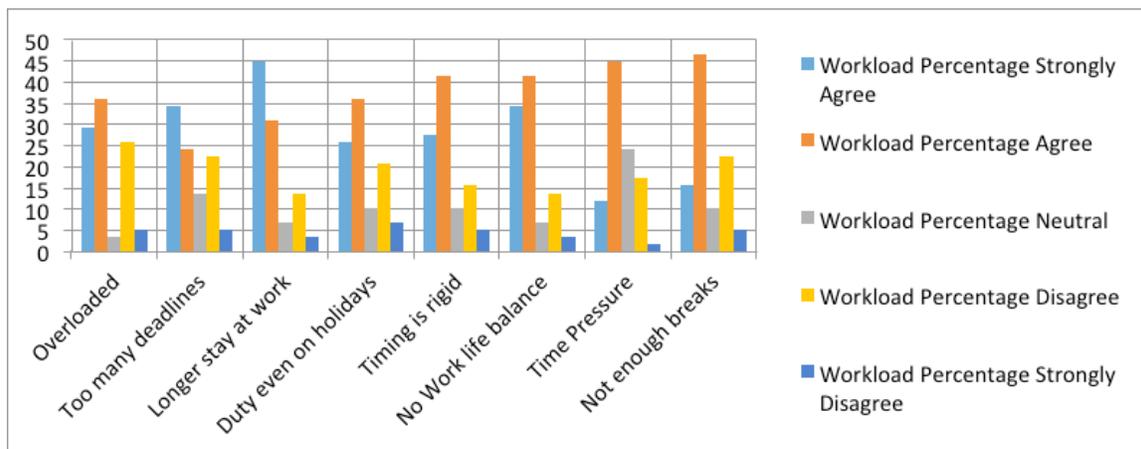


Figure 1: Workload

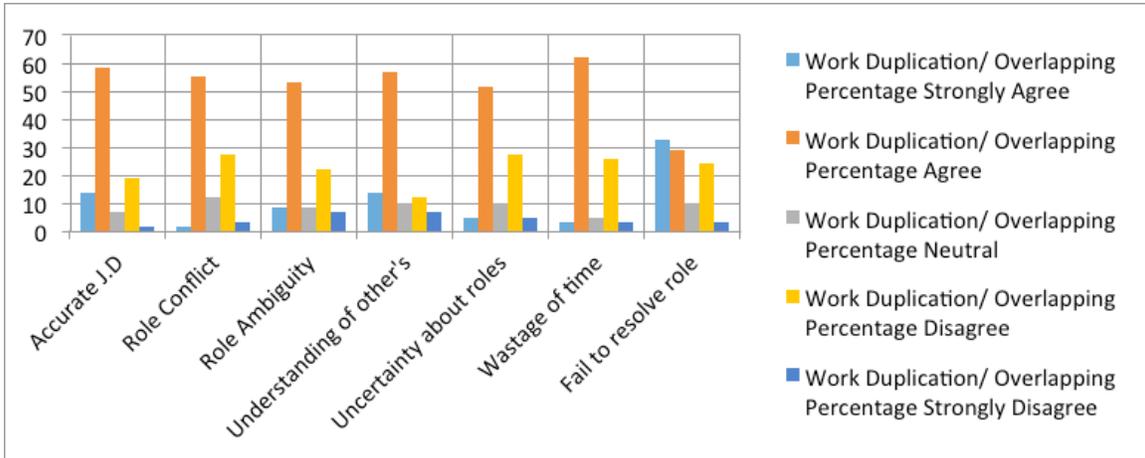


Figure 2: Work Duplication

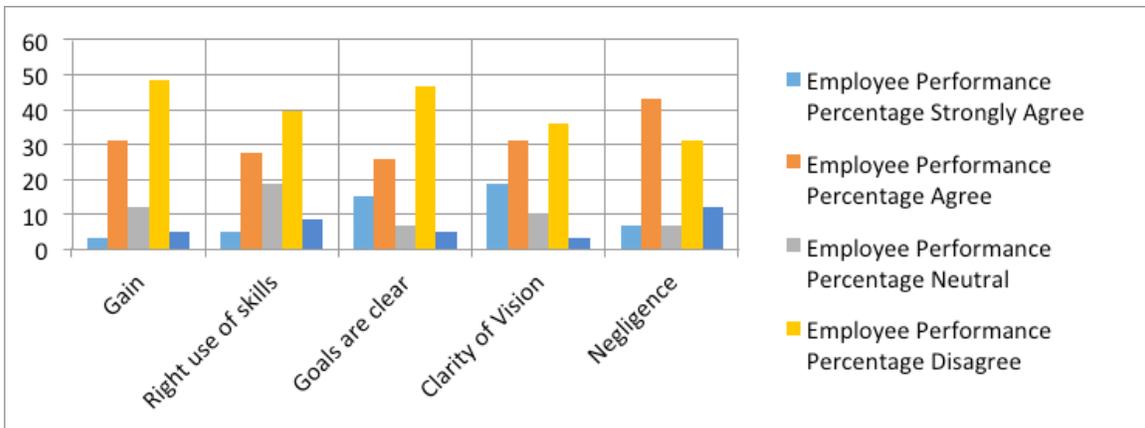


Figure 3: Employee performance

For the variable “Workload”, it was found that participants believed that there is workload. For the variable “Work Duplication”, participants agreed that there is overlapping of responsibilities and role ambiguity. For the variable “Employee Performance”, it was found that workload & work duplication negatively affect the performance of employees.

Results of correlation analysis showed negative correlation between workload and employee performance ($r=-0.44086$) and between work duplication and overlapping of work and employee performance ($r=-0.59835$). Here one value i.e. workload or work duplication decreases the other value i.e. employee performance increases.

Regression Analysis: Value of R square is .194 while adjusted R square is .179. This model explains 19% variation in dependent variable “Employee Performance” that is caused by

independent variable "Workload". Value of R square is .358 while adjusted R square is .346. This model explains 35% variation in dependent variable "Employee Performance" that is caused by independent variable "Work Duplication/ Overlapping of work".

DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

In this study, responses were collected via questionnaire. The levels of workload & work duplication among employees of Telecom sector appeared to range from moderate to high. According to above results, both workload and work duplication have negative effects on employee performance. The higher the workload and role ambiguity are, the lower the performance of employee is. This finding confirms the study of Khuong & Yen (2016) which found substantial influence of workload on job performance & concluded that workload and role ambiguity brings about job stress among workers resulting in poor concentration, mental block and decline in performance. The findings are also in agreement with the findings of Bauer & Green (1994); Szilagyi (1977); Williams, Podsakoff, & Huber (1992); Vanisher (2014); Sluss, van Dick, & Thompson (2011) who had also found negative correlation between workload, work duplication and employee performance.

Workload assessment is a major tool in assessing the overall comprehensive picture of the work position in the organization. It not only clarifies the requirements each job/task requires but also the kind of knowledge, skills and abilities (KSA) that are required for the specific job's tasks, duties and responsibilities (TDR). On the other hand, if employees do not have clarity in who is to perform what duties and whose responsibility is what, it will not be possible to smoothly run any task. Duplication of work results in wastage of monetary as well as human resources. Furthermore, duplication of work not only creates confusion as who is to do the task but also many of the times the task or duty is left unfulfilled assuming that the other person responsible would do it. Thus it can be said that work duplication/overlapping is a serious issue and a major economic burden on the organization. Organizations need to be careful in hiring as proper communication is required and secondly proper and effective job descriptions (JD's) have to be designed and formulated so as to get the best results.

LIMITATIONS

The study covered few organizations of Telecom sector which don't validate the research results over the whole telecom industry. Secondly, sample size is small due to limited resources and time. For further study, large sample size must be used to attain better results. Finally, there is no way to guarantee the honesty of any of the responses as respondents might be biased or inclined to attempt to actively portray their employer in a more positive or negative light than is true.

This research intended to investigate the impact of workload and work duplication on employee performance in Telecom Sector of Pakistan. The study conceptual framework was constructed based on previous theoretical and empirical studies. From this research finding, it can be concluded that both workload and work duplication have negative

influence on employee's job performance. The results of this research can be used as valuable and accurate reference for managers to formulate strategies or plans to reduce workload and role ambiguity among employees and encourage them to increase their performance and contribute more in the near future.

RECOMMENDATIONS

When planning your work, resources are also important. Some tasks or projects may be delegated, or given to someone else, in order to complete them faster. Sometimes there are additional resources that can assist such as software programs.

Prioritize and schedule tasks effectively. By understanding the priorities in our job, we can focus on important activities and minimize work on other tasks as much as possible. This helps us to get the greatest return from the work we do, and keep our workload under control. Return on Investment is a concept that is often used to help prioritize. A high return on investment occurs when you don't have to put a lot in to get a desired result. A low return on investment occurs when there is a high input with little result. So, projects that can be easily completed with little effort and time may take priority over other projects.

We can use time available efficiently to complete tasks. We can Put off less important tasks until latter and break large tasks up into a series of smaller ones.

Seeking help and support is another key element in managing workloads. Issues may arise that interfere with workload goals. These issues can be addressed if one may seek help and support from others.

Talk to people regularly to make sure that everyone is clear about what their job requires them to do. Making sure that everyone has clear defined responsibilities linked to business objectives.

A proper job analysis should be carried out by organizations as a necessary step to stem the conflicts within jobs and between jobs incumbents. Role ambiguity occurs when people are uncertain about their expectations within a certain role, typically their role in the job or workplace. Role ambiguity arises when the definition of the person's job is vague or ill defined. Workers may be unclear regarding the goals, expectations, or responsibilities associated with the performance of their positions. Unclear roles may involve expectations for behavior or performance levels. In order to be proficient in their role, people should be made aware of the responsibilities and obligations of that role, the actions necessary to fulfill the role, and the effects that the role has on various constituents, including the workers themselves, their coworkers, and the organization itself.

Job analysis helps to understand the nature of job. It describes JD's that provide a road map of sorts for the employee and the Line Manager. Most of the time JD's re boilerplate text; when writing new ones, hiring managers tend to just copy the last one they used, tweak it a little bit, and publish. If they write them this way, then they're certainly boring. If

they design JDs - instead of writing them - they can turn lifeless documents into an alignment-producing, consensus-driving, ever-evolving communication tool. It leads to role clarity.

Future research must cover a wider population such that the results of this study may be replicated to the whole Telecom Sector.

REFERENCES

- Brookings, J. B., Wilson, G. F., & Swain, C. R. (1996). Psychophysiological responses to changes in workload during simulated air traffic control. *Biological Psychology*, 42(3), 361-377.
- Burney, L., & Widener, S. K. (2007). Strategic performance measurement systems, job relevant information, and managerial behavioural responses – role stress and performance. *Behavioral Research in Accounting* 19(1), 43–69.
- Collis, D. and Montgomery, C.A. (1995). Competing on Resources. *Harvard Business Review*, 73(4), 120-128.
- Dorota, T. and H. Annekatrin, 2014. Change in affective well-being on change in perceived job characteristic: The mediating role of hope. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, 87 (3).
- De Bruin, G.P. & Taylor, N. (2006). Development of the Sources of Work Stress Inventory. *South African Journal of Psychology*, 35, 748-765.
- Firth, L. and C. Loquet, (2004). How can managers reduce employee intention to quit? *J. Manage. Psychol.*, 19: 170-187.
- Fisher, R. T. (2001). Role stress, the type A behaviour pattern and external auditor job satisfaction and performance. *Behavioral Research in Accounting*, 13(1), 143– 170.
- Hankins, T. C., & Wilson, G. F. (1998). A comparison of heart rate, eye activity, EEG and subjective measures of pilot mental workload during flight. *Aviation, Space, and Environmental Medicine*, 69, 360–367.
- Iroegbu, M.N. (2014). Impact of Role Overload on Job Performance among Construction Workers. *Asian Journal of Social Sciences and Management Studies*, 1(3), 83-86.
- Jamil, S.A, Ahmad, M. and Ghouse, S. (2016). The impact of job stress on job performance: A case study on academic staff at Dhofar University. *International journal of Energy Research*, 13(1), 21-33.

- Khuong, M.N. & Yen, V.H. (2016). Investigate the Effects of Job Stress on Employee Job Performance-A Case Study at Dong Xuyen Industrial Zone. *Vietnam. International Journal of Trade, Economics & Finance*, 7(2), 31-38.
- Kovach, K.A. (1987). What motivates employees? Workers and supervisors give different answers, *Business Horizons*, 30 (5), 58-65.
- Luximon, A. & Goonetilleke, R.S. (2001). Simplified subjective workload assessment technique. *ERGONOMICS*, 44(3), 229-231.
- Motowidlo, S.J. (April, 2003). Discussant for Task, contextual, and social behaviors: Advancing the meaning of performance. Symposium presented at the meeting of the Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology, Orlando, FL.
- Qureshi, M.S., Toor, J.M. & Zeeshan, A. (2012). Impacts of Late Working Hours on Employee's Performance: A Case Study on Engineers in Telecom Company of Pakistan. 1-15.
- Robbins, S. P., and Judge, T. A., (2014). *Organizational Behavior*. 12th Edition. Pearson Prentice Hall.
- Robbins P, S. (1999), *Organizational Change and Stress Management*, *Organizational Behaviour*, 8th Edition, p 650-653, Prentice Hall of India, New Delhi.
- Rizzo, J., House, R., and Lirtzman, S (1970). Role conflict and ambiguity in complex organizations. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 15, 150-163.
- Sword, L.D. (2010). Conflicts from confused roles and responsibilities. Retrieved from <http://conflictcompetence.com/conflicts-from-confused-roles-andresponsibility>
- Vanishree, P., 2014. Impact of role ambiguity, role conflict and role overload on job stress in small and medium scale industries. *Journal of Management Science*, 3(1), 10-13.
- Yeh, Y. Y., and Wickens, C. D. (1985). The nature of subjective workload. In R. E. Eberts and C. G. Eberts (Eds.), *Trends in ergonomics/human factors II*, 153–159.