

## Role Conflict, Role Overload and Intention to Quit the Job Among Women IT Professionals in Kerala

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### ABSTRACT

*The role of working women in the IT sector has become more complex as they have heavy workload in the home and office. Working in the IT industry puts strain on women executives to a greater extent because of long working hours, shift and overtime work. The dual role burden will lead to role related stress among women IT professionals. Intention to quit the job among women professionals in the IT sector is a contemporary issue to discuss at the earliest. The present paper tries to analyze the impact of role stressors such as role conflict and role overload on intention to leave the job among women IT professionals in Kerala. Thus the study aims to analyse the relationship between role stressors (role conflict and role overload) and intention to leave the job among women professionals in the IT industry. The data were collected from 303 women IT professionals from 52 IT companies in Kerala. Stratified random sampling technique was adopted to select the companies. A structured questionnaire has been used to collect primary data from the sample respondents. Regression analysis was used to find the impact of role conflict and role overload on intention to quit the job. The findings of the study indicated that there is a significant positive relationship between role conflict and intention to leave the job among women professionals in the IT industry. Similarly, there is a significant positive relationship between role overload and intention to leave the job among women professionals in the IT industry.*

**Keywords:** *Role Conflict, Role Overload and Intention to Quit the Job*

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## INTRODUCTION

Role plays an important part of everyday life of persons. Every individual holds different positions in the society and performs multiple roles. They have to perform multiple roles in the personal and professional life. Performance of multiple roles with limited time and resources lead to role related stressors such as role conflict and role overload.

The role of women professionals in the IT sector has become more complex because of long working hours and work overload. Intention to leave the job is a serious issue among women IT professionals because they experience a lot of problems while balancing working hours with their family responsibilities. Working women experience high frequency of role conflict and role overload on daily basis because they have heavy workload in the home and office as they have to play different roles: that of a homemaker, mother and employed woman. The main source of turnover intention among women IT professionals are role stressors of role conflict and role overload. Sweeney and McFarlin (1997) found that intention to stay, job satisfaction, job involvement and organisational commitment was stronger for men than women as dual role burden increases job related tension, stress and consequently intention to quit the organisation.

Role conflict is an internal conflict occurs within and individual when he /she forced to perform multiple and inconsistent roles simultaneously. In other words, it is the incompatible expectations within and or between different roles. It exists when an individual is directed to perform two or more roles that are incompatible or in conflict with one another (Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn & Snoek, 1964). Thus role conflict occurs as a result of inconsistent role expectations from mutually contradicting roles (Beehr et al., 1997).

High frequency of role conflict will lead to role overload as role overload occurs when the level of role demand exceeds individual's available time and capability as one has to perform multiple tasks at a time with limited resources. Simply speaking role overload is a situation when the person has too many tasks which may be contradictory or not and forced to perform all the roles with limited time period.

Performance of multiple roles may lead to role conflicts, role stress and role strain leading to 'overload' (Sekaran, 1983). Fulfillment of several roles at the same instant is more indicative to role overload because one has to enact multiple role demands within his limited time and available resources (Rapoport & Rapoport, 1976). Spector & Jex (1998) recognized

that role overload exists when role expectations are higher than the individual's abilities and time to perform the assigned roles.

Role stressors may have detrimental consequences to the Role conflict and role overload may have negative effects to the productivity and quality of work life of employees. Studies reveals that those suffering from role stressors could not perform their work roles properly as it would reduce job involvement increased turnover and intention to leave. Those experiences with high role conflict are likely to experience less job satisfaction since they did not do more than the minimum requirement at work. Performance of multiple roles often leads to job dissatisfaction. The best-documented effects of role stressors are increased job stress, less job involvement and lower intention to quit the organization (Khan et al. 1964). Role stressors are associated with reduced job commitment, work quality and increased propensity to leave the organization (Singh, 2000).

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

According to Yip et al., (2008) the role stressors have significant impact on emotional drain and professional efficiency of the employees. Organizations can conduct problem oriented training on how to deal with the stressful situation and it will help to prevent turnover intention among employees.

Myers (1981) reported that technological advancement and global communication enhanced the self sufficiency of working women as they can improve their career by themselves with the help of advanced information and communication technology. Organizations should develop family friendly human resource policies in order to reduce career gap among men and women.

Prasad (2003) recommended that organizations should conduct family meets on a continuous basis where the human resource managers of the organization should take initiative to convince the family members about the work demands of the women employees and help to create a congenial family relationship. Women employees can effectively perform their role along with their male counterparts provided the right environment and supportive factors are put in place. It is their role as house wife and a working woman that reduces their organizational commitment if clarity of role is ensured and a sharing environment created women are as effective as men in their tasks.

Boles et al., (2003) reported that work family conflict, job dissatisfaction and less job commitment will lead to intention to quit the job among women employees. Thus it is the responsibility of the employer to frame flexible and comfortable work environment to increase job satisfaction and organizational commitment and thereby reducing turnover intention.

According to Hecht (2001) role stressors have negative influence on psychological wellbeing of the employees because those experience high role conflict and role overload experiences significantly less psychological well being.

## **ROLE CONFLICT**

Kahn et al. (1964) have defined role conflict as the “simultaneous occurrence of two or more roles which are incompatible or inconsistent in nature and the individual cannot meet the demand of one role without rejecting the demands of other roles”. Thus role conflict is an internalized conflict occurs within an individual when he/ she has to meet inconsistent role requirements.

## **ROLE OVERLOAD**

Role overload occurs when an individual is involved in the enactment of multiple roles which are compatible in nature, but his available time and energy is not sufficient to meet the demands of all the said roles (Goode, 1960). Simply speaking role overload is a situation when the person has to perform too many tasks within short period of time and with limited resources.

## **RELEVANCE OF THE STUDY**

The growth and development of Information Technology industry depends upon its human resources much stronger than other resources because this is highly competitive, dynamic and technical industry. Human Resource Development plays a vital role in the growth and development of Information Technology industry in Kerala. There is a significant contribution of women professionals to the IT industry in Kerala as women constitute about one-third of the total workforce in IT industry in Kerala (IT Policy, Government of Kerala, 2016).

Role conflict and role overload are the most significant factors that create labor turnover intention among women IT professionals and this should consider while framing human resource management strategies. Thus it is the responsibility of the employer to understand the negative consequences of role stressors on work life of women professionals in the IT sector. This will only bring gains for the employer as it increases employee productivity.

## **INTENTION TO QUIT THE JOB**

Intention to quit the job is defined as the propensity of an employee to quit from his present job and look onward for another in the future. (Griffith, Hom and Graetner, 2000). Thus it is the behavioral intention of an employee to quit from his present job.

## **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The main objectives of the study are as follows;

1. To investigate the impact of role conflict on intention to quit the job among women IT professionals in Kerala.
2. To investigate the impact of role overload on intention to quit the job among women IT professionals in Kerala.

## **Hypotheses**

A recent study (Lenaghan, Buda & Eisner, 2017) reveals that if the employees themselves find difficult to manage multiple demands of work and family roles, they choose to quit themselves from the work role. According to Malik, Sajjad, Hyder, Ahmad, Ahmed & Hussain (2013), role overload has a significant negative relationship with retention of employees. Turnover intention is a serious issue among professionals in the IT industry on account of work overloads (Venugopal, 2006). Lui, Ngo & Tsang (2001) has stated that inter role conflict had a positive relationship with propensity to leave and negative relationship with job satisfaction.

Therefore, in the present study the following hypotheses were developed:

### Hypothesis I

H0: There would be no significant impact of role conflict on intention to quit the job among women IT professionals.

H1: There would be a significant impact of role conflict on intention to quit the job among women IT professionals.

### Hypothesis II

H0: There would be no significant impact of role overload on intention to quit the job among women IT professionals.

H1: There would be a significant impact of role conflict on intention to quit the job among women IT professionals.

## METHODOLOGY

### Data Collection

The study was conducted among the married women IT professionals in Kerala. A sample of 303 married women IT professionals has been selected for the study. Multi stage random sampling technique was adopted for the study. In the first stage two government owned IT parks Technopark, Trivandrum and Infopark, Kochi were selected for the study. In the next stage different types of companies, viz Software Development companies, BPO companies, Animation companies and E- business companies have been identified from these two parks for selecting the respondents. Finally in the last stage respondents were selected by random sampling technique from these four types of companies to form the sample of the study.

**Table 1: Distribution of Sample Respondents**

Type of Company	Number of Respondents		Total
	Technopark	Infopark	
Software Development	116	63	179
BPO	30	16	46
Animation	22	12	34
E-Business	28	16	44
Total	196	107	303

Source: Primary Data

## MEASURES

A structured questionnaire was used to collect data from the respondents. To study the extent of role conflict experienced by the women professionals in the IT sector, a role conflict questionnaire was framed based on the role conflict scale developed by Johnson and Stinson (1975). Ten statements have been used in the role conflict questionnaire to measure the role conflict. The Likert scale of summated rating was used to measure the extent of role conflict. There are five responses in the role conflict statement viz., strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree and strongly disagree. A score of 5-1 was given to these responses. The maximum score is 50 and minimum score is 10. A high score indicates high role conflict and low score indicates low role conflict. The reliability of the role conflict scale is 0.80.

For studying the extent of role overload experienced by women IT professionals, the role overload questionnaire was framed based on role overload scale developed by Higgins and Duxdury (1991). Ten statements have been used in the role overload questionnaire to measure the role overload. The Likert scale of summated rating was used to measure the extent of role overload. There are five responses in the role overload statement viz., strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree and strongly disagree. A score of 5-1 was given to these responses. The maximum score is 50 and minimum score is 10. A high score indicates high role overload and low score indicates low role overload. The reliability of the role overload scale is 0.72.

## RESULTS

In this section the level of role conflict and role overload of working mothers in the IT sector of Kerala was analyzed by classifying them as high, medium and low based on mean and standard deviation of role conflict and role overload score.  $\chi^2$  test was used to find out the association between independent variables and intention to quit the job.

In order to study the influence of role conflict and role overload on intention to quit the job, regression analysis were carried out. Separate regression analysis was carried out by taking intention to quit the job as dependent variables and role conflict and role overload as independent variables.

**Table 2: Comparison of Intention to Quit the Job Based on Role Conflict**

Intention to Quit the job	Low		Medium		High		$\chi^2$	P
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Percent		
Yes	4	5.3	17	15	10	8.8	5.16	0.076
No	72	94.7	96	85	104	91.2		

Source: Primary Data

In the Table II the test value ( $\chi^2=5.16$ ,  $p>0.05$ ) shows that intention to quit the job is not significantly related with the role conflict experienced by the women IT professionals. It means that proportion of intention to quit the job is more or less similar among respondents experiencing different levels of role conflict.

**Table 3: Comparison of Intention to Quit the Job Based on Role Overload**

Intention to Quit	Low		Medium		High		$\chi^2$	P
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent	Count	Percent		
Yes	1	1.5	18	15.4	12	10	8.85*	0.012
No	65	98.5	99	84.6	108	90		

Source: Primary Data

In the Table III the test value ( $c^2=8.85$ ,  $p>0.05$ ) shows that intention to quit the job is not significantly related with the role overload experienced by the women IT professionals. It means that proportion of intention to quit the job is more or less similar among respondents experiencing different levels of role overload.

**Table 4: Predictive power of Role Conflict and Role Overload on Intention to Quit the Job**

	Constant	B	T	P	R <sup>2</sup>
Role conflict	31.71	0.93	0.51**	0.611	0.001
Role overload	32.57	2.53	56.71**	0.000	0.007

Source: Primary Data

The result of six linear regression analysis was presented in Table IV. From the table it can be seen that the B coefficient of the variable role conflict for predicting intention to quit the job is 0.93. It means that as there is an increase in score of 9.3 in intention to quit for increase of

every 10 score in role conflict. The p value shows that the influence of role conflict on intention to quit the job is statistically significant at 0.01 level. The  $R^2$  of the regression equation is found to be 0.001 which indicates that 0.1 percent of variation in the intention to quit the job of women IT professionals can be explained by role conflict.

The table also shows that the B coefficient of the variable role overload for predicting intention to quit the job is 2.53. It means that as there is an increase in score of 25.3 in intention to quit the job for increase of every 10 score in role overload. The p value shows that the influence of role overload on intention to quit the job is statistically significant at 0.01 level. The  $R^2$  of the regression equation is found to be 0.007 which indicates that 0.7 percent of variation in the intention to quit the job of women IT professionals can be explained by role overload.

## CONCLUSION

The purpose of the present study is to examine the impact of role conflict and role overload on intention to quit the job among women IT professionals in Kerala. Regression analysis influence of role conflict on intention to quit the job is statistically significant at 0.01 level and 0.1 percent of variation in the intention to quit the job of women IT professionals can be explained by role conflict. Regression analysis also shows that influence of role overload on job intention to quit the job is statistically significant at 0.01 level and 0.7 percent of variation in the intention to quit the job among women IT professionals can be explained by role overload. So the hypotheses formulated in this context are accepted.

## DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of the present study is to examine impact of role conflict and role overload on intention to quit the job among women IT professionals in Kerala. Role conflict and role overload are found to be the source of intention to quit the job among women IT professionals in Kerala. The present study results are in line with the previous research (Lenaghan, Buda & Eisner (2017), Malik, Sajjad, Hyder, Ahmad, Ahmed & Hussain (2013), (Venugopal, 2006) & Lui, Ngo & Tsang (2001) as the results shows that intention to quit the job among women IT professionals in Kerala significantly and positively related with role stressors of role conflict and role overload. The present study differs from previous studies

in a way that the review of literature reveals that no exhaustive study has been conducted so far on impact of role stressors on intention to quit the job among women IT professionals in India.

In order to reduce the turnover intention among women IT professionals, organizations should frame the specific policies such as workload monitoring system and build better superior subordinate relationship. To reduce role stress among women employees, organizations can frame family friendly work policies such as flexible work schedule, telecommuting etc. Information Technology policy 2017 of Kerala Government does not have considerable provisions for the health, safety and welfare of women professionals in the IT sector. Policy makers should include appropriate policy initiatives to ensure the safety of women IT professionals.

## MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

Role stressors are the significant contributors to create problem for working women as they have to satisfy the multiple role demands of work and family responsibilities. High role conflict and role overload contribute to turnover intention among women employees. It is the responsibility of the employer to understand the effects of role conflict and role overload on intention to quit the job among women IT professionals. These factors should consider while formulating human resource management strategies, this will only bring gains for the employer as it increases employee productivity. Management cannot distinguish in HR practices between men and women. Practical significance of the study is that HR strategies can be drawn from the findings of the study.

## SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

A comparative study of role stressors and intention to quit among men and women IT professionals can be conducted. An extensive study can be conducted by including other variables such as job satisfaction, job involvement and job stress.

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