

The Relationship between Role Ambiguity and Job Insecurity on Work-Life Quality in Jordanian private Universities

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Abstract

The importance of QWL has become a common factor for employees and organizations, because there are many advantages that can help an organization to achieve its goals and meet the needs of employees and how its effect on their life, These changes brought different types of work stress not only among employee at business organization, but also among university academic staff. The aim of this study was to test and analyse the influence of role ambiguity and job insecurity on quality of work life (QWL) among faculty members on private universities, the data were collected by structured questionnaires and 209 academic staff from Jordanian private universities, completed the questionnaires. The result showed a significant positive association between both role ambiguity, job insecurity and quality of work life.

Keywords: role ambiguity, job insecurity, quality of work life.

1. Introduction

The term 'work-life quality' (QWL) is in reference to the satisfaction that employees have in their working life, and it is a concept that is a multidimensional one. QWL relates to the feelings of employees regarding numerous dimensions of their work. Those dimensions could include the working environment, the content of the job, the systems of pay and reward, the opportunities for career development and training, participation within decision-making, work stress, matters of occupational safety and health, job security, interpersonal and organisational relation, relationships between the life off and on the job, and constitutionalism (Kanten and Sadullah, 2012; González-Baltazar et al., 2015). QWL has importance for improving and enhancing work conditions from employee perspective that result in productivity within an organisation (Permarupan, Mamun and Saufi, 2013). Those who support QWL theory look from different perspectives at how employees can be helped in avoiding conflicts between their working lives and their personal lives (Arief and Saptono 2021)

For the reasons mentioned above, enhancement of QWL has become an interest that is common for employees and organisations since there are numerous advantages that can help an organisation achieves its goals whilst helping in the satisfaction of employee needs. QWL relates to job satisfaction levels, job security, wages and numerous other factors that have a bearing on employees including physical, psychological and social ones (Swamy, Nanjundeswaraswamy and Rashmi, 2015). It was found by Manzoor, Awan and Mariam (2012) that long work hours and work overload, job insecurity and work pressure were the key causes of high levels of stress upon employees working with the Indian textile industry. In Jordan, job insecurity, role ambiguity, poor working conditions and poor quality of interactions between employees and employers increased stress levels and raised the feelings of their being injustices.

2. The study significance

The study has importance for both theory and practice. In theoretical terms, this study is important in that the QWL concept is investigated within developing countries and gaps within the literature are bridged, with contributions also made to knowledge regarding QWL, job insecurity and role ambiguity. Few studies can be found within the literature that have undertaken investigation of QWL within developing countries and so this particular study makes a contribution to the developing country literature through its examination of the impact upon QWL of particular variables within Jordan.

3. The review of literature

Despite numerous studies having contribution to the QWL field, there still remains a lack of clear cut conceptual understanding and a definition for QWL that is universally accepted; indeed, there is no clarity over what the concept entails (Krueger et al., 2002). QWL was defined by Robbins (1998) as being “a process by which an organization responds to employees needs by developing mechanisms to allow them to share fully in making the decisions that design their lives at work.” QWL may be defined in regard to the satisfaction of employees and work-related behaviours with the attempts at development of work conditions that are more satisfying by way of collaboration between employees and management (Bagtasos, 2011). In regards to continuance, stability and security of jobs, QWL may be defined as being a process through which employees are attracted and retained with the satisfaction of personal needs contributing to improvement in work.

Another definition for QWL viewed it as the meeting of different staff needs including their need of using skills, their social needs and their needs for esteem (Tang and Chang, 2010). The QWL definition that is used most widely was that put forward by Walton (1975) who saw it as the extent to which work organisation members perceive they are able to satisfy significant needs by way of their experience within the organisation. Further to this, Kanten (2014) noted that the satisfaction of such important needs takes the form of fair and adequate compensation, a healthy and safe working environment, security and growth, social relevance, constitutionalism, total life space, human capacity development and social integration. The QWL model of Walton remains the concept that is most comprehensive and, indeed, various researchers do follow it; it has proved to play a significant role within the development of the concept of QWL. Eight key conceptual areas were identified within the model for comprehending QWL, as follows: a) working conditions that are safe and healthy; b) safe compensation and adequate income; c) development of human capacities; d) security and growth opportunities; e) social integration within the work organisation; f) constitutionalism; g) total life space and the work; h) social relevance for the working life.

Van Den Broeck (2010) considered there to have been different models formulated in relation to job characteristics, i.e. the JDR model (job demands resources), the ERI model (effort reward imbalance) and DCM model (demands control model). Van Den Broeck (2010) argued that the models for job characteristics, such as the ERI and JDR models had the hypothesis that the work-related wellbeing of employees could be impacted by various work characteristics. The characteristics of the job may be split into 2 broad categorisations, the job resources and the job demands.

3.1. Work-life quality and role ambiguity

The definition for role ambiguity is that it is the lack of information with regard to nature of tasks, objectives, the necessary conditions and the nature of responsibilities and duties that are required for the functions to be performed effectively (Marginson, 2006; Burney and Widner, 2007). Ambiguity in roles has often been linked to outcomes that are undesirable for both the organisation and individual members. However, there may also be positive impacts, since individuals are forced into defining their roles (Ebbers and Wijnberg, 2017). Within a study regarding job satisfaction behaviour, Palomino and Frezatti (2016) discovered that role ambiguity affected employees more strongly than in the case of the work of House and Rizzo (1972) which argued that role ambiguity had greater relevance in a model of organisational behaviour.

Role ambiguity occurs because of lack of clarity with regard to duties, unclear goals and plans, and uncertainties with regard to the degree of authority that is granted for performance of tasks (Rizzo et al., 1970). It was found by Beauchamp and Bray (2001) that role ambiguity relates to a lack of consistent, clear information with regard to the actions needed for a particular position. Assessment and determination of work stressors may help managers avoid role ambiguity since they lead to exhaustion and disengagement (Dasgupta, 2012). Association has been made between role ambiguity and conditions through which jobs are to be performed, lack of appropriate information with regard to goals, and the duties and responsibilities for performing the job in an effective manner (Marginson, 2006).

Role ambiguity has consequence if roles are not defined clearly by managers and that results in employees not having clarity over their responsibilities and the expectations for performance. Indeed, it was argued by Dasgupta (2012) that role ambiguity has been discovered to be a significant predictive factor for exhaustion and disengagement. Disengagement and exhaustion are seen as being core burnout dimensions that may lead to emotional resources being drained and negative behaviours with regards to the work. Employees that have jobs requiring huge amounts of time involved in interactions with other people may have greater likeliness of experiencing role ambiguity when compared to employees that work in roles where, by and large, performance is a function of the completion of specific types of job task. Within their research, Castro et al. (2016) discovered that prevention of role ambiguity and better working environment may lead to enhancements in the job satisfaction of employees which would lead to higher levels of productivity if employees feel there is sound structure and

definition of their duties and responsibilities. In addition, the role ambiguity for employees is affected by work environment and the demands of their task(s). Within a study undertaken by Beena (2011) that investigated the impact that role ambiguity had upon QWL, findings showed that QWL was indeed affected negatively by role ambiguity. Likewise, within a study undertaken by Normala (2010), it was also found that role ambiguity had a negative impact upon QWL. Also, it was found by Koustelios et al. (2004) that role ambiguity had a negative impact upon job satisfaction. Also, within the research of Bolhari et al. (2012), role ambiguity was revealed as having a negative impact upon QWL. So, role ambiguity impacts may be negative or positive in support of the non-directional type of hypothesis. So, the hypothesis can be made, as follows:

H1: The relationship between work-life quality and role ambiguity is a significant one.

3.2. Work-life quality and job insecurity

The definition for job insecurity is that it involves the feelings of being at risk of losing one's job that results in worries over such threats (Blackmore, 2011). In recent years, working life has been characterised by significant change that has affected the work environment and career structure of employees. In 2008, global financial crises resulted in job insecurity becoming a major aspect of economies across the world and that has affected the wellbeing of employees. Within the literature, significant attention has been paid to job insecurity due to the unstable economic conditions and the implications they have towards wellbeing of individuals and organisational attitudes. Those crises of 2008 resulted in downsizing and led to the conditions of employees changing as organisations undertook huge restructuring initiatives in order to try and find a fit to new economic circumstances (Taamneh, 2020).

The job insecurity concept changed from the 1960s/70s to the 1980s from being related to job security (motivator) to job insecurity (stressors) (Greenhalgh and Rosenblatt, 1984). Economic change within the 1980s and up until recent years have created instability across the world and led to greater interest being paid to studying the impact of those changes upon both employees and organisations. Changes to the global economy since 1980 have impacted upon the labour market and this has resulted in increased perceptions of job insecurity (De Cuyper, Bernhard-Oettel, Bernston, De Witte and Alarco, 2008; Silla, De Cuyper, Gracia, Peiro, and De Witte, 2009). Furthermore, particular interest has been paid by researchers to perceptions of job insecurity amongst individuals that have work arrangements that are non-standard, including forms of work employment that are temporary and fixed term. Job insecurity relates to feeling regarding the potential that a job may be lost, and it results in feelings of various kinds of stress. There could, indeed, be cruel consequences whether or not the fear materialises into the actual loss of the job in question (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984). Also, job insecurity is seen as being a key job stress factor that obstructs the functioning of employees (Cheng and Chan, 2008). Pienaar et al. (2013) when it refers to work-related stress, job instability is one of the most common, established, by way of their many years of research, that it had major outcomes such as worse levels of health, increased organisational turnover, decreased levels of job satisfaction and lower levels of organisational performance and commitment.

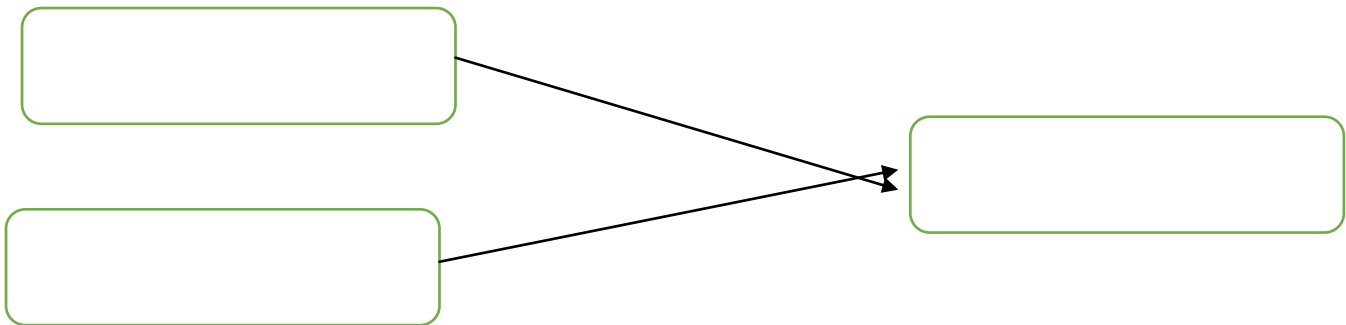
Greenhalgh and Rosenblatt (1984) noted that a differentiation may be made between affective and cognitive job insecurity. Later, affective and cognitive job insecurity were employed within the work of Ashford et al. (1989), Borg (1992). Also, De Witte (2000) developed measures for affective and cognitive job insecurity. A cognitive process is triggered by job insecurity that requires estimation of the probability, the content and timing of potential work loss/reduction, and it also calls for the affected individual to appraise their ability of responding to such threats (Jacobson, 1987). Indeed, Lazarus and Folkman (1984) have suggested that cognitive appraisal is related to cognitive processes associated with job insecurity. Jacobson (1991) considered that the reaction that individuals have to job insecurity is to evaluate likelihood that the job will be lost and to evaluate whether that likelihood can be perceived as being positive, stressful or irrelevant. It has been shown in numerous previous studies that job satisfaction, commitment to an organisation and job performance are increased by high levels of job security, whilst low levels of job security results in absenteeism, job dissatisfaction, poor job performance and desire for leaving the job (Bryson, Cappellari and Lucifora, 2009; Hank and Erlinghagen, 2011; Purwanto et al 2021).

Prior research have revealed the link between job security and QWL. It was suggested by Drobic et al. (2010) that those employees with secure pay and jobs tend to feel comfortable within their place of work and that, too, has an impact upon quality of life. A literature review was undertaken by Nanjundeswaraswamy and Swamy (2013) that discovered that job security was a key factor that affected the QWL of workers. Indeed, job insecurity may be a key factor impacting upon the QWL of employees within a university setting (Letoane, 2013). Job insecurity leads to decreasing levels of job satisfaction and leads to work-life imbalance and high stress levels which, eventually, result in low levels of QWL (Sushil, 2013).

As such, the expectation for this study is that it will be found that job insecurity impacts significantly upon QWL amongst workers. So, the hypothesis is made, as follows:

H2: A significant relationship exists between work-life quality and job insecurity

**Figure1
Theoretical Framework**



4. Data Analysis

Table 1 Cronbach’s alpha results and the results for convergent validity for the overall CFA model

Construct	Convergent validity		
	Internal reliability (Cronbach’s)	Average variance extracted (AVE) ^a	Composite reliability
RA	0.953	0.801	0.874
JI	0.847	0.701	0.899
QWL	0.917	0.576	0.915

Concern lies over the process of elimination of ten items from the 47-item original model. However, that number is considered relatively low when compared to the earlier number of 47 items. So, it is not considered that the removal will significantly change construct concept since they have been conceptualised. The results shown within Table 1 demonstrates that the values of AVE All of them are higher than the recommended cut-off value of 0.5. The range of AVE values goes from a value of 0.576 to a value of 0.801. The range of composite reliability values goes from a value of 0.874 to a value of 0.915 and, therefore, above the recommended 0.6 value (Bagozzi and Yi, 1988). Likewise, the value for Cronbach’s alpha is in the range from a value of 0.847 to a value of 0.953 and so above the recommended 0.7 threshold value (Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994). As such, therefore, the Cronbach’s alpha obtained for all of the constructs was considered to be at a sufficiently error-free level.

Table 2 Discriminant validity for the overall modified measurement model

	RA	JI	QWL
Role ambiguity (RA)	0.862		
Job insecurity (JI)	0.301	0.835	
Quality of work-life (QWL)	0.267	0.292	0.759

N.B. Diagonals are representing average variance extracted square root whilst other entries are representing square correlations.

Table 3 Descriptive statistic of variables results

Constructs	Mean	Standard deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Quality of work-life (QWL)	3.262	0.735	1.3	4.66
Role ambiguity (RA)	3.757	0.939	1.43	4.71
Job insecurity (JI)	3.691	0.906	1.29	5

The standard deviation represents an index of dispersion that shows the extent to which the individual values in each variable are differing from variable mean. It is shown by the analysis that variable RA (role ambiguity) has a value that is the highest, with SD of 0.939.

The implication is that high variability exists in the perception of respondents with regard to RA. The lowest obtained standard deviation, however, was for QWL (quality of work-life) with SD of a value of 0.735; the indication is that there is a minimal variability in the perceptions of respondents towards QWL.

Table 4 Examination of the hypotheses variables results within the structural model

Path	Unstandardised estimate		Standardised estimate	c.r.	P-value	Hypothesis result
	Estimate	S.E.	Beta			
RA → QWL	0.096	0.041	0.142*	2.321	0.02	H1supported
JI → QWL	0.123	0.048	0.173*	2.553	0.011	H2supported

*p < 0.05, **p < 0.01, ***p < 0.001

The results shown within Table 4 show path analysis of JI (job insecurity), RA (role ambiguity) and QWL (quality of work-life) were all statistically significant since p-values lay below the 0.05 standard significance level. So, hypotheses H1 and H2 can be supported.

H1) RA (role ambiguity) has a positive impact upon QWL (quality of work-life)

When it refers to the relation between RA (role ambiguity) and QWL (quality of work-life), the p-value and C.R. are 0.02 and 2.321, respectively. The indication is that possibility of obtaining C.R. as big as 2.321 is 0.02 at the absolute value. Moreover, weight of regression of RA in terms of predicting for QWL has significance difference from zero at the level of 0.05. Hence, there is support for hypothesis H1. Since beta value is 0.142, there is further support since it implies that there is a relationship. In regard to statistical analysis, the results show that when RA goes higher by a standard deviation, then QWL rises by a standard deviation of 0.142.

H2) JI (job insecurity) has a positive impact on QWL (quality of work-life)

Likewise with regard to H4, the relationship between QWL (quality of work-life) and JI job insecurity) has a p-value and C.R. of 0.011 and 2.553, respectively. The indication is that probability for obtaining C.R. as big as 2.553 for absolute value lies at a value of 0.011. Moreover, regression weight for JI (job insecurity) with forecasting of QWL (quality of work-life) has significant difference, at the 0.05 level, from zero. Hence, there is support for hypothesis H4. There is further support from the 0.173 beta value, with the implication of a positive relationship. In regard to statistical analysis, the results indicate that when JI increases by a standard deviation, then QWL rises by a standard deviation of 0.173.

5. Discussion

The majority of prior research in the field is in disagreement with findings from this study. It has been found by a number of researchers, including Koustelios et al. (2004), Normala (2010), Beena (2011) and Bolhari et al. (2012) and Enaizan., et al (2020), that role ambiguity has an effect upon job satisfaction and QWL that is negative. Nonetheless, previous research is also in agreement with the study findings from this research. For instance, it was found by Palomino and Frezatti (2016) that, within Brazil, role ambiguity impacts positively upon job satisfaction. So, a number of studies have revealed findings that similar to the one of this study. A possible explanation for this is that difficulties in finding jobs makes workers alert to increases in job insecurity so they attempt to become equipped with new capabilities and new tasks and to demonstrate organisational commitment and enhance productivity so as not to be included with people destined to be laid off or replaced.

Efforts to fit within that environment lead to increases in QWL since workers are managing to remain employed even though the employment is faced with difficult circumstances. The majority of relevant prior research disagree with findings from this study. Based upon study findings related to the European Foundation, Pisheh (2012) found job security to be a key indicator for consideration in improving working and living conditions for the designing and measuring of a quality in work framework. Within a study related to public employees in Iran, Pisheh (2012) found job stress and job insecurity to be correlated. It was pointed out by Sushil (2013) that an organisational environment that is competitive creates feeling of job insecurity and decreases levels of job satisfaction. He added that work/life imbalance and high stress levels eventually result in low quality for working life.

Job security is considered a key factor of concern for employees since it leads to improvement in QWL (Swamy, Nanjundeswaraswamy and Rashmi, 2015; Eneizan., et al 2021).

Noor and Abdullah (2012) consider that once job security is perceived by an employee, they have greater willingness for being an active participant, and that results in higher QWL. When there is job insecurity that results in different attitudes between non-permanent and permanent employees (Cuyper and Witte, 2010). Further studies have supported significant impacts upon employees from job insecurity within service industries (see Sushil, 2013) or educational institutions, including university (see Letoane, 2013; Rawwash., et al 2020). The reason for their being contradiction between previous study findings and those from this study, however, could, in the main, be related to education levels and opportunities for finding other jobs. Previous research was undertaken upon academic staff or upon employees that were working within large firms within good positions. This study, however, was undertaken within Jordan involving workers that were working for 10 hours with a salary of just 110 to 160 USD per month. So, differences in nature of respondents and the context could have contributed to contradictions between findings from this particular study and other research.

6. Recommendations

A review of the literature has shown that studies are lacking that pertain to QWL within developing countries. For future potential studies it is recommended that investigations are undertaken of QWL in developing countries. If such studies are conducted then valuable help can be given to understanding QWL amongst employees within developing countries. Our particular study was undertaken with academic staff. It is recommended that some future studies are undertaken to make comparisons of QWL amongst other workers. Since employees may have a different level of satisfaction with their QWL if they feel they are able to find another job, future studies could investigate ability in finding other work as a type of moderator between, role ambiguity, job insecurity and QWL. Also, studies could investigate the impact on QWL of various additional variables such as the impact of transformational and transactional leadership styles, salary levels, organisational support and economic uncertainty. Finally, as this study was only undertaken within private universities, it is recommended that future studies could be undertaken that examine QWL amongst employees working within different context.

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