THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ROLE STRESSORS

AND

ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT

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Research report in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master Business Administration

June 2006

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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ABSTRACT

Level of education is one of the measures of nations' wealth. Good quality graduates who are knowledgeable, adaptable and versatile to a great extent promised a realization of the nations' vision. Thus, this had caused a need to have committed lecturers who are responsible to produce such graduates. As a result, these lecturers faced role stressors in their workplace because there are many demands, expectations and workload that are at times unmanageable. The present study was carried out to examine the relationship between work role stressors and organizational commitment among public university lecturers. A self-administrated questionnaire was used to measure the variables of the present study. The questionnaires were distributed to the public university lecturers in Malaysia and out of 650 questionnaires distributed, 122 were returned useful. The major findings of the present study showed that role ambiguity and role conflict were the two role stressors that were negatively related to organizational commitment. It was also discovered that role ambiguity was the most dominant role stressor to organizational commitment. In the other hand, role overload was found insignificant to organizational commitment among lecturers. It is hoped that the findings of the present study will offer insights to issues relating to sources of stress, specifically role stressor among lecturers in both public and private universities that would lead to organizational commitment to their universities.

ABSTRAK

Kekayaan sebuah negara boleh diukur dengan taraf pendidikan penduduknya. Graduan yang berkualiti tinggi, yang mana berpengetahuan, mudah menyesuaikan diri dan berkebolehan mampu menrealisasikan visi sesebuah negara. Oleh itu, pensyarah yang komited dan bertanggungjawab untuk melahirkan graduan sedemikian amat diperlukan. Kesannya, kadang-kala pensyarah menghadapi tekanan peranan di tempat kerja kerana terdapat banyak permintaan, harapan dan beban kerja yang tidak mampu untuk dilaksanakan. Kajian ini dilakukan dengan tujuan untuk mengkaji hubungan tekanan peranan di tempat kerja dengan komitmen terhadap organisasi di kalangan pensyarah di universiti awam. Data telah dikumpulkan melalui edaran borang soal-selidik yang diedarkan kepada pensyarah di beberapa buah universiti awam di Malaysia. Sejumlah 650 borang soal-selidik diedarkan dan hanya 122 borang dikembalikan berguna untuk kajian ini. Dapatan kajian menunjukkan bahawa konflik peranan dan ketidaktentuan peranan mempunyai hubungan yang signifikan negatif dengan komitmen terhadap organisasi di kalangan pensyarah. Tambahan, ketidaktentuan peranan merupakan tekanan peranan yang paling ketara terhadap komitmen organisasi. Walau bagaimanapun, hasil kajian menunjukkan bahawa peranan berlebihan tidak mempengaruhi komitmen terhadap organisasi. Selain itu, hasil kajian ini diharap dapat membantu menyelesaikan isu yang berkaitan dengan punca stres umumnya dan stres peranan khasnya di kalangan pensyarah baik di universiti awam mahupun swasta.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Our future lies in the hands of our children. Proper education and guidance is vital to nurture the future leaders of the country. Education is the invaluable asset a human being gain to prepare them for the future. Hence, lecturers are important group of people who are responsible to mould the life of the students. Their role is crucial to educate and guide the students.

As such, strong organizational commitment among lecturers will lead to proper guidance and excellent teachings to the students. In order to have the sense of belonging to the organization they work for, lecturers should have accurate and clear understanding on their role as educators and suitable workload.

It is generally recognized that teaching is a stressful occupation and past research has supported this (Travers & Cooper, 1993). The work roles specifically lead to the greater portion of stress. In related research, Beehr and McGrath (1992) noted that negative outcomes examined in role stress research almost exclusively involve the individual's well-being. These outcomes include dissatisfaction with work, dissatisfaction with life, low self-esteem, depressed mood, self-reported fatigue, tension or anxiety, and several risk factors in coronary heart disease that have been shown to be related to role stressors. However, although role stressors are known to affect individuals adversely, their effect on organizationally valued states of the individual, such as organizational commitment has received less attention.

1.2 Problem Statement

Having too many roles and different instructions in completing a job will lead to work pressure and low level of commitment towards the organization. Individuals may face difficulties following orders differently from different people and having more than one role in the workplace. Role stressors are a major concern in the workplace as it will result to low organizational commitment.

The role of a lecturer is becoming too demanding each day and new targets are set to improve the quality of education each year. A number of responsibilities are assumed to be on their shoulders and to perform well is not a choice. From having a main duty that is to educate students and to carry out numerous researches have been norms in the list of responsibilities of a lecturer. The frequency of attending seminars and publishing academic articles and books will determine their appraisal each year.

In addition, pressure to upgrade their level of education from master's level to postgraduate level, from a doctor to a professorship and et cetera adds on to their existing duties. The more they accomplished, the better they will be evaluated. At times, they were forced to give more attention to other duties while forgetting their primary duty that is to educate students. Educating students is much related to time and energy consumption for a promising result. Also, the numbers of students are increasing every year. For example, a lecturer could have about 1,000 students in his class. Just imagine how hard the responsibilities that the lecturer has.

Role stress is a major factor in defining ones' commitment to the organization. Role clarity is important to ensure organizational commitment among employees and it refers to the extent to which employees possess a precise understanding of their fit and function within a given context. Employees who clearly understand their organizational roles have been found to experience less anxiety and higher levels of commitment. Role conflict, role ambiguity and role overload are three major role stressors faced by employees. Employees experience role stress (role conflict, role ambiguity and role overload) when conflicting job demands are placed on them, or when they are unsure what is expected of them in certain job situations, or when there is much to do at one time. Most research studies have indicated that the influence of role stress on most job outcomes is negative.

Teaching is an occupation that demands many roles (Koustelios, Theodorakis & Goulimaris, 2004) especially among lecturers in public universities. Thus, it is very important for us to study the elements of role stressors which would lead to lower level of organizational commitment and indirectly impact the quality of education, work quality and productivity among lecturers.

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Also, the issue on Malaysian graduates especially from the local university faced difficulties to get a job addressed the responsibilities that lecturers are group of people that could help better equip students to face the working environment. On the other hand, students themselves, their families, the syllabus of the courses offered and et cetera play another role in determining graduates to be employed. However, high levels of commitment among lecturers contribute to better teaching style and excellent supervision to students. Thus, it is crucial to identify role stressors that would lead to organizational commitment.

This present study concentrates on the relationship between role stressors namely role conflict, role ambiguity, role overload and organizational commitment. In the present study, our focus is on lecturers' role stressors.

1.3 Research Objectives

There are a few main research objectives in the present study. The research objectives are as follows:

1. To examine whether there is a relationship between role stressors (role conflict, role ambiguity and role overload) and organizational commitment.

2. To justify role stressor (role conflict, role ambiguity and role overload) that gives the most impact on organizational commitment.

1.4 Research Questions

There are a two main research questions in the present study which are:

1. Is there a significant relationship between role stressors (role conflict, role ambiguity and role overload) and organizational commitment?

2. Which role stressor (role conflict, role ambiguity and role overload) gives the most impact on organizational commitment?

1.5 Significance of the Present Study

The present study is a follow-up to the research on organizational commitment and role stressors that contribute to the modern organizational behavior literature in the following ways:

First, the present study aims to fill in the gap in the literature of role stressors and organizational commitment especially among lecturers. Most studies focus on the organizational factors that caused stress among employees. There were limited studies done on the role stressors that would lead to work-related behavior especially organizational commitment. The only study done on organizational commitment in the higher institution of learning in Malaysian setting was by Nasurdin and Barcelona (1997). The sample of their study was expatriate lecturers. The present study is different from other studies as it addressed only the relationship between role stressors and organizational commitment and it identifies the dominant role stressors to organizational commitment among public universities lecturers in Malaysian context. This study was done to revisit the topic of organizational commitment in the higher institution of learning.

Second, as the limited empirical studies were done on role stressors in the Malaysian context, it will acknowledge the stress factors that are distracting the Malaysian lecturers. The result of this study will reveal the importance and impact of role stressors in work setting that might have profound influence on the level of organizational commitment specifically to the lecturers.

Lastly, most studies on role stressors and organizational commitment have been conducted on school teachers (Kostelios et. al, 2004; Conley & Woosley, 2000; Travers et. al., 1993). With the present study done in the higher education institutions settings, the present study hopefully will shed some light on the issues of factors contributing to the lecturers' role stress. Thus, from the results of the present study, the higher education institutions, specifically the public universities could come up with new ideas to improve their academicians work policies.

1.6 Definition of Key Terms

There are a few key terms in the present study. Among them are role stressors, mainly role conflict and role ambiguity, role overload and organizational commitment.

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1.6.1 Role Stressors

According to Pareek (1993), role is a set of functions one performs in response to the expectations of the "significant others", and one's own expectations from that position or office. Each role has its system. This consists of the role occupant and those who have a direct relationship with him, and thereby, certain expectations from the role. These "significant others" having expectations are role senders. They send expectations to the role. A role occupant also has expectation from his role; he too is a role sender (Aziz, 2004).

On the other hand, Ivancevich and Matteson (1993), defined stress simply as the interaction of the individual with the environment and in their detailed working condition, it is defined as an adaptive response, mediated by individual differences and/or psychological processes, that is the consequence of any external (environmental) action, situation, or event that places excessive psychological and/or physical demands upon a person. The physical or psychological demands from the environment that cause stress are called stressors (Hellriegel, Slocum & Woodman, 1998). In addition, Johns and Saks (2005) defined stressors as environmental events or conditions that have the potential to induce stress.

Role demands are stressors associated with the role a person is expected to play (Moorhead & Griffin, 2001). At times, it is too the demanding to play a role without enough information, guidelines and ample time. Thus, role stressors are a set of functions one performs in response to the expectations on them that have potential to cause stress. Abraham (1997) stated that role stressors consist of role conflict, role ambiguity and role overload.

1.6.1.1 Role Conflict

According to Sarbin (1954), role conflict occurs when a person occupies two or more position simultaneously and when the role expectations of one are incompatible with the role expectations of the other.

1.6.1.2 Role Ambiguity

Role ambiguity has been described as the situation where an individual does not have a clear direction about the expectations of his or her role in the job or organization (Rizzo, House & Lirtzman, 1970).

1.6.1.3 Role Overload

Role overload occurs when expectations for the role exceed the individual's capabilities (Moorhead & Griffin, 2004). Overload may be of two types: qualitative or quantitative (Ivancevich & Matteson, 2002). Quantitative work overload is the person has too many tasks to perform or too little time to perform them and qualitative work overload is the person may believe he or she lacks the ability to do the job (Moorhead & Griffin, 2004).

1.6.2 Organizational Commitment

Organizational commitment has been defined by Porter, Steers, Mowday and Boulin, (1974) as the relative strength of an individual identification with and involvement in a particular organization. Mowday, Porter and Steers (1982) have shown the concept of organizational commitment characterized by three factors: a strong belief in and acceptance of the organization's goals and values, willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organization and a strong desire to maintain membership in the organization.

1.7 Organizations of Chapters

Chapter 1 renders an overview of the present study pertaining to problem statement, research questions, definitions of key terms, and significance of the present study. Chapter 2 reviews the literature on organizational commitment and the work role stressors. Also, this chapter discusses the theoretical framework and the hypotheses development. Chapter 3 illustrates the methodology applied in the present study which encompasses the research design, population/sample, data collection procedures, measures and data analyses. In chapter 4, the findings obtained including the hypotheses testing of the present study were discussed. Chapter 5 provides discussions and implications of the present study's findings. It also highlights the limitations of the

present study and proposes some suggestions for future research. Lastly, to wrap up the present study a concluding remark was stated.

CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews the relevant literature that forms the basis of the present study. It constitutes a review of the past literature on role stressors mainly, role conflict, role ambiguity, role overload and organizational commitment.

Next, this chapter depicts the theoretical framework of the present study and the formulation of hypotheses. Finally, it provides a summary of the chapter discussion and overview of the subsequent chapter.

2.2 Organizational Commitment

Since the pioneering work of Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn, Snoek, and Rosenthal (1964) on organizational role dynamics, extensive research has investigated the relationships between work role stressors and a variety of consequences such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, job performance, and turnover. In the present study, our main focus is on the role stressors mainly role conflict, role ambiguity and role overload.

Definitions of commitment have widely been interpreted and differs from one another. Hall, Schneider and Nygren (1970) defined commitment as "the process by which the goals of the organization and those of individual become increasingly integrated or congruent". However, commitment to Hrebiniak and Alutto (1972) is focused more on exchange, or participation framework. According to Hrebiniak et. al, (1972), commitment is "a result of individual-organizational transactions and alterations in side bets or investments over time". Side bets or investments refer to effort, time, development of work friendship, skills and political deals, constitute sunk costs that diminish the attractiveness of external employment alternatives (Tan, 1998).

Buchanan (1974), viewed commitment as "a partisan, affective attachment to the goals and values of the organization, to one's role in relation to goals and values and to

the organization for its own sake, apart from its instrumental worth". Hence, this psychological approach to commitment consisted of identifying the strength of an employee's attitude towards the organization and its goals (Zin, 1999).

Research in organizational commitment was earlier done and dominated by the Organizational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ) developed by Porter and his colleagues (Porter et. al., 1974; Mowday, Steers & Porter, 1979). Organizational commitment has been defined by Porter et. al., (1974) as the relative strength of an individual identification with and involvement in a particular organization.

Additionally, Mowday, et al., (1982) have shown the concept of organizational commitment characterized by three factors: a strong belief in and acceptance of the organization's goals and values, willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organization and a strong desire to maintain membership in the organization. In other words, this is an attitude reflecting employee's loyalty to their organization and is an ongoing process through which organizational participants express their concern for the organization and its continued success and well-being.

2.2.1 Dimensions of Organizational Commitment

Organizational commitment was first been conceptualized along two different perspectives that is attitudinal or behavioral in early years of 1990. Similarly, Mathieu and Zajac, (1990) claimed that there are two wide known views of commitment: attitudinal or affective commitment and behavioral or continuance commitment.

Attitudinal or affective commitment assumes that an individual identifies with a particular organization, accepts its goals and values and is therefore committed to maintain membership in the organization. This perspective has been measured with a scale known as the Organizational Commitment Questionnaire developed by Porter and his colleagues (Porter et. al. 1974).

Becker (1960) noted that "commitments come into being when a person, by making a side-bet, links extraneous interests with a consistent line of activity". His "side-bet theory" had bred the behavioral perspective. Hence, the individual maintained his or her membership in the organization because of the various perceived costs associated with leaving. Side-bets are created by (1) generalized cultural expectations, if violated,

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involve penalties; (2) impersonal bureaucratic arrangements, such as pensions and seniority provisions; (3) individual adjustments to social positions, such that a person can become unfit for new jobs or organizations; (4) self-presentation concerns, or concerns about living up to a social image; (5) nonwork concerns, such as family and community involvement (Shore, Tetrick, Shore & Barksdale, 2000). Behavioral commitment has been first measured with scales developed by Ritzer and Trice (1969) and later modified by Hrebiniak and Alutto (1972) and Alutto, Hrebiniak and Alonso (1973).

Meyer and Allen (1984) first conceptualized organizational commitment as two dimensions after continuing the work of Porter et. al. (1974). It consists of affective and continuance commitment dimensions. Based on the work of Weiner (1982), the third dimension of organizational commitment that is the normative commitment which was developed (Allen & Meyer 1990), he latter said that "committed individuals may exhibit certain behaviors not because they have figured that by doing so is to their personal benefit, but because they believe that it is the right and moral thing to do." He defined organizational commitment as the "totality of internalized normative pressures to act in a way that meets organizational interests".

A theoretical model of organizational commitment that postulated the various linkages between the three components of commitment and their antecedents, correlates and consequences was proposed by Meyer and Allen (1991). This is now commonly known as Meyer and Allen's (1991) Three-Component Model of Organizational Commitment. In this model, there are three separate components that develop independently and have different consequences for employee behavior in defining commitment that characterizes an employee's relationship with the organization. The components are affective commitment, continuance commitment and normative commitment.

According to Meyer and Allen (1991), affective commitment refers to identification with, involvement in and emotional attachment to the organization, in the sense that employees with strong affective commitment remain with the organization, because they want to do so. In this model, normative commitment refers to commitment based on sense of obligation to the organization. Thus, those with strong normative commitment remain with the organization, because they feel that they ought to do so.

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Also, continuance commitment refers to commitment based on employees' recognition of the costs associated with leaving the organization.

Earlier, Meyer and Allen (1984) developed eight items each for each component or dimension of organizational commitment. Later, a revision of the three scales was undertaken with the normative commitment scale being revised most extensively (Meyer, Allen & Smith, 1993). The revised scales each comprise six items.

Recently, the foci of organizational commitment has been a new interest. It investigates the commitment towards specific entities such as supervisor, co-worker, work group, and the overall organization (Becker, 1992; Becker, Billings, Eveleth & Gilbert, 1996). In relation, Swailes (2004) conducted a research on profiles of commitment and in-role performance among public and private accountants. Using four cluster employees that have been studied empirically by Becker (1992) that is first, "the committed" showed above the average commitment to their organization, to top management, to their supervisor and to their work group. Secondly, "globally committed" showed high commitment to their organization and top management but not to their supervisor and or their work group. The third cluster the "locally committed" showed high commitment to the work group and the supervisor only. The fourth cluster, the "uncommitted" showed low commitment to all four foci. The study found that both public and private accountants revealed clusters that contained employees who show above average commitment to all four foci and employees who show below average commitment to all four foci. The public accountants also revealed a cluster of locally committed employees and the private sector management accountants clustered slightly differently and revealed a cluster that shows above average commitment to the work group and below the average to the organization, supervisor and top management. It was concluded that the usefulness of management efforts aimed at obtaining commitment to local foci is endorsed by the findings linking cluster types to achievement-related and innovation-related behavior and is particularly important for public accountants.

2.2.2. Determinants and Outcomes of Organizational Commitment

Determinants of organizational commitment are quite diverse in their nature and origins (Steers, 1977) and understanding the antecedents of commitment and managing

them to secure employee commitment in specific sectors and organizations is, ultimately, improved organizational performance (Maxweel & Steele, 2003). Because of the range of theories and diversity of antecedents, categories are useful. In general, personal characteristics, work-related characteristics, group-leader relations, organizational characteristics, and role-related characteristics have been considered as sources of commitment (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Meyer et al., 1991; Mowday et al., 1982). Steers (1977), developed four categories of organizational commitment antecedents: personal characteristics, job-or role-related characteristics, work experiences and structural characteristics (Mowday et al. 1979).

Similarly, according Nasurdin and Barcelona (1997), antecedents of organizational commitment can be grouped into two categories, namely demographic and organizational variables. In their study on the determinants of organizational commitment among expatriates in institutions of higher learning in Malaysia, demographic variables consist of age, gender, education, marital status, number of dependents, tenure and personality factors. The organizational variables include factors that relate to an employee's roles such as role ambiguity and role conflict, job characteristics, structural characteristics and others. In relation, Luthans (1998) confirmed a number of personal (age, tenure in organization, and dispositions such as positive or negative affectivity, or internal or external control attributions) and organizational (the job design and the leadership style of one's supervisor) variables are the determinants of the organizational commitment attitude.

Maxwell and Steele (2003) explored the organizational commitment, discussed the main antecedents and outcomes among managers in large hotels. It was found that avoiding role conflict and role ambiguity for managers by defining job responsibilities appropriately is vital to promise high organizational commitment.

A study by Elizur and Koslowsky (2001) was on values and organizational commitment. The primary objective of the study was to examine the relationship between work values, gender, and organizational commitment conducted on students who work outside school. It was found that work values, especially cognitive ones, are positively related with commitment and the interaction of values with gender was also found to be a significant predictor of commitment.

Gupta, Prinzinger and Messerschmidt (1998) did a study on the role of organizational commitment in advanced manufacturing technology and performance relationship. Their study was different from other as it utilized an advanced manufacturing technology (AMT) intensity index to examine the variations in a company's performance as a function of the simultaneous effect of organizational commitment and the dimensions of manufacturing technology intensity and, also using the moderator hypothesis, examined a proposal that the greater the organizational commitment complemented AMT's competences, the greater would be the performance impact of AMT. The result of the study indicates that elements described as complementary to advanced manufacturing technology strengths such as desire to keep membership and willingness to exert effort on behalf of the organization interact negatively with advanced manufacturing technology.

Many researchers have acknowledged that organizational commitment is closely linked with important work behaviors such as absenteeism (Blau & Boal, 1987, 1989), turnover intentions and actual turnover (Blau et al., 1987; Clugston, 2000; Porter, Steers, Mowday & Boulian, 1974; Tett & Meyer, 1993), and job performance (Angle & Perry, 1981; Steers, 1977).

Jernigan, Beggs and Kohut (2002) did a research on the dimensions of work satisfaction as predictors of commitment type. Dissatisfaction with organizational policies, autonomy, and professional status were significant predictors of affective commitment and affective and continuance commitment were found to correlate positively with job satisfaction, while normative commitment was found to correlate negatively. In addition, no dimension of work satisfaction was found to be a significant predictor of calculative commitment.

O'Reilly and Chatman (1981) demonstrated that the consequences of commitment vary according to the individual's basis of attachment. Many different outcomes of commitment have been researched and principal among them are adoption of the organization's norms and goals, and employee performance (Maxwell & Steele, 2003). In a study on the public accountants by Stallworth (2004), attitudinal or affective commitment is the best predictor of intention to leave. Also, organizational commitment was found to be significant determinants of organizational performance (Iverson,

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McLeod & Erwin, 1996). In short, determinants and outcomes of organizational commitment vary across organization, individual's basis of attachment and non-work environment.

In the present study, our focus is on attitudinal commitment which attaches the individual to the organization. According to Mowday et al. (1979), attitudinal commitment has been defined as the relative strength of an individual's identification with, and involvement in a particular organization. The concept of commitment can be characterized by at least three factors: (a) a strong belief in, and acceptance of, the organization's goals and values, (b) a willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organization; and (c) a strong desire to remain in the organization (Mowday et al. 1979).

2.2.3 Model of Teacher Commitment

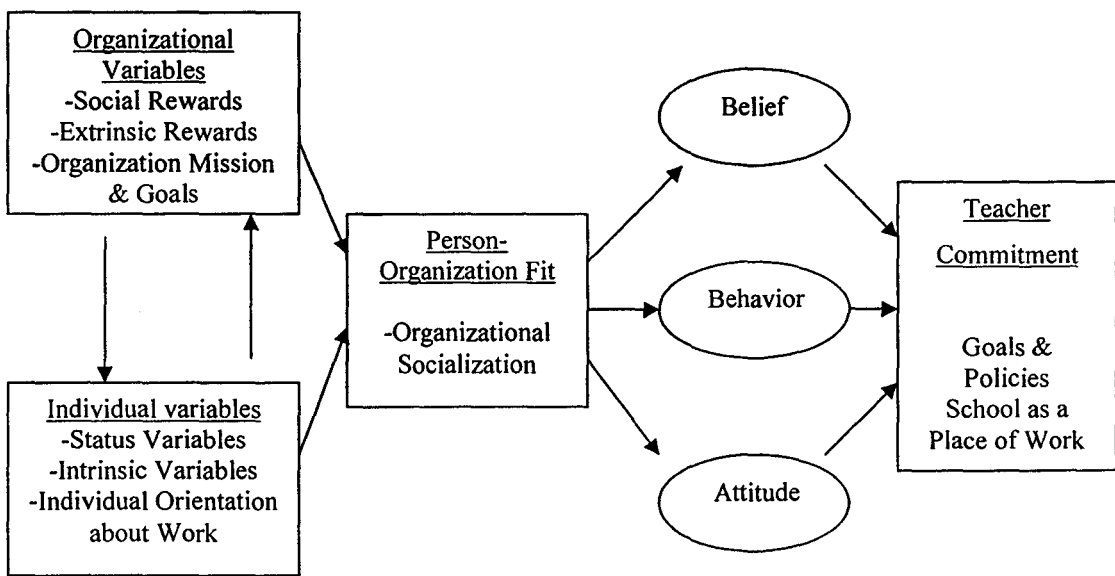*Figure 2.1*   Model of Teacher Commitment to an Organization (Reyes, 1990).

In a model of teacher commitment developed by Reyes (1990), several antecedents of commitment were assumed: individual variables, organizational variables, person-organization fit, beliefs, behaviors, attitude formation and outcomes of commitment. Mowday et al. (1982), reported that many studies show tenure to be positively related to

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commitment (Brown, 1969; Sheldon, 1970; Angle & Perry, 1981; Morris & Sherman, 1981). This also applies in the teaching profession as study by Rosenholtz (1989) and Freeston (1987) proved that teachers with greater tenure in organization are more committed that those with lesser tenure. They also found a relationship between relative age of teachers and the level of commitment. Older lecturers had higher level of organizational commitment. Contrary to this, one of the empirical findings in Balfour's research (1990) is that individual characteristics (tenure, education, professional association, age, gender, position, internal motivation) has no significant effect on organizational commitment. Othman (1996) also found that gender has no effect on commitment.

In Reyes (1990), model of teacher commitment, intrinsic variables form the characteristics of the job tasks that are shown to affect commitment include task identity – the extent to which the expectation of the workers and the requirements of the task are compatible, the opportunity for optional social interaction in completing tasks (Steers, 1977); task involvement – the extent to which teachers are involved in planning and making decisions about their jobs (Weiner & Gechman, 1977); and task autonomy – the amount of authority teachers have to decide on the matters relating their work environment. It has been argued that the overall orientation of the teachers affects commitment in Reyes' study. According to Reyes (1990), the work orientation of the teachers correlates with commitment.

In this model, organizational variables include social rewards, extrinsic rewards and organizational orientation. Social rewards include the relationship between the teacher and people in his/her work environment. This includes relationship with supervisor, subordinate and students. If the relationship is perceived as positive, it will enhance the commitment of teachers. Extrinsic rewards were viewed as the pay and benefits of working in the organization. If teacher perceived the reward as satisfying, they are believed to be more committed to the organization. It has been defined by Reyes (1990), that organizational orientation was referred to the overall value orientation of a school. Emphasizing normative aspects of school will generate higher level of commitment (Reyes, 1990).

Person-organization fit was defined as socialization which is the process by which an employee learns the values, norms and required behaviors that permit participation as a member of the organization (London, 1985). In the teaching profession, this implies to the shared values, norms and goals.

Reyes (1990) reported that socialization involves the interaction of individual background, experiences, interpretation of messages and the administrative hierarchy. Teachers then develop beliefs in the goals and policies of the organization, behave in ways that the organization expects and build up positive attitudes about the organization. The composite of these beliefs, behaviors and attitudes leads to the development of teacher commitment.

2.2 Role Stressors

Role denotes a set of functions one performs in response to the expectations of others and stressors are the antecedents of stress (Champoux, 2000). Stress is a dynamic condition in which an individual is confronted with an opportunity, constraint, or demand related to what he or she desires and for which the outcome is perceived to be both uncertain and important (Robbins, 2003). Thus, role stressors include condition where employees have difficulty understanding, reconciling, or performing the various roles in their lives (McShane & Glinow, 2003).

Role stressors can be define as a set of functions one performs in response to the expectations on them that have potential to cause stress. Interaction between individual with the organization through the role assigned to him/her within the organizational structure is an important facet. It is through the role that an individual interacts and becomes integrated in the organization (Aziz, 2004). According to Abraham (1997), role stressors consist of role conflict, role ambiguity and role overload.

2.3.1 Category of Role Stressors

Many scholars had categorized role stressors, namely role conflict, role ambiguity and role overload differently. Luthans (1998) in his macro level organizational stressors model consisting of administration policies and strategies, organizational structure and design, organizational process and working conditions, categorized role conflict and role

ambiguity under the dimension of organizational structure and design. On another hand, he also categorized role conflict, role ambiguity and role overload in the individual level as he believed the stressors (extraorganization, organization and group) all eventually get down to individual level (Luthans, 1998).

Adapting Quick and Quick (1984) framework, Moorhead and Griffin (2004) categorized organizational stressor into four dimensions and overload falls into the task demands. Role conflict and role ambiguity were put into the role demands.

In a simple framework developed by Ivancevich, Matteson Fredman and Phillips (1990), role conflict, role ambiguity and workload were categorized as work and non-work stressors.

A comprehensive model of stress developed by Robbins (2003) comprise of three potential sources of stress. He had categorized role conflict, role ambiguity and role overload under the role demands. In his model, role demands were categorized as one of the dimensions of organizational factors that was believed to be potential source of stress.

Initiating a new model of stress, Johns and Saks (2005) had developed a model by matching level of employees with the sources of stress. From his model, role ambiguity is believed to be the source of stress for all employees. In addition to that, role conflict is a source of stress for boundary roles and role overload matched the executive and managerial level.

In the present study, our focus is on the three role stressors namely role conflict, role ambiguity and role overload.

2.3.2 Role Conflict

Role conflict is defined as the dimensions of congruency-in congruency or compatibility-incompatibility in the role requirements (Rizzo et al., 1970). Hellriegel et al. (1998), viewed role conflict as differing expectations or demands on a person's role at work. It is believed that role conflict occurs when multiple roles an individual is expected to play infringe upon each other (Williams & Alliger, 1994).

Despite variations in the terms used, the central component of all the formulations is incompatibility (Grace, 1972). Incompatibilities may be seen by role occupants to be problems, or seen and felt as problems, in which case the terms 'role strain' and 'role

stress are sometimes used to denote degrees of personal concern. As Kahn (1964) point out, it is possible to examine role conflict as a fact in the environment of the person and as a fact in his internal, psychological life.

Moorhead and Griffin (2001) categorized role conflict into four forms, interrole conflict, intrarole conflict, intrasender conflict and person-role conflict. He noted that role conflict occurs when the messages and cues from others about the role are clear but contradictory or mutually exclusive. Role conflict would cause job dissatisfaction, absenteeism, low organizational commitment and turnover among employees. Also, it is consistently argued in the theory that experience of role conflict will inevitably lead to a reduction in commitment (Morris & Sherman, 1981).

Thus, in the present study defines role conflict as the simultaneous occurrence of two or more sets of pressures (Kahn et al., 1964) such that compliance with one would make more difficult to compliance with other (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985).

2.3.2 Role Ambiguity

According to McShane and Glinow (2003), role ambiguity exists when employees are uncertain about their job duties, performance expectations, level of authority and other job conditions. Opinion on the effects of role ambiguity is apparently more divided than on role conflict. Some researchers believed that role ambiguity is not "a significant independent predictor of commitment" (Morris & Sherman, 1981).

However, many studies had proved that role ambiguity leads to negative job behaviour due to the level of stress. Moorhead and Griffin (2001) stated that role ambiguity arises when a role is unclear and thus be significant source of stress. It is a source of stress because the job lack of clarity needed to perform a task assigned.

Luthans (1998) wrote that role ambiguity results from inadequate information or knowledge to do a job. This ambiguity may due to inadequate training, poor communication, or the deliberate withholding or distortion of information by a coworker or supervisor.

Faced with high stress level, an employee is unable to do the job as expected by the organization. Also, role ambiguity might be expected to lead to lower performance in

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some jobs, simply because workers do not know how to direct their efforts most effectively (Beehr et al., 1976).

In the present study, role ambiguity refers to how unclear job tasks are identified.

2.3.4 Role Overload

Role overload is experienced when the employee is expected to do more than time permits (Robbins, 2003). Adding to that, Moorhead & Griffn (2004) defined role overload occurs when expectations for the role exceed the individual's capabilities. Role overload can be in the form of qualitative overload or. Qualitative overload refers the huge number of task to perform or the limited time to perform the task and on the other hand, quantitative overload occurs when a person may believe that he or she lacks the ability to do the job (Moorhead et al., 2004).

Luthans (1998) wrote that role overload has not received as much attention as role conflict and role ambiguity but it may be just as stress-provoking. In the model stress developed by many scholars, role overload had been categorized as one of the role stressors that would lead to negative outcomes. Hence, the contribution of role overload may be significantly important in determining the organizational commitment. In the present study, role overload refers to qualitative overload and quantitative overload as been defined by Moorhead et al. (2004).

2.4 The Impact of Role Stressors on Organizational Commitment

Foote (2005) studied on the influence of attitude, role clarity and role conflict on policy commitment, as well as the influence of policy commitment on organizational commitment. It has been discussed about the relationship between role clarity and policy commitment that reinforces the importance of working to ensure employees understand their organizational roles thoroughly and precisely. It was also indicated that, clearer understanding of one's role contributes greatly to the successful implementation of policies by raising employee's level of commitment, which can lead to greater conscientiousness, civic virtue and organizational commitment.

Yousef (2002) examined job satisfaction as mediating factor of the relationship between role stressors and organizational commitment. The results that role conflict and

role ambiguity, as sources stress, directly and negatively influence job satisfaction suggested that employees who perceived higher levels of role conflict and role ambiguity will be less satisfied with the job, and hence lead to lower organizational commitment.

The result of a research done by Sigler (1988) suggested that role conflict is not significant concern of police officers. This was aligned with a research on 150 police officers by Jaramillo, Nixon and Sams (2005). The result showed consistency with the findings of the 2000 local police department survey that has indicated that the majority of local police departments have adopted written policies in important issues such as maximum number of hours police officers can work, community policy plans, use of lethal and non-lethal weapons and force, and pursuit driving policies. In conclusion, these results suggested that role ambiguity and role conflict may not be relevant stressors in military type setting with a well-structured chain of command and clearly defined job tasks.

It has been revealed in the study of Lui (2001) that inter role conflict is a predictor of job satisfaction and propensity to leave. Therefore, organizations, should try to reduce inter role conflict by means of better job design and clear work expectations that are aligned with professional values and ethical code. In this study, the researcher suggested a further study to be done by having other moderators such as organizational commitment, trust, and certain individual personality variables between inter role conflict and propensity to leave. It was concluded that the inter role conflict was a major source of job dissatisfaction and propensity to leave among professional accountants

Zahra (1985) reported that role conflict and role ambiguity is negatively related to organizational commitment. Consistent with previous research, Hartenian et al. (1994) reported negative correlation between role conflict and organizational commitment and positive correlation between role clarity and organizational commitment.

Boshoff and Mels (1995) studied a causal model to evaluate the relationships among supervision, role stress, organizational commitment and internal service quality on insurance salespeople. It has been suggested by the researchers that the management of an insurance sales force can enhance internal service quality by creating a working environment where employees identify with the goals, objectives and values of their organization. It was found that organizational commitment of insurance sales people

exerts a strong positive influence on their service quality. In addition, organizational commitment is positively influenced by participation in decision making and negatively influenced by role conflict.

Yousef (2000) did a study on the mediating role of Islamic work ethic in the relationship between locus of control, role conflict and role ambiguity in the Islamic and multicultural environment. In conclusion of his study, Islamic work ethic mediates the relationship. Role ambiguity and individuals with internal locus of control have stronger support on the Islamic work ethic.

Vakola and Nikolaou (2005) studied on attitudes towards organizational change and the role of employees' stress and commitment. It has been revealed a negative correlation between occupational stressors and attitudes to change, indicating that highly stressed individuals demonstrate decreased commitment and increased reluctance to accept organizational change interventions. Specifically, lack of a socially supportive environment, as expressed by bad work relationships, was found to be the strongest predictor of negative attitudes towards change. However, results did not support the role of organizational commitment as a moderator in the relationship between occupational stress and attitudes to change.

A study on effects of role conflict and role satisfaction among nurses, social workers and managers in Hong Kong was done by Chiu (1998). Researcher had pointed out his view on the stress faced by Hong Kong residents resulted from culture clash. On one hand, the Hong Kong residents uphold the Chinese value of giving priorities to family and on the other hand they are influenced by the western value of life which emphasizes work as a means to attain status and career success. This incompatibility between work role and family role results in tension that will lead to low organizational commitment.

Aziz (2004) conducted a study on women informational technology professionals in the Indian private sector. It was concluded in this study that resource inadequacy and role overload were two main role stressors. Higher role overload is reflective of the fact that the information technology professionals are feeling that too much is expected from the role that they can cope with. It has been suggested in the study that organization should divest and invest in strategies that can keep the level of role stress within

manageable limit among women employees. This is because; high level of role stress will lead to negative behavior on job outcome such as low organizational commitment.

Conley and Woosley (2000) investigated the role stress-outcome relationship. In their study, role stressor consisted of role conflict, role ambiguity and role overload. However, role overload was found to be insignificantly related to organizational commitment. The researchers suggested that employers should take wise steps to reduce role stressors among employees that will benefit individuals and organization as a whole.

2.5 Research Purpose

The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between role stressors namely role conflict, role ambiguity and role overload and organizational commitment.

2.6 Theoretical Framework

Based on the discussion above and review from past literature, a theoretical framework of the present study is presented in Figure 2.2
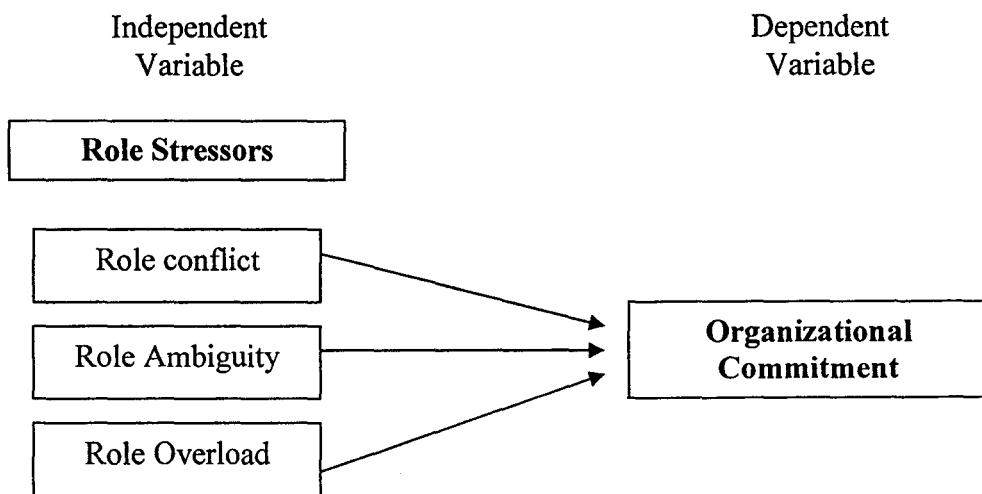
Independent
Variable

Dependent
Variable

| Role Stressors |

| Role conflict |

| Role Ambiguity | → | Organizational Commitment |

| Role Overload |

Figure 2.2   Theoretical Framework.

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2.7 Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were developed from the above theoretical framework.

H_1:   There is a significant negative relationship between role conflict and organizational commitment.

H_2:   There is a significant negative relationship between role ambiguity and organizational commitment.

H_3:   There is a significant negative relationship between role overload and organizational commitment.

2.8   Summary

This chapter reviewed literatures on the independent variables of the present study, i.e., role conflict, role ambiguity and role overload. Meanwhile, the dependent variable that is the organizational commitment was discussed. Three major hypotheses are formulated for the present study. Research methodology of the present study will be discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 3
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study was to determine the relationship between role stressors (role conflict, role ambiguity and role overload) and organizational commitment and the impact of demographic characteristics on this relationship. This chapter describes the methodology that was used to achieve this purpose. Specifically, this section presents the descriptions of : 1) the sample and population; (2) the instrument; (3) data collection procedures; and (4) data analysis procedures.

3.2 Sample and Population

The population for this study was public university lecturers in Malaysia. The sample consisted of university lecturers selected from public universities in Malaysia. The unit of analysis was the individual lecturer who responded to the questionnaire.

Convenient sampling was used to select the sample for the study in order to obtain a large number of completed questionnaires quickly and economically, due to time and budget constraints. Also, in convenient sampling, each unit in the population has the chance to be selected in the present study. A sample of 650 from various public universities lecturers was selected.

In all cases, guidelines were given to lecturers on administering the questionnaires. Questionnaires were then administered to the sample of this study.

3.3 Variables and Measurements

This section will discuss the respective measurements for the independent variables (role conflict, role ambiguity and role overload), and the dependent variables (organizational commitment) applied to the present study. All instruments were adopted from published literature. The questionnaire consists of items. (see Appendix A).