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Predictors of Role Stress Among Malaysian Journalists in Newsroom Decision–Making Process

Stress on the job is a real, growing problem. Not only it is detrimental to industry; it is also expensive in human terms. And for industries such as the mass communications particularly the media organisations that already have a reputation as being stressful, it is a problem that needs immediate attention (Endres and Weardon 1991).

Given the fast-paced, constantly changing nature of the media, one might guess that the best structure for an information company would be one which is a stable and very organised, where work moves in a predictable, timely fashion conducive to the daily deadline demands. However, modern management thinking suggests that the best format to accomplish the goals of a progressive media organisation should not be quite so formal (Lavine and Wackman 1988).

Media managers and leaders, according to Lavine and Wackman (1988) have to deal with a structure that must accomplish two somewhat contradicting objectives: (a) producing media products in an orderly fashion to meet deadlines and (b) producing media products that are fresh, innovative, timely and informative as well as messages that are of high-quality. Whilst the first objective requires that media organisations follow a formal kind of organisational structure, the second objective requires that the employees be given some freedom from a rigid work schedule.

The fundamental distinction between the media and other industries is the factor that gives information organisations

and their managers and workers major challenges. According to Lavine and Wackman (1988:20) besides the enormous deadline pressure that media managers and journalists have to encounter everyday, there are also these challenges that need daily attention:

1. Public policies as well as societal, legal, regulatory and ethical limits that are different, more visible, and often more restrictive than those facing managers in nonmedia industries.
2. The production of a product with content that is brand new each times it reaches the audience market or advertiser market.
3. Managing a workforce whose most important employees are often headstrong and creative, possessing their own ideas about quality – employees who often have more allegiance to their profession than to their employers; and
4. Making decisions in industries where traditional lines of demarcation are rapidly disappearing.

It is the very complexity of these constraints and responsibilities within the media organisations that place media managers and journalists under stressful conditions (Endres and Wearden 1992; Cook and Banks 1993). Such is the nature of the media organisations that a slight occurrence of unexpected important events can greatly enhance tension in the newsroom. Tension before deadlines is something that media managers and journalists have to deal with everyday.

Apart from deadline pressures, journalists and media practitioners uphold certain obligations, ideals and responsibilities. The strain resulting from the conflict between organisational demands and the needs of journalists to maintain autonomy and uphold certain ideals could result in role stress in the newsroom. According to Cooks and Banks (1993), the psychological syndrome of stress and job burnout are linked to job expectations and performance, productivity, job satisfaction and job longevity.

Role Stress

Generally, stress is a term applied to the pressure people feel in life. The presence of stress at work is almost inevitable in many jobs. When pressure begins to build up it can cause

adverse strain on one's emotions, through various processes and physical conditions. When stress becomes excessive, employees develop various symptoms of stress that can harm job performance and health, and even threaten their ability to cope with the environment (Davis and Newstrom 1989).

Otto (1987) suggests that stress arise in the process of interaction between person and environment. She observes that demands and resources (both external and internal) for meeting stress must be well balanced in order to enable people to function comfortably, but any lack of fit between them will generate stress.

Two major areas in understanding role stress are role conflict and role ambiguity. According to Luthans (1992) the result of role conflict and role ambiguity is stressful for the individuals, and there is a substantial body or research indicating undesirable outcomes for the individual and the organisation.

Role conflict occurs when the behavioural expectations for a position differ between two or more parties (Handy 1982). A common role conflict in organisations arises with the conflicting demands on workers from both superiors, subordinates and co-workers.

Kahn et al. (1964) believed that in role conflict there is a simultaneous occurrence of two sets of pressures, and that an individual complying to one set of pressure will find difficulty in complying with the other.

Role conflict can therefore be seen as resulting from certain inconsistencies or incompatibilities between what a person is expected to do and what he aspires to do.

The expectations of each role may be quite clear and the expectations are compatible with the role, but the roles themselves may be in conflict. A woman journalist, for instance, often finds that she is expected to fulfill at one time and the same time the expectations attached to being a woman and the stereotype expectations of successful female journalists especially from their male counterparts. The two roles are in conflict.

Another crucial expectations that shape the definition of role are that of the individual himself who is the focal person, as identified in most role models and theories.

If the individual's conception of his role is unclear or if his conception of his role differs from that of the others in his role

set, there will be a degree of role ambiguity. When an individual experiences role ambiguity, it does not mean that he is not functioning in the organisation. In actuality, he is functioning but the ambiguity may lead to role stress.

Handy (1982) identifies four most frequently cited instances of role ambiguity in a workplace; these include uncertainty about one's work is evaluated, uncertainty about the scope of one's advancement, uncertainty about the scope of one's responsibility and uncertainty about others' expectations of one's performance.

In an open-system, employees of organisations are given job descriptions that help to lessen role ambiguities. However, studies have shown that job descriptions are seldom complete role definitions except at the lower end of the scale (Rizzo et al., 1970; Katz and Kahn 1978; Handy 1982; Liew 1990).

Moorhead and Griffin (1992) suggest that role ambiguity occur because a person is uncertain of his role. In this case, inadequate job descriptions, vague instruction or unclear cues from co-workers are contributory factors that lead to role ambiguity.

Otto (1987) observes that people in some occupations have more power than others to influence decisions, which affect them, and thus the stress problems they faced can be easily resolved.

In the case of newsroom decision-making , the position of journalists in terms of control they can exert over the stress-producing aspects of their jobs, is a more complex one.

Although journalists are professionals whose work roles should not be closely prescribed by others, they are nonetheless the target for a wide range of expectations from 'role senders' who often exert a considerable amount of pressure, not only from within the work place but also from outside. From within, there are chief editors, news editors, managing editors, editorial policies; from the outside there are the pressure groups, readers and audiences, advertisers, politicians and government–not to mention the fact that expectations from all these sources are often in conflict. Hence, these journalists are under constant stress.

Apart from environmental pressure cited above, journalists also face deadline pressure, which is an occupational hazard that causes stress. Journalists have to gather facts quickly and write well within a stipulated time.

However, according to Luthans (1992) people in the creative industries such as newspaper and broadcast journalists, creative directors in the advertising agencies, television announcers and others who work under time pressures would seem to benefit from a mild level of stress. He says mild stress may get employees 'juices' flowing and lead to increased activity, creativity, change and overall better performance.

Decision-making in the Newsroom

There are various departments in the media organisations which are involved in various functions and decision-making. But one of the most important departments, where crucial decisions are made daily, is the newsroom, which is considered the lifeline of a media organisation (Teel and Taylor 1983).

According to Epstein (1973) the daily agenda of reports produced by the media organisations and labeled as 'news' is by no means a product of chance events; it is actually the result of crucial decisions made in the newsrooms. The process of selecting news is known as news decision-making process and it is also a task executed in a hurry due to deadline pressure.

Decision-making in the newsroom comes in various forms which include news evaluation and selection by the news staff; the utilisation of time and resources for news gathering; the assigning of reporters to specific events; the allocation of space for the presentation of news and the like. These are among the numerous tasks that have to be undertaken by reporters and editors in their roles as journalists.

The numerous tasks and decisions that need to be handed within the enormous deadline pressure in the newsroom are major reasons that place media managers and journalists under constant stress especially job-related stress and role stress.

In making news decisions, news organisations basically need to consider their own goals and requirements for surviving in a competitive environment. Decisions made will be based on key decision makers, namely, the editors and editorial managers, and also couple of other chiefs in the editorial department such as the news editors, chief copy editors (sub editors) and chief reporters, who will make

decisions consistent with the organisation's overriding interests. These decisions will in turn shape its product–the news (Epstein 1973).

Although the key decisions are in the hands of top editors, from the author's personal experience, it appears that many reporters are also involved in the initial decision-making at specific stages such as news gathering, factual organisation and writing as well as editing. Thus, both editors and reporters have decisions roles that give them some amount of autonomy within the realms of the journalistic profession.

Studies by scholars have shown that journalists have strong needs for greater participation in news decisions (Epstein 1973; Johnstone et al., 1976; Gans 1980; Joseph 1982; Adams and Fish 1987; Gaziano and Coulson 1988; Powers 1991).

Various studies on participation also showed that lack of participation can be a major source of stress (French et al., 1960; French and Caplan 1972; Jackson 1983; Pearson 1991). These studies have shown that lack of opportunities to participate in the decision process can create strain or stress in the person and even adversely affect satisfaction and productivity.

Media organisations in Malaysia especially the influential national dailies such as *New Sraits Times, Utusan Malaysia, Berita Harian* and *The Star*, the government news agency, BERNAMA, and the two leading television stations, Radio Televisyen Malaysia (RTM) and TV3 are regarded by Malaysians as the media that play the most significant role in providing information for decision makers and the attentive public (Lent 1974, Means 1991).

If journalists of these organisations share certain preferences in the interpretation of their roles in the newsroom decision process, and if their preferences do not represent what they actually practise in reality, we can conclude that there are some incongruencies in their role expectations which will result in role stress. Journalists under stress may feed erroneous information in the news, possibly causing inappropriate decisions and policies to be made by the Malaysian government and its people.

Furthermore, according to a renowned Malaysian journalist, A Samad (1991) the definition of news itself is still rather vague and there lies a wide area of ambiguity. Since

there is no hard and fast rule to help journalists make decisions in the newsroom, they invariably have to depend more on their good sense and judgement, with the interests of their organisational goals in mind.

According to the role theory, when the behaviours expected of an individual by others in the organisations are inconsistent or incongruent, he or she will be in a state of role conflict and will experience stress, becomes dissatisfied and performs less effectively than if the expectations did not conflict. Role theory posits that role ambiguity will result from a lack of information about the role tasks. If an employee does not know what his/her duties is, what authority he/she possesses, or how he/she is to be evaluated, he/she may hesitate to make decisions and will rely on trial and error (Kahn et al., 1964).

Studies on role stress showed that role conflict and role ambiguity are related to low levels of job satisfaction; low confidence in the organisations; low job involvement and low work performance (Kahn et al. 1964; Rizzo et al. 1970; Tosi 1971; Jackson 1983). Research on stress in the journalism and mass communication field also has shown that high level of job stress also results in low levels of job satisfaction, and a lack of concern about ones work and personal accomplishment (Johnstone et al. 1976; Weaver and Wilhoit 1986; Endres and Wearden 1991; Cook and Banks 1993).

In the context of the major trends in the stress research, studies at the local level have also revealed that the roles of journalists in newsroom decision making are limited and regulated. These studies also showed that the Malaysian journalists have a low level of job satisfaction and job involvement; and that there are several mechanisms within the organisational structure that have some influence on the roles of journalists in the newsroom decision–making process (Anita 1988; Liew 1990; Faridah 1990).

However, these studies have not explore the importance of role stress in relation to its outcomes such as journalistsí low job involvement and satisfaction, and more importantly the studies have hardly revealed what are the related variables that predict role stress.

In relation to the gap identified in past newsroom research and role studies, this article attempts to identify the nature of relationships between journalists perceptions of role stress
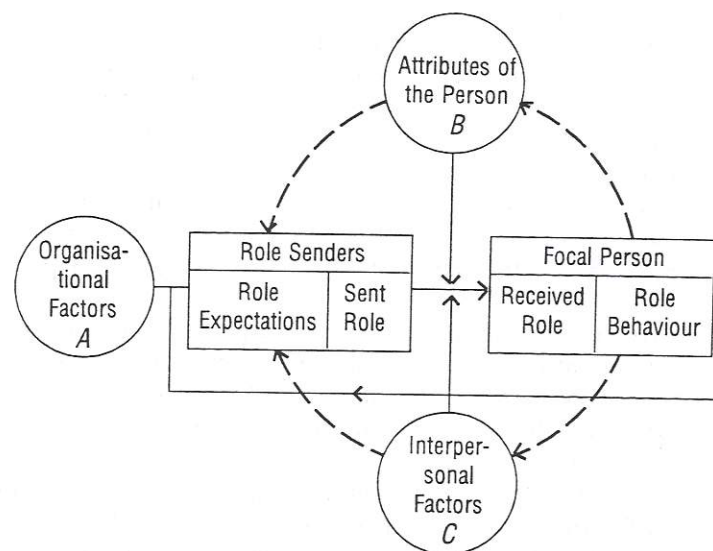
(particularly role conflict and role ambiguity) with selected organisational, interpersonal and personal variables; Based on an empirical research, the paper also look at the significant predictors of journalists perceptions of role stress.

Research on Role Stress

In recent years a substantial body of empirical research on roles has shown that high levels of role stress particularly role conflict and role ambiguity result in unfavourable outcomes for both the individual and the organisations (Kahn et al. 1964; Rizzo et al. 1970; Tosi 1971; House and Rizzo 1972; Miles and Perreault 1976; Schuler 1977; Morris et al. 1979).

A classic study on roles with regard to role conflict and role ambiguity was the study conducted by Kahn et al. In 1964. This study which is from the industrial psychological discipline acts as a concrete platform that places role concepts as the major means for linking the individual and organisational levels or research and theory. It was from this study that a model of role-sending and role behaviour called The Model of Role Episode (See Figure 1) was proposed. The findings in this article used this model as the basic conceptual framework.

FIGURE 1
A Model of Role Episode. A Theoretical Model of Factors Involved in the Taking of Organisational Roles (Kahn et al. 1964)

Three major properties which Kahn et al. (1964) have identified in their role research are the organisational factors, personal factors and interpersonal factors. Role conflict and role ambiguity are found to be related to organisational factors such as size of organisations, organisational rules, job task; personal factors such as person's motives and goals, preferences and interpersonal factors such as the quality of interpersonal relations between the individual and members of his role set. Praise and criticism for instance have different sets of meanings when they come from different categories of sources.

Although Kahn and associates were the pioneering group who placed the concept of role firmly in understanding organisational behaviour and effectiveness, it was Rizzo et al. (1970) who developed an instrument specifically to measure role conflict and role ambiguity which was widely used in many role studies since then.

One significant study which used all the three groups of predictor variables in predicting role stress was conducted by Newton and Keenan in 1987. This article which is based on a study also looked at the three groups of predictor variables but with different sets of independent variables.

Newton and Keenan used a questionnaire that incorporated the three groups of predictors of role stress and administered it on a sample of young engineers. Their results support the relevance of personal factors (Type A behaviour pattern; higher order needs); interpersonal factors (social support; social confiding and interpersonal climate) and organisational factors (organisational size, economic sector, task analysis, skill requirement and training) as predictors of role stress.

This study adapted Katz and Kahn's Role Episode Model as the research framework because it is the most suitable model that helps to explain variables related to role conflict and role ambiguity. The model also fitted the purpose of the present study which was to identify the significant predictors (among selected variables) of journalists' perceptions of role conflict and role ambiguity.

Furthermore, Katz and Kahn's Role Episode Model is a classical model that is widely used by researchers to study role stress among workers (Schuler 1975; Fisher and Gitelson 1973). According to Dougherty and Pritchard (1985), the role conflict

and role ambiguity measurement captured somewhat global perceptions of role stress and can be used with any jobs.

In the context of Malaysian journalism, various writings and local studies have suggested several important factors that could place journalists in a state of dilemma, tension and ambiguity (A. Samad 1991; Faridah 1990; and Liew 1990). Among these factors are journalistic autonomy and participation, management involvement in the newsroom, interpersonal relationships and communication between media leaders and journalists, just to name a few. These factors which could be categorised into organisational, personal and interpersonal factors have some important influence on the journalistic profession.

Based on Katz and Kahn's Role Episode Model which postulates that the level of role stress among individuals as enacted by their role behaviours, could be associated with, at least three major factors, the present study had identified the following variables which were categorised under organisational, personal and interpersonal factors.

The organisational factors include participation in decision-making; participation in task decision; leadership behaviour which include leader's supportiveness and leader's emphasis for task and structure; deadline pressure and nature of task characteristics.

The personal factors which applied to the role of receivers or focal person were individual's age; years of working experience; years of formal education and salary. Other personal variables which were used to describe the general demographics of the respondents, included variables such as gender, job status, highest educational attainment, departmental transfer and job promotion; propensity to leave the profession, race, nature of organisation and marital status.

The interpersonal factors include communication relationship and interpersonal relationship.

According to several meta-analyses conducted across various disciplines studying role stress, it was found that studies have not dealt directly with the role senders but indirectly by measuring the focal person's perception of conflict and ambiguity in the role expectations sent by the senders (Van Sell et al. 1981; Fisher and Gitelson 1983). This study is the first attempt to look at perception of role stress among Malaysian journalists and has also adopted a similar approach.

Methodology

The study was carried out among 226 randomly selected journalists from eight Malaysian print media organisations and a national news agency in 1994-95. A survey research method was employed and self-administered and structured questionnaires were used to collect data. Descriptive and inferential statistics, namely, frequency and percentage, Pearsons correlation coefficients and multiple regression analysis were used for data analysis.

The organisations where the samples were drawn included two bahasa Malaysia newspaper organisations, Utusan Melayu (M) Berhad (UM) and Berita Harian Sdn. Bhd. (BH), three English language newspaper organisations, The New Straits Times press (NSTP), The Star Publication (Star) and The Sun, a national news agency, BERNAMA, two Chinese newspaper organisations, Sin Chew Jit Poh and Malayan Thung Bao and one Indian newspaper organisation, Tamil Nesan.

The study used a combination of stratified and simple random procedure which were considered appropriate for selecting respondents for the study.

The development of the survey instrument for this study was guided by a number of studies on similar topics especially Kahn et al. (1964), Rizzo et al. (1970) and Keenan and Newton (1985) studies on role stress.

Findings

The respondents of the study came from three groups in terms of job status: 68.9 percent were general reporters and special desk reporters (for example court, sports, crime and women); 23.0 percent subeditors, feature writers and columnists; and 8.4 percent news editors, chief reporters and chief subeditors.

There were 64.6 percent male journalists and 35.4 percent female journalists. Among the respondents, 53.1 percent were single while 46.5 percent were married. The minimum age of respondents was 20 years old and the maximum was 54 years old. Journalists in Malaysia came from a younger age group where 82.3 percent were below 36 years old. In terms of salary, the journalists in the study were lowly paid with an average of RM1582.60.

The minimum length of years of formal education completed was nine years and maximum was 20 years, while

the mean was 14.6 years which indicated that majority of the respondents had Diploma and Bachelor degree (an equivalent of 14 to 17 years of formal education). In terms of working experience, the mean was 7.3 years which indicated that the majority of the journalists had a fair amount of experience in the journalism field.

Factors Leading to Role Stress

Respondents of the study were asked in an open-ended question to list out what were the major factors which they thought could lead journalist to role stress. Out of the 226 respondents only 153 responded. Table 1 shows that 36.6 percent of those responded cited deadline pressure as the major cause of stress among journalists in the newsroom.

Among the comments made regarding the hazards of deadline or time constraints were presented below:

> "The main cause of role stress is trying to meet deadlines stipulated by the management. Of course this is not always possible due to technical reasons."

> "The stress level among journalists can be quite high. Causes: Time constraints, too demanding assignments, unreasonable instructions, uncooperative subjects, conflict of interests, stiff competition from co-workers."

> "Journalists face a high level of stress brought on by the demands of their superiors, the nature of the job, long working hours, deadlines to meet and bosses who ignore personal problems of the staff."

Apart from deadlines, respondents also cited lack of support from leaders and management (28.8 percent), the characteristics and demand of the job (28.1 percent), no cooperation from news sources (20.9 percent), heavy work load (19.6 percent). Interpersonal relations problem (17.6 percent) and work-income imbalance (14.4 percent) as some of the major factors causing journalists to feel stressful.

The following were comments made by respondents with regard to work-income imbalance and superior-subordinate relationships:

"Unnecessary directives and too many orders from superiors, low pay and no incentives are among the major factors that lead journalist to stressful situation."

"Lack of leadership and coordination in the higher echelons. Lack of proper performance evaluation, no formal system for promotion and division of responsibility. Most importantly, pay that does not commensurate with the amount of intelligence and initiative required in the job."

Other stress induced factors cited by the respondents corresponded with various writings on role stress (see Katz and Kahn 1978; Robbins 1989). Surprisingly, political and governmental involvement was the least to be cited.

	Factors	Frequency	Percentage
1.	Deadline pressure	56	36.6
2.	Lacking support from management	44	28.8
3.	Job characteristics and demand	43	28.1
4.	No coopertion from news sources	32	20.9
5.	Heavy work load	30	19.6
6.	Interpersonal relations	27	17.6
7.	Work-income imbalance	22	14.4
8.	Unclear instruction	20	13.1
9.	Produce the 'impossible'	17	11.1
10.	Physical environment	17	11.1
11.	Lacking peer support	16	10.5
12.	Doubts about career prospects	16	10.5
13.	Inadequate manpower	15	9.8
14.	Unclear evaluation criteria	14	9.2
15.	Political and governmental pressure	14	9.2

TABLE 1
Factors leading to role stress as perceived by respondents

Levels of Perceived Role Conflict and Role Ambiguity

Several findings from the study also highlighted the levels of role conflict and role ambiguity experienced by journalists in newsroom decision-making. Based on Table 2, for role conflict out of the total possible score of 91, the mean score of 44.8 with a standard deviation of 8.9 represented the middle percentile

or 49.2 percent. This indicated that journalists in the newsroom experienced a moderate level of role conflict.

For role ambiguity, out of the total possible score of 63, the mean score of 29.5, with a standard deviation of 6.3, represented the middle third percentile or 46.8 percent. This demonstrated that journalists in this study were experiencing a moderate level of role ambiguity in newsroom decision-making.

TABLE 2. Levels of role conflict and role ambiguity in newsroom decision-making as perceived by journalists

Research variables	Mean	S.D.	Min.	Max.
Role conflict	44.8	8.9	25.0	58.0
Role ambiguity	29.5	6.3	9.0	53.0

Significant Predictors of Role Conflict and Role Ambiguity

A simple multiple regression analysis was conducted to identify the significant predictors, in terms of strength, of the journalists perceived level of role conflict in newsroom decision-making. By knowing these predictors, media managers as well as journalists are able to control certain variables in order to reduce role conflict and role ambiguity i.e. role stress in the newsroom. For this purpose all 12 selected predictor variables identified in this study were regressed with role conflict and role ambiguity. The results of the regression analyses (method enter) are shown in Table 3 and 4.

The findings in the study showed that all the three groups of independent variables identified in this study namely organisational, personal and interpersonal variables were responsible in contributing 23 percent of the variance in role conflict and 36 percent of the variance in role ambiguity perceived by the journalists in the study.

Out of the 12 independent variables investigated, four variables were found to be good predictors of role conflict. These variables were years of working experience (Beta = -.29), deadline pressure (Beta = -.25), task characteristics (Beta = -.20) and participation in task decision (Beta = -.13).

For role ambiguity, out of the 12 independent variables investigated, four variables were found to be good predictors

of role ambiguity. These factors were interpersonal relationship (Beta= -.39), task characteristics (Beta = -.17) , participation in decision making (Beta = -.17) and years of experience (Beta = -. 11). The other predictor variables had betas of less than .10 indicating that they were not good predictors of role conflict and role ambiguity.

Independent variable	Dependent variable Role Conflict		
	B	Beta	T-sig
Organisational variables			
Participation in task decision	-.08	-.13	.03
Participation in decision making	.07	.06	.45
Leadership behaviour – supportive	.01	.01	.95
Task characteristics	-.13	-.20	.00
Leadership behavior – structure	.02	.02	.83
Deadline pressure	.37	.25	.00
Interpersonal variables			
Communication relationship	-.02	-.02	.84
Interpersonal relationship	.02	.02	.78
Personal variables			
Age in years	.01	.01	.84
Years in formal education	-.04	-.01	.88
Salary	-.04	.06	.47
Years of Working Experience	-.39	-.29	.00
(constant)	57.01		

TABLE 3
Multiple regression between role conflict and overall independent variables

R square   = .27
F   = 6.44
Sig. F.   = .00
Adjusted R square = .23

TABLE 4
Multiple regression between role ambiguity and overall independent variables

Independent variable	Dependent variable Role Ambiguity		
	B	Beta	T-sig
Organisational variables			
Participation in task decision	-.04	-.10	.06
Participation in decision making	.-.15	-.17	.01
Leadership behaviour – supportive	..04	.06	.44
Task characteristics	-.09	-.17	.01
Leadership behavior – structure	.07	.10	.17
Deadline pressure	-.08	-.08	.16
Interpersonal variables			
Communication relationship	-.08	-.10	.17
Interpersonal relationship	-.24	-.39	.00
Personal variables			
Age in years	-.05	-.06	.41
Years in formal education	-.06	-.02	.71
Salary	-.04	.04	.54
Years of Working Experience	-.11	-.11	.06
(constant)	59.29		

R square = .40
F = 11.70
Sig. F. = .00
Adjusted R square = .36

Discussion and Conclusion

The levels of role conflict ad role ambiguity experienced by journalist with regard to decision–making in the newsroom were found to be at the moderate level Although studies have shown that employees may benefit from some amount of stress (Luthans 1992), the fact that role stress existed up to a moderate level among professional journalists is a problem that needs immediate attention. Role stress is a complex problem especially in a complicated business such as the mass media industries.

This paper has empirically examined factors that may lead to increase in role conflict and role ambiguity among Malaysian journalists. Potential stress gaps were found especially in areas most important for working journalists.

For role conflict, the findings showed that the strongest predictors of role conflict were work experience, followed by deadline pressure, nature of task characteristics and participation in making task decisions. Whilst for role ambiguity, findings in the study showed that interpersonal relationship, task characteristics, participation in decision making and work experience of the journalists were the significant predictors.

The findings highlighted in this paper have demonstrated that the three groups of independent variables namely the organisational, personal and interpersonal variables as illustrated in Katz and Kahn's Role Episode Model were found to have at least suggestive theoretical significance. The organisational and personal factors were better predictors of role conflict, while the interpersonal and organisational factors were better predictors of role ambiguity.

The study has identified that factors like participation in decision–making and participation in task decisions could affect role conflict and role ambiguity. The dominance of participation in predicting both role stress indexes had provided support for Schuler's (1980) and Jackson's (1983) studies which suggested that with greater participation, employees were able to reduce grievances and differences, and hence reducing role conflict; and with greater participation employees were able to clarify certain roles and actions, and thus reducing role ambiguity.

Generally , as reported in several newsroom studies internationally (Gans 1980; Joseph 1982; Gaziano and Coulson 1988) and locally (Liew 1990; Faridah 1990), it is the traditional practice within the media organisations that most editorial and other newsroom decisions lie in the hands of management. This study suggested that journalists perceived a higher level of role conflict and role ambiguity with lesser participation in newsroom decision–making process.

In conclusion this paper suggests that in order for media organisations to cope with the existing role stress experienced by journalists, it is important that some initiative and freedom of decisions be permitted among the journalists particularly in matters that affect them and their jobs. It also implied that a participative environment in the newsroom, or ideally, a participative management style, could help provide a conducive work setting with lesser role stress.

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