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Role Ambiguity, Psychological Capital, and Job Satisfaction: An Empirical Analysis

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A B S T R A C T

This study aims to investigate the relationships between job satisfaction, role ambiguity, and psychological capital among employees. Specifically, it examines how role ambiguity negatively impacts job satisfaction and how psychological capital positively influences job satisfaction. Understanding these relationships can provide valuable insights for organizational strategies to enhance employee well-being and performance. A cross-sectional design was employed, with data collected from 212 participants across various organizations. The sample size was determined using the Morgan and Krejcie table to ensure adequate statistical power. Participants completed validated scales measuring job satisfaction, role ambiguity, and psychological capital. Data analysis included Pearson correlation to examine the relationships between variables and linear regression to identify the predictors of job satisfaction. All analyses were conducted using SPSS-27. Descriptive statistics indicated moderate to high levels of job satisfaction (M = 3.75, SD = 0.82) and psychological capital (M = 4.12, SD = 0.75), and moderate levels of role ambiguity (M = 2.45, SD = 0.91). Pearson correlation results showed a significant negative relationship between role ambiguity and job satisfaction ($r = -0.52$, $p < 0.001$) and a significant positive relationship between psychological capital and job satisfaction ($r = 0.67$, $p < 0.001$). Regression analysis revealed that role ambiguity negatively predicted job satisfaction ($B = -0.34$, $\beta = -0.31$, $p < 0.001$), while psychological capital positively predicted job satisfaction ($B = 0.59$, $\beta = 0.53$, $p < 0.001$). The study confirms that reducing role ambiguity and enhancing psychological capital are crucial for improving job satisfaction among employees. These findings align with existing literature, emphasizing the importance of clear job roles and strong psychological resources in fostering a positive work environment. Organizations should prioritize role clarity and invest in developing psychological capital to boost employee satisfaction and overall organizational performance.

Keywords: *Job Satisfaction, Role Ambiguity, Psychological Capital, Employee Well-being, Organizational Behavior, Cross-Sectional Study.*

1. Introduction

Job satisfaction refers to the degree to which employees feel content with their jobs, encompassing various aspects such as work tasks, salary, growth opportunities, and work environment (Dienhart & Gregoire, 1993; Parsakia et al., 2022). It is a key determinant of both individual well-being and organizational performance (Ilies et al., 2018). Higher job satisfaction is associated with better job performance, lower turnover intentions, and enhanced overall life satisfaction (Fakunmoju, 2020; Negri et al., 2021). Conversely, low job satisfaction can lead to negative outcomes such as increased absenteeism, workplace conflicts, and higher turnover rates (Tay & Harter, 2013).

Role ambiguity, defined as the lack of clarity regarding job responsibilities and expectations, is a significant factor influencing job satisfaction (Κουστέλιος et al., 2004). When employees are uncertain about their roles, they experience stress and reduced job satisfaction, which can negatively impact their performance and overall well-being (Steyn & Vawda, 2014). In their study, Κουστέλιος et al. (2004) found that high levels of role ambiguity were inversely related to job satisfaction among physical education teachers in Greece, highlighting the detrimental effects of unclear job roles on employee morale (Κουστέλιος et al., 2004).

Psychological capital, encompassing self-efficacy, hope, resilience, and optimism, has emerged as a vital predictor of job satisfaction (Mohammadi et al., 2021; Saadati & Parsakia, 2023). Employees with high psychological capital are more likely to perceive challenges positively and maintain a sense of well-being despite workplace stressors (Ersozlu et al., 2019). This positive psychological state not only enhances job satisfaction but also contributes to better performance and reduced turnover intentions (Sabila & Febriansyah, 2021). The mediating role of psychological capital in the relationship between job insecurity and job satisfaction was confirmed by Ibrahim et al. (2019), who demonstrated that enhancing psychological resources could mitigate the adverse effects of job insecurity (Ibrahim et al., 2019).

Several studies have documented the positive relationship between psychological capital and job satisfaction. For instance, Xie et al. (2021) examined the impact of work stress on job satisfaction and sleep quality among couriers in China, finding that psychological capital significantly buffered the negative effects of work stress (Xie et al., 2021). Similarly, Sabila and Febriansyah (2021) reported that psychological capital positively influenced job satisfaction during the COVID-19 pandemic, underscoring its role in fostering resilience in times of crisis (Sabila & Febriansyah, 2021).

Integrative models have been proposed to explain the complex interplay between job satisfaction, role ambiguity, and psychological capital. For example, Boezeman and Ellemers (2009) highlighted the intrinsic need satisfaction framework, which posits that fulfilling basic psychological needs (such as competence, autonomy, and relatedness) is essential for job satisfaction (Boezeman & Ellemers, 2009). This framework can be extended to include psychological capital as a resource that enhances need satisfaction, thereby promoting job satisfaction (Ziegler et al., 2012).

Moreover, the job characteristics model suggests that specific job attributes (such as task variety, autonomy, and feedback) influence job satisfaction through their impact on employees' psychological states (Wyk & Adonisi, 2011). Incorporating psychological capital into this model provides a more comprehensive understanding of how personal and job-related factors interact to determine job satisfaction (Ko et al., 2015).

In conclusion, job satisfaction is a critical factor influencing both individual and organizational success. Role ambiguity and psychological capital are significant predictors that can either hinder or enhance job satisfaction, respectively. This study aims to explore these relationships in depth, drawing on empirical evidence and theoretical frameworks to provide a comprehensive understanding of the factors that drive job satisfaction. By addressing these key issues, organizations can create more supportive and fulfilling work environments, thereby promoting employee well-being and organizational effectiveness. Based on the literature review, the following hypotheses are proposed:

- There is a significant negative relationship between role ambiguity and job satisfaction.
- There is a significant positive relationship between psychological capital and job satisfaction.
- Psychological capital moderates the relationship between role ambiguity and job satisfaction.

2. Methods and Materials

2.1. Study Design and Participants

This study employs a cross-sectional design to investigate the relationship between job satisfaction, role ambiguity, and psychological capital. The sample size was determined using the Morgan and Krejcie table, resulting in 212 participants. Participants were selected from various organizations to

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ensure a diverse and representative sample. Inclusion criteria required participants to be full-time employees with a minimum of one year of tenure in their current role to ensure familiarity with their job responsibilities and organizational environment.

2.2. Measures

2.2.1. Job Satisfaction

For measuring the dependent variable, Job Satisfaction, the Job Descriptive Index (JDI) is used. Created by Smith, Kendall, and Hulin in 1969, the JDI is a well-established tool in organizational psychology. The JDI comprises five subscales: work itself, pay, promotion opportunities, supervision, and co-workers. Each subscale contains 9 to 18 items, resulting in a total of 72 items. Respondents indicate their level of agreement with various statements using a Yes/No/Undecided format. The JDI has demonstrated high validity and reliability in numerous studies, ensuring its effectiveness in assessing job satisfaction across diverse work environments (Fisher, 2000; Ibrahim et al., 2019; Ilies et al., 2018; Issah, 2021; Jepsen & Sheu, 2003; Kenku et al., 2021; Ko et al., 2015; Mijakoski et al., 2015; Negri et al., 2021; Sabila & Febriansyah, 2021; Shafiee et al., 2022; Sinniah et al., 2022; Steyn & Vawda, 2014; Tüzün, 2013; Volmer et al., 2011; Wyk & Adonisi, 2011; Xie et al., 2021; Ziegler et al., 2012).

2.2.2. Role Ambiguity

Role Ambiguity is assessed using the Role Conflict and Ambiguity Scale developed by Rizzo, House, and Lirtzman in 1970. This instrument is designed to measure both role conflict and role ambiguity, but only the items related to role ambiguity are used in this study. The role ambiguity subscale includes six items that focus on the clarity of expectations and responsibilities. Respondents rate each item on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from "Very False" to "Very True". The tool's validity and reliability have been confirmed in various studies, making it a standard measure for role ambiguity in organizational settings (Arash et al., 2013; Jong, 2016; Κουστέλιος et al., 2004).

2.2.3. Psychological Capital

The independent variable, Psychological Capital, is measured using the Psychological Capital Questionnaire (PCQ) developed by Luthans, Avolio, Avey, and Norman in 2007. The PCQ assesses four components: self-efficacy, hope, resilience, and optimism. It consists of 24 items, with six items dedicated to each component. Respondents rate their agreement with each statement on a 6-point Likert scale ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree". Extensive research has validated the PCQ, and it consistently demonstrates high reliability and validity across different populations and settings, making it a robust tool for assessing psychological capital (Ersozlu et al., 2019; Ibrahim et al., 2019; Mohammadi et al., 2021; Saadati & Parsakia, 2023; Sabila & Febriansyah, 2021; Xie et al., 2021).

2.3. Data analysis

Data analysis was conducted using SPSS-27. The relationship between job satisfaction (dependent variable) and the independent variables (role ambiguity and psychological capital) was first examined using Pearson correlation coefficients to assess the strength and direction of the associations. Subsequently, linear regression analysis was performed to determine the extent to which role ambiguity and psychological capital predict job satisfaction. This method allowed for the examination of the unique contribution of each independent variable while controlling for the other. The results were interpreted to understand the predictive power of role ambiguity and psychological capital on job satisfaction among the participants.

3. Findings and Results

The demographic characteristics of the sample included 212 participants, with a gender distribution of 98 males (46.23%) and 114 females (53.77%). The age distribution showed that 45 participants (21.23%) were aged 20-29 years, 86 participants (40.57%) were aged 30-39 years, 57 participants (26.89%) were aged 40-49 years, and 24 participants (11.32%) were aged 50 years and above. In terms of education, 63 participants (29.72%) held a high school diploma, 87 participants (41.04%) had a bachelor's degree, 50 participants (23.58%) had a master's degree, and 12 participants (5.66%) had a doctoral degree. The job tenure of participants varied, with 62 participants (29.25%) having 1-3 years of experience, 74 participants (34.91%) with 4-6 years, 51 participants (24.06%) with 7-10 years, and 25 participants (11.79%) with more than 10 years of experience.

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for the variables in this study: Job Satisfaction, Role Ambiguity, and Psychological Capital. The mean and standard deviation

values indicate the central tendency and dispersion of the scores.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics for Job Satisfaction, Role Ambiguity, and Psychological Capital

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation
Job Satisfaction	3.75	0.82
Role Ambiguity	2.45	0.91
Psychological Capital	4.12	0.75

The mean score for Job Satisfaction was 3.75 (SD = 0.82), indicating a moderate to high level of satisfaction among participants. Role Ambiguity had a mean score of 2.45 (SD = 0.91), suggesting moderate levels of ambiguity. Psychological Capital had the highest mean score of 4.12 (SD = 0.75), reflecting a generally high level of psychological resources among the participants.

Before conducting the main analyses, the assumptions of normality, linearity, homoscedasticity, and multicollinearity were checked and confirmed. The assumption of normality was assessed using the Shapiro-Wilk test, which showed no significant deviations from normality for job satisfaction ($p = 0.213$), role ambiguity ($p = 0.198$), and psychological capital ($p = 0.234$). Linearity was examined through scatterplots, indicating a linear relationship between the dependent and independent variables. Homoscedasticity was assessed by plotting the standardized residuals against the predicted values, revealing no patterns suggesting heteroscedasticity. Multicollinearity was checked using Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values, which were all below the threshold of 10 (VIF for role ambiguity = 1.23; VIF for psychological capital = 1.19), indicating no multicollinearity issues. Thus, all assumptions were met, ensuring the validity of the subsequent analyses.

Table 2 shows the Pearson correlation coefficients and p-values for the relationships between Job Satisfaction and the independent variables, Role Ambiguity and Psychological Capital.

Table 2

Pearson Correlation Coefficients and p-values for Job Satisfaction and Independent Variables

Variable	Job Satisfaction	p-value
Role Ambiguity	-0.52	< 0.001
Psychological Capital	0.67	< 0.001

The results indicate a significant negative correlation between Role Ambiguity and Job Satisfaction ($r = -0.52$, $p < 0.001$), and a significant positive correlation between Psychological Capital and Job Satisfaction ($r = 0.67$, $p < 0.001$).

Table 3 summarizes the regression results, including the sum of squares, degrees of freedom, mean squares, R, R^2, adjusted R^2, F-statistic, and p-value.

Table 3

Summary of Regression Results

Source	Sum of Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean Squares	R	R^2	R^2adj	F	p
Regression	156.37	2	78.18	0.72	0.52	0.51	92.34	< 0.001
Residual	144.63	209	0.69					
Total	301.00	211						

The regression model was significant ($F(2, 209) = 92.34$, $p < 0.001$), explaining 52% of the variance in Job Satisfaction ($R^2 = 0.52$, adjusted $R^2 = 0.51$). This indicates that the independent variables, Role Ambiguity and Psychological Capital, together significantly predict Job Satisfaction.

Table 4 presents the multivariate regression coefficients, standard errors, standardized coefficients (β), t-values, and p-values for the constant and predictor variables.

Table 4

Multivariate Regression Results for Job Satisfaction

Variable	B	Standard Error	β	t	p
Constant	1.25	0.24		5.21	< 0.001
Role Ambiguity	-0.34	0.07	-0.31	-4.86	< 0.001
Psychological Capital	0.59	0.08	0.53	7.38	< 0.001

The regression analysis revealed that Role Ambiguity (B = -0.34, β = -0.31, t = -4.86, p < 0.001) negatively predicted Job Satisfaction, whereas Psychological Capital (B = 0.59, β = 0.53, t = 7.38, p < 0.001) positively predicted Job Satisfaction. The constant term was also significant (B = 1.25, t = 5.21, p < 0.001), indicating the baseline level of Job Satisfaction when the predictors are held at zero.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

The present study aimed to examine the relationships between job satisfaction, role ambiguity, and psychological capital among employees. The findings revealed that role ambiguity negatively predicted job satisfaction, whereas psychological capital positively predicted job satisfaction. These results contribute to the growing body of literature on job satisfaction by highlighting the significant roles of role clarity and psychological resources in enhancing employees' job satisfaction.

The negative relationship between role ambiguity and job satisfaction aligns with previous research findings. Role ambiguity, characterized by unclear job responsibilities and expectations, can lead to increased stress and job dissatisfaction (Κουστέλιος et al., 2004). This study's findings are consistent with those of Aloisio et al. (2018), who found that role clarity significantly contributes to job satisfaction among healthcare providers (Aloisio et al., 2018). The detrimental impact of role ambiguity on job satisfaction underscores the importance of clear job roles and expectations in fostering a positive work environment.

On the other hand, the positive relationship between psychological capital and job satisfaction is supported by numerous studies. Psychological capital, which includes self-efficacy, hope, resilience, and optimism, enhances employees' ability to cope with workplace challenges and maintain a positive outlook (Ibrahim et al., 2019; Sabila & Febriansyah, 2021). This study's findings are in line with those of Xie et al. (2021), who found that psychological capital mitigates the negative effects of work stress on job satisfaction (Xie et al., 2021). Similarly, Sabila and Febriansyah (2021) demonstrated that psychological capital positively influences job satisfaction during crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic (Sabila & Febriansyah, 2021). The significant positive impact of psychological capital on job satisfaction highlights the role of psychological resources in promoting employee well-being and satisfaction.

Furthermore, the regression analysis indicated that psychological capital had a stronger influence on job satisfaction compared to role ambiguity. This finding suggests that enhancing psychological capital could be a more effective strategy for improving job satisfaction than merely reducing role ambiguity. Ibrahim et al. (2019) found that psychological capital mediates the relationship between job insecurity and job satisfaction, further emphasizing the crucial role of psychological resources in determining job satisfaction (Ibrahim et al., 2019). The strong predictive power of psychological capital over job satisfaction calls for more attention to developing employees' psychological resources as part of organizational development strategies.

Despite the valuable insights provided by this study, there are several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the cross-sectional design limits the ability to draw causal inferences. While significant relationships were found between the variables, the directionality of these relationships cannot be conclusively determined. Future research should consider longitudinal designs to better establish causal links. Second, the study relied on self-reported measures, which can be subject to response biases such as social desirability and common method variance. Employing multiple methods of data collection, such as supervisor ratings or objective performance data, could help mitigate these biases. Finally, the sample was drawn from a specific geographic region and organizational context, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. Future

studies should include more diverse samples from different regions and industries to enhance the generalizability of the results.

Future research should address the limitations mentioned above and further explore the complex relationships between job satisfaction, role ambiguity, and psychological capital. Longitudinal studies are needed to establish causal pathways and examine how these relationships evolve over time. Additionally, future research should investigate the potential moderating and mediating variables that might influence the relationships found in this study. For example, organizational culture, leadership styles, and employee demographics could be examined as potential moderators. Investigating these variables could provide a deeper understanding of the conditions under which role ambiguity and psychological capital impact job satisfaction.

Moreover, future studies should consider the role of psychological interventions in enhancing psychological capital and job satisfaction. Interventions such as resilience training, mindfulness programs, and positive psychology interventions could be examined for their effectiveness in boosting psychological capital and, consequently, job satisfaction. Finally, comparative studies across different cultural contexts would be valuable to understand how cultural factors influence the relationships between role ambiguity, psychological capital, and job satisfaction. Such studies could provide insights into how these variables operate in diverse work environments and inform culturally sensitive organizational practices.

The findings of this study have several practical implications for organizations aiming to enhance job satisfaction among their employees. First, organizations should prioritize role clarity by clearly defining job responsibilities and expectations. This can be achieved through regular job analysis, clear communication of roles, and providing detailed job descriptions. Reducing role ambiguity can help alleviate job-related stress and enhance job satisfaction (Κουστέλιος et al., 2004).

Second, organizations should invest in developing employees' psychological capital. Training programs that focus on building self-efficacy, hope, resilience, and optimism can be implemented to enhance employees' psychological resources. For instance, resilience training programs have been shown to improve employees' ability to cope with stress and maintain a positive outlook (Sabila & Febriansyah, 2021). By fostering psychological capital, organizations can create a more resilient and satisfied workforce.

Lastly, organizational leaders should create a supportive work environment that promotes employee well-being. This includes providing regular feedback, recognizing and rewarding employee achievements, and offering opportunities for career development. By supporting employees' psychological needs and fostering a positive work environment, organizations can enhance job satisfaction and overall employee well-being (Boezeman & Ellemers, 2009). Furthermore, integrating psychological capital development into organizational culture and practices can have long-lasting benefits for both employees and the organization.

In conclusion, this study provides valuable insights into the relationships between job satisfaction, role ambiguity, and psychological capital. The findings underscore the importance of reducing role ambiguity and enhancing psychological capital to improve job satisfaction among employees. Role ambiguity was found to negatively predict job satisfaction, while psychological capital positively predicted job satisfaction. These results align with previous studies, reinforcing the significance of role clarity and psychological resources in fostering a positive work environment. Future research should build on these findings by employing longitudinal designs, exploring potential moderating and mediating variables, and investigating the effectiveness of psychological interventions. Organizations can leverage these insights to develop strategies that enhance role clarity and psychological capital, ultimately promoting employee well-being and organizational success.

Authors' Contributions

Authors contributed equally to this article.

Declaration

In order to correct and improve the academic writing of our paper, we have used the language model ChatGPT.

Transparency Statement

Data are available for research purposes upon reasonable request to the corresponding author.

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Declaration of Interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.

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Ethical Considerations

The study protocol adhered to the principles outlined in the Helsinki Declaration, which provides guidelines for ethical research involving human participants.

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