

EXPLORING MEDIATING ROLE OF EMPLOYEE STRESS: THE RELATIONSHIP OF WORK OVERLOAD, WORK CONFLICT AND ROLE AMBIGUITY WITH ABSENTEEISM

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Abstract: In order to compete in current international and local markets, organizations must find ways to reduce their cost. One of the reasons for the increased cost of organizations is employee absenteeism. The present study aimed to assess the impact of work overload, role ambiguity, and role conflict on job stress and absenteeism. The present study also explored the mediating impact of stress among mentioned independent variables and absenteeism. The data of the study was collected from the employees working conducted electronic goods-producing firms of Indonesia through convenience sampling. The findings of the study confirmed all proposed hypothesis. The findings of the study fill the gap of few studies tried to identify the role of different factors, creating stress and causing absenteeism among employees of the manufacturing sector of Indonesia. The results of the research are helpful for the policymakers of the sector and HR managers to device policies by which they can engage the employees.

Keywords: Work overload; work conflict; Absenteeism; Role ambiguity; Indonesia

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1. Introduction

The employees were working in the organization play a key role to achieve its financial objectives. HRM and employees are a key component of quality of services, organizational success, organizational performance and competitive advantage. For this reason, a number of authors have studied the role of human and employees for the success of the organization. The important problem being faced by organizations is the absence of employees from the workplace (Čikeš, Maškarin Ribarić, & Črnjar, 2018).

Organizations all around the globe are facing the issue of unfavourable behaviour and attitude of employees. Absenteeism of employees is important behaviour which impacts the organization. Organizations are impacted indirectly and directly because of employee absenteeism because it impacts the cost of producing any good, which in turn impacts the performance of the organization. Moreover, absenteeism also impacts employee morale, waste of money, waste of time, output loss, overtime cosy, quality of goods to be produced, and organi-

zational performance. Basically, absenteeism is the employee's temporary absence from the workplace due to a number of reasons like personal issues, family matters or illness. Some employees also remain absent from the workplace because they are habitual some researchers treat absence from work due to education, military duty, maternity leave and consider vacations also as the part of Absenteeism (Cucchiella, Gastaldi, & Ranieri, 2014).

There are a number of issues which are creating absenteeism among the employees working in the organization. One of the important reasons being face by employees is stress due to job-related roles. Job stress has a significant role and impact on the output of the organization. The workplace is basically a society which plays a very important role in the performance of an employee. If an employee has stress at the workplace, it will impact individual performance and organizational performance as well (Lorincová et al, 2019; Leon-zarceno et al., 2020; Malkin et al., 2020; Malayer Rodriguez & Vargas Perez, 2020; Martin-Urbano et al., 2020; Laužikas, & Miliūtė, 2020; Indrasiene et al., 2020; Salleh et al., 2020; Hitka et al., 2020; Anguelov et al., 2020).

On the other hand, another important aspect that impacts the overall performance and behaviour of employees is work overload. Workover load is the condition when employees have the extra burden of work, and they have to work extra hours to finish their tasks. The phenomena of work overload have emerged from the term's extra duties and obligations. The terms are derived from the concept that shared working load is so much that employees have to work extra to fulfil their given tasks (Lyons, Higgins, & Duxbury, 2010).

Another important aspect which impacts the behaviour of employees at workplace is role ambiguity. Cho et al., (2014) explained role ambiguity as to the uncertainty in the mind of employee regarding the scope of the job which is required by them to be performed. Basically, role ambiguity is the state in which employee is ambiguous regarding consequences, behaviours and expectations regarding work and its scope. Thus, role ambiguity is the situation do not have clear guidelines regarding the best way to perform a certain task (Grobelna, 2016)

In combination with role ambiguity, an important aspect that impact employee behaviour is role conflict. Role conflict is the situation which is faced by the employee when more than one requests are received by the top management regarding tasks and goals to be achieved. In both these cases, stress is generated, which is mainly because of the lack of experience of top management and leadership (Ali & Farooqi, 2014).

Above issues always create the problem of stress and dissatisfaction among employees which in result cause absenteeism among employees. This research is crucial because role ambiguity, role conflict and work overload are important issues of a number of manufacturing sector organizations. One of the important sectors in Indonesia is Consumer electronic goods sector. It is expected that this sector will generate a revenue of 5.56 million USD in the year 2020. Moreover, the rate of rising in revenue for next year is also projected to be more than 14% (Raj-Reichert, 2019). If there are role conflict, ambiguity and work overload, employee's morale will be decreased, causing stress. Therefore, employees are the basic determinant of the performance of this industry. Thus, the main objective of the present study is to examine the impact of workload, role conflict, role ambiguity on Stress and Absenteeism. Moreover, the mediating role of stress will be examined, as well.

2. Literature Review

Employee Absenteeism

In literature, the topic of employee absenteeism is defined and explained by a number of researchers in past studies. Research has defined absenteeism as the disruptive, unjustifiable, unplanned incident. This act is characterized more by a lack of employee's physical presence at work, for instance, leaving workstation, late coming, extended breaks, and scheduled absents. In the same context, studies defined Absenteeism as Employee's withdrawal behaviour when it is utilized as a source to get escape for the work environment, which is undesirable. Motivational levels are introduced in this definition to further elaborate it. The motivation of the minimum level is the level when the performance of the employee is less than the required performance. If the employee is performing at doing things at the required level, it is called the expected level of motivation. In the end, moti-

vation at the maximum level is required to do more than necessary. Researchers explained that employees who are performing their tasks at a maximum or minimum level could cause Absenteeism (Løkke Nielsen, 2008).

The difference between voluntary and involuntary absence is well defined in past researches. According to the author, the involuntary absence is beyond the control of the employee, and it includes funeral attendance, sickness leave etc. on the other hand, voluntary absence represents uncertified leaves in which personal objectives of employees are involved. Studies further elaborated the absenteeism and argued three categories of this concept. These categories include unauthorized absence, authorize absence and sick leave (Singh, Chetty, & Karodia, 2016).

Job Stress

Researchers stated that job stress is the feeling or perception of the employee regarding the personal disability due to work environment. Job stress in the work environment can be treated as a reaction or stimulus. It can also interact among environment and employee. Researchers have outlined job stress as employees' condition, which is because of the task assigned, which are beyond the ability of a person and. Moreover, resources are not available as well to complete these duties (Mittal & Bhakar, 2018).

Definition of workplace stress is provided by the Health and Safety Executive (2010) as a reaction which is adverse employees had to perform pressure or other demands put on them. From this definition, it is evident that workplace stress is not only caused because of work at the workplace, but it is also caused by the environment of the organization. Workplace stressed can impact the employee in a number of ways. It can cause a decline in the performance of the employee, lack of motivation and absence (Bhui, Dinos, Galant-Miecznikowska, de Jongh, & Stansfeld, 2016).

Stress is explained as the condition in which an employee is faced with pressure on a constant basis which normally arises in the organization. This pressure is also caused because of family pressure, bad health condition, deadlines and short notices at work. The situation when employees have to face high requirements which are difficult to manage, it impacts the behaviour of the employee. More than 50 per cent of the disease being faced by employees is because of stress. Employees commitment and engagement is also impacted by Stress of Employee (Jalagat, 2017).

Work Overload

Work overload is referred to as the high level of tasks related to the job, which may create mental distress among employees. The response of people regarding workload is different. Some employees show frustration, while some of the employees accept it. As employees get promoted in their jobs, their workload is increased due to which their performance is influenced. This is the major concern for the management who want to hire an employee who can perform well. Studies found that pressure at the workplace has the capability to impact job performance significantly. Moreover, the workload is also referred to as the quantity of assignment and activities for which an employee is responsible for the organization. Thus, the workload is the stress which an employee bears because of the work assigned to them (Ali & Farooqi, 2014).

Moreover, work related to the job is considered as freedom source in which employees are encouraged regarding self-fulfilment, self-respect, satisfaction and personal growth. Researcher in the literature pointed out that if any person does not have any work or task to achieve it means life has no engagement or valuable meaning. The workload is considered as the major problem which is being faced by the employees of every sector. Due to this reason, pressure, the timing of duty and working hours are increased by the management of the organization. In literature, few conditions are discussed which may cause job overload. These conditions may include having high expectations from employees in terms of their tasks, high workload, the pressure to work extra, fewer breaks, fewer holidays and high working hours. It may also include few resources, limited time and few resources to achieve the task. For employees, work is not a problem itself. The major problem is to expect extra from the employee, which is more than the normal capacity of a human. In such a situation, employees suffer

from both psychological and mental health issues (Johari, Ridzoan, & Zarefar, 2019; Grabara et al., 2020).

Role Ambiguity

The issue of role ambiguity is faced when the role of an employee for a certain position is poorly defined or not clear. Most of the employees are deviated from their work because of the goals to be achieved are not much clear. For instance, the tasks to be performed by the person are mentioned in an HR document known as the job description. It also includes the skills and qualification which are needed to be met by the person for a certain job. If these points are not clearly or poorly discussed in the job description, it may raise the issue of role ambiguity. Role ambiguity issue is most of the time originated when roles are not clearly defined, its dimensions are not much clear, methods and procedure are not properly elaborated to Employee (Khattak, Ul-Ain, & Iqbal, 2013; Hussain et al., 2020).

In literature, role ambiguity is defined as well as the lack of information which is critical and required by the employee to fulfil a task in a suitable manner. On the other hand, researchers mentioned that ambiguity in roles within a firm is possible. Moreover, these issues can be experienced by a person due to cultural issues as well. In the same vein, different people may have different experience regarding the role of ambiguity within the organization. Four aspects of role ambiguity are discussed by authors as behaviour ambiguity, priority, process ambiguity and expectation ambiguity (Soltani, Hajatpour, Khorram, & Nejati, 2013). On the other hand, it is mentioned that it is very hard to innovate something for NPD without role ambiguity. Therefore, it is important that organizations must encourage the employees to be involved in the process of innovation. Thus, the nature of uncertainty must be determined for NPD. Moreover, researchers also stated that there exists two kind of ambiguity, namely resource ambiguity and subject ambiguity. In the case of role ambiguity, employees may face the issues of Stress, anxiety and depression (Tang & Chang, 2010).

Role Conflict

When an Employee face occurrence of more than one required role simultaneously, the issue of role conflict is born. As there are more than one tasks to be achieved, therefore the performance of one task impacts the performance of the task. Later studies also used the same idea who pointed out that role conflict makes it impossible for the tasks to be achieved. Moreover, studies have pointed out that employee can feel pressure due to the issue of role conflict.

It is also pointed out that role conflict situations are faced by employees when employees have the perception that their performance will be examined in a different manner among more than one roles, have the view that employer will evaluate the task on the basis of new technology, and the performance will be evaluated by more than one superiors who have different experiences and requirements (Palomino & Frezatti, 2016).

Absence of factors such as differentiation, congruence and consistency creates the issue of role conflict among employees. Role conflict has a direct relationship with the environment of the workplace. Most of the times, this situation is faced when it is important to complete the task, accomplishment of task and duties assigned are not clear, specified and described. Researcher in their study mentioned that role conflict is the difference among the job given to an employee and the performance of the Employee (James, 2003). Role conflict is most of the times caused by role ambiguity in which employee may have to face two or more conflicting tasks. The issue of role conflict is faced, for example, when a salesperson does not have clarity that he has to do alter the assigned territory, or an account must be generated. If both tasks must be done simultaneously, and employee can't decide priority, the issue of role conflict will rise (Tarrant & Sabo, 2010).

Stress and employee absenteeism

Researchers have defined job stress in the demand of role have origin in the work environment. The common reactions of stress are physical reactions like high cholesterol, psychological like burnout and behavioural like

absenteeism. They are also considered the outcomes of job stress.

When the demand for the job is more than the resources of the job, there are chances that stress will be produced. In this scenario, the employee may try to may opt to withdraw in order to avoid stress. In organizations, employees can avoid work in the form of absenteeism. It is the observable outcome due to which effort and time are changed. In the same way, researchers observed that withdrawal of work has a connection with job stress. It is because there are a number of factors due to which employees want to remain absent from work. In the same context, a study has found that nurses in a hospital had high absent rate due to stress at the workplace (Westman & Etzion, 2001).

H1: Stress and Employee Absenteeism are significantly related to each other.

Work overload and stress

A number of psychological, as well as physiological reactions, are faced by employees because of work overload. Basically, work overload is the hypothetical state which is influenced by the workplace environmental forces. They are demonstrated by a number of social, psychological and physiological reactions at different levels. Researchers mentioned that despair, fear, frustration, helplessness, anxiety and depression are psychological consequences. In past literature, researchers have given priority to stress. They have described the causes of stress. One of the major reasons to create stress is work overload. Work overload is faced by the employees in case of no adjustment among employees and organizational goals. Employees suffer a number of issues because of work overload, including substandard work performance, anxiety and most importantly, stress. As a result, employees want to remain absent from work and the profit of the organization is declined (Altaf & Awan, 2011).

Studies have reported a number of factors which cause stress among employees at the workplace. One of those Stress causing reason identified was heavy workload due to which employees did not get the chance to get relax. The impact of work overload on every employee is different. Some may be affected as more stressed, and some may not get stressed at all. The amount of work quantifies work overload, which creates stress among employees working in the organization (Abbasi, 2015).

H2: Work overload and stress are significantly related to each other.

H3: Stress is a significant mediator between Work overload and employee Absenteeism.

Role Conflict and Stress

Employees face the issue of role conflict when they have work demand which is incompatible. The case of role conflict rises when more than one supervisor demands more work from employees. Studies conducted regarding stress found it to be the major factor which causes stress among employees. The jobs where there exists lack of description regarding what needs to be done and the procedure to perform the task face the issue of role conflict which creates stress among employees (Khattak et al., 2013).

Researchers mentioned that the situation when employees are expected with incompatible goals, stress will be experienced by the employee. Therefore, there is a negative impact of role conflict on the state of mind of Employee (Safaria, Othman, & Wahab, 2011).

H4: Role Conflict and Stress are significantly related to each other.

H5: Stress is a significant mediator between Role Conflict and Employee Absenteeism.

Role ambiguity and stress

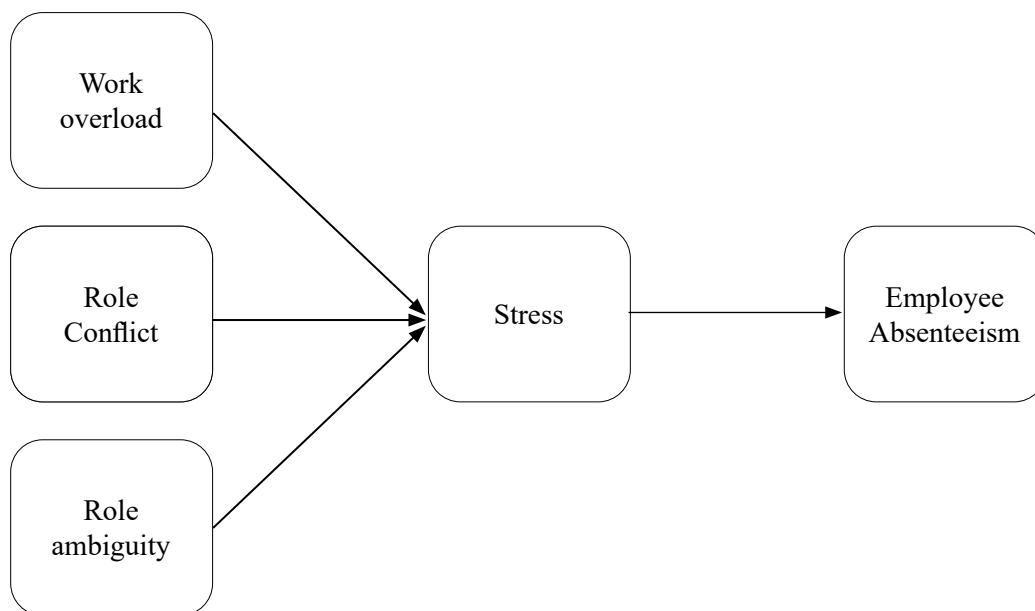
Basically, role ambiguity is the absence of consistent and important information. Because of a lack of clear responsibilities and SOP's by the organizations, employees face the issue of role ambiguity. Researchers have found that due to an increase in responsibility, adjusting the work according to the skills of employees, may cause stress among the employees.

The level at which there exists ambiguity in the work of an employee is the widely studied topic in the field of research. Its role in creating stress among employees is not clear so far. Uncertainty is experienced by the employees who face the problem of role ambiguity. There exists a link between job stress, the requirement of work, absence of clarity of work and role ambiguity. Therefore, role ambiguity has a positive impact on work stress (Ram, Khoso, Shah, Chandio, & Shaikih, 2011).

H6: Role ambiguity and stress are significantly related to each other.

H7: Stress is a significant mediator between Role ambiguity and Employee Absenteeism.

Research Framework is presented in Graph 1.



Graph 1. Research framework

3. Research Methodology

The data in the present study were collected from the employees working in consumer electronic manufacturing organizations. For this purpose, the researcher adopted approach survey method. Data was distributed among 475 employees working in electronic manufacturing firms of Indonesia. The sampling procedure used by the researcher was convenience-based sampling. Total of 409 questionnaires was received back. Out of the received questionnaires, 12 were omitted because they were incomplete. Thus, the remaining 397 questionnaires were used for further analysis. Thus, the response rate of the study was 83.57%. Measurement items used in the present study adopted from the past studies on the basis of seven Likert scales having a range from 1 to 7. In this scale, 1 represent strongly disagree, and 7 represent strongly agree. For the analysis of the data collected, the researcher has opted PLS 3, which is discussed in the next section below.

Instrumentation

The items of research variables were adapted from several past studies. Employee Absenteeism had three items taken from (Abdullah & Lee, 2012). Stress was adapted from (Abdullah & Lee, 2012) who measured the job stress of employees based on four items. Work overload and Role ambiguity were measured with six items adapted from (Karatepe, 2013) and (Faucett, Corwyn, & Poling, 2013) respectively. Role Conflict was measured with seven items adapted from (Faucett et al., 2013).

4. Results and Analysis

As mentioned above, the present study has adopted PLS-SEM for the analysis of the data. The author used PLS-SEM for the assessment of structural and measurement model (Joseph F Hair Jr, Hult, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2016). Basically, the analysis of the data through PLS is based on two steps, namely, measurement model and structural model. SEM is the data analysis technique which is second generation multivariate technique. This technique has controlled the shortfalls of the first-generation method of SEM. Researchers pointed out that SEM is a very good tool to evaluate the multiple relationships of more than one variable at the same time. In order to assess the interrelationships of the structural equations, SEM has the power to perform the tasks. SEM has the capability to evaluate both additive and linear relationships of the model; therefore, this test is applied in the present study (Chin, 1998).

For PLS-SEM, the researcher has used PLS 3 software which has two steps, i.e. measurement model and structural model. The measurement model is important for the determination of loading and convergent validity of the data. In line of the Joe F Hair Jr, Sarstedt, Hopkins, and Kuppelwieser (2014), the convergent validity of the constructs are achieved if the factor loading of the items meet the minimum criteria's. The factor loading of the item is mentioned in the table below (Figure 1).

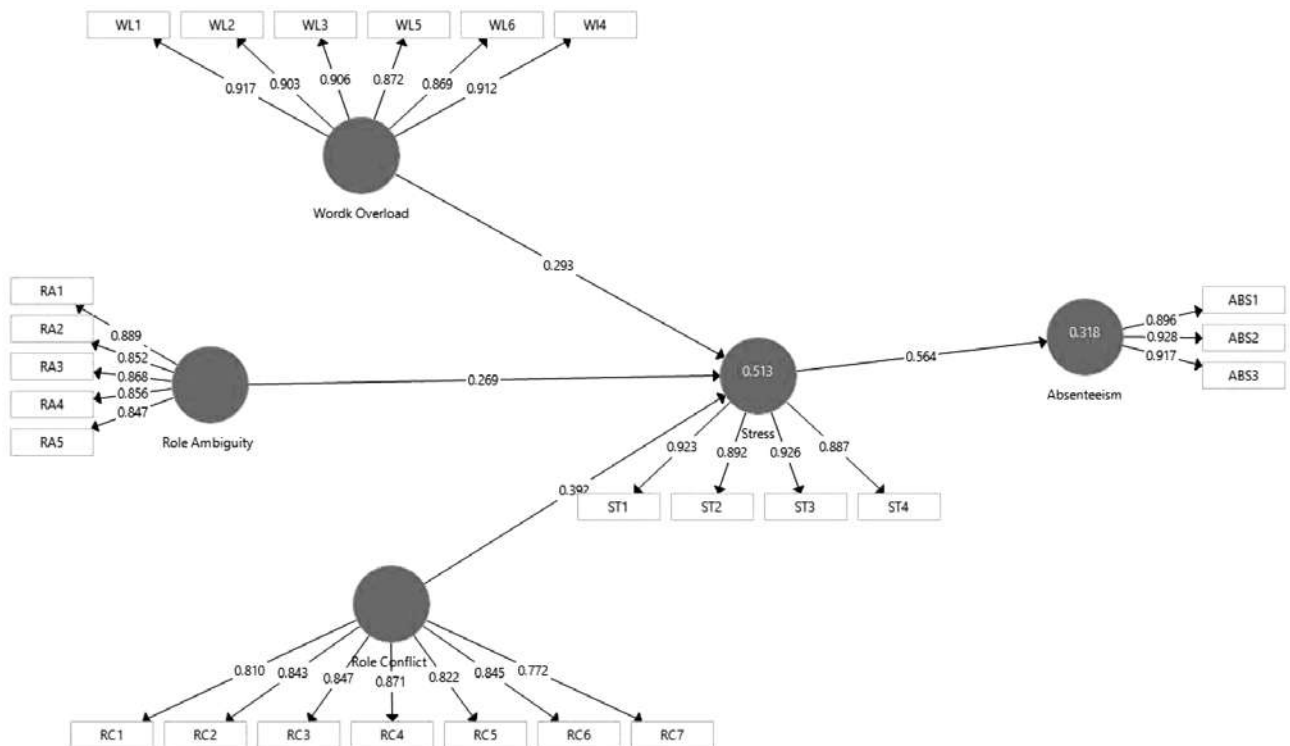


Figure 1. Measurement Model

The first step is to assess the loading of the items involved in the study. The loading of items should be minimum 0.708 for further analysis of the study. The values mentioned in table 1 below the recommendations are met in the present study. All values are well above the minimum acceptable figure of 0.708. The minimum value is of RC7 is 0.772, and the maximum value is of ABS of 0.928.

Table 1. Loading of the items

	AB	RA	RC	ST	WL
ABS1	0.896				
ABS2	0.928				
ABS3	0.917				
RA1		0.889			
RA2		0.852			
RA3		0.868			
RA4		0.856			
RA5		0.847			
RC1			0.810		
RC2			0.843		
RC3			0.847		
RC4			0.871		
RC5			0.822		
RC6			0.845		
RC7			0.772		
ST1				0.923	
ST2				0.892	
ST3				0.926	
ST4				0.887	
WL1					0.917
WL2					0.903
WL3					0.906
WL5					0.872
WL6					0.869
WI4					0.912

Note: ABS= absenteeism, ST= stress, WL= work overload,
 RC= role conflict, RA= role ambiguity

It is also important to evaluate the reliability and internal consistency of the scales involved in the study (McCrae, Kurtz, Yamagata, & Terracciano, 2011). To evaluate the validity and reliability of the data collected through data collection, different tests are performed like discriminant validity, Cronbach alpha, AVE and Composite reliabilities.

The next step is to assess the validity and reliability of the data. Cronbach Alpha and composite reliability test are calculated. Internal consistency of the data is shown through Cronbach Alpha analysis. The acceptable value of Cronbach Alpha is more than 0.70. on the other hand, an acceptable range of composite reliability is above 0.70 as well. Table 2 below shows the value of CR and Cronbach alpha is meeting the minimum acceptable criteria.

Table 2. Reliability and internal consistency

	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	(AVE)
AB	0.901	0.904	0.938	0.835
RA	0.914	0.917	0.935	0.744
RC	0.925	0.932	0.940	0.690
ST	0.928	0.929	0.949	0.823
WL	0.951	0.953	0.961	0.804

Note: ABS= absenteeism, ST= stress, WL= work overload,
 RC= role conflict, RA= role ambiguity

The next step is to evaluate the AVE of the data. Minimum acceptable value for the acceptability of AVE is 0.50. table 2 above showing this criterion is also met by the research. Therefore, all items of the study have a high level of convergent validity.

In the next phase, the discriminant validity of the constructs is assessed.

Determining discriminant validity is the next step of the analysis. In this scenario, studies mentioned that discriminant validity shows the point to which there is a difference among the latent variables. The values of AVE were used in the present study for the prediction of discriminant validity. Through the correlation among the AVE's square root values and latent variable's correlation, discriminant validity was obtained (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

The values mentioning at the diagonal should be more than the remaining values of the construct. Values of table 3 below show this criterion is also meet.

Table 3. Discriminant Validity: Fornell and Larcker (1981)

	AB	RA	RC	ST	WL
AB	0.914				
RA	0.436	0.862			
RC	0.527	0.310	0.831		
ST	0.564	0.470	0.593	0.907	
WL	0.418	0.274	0.403	0.524	0.897

Note: ABS= absenteeism, ST= stress, WL= work overload, RC= role conflict, RA= role ambiguity

Bootstrapping along with PLS algorithm procedure, was adopted to run the structural model in the present study (Chin, 1998). The structural model is basically important for the evaluation of direct as well as indirect hypothesis proposed in the study. Table 4 below shows the statistical results of direct results. The minimum benchmark t-value for the acceptability of a hypothesis is 1.96

Table 4. Direct results of the study

	(O)	(STDEV)	T Statistics ((O/STDEV))	P Values
RA -> ST	0.269	0.052	5.132	0.000
RC -> ST	0.392	0.052	7.533	0.000
ST -> AB	0.564	0.043	13.169	0.000
WL -> ST	0.293	0.049	5.976	0.000

Note: ABS= absenteeism, ST= stress, WL= work overload, RC= role conflict, RA= role ambiguity

It's evident from the values mentioned in the table 4 above that the minimum benchmark of t-value is fulfilled in the present study. Therefore, role ambiguity has a significant impact on stress; role conflict has a significant impact on stress and works overlard is also significantly associated with stress. In the end, stress has a significant relationship with absenteeism. Further mediation results are mentioned in the table 5 below.

Table 5. Mediation results

	Original Sample (O)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics ((O/STDEV))	P Values
RA -> ST -> AB	0.152	0.032	4.781	0.000
RC -> ST -> AB	0.221	0.038	5.796	0.000
WL -> ST -> AB	0.165	0.028	5.815	0.000

Note: ABS= absenteeism, ST= stress, WL= work overload, RC= role conflict, RA= role ambiguity

For the mediation results, the study has followed the t- values statistic benchmark. The table above shows these benchmarks are also fulfilled. Thus, stress mediates significantly between role ambiguity, role conflict, work overload and absenteeism (see Figure 2).

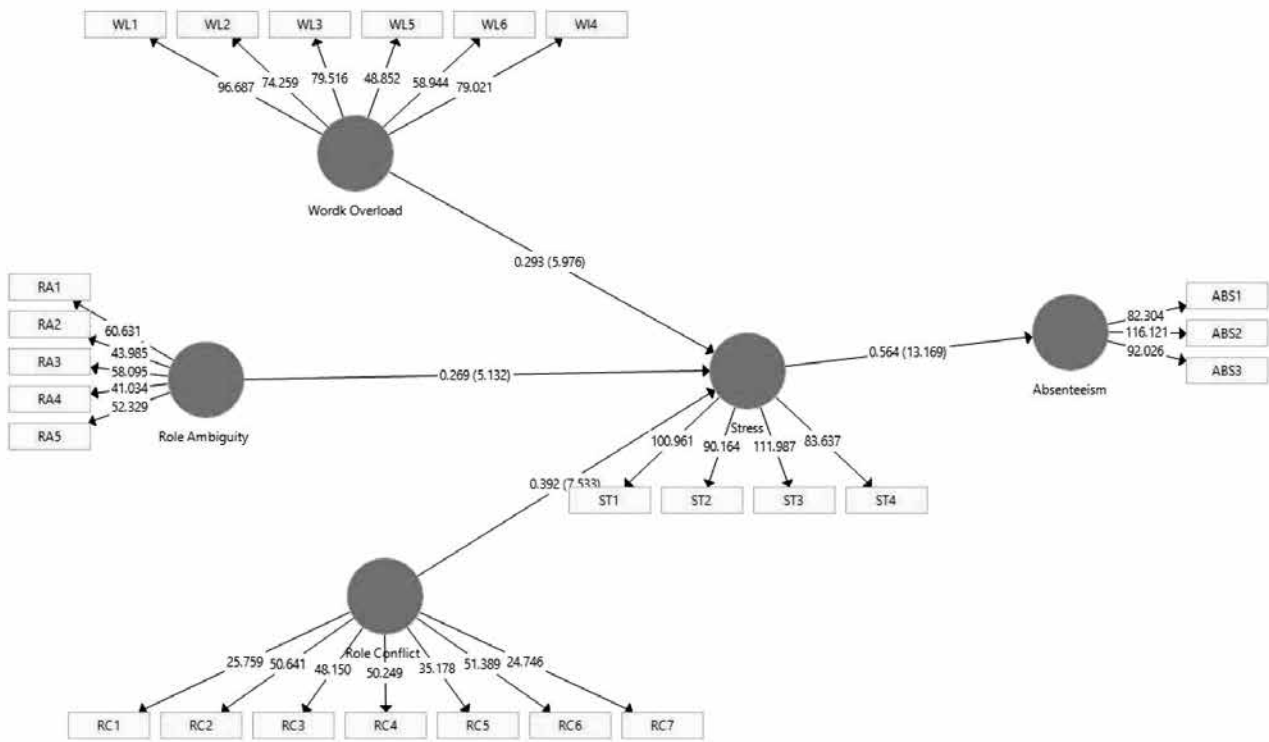


Figure 2. Structural Model

It is critical to assess the predictive relevance of the model proposed through the values of R square known as the coefficient of determination of the endogenous variable (Chin, 1998). As per the mentioned criteria, minimum acceptable value of R^2 is 0.10. The values of R^2 are mentioned in the table 6 below.

Table 6. R Square

	R Square
AB	0.318
ST	0.513

Note: ABS= absenteeism, ST= Stress

In the end, the requirement is to assess the predictive accuracy. For this purpose, Q^2 values were used as proposed by Geisser (1974). The recommended value should be non-zero for predictive accuracy. These values are mentioned in Table 7 below and Figure 3.

Table 7. Q square

	$Q^2 (=1-SSE/SSO)$
AB	0.263
ST	0.417

Note: ABS= absenteeism, ST= stress

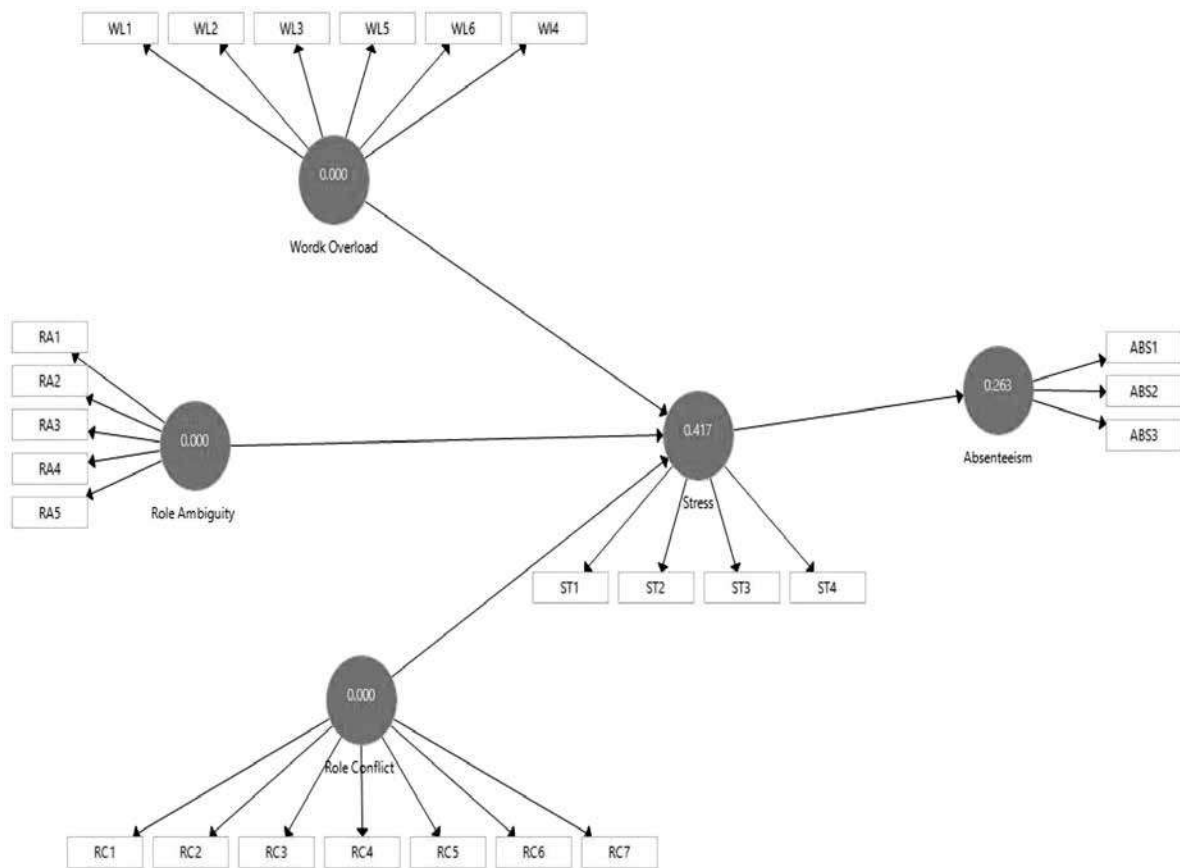


Figure 3. Resulting model

5. Conclusion

In this era of intense competition, organizations can compete with each other at the local and international market by reduction of cost. The cost of operations is increased in case of employee absenteeism from the workplace. This study was conducted to assess the effect of role conflict, role ambiguity and work overload on stress which in turn force the employees to remain absent from the workplace. The study was conducted in the electronic industry of Indonesia. The findings of the study confirm the direct impact of role conflict, role ambiguity, and work overload on stress. Moreover, mediation impact of stress is also confirmed from the findings of the study.

The results of the study show that organizations should have clarity regarding the role an employee has to play in the production process. The job description must clearly define the expected outcomes and SOP's to be followed to achieve these goals. Moreover, job role must not conflict as well. It's better than the employee must report to one supervisor at a time with a single goal to achieve (Koloba, 2020; Kusananto et al., 2020; Dlalisa & Govender, 2020; Govender & Govender, 2020; Tsaurai & Nyoka, 2019; Tsunga et al., 2020). Moreover, the organization should provide appropriate resources to achieve these goals as well. In the end, organizations must distribute the work according to the work capacity and skills of the employee. The goals must be designed in a way that employee can complete those in normal time. If these three aspects are not taken care of by the organization, it will lead to the development of stress among employees. The stress has the capability to damage employee psychologically and physiologically. As a result, employees want to remain away from organizations and prefer absenteeism (Janssen, 2020; Hornung, 2020; Mhlanga & Dunga, Mokwena et al., 2020; Kasalak & Dagyar, 2020; Kengatharan, 2020).

There are a few limitations in the present study. The impact of job burnout should be assessed in future studies. Moreover, the direct impact of work overload, role conflict and ambiguity should be assessed on absenteeism. In the end, this model should also be tested with the moderation effect of employee satisfaction. Results of the study are important for the academicians of HR to engage the employee at the workplace.

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