

## INFLUENCE OF NEGATIVE ROLE PERCEPTIONS ON PSYCHOLOGICAL STRESS DYNAMICS — A LONGITUDINAL STUDY

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*Настоящата статия представя данни от лонгитюдно изследване на ефектите на два ролеви стресора — неяснота и конфликт. Авторите обособяват четири равнища на стрес, но проверяват хипотезата, че тези стресори влияят само върху две от тях. Субективните реакции са диагностицирани чрез четирикратно измерване на нехомогенна по пол, стаж и извършвана дейност, извадка от една организация. Данните илюстрират, че двата стресора определят динамиката на реакциите на психичен стрес по специфичен начин. Неяснотата поражда чувства на несигурност в дългосрочен аспект, а конфликтът — състоянието на депресия в зависимост от силата на текущите емоции в един и същи момент. Дискриминантният анализ открие комплекс от емоции, които са типични за развитието на депресивното състояние.*

Job-related stress originates from various factors of work environment. A number of potential stressors have been traditionally studied — physical conditions, organisational design and processes, social psychological problems of co-operation in achievement of organisational goals, spill-over between individual participation in organisational life and playing the required social roles, etc. These factors affect well-being and mental health of employees depending on specific characteristics of the workplace.

The concept of role introduced by Kahn and co-authors (1964) differentiates three types of the role stressors — ambiguity, conflict and overload. Role ambiguity is defined as a sense of uncertainty, which results from unequivocal or lack of information about personal responsibilities, required

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role-related actions, important people as a source of role expectations and consequences of role behaviour for other colleagues and for the whole organisation. Role conflict refers to an experience of personal discomfort, which is caused by demand to perform inconsistent or conflicting expectations of different colleagues and/or groups in work process. Role overload is described as a state of discomfort when the focal individual has to meet a lot of non-conflicting expectations of different people in organisation. Obviously the first stressor is related to role definition, and the other two — to individual work behaviour.

Other researchers distinguish additional stressors. Dougherty and Pritchard (1985) specify three stressors concerning the outcomes of role-related behaviour. Role overload is related to frequent situations in which time given is not sufficient for the individual to attain the required outcomes. Role ambiguity reflects the frequency of emerging problems about the ways to undertake the required actions and to meet the colleagues' evaluative standards. Role conflict reflects disagreement between individual's standards of the ways to perform the assignments and his/her superior's requirements. Newton and Keenan (1987) suggest a set of four stressors. Role ambiguity and role conflict are similar to the role problems described by Kahn and colleagues. The third stressor refers to limited opportunities for expression of personal professional competence and the fourth one expresses the lack of time to perform the expected actions. Other authors extend the range of role stressors specifying overload, insufficiency, boundary, responsibility, and ambiguity (Osipow & Davis, 1988; Lagace, 1988).

Such variety of role stressors focuses our attention to the fact that organisational role-related behaviour could be frustrated or complicated by many factors. Regardless of the terminological overlap of the types of role stressors we can draw the following conclusions. First, some of them concern two processes: the individual understanding of the nature of organisational role and required actions to perform it. Second, negative role perceptions originate when the available information is conflicting, new, insufficient or ambiguous and when it comes from different sources.

A lot of data demonstrate that role stressors have various negative consequences. The meta-analytic study conducted by Jackson & Schuler (1985) illustrates some of them. First, there exists a wide range of subjective reactions — from aggravated perceptions of work tasks and leader's actions through personality changes and increased negative attitudes, such as job dissatisfaction and negative feelings such as anxiety, to impaired work behaviour — i.e. poor task performance and active avoidance. Second, role ambiguity predicts role-related stress reactions better than role conflict. Third, these stressors are correlated. They evoke short-term reactions such as frustration (Keenan & Newton, 1984), hostility towards work group members (Brown & Wade, 1987), and impaired quality of work (Wallis, 1987). Dissatisfaction with job content, low job involvement and decreased life satisfaction were found too (Sinha, 1986). Role ambiguity and role conflict increase depressive state and psychosomatic complaints (Cooper & Davidson, 1982), the risk of