

A CONCEPTUALIZATION OF ENTREPRENEURS' ROLE STRESS

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ABSTRACT

Entrepreneurship as a domain of research has grown by benefiting from more established disciplines. However, a commonality in the early stages of applying established theories to entrepreneurship is the lack of grounded research frameworks. This paper reviews literature on role stress and develops a conceptual framework that illustrates how this construct can serve entrepreneurship research. Based on a review of psychological and sociological literature, the paper proposes a model of antecedents and consequences to entrepreneur role stress. Suggestions for future research and practical implications are also presented.

Keywords: role stress, role theory, entrepreneurship, entrepreneurial role, review

INTRODUCTION

Scholars agree that entrepreneurship is developing into a well-established academic discipline (Davidsson, 2004; Shane and Venkataraman, 2000; Venkataraman, 1997). However, entrepreneurship as a domain of research still benefits largely from contributions from more established research areas. As focus tends to be on the entrepreneur as an individual, psychological and sociological theories have played an important role in advancing entrepreneurship research. For example, studies in entrepreneurship have applied theory of planned behavior (e.g., Davidsson, 1995), self-efficacy (e.g., Gartner, 1989), and networks and social capital (e.g., Busenitz, West, Shepherd, Nelson, Chandler, and Zacharakiz, 2003) to explain entrepreneurship vis-à-vis venture success and failure. The approach taken in this paper is to review literature from psychology and sociology to develop a research agenda. This paper presents a conceptual discussion of how a construct that has received a lot of attention in psychology and sociology can be applied to entrepreneurship research.

Attention is directed to literature that has been neglected despite its potential. Although psychological and sociological literature has contributed much to the field of entrepreneurship, focus on roles and role behavior has been scant. This is seen as a shortcoming as role theory highlights “one of the most important characteristics of social behavior – the fact that human beings behave in ways that are different and predictable depending on their respective social identities and the situation” (Biddle, 1986, p. 68). Thus, by recognizing this theory we can add to the emerging research on the entrepreneurial

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identities (see for example Dobrev and Barnett, 2005; Downing, 2005). Being an entrepreneur is related to a role – one based on combining resources to create profit from a market opportunity (Shane and Venkataraman, 2000). That being an entrepreneur is a role (i.e., a prominent part of an entrepreneur’s self identity) is evident when reading literature, practitioner outlets, or magazines that address entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship. While obvious, this opens a door for research in a rather unexplored area – studies about entrepreneurs and entrepreneur role stress. Although most people would recognize that the entrepreneurial role, or self identity can be exposed to pressures, entrepreneurship scholars has not yet integrated such a perspective. To date, only a few studies have hinted at the occurrence of role stress among entrepreneurs (e.g., Buttner, 1992; Stoner, Hartman, and Arora, 1990; Teoh and Foo 1997; Williams, 1984), and the construct has not been elaborated on explicitly. As such, little is know about role stress and entrepreneurs. Nevertheless, there is a large body of literature on role stress in psychological and sociological journals that can be used for designing such studies. Since the 1960s, about 300 articles have been published on role stress or one of its three dimensions: *role conflict*, as the discrepant role expectations sent by members/outstanding persons of an individual’s role set (Kahn et al., 1964), *role ambiguity*, as the degree of vagueness, ambiguity, or unclarity in desired expectations that creates difficulties for a person to fulfill requirements (Kahn et al., 1964), and *role overload*, as the extent to which time and resources prove inadequate to meet expectations of commitments and obligations to fulfill a role (Latack, 1981). The diversity of journals where the articles are published suggests that similar concepts are tested over and over again in different contextual settings and on different actors performing different roles. Studies on entrepreneurs and new ventures have not profited from these publications. Conceptual explanations about why and how some entrepreneurs are identifying themselves as more or less successful in running their ventures are under-developed. In general, so-called “positive” constructs (i.e., what is worthwhile to strive for versus what should be avoided) have been predominant in studies examining entrepreneurial outcomes, leaving the picture incomplete. Recognizing the need for understanding these positive constructs, this paper shows the importance of also understanding negative constructs such as role stress. It is important to know how and what to avoid as much as what is worth striving for when pursuing business opportunities.

With this in mind, role stress and role stress models presented in sociological and psychological journals should have value in explaining actions and behaviors of entrepreneurs as well as venture outcomes. This research should also have relevance for reporting early “unmasked” conceptual analyses and developing research agendas. In advancing the study of role stress for entrepreneurship, this paper specifically looks at the development of a conceptual model based on constructs that can be modeled as antecedents and consequences of entrepreneur role stress.

To accomplish our goals with the paper, a rich literature base on role stress was secured. Several databases were used for conducting the literature search: Academic Search Premier, Business Source Premier, Psychology and Behavioral Science Collection, PsycINFO, Sociological Collection, Jstor, and PsycArticles. These databases were selected because literature on role stress has largely been published in psychological and sociological journals (Biddle, 1986). All articles that mentioned role stress, or any dimension thereof (i.e., role conflict, role ambiguity, or role overload), were initially selected. In addition to role stress, a number of constructs that have been proposed as antecedents to and consequences of role stress were extracted from the literature.

A MODEL ON ENTREPRENEUR ROLE STRESS

This section develops a conceptual model of entrepreneur role stress that shows how including role stress literature advances knowledge on entrepreneurs and venture outcomes. We illustrate our discussion with Figure 1 that summarizes all the proposed relationships.

Figure 1 about here

The model proposes the full picture of a series of relationships among entrepreneur role stress, antecedents (i.e., role novelty, role support intolerance for ambiguity, and locus of control,) and consequences (job satisfaction, job performance, work-family conflicts, and withdrawal). The eight variables and their relation to role stress, as summarized in Table 1, have been selected because of their relevance for entrepreneurship. Based on the literature review, we also recognize feed-back loops among the variables that can serve multiple roles and causalities. These interrelationships shed additional light on what is known about entrepreneurs and new ventures.

Table 1 about here

Role Stress, Satisfaction and Withdrawal

Withdrawal intentions are of great interest for the entrepreneurship field, as the knowledge about entrepreneurs' failure still is rather limited (see for instance Mellahi and Wilkinson, 2004; Shepherd and Douglas, 2000; Wilkinson and Mellahi, 2005). According to role stress literature, withdrawal intentions could be explained by role stress. Thus, role stress holds the potential to illustrate a chain of events leading to entrepreneurs' failure. The rationale is that a common response to increased role stress has shown to be withdrawal from the organization. This response, however, results from low job satisfaction rather than directly from high role stress (Ashforth and Saks, 1996; Babin and Boles, 1998; Baroudi, 1985). The majority of studies (e.g., Kemery, Mossholder, and Bedeian, 1987) indicate that "withdrawal" is a natural reaction to low job satisfaction caused by high role stress. Empirical support has been found among salespersons that were doing similar jobs as entrepreneurs (e.g., Netemeyer, Johnston, and Burton, 1990) and Futrell and Parasuraman (1984) noted that turnover intentions were a good indicator of future turnover (i.e., withdrawal). In turn, the negative relationship between role stress and job satisfaction is much supported in various roles (Behrman and Perrault, 1984) where among others Walker et al. (1985) proposed that role stress is noxious stimuli that could lead personnel to feel discontented or disillusioned with their work situation. We argue this causal chain to be evident among entrepreneurs. When confronted with conflicting demands, unclear role perceptions, or role overloads, entrepreneurs will evaluate their job context and experience low job satisfaction as a result. Based on the strong support in other roles, we also have reason to believe the negative effects on withdrawal to primarily originate from not being satisfied rather than the pressures of the entrepreneurial identity that role stress captures. Indeed, in a world of uncertainty and risks, entrepreneurs know they are somewhat struggling towards unknown harbors. Role stress is likely not harmful for the development of withdrawal intentions per se. However, in a situation of not being satisfied, entrepreneurs' likely start having doubts and question if withdrawal is an alternative.

Proposition 1: The negative effect from entrepreneurs' role stress on venture withdrawal comes indirectly by mediation from the negative effects a greater level of role stress has on job satisfaction.

Role Novelty and Role Stress

Much effort has been on understanding the consequences of being new in the role as an entrepreneur. Scholars interested in entrepreneurship have repeatedly studied the impact of education and experience, both in current discussions about serial entrepreneurs and in teaching. Role stress literature also provides rationales for their importance. Solomon et al. (1985) defined role novelty as an undeveloped script for a specific role. A role script can be developed from experience or education (Zahrly and Tosi, 1989). In short, role novelty is higher when a script is lacking or not developed. Experience received early empirical support for being an important antecedent to role stress (Tropman, 1968). The conceptual explanation points to a negative relationship between experience and role stress and this relation has received empirical support (Fisher and Gitelson, 1983; Jackson and Schuler, 1985; Walker et al., 1985). Singh and Rhoads (1991) offered two explanations for this: (1) experience increases knowledge about what people expect of the role set, and (2) experience helps individuals obtain and accumulate information from members of the role set. These features are of particular importance in the entrepreneurial setting, when entrepreneurs need to realize, present, evaluate and convince customers, suppliers and other stakeholders (Downing, 2005). Education has also received sound conceptual and empirical support (e.g., Brief et al., 1979; Fisher and Gitelson, 1983; Gong et al., 2001; Jackson and Schuler, 1985; Kelly, Gable and Hise, 1981; Monahan, 1999; Rizzo et al., 1970), and the relation is likely to hold for entrepreneurs. Shenkar and Zeira (1992) studied top managers, who like entrepreneurs hold the highest position in the organization, and argued that they have learned to use their knowledge in a sophisticated way that enables them to reduce conflicts. The entrepreneurship field has also research supporting the credit of this statement (Parker, 2006). Role novelty in the face of a new or unknown market, technology or business idea is likely to create pressures on the entrepreneurs' identity. Consequently, as the lack of experience and education signals for high role novelty there is reason to propose a positive relationship between role novelty and role stress among entrepreneurs.

Proposition 2: The greater the entrepreneurs' role novelty, the greater their role stress.

Role Advisors and Role Stress

Role advisors can be important in the context of entrepreneurship and new venture management. Role advisors are individuals that are included in a focal person's role set. Role advisors influence role stress by the social support to the person at hand. This support has received much attention in the role stress literature and is often cited as an antecedent to role stress. In an organizational setting, this support has been studied as support from supervisors or co-workers (e.g., Babin and Boles, 1996; Gil-Monte, Valcarcel, and Zornoza, 1993). Some studies have focused on support provided by other actors. For instance, Berkowitz and Perkins (1984) examined support given by husbands to working farm women, which they found to be an antecedent to role stress. Tetrick, Slack, Da Silva and Sinclair (2000) argued that support, consisting of support from supervisors, peers, subordinates, friends, and significant others, had a preventive affect on stressors (i.e., role stress). In the context of entrepreneurship, a number of other actors might be influential as role advisors, including ventures stakeholders (e.g., financiers, co-operators, employees, suppliers, customers, governments, universities, society, contractors, consultants, and supporting actors) and family and friends outside the work setting. Schaubroeck, Cotton, and Jennings (1989) argued that social support can decrease role ambiguity, since high levels of social support increase communication between the stakeholders and entrepreneurs. Schaubroeck et al. (1989) also argued that support (from co-workers) decreases role conflict since social support reflects cooperation among peers and enables negotiation of role demands, which as well indicates

that role advisors might have the same effect on role overload. As a result, supportive role advisors are likely to reduce role stress among entrepreneurs.

Proposition 3: The greater support from the entrepreneurs' role advisors, the less their role stress.

Intolerance for Ambiguity

Although mixed support, intolerance for ambiguity has been rather well used in entrepreneurship studies. In the role stress literature, Frone (1990) and Ivancevich and Matteson (1980) provided convincing support for a relationship to role stress. They found that although intolerance for ambiguity might be strongly related to role ambiguity, this personality trait likely influence the other facets of role stress (i.e., role conflict and role overload) as well. Risk and uncertainty pervade entrepreneurial activities; as such, ambiguities cannot be avoided. Koh (1996) suggested that entrepreneurs need to have substantial tolerance for ambiguity to manage the process of entrepreneurship or they will be unable to tackle or engage in the required tasks. Therefore, intolerance for ambiguity should increase role stress for entrepreneurs. Also, intolerance for ambiguity can likely moderate the relationships between entrepreneur role stress and job satisfaction. When intolerance for ambiguity is high, high entrepreneur role stress reduces job satisfaction more than if the opposite. Intolerance for ambiguity was an important moderator of role stress outcomes already in the work by Kahn et al. (1964) and has been treated as such in subsequent studies. Frone (1990) used a meta-analysis to understand intolerance for ambiguity as a moderator of role stress. Results showed that individuals with low intolerance for ambiguity perceive stressful events to be less threatening than individuals with high intolerance for ambiguity. Consequently, intolerance for ambiguity is influential in understanding the size of the effect of role stress on job satisfaction. Keenan and McBain (1979) hypothesized that individuals with high intolerance for ambiguity would experience lower job satisfaction than those with low intolerance of ambiguity. Thus, intolerance for ambiguity likely has two roles to serve in relation to role stress.

Proposition 4: The greater the entrepreneurs' intolerance for ambiguity, the greater their experiences of role stress.

Proposition 5: Intolerance for ambiguity can likely moderate the relationship between entrepreneur role stress and job satisfaction.

Locus of Control and Role Stress

Locus of control has a long history in serving the field of entrepreneurship. Szilagyi et al. (1976) described internal locus of control as a personality trait that causes individuals to view surrounding events as resulting from their own actions. People with an external locus of control, on the other hand, view surrounding events as the result of fate, luck, or powerful others. Organ and Greene (1974) found empirical support for locus of control as an antecedent to role stress. Although Keenan and McBain (1979) argued that there is a lack of conceptual support for this relationship, later researchers have proposed several explanations. For instance, Singh and Rhoads (1991) found that those with an internal locus of control experience less role ambiguity, since they tend to be better informed about their role and task environment. Similarly, Von Emster and Harrison (1998) argued that "internals" have a greater sense of control over situations and experience less role ambiguity as a result. This extends to entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurs who believe their success or failure is an outcome of their own actions keep track of what to avoid and take greater care in planning, which will lead to reduced levels of role stress. Locus of control likely has an additional, more complicated role. When internal locus of control is low, high entrepreneur role stress reduces job satisfaction more than if the opposite. Support for locus of control as moderating the

consequences of role stress has also been found. Grover (1993) argued that locus of control moderated the relationship between role stress and its consequences (i.e., lying and ethical behavior). According to Keenan and McBain (1979), internals react more positively to increased complexities from a high level of role stress than externals. Their research should have particular bearing for the entrepreneurship context. These researchers argued that role stress would be associated with lower job satisfaction among the latter group. Thus, locus of control has two functions in which it influences role stress.

Proposition 6: The greater the entrepreneurs' internal locus of control, the less their experiences of role stress

Proposition 7: Internal locus of control can likely moderate the relationship between entrepreneur role stress and job satisfaction.

Role Stress and Job Performance

In the role stress literature, different performance constructs have been widely used and associated with role stress (Ashforth and Saks, 1996; Babin and Boles, 1998; Behrman and Perrault, 1984; Dubinsky, Michaels, Kotabe, Un Lim, and Moon, 1992). Job performance is one of them and is often viewed as the degree to which employees execute their job tasks, responsibilities, and assignments adequately (Dubinsky et al., 1992). Early conceptual work proposed a negative relationship between role stress and job performance since exposure to role stress reduces control over the work environment and hinders job performance (e.g., McGrath, 1976). In boundary spanning roles similar to the entrepreneurial one, the negative relationship between role stress and job performance is explained by role behavior becoming "inefficient, misdirected, or insufficient" (Jackson and Schuler, 1985, p. 43; Singh, 1993, p. 15). In academia, the number of submissions (as a performance measure) is indicative of how role stress (i.e., role ambiguity) influences performance (Bauer and Green, 1994). Jackson and Schuler (1985) established a negative relationship between role stress and job performance in their meta-analysis. They explained this relationship drawing from cognitive and motivational research. According to a cognitive perspective, role stress results in lower job performance since role stress includes lack of information and information overload (Tubre and Collins, 2000). From a motivational perspective, role stress weakens effort-to-performance and performance-to-reward expectancies (Tubre and Collins, 2000). The negative relationship between role stress and job performance likely persists for entrepreneurs (Stoner et al., 1990; Williams, 1984), since it has been reported for CEOs (Shenkar and Zeira, 1992). Most studies, however, have defined entrepreneurs as small business managers rather than new venture creators. The proposed direction of the relationship is relevant for entrepreneurs (conceptualized as new venture creators) as inconsistent demands (role conflict) can lead to inefficiency due to incompatible demands and uncertainty about how time and effort should be allocated (role ambiguity) – both of which make it hard to perform any role well. Not having enough time and resources (overload) is also detrimental to job performance.

The inverse causal relationship between role stress and performance, where performance is an antecedent to role stress, is also proposed and studied. Oliver and Brief (1977) found empirical support for performance as an antecedent to role ambiguity, discussed as performance feedback (as modeled in Figure 1). Shirom and Kirmeyer (1988) found evidence that performance was both an antecedent and a consequence to role conflict, role ambiguity, and role overload, giving further cause for modeling a feedback relationship between performance and role stress. Other researchers have established that different performance indicators influence the dimensions of role stress. That is, job or venture performance as an antecedent is negatively related to role stress. Evidence in the literature supports this relationship. For instance, client satisfaction, as a component of venture performance, has been found to be negatively related to role stress (Beard, 1999). In light of this, job

performance likely has a feedback loop that reduces levels of role stress. Entrepreneurs scoring high on job performance will likely exhibit low role stress.

Proposition 8: The greater the entrepreneurs' role stress, the less will be their job performance.

Proposition 9: The greater the entrepreneurs' job performance, the less will be their role stress.

Job performance has a multi faceted role as also capable of moderating the relationships between intolerance for ambiguity, locus of control, role novelty, and role advisors and entrepreneur role stress. The rationale is that when having attributes that likely enhance role stress together with a job diagnose of not knowing or having the capacity to perform the entrepreneurial role (i.e., low job performance), the attributes normally leading to role stress should be very influential. In opposite, when job performance is high the experienced role stress should not be substantial as the rationale provoking role stress in the proposed antecedents should be mitigated. Job performance, viewed as a receipt of doing well in the role (Behrman and Perreault, 1984; Dubinsky et al., 1992; Lysonski, 1985), might reduce the impact of intolerance for ambiguity, external locus of control, role novelty and low support of role advisors. This is likely since all of these variables have in common that they create doubts and uncertainties of not performing the role sufficient (cf. Oliver and Brief, 1977). Therefore, job performance is likely influential in determining the impact the mentioned variables have on role stress, increasing or decreasing depending on whether it signals positive or negative performance.

Proposition 10(a,b,c,d): Job performance can moderate the relationships between intolerance for ambiguity, locus of control, role novelty, and role advisors and entrepreneur role stress. When job performance is low; high intolerance for ambiguity (10a), low locus of control (10b), high role novelty (10c), and low role advisors (10d) enhance role stress. If not, the relationships are likely to be weak or nonexistent.

Job Performance, Job Satisfaction and Role Stress

We already discussed the robust support for an association between role stress and satisfaction above and beyond controlling for other variables. When including job performance in analysis the complexity increases. Bagozzi (1980) found that job performance influenced job satisfaction, which has been empirically supported in other studies (e.g., Behrman and Perreault, 1984; Dubinsky and Hartly, 1986; Lusch and Serpkenci, 1990; Singh, 1993). Babin and Boles (1998) argued that the relationship between job performance and job satisfaction has been positive but modest in empirical studies. Bagozzi (1978, 1980) has studied the relationship between performance and satisfaction the most extensively. Based on his thorough conceptual and empirical research, he has concluded that job performance has a significant positive influence on job satisfaction. It is likely that this holds also for entrepreneurs.

However, when job performance is low, high levels of role stress reduce job satisfaction. If high, the influence of role stress on job satisfaction is likely to be weak or nonexistent. When illustrating the applicability of role stress, we argue for admitting this complexity. The rationale is that individuals who work in an environment characterized by conflicting demands and expectations and where there is a lack of clarity about job assignments and performance may not fully commit their effort to the organization. Previous research in organizational behavior has found that role stress is negatively related to organizational commitment (Morris and Koch, 1979; Johnston et al., 1990; Michaels, Day, and Joachimsthaler, 1988), especially when performance is low. When performance is low, ambiguities and overloads on the entrepreneurial role likely lead to decreased job satisfaction, as per literature on the relationship between role stress and job satisfaction. On the other hand,

when performance is high, conflicts, ambiguities, and overloads on a role are less likely to influence job satisfaction. Although expectations from role senders may be unclear or conflicting, high job performance can guide the perception of performing well in the role.

Proposition 11: The greater the entrepreneurs' job performance, the greater their job satisfaction.

Proposition 12: High job performance is required to compensate job satisfaction for high levels of entrepreneur role stress. When job performance is low, high levels of role stress reduce job satisfaction. If high, the influence of role stress on job satisfaction is likely to be weak or nonexistent.

Work-Family Conflicts and Role Stress

Work-family (or work-home) conflict is used as another common outcome of role stress (Babin and Boles, 1998; Bacharach, Bamberger and Conley, 1991). Several researchers have found conflicts between work and home roles heightened for employees working long or inflexible hours (Burke, Weir and Duwors, 1980; Fogarty, Rapoport and Rapoport, 1978; Pleck, Staines and Lang, 1980), a situation that can be recognized for many entrepreneurs and that has received especial support among female entrepreneurs (Shelton, 2006). Greenhaus, Bedeian and Mossholder (1987) found that role conflict and extensive time commitment at work were associated with higher levels of 'work-home conflict' among accountants. As Bacharach et al. (1991: 42) stated: "there seems to be increasing evidence of a 'spill-over' effect from the work place to the home; that is, an inverse relationship between negative experiences at work and well-being in one's home life". Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) provided a more in-depth explanation of how role stress influences work-family conflict. They noted that time-based conflict, as devoting time to one role and thereby not having time to fulfill expectations in another role, and strain-based conflict, as letting strain created in one role influence the performance, or the ability to perform, in another role. Besides from different types of role conflict, also role overload has been an explanation in that several researchers have noted that work-family conflict is higher when employees are working long and/or inflexible hours (see for instance Fogarty et al., 1978). It is likely that these reactions to role stress are as valid in a sample of entrepreneurs.

In addition to the relationship between role stress and work-family conflict we expect the opposite causality, as work-family conflict has been treated as a construct describing the spill-over effect from one role to others. That is, work-family conflict is constituted by the spill-over influence in the transition between the work role and the family role. As such, work-family conflict indicates the ability of buffering role stress, but when work-family conflict is high it is likely that role stress increases as it is spreading into the focal persons other roles and minimizes the possibilities for recovering. That work-family conflict also has the potential to be an antecedent to role stress has been widely studied and empirically supported (Boles et al., 1997; Chiu, 1998), as well received some attention in studies with implications for entrepreneurship (Folbre and Nelson, 2000; Orser and Hogarth-Scott, 1998; Shelton, 2006).

Proposition 12: The greater the entrepreneurs' role stress, the greater their work-family conflicts.

Proposition 13: The greater the entrepreneurs' work-family conflicts, the greater their role stress.

Work-Family Conflict, Job Satisfaction and Role Stress

In addition to role stress, work-family conflict has other well established associations to other constructs in the model we have illustrated. Several studies have examined how work-family conflict influences organizational behaviors (e.g., Bacharach et al., 1991), and

empirical support has been found for a relationship between work-family conflict and job satisfaction (Andrisani and Shapiro, 1978; Pleck et al., 1980; Porter and Steers, 1973). In a meta-analysis of 19 samples conducted by Kossek and Ozeki (1998), the correlation between work-family conflict and job satisfaction was -0.27. This relationship likely extends to the entrepreneurial role, where it has received some attention (see for instance Shelton, 2006).

However, the relationships involving work-family conflict also adds additional complexity (and detail) in our illustration of role stress usability. When work-family conflict is high, high levels of role stress reduce job satisfaction. Thus work-family conflict can moderate the role stress job satisfaction relationship. When work-family conflict is high, high levels of role stress reduce job satisfaction. If low degrees of work-family conflict, the influence of role stress on job satisfaction is likely to be weak or nonexistent. Work-family conflict is a variable that has been considered to have a spill-over relation with role stress (Bacharach et al., 1991). When work-family conflict is high, it is likely that role stress at the work will influence its outcomes to a higher degree (Kabanoff, 1980). It is thus likely that job satisfaction as a commonly studied consequence is further reduced when work-family conflict is high. At the other end of the spectrum, low work-family conflict likely buffers the negative affects of role stress on job performance. This is because the concept of work-family conflict functions to balance the spillover affect of role stress among various roles.

Proposition 14: The greater the entrepreneurs' work-family conflict, the less their job satisfaction.

Proposition 15: Low work-family conflict is required to compensate job satisfaction for high levels of entrepreneur role stress. When work-family conflict is high, high levels of role stress reduce job satisfaction. If low, the influence of role stress on job satisfaction is likely to be weak or nonexistent.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this conceptual analysis was to discuss how role stress can be used in entrepreneurship research. The conceptualization herein provides ample support for the study of role stress in entrepreneurial settings as well as the development of future research agendas. Based on these observations, a sufficient body of psychological and sociological literature exists on outcomes to test causal models and pursue deductive research on entrepreneur role stress. Role stress may help resolving unanswered questions in the field of entrepreneurship, and it has potential to further the research on entrepreneurial identity. For example, it may advance understanding of how personality can influence job performance and withdrawal (i.e., failure) – an issue hotly debated in entrepreneurship research and that has produced ambiguous findings (cf. Begley and Boyd, 1987; Johnson, 1990). Further, role stress may be an important mediator and a key construct for researching and introducing more “negative” consequences that have not received much research attention in an entrepreneurship setting.

More conceptual and empirical studies in the development of future research agendas are clearly needed. In context of entrepreneurship, role stress may have a number of direct and indirect negative affects on the creation of sustainable ventures, including the propensity to withdraw and low organizational commitment. Cross-sectional and longitudinal field surveys examining the propositions introduced in this paper would be one direction for future research. Further research is also required to develop new models, expand existing ones, and test the antecedents and consequences identified in the literature review to determine what is contextually important for entrepreneurship. The literature review suggests some guidelines, but deductive work in combination with the real life experiences of entrepreneurs would greatly contribute to the study of entrepreneur role stress.

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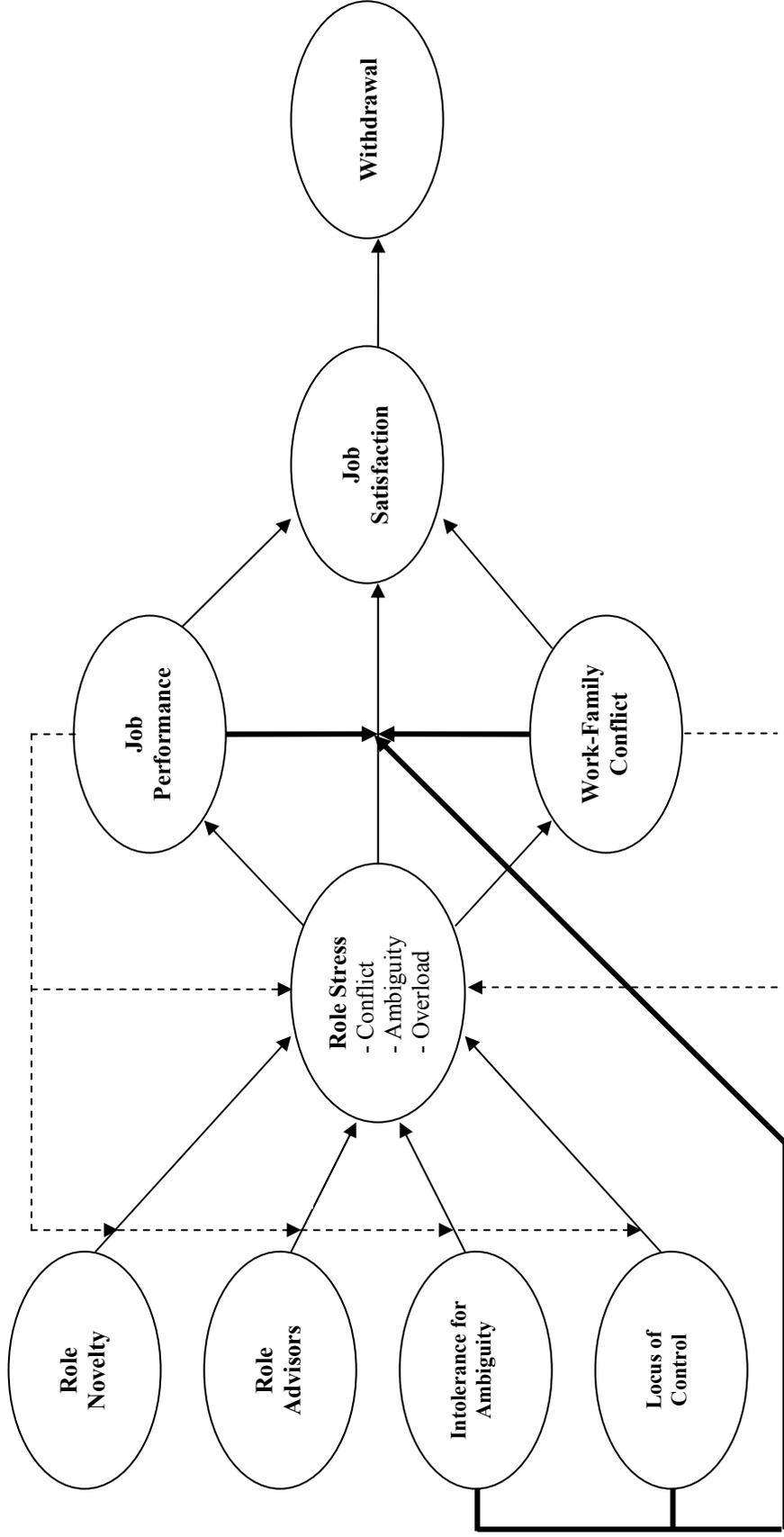
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TABLE 1
Proposed Correlates to Entrepreneur Role Stress

| Construct | Definition | Relation to Role Stress |
|---------------------------|--|-----------------------------------|
| Role novelty | The lack of or undeveloped script for a specific role (Solomon et al., 1985). | Antecedent |
| Role advisors | Individuals included in a focal persons role, which have the potential to influence the focal person through support. | Antecedent |
| Intolerance for ambiguity | "The tendency to perceive ambiguous situations as sources of threat" (Budner, 1962, p. 29). | Antecedent/Moderator |
| Locus of control | The perception individuals hold about how their actions will affect outcomes (Rotter, 1966). | Antecedent/Moderator |
| Job performance | The degree to which employees execute their job tasks, responsibilities, and assignments adequately (Dubinsky et al., 1992). | Antecedent/Consequence /Moderator |
| Job satisfaction | The "pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job or job experiences" (Locke, 1976, p. 1300). | Consequence |
| Work-family conflict | Conflicts between work and home roles for a focal person (Fogarty et al., 1978). | Antecedent/Consequence |
| Withdrawal | The propensity to leave the organization (turnover intentions). | Consequence |

FIGURE 1
Proposed Relationships between Antecedents and Consequences of Entrepreneur Role Stress



Note: The dotted line represents feedback loop mechanisms. Solid lines represent additional interaction effects.