ROLE STRESS AND WORK ENGAGEMENT AMONG COLLEGE DEANS OF HIGHER EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

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Abstract - Deans of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are expected to play essential leadership roles that involve intellectual, emotional, social and moral development of those who are under their supervision. It is then expected that they at times experience stress brought about by their workloads and conflicting roles. The purpose of this study is to determine the level of role stress and work engagement among college deans of HEIs in Baguio City. The researcher used descriptive research. Qualitative data were also gathered to determine the challenges encountered by the deans in relation to their roles as administrators. Based on the findings of the study, it is concluded that the challenges experienced by the deans are centered on educational problems in relation to organizational effectiveness, leadership and curricular development. To address the issue, the researcher developed a model which maybe view and review and evaluated by top management of HEIs in Baguio City and Benguet for possible adaptation.

Keywords - Role Stress, Work Engagement, Deans, HEIS

I. INTRODUCTION

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) are important parts of society as they generate broader economic growth as well as individual success (Faust, 2010). Moreover, one of the most important contributions of the institution is the creation and dissemination of knowledge to the new generation. This is especially true with the role of HEIs to be more transformative in various aspects of teaching and learning, instruction, extension, and linkages.

Deans are important personnel in higher education institutions. By definition, an academic dean is an administrator tasked to oversee the operations of various academic discipline areas or units, supervise faculty members, and provide leadership for the faculty (Russell, 2000). However, the dean's importance is also associated with a lot of responsibilities combining administration and instruction including competing priorities, interests, agendas, and other concerns in management of the college and faculty members (Wild, 2002). These concerns contribute to the stress that college deans experience. In addition, the deans are also bombarded with stressful demands, accountability, restriction in resources, expectations for services, and challenges in the interaction between faculty members and administration (Seagren et al.,1994; Tucker & Bryan, 1999; Warton, 1997; Wild,2002).

Because of the complexity and change in universities, many new challenges are brought to the attention of university faculty members and administrators. Although a lot of studies have been done on this, specifically on the relationship between job engagement, job stress, job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Huang & Hsiao, 2007; Liu et al, 2011), very few empirical studies were conducted in the context of the Philippines.

II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.1. Research Design and Data Gathering Tool

Descriptive research design was used to identify and describe the levels of role stress and work engagement of the college deans. The respondents of the study were the 67 deans of the six (6) higher education institutions (HEIs) in Baguio City and Benguet.

A set survey questionnaire was used to answer the problems of this research. These are the Role Stress Scale(to determine the level of role stress) and the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (to determine the level of work engagement), The questionnaires have a reliability coefficient of 0.89 and 0.86, respectively.In addition, an open-ended question was included in the instrument to determine the challenges that the deans encounter in carrying out their responsibilities as administrators and as teachers.

2.2. Treatment of Data

The gathered quantitative data were treated using mean. On the other hand, qualitative data were thematically analyzed.

The following scales were used to interpret the mean values.

Statistical Limits	Role Ambiguity	Role Conflict	Work Engagement
4.20 – 5.00	Very low	Very high	Very high
3.40 – 4.19	Low	High	High
2.60 – 3.39	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
1.80 – 2.59	High	Low	Low
1.00 – 1.79	Very high	Very low	Very low

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Role Ambiguity

Table 1 shows that the level of role ambiguity experienced by the deans of HEIs in Baguio City and Benguet is very low based on the sub mean of 1.72. This very low level of role ambiguity is due to the fact that the respondents "strongly agreed" that explanations are clear on what they have to do (1.78), they know what exactly is expected of them (1.73), they have clear, planned goals and objectives for their jobs (1.66), they know what their responsibilities are (1.46).

	Indicator	Mean	Verbal Description	Level
1	I feel certain about how much authority I have	1.85	Agree	Low
2	I have clear, planned goals and objectives for my job	1.66	Strongly Agree	Very Low
3	I know that I have divided my time properly	1.82	Agree	Low
4	I know what my responsibilities are	1.46	Strongly Agree	Very Low
5	I know what exactly is expected of me	1.73	Strongly Agree	Very Low
6	Explanation is clear of what has to be done	1.78	Strongly Agree	Very Low
Sub-mean		1.72	Strongly Agree	Very Low

Table 1. Level of Role Ambiguity

Furthermore, the data show that the respondents "agreed" that they feel certain about how much authority they have (1.85), and they know that they have divided their time properly (1.82). These findings imply that the deans perceive their roles and functions assigned to them as clear. They know what is expected of them as information about their job descriptions are not ambiguous. There is also a good communication system and top management is transparent in their rules and polices about the job functions of the deans.

As Vandenberghe et al. (2011) mentioned, role ambiguity is a type of inadequacy where clear information is lacking regarding the expectation associated with a role. Further, Luthans (1994) mentioned that role ambiguity could be brought about by inadequate training, poor communication or a deliberate withholding or distortion of information by co-worker or supervisor.

Role Conflict

Table 2 shows that the level of role conflict experienced by the deans of HEIs in Baguio City and Benguet is very high based on the overall mean of 3.55. This implies that the deans are experiencing conflicts in their roles as administrators, superior, and employee. This very high level of role conflict is due to the fact that the respondents "agreed" that they have to do things that should be done differently (4.01), work with two or more groups who operate quite differently (3.70), receive incompatible requests from two or more people (3.57), receive an assignment without the manpower to carry out an assignment (3.52), and receive an assignment without adequate resources and materials to execute it (3.51).

Furthermore, the data show that the respondents are "undecided" that they need to work on unnecessary things (3.21), and somehow "agreed" that they have to buck a rule or policy in order to carry out an assignment (3.42).These findings imply that the deans of HEIs in Baguio City and Benguet are generally experiencing high level of role conflict. This shows that they experience incongruence in their personal values or beliefs vis-à-vis their tasks or roles in the institution. Further, they are experiencing confusion when directions are received from many different sources from the higher ups and the faculty members.

	Indicator	Mean	Verbal Description	Level
1	I have to do things that should be done differently	4.01	Agree	High
2	I receive an assignment without the manpower to carry out an assignment	3.52	Agree	High
3	I have to buck a rule or policy in order to carry out an assignment	3.42	Agree	High
4	I work with two or more groups who operate quite differently	3.70	Agree	High
5	I receive incompatible requests from two or more people	3.57	Agree	High
6	I do things that are apt to be accepted by one person and not accepted by others	3.46	Agree	High
7	I receive an assignment without adequate resources and materials to execute it	3.51	Agree	High
8	I work on unnecessary things	3.21	Undecided	Moderate
Sub-mean		**3.55**	**Agree**	**High**

Table 2. Level of Role Conflict

Nonetheless, the deans are also trying to be flexible in their tasks based on the need. However, this also leads to role conflict, albeit being an item with the lowest mean, which could be because of their difficulty to position themselves as faculty member or as administrator. They are also experiencing difficulty in positioning themselves despite their effort to becoming firm in their decisions to be accepted by different people. Since deans are from different disciplines, they may not have proper training or theoretical orientation on educational management. Similar with the words of Kahn et al. (1964), role conflict happens when the work and the expectations do not match the expertise, interests, goals and values of the employees, in the case of this research, the dean.

Work Engagement among HEI Deans

This section presents the data found in relation to work engagement as to vigor, dedication, and absorption.

Vigor

Table 3 shows that the deans of HEIs in Baguio City and Benguet experience a high level of vigor at work. This is based on the mean value of 4.20, which implies that the respondents are driven when they go to work and in fulfilling their roles as deans.

When the specific items are examined, it can be observed that the item with the highest mean was the statement "At my work I always persevere, even when things do not go well" with a mean of 4.31. This implies that the deans are resilient and can go on with their tasks and roles even if they encounter a problem at work. This is followed by the statement "When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work" with a mean of 4.25, implying that the deans are still looking forward to going to work or in the institutions. This could be attributed to their being used to working or going to the institution every day for the many years at the HEI.

	Indicator	Mean	Verbal Description	Level
1	At my work, I feel bursting with energy	4.12	Often	High
2	At my job, I feel strong and vigorous	4.21	Often	High
3	When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work	4.25	Often	High
4	I can continue working for very long periods at a time	4.13	Often	High
5	At my job, I am very resilient, mentally	4.18	Often	High
6	At my work I always persevere, even when things do not go well	4.31	Often	High
Sub-mean		**4.20**	**Often**	**High**

Table 3. Level of Work Engagement as to Vigor

The item with the lowest mean was the statement "At my work, I feel bursting with energy" (4.12), which is interpreted to be an indication of high work engagement. This item is still considered as high level of vigor as it is often experienced or felt by the deans. This means that the deans have enough energy when they are at work, even though they are swamped by a lot of responsibilities when they are in the institution. Similarly, another item with a low mean value was the statement "I can continue working for very long periods at a time" with a mean of 4.13, though still having an interpretation of high level of vigor. This implies that the deans do not have much energy to carry out their work and they are not able to do a lot of work for very long period because of the limited time they have due to the different roles they play.

Dedication

Another component of work engagement is dedication which refers to the way the deans feel: that going to work is meaningful. Based on the data in Table 4, the deans generally have high dedication as a component of work engagement with a sub-mean of 4.40. This implies that they are dedicated to their work as they find it meaningful and gives them enthusiasm to do their best every day. In particular, the deans find their work to be challenging based on the highest mean of 4.57, which indicates very high dedication. This means that the deans put their time and effort in their work because they perceive that what they do at work is a challenge that drives them to work hard every day.

	Indicator	Mean	Verbal Description	Level
1	I find the work that I do full of meaning and purpose	4.43	Often	High
2	I am enthusiastic about my job	4.30	Often	High
3	My job inspires me	4.28	Often	High
4	I am proud on the work that I do	4.43	Often	High
5	To me, my job is challenging	4.57	Always	very High
Sub-mean		4.40	Often	High

Table 4. Level of Work Engagement as to Dedication

In addition, their dedication is also driven by their sense of purpose (M=4.43) and pride (M=4.43). These findings indicate that the deans are used to working and doing the same prestigious work in the institution, since they are considered veterans in the HEI based on their years of experience and accomplishments. The item that had the lowest mean value was the statement "My job inspires me" with a mean of 4.28, which nonetheless is interpreted as high level. This means that among the indicators, inspiration is the least factor that makes them dedicated in their work. This implies then that in their work, they are driven more by responsibilities rather than inspiration.

Absorption

This refers to the full concentration and strong attachment of an individual which makes it difficult for him/her to be detached from work and time. In general, it can be seen in Table 5 that the deans of HEIs in Baguio City and Benguet have a high level of work engagement in terms of absorption. This is based on the overall mean of 3.74, which indicates a high level of engagement. This implies that the deans often have undivided attention and high concentration when at work, which makes them fully immersed in what they do.

	Indicator	Mean	Verbal Description	Level
1	Time flies when I'm working	4.06	Often	High
2	When I am working, I forget everything else around me	3.40	Sometimes	Moderate
3	I feel happy when I am working intensely	3.87	Often	High
4	I am immersed in my work	3.70	Often	High
5	I get carried away when I'm working	3.69	Often	High
6	It is difficult to detach myself from my job	3.73	Often	High
Sub-mean		3.74	Often	High

Table 5. Level of Work Engagement as to Absorption

When the specific items are examined, the item with the highest mean is the statement, "Time flies when I'm working" (4.06). This implies that the deans are so absorbed in what they do and they cannot monitor the time especially when there are many things to do in relation to their responsibilities as administrators and teachers. Nonetheless, they feel fine about this as reflected in the second highest item "I feel happy when I am working intensely" (3.87), which implies that they still experience intrinsic enjoyment despite the stress and distortion of time they experience at work.

This is also reflected in the item, "It is difficult to detach myself from my job," with a mean of 3.73. These findings imply that the deans have a high level of absorption when they are working and doing their roles and responsibilities. The deans only moderately experience absorption as a component of work engagement in relation to how they deal with other people in their organization. This is reflected in the item with the lowest mean "When I am working, I forget everything else around me" (3.40). This means that sometimes, the deans are too absorbed by their tasks that they tend to forget other things happening around them. This is also evident in the statement, "I get carried away when I'm working" with a mean of 3.69. This means that the deans, due to their concern and dedication to their jobs, tend to be too immersed with their responsibilities and function as school administrators.

Interestingly, this is contrary to the findings of Morris and Laipple (2015) among academics in the United States. Based on their study among the university administrators, majority expressed less interest and less enthusiasm about their work after years of being appointed as academic deans, directors, associate deans, or department chairs.

Challenges Encountered by the Deans in HEIs

The following were the identified challenges encountered by the deans.

Organizational Challenges. These are issues and problems that the deans encounter in relation to the administration or the institution. This challenge is divided into two components, namely, administrative relationship and administrative support.

Challenges as to administrative relationship are those problems experienced by the deans relative to their relationship and organizational connection to the higher-level administrators such as vice presidents and presidents of the institution. Most of the responses that fall under this theme include concerns on "The University institutional challenges or reorganization", "New University rules", and "Strict policy implementation" as applied and seen in their institutions.

One respondent mentioned, she is challenged by "Unexpected requirements that the university is expecting the Dean to finish immediately." This is corroborated by Cohen et al. (2007) when they stated that competition and its consequent demands in terms of research, teaching, extension and administrative work may lead to high levels of stress among people in the academe.

On the other hand, organizational challenges as to administrative support are problems experienced by the deans relative to their concern on resources (manpower, financial, and infrastructure) vis-à-vis their position as manager and subordinate of the institution. This finding is based on the responses of

the respondents citing problems such as "lack of manpower and resources" and "financial challenges". The organizational challenge as to administrative support was then summed up by one of the respondents by mentioning that she has "To face the challenges in distribution of resources in the face of the limitation of means." This statement implies that it is not only the use and generation of resources that the deans are concerned of but also the distribution of such resources – financial and
manpower.

Seada (2017) mentioned that the perception of inadequate resources in the workplace tend to affect an employee's level of stress due to their belief that the presence of appropriate and adequate resources could lead to a more effective job performance and more opportunities to learn new skills.

Academic and Curricular Challenges. These are the problems, issues and challenges encountered by the deans in relation to academic expectations and needs of the HEI. Most of the concerns that fall under this theme are related to board examination passing rate, curriculum, and academic trends. For example, three deans mentioned that one of the things they need to always respond to when it comes to academic concerns is the board examination passing rate. A law school dean emphasized "The changes in the topics and conduct of the BAR EXAMS" while the other two for undergraduate courses, on "How to have higher passing rate on the board exams with the mixed types of students" and "Making our graduates excel in their board examination".

On another note, deans are challenged on the changes and implementation of the curriculum. It was mentioned by the deans that they encounter problems in relation to "Institutional curricular changes" as well as "Curriculum assessment and curriculum revision". The curriculum of HEIs in the Philippines is undergoing changes and the deans are at the forefront of the revisions, implementation and assessment of the curricula that the HEIs have in the advent of the implementation of the K-12 system.

Leadership and Personnel Challenges. Other challenges encountered by the deans are those concerning leadership and personnel. Most of the concerns are on faculty member changes and its implications to co-working relationships, decision-making, and motivation.

In terms of faculty member changes, "Workforce turnover" is prominent. Conflict arises since new and permanent faculty members have different personalities, styles and practices. One dean mentioned that she experiences a challenge on "How to convince all faculty members of the changes coming our way academically".

In terms of challenges in decision-making, the main concerns here are related to how they handle cases and complaints of faculty members as well as the other stakeholders such as students and their parents. For example, one dean mentioned that she has a problem "Dealing with difficult personalities, those that do not understand administrative decisions; self-righteous persons (they always think they are right) and do not acknowledge mistakes" and another one mentioned the problem of "Having the full responsibility of my department. Being the fallback of every issue, concerns, feedbacks". These statements only show that even the decision-making executed by the deans for their faculty members are also considered as issues and problems in doing their work in the HEI.

In addition, decision-making also becomes difficult for the deans when they are forced to deal with "cantankerous parents" as well as with students. Although, problems of students and their parents are initially to be handled by faculty members who have direct relations with the students, the dean intervenes if the faculty members are not able to decide regarding a certain problem. As one of the deans mentioned, "Difficult decisions are to be made regarding faculty regrets, student regrets, etc.".

In terms of challenges in motivating faculty members, the main concerns here are related to "Faculty discontent" that are perceived by the dean based on the concerns raised by the faculty members. One dean mentioned that one of the biggest problems that she encounters is on "motivating subordinates to give support and do their part". However, there are times that the faculty members experience burnout, which may lead them to be unproductive.

Challenges relating to Balance of Responsibilities. Other challenges encountered by the deans are those related to the many interconnecting responsibilities the deans need to carry out and how they need to properly balance these. The concerns under this aspect are divided into sub-themes relating to image-building, administrative responsibilities, and personal challenges.

The challenge on image-building as a component of balancing responsibilities refers to how the deans try to maintain stability in their college. One dean claimed, "Make my department productive in both academic and non-academic" concerns. As one dean said, she is challenged by the responsibility "To uplift the image of the department that I am leading and to improve the performance of the students in licensure examination."

Academic productivity does not only involve the status of the HEI in the board examination but also the quality of teachers, the quality of instruction, the research outputs of the faculty members and students, and the academic achievements of the students, among others. This means that academic productivity in the department does not only refer to the responsibilities of the faculty members as employees but also as instruments towards development, academic productivity or excellence of the students. On the other hand, non-academic productivity such as achievements of the department in relation to co-curricular activities (sports, culture, debate, student

council, etc.) and extension or outreach services are also concerns of the deans. This implies that the dean does not only oversee the academic side of the department but also other aspects that may build up a good image for the department and the HEI. One response aptly summarizes how image-building in both academic and non-academic aspects should be attained through the way deans balance their roles in the HEI – "The strategic plan must enable continuous quality improvement in all processes through which the academic unit functions, including the processes through which faculty members are professionally and intellectually developed."

In terms of administrative responsibilities, the deans also experience problems in relation to how paperwork and other simultaneous administrative works combined with their leadership, academic, and organizational roles. Specifically, it was mentioned by one respondent that he experiences challenges when there is a need to "Do a lot of paperwork instead of strategizing things for the advancement of the school." Also, there is a problem that deans encounter because being given responsibility to work on a lot of things for the College or the University feels like never-ending for them. "The deans responsibilities make a never-ending list," claimed one dean. This means that even if they have completed on task (e.g., meeting with faculty members to plan for the strategic direction of the department), another task is either given to them or they need to respond to another responsibility or problem such as implementing faculty development activities and assessing the outcomes for future faculty planning and image-building. The deans are constantly at work, which may also be a cause for alarm when it comes to role stress and their work engagement.

Balance of responsibilities, that is being an administrator and at the same time a teacher, among the deans is also a challenge. One respondent stated, "The balance of my administrative work from my academic responsibilities" (Personal communication, 14 December 2018), as well as knowing how to and carry out the actual roles, responsibilities and expectations of being dean. One respondent, who considers herself as a novice in the field of higher education management, mentioned that "Being a neophyte, I had to know "all" dean functions in a short span of time" (Personal communication, 14 December 2018). Tytherleigh et al. (2005) claimed that the education sector is considered as stressful work environment because of high workload demands and long hours of work, which are also experienced by the deans as seen in this research.

Seada (2017) also mentioned that a pressing challenge in balancing roles and having a high-level expectation from supervisors tend to interfere with their social life and make them feel stressed out. This holds true also with the findings of this study, wherein the deans are having trouble in managing their roles as managers and colleagues.

IV. CONCLUSION

The deans of HEIs in Baguio City and Benguet are certain of their roles and are highly engaged in the performance of their duties and responsibilities. However, they experienced challenges that are related to organizational effectiveness, leadership and curricular development.

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