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Multiple role playing and career adaptability: A conceptual framework for unveiling the dynamics

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Abstract

This research paper presents a conceptual framework aimed at exploring the relationship between women's multiple role-playing and their career adaptability. With the evolving nature of work-life dynamics, understanding how women's engagement in multiple roles influences their career adaptability is crucial. Integrating concepts from Career Construction Theory, role accumulation theory and career development research, the study delves into proposing a conceptual framework providing a comprehensive understanding of how multiple role playing can serve as a pathway to career adaptability. The paper discusses the theoretical foundations, key constructs, and potential mechanisms underlying the relationship, while the conceptual framework paves the way for further research and exploration of the proposed dynamics.

Keywords: Multiple role playing, career adaptability, self-efficacy, self-esteem, role accumulation, social support, networking

Introduction

Women in the contemporary world often face the expectation of being able to "do it all" and the constant strive of proving themselves impeccable in all domains has been contemplated to have women experience high levels of stress, burnout, and dissatisfaction (Muhammad & Gagnon, 2010; Allen *et al.*, 2000) ^[23, 1]. Consequently, substantial literature in the past has documented the multiple roles in conflicting perspectives substantiating that women face role conflicts when the expectations and demands of their various roles clash or compete with one another (Posig & Kickul, 2004) ^[26]. However, challenging the traditional notion, Sieber (1977) ^[40] proposed that having multiple roles can bring about positive outcomes for individuals. Sieber's research argued that multiple roles can provide individuals with various advantages, such as privileges associated with each role, a sense of security in terms of social status, personal growth and enrichment, and a gratifying boost to one's self-esteem and sense of identity. Thus, recognizing the potential benefits and opportunities emerging from multiple role playing, this research intends to investigate how women can leverage their diverse roles to enhance their adaptability in the context of their careers.

Career Adaptability refers to an individual's ability to effectively navigate and adjust to changes, challenges, and opportunities in their career (Ataç *et al.*, 2017) ^[2]. It encompasses the capacity to anticipate and proactively respond to career-related changes, make informed decisions, acquire new skills, and pursue meaningful career paths (Creed *et al.*, 2009) ^[10]. Career adaptability is, however, viewed as an attribute that is not fixed but rather can be nurtured and improved through proactive engagement with one's career and ongoing learning efforts (Bocciardi *et al.*, 2017) ^[7]. Several contextual factors such as supportive environment, self-esteem, learning opportunities, mentoring and networking have been offered in the existing literature as mechanisms to improve career adaptability implying that the ability of adaptation can be developed and strengthened (Duffy, 2010; Hirschi, 2009) ^[15, 19].

Though the earlier research suggests a number of potential correlates of career adaptability, yet lesser knowledge contributes towards understanding the construct in the context of multiple role-playing. Hence the paper while proposing a conceptual framework seeks to contribute to the existing research in several ways. Firstly, women today face unique challenges in balancing multiple roles. Understanding how these various roles intersect and influence their career adaptability can provide valuable insights into the strategies and resources women need to navigate these complexities successfully. Secondly, as women's participation in the workforce continues to increase, it is essential to examine how their engagement in multiple roles impacts their career adaptation. Lastly, exploring multiple role playing in the context of women's career adaptability can lead organisations and policymakers to develop more inclusive and empowering practices that enable women to thrive in their professional pursuits while fulfilling their various roles.

Theoretical Background

Career Construction Theory explains how individuals actively construct their careers by making meaning of their experiences, interests, values, and aspirations. The theory explores how individuals utilize their self-regulatory strengths to construct and shape their career. Career adaptability in context of career construction theory is explained as a psychological construct denoting strengths and capacities individuals possess to effectively tackle unfamiliar, complex, and ambiguous challenges in their careers. Thus it allows individuals to effectively cope with career transitions and navigate work uncertainty by proactively exploring new career opportunities, acquiring new skills, and adapting to changing dynamics at workplace (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012) ^[31].

However, understanding multiple role-playing also requires an insight into the theory of role accumulation (Sieber, 1974) ^[32] which puts forth that espousing multiple roles brings individuals several positive outcomes such as better locus of control, personal development, enhanced role performance, and promoted self-satisfaction. The Role accumulation theory (Sieber, 1974) ^[32] posits that participating in multiple roles provides individuals with a diverse set of social identities and responsibilities. Each role brings with it a set of expectations, obligations, and behaviors. These roles can be complementary, overlapping, or conflicting, depending on the specific circumstances and individual experiences. The theory suggests that individuals navigate these challenges by developing strategies to manage their multiple roles effectively. These strategies may include prioritizing tasks, seeking support from social networks, setting boundaries, and adapting role behaviors and expectations to fit different contexts.

Numerous studies on women's career development have applied these theories in the context of multiple role expectations to accentuate how individuals perceive and approach various roles and responsibilities they assume. However, little is known about how multiple role-playing has implications on women's perceptions of their career adaptability. Taking this notion as the premise, this research paper proposes a conceptual framework that seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of how engaging in multiple roles influences women's perceptions and beliefs regarding their ability to adapt and thrive in their careers.

Review of Literature

Integrating the theoretical perspectives, the following sections review the existing literature to serve as the foundation for formulating a conceptual framework that aims to study the intricate dynamics between multiple role playing and career adaptability.

Multiple role playing-Role Accumulation -Career Adaptability

Literature on work enrichment (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006) ^[36] revolves around the fact that an individual's experiences and interactions in one domain create a spill-over effect resulting in improved performance of individuals in other domains. Research advocates that work and family are interconnected and that positive experiences in one area can have a beneficial impact on the other. The enrichment process operates through various mechanisms, including psychological, social, and emotional resources that individuals acquire in one domain and transfer to the other.

Baruch and Barnett, (1986) ^[6] observed that engaging in multiple roles offers women numerous sources of stimulation meaning they have access to a wider range of activities, responsibilities, and social interactions, leading them to have a greater pool of psychological resources at their disposal.

Feng *et al.*, (2021) ^[16] articulated that women indulging in multiple roles frequently interact with the environment and hence are able to acquire diverse experiences and knowledge which further contributes to their capability belief, reinforcing their confidence in their ability to handle career-related changes and challenges. Thus, they tend to exhibit greater adaptability as they accumulate a greater pool of buffer resources to navigate unpredictable changes in the career environment. Ruderman *et al.*, (2002) ^[30] in their study on managerial women also observed that role accumulation provided women with a more versatile perspective leading them to effectively cope with work and non-work-related issues. Effective coping further enhances work effectiveness and develops a sense of self-efficacy among women (Roberts *et al.*, 2021; Freire *et al.*, 2020) ^[28, 17]. Barnett and Hyde (2001) ^[5] also established that the stipulation of working women to manage multiple roles imparts her ability to cope up with uncertain conditions, raises their levels of self-efficacy and strengthens their respective ability to negotiate multiple roles across social paradigm.

Sinha (2017) ^[33] also observed the impact of women's multiple role accumulation and management, leading to overall psychological well-being in the long run. Working women's engagement in multiple roles makes them experience a broader range of meaningful activities and develops among them a sense of purpose and fulfillment which contributes to higher levels of psychological well-being. Baruch and Barnett (1986) ^[6] also enunciated that if the benefits outweigh the costs, the role contributes positively to a woman's well-being. For example, a role that provides a sense of accomplishment, personal growth, and meaningful relationships may be seen as beneficial, even if it adds to the total number of roles a woman occupies. Hence, in line with the proposed idea, this research expects that career adaptability among women is enhanced by the repertoire of resources accumulated through multiple role playing

Multiple Role Playing-Social Support Perceptions-Career Adaptability

Social support entails receiving assistance and genuine care from individuals or groups, going beyond surface-level interactions and is hence widely acknowledged as a pivotal factor in effectively dealing with the demands and uncertainties encountered in the workplace (Ataç *et al.*, 2017) ^[2]. When individuals take on multiple roles, they inherently increase their exposure to different social contexts and interact with a broader range of people (Lang & Lee, 2005) ^[22]. Having a diverse and expanded social network would mean having access to a wider range of individuals who can provide emotional support, guidance, and assistance. While the emotional support received from friends, family and colleagues helps relieve anxiety and stress, the instrumental support in the form of valuable career information enhances career adaptability and leadership among women (Sieber, 1974) ^[32]. Hirschi (2009) ^[19] demonstrated social support as contextual

factor being a significant predictor of career adaptation. Thus, when women receive understanding, empathy, and validation from their support networks, they are more likely to perceive their career challenges as manageable and develop effective strategies for adapting to new circumstances (Greenglass, 1993) [18]. Tal (2006) [14] while examining the nexus between family role-playing and career role-playing across urban women observed that support mechanisms that women rely on while managing multiple roles play a significant role in shaping their self-efficacy beliefs. For women playing multiple roles, social support acts as a buffer against the negative effects of work stress. Research signified that having strong social connections and support systems that women build across multiple roles helps them maintain a more positive mindset, build resilience, and better cope with the demands and pressures of work hence enhancing their career adaptability. Thus, the notion proposed here forms the basis for anticipating enhanced career adaptability through the social support that women obtain while engaging in multiple roles.

Multiple Role Playing-Self Esteem-Career Adaptability

Self-esteem as described by Coopersmith (1967) [37] refers to an individual's continuous evaluation and perception of themselves, encompassing their attitude of approval or disapproval and their belief in their own capabilities, success, and worthiness. Reitzes and Mutran (1994) [27] accentuated that engaging in multiple roles provides individuals with a sense of purpose and direction, ultimately enhancing their self-worth through a positive evaluation of themselves. The research highlighted that being involved in multiple roles can help individuals connect with others, potentially leading to more influence, respect, resources, and emotional satisfaction, ultimately boosting their self-esteem.

Van Vianen *et al.*, (2012) [35] established a relationship between self-esteem and career adaptability through locus of control stating that Individuals with higher self-esteem tend to have an internal locus of control, meaning they believe they have control over their lives and that their efforts can lead to positive outcomes. This internal belief reinforces career adaptability as the beliefs play a significant role in how women perceive and respond to stressful situations at work (Creed *et al.*, 2004) [38]. Individuals with high self-esteem are more likely to proactively engage in career planning and adopt effective coping strategies. The positive self-perception and confidence women develop through engaging in career planning and adopting coping strategies contribute to their optimism and willingness to tackle challenging tasks at work hence improving their career adaptability (Creed *et al.*, 2002) [11].

Past research establishes that an individual's self-perception, whether positive or negative, tends to play a crucial role in shaping one's beliefs in their abilities to pursue their challenging career paths (Pierce *et al.*, 2015) [25]. Thus, the positive perceptions women develop through multifaceted

experiences gained from multiple roles enable them to take up career-related challenges more effectively which in turn enhances career adaptability. Ataç *et al.*, (2017) [2] while establishing a link between self-esteem and career adaptability endorsed that Individuals with higher levels of self-esteem perceive themselves as capable of effectively adapting to the evolving demands and transitions in the workplace indicating their adaptability in their career.

Multiple Role Playing-Self Efficacy-Career Adaptability

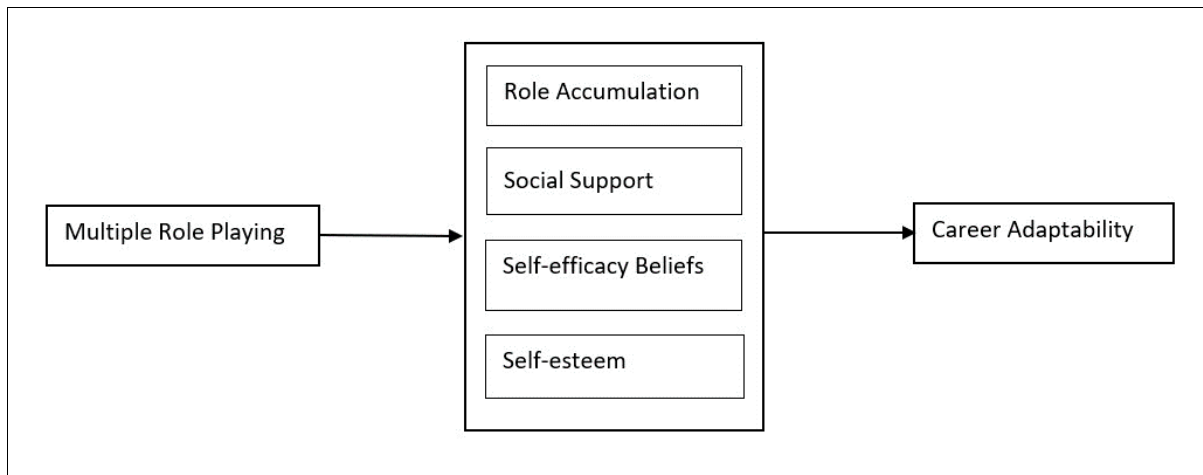
Understanding the multiple role engagement of women in the context of Bandura's (1977) [4] concept of self-efficacy is indeed crucial. Self-efficacy is based on an individual's assessment of their own competence in a particular area and involves evaluating one's skills, knowledge, past experiences, and the ability to mobilize resources to achieve desired outcomes. Vast literature substantiates that a high level of self-efficacy is associated with improved performance, increased resilience, better coping skills, and higher levels of well-being (Baluszek *et al.*, 2023; Brown, Jones, & Leigh, 2005; Bono & Judge 2003) [3, 9, 8].

Literature suggests that recognition and satisfaction received from fulfilling multiple roles can enhance self-worth among women and when women perceive themselves as competent and capable in their various roles, their self-efficacy beliefs are reinforced resulting in enhanced adaptability in career (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006) [36]. Creed *et al.* (2004) [38] established a link between career self-efficacy with career maturity asserting that individuals with higher self-efficacy tend to indulge in career planning essential to enhance career adaptability.

Dukstein (1994) [39] observed that women's habitual multiple-role self-efficacies are a major driver force for career success. Through the perspective of SCCT, such an observation could possess multiple meanings. Tal (2006) [14] in a research across pregnant working women observed the time across pregnancy as a prime aspect in decision making regarding multiple role playing as wife, work manager, mother and daughter. The research acknowledged that the phase of pregnancy brings its own set of duties and responsibilities, which in turn leads to onset of unique confidence in aspiring mothers regarding multiple role management across family and workplace.

Proposed Conceptual Model of Multiple Role Playing and Career Adaptability

Integrating the foundational principles of role accumulation theory, career construction theory, and a comprehensive review of existing literature on multiple role playing and career adaptability, this research paper puts forth a conceptual framework intended to explore the relationship between multiple role-playing and women's career adaptability. The model aims at providing a comprehensive framework for understanding how engaging in multiple roles influences women's ability to adapt and succeed in their careers.



Source: Author's Assumptions

Fig 1: Proposed Conceptual Model of Multiple Role Playing and Career Adaptability

The model acknowledges the significance of resource accumulation, social support, and self-perception in shaping women's perceptions of their adaptability to evolving working environments. The model suggests that through their engagement in multiple roles, women have the opportunity to accumulate a diverse range of resources, such as knowledge, skills, and experiences, which can enhance their adaptability. Additionally, the support and encouragement received from their social networks play a crucial role in fostering their confidence and resilience. Furthermore, women's own self-perception and belief in their abilities contribute to their overall career adaptability. By exploring these interconnected factors, the research model provides a comprehensive understanding of how multiple role-playing influences women's career adaptability. The proposed model comprises three main components:

- Multiple role playing indicates role exploration reflecting on women's self-awareness and exploration of different roles. It recognizes that women explore and engage in diverse roles in their lives and hence develop multiple identities and interests that can be relevant to their career aspirations.
- Women's exploration of multiple roles leads them to develop skills and experiences, fetch social support, and foster a sense of self-worth and self-efficacy, which in turn equip them to understand and deal with the divergent requirements of each role. The set of skills and attributes, so accumulated, enables women to cope with career-related changes and challenges effectively.
- The positive outcomes of role exploration, such as the integration of experiences and skills, enhanced self-esteem, and self-worth, contribute to women's career adaptability. As they draw on their diverse experiences and cultivate a sense of self-assurance, women can make more informed career choices, navigate challenges with resilience, and embrace opportunities for growth and advancement.

The conceptual model of multiple role playing and career adaptability holds immense significance as it provides a comprehensive and dynamic framework for understanding the intricate relationship between diverse life roles and successful career development. By recognizing the complexity of individuals' lives and the interconnectedness

of their personal, family, and professional responsibilities, this model encourages a holistic approach to career decision-making. It emphasizes the transferability of skills and experiences gained from various roles, promoting adaptability in the face of career transitions and evolving job markets. Additionally, the model's focus on enhancing self-efficacy and self-worth through successful role management empowers individuals to make proactive career choices aligned with their values and aspirations. Embracing this framework not only fosters work-life integration but also promotes diversity and inclusion within organizations, ultimately creating a supportive and resilient workforce.

Implications and Conclusion

The proposed research model in this study highlights the interplay between multiple role-playing and career adaptability, emphasizing the role of resource accumulation, social support, and self-perception in shaping women's perceptions of their adaptability to changing working environments. The paper acknowledges the multitude of benefits that arise from engaging in multiple role playing, which women can leverage to enhance their career adaptability. By drawing upon the repertoire of resources emerging from multiple roles women are expected to be able to effectively navigate their career paths.

Understanding these dynamics of multiple role playing and career adaptability holds several implications for various stakeholders. Firstly, for women themselves, understanding how their engagement in multiple roles impacts their career adaptability can empower them to make informed decisions about their professional lives. It allows them to recognize and leverage the resources and skills gained from their multiple roles, leading to enhanced adaptability in navigating career challenges and changes. Secondly, organizations can benefit from this research by recognizing the value of women employees who engage in multiple roles. By acknowledging and supporting their diverse roles and responsibilities, organizations can create a supportive work environment that fosters their career adaptability. This can contribute to increased satisfaction, retention, and productivity among women. Thirdly, policymakers and practitioners in the field of work-life balance and gender equality can utilize the findings to inform policies and practices that promote and support women's multiple role-playing. This can include initiatives such as flexible work

arrangements, family-friendly policies, and mentoring programs, which can enhance women's career adaptability and overall well-being.

However, it is important to note that the current research is limited to proposing a conceptual framework for exploring the dynamics of multiple role-playing and career adaptability among women. The model may not fully account for the influence of societal norms and gender expectations that can shape individuals' choices and opportunities in various roles, potentially limiting their career adaptability. Finally, while the framework provides a valuable theoretical basis for understanding the relationship between these variables, further empirical research is warranted to validate and refine this proposed model.

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