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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Discussion on conflict management with special emphasis on role conflict: Scope in future study

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Abstract

This paper deals with conflict related problems in different industries. Literature review on conflict management & role conflict has been segregated in terms of different industries. To identify what problems industries faces due to conflict and what types of studies has been done on these issues. Moreover the paper is also written to examine what areas of role conflict have not been studied yet and what type of work can be done by future studies. This paper is descriptive in nature so that so empirical study has been carried out. This paper is for those who want to go for further research in conflict management and role conflict so that researcher can have an idea about the past researches as well as scope in future studies.

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INTRODUCTION

1. Conflict

1.1. Origin of Conflict:

In literature, the literary element conflict is inherent incompatibility between the objectives of two or more characters or forces. Conflicts create tension and interest in a story by adding doubt as to the outcome.

Conflict was first described in ancient Greek Literature as '*Agon*'. In a classical Greek drama, a dramatized debate or argument between characters, especially one who is protagonist (the first fighter) or we can say him as Hero and other one is antagonist (the second fighter) or we can say him as villain. An excellent example of the Agon found in *Eumenides (458 B.C.)* The term '*Agon*' is indicated as Struggle or contest. In a wide sense this term referred to its broader sense of a struggle or contest, it refer to as a contest in athletics, chariot, horse racing, music or literature at public festival in ancient Greece.

According to **Aristotle**, the Agon or conflict must involve the protagonist we can call him as hero and the antagonist. The result of contest cannot be known in advance. The word "Conflict" is come from Latin word "*conflictus*" which was used in '*1375-1425*'; as Noun in late Middle English.

1.2. Define Conflict:

Conflict, is a very wide term. Generally when we talk about conflict it comes with some negative connotations. Mostly it refers as a wars, dispute, fight and scuffles. As we know it is inevitable too. When there will be more than two things there will be conflict. It can be more than one idea, thoughts, views, perception, personalities, needs and beliefs.

Conflict occurs due to attitudes, behaviors and situations. According to **Mitchell (2005)** "Conflict structure consists of three parts: attitudes, behavior and situations that interact and create conflicts between actors."

According to **Coser (1967)** "A struggle over values and claims to scarce status, power, and resources in which the aims of the opponents' are to neutralize, injure, or eliminate the rivals." (*Fleetwood, 1987*).

Deutsch (1973) states that “Conflict exist whenever incompatible activities occurs”. An action which is incompatible with another action prevents, obstructs, interferes with, injures, or in some way makes it less likely or less effective.”(*Fleetwood, 1987*).

1.3. Conflict Management:

Conflict management means acquiring skills related to:

- Conflict resolution,
- Self-awareness about conflict modes,
- Conflict communication skills, and
- Establishing a structure for management of conflict in the environment.

Conflict management seeks to limit the negative aspects and increase the positive aspects of conflict by implementing certain strategies. It aims to enhance learning and group outcomes. (**Rahim**)

Conflict management is a process of limiting the *negative aspect* of conflict while increasing the *positive side*.

There are different views on conflict. **First view** is **traditional conflict**, which says that conflict is always bad, dysfunctional and destructive, and must be avoided. This was developed in **late 1930s** and **early 1940s**. This was a very basic approach to conflict. **Second view** is **Human relation view**, which says that conflict is bad but inevitable in organizations. **Third view Inter-actionist view-** Conflict is good for organizations health because it give space to new thinking, Argument and discussion. (*Verma*)

1.4. Types of conflict In Organization:

- **Functional Conflict:** It is actually a positive conflict. As it increases Productivity in organization, as well as uplift organization’s as whole.
- **Dysfunctional Conflict:** This conflict hampers the organization growth, Interpersonal Relations and Growth of the individuals.
- **Inter Group Conflict:** As its name refers that this conflict happens between two groups. When in two groups attitudes, beliefs and personality doesn’t match so, in that case conflict occurs.
- **Intra Group Conflict:** This conflict happens within the group. When the scuffles take place within the group is called Intra group Conflict. (*Meer*)

1.5. Problems associated with conflict in organization:

- Decrease in productivity
- Increase in employees turnover rate
- Increase In workplace bullying
- Increase in psychological strain.
- Ruined Interpersonal relationships. (*Brookins, Grace*)

2. Role

In sociology, the Role is, A particular behavior which is expected from an individual who occupies a given social position or status. A role is something which a person ought to show when he/she is in certain position. The term, borrowed from theatrical usage, emphasizes the difference between the actor and the part. Role remains same and even stable rather than people who occupy the position.

Role is not just fulfilling the given task but it also includes qualities with actions, which a person performs while justifying his/her role. For Example: If we talk about a Teacher, it may expect from his/her role, to deliver lectures, giving assignments and prepare test but also qualities require which are, to be dedicate, concerned, honest and responsible. One person occupies single position but have to perform certain obligations, duties, privileges and rights vis-à-vis other person. (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*). A **role** is the set of norms, values, behaviors, and personality characteristics attached to a status.

2.1 Role Conflict:

Role conflict refers to a clash between two or more of a person’s roles or incompatible features within the same role. These incompatibilities can consist of differing expectations, requirements, beliefs, and/or attitudes.

Role conflict occurs due to incompatible role expectation in different social statuses people occupy. When more than one different roles are associated with same status, the outcome is in form of role conflict. (*Crossman*)

2.2 Types of role conflict:

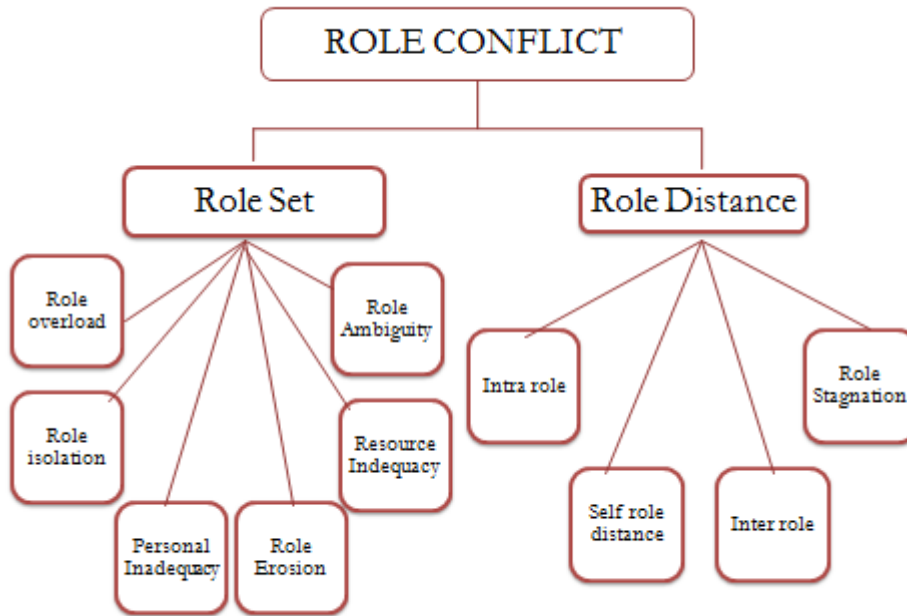


Figure1. Classification of Role-Conflict. Adapted by *Udai Pareek (1983)*

- **Intra-role conflict:** It refers to incompatible requirements within the same role. It means when there is contradicting requirements in a particular role. Different people have different conceptions for the same role.
Example: Lady X thinks that being a good mother she cares for her child also she should work outside so she can fulfill all the duties of “Good Mother” and also believe that will provide socio-emotional support to her family. But simultaneously her mother-in-law thinks being a good mother her duty to be with child round a clock. So this type of conflict is called Intra-conflict.
- **Role- overload:** It refers that conflict arises when there are many things expected to do by a single person a given time. There are too much to do in a very less time. Role Overload is defined as feel time pressure for completion of assigned duties and responsibilities. It occurs when doer is not able to do his\her job at given time.
- **Inter Role distance:** refers to when one person feels conflict and difference between organizational and non-organizational roles.
- **Role-Stagnation:** Refers to being stick with same role. This stress will result in the perception that there is no opportunity in career.
- **Role- erosion:** Refers when some roles which are properly perform by role occupant but those roles are actually transferred to some other person is called role erosion. It happens when role occupant’s credit goes to someone else.
- **Role –Isolation:** Refers to psychological distance between the occupant’s role and other roles in same set.
- **Personal Inadequacy** refers to the feeling of conflict arises when role occupant feels that he/she does not have necessary skills and training for effectively for performing his duties and functions which are important for delivering particular job.
- **Role ambiguity** refers to when roles are not clear and there is some vagueness in roles.
- **Self-Role Distance** when the same person is having roles which are not actually fir to him/he
- **Inter-role conflict.** It refers to clashing expectations from separate roles within same person. Expect many things to be work out by a same person is relates with inter role conflict.

Example: Lady X has two major responsibilities. First is she has a baby so, being a mother she need to fulfill all the duties what a mother ought to do. And second is she is working outside. So, these two are major roles. When one day she was in office and got the news that her child is ill so she wasn't able to understand that what to do now. Whether to go outside and take her child to specialist or to attend meeting which is very important because there are many decisions need to be taken. So, in this way these two roles of a same person are contradicting each other. This is called Inter-role conflict. (*Scott T. Wolf*)

3 Sectorial Literature Review on role Conflict:

3.1. Role Conflict in Education sector:

- One Study done by *Jdaitawi, Mutawa, Talafha (2014)* on 217 university lecturers in university of Dammam. Mainly to examine relationship with individual role stressor (role overload, role conflict and role ambiguity) with psychological strain.
- This paper says of *Rajarajeswari (2010)* talked about cut-throat competitions of colleges due to mushroom growth of Pvt. Institutions. Problem arose when more than teaching teachers have to do the clerical work this create a problem of stress and make employees distressful. This paper mainly talks about two things 1. Types of role conflicts that have been felt i.e. Role overload, role ambiguity, role stress and self-role distance. 2. Govt. and Pvt. Institutions compared with each other that role stress is more in Pvt. College teachers rather than govt. college teachers. 3. Strategies to manage these problems.

3.2 Studies on manufacturing sector:

3.2. 1. On Sales Personal:

- This paper focused on salesperson's time congruity means time management and to enhance organization's recruiting strategies so the people who are fit for the job that can be utilized. According to *Weeks & Fournier (2010)* this paper generally discusses the different aspect of role conflict and the one in that is role stress. This paper intended that if we recruit right person for right job we can easily minimize the role stress problem in organizations.
- In this paper 129 salespersons are taken into consideration. There is distinction showed between male and female salesperson. *Boles, Wood & Johnson (2003)* concluded that 'NO BEST POLICY' that can able to positively influence all type of job satisfaction.
- This article investigates the relationship of span of control to the role conflict and role ambiguity faced by sales representatives. The Multi trait- multi method matrix approach used by *Chonko (1982)* to know whether role conflict declines as span of control widens or sales representative experienced increased role ambiguity as span of control widens.

3.2.2 Safety Professionals

- According to *Minnick (2013)* purpose of this study is to identify important sources and predictor variables of role conflict and role ambiguity, perceived organizational support, formalization and reporting structure autonomy, number of roles, experience, and gender. The Results showed that in centralized organizations role conflict and ambiguity were significantly higher. **In Non-formalized roles, role ambiguity is significantly higher. As Years of experience increase there is significant decrease in role ambiguity but indifference with role conflict.**

3.3. Role Conflict in Service sector

• Gaming Venues

This paper explores the challenges for the hospitality staff in gaming venues. Through 48 in depth interviews in the gambling issues recognize the problem in hospitality job. *Hing (2011)* concluded that confusion and dilemma is there in the form of role ambiguity among staff members. Training can overcome the problem of role ambiguity.

• Hotels Industry

This paper is written on 130 hotel managers to examine effect of diversity climate on these three: role ambiguity, role conflict and job satisfaction. *Madera, Dawson & Neal (2013)* resulted that **when there is positive diversity climate, less would be the Role conflict and role ambiguity but more in job satisfaction.**

- **Lawyers and Accountants**

This paper is on 121 Australian lawyers and accountants to examine that are facing more role conflict, role overload and role ambiguity more dual career or single career couples. And according to **Elloy & Smith (2003)** showed result that dual career couples are facing more stress, work family conflict and work overload rather than single career couples.

- **Airline professionals**

According to **Hauge, Skogstad & Einarsen (2011)** stressful working environments are commonly assumed to create conditions that can lead to bullying. This study is done on airline professionals to know with individual-level target-oriented model of role stressors as antecedents of exposure to workplace bullying.

3.4. Role Conflict in family firm

- **Esra, Chang, Erick, Kellermanns, Franz, Dianne (2015)** have written this paper is on the family firms where the members of family have a dual role to play first is to being a family member and second as a employee of firm. This article develops a theory of reciprocal altruism so; this leads to mitigate role conflicts. In family complexity of Role conflict increases and decreases the performance of the firm.

3.5. Work-Family Conflict

- This study is done in Australian university with sample of 3326 workers who responded online survey. This study is done on both academic and non-academic staff. The aim of this research is to examine the role of work-family conflict as a mediator of relationships between the features of work environment and worker well-being and organizational outcome. **Winefield, Helen Boyd, Carolyn Winefield & Anthony (2014)** suggested two things that can improve worker well-being and productivity: Improving Job autonomy has and reducing job demands consequent reduction in work family conflict.

Conclusion

After the detailed study & analysis of Intensive literature Review of Role Conflict, paper concludes several problems, which associate with role conflict in organizations. This paper discusses and classified sector-wise literature review mainly focused on the types of role conflict which has been carried out for study. Now let's look upon to the problems which are identified as a problem of role conflict- It increases the work- family conflict. (**Winefield, Helen R. 2014**), It hampers the Productivity and growth of organizations. (**Memili, Esra; et. al. H. B. 2015**), Role conflicts give space to workplace bullying. (**Hauge, L. J., Skogstad, A., & Einarsen, S. 2011**), Role conflict hampers the Inter-personal relations and also creates tensions that lead to psychological strain. (**Jdaitawi, M. T. et.al 2014**).

This is a detailed study on role conflict as it's a descriptive study on literature review but then also this paper doesn't give any remedial approach to minimize role conflict in organizations. After close scanning of previous literatures NGO's, Doctors and politicians are not into consideration for study, Role erosion and Intra-role conflict are the types of role conflict, effects of spirituality on role conflict which can also be used for future study.

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