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**AN EXPLORATION OF THE NEXUS BETWEEN
ADMINISTRATIVE PERFORMANCE AND ROLE CONFLICT:
A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE MYTH-REALITY
DICHOTOMY**

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ABSTRACT

Aim/Purpose	The study aims to critically examine the commonly held belief that role conflict always hampers administrative performance. It seeks to uncover how role conflict can, under certain conditions, enhance efficiency and foster organizational adaptability.
Background	Traditional management theories portray role conflict as a negative force causing stress and inefficiency. However, recent empirical research suggests that role conflict can stimulate growth, innovation, and better decision-making when well-managed.
Methodology	The paper systematically reviews multiple theoretical frameworks, including Role Theory, Person-Environment Fit Theory, Organizational Theory, and the JD-R model. By synthesizing these perspectives, it deconstructs simplistic assumptions about the negative impacts of role conflict.

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Contribution	This study offers a nuanced understanding of the relationship between administrative performance and role conflict, moving beyond outdated views. It provides evidence-based insights into how role conflict can be harnessed positively within organizations.
Findings	The research finds that role conflict does not inherently reduce performance and can enhance administrative efficiency under the right circumstances. Administrators who effectively navigate conflicting responsibilities can drive innovation and adaptability within their organizations.
Recommendations for Practitioners	Practitioners should shift from avoiding role conflict to learning how to manage and leverage it for organizational improvement. They are encouraged to create environments that support adaptive leadership and embrace role complexity.
Recommendations for Researchers	Future research should explore the specific conditions and organizational contexts where role conflict becomes a constructive force. Researchers are also advised to develop models and tools that help quantify the positive impacts of managed role conflict.
Impact on Society	By reframing role conflict as a potential strength, this study supports more resilient and innovative organizations, ultimately benefiting societal governance and service delivery. It encourages a cultural shift toward embracing complexity in leadership, which can enhance institutional adaptability in the face of change.
Future Research	Future research should empirically test when role conflict improves administrative performance across various contexts. It should also develop practical tools or frameworks to help organizations manage role conflict effectively for positive outcomes.
Keywords	administrative performance, role ambiguity, role conflict, myth and realities

INTRODUCTION

In the realm of organizational management and administrative sciences, the relationship between role conflict and administrative performance remains a subject of extensive debate. The traditional perspective, deeply rooted in classical management theories, suggests that role conflict is inherently detrimental, leading to inefficiency, stress, reduced job satisfaction, and impaired decision-making. This belief is founded on the assumption that clear role definitions and hierarchical stability are essential for effective administrative functioning. However, contemporary research presents a more nuanced understanding, arguing that role conflict, when managed appropriately, can drive professional growth, adaptability, and organizational innovation (Kahn et al., 1964; Katz & Kahn, 1978; Liu & Hynes, 2012).

This study critically examines the myth-reality dichotomy in the discourse on administrative performance and role conflict. The myth stems from early organizational theories that regard role conflict as a disruptive force that impairs an individual's ability to perform effectively. As suggested by recent empirical findings, the reality reveals a more complex dynamic. While excessive and unmanaged role conflict can lead to negative outcomes, moderate and well-managed role conflict can enhance problem-solving capabilities, strategic decision-making, and overall administrative resilience (Sazhin & Saraikin, 2016). This paper seeks to bridge the gap between theoretical assumptions and empirical realities, offering a fresh perspective on the interplay between these two constructs.

Every human being is born into a family, needs to work, and relate within society. Most importantly, family and work are fundamental aspects of life, and an individual must find a balance between both. Favoring one aspect over another can lead to difficulties in life. Each person has significant

responsibilities in both their professional and personal spheres, striving to meet their needs. However, achieving balance, as posited by Amilin (2017), is often challenging and can result in conflict. The causes of this conflict differ based on various work-related factors, including job hours, workplace conditions, job type, and relationships with colleagues. Personal aspects such as marital status, number of children, home dynamics, age, gender, and geographical location can also play a role.

What we try to say above is that all people have roles in life. Role conflict arises when an individual's various roles create tension, either for themselves or for others. Each role carries specific responsibilities and expectations, which can lead to conflict when these demands contradict one another. This occurs when a person is required to fulfill obligations at odds with each other, making it difficult to meet all expectations simultaneously.

Interview and observational data were examined through thematic analysis, guided by Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework. Manual coding of the transcripts facilitated the identification of recurrent patterns and themes, particularly those concerning role conflict, sources of stress, and coping mechanisms. This analytical method was selected due to its suitability for capturing nuanced, participant-driven insights, making it well-aligned with the study's interpretivist orientation and qualitative aims.

Administrative performance is pivotal to the success of organizations, yet it is often impeded by role conflict – a phenomenon where individuals face incompatible demands within their professional roles. The traditional view posits that clearly defined roles and hierarchical structures ensure efficiency and clarity. However, the dynamic nature of modern organizations challenges this notion, revealing a gap between the myth of role clarity and the reality of role ambiguity and conflict.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This paper seeks to deconstruct the myth by examining the traditional perspectives that view role conflict as an impediment to administrative performance:

- Analyze the empirical reality as we explore how role conflict manifests in real-world administrative environments and assess its negative and positive impacts.
- Identify key moderating factors when investigating the conditions (e.g., leadership support, organizational culture, and flexibility) that determine whether role conflict hinders or enhances administrative performance.
- Offer practical solutions as we provide strategies for organizations to manage role conflict constructively, transforming it into a driver of professional development and efficiency.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The intersection between administrative performance and role conflict has long been a focal point of public administration, organizational behavior, and management research. As modern bureaucracies become increasingly complex, administrators face pressures from multiple stakeholders, ambiguous expectations, and conflicting role demands. This literature review critically explores the theoretical frameworks, empirical findings, and debates around the relationship between administrative performance and role conflict, especially focusing on the *myth-reality dichotomy* – the gap between how administrative roles are idealized versus how they are actually performed.

Role theory (Kahn et al., 1964) posits that individuals occupy positions within organizations that come with prescribed behaviors (roles). Role conflict arises when there are incompatible demands associated with these roles, either between multiple roles (inter-role conflict) or within a single role (intra-role conflict). Seminal works by Katz and Kahn (1978) suggest that unresolved role conflicts can lead to stress, reduced job satisfaction, and diminished organizational performance.

Therefore, administrative performance refers to the effectiveness, efficiency, and accountability with which administrative actors fulfill their functions (Gulick & Urwick, 1937; Simon, 1947). It

encompasses both task performance (goal achievement, quality of service delivery) and contextual performance (initiative, teamwork, adaptability). Performance measurement is often shaped by formal evaluation systems, yet many scholars argue these fail to capture the informal, political, and discretionary aspects of administrative work (Behn, 1995).

Thus, the “myth” refers to the idealized, normative models of administration: rational, neutral, and rule-bound, as described in classical public administration (Weber, 1946). The “reality” refers to administrative practice’s messy, negotiated, conflict-laden nature (Lipsky, 1980; March & Olsen, 1989). This dichotomy shapes how role conflict is perceived: are administrators “failing” when they experience conflict, or is conflict an inherent, necessary feature of complex governance?

Empirically, research consistently links role conflict to negative psychological outcomes such as stress, burnout, and turnover (Beehr & Glazer, 2005; Jackson & Schuler, 1985). Administrators, especially at the street level, navigate conflicting demands from citizens, supervisors, and political actors, leading to emotional labor and job strain. The relationship between role conflict and performance is nuanced. Some studies find negative effects; for example, role conflict leads to distraction, reduced focus, and lower task efficiency (Singh & Rhoads, 1991). Others find adaptive responses; skilled administrators use discretion, negotiation, and innovation to manage conflict, potentially improving performance in uncertain environments (Hill, 2003; Tummers et al., 2015). Notably, Lipsky’s (1980) *street-level bureaucracy* argues that conflict and discretion are unavoidable in public service, and coping strategies like rationing services or bending rules are integral to administrative survival.

Factors that influence how role conflict affects performance include: organizational support (Rizzo et al., 1970) – supportive environments buffer negative effects; *leadership style* (House, 1971) – participative leaders help clarify expectations; *role clarity and autonomy* (Fried et al., 2008) – high autonomy can mitigate role conflict; and *cultural context* (Aycaan et al., 1999) – cultural norms shape how conflict is experienced and resolved.

Conversely, classical models assume clear hierarchies, defined roles, and objective performance criteria exist. However, empirical studies show that roles are often ambiguous, performance is judged subjectively, and administrators engage in political and ethical balancing acts (Olsen, 2006). This gap between normative ideals and real-world practice creates systemic role conflict. Yet, while much research frames role conflict as inherently negative, some scholars argue it can be productive. This, they argue, promotes innovation and creative problem-solving (Farh et al., 2010), forces ethical reflection on competing values (Dobel, 1990), and enhances adaptive capacity in dynamic environments (Christensen & Lægveid, 2007). Thus, the myth-reality dichotomy is not just a gap but a productive tension.

Recent developments and emerging perspectives are interesting to look at. New Public Management (NPM) reforms have intensified performance pressures and accountability demands, often increasing role conflict (Hood, 1991). Collaborative governance and networked administration blur boundaries between public, private, and nonprofit roles, complicating role definitions (O’Toole, 1997) while emotional and identity-based perspectives explore how administrators reconcile conflicting professional identities (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). These newer perspectives challenge traditional performance metrics and call for more nuanced, multidimensional assessments of administrative effectiveness.

Furthermore, Schaufeli (2017) builds on the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model, emphasizing how burnout arises from an imbalance between high job demands and low job resources. According to him, burnout is described as a psychological syndrome characterized by exhaustion, cynicism, and reduced professional efficacy. He posits that role stress, particularly role overload and role ambiguity/conflict, is identified as a significant contributor to burnout. Essentially, his paper provides practical guidance for measuring burnout and designing interventions, focusing on boosting job resources (e.g., social support, autonomy) to buffer against high demands. Thus, in practical terms, Schaufeli highlights how organizations can use the JD-R model diagnostically to improve employee well-being and reduce burnout.

Interestingly, Tims and Bakker (2010) extended the JD-R model by introducing job crafting as a proactive behavior by employees. They define job crafting as the self-initiated changes employees make to align their jobs with their skills, needs, and preferences. Thus, job crafting leads to higher engagement, well-being, and performance, and it helps prevent burnout. Types of crafting include increasing structural resources, such as autonomy, opportunities to develop, increasing social resources such as feedback and social support, increasing challenging demands, and decreasing hindering demands.

Yet, Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001), the pioneers of the concept of job crafting, defined job crafting more broadly as changes employees make in task boundaries, such as taking on different tasks, relational boundaries, such as changing interactions with others, and cognitive boundaries, such as changing how one perceives their job. Accordingly, their theoretical contribution introduced the idea that job crafting allows employees to find meaning in their work, making it personally significant and fulfilling.

Accordingly, the nexus between administrative performance and role conflict is central to understanding the challenges and contradictions of modern governance. Rather than viewing role conflict solely as a barrier to performance, scholars increasingly recognize it as a defining feature of administrative life that reveals the persistent tension between the myths of bureaucracy and the realities of public service. A critical analysis of this dichotomy offers a clearer understanding of administrative performance and insights into how governance systems might be designed to harness, rather than suppress, the creative potential of conflict.

CLASSICAL THEORIES

Max Weber's bureaucratic theory

Max Weber's (1947) bureaucratic model emphasizes a structured hierarchy, formal rules, and impersonal relationships to achieve organizational efficiency and predictability. While this model aims to minimize role conflict through clearly delineating duties, it often leads to rigidity, limiting adaptability in complex situations. That is why Rodriguez's (2018) thesis examines contemporary administrative theories, emphasizing the reform of traditional bureaucracies through participatory management, decentralization, network governance, and a public value-oriented approach.

Frederick Taylor's scientific management

Frederick Taylor's (1911) scientific management focuses on task optimization and standardization to enhance productivity. By assigning specific tasks to workers, it seeks to eliminate ambiguity. However, this mechanistic approach can neglect the human element, leading to dissatisfaction and potential role conflict when workers' needs and organizational demands diverge.

Chester Barnard's theory of cooperative systems

Chester Barnard (1938) introduced the concept of organizations as cooperative systems, highlighting the importance of communication and the willingness of individuals to contribute to organizational goals. He acknowledged that role conflict arises when there is a misalignment between individual values and organizational expectations, affecting overall performance.

MODERN PERSPECTIVES

Role theory

Role theory posits that individuals occupy multiple roles, each with specific expectations, and conflicts arise when these expectations are incompatible (Kahn et al., 1964). Role conflict can lead to stress, reduced job satisfaction, and impaired performance, particularly when individuals struggle to meet conflicting demands.

Job demands-resources model

The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model suggests that job demands, such as workload and role conflict, can lead to burnout when not balanced by adequate resources (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). High role conflict increases job strain, negatively impacting performance and well-being.

New public management and post-NPM critiques

New Public Management (NPM) emphasizes efficiency, performance measurement, and customer orientation in public administration. However, it often leads to role conflict as administrators balance traditional public service values with market-driven approaches (Hood, 1991). Post-NPM critiques advocate for hybrid models that integrate ethical considerations and flexibility to mitigate role conflict.

Psychological contract theory

Psychological contract theory explores the unwritten expectations between employees and employers. When these expectations are unmet, such as when administrators face conflicting demands without adequate support, role conflict ensues, leading to decreased motivation and performance (Rousseau, 1995).

SECTOR-SPECIFIC FINDINGS

Public sector

In the public sector, administrators often navigate conflicting directives from political leaders and bureaucratic superiors, leading to role conflict. This tension can result in decreased morale, slower decision-making, and reduced innovation (Perry & Wise, 1990).

Healthcare administration

Healthcare administrators frequently juggle clinical responsibilities with managerial duties, leading to role conflict. Studies have shown that this dual role can cause stress and burnout, adversely affecting job performance and patient care (Park & Kang, 2022).

Education sector

Educational administrators, such as school principals, often face role conflict when balancing instructional leadership with administrative tasks. In Nepal, principals reported challenges due to limited autonomy and professional development, impacting their effectiveness (Khanal & Ghimire, 2022).

Law enforcement

Police officers experience role conflict when balancing law enforcement duties with community engagement. This conflict can lead to stress and decreased job satisfaction, affecting overall performance (Skolnick, 2008).

Non-governmental organizations

Non-governmental organization (NGO) administrators often encounter role conflict when aligning donor expectations with community needs. The pressure to meet funding requirements can divert focus from mission-driven activities, leading to internal friction and reduced effectiveness (The Guardian, 2024).

The exploration of administrative performance and role conflict reveals a complex interplay between organizational structures, individual expectations, and sector-specific challenges. Classical theories provide foundational insights, but modern perspectives highlight the nuanced realities administrators face. Recognizing and addressing role conflict is essential for enhancing administrative performance and bridging the gap between myth and reality.

DISCUSSION AND RESULTS

CONCEPTUALIZING ROLE CONFLICT

According to Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001), role conflict occurs when individuals experience incompatible demands, expectations, or pressures related to their social or professional roles. This conflict, according to them, can create stress, confusion, and difficulty in fulfilling obligations effectively. Therefore, it can show in different ways, including intra-role conflict, which occurs when conflicting expectations exist inside a role. For example, a manager is expected to be both strict in enforcing rules and empathetic towards employees' concerns. Inter-role conflict is when an individual holds multiple roles that have contradictory expectations. For example, a working parent struggles to balance their responsibilities at work and their duties at home. Person-role conflict arises when an individual's values, personality, or beliefs conflict with role expectations. A typical example is a lawyer defending a client they believe is guilty, conflicting with their personal ethics. An inter-sender conflict arises when different people or groups send contradictory expectations for the same role, such as when an employee receives conflicting instructions from two supervisors. Intra-sender conflict occurs when one person gives conflicting expectations about a role. An example is a boss telling an employee to be innovative while also requiring strict adherence to existing procedures.

SOME THEORIES ON ROLE CONFLICT AND ADMINISTRATIVE PERFORMANCE

Role conflict and administrative performance are widely studied in organizational and management theories. Suffice it to reiterate that role conflict arises when individuals face incompatible demands within their job, which can negatively affect their performance. Gleaning from the works of Biddle (1986), George (2025), Hall (1972) and Rizzo et al. (1970), some key theories that explain this relationship are hereby highlighted.

Role theory by Kahn et al.

Kahn (1964) et al. opined that individuals hold multiple roles in an organization, leading to potential conflicts when expectations clash. To them, role conflict can be inter-role conflict (conflict between different roles) or intra-role conflict (conflict within a single role). Thus, administrative performance declines when role conflict increases stress and reduces decision-making efficiency.

Person-environment fit theory by Kristof-Brown et al.

Kristof-Brown et al. (2005) stated that a mismatch between an individual's skills, expectations, and the work environment causes stress and reduces job performance. To this end, role conflict arises when an administrator's responsibilities do not align with organizational expectations.

Organizational role stress theory by Pareek

Pareek (1983) identifies different types of role stress, including role conflict, role ambiguity, and role overload. According to him, high levels of role stress reduce administrative efficiency, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment.

Expectancy theory by Vroom

Vroom (1964) argues that individuals are motivated to perform based on expected rewards. However, role conflict can lower motivation by making rewards seem unattainable, leading to decreased performance.

Job demands-resources (JD-R) model by Bakker and Demerouti

Bakker and Demerouti (2007) explained how job demands (e.g., role conflict) and job resources (e.g., support, autonomy) affect performance and burnout. Therefore, administrators experiencing high role conflict with low resources are more likely to experience burnout and reduced effectiveness.

Cognitive dissonance theory by Festinger

Festinger (1957) submitted that individuals experience psychological discomfort when their actions contradict their beliefs or values. Accordingly, administrators facing conflicting role expectations may feel dissatisfied, leading to reduced performance and decision-making efficiency.

Bureaucratic role conflict theory by Merton

Merton (1940) examined how rigid bureaucratic structures create role conflicts for administrators. Strict rules may conflict with the need for flexibility, reducing innovation and efficiency.

The job demands-resources (JD-R) model

This is a simplified framework (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007) for understanding how workplace factors influence employee well-being, performance, and burnout. The model is particularly useful in explaining the effects of role conflict on administrative performance by categorizing workplace characteristics into job demands and job resources.

Job Demands (stressors that require effort): Job demands are aspects of a job that require sustained effort and lead to stress and exhaustion if not managed properly. These include the following: *Role conflict* – conflicting expectations from different stakeholders, such as superiors, subordinates, and external partners. *Role ambiguity* – unclear job responsibilities, leading to confusion and inefficiency. *Work overload* – excessive work demands that exceed an individual's capacity. *Time pressure* – deadlines that create stress and limit decision-making quality. *Emotional strain* – handling interpersonal conflicts or difficult situations.

The effect of these on administrators when they face high job demands (e.g., unclear expectations, excessive workload, or conflicting priorities) is that it increases their stress and exhaustion, ultimately lowering job performance.

Job Resources (supportive elements that reduce stress): These are aspects of a job that help employees manage stress and enhance their work performance. These include the following aspects. *Autonomy*, i.e., the ability to make decisions and control work processes. *Social support*, i.e., help from colleagues, subordinates, and supervisors. *Feedback*, i.e., constructive performance evaluations that clarify expectations. *Opportunity for growth*, which includes training, professional development and career advancement.

The effect of the above on administrators is that with high job resources (e.g., supportive leadership, clear communication, and autonomy), they can buffer the negative impact of role conflict, reduce stress, and perform better.

HOW DOES ROLE CONFLICT FIT INTO THE JD-R MODEL?

The dual process of job demands and job resources

The JD-R model suggests that workplace stressors (like role conflict) trigger some psychological processes, which are: (i) health impairment process (burnout pathway); (ii) high job demands (e.g., role conflict, overload, ambiguity) lead to stress and exhaustion, which causes burnout and reduced performance; and (iii) motivational process (engagement pathway), which are high job resources (e.g., autonomy, support, feedback), lead to higher motivation, which enhances engagement and performance. Essentially, if an administrator faces high role conflict but lacks resources, their performance declines due to stress. If they have adequate resources (e.g., support, autonomy, feedback), they can cope better with role conflict and still perform effectively.

Applications of the JD-R model in administrative performance

The JD-R model helps organizations understand how role conflict affects administrative performance in this simple equation: High Role Conflict + Low Job Resources → Poor Performance. An administrator who is given conflicting directives from upper management and department heads but lacks clear guidelines or support. The outcome is increased stress, decision fatigue, and lower

efficiency. Conversely, High Role Conflict + High Job Resources → Balanced Performance is a case where an administrator experiences conflicting expectations but has a strong mentor, autonomy, and clear performance feedback. The outcome will be less stress, better adaptability, and higher productivity. But with low Role Conflict plus High Job Resources will lead to Optimal Performance. When an administrator works in a well-structured organization with clear goals, supportive leadership, and autonomy, the outcome will definitely be higher engagement, motivation, and top-tier performance.

The JD-R Model provides a comprehensive framework for understanding how role conflict impacts administrative performance. If job demands (such as role conflict) are too high and job resources (such as autonomy and support) are too low, burnout and reduced efficiency occur. However, increasing job resources can counterbalance role conflict, leading to better stress management, higher engagement, and improved performance.

Accordingly, Tims et al. (2013) integrate the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) model with the notion of job crafting — employees’ self-initiated changes to their work roles. They find that employees who craft their job resources (e.g. seeking feedback, increasing autonomy) tend over time to increase structural and social resources, which improves well-being (more work engagement and job satisfaction, less burnout). Crafting challenging job demands (taking on more stretch tasks) showed direct positive effects on well-being, even though crafting hindering demands (trying to reduce burdens) did *not* reliably reduce those demands. Thus, proactive resource crafting is more consistently beneficial than demand reduction in this model.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

PRIMARY DATA (INTERVIEW EXCERPT)

“Sometimes I feel like I’m living two lives. At work, I’m expected to take charge, lead, and be completely professional. But at home, I have to drop everything to take care of my family. It’s like both roles demand everything from me – and I’m left with nothing for myself.”

Participant 4 is a mid-career female professional. This excerpt illustrates the theme of role conflict, particularly the tension between professional expectations and domestic responsibilities, and its emotional toll on the participant.

Personal observation (Field Note)

During the observation session, we noticed that Participant 4 kept checking her phone throughout our conversation. At one point, she apologized, explaining that her child’s school had been calling earlier. Her body language was tense – she sat upright, fidgeted with her scarf, and frequently glanced at the door. This seemed to reflect an ongoing internal pressure to be simultaneously present in both professional and personal spheres.

Field notes, Day 3 (Observation Site: Local Government Office)

This observation supports the theme of constant role negotiation and suggests a stress-induced state of hyper-vigilance, further reinforcing the findings from the interview data.

SET 2: THEME: CULTURAL EXPECTATIONS AND GENDERED ROLE STRESS

Primary data (interview excerpt)

“Even if I work late, I’m still expected to cook, clean, and take care of the kids. My husband helps sometimes, but the assumption is that the home is my responsibility. My job gives me pride, but it also feels like I’m constantly failing somewhere – either at work or at home.”

Participant 7 is a government administrative officer. This highlights the gendered nature of role conflict, where traditional expectations persist despite women’s professional advancement.

Personal observation (Field Note)

Participant 7 arrived 15 minutes late for the interview and looked visibly rushed. She apologized, explaining that her domestic helper had not shown up, and she had to prepare breakfast and get her children ready before leaving. She kept her handbag on her lap and didn't fully relax in the chair during the session. There was a sense of urgency in her tone, even when discussing unrelated topics.

SET 3: THEME: COPING STRATEGIES AND ADAPTIVE BEHAVIOR

Primary data (interview excerpt)

“I’ve learned to set boundaries. I don’t take work calls after 6 p.m. unless it’s an emergency. It took years to stop feeling guilty about it, but if I don’t protect that time, I start feeling burned out again.”

Participant 2 is a senior education officer. This quote reflects an adaptive coping strategy and boundary-setting behavior, often emerging later in participants’ careers after repeated experiences of stress and exhaustion.

Personal observation (field note):

Unlike earlier participants, Participant 2 appeared calm and composed throughout the session. She turned her phone on silent and mentioned at the start that she had blocked out the next hour specifically for the interview. Her manner suggested a conscious effort to be present. She smiled frequently and spoke in a reflective tone, often using phrases like “I’ve learned...” and “What works for me now...”

How these fit thematically

Primary data excerpts (direct participant quotes) that clearly illustrate how role conflict can lead to innovation, adaptability, and leadership growth (Table 1).

Table 1. Tabular Representation of Interview Excerpt

Theme	Primary data	Observation insight
Role conflict	Tension between work and home responsibilities (Set 1, 2)	Behavior reflecting divided attention or internal stress
Cultural/gendered expectations	Traditional household expectations are placed primarily on women	Visible stress in domestic-professional balancing acts
Coping strategies	Boundaries, mindset changes, prioritization (Set 3)	Relaxed demeanor and organized behavior reflecting emotional resilience

Source: Field work summary

THEME: ROLE CONFLICT AS A DRIVER OF INNOVATION

Participant Quote 1 – Creative Problem-Solving: “Because I was constantly switching between my work demands and home obligations, I had to come up with my own system to manage time. I created a color-coded scheduling method that even my team started using. It saved us a lot of confusion.” Participant 5 is a mid-level administrator.

Participant Quote 2 – Process Innovation: “Juggling multiple expectations made me rethink how we handle internal communication. I introduced *WhatsApp* groups for different departments to reduce email overload – it worked better than the formal system.” Participant 9 is a divisional coordinator.

THEME: ROLE CONFLICT AS A PATHWAY TO LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Participant Quote 3 – Leadership through Emotional Intelligence: “Dealing with constant pressure at home and work taught me to be more empathetic. Now when my staff are struggling, I know how to support them better because I’ve been there myself.” Participant 7 is a senior government officer.

Participant Quote 4 – Strategic Adaptability: *“At first, I saw the conflicting demands as a burden. But over time, I learned to prioritize, delegate, and make quicker decisions. I think that’s what helped me get promoted—I became more efficient under pressure.”* Participant 6 is a zonal education manager.

THEME: ROLE CONFLICT ENHANCING SELF-REFLECTION AND GROWTH

Participant Quote 5 – Identity and Leadership Growth: *“Navigating conflicting roles forced me to reflect on what kind of leader I wanted to be. I started reading more about leadership styles and adapted my approach to be more inclusive and flexible.”* Participant 8 is the head of a public health division.

These quotes directly demonstrate that while role conflict is often associated with strain, it can also prompt innovation, resilience, and leadership capacity, especially when individuals find ways to turn constraints into opportunities.

IMPACT OF ROLE CONFLICT ON ADMINISTRATIVE PERFORMANCE

Summarizing the works of Afifah et al. (2015), Acorn (1991), Amilin (2017), and Morrison (1994), role conflict significantly affects administrative performance in various ways, influencing decision-making, efficiency, and overall job satisfaction. Since administrators are responsible for overseeing operations, managing employees, and ensuring organizational goals are met, any form of role conflict can disrupt these functions.

- 1. Increased Stress and Burnout:** Administrative roles often involve juggling multiple responsibilities. Conflicting demands can cause mental exhaustion, leading to reduced focus and efficiency. Continuous stress can lead to burnout, causing absenteeism and decreased motivation. For example, a school principal must balance enforcing strict policies while maintaining a friendly relationship with teachers and students, which can create emotional strain.
- 2. Poor Decision-Making:** Conflicting expectations can lead to indecisiveness or hesitation in decision-making. Administrators may struggle to prioritize tasks, causing delays in important processes. For example, a hospital administrator faces pressure from doctors to increase staff while being told by higher management to cut costs, leading to delayed staffing decisions.
- 3. Reduced Efficiency and Productivity:** When an administrator experiences intra-role conflict (conflicting demands within the same role), they may find it difficult to perform tasks effectively. The mental burden of managing competing expectations can slow down administrative processes. For example, a university dean may struggle to implement new academic policies while simultaneously addressing faculty concerns, leading to inefficiencies.
- 4. Lower Job Satisfaction and Morale:** Unresolved role conflict can lead to job dissatisfaction, making administrators less engaged. Lack of clarity in role expectations may cause frustration, reducing enthusiasm for the job. For example, a corporate administrator who constantly receives contradictory directives from different department heads may feel undervalued and demotivated.
- 5. Workplace Tension and Poor Communication:** Role conflict can create misunderstandings and strain relationships with colleagues, subordinates, and superiors. Poor communication due to unclear expectations can lead to mismanagement and organizational dysfunction. For example, an HR administrator mediating between employees and top management may struggle to satisfy both parties, resulting in workplace tension.
- 6. Failure to Meet Organizational Goals:** When administrators are caught between conflicting responsibilities, their ability to align with organizational objectives is compromised. This can result in missed deadlines, budget mismanagement, or failure to implement policies effectively. For example, a government administrator handling public welfare programs may face pressure from political leaders and public demands, hindering the smooth execution of policies.

STRATEGIES TO MANAGE ROLE CONFLICT IN ADMINISTRATION

Clarify Job Expectations: Clearly defining roles, responsibilities, and expectations can help reduce misunderstandings and conflicts. This includes ensuring that job descriptions are specific and align with organizational goals.

Improve Communication: Open and transparent communication helps administrators address conflicting demands. Regular meetings, feedback sessions, and active listening can prevent misinterpretations and create a more collaborative environment.

Prioritize Tasks: When faced with multiple responsibilities, administrators should assess the urgency and importance of tasks. Using prioritization techniques (e.g., the Eisenhower Matrix) can help manage workloads effectively and reduce stress.

Seek Support and Training: Administrators can benefit from professional development, mentorship, or peer support to gain new skills and strategies for handling role conflicts. Training in conflict resolution and time management can be particularly helpful.

Delegate Responsibilities: Assigning tasks to capable team members can help balance workloads and reduce conflicts. Effective delegation ensures that duties are distributed according to expertise, allowing administrators to focus on higher-priority responsibilities. Thus, it distributes the workload effectively to prevent overwhelming situations.

Role conflict can severely hinder administrative performance by increasing stress, reducing efficiency, and impairing decision-making. However, addressing these challenges through clear communication, structured prioritization, and support systems can enhance administrative effectiveness and organizational success.

RESOLVING ROLE CONFLICT

As submitted by Fisher (2001), resolving role conflict requires a combination of clear communication, prioritization, and organizational support.

Clarify Role Expectations: Ensure that job descriptions are well-defined and responsibilities are clearly outlined. Seek clarification from supervisors or stakeholders when expectations are unclear. A teacher experiencing pressure from both parents and school administrators should request a clear policy on grading and student discipline.

Improve Communication: Encourage open discussions with managers, coworkers, or family members about role expectations. Address conflicting instructions by seeking direct clarification from the sources. If an employee receives contradictory directives from two managers, they should request a meeting to align expectations.

Prioritize Responsibilities: Identify which tasks are most critical and focus on them first. Use time management techniques like to-do lists and delegation to manage workload. A working parent can schedule dedicated work and family time to minimize overlapping responsibilities.

Seek Organizational Support: Companies should create policies that prevent conflicting demands on employees. Supervisors should provide regular feedback to ensure role clarity. HR departments can introduce flexible work policies to help employees balance personal and professional roles.

Develop Conflict Resolution Skills: Learn negotiation strategies to manage and resolve competing demands. Use assertiveness techniques to communicate needs without escalating conflicts. A nurse facing pressure from both doctors and hospital management can propose a structured workflow to balance patient care and administrative duties.

Establish Role Boundaries: Set clear limits on work and personal life to avoid excessive stress. Learn to **say no** when demand exceeds capacity. An employee should avoid taking on extra tasks that conflict with their primary job role unless properly compensated.

Provide Training and Development: Organizations should offer workshops on stress management and conflict resolution. Employees should seek mentorship to learn how to handle role conflicts effectively. A new project manager can attend leadership training to manage competing expectations from team members and executives.

Therefore, Role conflict can be managed through clarity, communication, prioritization, and support systems. By proactively addressing conflicting expectations, individuals can reduce stress, improve efficiency, and enhance job satisfaction.

The role of Counseling: When role conflict leads to frustration and loss of efficiency, according to Elman and Gilbert (1984), counseling may prove to be a helpful antidote. Managers may be able to perform this function. Non-directive counseling, or “listening with understanding”, is little more than being a good listener; something every manager should possess. Sometimes, the simple process of being able to vent one’s feelings – that is, to express them to a concerned and understanding listener – is enough to relieve frustration and make it possible for the frustrated individual to advance to a problem-solving frame of mind, better able to cope with a personal difficulty that is affecting their work adversely.

Table 2 outlines the key contributors to role conflict and provides real-world examples to illustrate how they manifest in organizational settings.

Table 2. Tabular representation of the formation of role conflict

Factor	Description	Example
Role expectations	Conflicting expectations from different sources (e.g., supervisors, peers, clients).	A manager expects an employee to prioritize efficiency, while customers demand personalized service.
Role ambiguity	Unclear or inconsistent role definitions and responsibilities.	An employee is unsure whether handling customer complaints is part of their duties.
Inter-role conflict	Clashes between multiple roles an individual holds.	A working parent struggles to balance job responsibilities with family obligations.
Intra-role conflict	Contradictory demands within the same role.	A supervisor must enforce strict company policies while maintaining good relationships with employees.
Person-role conflict	Misalignment between an individual’s personal values and role expectations.	An employee in sales is required to use aggressive marketing tactics that conflict with their ethical beliefs.
Resource constraints	Limited time, support, or tools leading to role strain.	A teacher is expected to provide individual attention to students but has a large class size and limited resources.

Table 2 highlights the key factors that shape role conflict within organizations. Conflicting role expectations, unclear responsibilities, and contradictory demands create ambiguity and strain, while inter-role pressures—such as balancing work and family—and intra-role contradictions add further tension. Person-role misalignments generate ethical discomfort, and resource constraints intensify role strain. These dimensions are consistent with established theories: Kahn et al. (1964) and Rizzo et al. (1970) identify ambiguity and conflicting expectations as core stressors; Pareek (1983) emphasizes inter- and intra-role conflicts; Festinger’s (1957) cognitive dissonance theory explains the strain of value misalignments; and the JD-R model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007) links high demands and low resources to burnout. Collectively, these perspectives underscore the multidimensional nature of role conflict, rooted in both organizational structures and individual experiences.

THE MYTH VS. REALITY OF ROLE CONFLICT

Role conflict is a widely discussed phenomenon in organizational behavior and psychology (Afifah et al., 2015; Ebbers & Wijnberg, 2017; Morrison, 1994). However, misconceptions often arise regarding its nature, causes, and impact. Below is an exploration of some common myths and realities surrounding role conflict.

MYTH #1: ROLE CONFLICT ONLY OCCURS IN HIGH-STRESS JOBS

Reality: While high-stress jobs (e.g., healthcare, law enforcement, administration) often experience role conflict, it can occur in any profession or social setting. Even in less demanding roles, conflicting expectations can emerge between coworkers, supervisors, or personal responsibilities. A cashier may face pressure from management to up-sell products while also being expected to provide fast service to customers.

MYTH #2: ROLE CONFLICT IS ALWAYS NEGATIVE

Reality: While excessive role conflict can lead to stress and burnout, some level of role tension can drive growth and adaptability. It can encourage problem-solving, prioritization, and better communication. A team leader handling conflicting project deadlines may develop stronger time management and delegation skills.

MYTH #3: ROLE CONFLICT CAN BE COMPLETELY ELIMINATED

Reality: Role conflict is inevitable in complex organizations and multi-role environments. It can be managed and minimized but rarely eliminated, as individuals constantly navigate different expectations. A working parent will always balance career demands with family responsibilities, but flexible work arrangements can help manage the conflict.

MYTH #4: ROLE CONFLICT IS THE SAME AS WORK-LIFE CONFLICT.

Reality: Work-life conflict is a specific type of role conflict, but not the only one. Role conflict can occur within a single role (intra-role conflict) or between multiple professional roles (inter-role conflict). A doctor is facing a conflict between their role as a medical professional (providing patient care) and their administrative role (handling hospital paperwork).

MYTH #5: ROLE CONFLICT ONLY AFFECTS INDIVIDUALS, NOT ORGANIZATIONS

Reality: Role conflict impacts both individual well-being and organizational efficiency. If employees experience excessive role conflict, it can lead to poor performance, high turnover, and workplace dissatisfaction. A company with unclear job descriptions may struggle with employee frustration and low productivity.

Role conflict is a real and common challenge in various aspects of life and work. While it cannot be completely avoided, proper management strategies, such as clear role expectations, open communication, and organizational support, can help individuals and businesses navigate its effects effectively.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF THE MYTH AND EMPIRICAL REALITIES

The Myth of Role Conflict as a Barrier to Performance: Role conflict has long been perceived as a significant obstacle to effective administrative performance. This perspective is rooted in early organizational and role theory, which emphasized stability, clarity, and efficiency as key determinants of productivity. The myth that role conflict is inherently detrimental is supported by several theoretical frameworks:

Classical Organizational Theory: Classical theorists like Weber (1946) and Taylor (1911) emphasized bureaucratic structures, clear hierarchies, and well-defined roles as essential for

efficiency. Role conflict, in this view, disrupts standardization and predictability, leading to inefficiency and administrative failure.

Role Theory (Kahn et al., 1964): Kahn and his colleagues identified role conflict as a major source of stress and job dissatisfaction. Their research classified role conflict: *intra-role conflict*, when contradictory expectations exist within a single role; *inter-role conflict*, when an individual's multiple roles have conflicting demands; and *person-role conflict*, when an individual's personal values or abilities clash with role expectations. This framework reinforced the idea that unresolved role conflict diminishes performance by increasing psychological strain and reducing role clarity.

Stress and Strain Models (Katz & Kahn, 1978): These models argue that role conflict leads to role ambiguity, stress, burnout, and inefficiency. Organizations have traditionally sought to minimize role conflict to maintain stability, reinforcing the myth that it is always harmful.

EMPIRICAL REALITIES

THE COMPLEX AND ADAPTIVE NATURE OF ROLE CONFLICT

Contrary to the traditional myth, contemporary research presents a more nuanced understanding of role conflict, highlighting its potential benefits under certain conditions.

Role Conflict as a Driver of Adaptability and Innovation: Recent studies in organizational behavior suggest that role conflict can stimulate problem-solving and innovation. When individuals face conflicting expectations, they may develop new strategies, seek creative solutions, and enhance their adaptability (Tang & Chang, 2010).

Moderated Role Conflict and Performance: Empirical studies (Mertensmeyer & Coleman, 1987) suggest that while high levels of role conflict can negatively impact performance, moderate levels, when paired with support mechanisms, can encourage resilience, critical thinking, and proactive leadership. Organizations that foster role negotiation and autonomy enable employees to manage conflict productively.

The Role of Coping Mechanisms and Organizational Support: Research by Beauchamp and Bray (2001), Rizzo et al. (1970), Peters (1998), and Fondas, 2014 highlights that the impact of role conflict on performance depends on *leadership and communication* (open communication and leadership support can reduce the negative effects of role conflict); *job autonomy* (when administrators have decision-making power, they can turn role conflict into an opportunity for growth); and *training and development* (providing conflict resolution training helps employees manage competing demands effectively).

REAL-WORLD CASE STUDIES

Empirical research on high-performance organizations demonstrates that administrators who successfully navigate role conflict often develop better negotiation skills, strategic thinking, and emotional intelligence. Case studies from corporate management, public administration, and healthcare suggest that role conflict can be a source of professional growth rather than an inherent barrier (MindTools, n.d.).

Accordingly, while traditional role theory and bureaucratic models emphasize the negative impact of role conflict, modern research highlights its complex and context-dependent effects. The myth that role conflict is universally detrimental overlooks its potential to drive adaptability, problem-solving, and leadership development. By shifting from a rigid, conflict-averse mindset to a strategic, conflict-management approach, organizations can harness role conflict as a tool for enhancing administrative performance. The following scenario further elucidates these prepositions.

The Effect of Role Conflict on Family

A commonly noted role conflict is that between work and family. For example, researchers (Beauchamp & Bray, 2001; Fondas, 2014; Kahn et al., 1964; Peters, 1998; Rizzo et al., 1970) have noticed a

declining fertility rate in developed countries. These studies suggest that this drop may be because more women are pursuing careers and obtaining education. Research (Liu & Hynes, 2012) demonstrated that women who have more trouble balancing their work life and family duties go on to have fewer additional children. Therefore, according to them, while some people believe that work-family role conflict only occurs for women, Kelly et al.'s (2011) study showed that 49% of employed males with families experienced work-family conflict. The study also showed that work flexibility is the number one concern for employed females with families and the number two or three issue for employed men with families. Flexibility in the workplace can be a huge relief to a person struggling to balance their career and home life. Having that control is something that could change the relationship between work and family life to better manage role conflict, and if more businesses participated in this action, there could possibly be a better outcome for all. Thus, Dell'Antonia (2012) reflects on and shares concise, meaningful parenting lessons she's received over time—such as being present, accepting imperfections, and meeting small moments of connection—that emphasize empathy, balance, and authenticity in raising children.

From the foregoing, we could be right to submit that role conflict requirements for different roles might compete for a person's limited time or could occur due to various strains associated with his/her multiple roles. Some people can play one role and play it well, while others can play multiple roles and also play them well.

Those in prisons

The prisons are filled predominantly with male inmates. This may be due to the dominant construction of masculinity, which inclines males to criminality and violence. Dominant masculinity is symbolized by control, independence, heterosexuality, aggressiveness, authority, and a capacity for violence in most societies today. When a male finds himself lacking in one of these areas, he may be driven to make up for it in another area, such as when a poor, jobless young man tries to show masculinity by carrying a gun, engaging in kidnapping, armed robbery, ritual killing, or wearing gang-related clothing. When such is in prison, many of the resources used to assert masculinity are not readily available, thus they seek other ways to proclaim their masculinity. Many inmates find it imperative to put on a mask of hyper-masculinity, which may conflict with their normal personality, in order to maintain their status within the prison. This expectation to maintain a certain idea of masculinity contradicts basic human needs and desires for intimacy and emotional expression, creating stress and conflict between their core selves and social expectations (Hepburn & Albonetti, 1980). To this effect, when they come out of prison, they are worse off.

Karp (2010) and Amilin (2017) further posited that role conflict is seen not only in the prison inmates but also in the prison personnel. According to him, there are two types of prisons: custody prisons and treatment prisons. The main goal of a custody prison is to protect the community by maintaining control over the inmates. The correctional officers are expected to maintain order, enforce rules, and keep custody. A key rule of their job is that interaction between inmates and officers is to remain distant. Again, the main goal of a treatment prison is to protect the community by rehabilitating the inmate. The officers are expected to respond to inmates in a therapeutic manner and develop ties with them. Currently, prisons are combining the two types of custody, and the staff is experiencing role conflict. Officers are being asked to do conflicting jobs, such as remaining socially distant while also building close, supportive relationships with inmates. This emphasis on the combination of custody and treatment often results in two distinguished, mutually antagonistic groups of staff.

The father in the home

A status may attract many roles. The status of a father, for example, has packed into it more than just the relationship with the son. The father-ship position encompasses more roles than those within the family. As a father, he is a member of the parents' association, the old people's association, his village association, etc. All the attendant roles in the individual's position because of his initial membership

of the father's club, and for which he is expected to perform the roles as and when called upon, constitute 'role conflict'. In effect, we can see that a single status generates more than one role. A husband does not marry his relatives-in-law. Rather, he sees them as relevant in performing his 'in-lawship' role, and therefore these in-laws become his 'role-partners', i.e., the status of husband is associated with his sister-in-law, mother-in-law, etc., and he must take into consideration when acting or behaving.

The lecturer

The teaching profession has many duties, and managing these duties can be very challenging, leading to stress and burnout. Heavy workloads with time constraints cause pressure, making it difficult to balance work and non-work responsibilities, which may cause a failure to maintain a work-life balance. The lecturer is required to teach, mark scripts, conduct research, attend meetings, counsel students, and, at the same time, act as a parent, spouse, and community leader. Finding work-life balance means finding an equilibrium between work and personal activities. Policies at work enable employees to find the balance between daily work and non-work activities, thus initiating role conflict. Stress plays a major role during the process of finding this balance, and it is important to minimize its impact before it becomes unmanageable (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001).

The office setting

Working with groups – especially in a work or committee setting – can sometimes result in role conflict if individuals feel that their roles are in opposition. These roles may conflict for many reasons. For example, the role taker may misunderstand the role sender's prescribed tasks, or the miscommunication can occur in another way. Suppose a role taker is seemingly enthusiastic about taking on many tasks within various roles. In that case, this may be communicated to the role sender, and he or she may be given conflicting role requirements. Role conflict can pair with role ambiguity – a situation in which role expectations are ill-defined – to create role stress, which is detrimental to workplace performance. Role stress has also been linked to decreased job satisfaction and employee turnover (Tang & Chang, 2010).

To avoid role conflict within a workplace, they suggested that managers should outline specifically the duties required by an employee to avoid any miscommunication or confusion. Feedback should also be provided to employees, as this explicitly illustrates if the role-taker is properly performing the role requirements and can assist the role-taker if there are any concerns. Steps should be taken to avoid the crossover of potentially conflicting roles, and if two or more roles are required of an employee, these roles should be separated by time and place if possible.

ROLE AMBIGUITY

One of the main causes of role conflict is role ambiguity, which is the lack of certainty in what a certain role in an organization requires. This can result from poor communication of job duties or unclear instructions from a supervisor. This can lead to role conflict when there are contradicting ideas as to what tasks are supposed to be accomplished. Team members can then be uncertain of their role and their teammates' roles within the team, and team objectives begin to conflict with one another (Kahn et al., 1964). Therefore, role ambiguity occurs when an individual lacks clear information about their job responsibilities, expectations, or authority. This uncertainty can make it difficult to perform tasks effectively and confidently.

CAUSES OF ROLE AMBIGUITY

Unclear Job Descriptions: When job descriptions are vague, incomplete, or poorly defined, employees may struggle to understand their responsibilities and performance expectations. Without clear guidelines, they may feel uncertain about which tasks fall under their role and which do not. This can lead to inefficiencies, hesitation in decision-making, and frustration, ultimately affecting

productivity and job satisfaction. A well-defined job description helps set clear expectations and reduces confusion.

Poor Communication: Effective communication between supervisors and employees is essential for clarity in job roles. When leaders fail to provide precise instructions, clear objectives, or necessary resources, employees may feel lost regarding their duties. Miscommunication can result in tasks being completed incorrectly, duplication of efforts, or even important responsibilities being overlooked. Regular check-ins and open communication channels can help address uncertainties and minimize role ambiguity.

Conflicting Expectations: Employees may face confusion when different supervisors, departments, or stakeholders provide contradictory directives. For example, one manager may emphasize efficiency, while another prioritizes customer satisfaction, creating uncertainty about which goal to prioritize. This misalignment can cause stress, decreased morale, and difficulty in fulfilling job responsibilities. Clear hierarchical structures and coordination between departments can help mitigate such conflicts.

Frequent Organizational Changes: Changes such as company restructuring, leadership transitions, mergers, or shifting business priorities can blur role boundaries and create uncertainty about responsibilities. Employees who were once clear about their job roles may suddenly find themselves in a new environment with unclear expectations. Without proactive communication and role redefinition, such transitions can lead to disengagement, frustration, and decreased efficiency. Organizations should ensure that employees are informed and supported during such changes.

Lack of Feedback: Without regular performance evaluations and constructive feedback, employees may struggle to understand how well they are meeting expectations or whether they need to adjust their approach. A lack of guidance can leave employees feeling directionless and uncertain about their contributions to the organization. Regular feedback sessions, mentorship programs, and goal-setting discussions can help employees clarify their roles and feel more confident in their work.

With a purposeful drive to address these causes of role ambiguity, organizations can create a more structured and efficient work environment, reducing stress and enhancing employee performance.

EFFECTS OF ROLE AMBIGUITY

Increased Stress and Anxiety: When employees are uncertain about their responsibilities, they may experience heightened stress and anxiety. The constant struggle to determine their expectations can lead to mental strain, frustration, and even burnout. This emotional distress affects their well-being and can also reduce their ability to perform effectively. Over time, chronic stress caused by role ambiguity may contribute to physical health problems and decreased motivation at work.

Reduced Job Satisfaction: Employees who lack clarity about their roles often feel undervalued and frustrated. When they are unsure of their contributions or receive mixed signals from supervisors, they may feel disengaged or unappreciated. This dissatisfaction can lead to decreased morale, making employees less motivated to put in extra effort. Over time, unresolved role ambiguity can result in a toxic work environment where employees feel disconnected from their work and the organization.

Lower Productivity: Confusion about job responsibilities can lead to inefficiencies, delays, and mistakes. Employees unsure of their tasks may either duplicate work already being done by others or neglect essential duties altogether. This lack of clarity disrupts workflow, wastes time, and ultimately lowers productivity. Additionally, when employees expend mental energy to figure out their roles rather than completing tasks, their efficiency and work output is sure to decline.

Poor Decision-Making: Role ambiguity often leaves employees uncertain about their authority and decision-making power. Without clear guidelines on their responsibilities, they may hesitate to take initiative or make necessary choices. This uncertainty can slow down processes, create bottlenecks,

and lead to a passive workforce. In situations where quick decisions are needed, unclear roles can result in confusion, miscommunication, and errors that negatively impact the organization.

Higher Turnover Rates: Persistent role ambiguity can push employees to seek opportunities elsewhere. When workers feel unsupported, confused, or unfulfilled in their positions, they may decide to leave the organization in search of a more structured and transparent work environment. High turnover increases hiring and training costs, disrupts team dynamics, and reduces institutional knowledge within the company. Addressing role ambiguity can help improve employee retention and create a more stable workforce.

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ROLE AMBIGUITY AND ROLE CONFLICT

While role ambiguity refers to uncertainty about job responsibilities due to unclear expectations, role conflict arises when an individual faces conflicting demands within their role. Role ambiguity creates confusion and stress due to a lack of guidance, whereas role conflict results from contradictory instructions or expectations from different sources. Both issues can negatively impact employee performance and well-being, but they require different management strategies, such as clarifying job descriptions for role ambiguity and resolving conflicting directives for role conflict (Amilin, 2017).

Table 3. Differences between role ambiguity and role conflict

Factor	Role ambiguity	Role conflict
Definition	Unclear expectations	Conflicting expectations
Cause	Lack of information	Contradictory demands
Example	A new employee is unsure of their exact duties	A manager is told to be both strict and lenient

Role ambiguity is a common workplace issue that can negatively impact both employees and organizations. By improving communication, setting clear expectations, and offering support, organizations can create a more structured and productive work environment.

REVIEW OF THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON ROLE CONFLICT AND ADMINISTRATIVE PERFORMANCE

This section provides a foundational understanding of role conflict and its implications on administrative performance by exploring relevant theoretical frameworks. The discussion covers classical, behavioral, and contemporary organizational theories that have shaped scholarly discourse on this topic.

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

Role Theory: Kahn et al. (1964) define role conflict as a situation where an individual faces incompatible expectations. Accordingly, they differentiate between inter-role conflict (conflict between different roles, e.g., a manager balancing work and personal life) and intra-role conflict (conflict within the same role due to competing demands from multiple stakeholders).

Organizational Behavior Models: They include, among others, Classical Management Theories (Taylorism, Weber’s Bureaucratic Model), which view role conflict as a disruption that must be eliminated through rigid structures and well-defined hierarchies. Human Relations Theory (Mayo, 1933) suggests that social interactions and employee engagement can mitigate the negative effects. Contingency Theory (Burns & Stalker, 1961) posits that role conflict is not inherently negative but depends on the organization’s structure, leadership, and adaptability.

Stress-Strain Paradigms: Katz and Kahn (1978) explore how prolonged role conflict leads to stress, anxiety, and decreased performance when not managed effectively. Therefore, they introduce

coping mechanisms (e.g., role negotiation, boundary-setting) as essential for minimizing role-related strain.

Modern Perspectives: Role conflict as an opportunity, such as the Adaptive Leadership Theory, suggests that managing role conflict effectively can enhance problem-solving skills and innovation. On the other hand, Complexity Theory in Organizations argues that role conflict is a natural outcome of dynamic work environments and can lead to more creative and flexible decision-making (Aderibigbe & Olla, 2014).

MODERATING FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE WHETHER ROLE CONFLICT HAS A POSITIVE OR NEGATIVE EFFECT

From the works of Elena-Iuliana and Maria (2016) and Wikipedia (2024), not all role conflicts lead to poor performance. Several factors determine whether conflict becomes a destructive force or a driver of productivity. This section explores moderating variables that influence the outcomes of role conflict.

Organizational Structure and Culture: Rigid structures (e.g., hierarchical government institutions) tend to exacerbate role conflict. Flexible structures (e.g., tech startups) allow employees to navigate conflicts with greater autonomy.

Leadership and Management Style: Transformational leaders help employees reframe role conflict as an opportunity. Authoritarian leadership tends to intensify conflict and reduce employee morale.

Communication and Role Clarity: Clearer job descriptions and open communication channels help reduce ambiguity. Frequent feedback mechanisms help resolve conflicts before they escalate.

Employee Coping Mechanisms: Employees with strong problem-solving skills and emotional intelligence are better at navigating conflicting expectations. Training programs on conflict resolution can improve adaptability.

PRACTICAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MANAGING ROLE CONFLICT CONSTRUCTIVELY IN ORGANIZATIONAL SETTINGS

Below, we outline practical strategies that administrators and organizations can implement to mitigate the negative effects of role conflict while leveraging its potential benefits.

Role Negotiation and Clarity: Encourage employees to actively define their responsibilities with supervisors. Implement regular role audits to eliminate unnecessary overlaps.

Leadership Development Programs: Train managers in adaptive leadership to help them support employees facing role conflict. Promote mentorship programs where senior leaders guide junior employees on conflict resolution.

Workplace Flexibility and Structural Adjustments: Allow for cross-functional collaboration to distribute conflicting demands more evenly. Implement work-life balance policies to reduce role strain.

Technology and Workflow Management: Utilize AI-driven workload balancing tools to help managers optimize role distribution. Use collaborative project management platforms to enhance transparency in role expectations.

CONCLUSION: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH AND PRACTICE

This section presents the findings from the thematic analysis of the interviews and observations conducted with participants. The analysis revealed that role conflict, although traditionally associated with negative outcomes such as stress and burnout, can also serve as a catalyst for innovation,

leadership development, and strategic adaptability. Three main themes emerged from the data: (1) innovation through necessity, (2) leadership through emotional intelligence, and (3) strategic adaptability and growth. Therefore, rather than solely serving as a source of stress, conflict can also drive innovation and leadership growth. Participants demonstrated that the constant balancing of conflicting roles led to the development of adaptive strategies that improved individual performance and team effectiveness. These findings support the notion that role conflict can cultivate key leadership skills, including emotional intelligence, strategic decision-making, and problem-solving. Additionally, the study challenges the conventional view that role conflict inherently undermines performance, proposing instead that role conflict, when managed effectively, can be a positive force for professional growth. Accordingly, the traditional belief that role conflict always reduces administrative performance is a myth. When managed correctly, moderate role conflict can lead to adaptability, resilience, and innovation. Maintaining open communication to periodically discuss concerns with managers, coworkers, or family members is non-negotiable. Where necessary, negotiate realistic expectations by reaching out to mentors, counselors, or professional networks for advice and engagement in stress-relief activities like exercise. Above all, role boundaries should be established by setting limits on work and personal life to avoid excessive role strain. Additionally, delegate tasks when possible to reduce overload.

IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

There is a need for longitudinal studies on the long-term effects of role conflict. There should be an exploration of AI and digital tools in managing administrative role conflicts. Importantly, however, there should be a functional examination of cross-cultural differences in how role conflict is perceived and managed. Conversely, this paper concludes by advocating for a shift in mindset; role conflict should not be seen as a problem to eliminate but rather as a challenge to navigate strategically for improved performance.

DECLARATION OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST

There is no potential conflict of interest in research, authorship, or publishing articles.

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An Exploration of the Nexus Between Administrative Performance and Role Conflict

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An Exploration of the Nexus Between Administrative Performance and Role Conflict

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