



Relationship between role conflict and job satisfaction among school leaders in secondary schools

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to identify the relationship between the level of role conflict towards job satisfaction among the leaders of secondary schools in Kelantan. 125 teachers consisting of senior assistants, senior teachers, heads of units and heads of six (6) core subjects for Malaysian Certificate Examination from secondary schools in the state of Kelantan, Malaysia had participated in this research. The research design employed for this study was descriptive method of the correlational survey type. The results showed that the level of role conflict in schools as a whole as moderate ($M=3.02$, $SD=.30$). The study also found that the level of job satisfaction among school leaders as moderate ($M=3.04$, $SD=.18$). The research revealed that there was a moderate significant relationship between the level of role conflict and job satisfaction among the school leaders in Kelantan ($r = .46$, $p = .000$). The findings further suggested that there is a moderate significant relationship ($r = .39$, $p = .000$) between inter-sender conflict and job satisfaction; a weak significant relationship ($r = .17$, $p = .000$) between intra-role conflict and job satisfaction; and a weak significant relationship ($r = .23$, $p = .000$) between intra-sender conflict and job satisfaction. Several suggestions had been submitted in finding of the order to reduce the role conflict among the school leaders so as to increase job satisfaction to continue to be committed to the task of promoting the continuity of the nation's education transformation.

Keywords: Role Conflict; Job Satisfaction; School Leaders; Senior Teachers; Education Transformation

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Cite this article as: Saad, N.M., Daud, Y. and Mohamad, M. (2018), "Relationship between role conflict and job satisfaction among school leaders in secondary schools", *International Journal of Development and Sustainability*, Vol. 7 No. 12, pp. 2954-2964.

1. Introduction

Education continued to be a national agenda for Malaysian nation-building. To achieve this aspiration, the Ministry of Education Malaysia (MOE) continued to be committed to improving the best educational provision in Malaysia at the international level (Ministry of Education, MOE Report, 2015). Based on the 5th initiative of the Malaysian Education Development Plan 2013-2025, the ministry had expressed an emphasis on the placement of high-quality leaders in schools. Owing to this action, the highly competent school leaders were expected to be capable of delivering their best services in order to advance schools as well as to continue the aspiration of education in the country. Thus, role conflict among the leaders needed to be addressed to ensure the successful implementation of education transformation.

Likewise, challenges and demands of policy changes outlined by the Ministry of Education Malaysia had often changed resulting in discontent among teachers towards their career (Philip Sia Kah Shu and Azlin Norhaini Mansor, 2017). These generally committed teachers were middle leaders in the school who were fully involved in designing and implementing policies or programmes set by the top. In addition, the role of these school leaders had been expanded to cover a wider area of administration by managing the online information filling that needed to be updated from time to time according to their respective fields (SKPMg2, 2016). Moreover, the instructional supervisory task of Teachers' Learning and Facilitation (PdPc) needed to be implemented periodically through the Professional Circular No. 4/1986 apart from the basic task of implementing teaching and facilitating effectively also posed a role conflict and enhanced job dissatisfaction among school leaders.

In fact, comparing it internationally in the Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS), it was reported the time allocation for teaching and planning for teaching and learning session, teachers in Malaysia spent on average 23.5 hours while the time spend for other tasks such as school management, general administration, co-curriculum and other assignments were 19.7 hours (OECD,2016). Unlike Finland which excelled in education performance, their teachers spend 25.7 hours to teach and planning for teaching and learning session while teachers' additional work was only 2.9 hours (OECD, 2016). This reflected that Malaysian teachers spent more time doing other clerical tasks rather than focusing more on planning and implementing effective teaching and learning sessions. This overlapping of duties had contributed to job dissatisfaction and posed a conflict of roles when performing the various tasks.

As a consequence, this study was to identify the relationship between role conflict and job satisfaction and the level of role conflict and job satisfaction among school leaders in secondary schools in Kelantan.

2. Theoretical background

2.1. Role conflict

Previous research by Kahn et al. (1964) found that role conflict had a great impact on organizational pressure. Role conflict was work pressure that had been in existence especially among middle leaders because they were

performing various tasks at one time in the organization (Shi et al., 2009). Most western researchers also investigated the role conflict that existed in organizations (Aamodt, 2009; Duncan and Riley, 2005; Hecht, 2007; Martin and MacNeil, 2007).

According to Katz and Kahn (1970), role conflict stemmed from the presence of two or more role requirements that needed to be implemented simultaneously. This idea was supported by Fisher (2001) who stated that pressure among individuals would exist when some of the required roles could not be performed properly. In addition, King and King (1990) and Lee (2010) also stated the need to carry out such a role could be regarded as a burden or demand at a particular position or in certain situations.

Kahn et al. (1964) and Gross et al. (1958) defined role conflict as a role which did not function well and in return led to stress, work turnover, work dissatisfaction, anxiety and decrease in performance. While Knowles and Saxberg (1971) discovered that role conflict had been the cause of increase in concerns and disappointments which brought about decrease in competency of individuals. Nonetheless, well-managed role conflicts would encourage individuals to work with more diligence and eventually give a positive impact to the effectiveness of the organization (Jones, 1993).

According to Rizzo et al. (1970), role conflict was characterized as incompatibility in meeting the needs and expectations of roles assessed based on a set of circumstances affecting the performance of roles. Throughout the time, Kopelman, Greenhouse and Connolly (1983) interpreted role conflict as the level of stress experienced by someone due to a role which was incompatible with other roles that one was trusted upon. Kahn et al. (1964) specified the concept of role conflict was divided into four (4) dimensions namely inter-role conflict, intra-role conflict, inter-sender conflict and intra-sender conflict.

2.1.1. Inter-role conflict

Inter-role conflict was a conflict between several roles for the same person and required different needs or behavioural incompatibilities or changes in behaviour as necessary in the situation (Kahn et al., 1964). This conflict occurred against incumbent because he felt he had to perform more than one task in the role system which caused role overload.

2.1.2. Intra-role conflict

Intra-role conflict was an incompatibility between anticipated expectations of incumbent and expectations related to his position (Gross et al., 1958). It was a conflict between standards or personal values of incumbent with himself alone in fulfilling his responsibility for a position or role. This involved only the incumbent and his ability to carry out duties given to him.

2.1.3. Inter-sender conflict

Inter-sender conflict occurred when expectations and requests differed between role senders (Kahn et al., 1964). Gross et al. (1958) interpreted inter-sender conflict as situational conflict which happened when individual expectations and needs did not correlate with organizational needs.

2.1.4. Intra-sender conflict

Kahn et al. (1964) illustrated intra-sender conflict as different and incompatible prescriptive from in-house role senders. Usually, intra-sender conflict materialized when demands or directives from the top leaders for something to be executed within limited time or sources were not able to be implemented by middle leaders.

2.2. Job satisfaction

Job satisfaction has been defined with different dimensions in many complimentary ways. For the purposes of the current study, job satisfaction theory will be considered as the definition by Spector (1997) and applied widely in South East Asian Context (R. Zawatul et al., 2014). According to empirical study by Spector (1997) carried out nine (9) dimensions of job satisfaction including pay, promotion, supervision, benefits, contingent rewards, operating procedures, co-workers, nature of work and communication.

Table 1. Job Satisfaction Dimensions

Dimension	Description
Pay	Satisfaction with pay
Promotion	Satisfaction with promotion given
Supervision	Satisfaction with supervision by leaders
Benefits	Satisfaction with benefits given
Contingent rewards	Satisfaction with contingent rewards given for good reputation
Operating Procedures	Satisfaction with operating procedures at work
Co-workers	Satisfaction with co-workers
Nature of Work	Satisfaction with nature of work
Communication	Satisfaction with communication in organization

(Source: Spector, P.E. 1985)

According to Locke (1969) job satisfaction includes individuals' cognitive, affective and evaluative reactions towards their jobs which finally gives a pleasurable emotional to enhance intrinsic motivation. While Herzberg's (1966) theory, employees who are satisfied with both motivation such as nature of their jobs, achievement in the work, promotion opportunities, and chances for personal growth and recognition and hygiene factors including company policies, supervision, salary, interpersonal relations and working conditions are satisfied employees, while those who are dissatisfied with both factors would more likely to perform poorly.

2.3. Research questions

- 1- What is the level of role conflict among the school leaders in the secondary schools in Kelantan, Malaysia?
- 2- What is the level of job satisfaction among the school leaders in the secondary schools in Kelantan, Malaysia?
- 3- Is there any significant relationship between role conflict and job satisfaction among school leaders in Kelantan, Malaysia?

3. Methodology

3.1. Research design

The research design adopted for this study was descriptive survey of correlational method. Descriptive statistics was used to examine the level of role conflict and job satisfaction among school leaders from secondary schools in the state of Kelantan. Furthermore, inferential statistics (correlation coefficient) was used to examine the relationship between the variables. The quantitative approach emphasizes on measurement and correlation or relationship between variables. This approach also refers to the use of measurement objectively to produce numerical data which is normally analysed statistically from the responses in the questionnaire (Sekaran, 2003).

3.2. Population and sampling

The target population for this study comprised school leaders consisting of senior assistants, senior teachers, heads of units and heads of six (6) core subjects for Malaysian Certificate Examination from secondary schools in the state of Kelantan. This simple random sampling technique is used in this study. All school leaders involved were selected at random.

3.3. Data collection tools

The questionnaire used in this study consists of three (3) sections; section A consists of items related to role conflict, section B consists of item related to job satisfaction and in section C, are related to demography factor. The role conflict instrument was adapted from Rizzo et al. (1970). The current study has utilized 12 items of Rizzo et al.'s (1970) scales, where 12 items represented three dimensions of role conflict. In this research, the data were analysed using the Statistical Package of Social Science (SPSS) version 21. The data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Rizzo et al. (1970) scale was globally known as valid and reliable instrument for measurement of role demand with internal consistency was .85 (Anwar Khan et al., 2014).

The second instrument is developed based on JSS of Spector (1997) is employed to measure job satisfaction. The JSS consists of 36 items that are used to assess total job satisfaction using 9 subscales (each consisting of 4 items). These subscales include pay, promotion, fringe benefits, contingent rewards, supervision, co-workers, operating procedures, nature of work and communication. The internal consistency of total job satisfaction in this study was .84.

In short, all the instruments conform to the theory of role conflict and job satisfaction besides following the principles of building items in terms of validity and consistency, as mentioned above. The internal consistency of these two instruments is estimated by calculating the reliability coefficient, α . The scores for these two instruments have a very good reliability coefficient of more than 0.80 (Ary et al., 2002).

4. Findings

4.1. Profile of the respondents

Table 2 indicates the respondents' profile by gender, age, academic qualification and teaching experience. The findings show that the respondents comprised 58 (46.44%) male and 67 (53.6%) female teachers with the age ranged less than 30 until 60 years old. The majority came from over 40 years old age groups. In terms of academic qualification there were majority has degree qualification rather than master. While the respondents has teaching experience ranged 6 until more than 20 years. The majority came from 11 to 20 years teaching experience.

Table 2. Respondents by Gender, Age, Academic Qualification and Teaching Experience (N= 125)

Demographic information	Categories	N	%
Gender	Male	58	46.4
	Female	67	53.6
Age	Less than 30 years	1	0.8
	31 – 40 years	22	17.6
	41 – 50 years	75	60
	51 – 60 years	27	21.6
Academic Qualification	Master	16	12.8
	Degree	109	87.2
Teaching Experience	6 – 10 years	10	8.0
	11- 20 years	60	48
	More than 20 years	55	44

4.2. Research question 1 and 2

What is the level of role conflict and job satisfaction among the school leaders of secondary schools in the state of Kelantan?

Table 3. Mean Score and Standard Deviation for the level of role conflict and job satisfaction for school leaders

Variable	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Level
Role conflict	125	3.02	.33	average
Job satisfaction	125	3.04	.18	average

Table 3 indicates that 125 respondents participated in this study. The level of role conflict among school leaders in secondary schools in Kelantan was moderate ($M=3.02$, $SD=.33$). While the level of job satisfaction among school leaders was moderate ($M=3.04$, $SD=.18$).

4.3. Research question 3

Is there any significant relationship between role conflict and job satisfaction among school leaders in Kelantan, Malaysia?

The analysis using Pearson correlation coefficient found that the correlation between role conflict and job satisfaction level among school leaders has moderate relationship and significant ($r = .46, p = .00$) as stated in Table 4.

Table 4. Correlation between School Leaders’ Role Conflict and Job satisfaction (N =125)

	Role Conflict	Job Satisfaction
Role Conflict	-	.46**
Job Satisfaction	.46**	
N	125	125

** Correlation is significant at confidence level 0.01

Subsequently, the Pearson analysis which is used in assessing the strength and direction of relevance between school leaders’ role conflict with job satisfaction showed averagely moderate relationship but significant ($r = .46, p = .00$). Meanwhile, for the level of inter-sender conflict and job satisfaction showed that there is a weak relationship but significant ($r = .39, p = .00$) and the relationship between the level of intra-sender conflict and job satisfaction showed that there is a weak relationship but significant ($r=.23, p=.01$). However, the level of intra-role conflict showed that there is no significant relationship with job satisfaction ($r=.17, p=.06$).

As a conclusion, researchers summarize all the findings in Diagram 1 below so that readers are able to see clearly the correlation that exists for both variables followed by correlation with its dimensions.

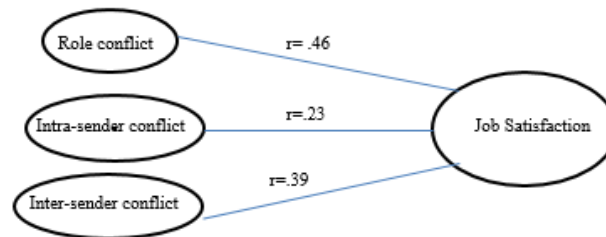


Figure 1. Correlation between role conflict and its dimensions with job satisfaction

5. Discussion

This study proved that school leaders in secondary schools in Kelantan state had an average level of role conflict and job satisfaction. While most western researchers had studied the role conflicts in the organization (Duncan and Riley, 2005; Hecht, 2007; Martin and MacNeil, 2007), however, studies in the field of services such as education were still minimal. The findings also showed that although international comparative analysis in the Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) found that Malaysian teachers worked almost 45.2 hours a week (OECD, 2016), teachers, especially school leaders with multiple roles could still handle the work load well. However, the diversity of duties among school leaders especially on clerical work should be reduced so as to provide more time for better teaching and learning in the classroom. For that reason,

the role conflict among school leaders can be reduced because their task was more focused on student development and academic excellence and enhanced their job satisfaction.

In conclusion, study findings also showed there is moderate correlation between role conflict and job satisfaction among school leaders. On the other hand, there is a weak correlation between inter-sender conflict and intra-sender conflict with job satisfaction. While there is no significant relationship between intra-role conflict and job satisfaction. Many findings showed significant negative relationships between role conflict and job satisfaction (Maqsood et al., 2017; Yongkang et al., 2014). However, if teachers were in charge of various roles as school leaders but had high order need strength, then, they could usually handle stress and overcome role conflict well (Conley and Woosley, 2000; Tang and Chang, 2010).

Hence, the level of average role conflict was in line with Tang and Chang (2010) finding which stated that despite the many effects of imposing motivation, role conflicts indeed had a positive effect. Role conflicts also enhanced work creativity because various roles exposed workers to different perspectives (Tang and Chang, 2010), enhanced creativity to act innovatively and flexibly, and extended the information obtained for the best solution (Janssen, 2000; Jones, 1993) and enhanced job satisfaction. As a result, proactive school leaders would not put the diversity of roles as a barrier to self-development, pupil development and school excellence.

In line with MOE's recommendation to embrace the High Order Thinking Skills (HOTS), school leaders needed to be more open-minded, visionary, loyal to the organization, and always practise the thinking features that include 4C 1V namely creative, critical thinking, effective communication and collaborative in addition to having good rapport with all parties to form a strong teamwork in carrying out certain task (MOE, PPPM 2013-2025).

6. Conclusion

Role conflict had been identified to have a negative impact on job satisfaction of a school leader (Dhaifallah Obaid Almutairi, 2013). Kahn et al. (1964) found that an employee was dissatisfied and was happy to work if he was squeezed in an inconsistent and unreasonable expectation. In fact, according to Conley and Woosley (2000), role conflicts would put pressure on the execution of an assignment and ultimately cause truancy symptoms, job dissatisfaction, less involvement in work, less motivated and have no high goals in their work.

Although there were some findings that supported role conflicts promoting creative and innovative problem solving and creativity (Janssen, 2000; Tang and Chang, 2010), the existence of too much role conflicts caused motivation for work to decline, instead of increasing time pressure, anxiety about work and job pressure, especially among middle leaders (Yongkang et al., 2014) and enhanced job dissatisfaction.

In this regard, this study can be used as a guide to reduce the level of role conflict among school leaders, especially involving intra-sender conflict. This type of conflict is internal organizational conflict involving the directives from top leadership that often issues assignments to be performed regardless of the limited resource and time factor and impossible to be completed in accordance to the specification. Intra-sender conflict will also affect individuals because they feel they are incompetent and this affects their reputation for not meeting the needs of the organization. The level of role conflicts should be minimized from time to time in order to

increase work contentment and job satisfaction as well as encourage high-performance and committed school leaders to continue contributing towards the success and excellence of the school.

In line with MOE's goal of producing committed and viable school leaders, a reduction in the burden of duties among school leaders should be taken into account and reviewed. In an effort to reduce the level of role conflict and role overlap among school leaders, the MOE should focus more on areas that have an effective impact on teacher professionalism, student enrolment and overall school excellence. Hence, the role distribution by expertise can reduce the role overlap as well as help increase motivation and job satisfaction to serve excellently.

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