

Effect of Organizational Role Conflict and Job Satisfaction on Performance in the Nigerian Customs Service: An Empirical Examination

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Abstract This study examined the effect of Organizational role conflict and job satisfaction on employee performance in the Customs Service of Nigeria. 103 Customs Officers were selected through random sampling for the study. Further stratification was done assigning 60 to various subject groups. The instruments used for the collection of data were Rizo et al (1970), role conflict scale, Smith et al (1969) Job descriptive index and performance ratings of the officers. A 2 x 3 factorial design was adopted while a two – way ANOVA for unequal sample sizes was used. The result showed that officers who were under low role conflict performed better than officers under high role conflict. Organizational role conflict therefore had a significant effect on their performance. Conversely, there was no significant effect of job satisfaction on performance. Also there was no significant interaction of job satisfaction and role conflict on performance. Efforts should be made to redesign the jobs of Customs officers, especially at the lower levels to reduce their conflicts and engender higher performance. In addition government should make adequate provisions of working materials in order to reduce role overload.

Keywords Role Conflict, Job Satisfaction, Employee Performance

1. Introduction

In Nigerian industries and organizations, especially those of the public sector, duties and responsibilities of employees at the lower echelons of the organization are not quite defined. As a result, most of the times, employees in this cadre have to depend largely on their supervisors, bosses or supervisors for assignment of tasks to perform and directives governing job performance.

This arrangement places junior employees at the receiving end of directives emanating from various higher authorities of the organization. Due to the diversity of authorities from whom these directives descend, quite often, instructions reaching the junior employees become contradictory, inconsistent or at best confusing. The process of dealing with this kind of circumstances entail some conflicts in terms of which assignments should come before the other and the ability to meet respective demands.

Taking cognizance of the fact that this category of workers constitute the life wire of any organization, there is a need to discover whether organizational role conflict have any real

effect on employee job satisfaction as well as actual performance. This step is wise in the sense that, over the years, a lot of concerns have been raised with respect to poor employee performance and satisfaction in the organizations.

1.1. Theoretical Background

The Concept of Role and Role Conflict

[1] postulated that within any social or organizational system, there are roles for each and every member of the role set. The role defines individuals' positions, duties, responsibilities and authorities within the hierarchial system of the organization. The most important focus in terms of role theory are the role demands; that is, the directives and instructions given to individuals on what specific acts or duties that should be carried out. Role demands also require that individuals carry out their duties at the appropriate time and duration, and within the available framework and resources.

Generally, the role demands vary in the degree of their generality or specificity. At one end of the continuum, role demands for some positions specify precisely the required behaviour, how and where it should be carried out, and the exact penalty for no adherence. At the other end of the continuum, some role demands consists only of broad outlines, giving the occupant of the position considerable freedom in the specific type of acts he can employ to

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accomplish the end. This is frequently common of very high managerial positions in an organization.

[1] went further to posit that for any particular incumbent of a position, several roles and not just one role, are carried out by the individual. They therefore emphasized that, in the real situation, there is an existence of multiple roles for each individual within an organization. Thus, an account clerk may be required to prepare vouchers, statements of accounts, pay salaries and attend junior staff meetings.

Due to this multiplicity of role demands for each role occupant, role conflict become very imminent in the organizations. Role conflict occurs in a situation where the role occupant experiences inconsistencies in the role demands such that the roles demanded of him are contradictory, ambiguous, confusing or inconsistent with each other or with the self.

[2] conceptualized man, whether found in an organization or social system, as a bearer of roles. The individual is viewed as being the sum of all his roles or duties in any work situation. In other words, an individual occupying a particular position in an organizational setting performs a series of activities. Such an individual is involved in the accomplishment of multiple roles. According to [2], roles represent the means by which societies and organizations are delineated in terms of hierarchies or individuals. Roles also specify the demands and expectations placed on every member of an organizational system. The multiplicity of roles borne by individuals gives rise to conflicts in terms of which roles to accomplish before the other and the ability to execute all the roles within the available time period. In addition, conflicts are also thought to arise as a result of roles that demand the simultaneous attention of the role occupant. [3] believed that role behaviour is an integral as well as important aspect of any organizational framework. This, they said, is because it is only through the carrying out of one's roles that the organizational objectives can be realized. They then catalogued over twenty type of roles carried out in an organization. For them, role conflict arises when certain roles demanded of a role occupant are in disagreement with some other roles which the individual is equally required to comply with.

[4] conceptualized role conflict as the degree of incongruity or incompatibility of demands communicated to a focal person by his or her superiors. Furthermore, they also conceptualized role conflict as the lack of clarity in the role demands. They therefore saw role conflict as having a multivariate characteristic.

Person role conflict is the extent to which the role demands are in disagreement with the orientations, values and inclinations of the role occupants. Role overload, on the other hand, is a situation in which the various role demands communicated to a role occupant exceed the amount of time and resources available for the accomplishment of the entire demands.

From all the theories and views examined, it becomes obvious that role conflict exists in situations in which

directives, demands or instructions emanating from one or more superior authorities in the organization to subordinates are unclear, ambiguous, confusing, contradictory or inconsistent with each other or with the time and resources available for the executions.

1.2. The Concept of Job Satisfaction

Several theories have provided various views on what constitutes job satisfaction and the components it is made up of. The understanding of the concept, therefore, would depend on the extent to which the various theories of job satisfaction can be meaningfully integrated.

[5] made reference to the existence of needs classified in a five level hierarchy – physiological, safety, social, ego and self actualization needs. Maslow's concept of job satisfaction is woven around these five attributes. For Maslow, an individual's satisfaction with his job will depend on the extent to which he is able to realize all these needs.

[5] saw job satisfaction as a function of the equity that exists between an employee's effort and the outcomes or incentives he is receiving. If there is disequilibrium in this relationship, the individual will feel dissatisfied with his job. The implication of this theory for role overload lies in the fact that while role overload involves additional efforts on the part of employee, there are usually no extra incentives given to employees to compensate for additional responsibilities.

[7] conceived of job satisfaction as having two aspects – intrinsic and extrinsic factors. The extrinsic factors are the material elements in the job and they are supposed to remove dissatisfaction. The intrinsic factors are related to the job content and such issues as achievement, autonomy and responsibility.

The implication of this for role conflict is that factors such as recognition, autonomy and responsibility are not encouraged at the lower levels of the organization. This account for the rigid control of employees and the frequent directives and instructions given to them, some of which becomes conflicting, thereby affecting employees satisfaction and performance.

[8] made certain assumptions in his theory X and Y which determines employee satisfaction. While theory X assumes that people must be coerced, controlled and threatened to get their efforts, theory Y believes that individual direction and control is possible. The implication of this theory is that individuals will likely be more satisfied with their jobs if they are allowed some degree of self directing and control in their duties. This approach will limit the volume of directives from above and their inconsistencies, and thus bring the incidence of role conflict to a minimum.

[9] stated that the function of work to man goes beyond merely providing him with material rewards. The thrill of the authority, autonomy and the accomplishment of the job provide immense gratification. The individual feels fulfilled when there are no conflicts or inconsistencies in the roles required of him.

However, all the theories and views outlined are not exhaustive. Other scientists who have conceptualized job satisfaction and also identified factors that influence it include [10] expectancy theory. [11] twelve principal needs and list of needs.

[11] explained job satisfaction as “the sense of well being, good feeling and positive mental state that emerge in an individual when his obtained reward is congruent or very nearly congruent with his equitable reward”.

Job satisfaction has to do with the attitude, the degree of likeness and interest employees have for their jobs. It is a state of the mind, an internal feeling which an individual has with respect to how he regards his job, performs it, identifies with it, values it, feel happy with it and wishes to remain on it. This feeling varies from one individual to another, and depends largely on the extent to which the individual has been able to realize all his needs and aspirations on the job. Although the needs and aspirations of individuals are enormous and diverse, basically, any variable or factor that affects an employee’s likeness and appreciation for his job is related to the concept of job satisfaction.

1.3. Employee Performance

Performance is the output obtained as a result of effort. It is a measure of effectiveness. It has to do with the general way and manner an employee works and the extent to which such an employee is able to realize the goals, objectives and targets set in the organization. It is also a standard of excellence of carrying out one’s duties in relation to the standards of others within the same organization.

There are a host of organizational variables that affect an employee’s level of performance. The skills of the employee, the standard of training, individual differences, conflict and motivational variables are some of the factors that influence the rate at which the employee works.

Over the years, several methods have been used to assess performance of employees in the organization. Job evaluation is usually easy, and taken to be an index of the quantity of job performed. However, for other jobs which cannot be easily quantified such as clerical duties, managerial jobs etc indirect methods of appraisal are often employed. These include rating of employees on a scale, ranking of employees in relation to others, forced distribution, paired comparisons, appraisal interview and appraisal of groups rather than individuals. Generally the method that will be employed will largely be determined by the nature of the jobs on which appraisal is being made, and what the appraiser seeks to ascertain.

1.4. The Link between Role Conflict, Job Satisfaction and Employee Performance

[9] posited that when the demands expected of an individual within the organization are contradictory, confusing, ambiguous or inconsistent with each other, the individual will be in a state of role conflict and will experience stress, become dissatisfied with his job, and

perform less effectively than if the expectations imposed on him did not conflict.

By the above predictions of [9] in their role theory, they provided the basis of the relationship between role conflict, job satisfaction and employee performance. Although there is hardly any conceivable organization whose members do not go through one form of role conflict or another, it still remains a controversy as to whether such conflict do bring about reduced job satisfaction and poor employee performance.

1.5. Literature Review

There is growing evidence which suggests the potential of role theory as a framework for understanding the interactions and outcomes of individual behaviours in organizations, but empirical studies have been few in number and have seldom focused on the influences of role conflicts on employee satisfaction and performance, generally, studies in this area have led to conflicting findings and conclusions.

[12] investigated the relationship of role conflict to employee satisfaction and performance with 142 managers chosen from a large industrial organization. The role conflict of managers was measured with Stogdill and [13] work analysis form while job satisfaction was measured with the [14] job satisfaction scale. Employee performance was determined through superior managers ratings of the subject, on a seven point scale. The researcher who employed zero order correlation in their analysis concluded that role conflict was neither related to job satisfaction nor to employee satisfaction and performance.

On the contrary, [15] in their own examination of the influence of role conflict on employee satisfaction and performance, using 530 lower level, supervisory and managerial employees concluded that employees in the three categories who experience greater conflicts than their counterparts reported lesser satisfaction in their jobs. With regards to the influence of role conflict on employee who experience, it was equally discovered that employee who experienced lesser degree of conflict were rated as better performer than employees under high degree of role conflict.

Furthermore, [18] employing multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) and a sample of 64 non-academic clerical employees, showed that employees who were under high degree of role conflict expressed lower satisfaction with their jobs than employees who were under low degrees of role conflict. However, a repeated measure analysis of performance rating failed to differentiate those who experienced high degree of role conflict from those who experienced low degree of role conflict. They therefore, suggested that role conflict does not have any adverse effect on the performance of the clerical employees.

[17], using analysis of variance and multiple regression technique, investigated the influence of role conflict on satisfaction and performance among 161 hospital professional personnel. The result showed that the role conflict affected the satisfaction of employees adversely.

Individuals who were classified as being lowly satisfied experienced more conflict in their jobs than their counterpart who were more fairly satisfied. In the case off on-the-job performance, role conflict did not have any significant effect on the individual performance of the employees. However, there was a significant interaction between role conflict and job satisfaction in determining the performance of employees.

[18] in his examination of the influence of role conflict on employee satisfaction utilized 272 employees drawn from a Midwestern public utility. The analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used in the study. He concluded that there was no difference in the degree of role conflict experience on the job, between employees whose job characteristics were more pleasant than employees whose jobs were less interesting.

[19] examined the relationship of role conflict to job satisfaction and employee performance with 2995 employees of a hospital as sample. The results of the research, which employed correlation analysis, revealed that role conflict was negatively related to job satisfaction ($r = -.54$). In addition, the researcher also concluded that role conflict was negatively related to on-the-job performance ($r = -.43$). Based on these results, it could be said that organizational role conflict affects the satisfaction and performance of employee adversely.

Furthermore, [20], employing correlation and factor analysis in his study, investigated the nature of the relationship between role conflict and employee satisfaction and performance. Subjects employed in the research were sales employees of a large industrial chemical company. The researcher discovered that role conflict influenced the satisfaction of the employee negatively. This was as a result of the negative correlation (-0.58) observed between the two variables. However, no relationship was observed between role conflict and actual performance.

[21] examined the role of conflict on job satisfaction and performance of 142 managers of a large industrial organization. The role conflict of managers was measured with the [4] role conflict scale. Job satisfaction, on the other hand, was assessed with the [10] job satisfaction scale. The performance of the managers was evaluated through performance rating by their subordinates. The researchers concluded that role conflict did not have any negative influence on the job satisfaction of the managers. This was as a result of the insignificant correlation coefficient ($r = 0.13$) discovered between the two variables, similarly, role conflict did not also affect the rated performance of the subjects.

On the other hand, [22] investigated the relatedness of role conflict to employee satisfaction and performance, using nursing aids and assistants of a university hospital as sample. The researcher discovered that employee who were more satisfied in their jobs were those who indicated being under less conflicting situations. Also, in terms of overall performance, it was found that those who were under less degrees of conflict performed better than other employees

who were under high role conflict.

Turning to local sources, although observable situations in Nigeria organizations have apparently shown the importance of the role theory and problems associated with role conflict, lack of research endeavours in this direction are quite surprising. Most investigations have concentrated either on superior/subordinate conflict or management/union conflicts. Very few have bothered to address themselves to the problems that arise as a result of employees finding themselves in between two or more opposing directives, or receiving directives which either do not conform with their internal values, or lack adequate resources to accomplish the.

[23] investigated the influence of role conflict on employee's satisfaction, using 274 teachers randomly selected from 22 secondary schools. Employing the chi-square statistics and the analysis of variance in the study, the results revealed that there were significant differences between the degrees of role conflict experienced by teachers and the corresponding levels of job satisfaction expressed by them. Thus, teachers who were more satisfied than others perceived their jobs as having less conflict than the less satisfied teachers perceived theirs.

Furthermore, [24] in a research on the district councillors and their jobs, examined the relationship between the role conflicts experienced by them and their satisfaction with the councillor's job. The research presumed that because the councillor's job involves the execution of directives from the District Commissioner on one hand and the Emirs on the other, that the incompatibility of these directives would affect the satisfaction of the councillors in the process of performing their duties. However, the result of the study was contradictory to the proposition of [24]. Role conflict failed to show any real relationship with job satisfaction. In fact, the councillors reported preferring, to an extent, situations of conflict since it affords them the opportunity to "scheme" from one position to another.

Contrary to the above finding, however, [23] carried out a study on the nature of role conflict and its relatedness to employee's job satisfaction, using Secondary Grammar School Teachers as sample. After the analysis of the data he found that the role conflicts of teachers were significantly negatively related to their various degrees of job satisfaction. Thus, teachers who were in less conflicting circumstances found their jobs more satisfying than teachers exposed to high degree of conflicting directives.

[26] pursuing the relationship of role conflict to job satisfaction and performance further, undertook a meta-analysis of forty three past studies in an effort to draw valid conclusions about the magnitude and direction of the relationships. They concluded that the variance between studies was non significant and that the inconsistent results could be ascribed to lack of control of moderating variables such as organizational categories, education and tenure.

In this regards, [27] looked at a particular type of role conflict known as intersender role conflict. Subjects in the research were full-time instructors of a university,

categorized in terms of three career stages, viz – establishment, advancement and maintenance. The performance of the various subjects were determined through ratings by co-workers. The analysis of variance (ANOVA) was employed by the researchers in their analysis. Results of the study showed that those in the advancement and maintenance stages experienced more intersender conflict in their jobs than those in the establishment stage. In addition, they equally felt more satisfied with their jobs than those in the establishment stage. The researcher therefore concluded that intersender role conflict does not affect employee satisfaction. In terms of performance, no differences were observed between the means of performance ratings of individuals who experienced more intersender conflict on their jobs than the others.

[28] examined the degree to which intersender conflict, person role conflict and role overload affected the satisfaction of employees on their jobs. Subjects used in the research were 210 employees drawn from a research and development organization. Employing analysis of variance (ANOVA) in the analysis, the researcher found that subjects had various levels of job satisfaction. Those who were highly satisfied, however, did not indicate experiencing more intersender conflict, role overload, or person role conflict than employees lowly satisfied with their jobs. He therefore concluded that the various role conflict types did not have any effect on employee satisfaction.

Also [29] investigated the relatedness of person role conflict and intersender conflict to employee satisfaction using 92 military officers as sample. The result showed that the relationship between intersender conflict and job satisfaction was insignificant ($r=.03$). Similarly, the relationship of person role conflict to employee satisfaction was equally low and insignificant. The researcher therefore suggested that high degree of intersender conflict and person role conflict are not necessarily associated with reduced job satisfaction.

[30] studied the influence of intersender conflict, role overload, and person role conflict on the satisfaction of employees drawn from a government research and development organization. The analysis of variance (ANOVA) and multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) were used in the data analysis. The result showed that employees who were poorly satisfied with their jobs did not differ from those who were highly satisfied in their experiences of intersender conflict, role overload and person role conflict. The researcher therefore concluded that the three conflict types might be inherent in the job in varying degrees, but that they certainly do not have any adverse effect on an employee's level of job satisfaction.

[31] examined the relationship between the various types of role conflict and the job satisfaction of employees, while controlling the moderating effect of organizational level. Subjects were professors and associate professors. The result showed that intersender conflict, role overload and person role conflict all correlated positively with the satisfaction of

employees. They therefore concluded that since increase in the values of the conflict types are associated with increase in job satisfaction, then, the role conflict types do not have any adverse effect on employees' satisfaction with their jobs.

1.6. Hypothesis

H1: There would be a significant effect of organizational role conflict on employee's performance.

H2: There would be a significant effect of job satisfaction on employee's performance.

H3: There would be a significant interaction of organizational role conflict and job satisfaction on employee's performance.

2. Methodology

2.1. Participants

The sample used for the study were 103 customs officers chosen from the Department of Customs and Excise of Nigeria. Further stratification was done assigning 60 to various subject groups. The choice of this organization was unique because of the diverse and heterogeneous nature of the jobs of the employee which provided a good basis for the study organizational role conflicts.

2.2. Instruments

Organizational role conflict was measured with the [4], Role Conflict Scale. The Scale is composed of 18 items scored in the likert form, with a five point scale of "very false" (1) to "very true" (5). The reliability of the scale has been established as 85 [4]. A high score indicates high role conflict and vice versa. Job Satisfaction was assessed with the Smith, [25] Job descriptive index. The scale has 72 items scored in form of yes, No or neutral. A high score indicates high job satisfaction and a low score low job satisfaction. The reliability of the scale has been established as [23b].

Performance of subjects on their jobs was assessed by asking senior employees under whom the various subjects worked to assign marks to them in terms of their individual levels of performance in relation to others. The objectivity of the raters was seriously solicited for, on the grounds that it had nothing to do with employee's advancement and future growth in the organization. Furthermore, the fact that subjects were not aware that their performances were being rated also helped to improve objectivity.

The performance evaluation were made on a 5-point likert scale, with an assigned mark of "1" indicating poor performance and an assigned mark of "5" indicating high performance, thus:

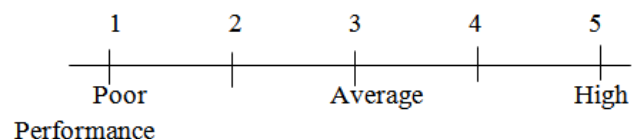


Table 1. Summary of results of a two-way ANOVA calculated to determine the combined effects of organizational role conflict and job satisfaction, on employee performance

SOV	SS	DF	MS	FO	FC	P	COMMENT
Organizational role conflict	5.9	1	5.9	4.9	4.02	<.05	Significant
Job Satisfaction	4.05	2	2.03	1.7	3.17	>.05	Not Significant
Interaction	.54	2	.27	.22	3.17	>.05	Not Significant
Error	62.31	54	1.2				
Total	72.8	59					

Marks of subjects belonging to a particular group were then cumulated and compared with marks of subjects in other groups – to see whether differences in performance scores would be a function of the combined effect of the degree of role conflict and the level of job satisfaction of the various groups.

2.3. Procedure

The battery of test was administered to the subjects, at their office through the use of simple random sampling, pieces of papers marked “yes and No” were picked by the participants and those who picked “Yes” were administered the battery of test.

2.4. Design/Statistics

The design employed in this study was a 2 x 3 factorial design, having two independent variables (Role Conflict and Job satisfaction) and one dependent variable (Performance).

2.5. Statistics

A two way analysis of variance for unequal sample sizes was used for the purpose of data analysis. The F test was used to test the significance levels of the results of the hypothesis.

3. Results

3.1. Table 1

Table 1 shows the result of the hypothesized interaction between organizational role conflict and job satisfaction in influencing the performance of employees on their jobs. From the table it is seen that the calculated F ratio (.22) for the interaction between role conflict and job satisfaction fell below the critical value of (3.17) at $p < .05$. This means that the two variables do not act jointly in influencing the on-the-job performance of the employee in the various groups.

Similarly, it was discovered that the calculated F ratio (1.7) for job satisfaction failed to reach statistical significance at $p < .05$. This means that the various levels of job satisfaction of employees did not have any real influence on their performance in the organization.

Furthermore, it was observed that the calculated F ratio (4.9), for organizational role conflict, exceeded the critical F

(4.02), and reached statistical significance. This means that the degree of role conflict influenced the performance of employees in their jobs.

3.2. Table 2

Table 2 shows the means of the performance of individuals in the various conditions. From the table, it is observed that the group with the highest mean score was those who were moderate in job satisfaction and low in role conflict. This implies that employees in this group were seen as better performers than employees in the other five conditions.

Table 2. Means of the Performance of Employees in the Various Group

Job Satisfaction

HIGH	MODERATE	LOW
2.85 (N=7)	3.63 (N=11)	3.09 (N=11)
3.7 (N=11)	4.18 (N=11)	3.66 (N=11)

3.3. Discussion

Furthermore, the calculated F ratio for organizational role conflict reached statistical significance. This implies that organizational role conflict had a significant impact on the performance of employees within the organization. This is possible if it is recalled that organizational role conflict has to do with situations of conflicting directives, or the giving of directives without adequate materials or time for their execution. In such instances, employee would be confused as to what action to carry out since they are not allowed to employ their directions in the course of their duties. Therefore, time wasted in trying to clarify issues stagnates the work, and subsequently affects performance. In addition, when materials necessary to execute a job are either lacking or inadequate, as is common in many governmental organizations, employees executing the jobs would be handicapped and this will equally affect their performance.

This finding is completely in line with the findings of [15]. They found that employees who experienced lesser degrees of role conflict were rated as better performers than employees under high degree of role conflict. Based on this, they concluded that since a high degree of role conflict leads to reduced performance, its preponderance in the organization should be curtailed or completely eliminated.

The findings is important in that it has showed that organizational role conflict is a factor contributing to the poor performance of employees in any organization. For a country like Nigeria, where performance level in many organizations are dropping, a critical examination of role conflict existent in such organization is a necessary step towards their elimination in order to improve overall performance of employees.

On the contrary, the calculated F ratio job satisfaction, as an independent variable, does not affect the performance of employees on their jobs. In order word, employees may feel highly, moderately or lowly satisfied with their jobs, but these feeling certainly does not have any observable effects on their performances. This is possible if we accept the fact that individuals in the organization, with time, get used to characteristic way and standard of performing their duties so even when such individuals are slightly dissatisfied, they still unconsciously keep up that characteristic pace at which they work. Therefore, the effect of the dissatisfaction would not be apparent from their performance.

Secondly, authorities may place a baseline for performance, which if an employee drops below, may attract several types of disciplinary actions. So, in this austere times of high unemployment rate, which may not guarantee an easy acquisition of a new job once the old one is lost, employee may strive hard to remain at an expected level of performance, even though they may be grossly dissatisfied with their jobs. Therefore such factor as job satisfaction may not produce any noticeable effects on the performance of employees.

In relation to the third hypothesis, the assertion that organizational role conflict and job satisfaction would interact to influence the performance of employees within the organization was not upheld. This is because the calculated F ratio for the interaction failed to reach statistical significance. This means that organizational role conflict and job satisfaction, as independent variable, do not act jointly in influencing the performance of employees.

3.4. Conclusions

This research endeavour has shown that Organizational Role Conflict is one variable that affects performance of workers in the organization. However, there was neither a statistically significant effect of job satisfaction on performance nor an interaction of role conflict and job satisfaction on performance.

3.5. Recommendations

1. Work organizations should endeavour to reduce the role conflicts in the jobs in order to enhance smooth job performance.

2. A proper job analysis should be carried out by organizations as a necessary step to stem the conflicts within jobs and between jobs incumbents.

3. Efforts should be made by organizations to provide adequate materials required for job performance.

4. As much as possible, directives, instructions and guidelines should be made as clear as possible, with no contradictions and confusions to forestall delays in job execution.

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