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PREVIEW

Rippe, Kenneth Lee

THE RELATIONSHIPS OF ROLE CONFLICT AND ROLE AMBIGUITY TO JOB
SATISFACTION OF NEBRASKA PUBLIC SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS AND
TEACHERS

The University of Nebraska - Lincoln

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THE RELATIONSHIPS OF ROLE CONFLICT AND ROLE AMBIGUITY TO JOB SATISFACTION
OF NEBRASKA PUBLIC SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS AND TEACHERS

by

Kenneth L. Rippe

A DISSERTATION

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Major: Interdepartmental Area of Administration,
Curriculum, and Instruction

Under the Supervision of Professor Edgar A. Kelley

Lincoln, Nebraska

May, 1983

TITLE

THE RELATIONSHIPS OF ROLE CONFLICT AND ROLE AMBIGUITY TO JOB SATISFACTION
OF NEBRASKA PUBLIC SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS AND TEACHERS

BY

Kenneth L. Rippe

APPROVED

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KLR

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. INTRODUCTION.	1
Problem Statement.	3
Research Questions	4
Definitions of Terms	4
Assumptions.	5
Limitations of the Study	6
Importance of the Study.	6
Design of the Study.	7
Population	7
Instrumentation.	7
Procedures	7
II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE.	9
Introduction	9
Role Theory.	9
Role Conflict.	11
Role Ambiguity	15
Job Satisfaction	17
The Relationship of Role Conflict, Role Ambiguity and Job Satisfaction	33
Summary.	43
III. PROCEDURES.	45
Introduction	45
Sample	45
Study Design	46
Instrumentation.	47
Data Collection.	48
Summary.	49
IV. PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA	50
Introduction	50
Results.	51
Research Question One.	51
Research Question Two.	58
Summary.	62
V. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS	65
Summary.	65

	PAGE
Findings	67
Conclusions.	70
Implications	71
Recommendations.	72
BIBLIOGRAPHY	73
APPENDIX A - Cover Letter and Instrument	76

PREVIEW

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE	PAGE
1 Questionnaire Return Rate	48
2 Respondent Distribution by Demographic Category	52
3 Frequency of Item Response.	53
4 Levels of Perceived Job Satisfaction by Role Group.	56
5 Levels of Perceived Role Conflict by Role Group	57
6 Levels of Perceived Role Ambiguity by Role Group.	59
7 Analysis of Variance by Age.	61
8 Analysis of Variance by Education	63

PREVIEW

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE		PAGE
1	Theoretical Model of Factors Involved in Adjustment to Role Conflict and Ambiguity.	10
2	Relationship of Job Satisfaction to Psychological Factors	21
3	Summary of Differences Between the Work Environment Scale and Job Satisfaction.	22
4	Data Gathered by Demographic Area in National Education Association Survey.	24
5	Specific Sources of Dissatisfaction in Teaching	28
6	Summary of Zero-Order Correlations by Classification of Variables.	34
7	Relationship of the Organization to the Outcomes of the Job.	38
8	Statistical Properties of Scales and Correlations of Scales with Role Conflict and Role Ambiguity, for Samples A and B	40
9	Shared Properties of Job Satisfaction, Role Conflict and Role Ambiguity.	55

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Public school education has received much criticism during the past ten years. During that period of time a large number of teachers and administrators have left the field of education. Much research has been conducted related to job design, job training, and job satisfaction in other fields of work but only limited research has been done in the field of education to determine if there is a relationship between educators' understanding of what their role is, what obstacles impede their progress, and how satisfied they are with their jobs.

In a study of factors which shape performance, William Greenfield and Joseph Blase found:

Effective performance results when teacher effort overcomes job-related interferences and leads to the achievement of valued outcomes and rewards, as determined by the teacher's perception of student needs. Effective performances, in turn, increase teacher satisfaction, involvement, and motivation. This, in turn, results in continued, and perhaps increased teacher effort.¹

Brauer, in her study of subject area consultants and building principals, found there was a significant negative correlation for principals between role and ambiguity and job satisfaction as well as between role conflict and job satisfaction. She found the same to be true for consultants. Further analysis indicated there were no significant

¹W. Greenfield and J. Blase, "Motivating Teachers: Understanding the Factors That Shape Performance," NASSP Bulletin, 65 (November, 1981), pp. 6-7.

differences in either the role ambiguity-job satisfaction relationship or the role conflict-job satisfaction relationship for principals as compared to subject area consultants.²

While an understanding of how role ambiguity and role conflict relate to job satisfaction is only in the early stages of study, it is fairly clear that if individuals do not clearly understand their role (role ambiguity) or if individuals sense an expectation of high production from their supervisor and only moderate production from their co-workers (role conflict), they will not perform their job with maximum efficiency.³ "Research on conflict and ambiguity is likely to increase considerably understanding of work related stress, job satisfaction and leader effectiveness."⁴

Members of an organization that is organized in a traditional hierarchical style of leadership, according to Rizzo, House, and Lirtzman, and where a clear chain of command results in orders being given by one superior only are less likely to experience role conflict in that they will not experience conflicting expectations or demands. This, in turn, reduces stress and increases satisfaction and productivity.

²M. A. Brauer, "Role Conflict, Role Ambiguity, and Job Satisfaction: A Study of Middle Management Positions in an Educational Organization" (unpublished Doctoral dissertation, University of Nebraska, Lincoln, 1980), pp. 85-86.

³F. Landy and D. Trumbo, Psychology of Work Behavior (Homewood, Illinois: Dorsey Press, 1980), pp. 510-511.

⁴Ibid., p. 512.

In this case, both the individual and the organization benefit.⁵

Ideally, according to classical organizational theory, every position in a formal organizational structure should have a specific job description so that the individual can be held accountable for specific performance and so as to provide guidance and direction for the individual worker. If individual employees do not know what authority they have, what they are expected to accomplish and how they will be evaluated, they are more likely to be hesitant in making decisions and will most likely resort to a trial and error method which is likely to result in the use of either avoidance techniques or defense mechanisms which in turn would result in increased anxiety and dissatisfaction. When this occurs, the individual is not likely to perform effectively.⁶

A need for further study of the relationship of role ambiguity, role conflict, and job satisfaction was identified by Brauer. She concluded there is a particular need to study roles in educational organizations, due to the fact little study has been done in this area.⁷

PROBLEM STATEMENT

The purpose of this study was to determine the relationship between and among job satisfaction, role conflict, and role ambiguity

⁵J. R. Rizzo, R. J. House, and S. E. Lirtzman, "Role Conflict and Ambiguity in Complex Organizations," Administrative Science Quarterly, 15 (June, 1970), pp. 150-151.

⁶Ibid., p. 151.

⁷Brauer, op. cit., p. 88.

for public school administrators and teachers in Nebraska.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Specific questions analyzed in this study were:

1. Are there significant differences in perceived levels of job satisfaction, role conflict and role ambiguity between and among seven role groups of professional educators in Nebraska's public schools when role groups included in the study are superintendents, high school principals, junior high or middle school principals, elementary school principals, high school classroom teachers, junior high or middle school classroom teachers, and elementary school teachers?

2. Are there significant differences in perceived levels of job satisfaction, role conflict and role ambiguity among and between professional educators in Nebraska's public schools when those educators are categorized by selected demographic variables, including sex, age, education, years in current position, size of school district, region of the state, and assignment for secondary teachers?

DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

For the purpose of this study, the following terms were defined:

Job satisfaction. The evaluative responses of individuals to their work or membership in an organization.

Principal. The chief administrator of an elementary, junior high, or senior high school.

Public school. Those schools which are open to all students and

are supported chiefly by public money.

Role ambiguity. The perceptions of individuals about the degree to which required information is available to them as the occupant of a given role within an organization.

Role conflict. The perceptions of individuals about the incongruence of demands placed upon them as the occupant of a given role within an organization.

Superintendent. The chief school district administrator.

Teachers. Those certified individuals who are employed by school districts to teach students in grades kindergarten through twelfth grade. For the purpose of this study teachers include only those who are considered full-time employees.

ASSUMPTIONS

For the purpose of this study, the following assumptions were made:

1. All individuals that returned the instruments responded honestly.
2. The levels of reliability and validity of the instruments used to measure role conflict, role ambiguity, and job satisfaction are adequate.
3. The subjects that responded to the questionnaire are representative of the random sample selected.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

1. The population in this study was limited to superintendents and principals who were members of the Nebraska Council of School Administrators and teachers who were members of the Nebraska State Education Association.

2. The results of the instrument used are based on job satisfaction, role conflict, and role ambiguity as perceived by the individual.

3. The study was limited to the relationship of only three variables: job satisfaction, role conflict, and role ambiguity.

IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

A strong determinant in the future of public school education is the quality of the administrators and teachers in those schools. Continuity of staff members is most necessary to develop and maintain quality public school programs. This study may lead to the identification of some factors which increase stress and ultimate dissatisfaction with the job, which may result in individuals leaving the education profession. Individual school systems may be able to apply the results to their organizational planning as well as for preservice and later inservice training for both administrators and teachers. Educator training institutions and professional education organizations might profit from the results in terms of planning for future service to educators. The results of this study could become baseline data for use by researchers, placement officials, and others for follow-up studies to

determine if progress is being made in reducing job dissatisfaction among educators.

DESIGN OF THE STUDY

Population

The population for the study was those public school teachers who were members of the Nebraska State Education Association and those public school administrators who were members of the Nebraska Council of School Administrators.

Instrumentation

The Rizzo, House, and Lirtzman scale, as revised by Mary Brauer, was used to measure role conflict and role ambiguity of the respondents. Job satisfaction was measured by the Bullock Job Satisfaction Scale as revised by Mary Brauer. These instruments were selected based on their reported reliabilities of .879 and .820 respectively as tested by Brauer.⁸

Procedures

The Nebraska State Department of Education, the Nebraska State Education Association, the Nebraska Council of School Administrators, and the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Teachers College were contacted and agreed to support this study, with the understanding that a report of the findings should be shared with them. A grant application was

⁸Ibid., p. 67.