

Role Conflict and Interpersonal Interactions as Predictors of Job Stress among School Teachers

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ABSTRACT

This study examines how interpersonal interactions and role conflict affect job stress among Malaysian secondary school teachers. Teachers' job stress has become a significant problem, with many expressing feelings of pressure. Individual factors in Malaysian secondary schools are the main focus of this study. In Melaka, Malaysia, 136 teachers participated in a cross-sectional quantitative study using convenient sampling and the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to analyze the data, and the results showed that role conflict and job stress were highly correlated, whereas interpersonal interactions were only moderately correlated. Role conflict significantly affects job stress, according to regression research. Future research should employ longitudinal designs, enhance sample diversity across secondary schools, and incorporate both quantitative and qualitative methods to yield more profound insights.

Keywords: Interpersonal Interactions, Role Conflict, Job Stress

1. INTRODUCTION

The pre-tertiary education sector, encompassing primary and secondary schooling, is of paramount importance in Malaysia's educational landscape. The teaching profession stands as a pivotal contributor to this sector. Teaching is a profession of considerable esteem among job seekers in Malaysia; it ranks alongside other esteemed fields such as engineering and medicine. The Department of Statistics Malaysia (DOSM) reported that in 2022, the count of government school teachers surpassed 400,000 (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2025).

Nonetheless, considerable prior research indicates that the teaching profession is among the most stressful vocations. Recent studies have consistently indicated that educators experience stress levels that exceed the norm, resulting in heightened burnout and reduced retention rates (Pogere et al., 2019). The teaching profession, already characterised by its rigorous demands, has seen an expansion in responsibility, which further exacerbates stress levels among educators. The stress experienced is not solely a consequence of classroom instruction; it also stems from supplementary administrative responsibilities, such as maintaining student attendance records, managing files, and performing various clerical tasks (Othman & Sivasubramaniam, 2019). The assertion was corroborated by the NUTP, which indicated that more than 10,000 government school teachers have opted for early retirement annually in recent years, a figure that significantly surpasses earlier figures (Siti Sarah Nurul Liyana, 2024).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Job Stress

The term "job stress" refers to a form of psychological strain arising from heightened demands, expectations, and pressures at work that exceed a person's capacity to handle (Singh et al., 2019). Furthermore, if left unchecked, this prevalent stressor can lead to poorer job performance, adverse effects on one's physical and mental health, job burnout, and increased turnover rates. In addition, job stress also contributes to the strain that individuals face in carrying out their duties (Tohir et al., 2020). Anxiety and depression are common symptoms of job-related stress, which can be caused by uncontrollable circumstances that impact an individual's mental state and cause internal tension.

It is often known that teaching, particularly in elementary and secondary schools, is one of the most demanding occupations, with high rates of burnout worldwide (MacIntyre et al., 2020). Teaching is a really fulfilling job, but it also has many obligations and stress (Bottiani et al., 2019). Additionally, numerous studies have found that teachers worldwide experience significant levels of occupational stress (MacIntyre et al., 2020). Tension permeating both personal and professional lives influences a teacher's perceived stress. Teachers typically experience two types of workplace stress in their daily lives: psychological and physical (Siswanto et al., 2023). It is marked by symptoms like exhaustion, lightheadedness, stomach discomfort, and an overwhelming amount of administrative work. Long-term exposure to stressful employment also leads to chronic physical and emotional weariness (Edú-valsania et al., 2022).

2.2 Role Conflict

Role conflict is a form of stress that employees experience because of their respective occupations (Dewa Gede Anom Dwipayana & I. Gusti Made Suwandana, 2024). The conflicting roles adversely affect the productivity of the organisation (Rifai et al., 2019). Role conflict may also be defined as the inability of an individual to fulfil multiple responsibilities simultaneously (Elsafty & Shafik, 2022). Indicators of role conflict include the following: different methods of completing tasks, the completion of unnecessary work, the collaboration of two incompatible parties, the violation of rules to complete the task, the acceptance of work by one party but not the other, a lack of sufficient human resources, and a lack of other physical resources and materials (Dewa Gede Anom Dwipayana & I. Gusti Made Suwandana, 2024; Rifai et al., 2019). To achieve their duties, teachers assume various positions. They serve as friends, mentors, teachers, parents, coaches, and more both within and outside of the classroom (Nipunta Kaur & Amita Kaishta, 2022). The requirements of their perceived and performed jobs sometimes trap teachers in multiple roles. Teachers are expected to oversee students both inside and outside of the classroom, monitor extracurricular activities, and perform other non-teaching duties in addition to instructing.

Research has shown that role conflict in Pakistan's banking sector predicts job stress (Muhammad Zulqarnain Arshad et al., 2020). In addition, role conflict has a positive direct effect on job stress for construction project professionals in Sri Lanka (Dodanwala et al., 2021). The South Kuta District Office also observes this effect among its non-civil servant employees (Dewa Gede Anom Dwipayana & I. Gusti Made Suwandana, 2024). For teachers, a Pahang study found a significant positive correlation between role conflict and job stress among primary school teachers (Mohd Faizal Hassan et al., 2019). Although there is a wealth of research on role conflict and job stress, secondary school teachers have received less attention.

As a result, the following is the initial hypothesis:

H₁: There is a significant relationship between role conflict and job stress among schoolteachers.

2.3 Interpersonal Interaction

'Interpersonal interactions' refers to either a real interaction occurring between two individuals or a mental representation of the relationship between oneself and others (Wilde & Dozois, 2019). Teacher-student and teacher-school community interactions are examples of teacher interpersonal interactions (Goktas & Kaya, 2023). The interactions encompass many types of connections among teachers, including those between teachers and students, teachers and principals, teachers and colleagues, and teachers and parents (Zandvliet et al., 2014). In their professional work setting, teachers must be able to effectively manage interpersonal interactions (Mohammed et al., 2023). Any conflict arising in the interactions will increase teachers' stress levels (Corbin et al., 2019).

Identifying prior research linking interpersonal interactions to job stress among secondary school educators in Malaysia presents a considerable challenge. Nonetheless, certain studies have already examined the variables and established the correlation between the two. Nurses at hospital X in Banjarmasin, Indonesia, conducted recent investigations that revealed a correlation between interpersonal interactions and job-related stress (Kartika & Hilintang, 2024). In Chennai, interpersonal dynamics significantly affect the job-related stress experienced by marketing executives in private banking institutions (Ramachandran & Rajendran, 2018). A study conducted in Malaysia's Klang Valley revealed that interpersonal interactions significantly contributed to job stress among culinary internship students (Khairunnisa Mohamad Abdullah & Nor Rabiatal Adawiyah Nor Azam, 2021).

The subsequent hypothesis arose from the previously mentioned discourse.

H₂: There is a significant relationship between interpersonal interaction and job stress among schoolteachers.

The conceptual framework presented in Figure 1 has been proposed following a literature review.

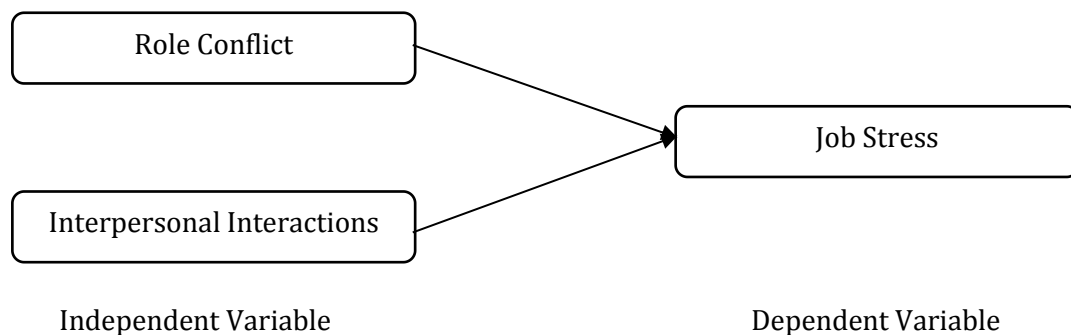


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This study employs two types of variables: job stress as the dependent variable and role conflict and interpersonal interactions as the independent variables. This study is being formulated as quantitative research. The research commences with a deductive approach that initiates by identifying the appropriate theory. The study is being guided by the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model (Bakker & de Vries, 2021; Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Demerouti & Bakker, 2011). The researchers designed this study as a cross-sectional analysis, collecting all data at a single point. The unit of analysis is the individual teacher in secondary school in Melaka, Malaysia.

3.2 Sampling Design

The research employed non-probability sampling to collect data from teachers at designated secondary schools in Melaka. Convenience sampling, which entails collecting data from conveniently accessible individuals within the population, has been chosen. This sampling enables teachers to engage in the study without incurring additional burdens or disruptions to their demanding schedules. Consequently, 136 teachers from the populations have engaged and completed the questionnaire.

3.3 Questionnaire

The survey was divided into two distinct sections. Section A collected data on the respondents' sociodemographic characteristics, including gender and age. In the meantime, Section B gathers information on role conflicts, interpersonal interactions, and job stress.

Table 1 Sources of Questionnaire

Measurement	Total Item	Sources
Role Conflict	9	De Bruin & Taylor (2006)
Interpersonal Interactions	9	Szostek & Lapinska (2020)
Job Stress	5	Faisal et al. (2019)

A Likert scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly concur) is employed for each of these three dimensions.

4. FINDINGS

4.1 Reliability Test

The Cronbach alpha values for each dimension are as follows:

Table 2 Cronbach Alpha

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	Reliability Result
Role Conflict	0.970	Excellent
Interpersonal Interactions	0.724	Good and Acceptable
Job Stress	0.968	Excellent

4.2 Sociodemographic Profile

Table 3 presents the respondents' gender status. The data show that female respondents exhibit a higher frequency and percentage than their male counterparts. A total of 114 respondents identified as female, accounting for 83.8% of the overall sample, while 22 identified as male, accounting for 16.2%.

Table 3 Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	22	16.2
Female	114	83.8
Total	136	100

Table 4 displays the ages of the respondents. A significant portion of the participants, specifically 51 teachers, is in the age range of 31–40 years, representing 37.5% of the overall sample size. Subsequently, 41 educators, representing 30.1% of the sample, fall within the age range of 41-50 years. A total of 19 teachers fall within the age range of 20-30 years, accounting for 14.0% of the total respondents. Finally, 25 educators, representing 18.4% of the overall group, are aged 50 and older.

Table 4 Age

Age	Frequency	Percentage (%)
20-30 years old	19	14.0
31-40 years old	51	37.5
41-50 years old	41	30.1
50 years old and above	25	18.4
Total	136	100

4.3 Analysis of Hypotheses

4.3.1 Data Description

Table 5 indicates that 136 respondents participated in this study and provided advice on role conflict, interpersonal interactions, and job stress. Table 5 presents the responses regarding job stress (mean = 3.296, standard deviation = 1.376), role conflict (mean = 3.227, standard deviation = 1.31), and interpersonal interactions (mean = 3.419, standard deviation = 0.634). These findings indicate that respondents perceive job stress and role conflict as significant issues, with mean scores indicating moderate levels of concern. Furthermore, the relatively higher mean for interpersonal interactions may suggest that positive workplace relationships could mitigate some of the adverse effects associated with stress and conflict.

Table 5 Descriptive Statistics: Means and Standard Deviation

Variables	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation
Job Stress	136	1.00	5.00	3.296	1.376
Role Conflict	136	1.00	5.00	3.227	1.31
Interpersonal Interactions	136	1.00	4.67	3.419	0.634

4.3.2 Correlation Analysis

Pearson's correlations among job stress, role conflict, and interpersonal interactions revealed a bivariate relationship among all variables. As shown in Table 6(a), there was a positive correlation between job stress and role conflict ($r=0.908$, $p<0.01$), indicating a very strong relationship, as noted in Table 6(b). Furthermore, the correlation analysis indicated that job stress is also associated with interpersonal interactions ($r=0.449$, $p<0.01$), reflecting a moderate correlation.

Table 6(a) Result of Correlation Analysis

Variables	Job Stress	Role Conflict	Interpersonal Interactions
Job Stress	-		
Role Conflict	0.908**	-	
Interpersonal Interactions	0.449**		-

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 6(b) Pearson's Indications

Pearson's r	Indications
0.90-1.00	Very high correlation
0.70-0.89	High correlation
0.40-0.69	Moderate correlation

0.20-0.39	Low correlation
0.00-0.19	Very low correlation

4.3.3 Relationship between role conflict, interpersonal interactions, and job stress among teachers

H₁: There is a significant relationship between role conflict and job stress among schoolteachers.

Table 7 demonstrates a significant correlation between role conflict and job stress ($\beta=0.447$, $t=5.687$, $=p>0.001$). Role conflict influences the job stress experienced by school teachers to some extent.

H₂: There is a significant relationship between interpersonal interaction and job stress among schoolteachers.

On the other hand, regression analysis found no significant relationship between interpersonal interactions and job stress ($\beta = 0.16$, $t = -0.445$, $p = 0.657$). It shows interpersonal interactions, not predictors of job stress among schoolteachers.

Table 7 Regression Analysis

Variable	β	t	p	R ²	R ² Δ	F
				0.868	0.865	289.708
Role Conflict	0.447	5.687	<0.001			
Interpersonal Interactions	0.16	-0.445	0.657			

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This study demonstrates how role conflict predicts occupational stress. However, interpersonal interactions do not predict teachers' job stress. Future research should use a longitudinal design that collects data at multiple time points over an extended period to gain a more thorough understanding of how role conflict and interpersonal interactions affect schoolteachers' job stress. Furthermore, increase the sample size to include a wider range of secondary school teachers from Melaka or across Malaysia. Furthermore, using mixed-method techniques has also proven advantageous.

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