

Analysis and Research on the Role Conflict of Law Teachers in Five Schools in Xi'an, China

Zhang Ya Kun, Vincent Wee, Eng Kim

Universiti Tun Abdul Razak (UNIRAZAK), Malaysia

Abstract

This study aims to investigate the current status and influencing factors of role conflict among law faculty members in five universities in Xi'an, China. By employing demographic analysis, the study compares role conflicts among teachers of different genders, ages, marital statuses, and job duties in terms of intra-role conflict, inter-personality conflict, and inter-role conflict. The results reveal that gender and marital status do not show significant differences in role conflict, while age and job duties have a significant impact. Teachers aged between 31 and 40 exhibit more prominent role conflicts compared to those in other age groups; concurrently, teachers with additional administrative responsibilities experience higher levels of inter-role and overall role conflicts than those with purely teaching duties. This research provides valuable insights for addressing the issue of role conflict among teachers.

Keywords: Role Conflict; University Teachers; Law Faculty

1. Introduction

Legal educators occupy the intersection of multiple fields, such as education and research, public decision-making, and legal practice, and play a vital role in shaping legal professions, promoting the rule of law, and strengthening law enforcement (Bianchi, 2020). The responsibilities and obligations of legal educators not only demonstrate the commitment of legal professionals but also effectively contribute to social governance and professional development.

Teaching is a highly stressful profession. Teachers face various internal and external pressures, such as dealing with student misconduct, noisy classrooms, demanding parents, unsupportive principals,

and peers, as well as the information overload in today's knowledge society, which contribute to a negative image of the profession. Consequently, an increasing number of teachers feel unable to cope with work-related stress and experience burnout.

Role conflicts arise when individuals experience psychological distress and doubts due to their inability to balance various aspects of their lives (Zhang Chunxing, 1989). Teachers often need to meet administrative demands, satisfy parents' expectations, and manage their own family and work lives, which frequently leads to dilemmas. When an individual plays two or more roles and is unable to meet the demands of each role or fulfil their own or others' role expectations, it causes psychological stress and emotional distress. Emotionally unstable teachers may struggle to focus on enhancing their teaching skills, which in turn affects the quality of education.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Current Status of the Level of Role Conflict Among University Teachers

The roles of university professors have become increasingly diverse with the evolution of university functions. John Schulz (2013) posits that, aside from their institutional teaching roles, university professors must also fulfil their professional responsibilities within the broader academic community, undertaking research, publishing, and consulting, which inevitably leads to role conflicts. Due to the expansion of university functions, Christopher Orpen (1982) noted early on that university professors are no longer solely teachers; research, administration, and fostering student development have become essential duties for them. However, the demands of these diverse responsibilities can be incompatible, resulting in an unavoidable high level of role conflict among university professors.

Many scholars have studied the role conflicts of university professors by defining their roles based on the three functions of universities and analysing the conflicts that arise when fulfilling these roles. They have discussed the current status of role conflicts among university professors from empirical or theoretical perspectives, as well as the differences among various types of role conflicts. Jing Anlei et al. (2013) conducted a study on the professional task characteristics, stress responses, and coping resources of 1,300 university professors from six universities in Shanxi Province. The results showed that their professional task characteristics and stress responses were higher than average norms, with role conflict being a significant dimension of stress responses. There were notable differences among professors with varying teaching experience, educational levels, and professional titles.

Xiong Deming (2013) argues that role conflict among university professors refers to the internal experience of incongruity between role behaviours and role cognition or expectations when acting as educators, researchers, service providers, and social critics. He adapted Rizzo et al.'s classic role conflict scale to survey 682 university professors and found that the overall level of role conflict among university professors was generally high. He further analysed the effects of different variables on role conflict, including gender, full-time or dual roles, discipline, teaching experience, and professional titles, discovering that some variables had a significant impact on the degree of role conflict, while others had less impact. Some variables showed regularity in their influence on role conflict, while others exhibited great dispersion without apparent patterns. Among these, male professors experienced slightly higher role conflict than females, engineering professors experienced relatively stronger role conflict, and associate professors had the highest level of role conflict.

2.2 Factors Influencing Role Conflict Among University Teachers

Numerous scholars have analysed the influencing factors of role conflict among university professors from various perspectives, including cultural and institutional aspects. For example, Li Yunpeng (2012) argues that there are two main aspects to the role conflict experienced by university professors: the first is the conflict between the three cultural concepts of teaching, research, and service; the second is the inherent conflict within the modern university system itself, where the evaluation mechanisms for university professors, as well as the classification and adjustment of university functions, do not meet societal demands. Xiong Deming (2013) believes that cultural conflict is the underlying cause of role conflict among university professors.

Regarding the conflict between teacher culture and student culture, it manifests as conflicts in beliefs and behaviour; in the conflict between academic culture and management culture, it appears as the clashes between egalitarian academic culture and hierarchical management culture, liberal academic culture and controlling management culture, inclusive academic culture and uniform management culture, and self-disciplined academic culture and externally controlled management culture. Furthermore, during the merging and upgrading processes of universities, conflicts arise between different campus cultures and between the old and new educational levels after the upgrade.

Some scholars have explored the impact of role conflict among university professors from the perspective of the workplace, including factors such as the lack of decision-making involvement, the nature of supervision and management, routinization, student behaviour issues, and career development. Workplace characteristics exacerbate the contradictions between professional spirit and management requirements (Bamberger, 1995). Other scholars have discussed the role conflict of university professors from the perspective of the underlying philosophy of higher education. Lv Suzhen (2013) believes that the roles of educator, scholar, and intellectual are the three primary roles of university professors in their professional activities. From the standpoint of the roles themselves, the main reason for role conflict among university professors is the multiple role conflicts caused by different higher education philosophies. The educator role reflects the humanistic philosophy of higher education in the role perception of university professors; the scholar role embodies the epistemological philosophy of higher education in the professional role perception of university professors; and the intellectual role concretizes the political philosophy of higher education in the professional role perception of university professors.

Additionally, differences in time, behaviour, and stance also contribute to the multiple role conflicts experienced by university professors. Teaching and research represent distinct behavioural modes for the educator and scholar roles, respectively, and conflicts can arise in the time spent fulfilling each role. Furthermore, the stance and behaviour of the scholar role differ from those of the intellectual role. The differences and contradictions between the educator role and knowledge in cultural and moral aspects are another factor contributing to the multiple role conflicts among university professors (Lv Suzhen, 2013).

Lu Xiaobin (2005) investigated the current status and sources of psychological stress and confusion among university professors in Wuhan and found that their stress and confusion levels were relatively high due to social role conflicts. The contradiction between 'the conscience of intellectuals' and 'the material temptations faced in a market economy' is an unresolved issue faced by contemporary intellectuals during the transition period and also represents an implicit role conflict for university professors. University professors who take on multiple intellectual roles in society often struggle with time and energy constraints, which can lead to psychological tension and stress.

3 Material and Methods

In this study, survey research was mainly used for data collection, with the sample targeting teachers from five universities in Xi'an, China. Firstly, a purposive sampling method was employed, selecting samples from five universities, including Xi'an Jiaotong University, Xi'an University of Technology, Xi'an University of Finance and Economics, Shaanxi Normal University, and Northwest University of Political Science and Law. Before distributing the questionnaires, the researchers contacted the relevant personnel or school organizers by phone to explain the purpose and content of the study, and to obtain their consent and assistance.

The questionnaire used in this study employs a Likert five-point scale and is developed based on the literature review of this research, referencing Kahn et al. (1964) and Chen Baique (2010). The wording of the questionnaire has been refined according to the research subjects. The overall internal consistency α value of the original scale is .85. Teachers are asked to select an answer for each question based on the content described and the degree to which they believe it applies, ranging from 'strongly agree,' 'mostly agree,' 'somewhat agree,' 'mostly disagree,' to 'strongly disagree,' with corresponding scores of 5, 4, 3, 2, and 1, respectively. A higher score indicates a higher level of role conflict perception among teachers, while a lower score indicates a lower level of role conflict perception. Furthermore, role conflict is divided into three aspects: 'inter-role conflict,' 'intra-role conflict,' and 'conflict between role and personality.'

Table 1: Summary of Item Analysis, Factor Analysis, and Reliability Analysis of Role Conflict Scale

Item No.	Formal Item No.	Factor	Critical Ratio (CR)	Correlation Coefficient (r)	Cumulative % of Explained Variance	Factor Loading	Communality	Subscale α Coefficient	Overall α Coefficient
3	1	Intra-role Conflict	7.420***	.659**		.853	.806	.766	.821
5	2		7.942	.697		.772	.707		
4	3		6.511	.590		.690	.766		
9	4	Conflict between Role and Personality	3.601	.434		.729	.578	.640	
11	5		8.851	.683	65.910	.722	.683		
10	6		7.453	.687		.435	.494		
7	7	Inter-role Conflict	5.445	.545		.785	.605	.619	
8	8		7.170	.600		.629	.627		
6	9		7.456	.698		.610	.605		

4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Demographics Analysis

Table 2: Distribution and Recovery of Research Samples Recovery

	Sample Size	Recovery Situation		Valid Questionnaires	
		Number	Ratio	Number	Ratio
Xi'an University of Technology	210	179	85.24%	158	75.24%
Xi'an Jiaotong University	210	188	89.53%	171	81.43%
Xi'an University of Finance and Economics	210	197	93.81%	188	89.52%
Shaanxi Normal University	210	182	86.67%	166	79.05%
Northwest University of Political Science and Law	210	198	94.3%	191	90.95%
Total	1050	907	86.38%	874	83.24%

Table 3: Background Variable Structure Analysis of Research Samples

Background Variables	Subcategories	Number	Percentage
Gender	Male	263	30.09
	Female	611	69.91
Age	30 and below	103	11.79
	31-40	369	42.22
	41-50	345	39.47
	51 and above	57	6.52
Marital Status	Married	620	70.94
	Unmarried	254	29.06
Positions Held	Mentor	442	50.57
	Subject Teacher	160	18.31
	Mentor with Administrative Duties	41	4.69
	Subject Teacher with Administrative Duties	162	18.54
	Teacher with Director	69	7.89

N=874

4.2 Summary Analysis of the Current Situation of Teacher Role Conflict

As shown in the table below, in terms of the overall level, the average score of teachers' role conflict is 2.62, which falls within the lower-middle range on a 5-point scale, indicating that it is between

‘mostly not consistent’ and ‘partially consistent.’ Among the sub-dimensions, the highest score is 2.76 for ‘intra-role conflict,’ while the lowest score is 2.44 for ‘inter-role conflict.’

Table 4: Summary Table of Teachers’ Role Conflict Status Analysis

Dimension Name	M	SD	Number of Items	Average Score per Item	Rank
Intra-role Conflict	8.28	2.532	3	2.76	1
Conflict between Role and Personality	7.97	2.163	3	2.66	2
Inter-role Conflict	7.32	2.299	3	2.44	3
Overall Role Conflict	23.56	5.630	9	2.62	

N=874

From the perspective of teachers, the average scores for each dimension of ‘role conflict’ are relatively low midrange. In terms of raw scores, ‘intra-role conflict’ has the highest score, followed by ‘conflict between role and personality’ and ‘inter-role conflict.’ This indicates that teachers believe that when playing multiple roles, intra-role conflict creates dilemmas, followed by conflicts between roles and personality, and then inter-role conflicts.

4.3 Analysis of the Differences in Role Conflict between Teachers of Different Background Variables

4.3.1 Analysis of the differences in role conflict between teachers of different genders

As shown in Table 5, there are no significant differences in the dimensions of ‘intra-role conflict ($t = 1.141$),’ ‘conflict between role and personality ($t = 1.790$),’ ‘inter-role conflict ($t = .823$),’ and ‘overall role conflict ($t = 1.537$)’ among teachers of different genders. In other words, there are no significant differences in the dimensions of ‘intra-role conflict,’ ‘conflict between role and personality,’ ‘inter-role conflict,’ and ‘overall role conflict’ among teachers of different genders.

Table 5: Summary of Differences in Role Conflict among Teachers of Different Genders

Measured Variables	Male (n=263)		Female (n=611)		t
	M	SD	M	SD	
Intra-role Conflict	8.43	2.636	8.21	2.486	1.141
Conflict between Role and Personality	8.17	2.085	7.88	2.192	1.790
Inter-role Conflict	7.41	2.339	7.27	2.282	1.823
Overall Role Conflict	24.01	5.888	23.37	5.509	1.537

N=874

4.3.2 Analysis of the differences in role conflict between teachers of different ages

As shown in Table 4-2-2, there are significant differences in the dimensions of 'intra-role conflict ($F = 9.242, p = .000 < .01$),' 'conflict between role and personality ($F = 5.426, p = .001 < .01$),' 'inter-role conflict ($F = 2.824, p = .038 < .05$),' and 'overall role conflict ($F = 7.865, p = .000 < .001$)' among teachers of different ages. Upon comparison, it is found that there is no significant difference in 'inter-role conflict.'

In terms of 'intra-role conflict,' teachers aged 31-40 have higher scores than those aged 30 and below, with an average difference of 1.184; teachers aged 31-40 also have higher scores than those aged 41-50, with an average difference of .759. In terms of 'conflict between role and personality,' teachers aged 31-40 have higher scores than those aged 30 and below, with an average difference of .591. In terms of 'overall role conflict,' teachers aged 31-40 have higher scores than those aged 30 and below, with an average difference of 2.368; teachers aged 31-40 also have higher scores than those aged 41-50, with an average difference of 1.699.

4.3.3 Analysis of the differences in role conflict among teachers with different marital status

In terms of role conflict, there are no significant differences in the dimensions of 'intra-role conflict ($F=2.460$),' 'conflict between role and personality ($F=.917$),' 'inter-role conflict ($F=.452$),' and 'overall role conflict ($F=1.605$)' among teachers with different marital statuses. In other words, there are no significant differences in the dimensions of 'intra-role conflict,' 'conflict between role and personality,' 'inter-role conflict,' and 'overall role conflict' among teachers with different marital statuses.

Table 6: Summary of Differences in Role Conflict among Teachers with Different Marital Status

Measured Variables	Married (n=626)		Unmarried (n=248)		F	Post Hoc Comparison
	M	SD	M	SD		
Intra-role Conflict	8.40	2.486	7.98	2.636	2.460	
Conflict between Role and Personality	8.03	2.138	7.83	2.224	.971	
Inter-role Conflict	7.35	2.204	7.22	2.541	.452	
Overall Role Conflict	23.78	5.452	23.02	6.053	1.605	

N=874

4.3.4 Analysis of the differences in role conflict between teachers in different positions

For teachers with different positions, there are no significant differences in the dimension of 'conflict between role and personality ($F=.498$). However, there are significant differences in the dimensions of 'intra-role conflict ($F=3.094, P=.015 < .05$),' 'inter-role conflict ($F=8.267, p=.000 < .001$),' and 'overall role conflict ($F=3.978, p=.003 < .01$).'

Upon further comparison, no significant differences were found in 'intra-role conflict.' In 'inter-role conflict,' teachers who are also administrators scored higher than teachers without administrative duties, with an average difference of 1.473; teachers with dual roles as subject teachers and administrators scored higher than teachers without administrative duties, with an average difference of .867. In 'overall role conflict,' teachers with dual roles as subject teachers and administrators scored higher than teachers without administrative duties, with an average difference of 1.818.

Table 7: Summary of Differences in Role Conflict among Teachers with Different Positions

Measured Variables	Mentor (n=442)		Subject Teacher (n=160)		Mentor with Administrative Duties (n=41)		F	Post Hoc Comparison
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD		
Intra-role Conflict	8.10	2.378	8.23	2.795	8.46	2.481	3.094*	ns.
Conflict between Role and Personality	7.88	2.109	8.11	2.319	8.15	1.652	.498	3>1
Inter-role Conflict	6.94	2.201	7.36	2.409	8.41	2.636	8.267***	4>1
Overall Role Conflict	22.92	5.264	23.69	6.050	25.02	5.768	3.978**	4>1

N=874; 1-Mentor, 2-Subject Teacher, 3-Mentor with Administrative Duties, 4-Subject Teacher with Administrative Duties, 5-Teacher with Director Duties; $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$ ns. $p > .05$

5 Conclusion

5.1 Genders

For teachers of different genders, there are no significant differences in the overall 'role conflict' and its dimensions of 'intra-role conflict,' 'conflict between role and personality,' and 'inter-role conflict.' This indicates that there is no perceived difference among teachers of different genders in terms of intra-role conflict, conflict between role and personality, inter-role conflict, and overall role conflict. This result is consistent with the findings of Chen Hongming (1995) and Chen Baique (2010).

5.2 Ages

Teachers of different ages have significant differences in the overall 'role conflict' and its dimensions of 'intra-role conflict,' 'conflict between role and personality,' and 'inter-role conflict.' After post-hoc comparisons, it was found that there were no significant differences in 'inter-role conflict.' Teachers aged 31-40 have higher 'intra-role conflict' than those aged 30 and below and 41-50. Teachers aged 31-40 also have higher 'conflict between role and personality' than those aged 30 and below. Teachers aged 31-40 have higher 'overall role conflict' than those aged 30 and below and 41-50.

This suggests that teachers aged 31-40 have significantly higher intra-role conflict, conflict between role and personality, and overall role conflict than other age groups, which is consistent with the findings of Chen Baique (2010), Lin Mengmei (2011), and Yang Peiling (2013).

5.3 Marital Status

Teachers with different marital statuses did not show significant differences in the overall 'role conflict' and its dimensions of 'intra-role conflict,' 'conflict between role and personality,' and 'inter-role conflict.' This indicates that, regardless of their marital status, teachers' perceptions of intra-role conflict, conflict between role and personality, inter-role conflict, and overall role conflict do not differ significantly.

5.4 Positions

Teachers with different positions showed no significant differences in the 'conflict between role and personality.' However, there were significant differences in 'intra-role conflict,' 'inter-role conflict,' and 'overall role conflict.' After a post-hoc comparison, no significant differences were found in 'intra-role conflict.' In 'inter-role conflict,' teachers with both teaching and administrative duties scored higher than teachers with only teaching duties. In 'overall role conflict,' teachers with both teaching and administrative duties also scored higher than teachers with only teaching duties.

This shows that teachers' perceptions of intra-role conflict and conflict between role and personality do not differ significantly between different positions. Teachers with both teaching and administrative duties have higher 'inter-role conflict' than teachers with only teaching duties. Teachers with both teaching and administrative duties also have higher 'inter-role conflict' and 'overall role conflict' than teachers with only teaching duties. These results are consistent with the findings of Zeng Weicai (2009) and Yang Peiling (2013).

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