

EFFECT OF SALESFORCE CONTROL SYSTEM AND SUPERVISORY BEHAVIOUR ON ROLE CONFLICT AND ROLE AMBIGUITY OF SALESPEOPLE: A REVIEW OF STUDIES

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Abstract: Role conflict and role ambiguity has effect on important salesforce and organizational outcomes like salesforce performance and sales organization effectiveness. Therefore organizations are making efforts to reduce role conflict and role ambiguity of salespeople. Salesforce control system, which is an organization's set of procedures for monitoring, directing, evaluating and compensating its employees (Anderson and Oliver, 1987), has been found to have an impact on role conflict and role ambiguity of salespeople along with supervisory behaviour. The objective of his paper is to highlight direct as well as indirect impact of salesforce control system and supervisory behaviour on role conflict and role ambiguity of salespeople. The paper is based on review of studies, taking into consideration the research studies from the period 1981 to 2014. Based on the findings of the studies, research implications are stated.

Keywords: Salesforce control system, Supervisory behaviour, Role conflict, Role ambiguity

Role conflict and role ambiguity have an adverse effect on salesforce performance which ultimately has a negative effect on the profitability of the organization. In their meta-analysis of 116 articles, **Churchill, Ford, Hartley and Walker (1985)** showed that role variables are important determinants of salespeople's performance. As the competition among firms is getting fierce, none of the firms want to lose because of the poor performance of salespeople. In such a scenario, firms are making efforts to eliminate all the obstacles coming in the way of good performance. Therefore, the importance of finding the determinants of role conflict and role ambiguity increases.

A salesforce control system which is an organization's set of procedures for monitoring, directing, evaluating and compensating its employees (Anderson and Oliver, 1987), is likely to have an impact on role conflict and role ambiguity. Anderson and Oliver (1987) gave propositions regarding the effect of salesforce control system on cognitions and capabilities, affects and attitudes, motivation, behavioural strategies and performance of salespeople. Cravens, Ingram, LaForge and Young (1993) converted these propositions into specific hypotheses and tested them in an empirical study involving 144 salespeople. Oliver and Anderson (1994) themselves tested their propositions empirically on 347 salespeople. Later on, Babakus, Cravens, Grant, Ingram and LaForge (1996) explored the effect of

salesforce control system on sales territory design. In a similar way, researchers introduced new variables into salesforce control system framework which were not considered by Anderson and Oliver (1987) and analysed the impact of salesforce control system on these variables. Various research studies studied the impact of salesforce control system on role conflict and role ambiguity. Sales manager supervisory behaviour has also been found to have an impact on role conflict and role ambiguity.

The objective of this paper is to extend the existing knowledge of the role of salesforce control system and supervisory behaviour in influencing the role conflict and role ambiguity of salespeople and to highlight the direct and indirect impact of behaviour based and outcome based salesforce control system and supervisory behaviour on role conflict and role ambiguity of salespeople. This paper first defines behaviour based and outcome based salesforce control system. Second, it describes the concepts of role conflict and role ambiguity. Third, it highlights important consequences of role conflict and role ambiguity. Fourth, it describes the framework for organizing the study. Fifth, it reviews important studies highlighting the direct as well as indirect impact of behaviour based and outcome based salesforce control system on role conflict and role ambiguity of salespeople. Lastly, the paper concludes with the summary of findings and research implications.

According to Anderson and Oliver (1987), they are two broad categories of salesforce control system: Behavior based and outcome based salesforce control system.

Behaviour based and outcome based salesforce control system: Behavior based control system is characterized by more monitoring of salespeople by management, more managerial direction to direct salespeople and use of subjective and more complex methods based on salesperson's aptitude and product knowledge, number of calls, their sales strategies to evaluate and compensate the salesforce (Anderson and Oliver, 1987). Salespeople are given a fixed amount of salary. While outcome-based salesforce control system is characterized by less monitoring of salespeople by management, less managerial direction to direct salespeople and use of objective measures of outcomes to evaluate and compensate the salesforce (Anderson and Oliver, 1987). Salespeople are given incentives based on the amount of sales they bring for the firm.

Role conflict and Role ambiguity

According to **Rizzo, House and Lirtzman (1970)**, "Role conflict is defined in terms of the dimensions of congruency-incongruency or compatibility-incompatibility in the requirements of the role, where congruency or compatibility is judged relative to a set of standards or conditions which impinge upon role performance." In short, it is the incompatibility in communicated expectations that impinge on perceived role performance. For example, when the requests of a customer and a supervisor are at odds, the salesperson is likely to experience role conflict (Rizzo et al, 1970). They also stated that "when the behaviors expected of an individual are inconsistent, he will experience stress and dissatisfaction and will perform less effectively. So in the context of sales organization, role conflict can be detrimental for the organization as will result in decreased salesperson satisfaction and decreased organizational effectiveness".

Rizzo et al. (1970) developed a questionnaire which was designed to measure role conflict and ambiguity in complex organizations. They defined role ambiguity as the situation where a person does not have clear direction about the expectations of his/her role in the job or organization. Salesperson will experience role ambiguity when they feel that they do not have enough information to perform their job adequately.

Salespeople should have a specified set of tasks to do. If salespeople do not know what he is supposed to do or how his performance will be judged, his performance will be hampered and so will the effective of the organization.

Consequences of Role conflict and Role ambiguity

Role conflict and Role ambiguity have important consequences for the salespeople as well as the organization. Analyzing data of 265 industrial salesmen from 10 companies in seven different industries using stepwise multiple regression analysis, **Churchill, Ford and Walker (1976)** found that the role conflict and role ambiguity experienced by the salesperson are negatively related to job satisfaction. Using regression model to analyse data of 161 industrial salespeople, **Bagozzi (1978)** found that role conflict has a significant negative impact on sales performance and job satisfaction while role ambiguity has a significant negative effect on specific self-esteem. Investigating the effect of role ambiguity on certain outcomes of salespeople using structural equation methodology, **Bagozzi (1980)** in their study on 122 industrial salespeople found that role ambiguity has a negative effect on self-esteem and performance. **Bedeian and Armenakis (1981)** analysed the consequences of role conflict and role ambiguity. Their analysis of 202 salespeople revealed that role conflict as well as role ambiguity are negatively related to satisfaction and positively related to tension.

Behrman and Perreault (1984) explored the antecedents and consequences of salesforce role conflict and role ambiguity. Analyzing data of 196 salespeople of industrial goods company using multiple regression analysis, they found that the innovativeness required by the salesperson's job is positively related to role conflict. They also found that salespeople experience more conflict when they think that the key events in their lives are due to chance or factors beyond their control. As far as the consequences of role conflict and role ambiguity are concerned, role conflict has a negative impact on job satisfaction and a positive effect on performance while role ambiguity has a negative effect on performance. Defining ethical conflict as occurring when an individual feels pressure to take actions that are inconsistent with what he or she feels to be right, **Dubinsky and Ingram (1984)** examined selected correlates of salespeople's ethical conflict. The study on 116 salespeople in United States stated that role conflict and ambiguity are unrelated to ethical conflict. This finding indicates that if sales managers want to clarify for salespeople the role they perform, their level of ethical conflict will not be reduced.

Fry, Futrell, Parasuraman and Chmielewski (1986) analysed relationships among leadership, role conflict, role ambiguity, job satisfaction and job anxiety. Their analysis of 216 pharmaceutical salespeople revealed that both role conflict and ambiguity have a direct negative impact on satisfaction. Role conflict was found to

have a direct positive impact on job anxiety. **Glisson and Durick (1988)** investigated the predictors of satisfaction and commitment. Analyzing data of 319 workers in 22 different human service organizations, they found that role ambiguity has a significant negative effect on job satisfaction. Role conflict and role ambiguity were also found to be important predictors of commitment. Investigating the effect of organizational formalization on work alienation through role conflict and role ambiguity, **Michaels, Cron, Dubinsky and Joachimsthaler (1988)** found that higher levels of organizational formalization are associated with lower levels of role ambiguity and role conflict among both salespeople and buyers. Their study on 215 salespeople and 335 industrial buyers further revealed that role conflict and ambiguity have a negative effect on organizational commitment and a positive effect on work alienation.

Johnston, Parasuraman, Futrell and Black (1990) examined the antecedents and consequences of salespeople's organizational commitment during their early employment. Taking into consideration, three antecedents (leadership behavior, role stress and job satisfaction) and two consequences (turnover intentions and behavior). Analyzing data of national consumer goods company's salesforce, they found leadership consideration affected role conflict. Leadership role clarification and role conflict affected role ambiguity. Organizational commitment was affected by role ambiguity during early employment. Examining the outcomes of role ambiguity, **Singh (1993)** found that role ambiguity has a negative effect on performance. Examining the effect of organizational factors on affective commitment, **Agarwal and Ramaswami (1993)** found that role ambiguity has a direct impact on affective commitment. Regression analysis of 184 salespeople further revealed that role conflict did not have a significant direct effect on affective commitment. Feedback, job codification and participation have an indirect impact on affective commitment through their impact on role ambiguity.

Boshoff and Mels (1995) analysed the relationships among supervision, role stress and organizational commitment. Their study on 140 insurance salespeople revealed that organizational commitment was negatively influenced by role conflict while role ambiguity was not found to be a significant cause of organizational commitment. They further found supervisory consideration to be negatively related with role ambiguity and role conflict. Exploring the relationship among formalization, work alienation, role ambiguity, role conflict and organizational commitment, **Michaels, Dubinsky, Kotabe and Lim (1996)** found a positive relationship between work alienation and both role conflict as well as role ambiguity. Analyzing data of 218 sales personnel from the electronics products industry in USA, 220 in Japan and 156 in Korea using multiple regression analysis, they found a negative relationship of role ambiguity and role conflict with organizational commitment; negative relationship between formalization and role ambiguity in each country; negative relationship between formalization and role conflict in USA. Analyzing the data of 672 insurance sales personnel, **MacKenzie, Podsakoff and Ahearne (1998)** found that there is a direct relationship between commitment and both role conflict and role ambiguity.

Flaherty, Dahlstrom and Skinner (1999) examined the relationship among organizational values, customer-oriented selling and role stress. Their analysis of data of 402 salespeople revealed that customer orientation discrepancy has a positive effect on role conflict as well as role ambiguity. As far as the effect of role stress on

customer-oriented selling is concerned, there is an inverse relationship between both role conflict and role ambiguity on customer-oriented selling performance. Analyzing the impact of role ambiguity on important outcomes, **Grant, Cravens, Low and Moncrief (2001)** in their study on salespeople found that role ambiguity has a positive impact on role conflict and intention to leave and negative effect on performance, job satisfaction and organization commitment. Examining the antecedents and consequences of burnout **Low, Cravens, Grant and Moncrief (2001)** found higher level of intrinsic motivation to be negatively related with role conflict and role ambiguity of salespeople. Analysis of data of 148 field salespeople from 27 companies in Australia revealed that role ambiguity will have a positive impact on role conflict and salesperson's intention to leave the organization and a negative impact on job satisfaction, organizational commitment and performance of the salesforce. The findings further revealed that both role ambiguity and role ambiguity will have a positive effect on burnout and role conflict will have a negative impact on salesperson's job satisfaction.

In their study on 210 salespeople and 630 customers, **Román and Iacobucci (2010)** found that role ambiguity is negatively related to adaptive selling behavior. Determining the predictors of export sales managers' job satisfaction, **Katsikea, Theodosiou, Perdikis and Kehagias (2011)** in their study on 160 UK exporters found that role conflict and role ambiguity have a significant negative effect on job satisfaction.

The studies revealed that role conflict has a negative impact on job satisfaction, sales performance, organizational commitment, formalization and customer-oriented selling performance while it has a positive impact on work alienation, tension, burnout and selling effort. As far as the consequences of role ambiguity are concerned, role ambiguity has a negative impact on job satisfaction, specific self-esteem, performance, organizational commitment, formalization, customer-oriented selling performance, selling effort and adaptive selling behavior while it has a positive impact on work alienation, role conflict, salesperson's intention to leave the organization, tension, burnout and opportunistic behavior. Table 1 summarizes the research studies examining the consequences of role conflict and role ambiguity of salespeople. The table includes the sample size, variables along with key findings of the studies.

Table 1

Study	Sample	Variables studied	Key findings
Churchill, Ford and Walker (1976)	265 industrial salesmen	Job satisfaction, Role conflict, Role ambiguity	Role conflict and role ambiguity are negatively related to job satisfaction
Bagozzi (1978)	161 industrial salespeople	Salesperson performance, Job satisfaction, Role conflict, Role ambiguity, Self-esteem	Role conflict has a significant negative impact on sales performance and job satisfaction
Bagozzi (1980)	122 industrial salespeople	Role ambiguity, Self-esteem,	Role ambiguity has a negative effect on

		Performance	self-esteem and performance
Bedeian and Armenakis (1981)	202 salespeople	Role conflict, Role ambiguity, Satisfaction, Tension	Role conflict as well as role ambiguity are negatively related to satisfaction and positively related to tension
Behrman and Perreault (1984)	196 salespeople of industrial goods company	Job satisfaction, Job performance, Role conflict, Role ambiguity	Innovativeness required by the salesperson's job is positively related to role conflict
Fry, Futrell, Parasuraman and Chmielewski (1986)	216 pharmaceutical salespeople	Role conflict, Role ambiguity, Satisfaction, Job anxiety	Role conflict and ambiguity have a direct negative impact on satisfaction
Glisson and Durick (1988)	319 workers in 22 different human service organizations	Role ambiguity, Role conflict, Job satisfaction, Commitment	Role ambiguity has a significant negative effect on job satisfaction
Michaels, Cron, Dubinsky and Joachimsthaler (1988)	215 salespeople and 335 industrial buyers	Role ambiguity, Role conflict, Organizational commitment, Organizational formalization, Work alienation	Role conflict and ambiguity have a negative effect on organizational commitment
Johnston, Parasuraman, Futrell and Black (1990)	National consumer goods company's salesforce	Role ambiguity, Role conflict, Organizational commitment, Leadership behavior	Organizational commitment was affected by role ambiguity during early employment
Singh (1993)	472 sales and marketing executives, 216 marketing and customer service personnel of an industrial firm	Role ambiguity, Performance	Role ambiguity has a negative effect on performance
Agarwal and Ramaswami (1993)	184 salespeople	Role ambiguity, Role conflict, Affective commitment, Feedback, Job codification, Participation	Role ambiguity has a direct impact on affective commitment.

Boshoff and Mels (1995)	140 insurance salespeople	Role ambiguity, Role conflict, Organizational commitment, Supervisory consideration	Organizational commitment was negatively influenced by role conflict
Michaels, Dubinsky, Kotabe and Lim (1996)	218 sales personnel from the electronics products industry in USA, 220 in Japan and 156 in Korea	Role ambiguity, Role conflict, Organizational commitment, Formalization, Work alienation	There is a negative relationship of role ambiguity and role conflict with organizational commitment
MacKenzie, Podsakoff and Ahearne (1998)	672 insurance sales personnel	Role conflict, Role ambiguity, Commitment	There is a direct relationship between role ambiguity and commitment and role conflict and commitment
Flaherty, Dahlstrom and Skinner (1999)	402 salespeople	Role ambiguity, Role conflict, Customer-oriented selling performance	There is an inverse relationship between both role conflict and role ambiguity on customer-oriented selling performance
Grant, Cravens, Low and Moncrief (2001)	Salespeople in Australia	Role ambiguity, role conflict, intention to leave, performance, job satisfaction and organization commitment	Role ambiguity has a positive impact on role conflict and intention to leave and negative effect on performance, job satisfaction and organization commitment
Low, Cravens, Grant and Moncrief (2001)	148 field salespeople from 27 companies in Australia	Role ambiguity, Role conflict, Intrinsic motivation, Burnout, Job satisfaction, Organizational commitment, Performance, Intention to leave the organization	Both role ambiguity and role ambiguity will have a positive effect on burnout
Román and Iacobucci (2010)	210 salespeople and 630 customers	Role ambiguity, Adaptive selling behavior	Role ambiguity is negatively related to adaptive selling

			behavior
Katsikea, Theodosiou, Perdikis and Kehagias (2011)	160 UK exporters	Role conflict, Role ambiguity, Job satisfaction	Role conflict and role ambiguity have a significant negative effect on job satisfaction

Framework for organizing the study

Taking into account the variables of salesforce control system, salesforce role conflict and salesforce role ambiguity, articles from following management, marketing, and sales journals from the year 1975 to 2012 have been included for the detailed and critical review - Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management, Journal of Marketing, International Journal of Research in Marketing, Journal of Marketing Research, The Journal of Business, Academy of Management Journal, European Journal of Marketing, Journal of Marketing Research, Administrative Science Quarterly, Journal of World Business, Academy of Marketing Science and Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science.

Review of studies

Role conflict: Research studies are discussed below to enhance the understanding of the relationship between salesforce control system and role conflict.

Exploring the antecedents of role conflict, Walker, Churchill and Ford (1975) found that the role conflict decreased when more organizational departments influenced the salesman's activities and when he was closely supervised. **Chonko and Burnett (1983)** measured the importance of ethical situations as a source of role conflict. Analyzing data of 143 sales representatives, 23 sales managers, and 94 sales support personnel, they found that there are four sources of role conflict - customer relations, the job, the family, and ethics. Ethical situations were shown to lead to higher levels of conflict than either customer relations, family, or job situations. In their study on 216 pharmaceutical salespeople, **Fry, Futrell, Parasuraman and Chmielewski (1986)** found that closeness of supervision, supervisor's consideration and supervisor's role clarity negatively affects role conflict while leader's initiation of structure positively affects role conflict.

Teas (1983) investigated the relationships among sales supervisory behaviour, salesforce role stress and salesforce job satisfaction, taking into account four supervisory behaviour variables of leader consideration, initiation of structure, participation and feedback. Using structural equation analysis to test data of 116 salespeople in Midwest, he found that leader's initiation of structure is positively related to the salesperson's perceived role conflict while leader consideration and salesforce participation are negatively related to the salesperson's perceptions of role conflict. Job experience has a marginally significant negative relationship with role conflict. As far as the effect on salesperson's job satisfaction is concerned, salesperson's perceived role conflict was found to have a negative effect. **Lagace (1991)** tested the impact of high and low reciprocal trust. Their study on 120 sales women and 63 sales managers revealed that for salespeople, higher trust of the sales

manager show higher job satisfaction, higher satisfaction with the manager and lower role conflict. Investigating the effect of leadership styles on role conflict, Dubinsky, Yammarino, Jolson and Spangler (1995) found that sales manager laissez-faire leadership is positively related with role conflict while transactional as well as transformational leadership are negatively related to salesperson role conflict.

Jones, Katak, Futrell and Johnston (1996) investigated the impact of supervisors' behaviors (leadership consideration and leadership role clarity) on salesforce role conflict. Their analysis of 109 field salespeople of consumer goods manufacturer revealed that leadership consideration has a negative impact on role conflict. Babakus, Cravens, Johnston and Moncrief (1996) developed a conceptual model of salesperson job satisfaction, including role ambiguity and role conflict as antecedents of satisfaction. Their analysis of 186 salespeople revealed non-significant paths between role ambiguity and performance. The results also showed that both compensation and training had a positive impact on perceived organizational support, which in turn has a negative impact on role conflict. Schwepker, Ferrell, and Ingram (1997) examined the relationship among ethical climate, ethical conflict and role conflict in a salesperson context. Their analysis of 152 salespeople in business-to-business companies in U.S. revealed a positive relationship between perceived salesperson ethical conflict (perceived differences between themselves and their sales managers) and role conflict while salesperson ethical conflict (as perceived between salespeople and top management) did not significantly influence role conflict.

In an attempt to examine an alternative perspective to behaviour-based management control in sales organizations, Cravens, Lassk, Low, Marshall and Moncrief (2004) investigated the impact of the high, bureaucratic, clan, and low control combinations on salesperson consequences. Their analysis of data of 1042 salespeople from a broad range of industries and companies revealed that salespeople working under a high management-control system will display lower role conflict than salespeople working under the other three management control combinations. Miao and Evans (2012a) investigated the interactive effects of outcome control, activity control, and capability control on adaptive selling behavior, selling effort, role ambiguity and role conflict and their subsequent effect on salesperson performance. They found that (1) Outcome control and capability control have a negative interactive effect on role conflict, (2) Outcome control as well as sales experience has a negative effect on role conflict, (3) Role conflict has a negative indirect effect on salesperson performance via role ambiguity, (4) Role conflict has a positive effect on selling effort.

Role ambiguity: Research studies are discussed below to enhance the understanding of the relationship between salesforce control system and salesforce role ambiguity. Investigating the antecedents of role ambiguity, Walker, Churchill and Ford (1975) in their study on 265 salespeople found that salesperson's role ambiguity decreased with increasing closeness of supervision. These findings suggest that managers can influence the amount of role ambiguity experienced by salesperson. Investigating the relationships among sales supervisory behaviour (leader consideration, initiation of structure, participation and feedback), salesforce role stress and salesforce job satisfaction, Teas (1983) found that leader consideration, salesforce participation and feedback are negatively related to salesperson's perceptions of role ambiguity. He also found that role ambiguity does not have a significant effect on salesforce job satisfaction. Examining the effect of supervisor behaviour on role ambiguity, **Fry,**

Futrell, Parasuraman and Chmielewski (1986) found that supervisor's role clarity negatively influences role ambiguity.

Singh (1993) examined the determinants of role ambiguity. Their analysis of two independent samples of marketing executives revealed that as far as organizational determinants of role ambiguity are concerned, feedback, autonomy and consideration have a negative effect on role ambiguity. Using correlational and hierarchical regression to analyse data of 174 sales staff-sales manager dyad, **Dubinsky, Yammarino, Jolson and Spangler (1995)** found that transactional as well as transformational leadership are negatively related to salesperson role ambiguity. Investigating the impact of supervisors' behaviors (leadership consideration and leadership role clarity) on salesforce role ambiguity, **Jones, Katak, Futrell and Johnston (1996)** found that leader role clarity has a negative impact on role ambiguity. Exploring the impact of different dimensions and types of supervisory control, **Challagalla and Shervani (1997)** in their study on 270 salespeople, they found that information dimensions of output, activity and capability control reduce role ambiguity. Activity information was found to increase job tension while capability information reduced tension. These findings highlight that controls have a direct influence on supervisor role ambiguity and job tension and an indirect influence on performance.

Grant, Cravens, Low and Moncrief (2001) developed a conceptual model linking satisfaction with territory design with role ambiguity, intrinsic motivation, job satisfaction and performance. The study conducted in Australia revealed that satisfaction with territory design has a negative impact on role ambiguity. **Ramaswami (2002)** examined the influence of salesforce control system on role ambiguity and opportunistic behaviors of salespeople. Analyzing data of 155 U.S.-based members of the American Marketing Association, they found that the perceptions of both process as well as output control are associated with lower role ambiguity and higher opportunistic behaviors. Incidence of opportunistic behaviors was found to be positively associated with role ambiguity. **Cravens, Lassk, Low, Marshall and Moncrief (2004)** investigated the impact of the high, bureaucratic, clan and low control combinations on salesperson role stress. Analyzing data of 1042 salespeople using MANCOVA, taking company size as a covariate, they found that salespeople working under a high management control system will display lower role ambiguity than salespeople working under the other three management control combinations.

Investigating the antecedents of role ambiguity, **Román and Iacobucci (2010)** in their study on 210 salespeople and 630 customers found that firm's customer orientation has a negative effect on role ambiguity. Analyzing data of 223 salespeople in US manufacturing companies using Partial least squares (PLS) structural equation model (SEM), **Miao and Evans (2012a)** found that (1) Activity control and capability control have a negative interactive effect on role ambiguity, (2) Outcome control and activity control have a positive interactive effect on role ambiguity, (3) Outcome control and activity control have negative effect on role ambiguity, (4) Capability control has a positive effect on role ambiguity, (4) Role ambiguity has a negative effect on performance, adaptive selling behavior and selling effort.

Taking reference from Expectancy Theory and Cognitive Evaluation Theory, Miao and Evans (2012b) investigated the combinatory effects of outcome, capability and activity control on role ambiguity which subsequently affect salesperson performance. Analyzing data of 195 salesperson-sales manager dyads using PLS (Partial Least Squares) analysis for hypotheses testing, they found that the effect of activity and outcome control on role ambiguity is negative while that of capability control is positive. In turn, role ambiguity was found to have a negative effect on salesperson performance. As far as the combinatory effects are concerned, outcome–capability control combination as well as activity–capability control combination was found to be negatively related to role ambiguity while activity–outcome control combination was positively related to role ambiguity.

Table 2 summarizes the research studies examining the effect of salesforce control system and supervisory behaviour on role conflict and role ambiguity of salespeople. The table includes the sample size, variables along with key findings of the studies.

Table 2

Study	Sample	Variables studied	Key findings
Walker, Churchill and Ford (1975)	265 salespeople	Role conflict, Role ambiguity, Supervisory style	Role conflict decreased with the closeness of supervision
Teas (1983)	116 salespeople in Midwest	Role conflict, Role ambiguity, Job satisfaction, Supervisory behaviour (leader consideration, initiation of structure, participation and feedback)	Leader's initiation of structure is positively related to the salesperson's perceived role conflict
Chonko and Burnett (1983)	of 143 sales representatives, 23 sales managers, and 94 sales support personnel	Role conflict, customer relations, family, job situations	Ethical situations were shown to lead to higher levels of conflict than either customer relations, family, or job situations
Parasuraman and Chmielewski (1986)	216 pharmaceutical salespeople	Role conflict, Role ambiguity, Supervisory behaviour (consideration and role clarity)	Supervisor's role clarity negatively influences role conflict and role ambiguity
Lagace (1991)	120 sales women and 63 sales managers	Role conflict, job satisfaction	For salespeople, higher trust of the sales manager show

			higher job satisfaction, higher satisfaction with the manager and lower role conflict
Singh (1993)	472 sales and marketing executives, 216 marketing and customer service personnel of an industrial firm	Role ambiguity, Feedback, Autonomy, Consideration	Feedback, autonomy and consideration have a negative effect on role ambiguity
Dubinsky, Yammarino, Jolson and Spangler (1995)	174 sales staff-sales manager dyad	Role conflict, Role ambiguity, Leadership styles	Sales manager laissez-faire leadership is positively associated with role conflict
Jones, Kantak, Futrell and Johnston (1996)	109 field salespeople	Role conflict, Role ambiguity, Supervisors' behaviors (leadership consideration and leadership role clarity)	Leadership consideration has a negative impact on role conflict
Babakus, Cravens, Johnston and Moncrief (1996)	186 salespeople	Compensation, Training, Job satisfaction, Role conflict	Compensation and training have indirect effect on role conflict
Challagalla and Shervani (1997)	270 salespeople	Role ambiguity, Job tension, Performance, Salesforce control system	Information dimensions of output, activity and capability control reduce role ambiguity
Schweper, Ferrell, and Ingram (1997)	152 salespeople in business-to-business companies in U.S.	Ethical conflict, role conflict	Perceived salesperson ethical conflict (perceived differences between themselves and their sales managers) is positively related to role conflict
Grant, Cravens, Low and Moncrief (2001)	Salespeople in Australia	Satisfaction with territory design with role ambiguity, intrinsic motivation, job satisfaction and performance	Satisfaction with territory design has a negative impact on role ambiguity
Ramaswami	155 U.S.-based	Salesforce control	Perceptions of both

(2002)	members of the American Marketing Association	system, Role ambiguity, Opportunistic behavior	process as well as output control are associated with lower role ambiguity
Cravens, Lassk, Low, Marshall and Moncrief (2004)	1042 salespeople from a broad range of industries and companies	Role conflict, Role ambiguity, Salesforce control system	Salespeople working under a high management-control system will display lower role conflict and lower role ambiguity
Román and Iacobucci (2010)	210 salespeople and 630 customers	Customer orientation, Role ambiguity	Firm's customer orientation has a negative effect on role ambiguity
Miao and Evans (2012a)	223 salespeople in US manufacturing companies	Role ambiguity, Role conflict, Adaptive selling behaviour, Selling effort, Salesforce performance, Salesforce control system	Outcome control and capability control have a negative interactive effect on role conflict
Miao and Evans (2012b)	195 salesperson-sales manager dyads	Role ambiguity, Salesperson performance, Salesforce control system	The effect of activity and outcome control on role ambiguity is negative while that of capability control is positive

Conclusion

The review of the studies revealed that salesforce control system and supervisory behaviour have an effect on role conflict and role ambiguity.

Role conflict – The findings could be summarized under following heads: (1) Positive impact on role conflict – Supervisory behaviour (leader's initiation of structure), sales manager laissez-faire leadership, salesperson's belief that the key events in his life are due to chance or factors beyond his control and innovativeness required by the salesperson's job were positively related to role conflict, (2) Negative impact on role conflict – Outcome control, Outcome – capability control combination, job and sales experience, influence of organizational departments on salesman's activities, supervisory behaviour (supervisor's role clarity, leader consideration and salesforce participation), closeness of supervision and transactional leadership as well as transformational leadership were negatively related to role conflict.

Role ambiguity – The findings could be summarized under following heads: (1) Positive impact on role ambiguity – Capability control and Outcome control – activity control combination were positively related to role ambiguity, (2) Negative impact on

role ambiguity – Outcome control, activity control, outcome–capability control, activity- capability control, closeness of supervision, supervisory behaviour (leader consideration, leadership role clarity, salesforce participation, autonomy and feedback), transactional leadership as well as transformational leadership and information dimensions of output, activity and capability control were negatively related to role ambiguity.

Implications

The study will have important implications for sales organizations as it will help them choose the right kind of salesforce control system and supervisory behaviour taking into consideration its impact on role conflict and role ambiguity of salespeople. The study also makes clear the consequences of role conflict and role ambiguity. So, the sales organizations should be more careful in choosing the right kind of measures for reducing role ambiguity and role conflict of salespeople as it will have important consequences for salespeople and sales organization.

Directions for future research

This study explored the impact of salesforce control system and supervisory behaviour on role conflict and role ambiguity. The research in future should focus on determining the interrelation among role conflict and role ambiguity. Also other antecedents of role conflict and role ambiguity should be explored.

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