

Role conflict and role ambiguity in higher education

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ABSTRACT :This article aims to explain a conceptual framework of quality between the variables of leaderships, role conflict, and role ambiguity in predicting lecturers' performance. This article gives prediction to some theoretical concept of organizational behavior, leadership, and lecturers' performance, that this article is expected to contribute to sciencedevelopment, particularly on field of organizational behavior

KEYWORDS:Leadership, Role conflict, Role ambiguity,Lecturers' performance

I. INTRODUCTION

Higher education contributes much to better comprehension of complex issues of social and environment and creates continuous solution in future [1]. Scientists insist that higher education has moral responsibility for leaders as realization of its existence in society to educate the decision makers in future [2].The moral responsibility becomes a consequence for lecturers to show better performance. Lecturer's performance is in broad definition as value gained from performing the three responsibilities of higher education (education, research, and public service) that lecturers have both direct and indirect contributions to higher educationto achieve the goal [3].High achievement of lecturers is much influenced by the leadership applied in an organization. Leadership is ability to influence and inspire the members the way to think, to act, and to behave, that the life of an organization is very much influenced by the capabilityof the leader and other personals in the organization [4]. Leadership is assumed as a factor having big influence to the performance of organization, manager, and employees [5].

Previous researches of leadership were initially directed to the effective leadership (democratic or autocratic, social oriented or target oriented) to link leadership with variety organizational results [6, 7]. Researches of leadership then focused on subordinate perspective and suggested two main aspects of leadership: transactional and transformational. Transformational leadership has stronger positive effect than transactional leadership on employee's attitude toward job, work environment and affects their performance [8, 9]. Theory of social exchange toward leadership views that both leader and subordinate agree with the reward the subordinates receive on consideration of their work performance. The reward is given based on satisfying results of their job. Since the exchange is beneficial to both the leader and subordinate, their relationship will continue and expected performance is achieved [10]. Previous researches indicated that leadership behavior based on positive contingent reward can influence satisfaction and subordinates performance [11, 12], although in different condition the negative exists between the leader and performance [13].Lecturers in their job performance such roles as interpersonal roles, informational roles, and decisional roles [14]. Since organizational role dynamic theory was firstly introduced [15], research has widely been conducted to analyze the link between role ambiguity, role conflict and other kinds of link, including organizational commitment, job satisfaction, individually performance. Role is defined as behavior pattern, refers to role ambiguity of expectation around the roles, and role conflict involving the disagreement of claim by individual [16]. Researchers have been conducted on organizational role dynamic using meta-analytic approach [17, 18, 19]. This meta-analytic concludes in general that role conflict and role ambiguityhave negative link to tension and job satisfaction [18], other negative link is shown by ambiguity of role and conflict of role toward job performance [18,19].

Research on educational field stated that a lecturer is demanded in performing the duty to play many roles. Demand of the roles may make him got stress when the organization expectation to the lecturer's role is ambiguous (role ambiguity) and the lecturer is unable to satisfy the high expectation of organization (role conflict) [20]. Stress on job emerges because of the two condition faced by lecturers: role ambiguity and role conflict [15]. Role ambiguity emerges when an individual of a certain role does not comprehend the role expectation of one or more members, the role ambiguity resulted may stress the individual. Meanwhile, the role conflict happens when an individual of certain role cannot respond the expectation of one or more members. Role conflict also happens when the expectation of one or more members is parallel [21].Role conflict androle ambiguity have attracted particular attention of many researcher, though become part of role stressor, role conflict and role ambiguity are different cases and must be treated separately [22].

Role conflict and role ambiguity can be very dysfunctional for organization when resulting in negative assumption or destructive act [23, 24]. Role conflict and role ambiguity can also obstruct job implementation that threatens individual perception in finishing the given job [25]. Role conflict and role ambiguity is job stress that affects job satisfaction [26, 27]. That condition is caused by the role conflict and role ambiguity challenging individual competence to finish the job. When individual cannot finish the job, he could experience negative emotion and anxiety in work place. So do the role conflict and role ambiguity be able to challenge to finish the job that make individual to feel unable to finish the job [25,28]. Phenomena in higher education in Makassar City denote that role conflict and role ambiguity are not easy to avoid because higher education have limited human resources, makes them involving internal lecturers in some organizational functions, or use external lecturers to be involved and otherwise permit the internal lectures to be involved in other higher educations. This condition can be explained that higher education is a part of knowledge dimension, educational dimension, and social dimension. These dimensions give opportunity to lecturers to be involved in various functions of organization. Involving the lecturers in organizational functions has prospect to role conflict and role ambiguity because of their limited time and energy [24, 29].

The fact indicated the need to carry out research on the antecedent and consequence of conflict of role and ambiguity of role on individual in organization, by consideration that the causal factors and implication of conflict of role and ambiguity of role must be immediately scrutinized because bad impact would happen on both individual and organization. This necessity emerged because individual behaves differently on the role that it is necessary to define the implementation of the main role and other roles of individual in the perspective of conflict of role and ambiguity of role. When individual is involved in multiple roles, negative impact would unexpectedly happen [30].

A problem would then be highlighted in this article: Do the variables of leadership, conflict of role and ambiguity of role affect lecturers' performance? The problem is formulized in some questions that need to be answered based on a conceptual framework made in this article:

- [1] Does leadership affect lecturers' performance?
- [2] Does leadership affect the conflict of roles?
- [3] Does leadership affect the ambiguity of roles?
- [4] Does conflict of roles affect lecturers' performance?
- [5] Does ambiguity of roles affect lecturers' performance?

II. LEADERSHIP

Leadership is an effort to influence people through communication to achieve goal, a way to influence people by direction or instruction, an action that cause other people to act or respond and produce positive change, dynamic strength, important to motivate and coordinate the organization to achieve the goal, ability to create self-confidence and support from subordinates in order to achieve the goal [31]. Others view leadership as ability to influence people to achieve organizational goal [32, 33, 34]. Generally, researchers do effort to isolate behavior that makes the leaders to be effective meaning not to find who the effective leaders are, but to define what the effective leaders do, how they delegate duties, how they keep in touch with and motivate subordinates, how they carry out duties, and others. Some researches indicated that leadership behavior that fits in one situation may not fit in other situations [35].

The first research of identifying role-behavior of leader was basically intended to analyze the formal and informal groups in limited context by way of closed-experimental test (laboratory test) and field test. The research refers to the finding that role-behavior of leader is functionally involved in two general purposes: Group maintenance and Group Task achievement, where a group member of informal group or a leader appointed in a formal group is perceived to act as a leader when involving in an activity of increasing group maintenance and/or guaranteeing job performance and goal achievement [36]. A research on supervision or control and leadership in organization identified two main roles of leadership: people oriented (social role) and task oriented (role of duty). Many researches on the third dimension of leadership role, leaders' behavior when making decision, were conducted in various sectors both public and private and educational sector [37]. Situational leadership focuses on the leadership of situation around the leaders. This theory principle is that different situation needs different types of leadership. Based upon the statement, an effective leader needs applicable leadership to different situation. The situational leadership dynamic of Hersey and Blanchard can be divided into two: leadership style and follower development level [38]. Leadership style contains behavior pattern of someone to persuade others, covering instructing behavior (duty) and supporting behavior (relation). Instructing behavior (duty) assists members of organization to achieve goal by giving instruction, evaluation method, establishing time limit, establishing role, and showing the way to achieve the goal.

Supporting behavior (relation) is to support and assist the members of organization to feel comfortable with themselves, colleagues and situation. This behavior involves two-ways communication and give respond to those who give social support and emotional to others. The followers' development is the level where they have competence and commitment important to achieve goal and certain activity [38].

III. ROLE CONFLICT AND ROLE AMBIGUITY

Role is an expected act pattern of individual in involving other people in action. Role reflects a person's position in social system with the rights and obligations, authority, and responsibility. In interaction with other people, certain way is needed to anticipate their behavior. Role plays this function in social system [39]. Each role requires different behavior in the same job environment where an individual may play more than one roles. Employees and managers' activities are directed by their role perceptions: what to do in conformity with their point of view to their own roles and how others should behave in the roles. Manager performs some different roles and must be able to adapt well when moving from one role to another. Performing more than one role in an organization is certainly not an easy job and potentially to create obstruction in implementation. In some researchers conflict of individual roles in organization is generally focused on two main concepts: role conflict and role ambiguity [15, 22, 40].

Role conflict is two roles or more that simultaneously bring pressure and contradictory one with another in completion [41]. If an individual perceives or expects differently on other's role, he tends to experience role conflict because it is difficult to satisfy one role without rejection of other. Role conflict is two or more claims that an individual faces simultaneously in which satisfying one will make the others be obstructed to satisfy [39]. Role conflict emerges when an employee is expected to carry out a job differently from what other jobs or things require or in contrary with his personality [41]. Role conflict is a potential source of stress resulting in the job satisfaction to lost, leader's faith to reduce, and/or comfortable job atmosphere to avoid. There are Three types of role conflict, The First is a conflict between a person and a role where there maybe a conflict between The personality and expected role, The Second is the conflict between the role of expectation which contradict to how to play a role, and the last is a conflict between roles, emerged from the different requirements between two or more roles to be played at the same time. In some studies there is evidence that role conflict has a negative impact on the success and performance influenced by cultural differences, where role conflict related to the performance in inversi [42].

Role ambiguity is the uncertainty about what is expected related to the role performance. Role ambiguity is defined as the extent to how uncertainty one's role expectations [43]. It is an indicator of uncertainty of individuals with ambiguous condition [44]. Role ambiguity occurs when an individual does not have clear information about what to expect on the job or how the reward system is applied [41]. The close relationship between role conflict and this role ambiguity leads many studies to examine the effect of interaction of both concepts simultaneously on for example individual performance in organization [45]. However, some others examine separately the role ambiguity with intention to know the limits of this concept as they call it 'multidimensional' [46]. Better understanding of role will help people to know things other people expect to them and how they should act. When mistake arises in understanding the role during interaction, a problem will probably emerge. To do a job well, people need to know what is expected from them. The expectation is sometimes unclear because manager does not try to communicate it to subordinate or to do it adequately or subordinate miss understands. Role ambiguity can be stressful for individuals [21]. Previous empirical research confirmed the antecedent factors be the cause of role ambiguity. First, with regard to three uncertainties: expectations, behaviors, and consequences, due to the specific role of individual. In this case, if there is no clear information to provide clarity or to communicate them, an individual will then be faced with the problem of ambiguity role. Second, role ambiguity can also be caused by organizational factors, such as the change of organizational structure or feedback system of job. And Third, individual factors such as information processing biases can also be a trigger of role ambiguity. Role ambiguity as some other empirical research results stated can be minimized if there is a role differentiation or differentiation of one role from others in social systems such as organizations [18,47].

IV. LECTURER PERFORMANCE

Individual performance is a core concept frequently used in research of organizational behavior or in other fields. Since the early of 1970s, this concept of performance has been attempted for clarification and expansion by researchers and made significant progress in order to bring better understanding to main predictors and processes related to individual performance [48]. However, with continuous changes in organization, concepts of performance and conditions of achieving performance are also changing [49].

Performance is an extension of the situation where individual and expectation converge with regard to what should be done in relation to a role, and the performance is evaluation of various customs in the organization which requires clear standardization. The study of individual behavior in achieving performance can be done by using the approach proposed in expectation theory of Vroom and models of Porter-Lawler. Both models are commonly known in theory of motivation, but the concept offered from both models makes it possible to study in a wider construct [50]. A large part of individual's behaviors is under voluntary control and motivated [51]. This model focuses on three relationships: (1) effort-to-performance is individual's perception of probability that efforts will yield performance, (2) performance-to-outcome is individual's perception of probability that efforts will provide specific results or the extent to which an individual believes that performing at a particular level will lead to the achievement of the desired output, and (3) results and valence. Result (outcome) is all things that may potentially arise from the performance. Valence of a result is attractiveness or rapidity of value of the results to someone [52,53]. The third element is reward-personal goals relationship [52]. It is about the extent to which organization reward meets the needs of individual's personal goals and potential attractiveness of the benefits for individual. For Vroom the valence is individual preference to a particular outcome, in other words the expected values, attitudes, and utility [42].

Vroom models are considered to be able to explain the relationship between individual goal and organizational goal, and help to understand organizational behavior [54]. The Vroom model is developed by building business premise or strength (motivation) unequal to the power and performance. Motivation, satisfaction and performance are separate variables. Effort (strength or motivation) generates performance indirectly [55]. Performance links to ability, character, and role perception [54]. The use of role perceptual as antecedent of performance made the Vroom theory different from Porter-Lawler model [56]. Role Perception includes business direction which describes individual activity and behavior with a confidence that he must engage and succeed at work [55,57].

V. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Previous studies provide evidence that there is a positive relationship between variables of transformational leadership and employee performance. The findings explain that leadership has positive and significant effect on performance [58,59]. Studies conducted at higher education showed evidence that leadership has significant effect on the performance of DPK lecturers (state lecturers who are assigned a task to teach in private higher educations), where increasing leadership will improve the lecturers' performance [60]. Inconsistency finding is shown by a study of 201 employees of public sector security organization in Israel, the results of the confirmatory factor analysis provided evidence that transactional leadership style influenced insignificantly the employees' performance [61]. Another causality to show in this conceptual framework is the influence of leadership with role conflict and role ambiguity. Sometimes, people make requests that are not appropriate to the manager (leader) and so role conflict emerges [15,62]. Managers are frequently confronted with conflicting demands from superiors and subordinates [63]. It is said that the role conflict involves disagreement with the relative priority of two roles, or about how to perform a particular role. To reconcile the conflicting role expectations, managers may respond to the superior's expectations, because the superior has more power to managers than the subordinates [15]. Language barriers and communication errors can lead to role ambiguity for managers (leaders), because managers are also concerned about whether their expectations can be understood by subordinates [64]. Other studies of the effect of role conflict and role ambiguity on performance confirming the relationship of role conflict with performance and role ambiguity with performance are found in some literatures. Role conflict and role ambiguity have relationship with performance. Role conflict has positive effect to performance, role conflict has negative effect to performance, and role ambiguity has negative effect to performance [65,66,67].

Based on previous studies, it is described in a conceptual framework, as follows:

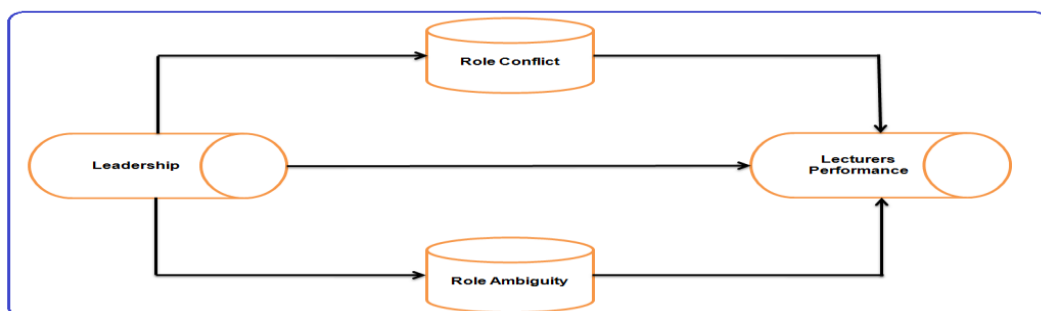


Figure : Conceptual framework showing the correlational links.

In higher educational setting lecturers are frequently involved in organizational structure of higher education in such position as a rector, dean, and head of study program. It could also be as a staff member of the college organizational unit. Involving a lecturer as staff member of an organizational unit is commonly found in the organizations of private higher education because of a limitation in human resources in operational activities. Lecturers may also involve in other organizations such as a consultant or advisor at government agencies and private sector and even in another private higher education as to run learning-teaching process. These phenomena may make individual unable to distinguish the primary role from the secondary role, and the consequence implementation of these roles be overlapping, which in turn leads individual into role conflict and role ambiguity. This research model departs from the basic idea that a lecturer has a number of roles and each role requires different behavior. When involved in higher education organization, the roles can be grouped on a primary role and secondary role. The primary role is giving lecture role. Other roles following are as parents, society personage, campus structural functionary, staff of campus organization, and so forth. Both primary and secondary roles sometimes need action at the same time, make the lecturer difficult to choose one role for precedence. This condition may create role conflict and role ambiguity to lecturers in particularly private higher education.

Research model is developed based on the theory of organizational behavior, which will specifically discuss about leadership, role conflict, role ambiguity, and performance. Leadership factor is an important factor in achieving lecturer's performance. Leadership and performance concern the efforts of leaders to act and to make positive change that lecturer's performance is achieved. Role conflict and role ambiguity are resistor variables mediating the relationship between leadership and effort to achieve lecturer's performance. Role conflict and role ambiguity in this article as a mediating variable consists of three dimensions: the relationship between individual and role, between role and role application, and between role and time. Role ambiguity in this study as a mediating variable is based on dimension of individual's understanding of his role [22]. Leadership refers to the concept of situational leadership [68] which focuses on leadership in a situation where the leader in different situations requires different types of leadership. Leadership style contains a pattern of behavior of a person to influence others, including instructing behavior (duty) and supporting behavior (relationship). Instructing behavior (duty) helps members of organization to achieve goal by instructions, to achieve goal by evaluation methods, to set time limit, to assign roles, and to show how to achieve the goal. Supporting behavior (relationship) gives support and helps members of organization to feel comfortable with the situation and their colleagues. This behavior involves two-way communication and response with social and emotional support to others. Leadership dimension consists of task-oriented leadership and relationship-oriented leadership [38]. Performance is work result in quality and quantity achieved by a lecturer in performing their duties in accordance with the responsibilities assigned to him. Lecturer performance as dependent variable in this study consists of dimensions of educating and teaching, research, public service.

VI. DISCUSSION

Analyzing individual characteristic in organization is important to support an understanding of lecturer's characteristics as individual in organization of higher education. The individual characteristics in this study cover age, gender, working period, class, position, and other job responsibilities in the organization. Individual maturity of thought following the increase of age reflected in role performance form the background of relationship between age and individual role. Gender does not give significant difference between men and women, but in a number of studies on role conflict and role ambiguity, it leads to female population. Other job responsibilities and marital status come from outside of the organization, but in some literatures they are considered having effect on individual role implementation within the organization they work for [66].

Linkage between the years of work and role implementation can be seen in individual's understanding to the role expectation. Meanwhile, class and position are strongly associated with a number of role expectations for the class or position which will affect other roles owned by individual. In organizational environment, role conflict is the perception or different expectations about the role of other person, as it is difficult to satisfy expectations without rejecting other expectations. When all roles are not enough to explain or not completely known, role ambiguity emerges, because individual was not sure how they should interact in this situation. Some studies found a negative relationship of role conflict behavior with individual performance in organization [18]. Role ambiguity and individual performance shows negative relation [69]. Using of variable of organizational context in analyzing leader initiating structure and leader consideration denoted that there is a negative relationship in explaining the relationship between the leader initiating structure and role ambiguity, and leader consideration has a negative relationship with the role ambiguity. Meanwhile, there is negative relationship between the leader initiating structure and role conflict, and so is there negative relationship between leader consideration and role conflict [18].

Referring to the empirical study the study on role conflict and role ambiguity in higher education by using both the role ambiguity and role conflict as mediating variables to explain the relationship between leadership and lecturer's performance is interested to carry out. The research on role conflict and role ambiguity in higher education is so far still limited. With regard to lecturers as unit of analysis in leadership studies, the role conflict and role ambiguity toward performance of lecturers are used to test the conceptual framework proposed in this article.

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