CHAPTER IX

BURNOUT AND ROLE CONFLICT
This Chapter attempts to discuss the concept of role conflict. Studies relating role conflict to a set of psychological variables suggest that role conflict is an important variable for formulating hypotheses in the present study. The studies on role conflict are reviewed and presented in the following pages. The research questions and the hypotheses linking role conflict to burnout are stated in this chapter.

Etymologically the term 'role' is derived from the Latin word 'Rotula' which stood for a sheet of parchment framed around a small wooden roller on which the 'parts' in a drama is written down (Sarbin & Allen, 1954). The meaning given to the term in the theatre has continued in the modern usage of the term 'role'. Later the term 'role' is referred to as the behaviour pattern expected of the incumbent of a given position in a social group or organization (Sarbin & Turner, 1972).

Role has significance to both the individual and the group. The concept has been used as a seminal one in the writings of Newcomb (1950). When expectations of a role are materially different or opposite a person tends to be in role conflict since there is no way to meet an expectation without rejecting the other. Role conflict occurs when a person is confronted with mutually contradictory and competing role expectations.

The term role conflict denotes the condition where an actor finds himself concurrently in two or more positions requiring contradictory role enactments (Sarbin & Allen, 1954). Secord & Backman (1964) suggest
that the condition where an actor is confronted with conflicting expecta-
tions is viewed as role conflict. Kahn et al (1964) identify role conflict
with one of the forms of role based stress, with the absence of role
ambiguity. Overload, difficulty in the task domain, the demands and the
requirements are closely associated with role conflict (Narayanan 1983d).
Payne (1971) suggests that role conflict exists whenever an individual
in a particular role is torn by conflicting demands.

Attention to organizational stress in general and role stress in
particular was drawn by Kahn et al (1964). The expectancies of signifi-
cant person indicate that inherent problems in the performance of a role
will produce inevitable stress (Pareek 1978). The concept of role is
inextricably linked with expectations. The organizational factors and
context assume importance due to their influence (Singh, 1986).

Role conflict is associated with the idea of demands, require-
ments or constraints imposed by behaviour settings and with the
difficulty in the task domain (Kahn et al, 1964). Workers who had the
responsibility for dealing simultaneously with some people inside the
organization and some outside it and having incompatibility of job
demands and role conflict exist whenever the conflicting job demands are
high (Kahn, 1978).

Role conflict affects motivation of the job holders (Tannenbaum
1966). According to Rapoport (1966) the participants in a conflict fall
under the influence of strong nonrational forces which push them
towards increasingly distinctive behaviour. Jains & Katz (1959) pointout
that majority of past research on intergroup and interpersonal conflict has focussed upon its destructive aspects. Conflict within an organization may call attention to specific problems which require change (Litterer, 1966). Such conflict tends to initiate a search for ways of reducing the conflict (March & Simon, 1958; Litterer, 1966).

Cherniss (1980a) holds the view that stress, strain, and the emotional detachment that is referred to as burnout is contributed by the two factors-role conflict and role ambiguity in work settings (Kahn et al., 1964).

**Research Questions:**

5.1 Whether a significant relationship exists be the scores of the individuals on the Burnout Inventory and on the Role conflict Differential?

5.2 Will there be significant differences between the scores of the High and the Low Groups on role conflict on the Burnout Inventory?

5.3 Will there be significant differences between the scores of the High and the Low Groups on burnout & on the Role conflict Differential?

5.4 Whether the profiles of burnout for the High and the Low Groups on role conflict will be parallel?

5.5 Whether the profiles of burnout for the High and the Low Groups on role conflict will be at the same mean level?

5.6 Whether the 'pooled' profiles of burnout for the High and the Low Groups on role conflict combined will be perfectly flat?
The staff in human service programs experienced the role overload as the most obvious type of conflict. Role overload is a major source of burnout. It contributes to increased stress and burnout (Cherniss, 1980a). Berkelly Planning Associates (1977) in their study found that role overload is strongly correlated with staff burnout rates. Cherniss (1980a) analysed the effect of role overload on burnout among the professionals employed in human service agencies. He found a relationship between role overload and burnout. In a study of 845 Social Security Administration employees Barad (1979) found that correlation exists between large case loads and burnout.

Professional bureaucratic role conflict occurs often in human service programs (Corwin, 1961; Kramer, 1974; Cherniss, 1980a). Orderliness, standardization, uniformity, efficiency, public accountability, and impersonality are emphasized by the bureaucratic mode of organizations (Merton, 1957). The special features of professional service ideal are the uniqueness of the individual, sensitivity to the special needs of each client, flexibility, individual initiative and resourcefulness, and the goal of personal growth and development. Hence it can be assumed that when professional practitioners are employed in bureaucratic organizations, they will experience person-role conflict to certain extent (Cherniss, 1980a). Inter-sender role conflict, intra-sender role conflict, intra-sender role conflict and person-role conflict are also identified as different types of role conflict which also induce stress and burnout (Kahn et al., 1964; Cherniss, 1980a; Udai Pareek, 1988).

Studies on physical education department chairpersons (Pohl, 1984), protective service workers (Barnes, 1986), School Principals

If the individual is having greater role conflict, the possibility to affect his/her health will be more. In a study role conflict is significantly correlated with higher pulse rates, abnormal electro-cardiographic readings, and obesity (Cooper & Payne, 1978). Foreman compared with shop workers are found to develop ulcers because their job induces more role conflict.

The review of literature stated above suggests that role conflict refers to a state in which the individual does not know what is expected from him/her. Various studies suggest that role conflict is closely associated with burnout. Hence the following hypotheses.

Hypotheses:

5.1 A significant relationship will exist between the scores of the individuals on the Burnout Inventory and on the Role Conflict Differential.

5.2 There will be significant differences between the scores of the High and the Low Groups on role conflict on the Burnout Inventory.
5.3 There will be significant differences between the scores of the High and Low Groups on burnout on the Role Conflict Differential.

5.4 The profiles of burnout for the High and the Low Groups on role conflict will be parallel.

5.5 The profiles of burnout for the High and the Low Groups on role conflict will be at the same mean level.

5.6 The 'pooled' profiles of burnout for the High and the Low Groups on role conflict combined will be perfectly flat.

Summary

This chapter reviewed the concept of role conflict elaborated in literature. Specifically, it is concerned with reviewing studies bearing on burnout. Based on the review of studies linking role conflict to burnout, this chapter has developed research questions and hypotheses.