



ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING AND INTERPERSONAL CONFLICT: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF ROLE AMBIGUITY

Kamran Naeem¹, Amjad Khan², Dr. Anjum Parvez³, Imran Naeem⁴

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.63544/jbii.v5i10.244>

Affiliations:

¹ Assistant Professor, Department of Management Sciences, Mir Chakar Khan Rind University, Sibi, Pakistan.
Email: kamran.naeem@mckru.edu.pk

² Department of Economics, University College Zhob, BUITEMS, Pakistan.
Email: amjadkhan90@yahoo.com

³ Associate Professor, Dean (Faculty of Management & Computer Sciences), Sardar Bahadur Khan Women's University, Quetta, Pakistan
Email: anj_parvez@yahoo.com

⁴ Examination Department, University of Balochistan, Quetta, Pakistan.
Email: imrannaeem06@yahoo.com

Corresponding Author's Email:

¹ kamran.naeem@mckru.edu.pk

Copyright:

Author/s

License:



Article History:

Received: 05.09.2026

Accepted: 25.09.2026

Published: 06.10.2026

Abstract

Organizational learning enables organizations to acquire, interpret, share, integrate, and institutionalize knowledge in response to changing internal and external conditions. This study examines the relationship between organizational learning and interpersonal conflict and tests role ambiguity as a mediating mechanism. Using a cross-sectional quantitative design, data were collected through closed-ended questionnaires from 245 employees working at different organizational levels across public, private, and non-governmental service organizations. Established multi-item measures assessed organizational learning at the individual, group, organizational, and inter-organizational levels, together with role ambiguity and interpersonal conflict. Regression and bootstrapped mediation analyses showed that organizational learning was negatively associated with role ambiguity and interpersonal conflict, whereas role ambiguity was positively associated with interpersonal conflict. The overall indirect effect of organizational learning on interpersonal conflict through role ambiguity was negative and statistically significant ($\beta = -0.4753$, $SE = 0.0683$, 95% CI $[-0.6517, -0.2949]$). Significant indirect effects were also observed for individual-, group-, organizational-, and inter-organizational-level learning, indicating that learning processes across organizational levels may reduce conflict by improving employees' understanding of responsibilities, authority, procedures, priorities, and performance expectations. The study extends organizational behaviour research by identifying role ambiguity as an explanatory link between organizational learning and interpersonal conflict. Practically, the findings suggest that organizations can strengthen role clarity and workplace relationships by improving knowledge sharing, collective interpretation, learning systems, and the institutionalization of knowledge. Because the study used cross-sectional, self-reported data and convenience sampling, the findings indicate statistical associations rather than causal effects.

Keywords: Organizational Learning, Role Ambiguity, Interpersonal Conflict, Knowledge Sharing, Role Clarity

1. Introduction

Organizations increasingly operate in environments characterized by technological change, knowledge intensity, interdependence, and continuously evolving work requirements. Under such conditions, organizational effectiveness depends not only on the acquisition of knowledge but also on the ability to interpret, share, integrate, and institutionalize knowledge in organizational processes and routines. In this study organizational learning is conceptualized multilevel phenomenon in organization, where knowledge and experiences are generated, shared, integrated and institutionalized. Knowledge generation is done at the individual learning and group learning level and embeds knowledge in routines and systems at organizational learning level; and inter-organizational learning extends knowledge exchange beyond organizational boundaries. The learning processes impact the availability, consistency and accessibility of role related information.



Organizational learning therefore represents an important organizational capability through which experience and information can be converted into knowledge that influences subsequent organizational action (Naeem et al., 2019). According to recent research, organizational learning involves organizational mechanisms that generate, interpret, transfer, retain, and incorporate knowledge into organizational practices and routines rather than just the accumulation of individual knowledge (Argote, 2011a; Lloria & Moreno-Luzon, 2014). Organizational learning has a very strong positive impact on performance (Naeem et al., 2026a). Organizations try to improve behavior, which brings positive and favorable outcomes. Hoy (2008) stated that experience curves made attention towards organizational learning (Hoy, 2008). Chang and Lee (2007) stated that organizations that learn could gain competitive advantage in market (Chang & Lee, 2007). Term organizational learning is closely related with knowledge management (Akbar, 2003; Günsel et al., 2011; Swart & Kinnie, 2010). Researchers suggest that organizational learning is concerned with the process and deal with knowledge, its acquisition, dissemination, storage; while knowledge management is mainly concerned with the flow and its administration within the organization. Patricia (2013) Moreno (2014) states that knowledge is something that people learn and learning its basically creating knowledge (Lloria & Moreno-Luzon, 2014; Patricia et al., 2013). Organizational learning is achieved by reviewing past experiences to develop knowledge for future use to enhance organizational performance (Argote & Miron-Spektor, 2011; Levitt & March, 1988). Vajihah Saadat (2016) called organization learning as medicine for several problems at organization. It is widely accepted that to avoid future mistakes organizations learn (Saadat & Saadat, 2016). It establishes a link between organization and its environment in a constructive and proactive way (Pérez López et al., 2006). Before being ingrained in organizational systems, structures, routines, and procedures, learning may evolve from individual insights into shared interpretations and coordinated action, according to the framework. According to recent research, cognitive hurdles may limit organizational learning, and organizations need ways to transform individual and group knowledge into behaviors that are beneficial to the company (Balarezo et al., 2024a; Zollo & Winter, 2002).

When workers don't know enough about their duties, performance standards, authority, priorities, processes, or the standards by which their work will be judged, role ambiguity arises (Dapeng et al., 2019). Long acknowledged as a significant role stressor (Rizzo et al., 1970a; Sawyer, 1992), role ambiguity has been linked to employee attitudes, well-being, performance, and other workplace outcomes, according to later studies (Anjum et al., 2026). Role ambiguity is linked to significant employee experiences and consequences, such as job alienation, occupational stress, burnout-related outcomes, and turnover-related processes, according to more recent research (Cheng et al., 2024; Maisonneuve et al., 2024; Naeem et al., 2022). These results imply that role clarity is a crucial aspect of workers' experiences in companies rather than just an administrative trait (Dapeng et al., 2019).

Organizational learning may represent an organizational-level condition that helps explain differences in employees' perceptions of role ambiguity. In order to comprehend interpersonal conflict, role ambiguity may also be crucial. Disagreement, interference, and unfavorable emotional responses between coworkers are all considered forms of interpersonal conflict. Unlike task disagreement, which may occasionally generate information sharing and alternate ideas, interpersonal conflict involves the social and emotive elements of professional engagement. Interpersonal conflict has been linked to dysfunctional employee outcomes, emotional strain, and decreased well-being, according to recent study (Jung et al., 2024). Research has also shown that workplace circumstances such as workload, decision power, supervisory support, and changing patterns of work may impact on employees' interpersonal conflict experiences ((Nikolova et al., 2023). A theoretically tenable mechanism linking interpersonal conflict and organizational learning is role ambiguity. Workers who are unclear about their duties and performance standards may view circumstances differently, feel uncomfortable about who owns a task, rely more on unofficial interpretations, or debate with coworkers about priorities and duties. On the other hand, workplaces with efficient learning procedures could give staff members more consistent information, shared interpretations, and clearer procedures. Consequently, lower role ambiguity may reduce the likelihood that uncertainty regarding responsibilities and expectations develops into interpersonal disagreement (Pervez et al., 2022). This logic suggests that organizational learning may be



associated with lower interpersonal conflict partly because organizational learning contributes to greater role clarity. despite the substantial literature on organizational learning, role ambiguity, and workplace conflict. Existing organizational-learning research has predominantly examined outcomes such as innovation, performance, competitiveness, knowledge creation, and organizational adaptability. Similarly, research on role ambiguity has often examined its consequences for employee attitudes, stress, performance, and turnover. Less attention has been directed toward examining whether role ambiguity serves as a mechanism through which organizational learning is associated with interpersonal conflict. Addressing this gap is important because it shifts attention from viewing organizational learning solely as a strategic or performance-related capability toward understanding how organizational learning may shape everyday employee interactions.

The present study therefore develops and tests a model where organizational learning is negatively associated with role ambiguity and interpersonal conflict, while role ambiguity is positively associated with interpersonal conflict. More specifically, organizational learning may reduce interpersonal conflict indirectly through lower levels of role ambiguity. The proposed model integrates organizational learning theory with role-based explanations of employee behavior and provides a support for examining how organizational knowledge processes may influence interpersonal workplace relationships.

The study contributes firstly by extending organizational-learning association with interpersonal conflict which influences workplace outcome, improves innovation and competitiveness. Secondly, it positions role ambiguity as an explanatory mechanism connecting organizational learning and its sub dimensions with interpersonal conflict. Third, it provides an empirical model through which managers can understand that organizational learning can be a source of role clarity and reduce interpersonal conflicts at organization.

2. Theoretical Framework

Organization acquires knowledge and organizational learning is a unit of acquiring knowledge and beside that organization learning process categorized as individual learning, group learning, organizational learning and inter-organizational learning. Concept of individual learning is explained by Argyris and Schon (1978) and stated that organizations learn through individuals (Argyris & Schon, 1978). Organizational learning starts with the individual and then becomes part of the organization (Argote, 2006; Ruiz J. et al., 2006). Several researchers stated that organizational learning passes through the level of individual group and then become part of organization; researchers also agree that learning occurs at all these levels (King, 2009; Wiseman, 2007). Group learning occurs when knowledge is acquired through experiences of individuals in group. It encompasses the shift of individual learning and knowledge with groups and peers. Some argue that group-learning process includes acting, feedback and then feedback is used and altered for future action. Organizational level when knowledge is shared from the group it is evaluated and validated by the organization and then implemented and embedded by the organization in its systems structures and policies as per its requirement. Therefore, close coordination and collaboration at organization level among groups is necessary for organizational learning to occur. Inter-organizational learning is different organizations working together share knowledge and learns from each other. When organizations collaborate with other organizations, they necessarily share information that they received from individuals through groups within organization. Researchers state that firm learn from their partner organization but in this learning prior experience has much influence. Such learning saves time and has less risk of potential problems (Lane & Lubatkin, 1998; Zollo & Winter, 2002); hence, it is a method to learn faster. Strategic alliances, joint ventures and collaborations are some forms in which inter-organizational learning took place to promote innovation (Karinna Vazquez, 2011; Zollo & Winter, 2002).

Organizational learning is mainly related with how experience and information are transformed into knowledge of how it is incorporated into organizational action. Argote (2011) state that organizations acquire knowledge from experience and use that knowledge to influence subsequent activities through organizational learning (Argote, 2011a). This perspective is particularly relevant to role ambiguity because employees need related information for their job, responsibilities, authorities, priorities and performance expectations from the employee. When such information is not complete, inconsistent, or difficult to interpret for employees, they



may experience confusion and uncertainty regarding what they are expected to do and how their action will be considered desirable performance. Thus, organizational learning can theoretically influence role ambiguity by shaping the quantity, quality, accessibility, and consistency of role-related knowledge available to employees. Therefore, we can propose;

Hypothesis 1: Organizational Learning would be negatively related to the level of Role Ambiguity.

H1a: Individual Level Learning would be negative related to the level of Role Ambiguity.

H1b: Group Level Learning would be negatively related to the level of Role Ambiguity.

H1c: Organizational Level Learning would be negative related to the level of Role Ambiguity.

H1d: Inter-Organizational Level Learning would be negative related to the level of Role Ambiguity.

Organizational learning is not limited to the knowledge acquisition only at organizational level but involves interconnected learning processes operates across different levels (Crossan et al., 1999). Foundation for the development of the knowledge is provided on individual learning level, group learning, that facilitates collective interpretation with shared understanding. Organizational learning embeds knowledge within organization and inter-organizational learning takes the knowledge development across boundaries of organization (Crossan et al., 1999; Jane e salk & Bernard I Simonin, 2012).

Interpersonal conflict is disagreement, tension and incompatibilities between employees which may arise due to perception, interest, expectations, values or interpretation of workplace situations. Some interpersonal disagreements can help in learning and problem solving, but relationship-oriented conflicts may negatively influence interpersonal relationships, cooperation, communication and knowledge exchange (De Dreu & Weingart, 2003). With the experience, feedback, interaction and reflection employees can learn the sources of interpersonal problems eventually it enhances employees; capacity of understanding workplace environment from different perspective than before. Which contributes to the modification of employee's behavior and can contribute to dysfunctional interpersonal interaction (Friedman & Victor J, 2002). Group learning improves knowledge sharing and dialogue, shared understanding, which contribute to improved coordination and eventually leads to fewer misunderstandings and may help reduce dysfunctional conflicts (Van Woerkom & Sanders, 2010). Organizational learning can also support constructive approaches to workplace conflict by institutionalized knowledge and improved organizational practices. Which eventually bring greater consistency and coordination and fewer interpersonal misunderstandings (Saikrishna, 2025). Organizations possess different interests, culture, identities, objectives and power positions. Knowledge exchange across boundaries, mutual understanding with improved coordination, which may cause fewer dysfunctional interpersonal conflicts (Akinci & Macpherson, 2025). Therefore, we propose that organizational learning would be negatively related with interpersonal conflict.

Hypothesis 2: Organizational Learning would be negatively related to the level of Interpersonal conflict.

H2a: Individual Level Learning would be negative related to Interpersonal conflict.

H2b: Group Level Learning would be negative related to Interpersonal conflict.

H2c: Organizational Level Learning would be negative related to Interpersonal conflict.

H2d: Inter-Organizational Level Learning would be negative related to Interpersonal conflict.

Role ambiguity is stated when employee don't have sufficient information about the job to meet the performance parameters. It includes the expectations, responsibilities, authority, procedures, and performance standards of the job (Rizzo et al., 1970a). Later researchers pointed out that role clarity enables employee to understand what is expected and how his/her performance will be evaluated (Sawyer, 1992). Thus, role ambiguity is fundamentally an informational condition that affects how employees interpret and enact their organizational roles.

Role theory gives the insight for relevance of role ambiguity and interpersonal conflict. Roles creates behavioral expectations related with their responsibilities and relationships within the organization. When these expectations are not clear, creates uncertainty in task boundaries, priorities, responsibilities and authority which eventually takes divergent interpretations when employees roles are interdependent and require coordination in organization. It create conditions conducive to interpersonal disagreement. In such situations



employees may rely on different assumptions or informal sources of information to determine appropriate behavior. Different employees interpret workplace behavior differently (Srikanth & Jomon, 2013). A coworker's involvement in a task, for example, may be interpreted by one employee as legitimate coordination but by another as unnecessary interference or an inappropriate attempt to exercise authority, which may produce frustration, disagreements and interpersonal tension (Vanishree, 2014). Consequently, role ambiguity may influence interpersonal conflict not simply because uncertainty is inherently conflictual, but because uncertainty concerning roles can make coordination and interpretation of coworkers' behavior more difficult.

Organizations with task interdependence, where responsibility boundaries are unclear, employees may experience disagreements related to task ownership, workload allocation, decision authority, accountability, and the appropriate sequence of activities (Singh, 1993). Therefore, ambiguity related to roles may provide circumstances in which differences in interpretation develop into interpersonal tension and conflict (Pervez et al., 2022). Therefore, we conceptualize that role ambiguity can be potential antecedent of interpersonal conflict rather than as a form of interpersonal conflict itself.

H3: Role ambiguity is positively associated with interpersonal conflict.

Organization which learn are the one which are engaged with continuous improvement. Role ambiguity is a situation where employee do not have clear guidance about what to do or what is expected from employee (Rizzo et al., 1970b), when person responsibilities are not clear or there are some confusions about it (Jones & Macpherson, 2005). Employee needs to know what they are expected and their role within the organization should be clear, having unclear information about the role may lead to tension and conflicts which decrease satisfaction (Slattery et al., 2008). The organization which learn continuously are hypothesized to be having role clarity rather role ambiguity based on previous literature discussed (Naeem et al., 2026b). Role ambiguity is raised due to lack of right information about the goals on which the job is to be based, and performance will be measured against the goals (Burney & Widener, 2007; Marginson, 2006). When there will be lack of information about the goals, the yardstick for measuring the goals will be supervisor not the goals itself; beside that employee will be confused on achievement their goal as some questions will remain unanswered such as, what to do?, how to do? And how much to do?

Researchers have found that repeated caution and blaming may rise the unrest and disturbed communication which may rise conflicts (Vince & Saleem, 2004). We assume that organizational learning equips organizations, shape its procedures and policy in a way that reduces the role ambiguity due to which some levels of interpersonal conflicts are controlled. Therefore, we can hypothesis;

Hypothesis 4: Role Ambiguity will mediate relationship between Organizational Learning and Interpersonal Conflict

H4a: Role Ambiguity will mediate relationship between Individual Level Learning and Interpersonal Conflict

H4b: Role Ambiguity will mediate relationship between Group Level Learning and Interpersonal Conflict

H4c: Role Ambiguity will mediate relationship between Organizational Level Learning and Interpersonal Conflict

H4d: Role Ambiguity will mediate relationship between Inter-organizational level Learning and Interpersonal Conflict

3. Methodology

A cross-sectional quantitative design was used in the study. Convenience sampling was therefore used to distribute closed-ended questionnaires to respondents at various organizational levels, including non-governmental organizations, public and private sector service organizations, aviation, banking, telecommunications, hospitality, media, education, and financial institutions. Questionnaire was developed using dimensions of Likert scale. Each questionnaire was accompanied by a cover letter that included enough details about the study's goal, background, and intended use of the data. The cover letter included a clear statement of the study title and the approximate time needed to finish the survey. A final sample of 245 valid questionnaires was kept for study after the replies were screened.



For organizational learning 18 items scale has been used given by (Lloria & Moreno-Luzon, 2014). Individual-level learning, group-level learning, organizational-level learning, and inter-organizational-level learning are the four aspects of organizational learning that the instrument was modified to evaluate. As a result, the dimensional structure used in this study is different from the original empirical factor structure described by Lloria and Moreno-Luzón (2014), but it keeps the same item content and arranges the items based on their organizational learning levels. Three items for individual-level learning, six for group-level learning, seven for organizational-level learning, and two for inter-organizational-level learning made up the modified scale.

For role ambiguity six items scale of C. David Shepherd & Leslie M. Fine (1994) has been used (Shepherd & Fine, 1994). The scale measure role clarity in an organizational domain, therefore the data is reverse coded to find out role ambiguity. Based on previous method and contextual theoretical framework role ambiguity is used as single construct. Following are individual items of role ambiguity scale and the coding used in statistical software is depicted as well.

For Interpersonal conflict four items scale has been adopted from (Lee & Lee, 2006). Interpersonal conflict is also used as a single construct in research.

4. Analysis

Table 1 provides descriptive statistics, reliability coefficients and Pearson correlation for the variables. The Cronbach's Alpha is 0.934 for role ambiguity and 0.934 for interpersonal conflict, 0.828 for individual-level learning, .925 for group-level learning, .921 for organizational-level learning, and .876 for inter-organizational-level learning. The correlation are statistically significant across study constructs. Role ambiguity and interpersonal conflict has negative correlation with all the four dimensions of organizational learning whereas role ambiguity and interpersonal conflict are having positive correlation.

Table 1

Correlations, Descriptive Statistics and Reliability

	(RA)	(IPC)	(OLIN)	(OLG)	(OLO)	(OLIO)
Role Ambiguity (RA)	.934					
Interpersonal Conflict (IPC)	.609**	.934				
Individual Level Learning (OLIN)	-.661**	-.481**	.828			
Group Level Learning (OLG)	-.722**	-.472**	.823**	.925		
Organizational Level Learning (OLO)	-.701**	-.458**	.790**	.884**	.921	
Inter-Organizational Level Learning (OLIO)	-.657**	-.421**	.696**	.775**	.851**	.876
Means	2.479	2.694	3.205	2.964	2.985	2.698
Standard Deviations	.985	1.152	0.985	1.019	1.015	1.260

Note. **p < .05

4.1. Organizational Learning and Role Ambiguity

Organizational learning is mainly the change is organizational knowledge (Fiol & Lyles, 1985), which mainly enables them to understand more about the organization functions and employees working for the organization and their need to know about their job and tasks to perform through the dynamic capabilities which are part of organizational capabilities (Argote, 2011b). It enables the transactive memory system of the organization through development from groups and experience in order to support efficient working and innovation (Argote, 2011b). Based on the literature the hypothesis that organizational learning will help in reducing the role ambiguity through experience learning and developing the dynamic capabilities which are emphatically tested in the section. Table 2 shows regression analysis of organizational learning and Role ambiguity with ($\beta = -0.751$, $t = -17.240$, $R^2 = 0.550$) having significant relation; thus, supporting Hypothesis 1 "Organizational Learning would be negatively related to the level of role ambiguity.". Hypothesis 1a prospect that "Individual Level Learning would be negative related to the level of role ambiguity"; regression analysis of Individual level learning and role ambiguity ($\beta = -0.661$, $t = -13.731$, $R^2 = 0.437$) having significant relation supports hypothesis 1a. Hypothesis 1b proposed, "Group Level Learning would be negative related to the level of role ambiguity"; hypothesis was tested using regression analysis depicts ($\beta = -0.698$, $t = -16.248$, $R^2 =$



0.521) having significant relation supports hypothesis 1b. Regression analysis of Organizational Level and Role ambiguity with ($\beta = -0.681$, $t = -15.341$, $R^2 = 0.492$) having significant relation; thus, supporting Hypothesis 1c "*Organizational Level Learning would be negative related to the level of role ambiguity*". Hypothesis 1d prospect that "*Inter-Organizational Level Learning would be negative related to the level of role ambiguity*"; regression analysis of inter organizational level learning and role ambiguity ($\beta = -0.513$, $t = -13.572$, $R^2 = 0.431$) having significant relation supports hypothesis 1d.

Table 2

Results from the Regression Analysis

Hypothesis	β	<i>t</i> -statistics	Significance Level (β)	R^2	F	Significance Level (F)
1	-.751**	-17.240	.000	.550	297.229	.000
1a	-.661**	-13.731	.000	.437	188.553	.000
1b	-.698**	-16.248	.000	.521	264.004	.000
1c	-.681**	-15.341	.000	.492	235.345	.000
1d	-.513**	-13.572	.000	.431	184.193	.000

Note. ** $p < .05$

4.2. Organizational Learning Relationship with Interpersonal Conflict

Table 3 shows regression analysis of organizational learning and Interpersonal conflict with ($\beta = -0.582$, $t = -8.806$, $R^2 = 0.242$) having significant relation; thus, supporting Hypothesis 2 "*Organizational Learning would be negatively related to the level of Interpersonal conflict*". Hypothesis 2a prospect that "*Individual Level Learning would be negative related to the level of Interpersonal conflict*"; regression analysis of Individual level learning and role ambiguity ($\beta = -0.562$, $t = -8.548$, $R^2 = 0.231$) having significant relation supports hypothesis 2a. Hypothesis 2b proposed, "*Group Level Learning would be negative related to the level of Interpersonal conflict*"; hypothesis was tested using regression analysis depicts ($\beta = -0.534$, $t = -8.348$, $R^2 = 0.223$) having significant relation supports hypothesis 2b. Regression analysis ($\beta = -0.520$, $t = -8.035$, $R^2 = 0.210$) having significant relation; thus, supporting Hypothesis 2c "*Organizational Level Learning would be negative related to the level of Interpersonal conflict*". Hypothesis 2d prospect that "*Inter-Organizational Level Learning would be negative related to the level of Interpersonal conflict*"; regression analysis of ($\beta = -0.384$, $t = -7.228$, $R^2 = 0.177$) having significant relation supports hypothesis 2d.

Table 3

Results from the Regression Analysis

Hypothesis	β	<i>t</i> -statistics	Significance Level (β)	R^2	F	Significance Level (F)
2	-.582**	-8.806	.000	.242	77.540	.000
2a	-.562**	-8.548	.000	.231	73.061	.000
2b	-.534**	-8.348	.000	.223	69.681	.000
2c	-.520**	-8.035	.000	.210	65.567	.000
2d	-.384**	-7.228	.000	.177	52.241	.000

Note. ** $p < .05$

4.3. Role Ambiguity and Interpersonal Conflict

In Table 4, regression analysis shows that role ambiguity has a direct significant relation having statistically significant ($\beta = 0.711$, $t = 11.954$, $R^2 = 0.370$, $F = 142.839$) and supports Hypothesis 3. This indicates that increase in role ambiguity will increase in interpersonal conflicts.

Table 4

Results from the Regression Analysis

Hypothesis	β	<i>t</i> -statistics	Significance Level (β)	R^2	F	Significance Level (F)
3	.711**	11.954	.000	.370	142.893	.000

Note. ** $p < .05$

4.4. The Mediating Role of Role Ambiguity on the Relationship Between Organizational Learning and Interpersonal Conflict



The results from the mediation role of role ambiguity in the relation between organizational learning and interpersonal conflict, using 95% biased corrected bootstrap intervals indicates that role ambiguity significantly mediates the relationship in Table 5. The indirect effect of organizational learning on interpersonal conflict mediated by role ambiguity is negative and statistically significant ($\beta = -0.4753$, $SE = 0.0683$) with 95 % bootstrap confidence interval ranging from (-0.6517 to -0.2949).

For individual level learning ($\beta = -0.3992$, $SE = 0.0594$) with 95% CI (-0.5565, -0.2523). The CI excludes zero, indicating the mediating effect is statistically significant. For group level learning indirect effect shows ($\beta = -0.4560$, $SE = 0.0638$) with (-0.6250, -0.2956) 95% CI suggests that knowledge sharing, discussion and learning with groups may contribute to clearer and better understanding of job responsibilities and performance expectations. The indirect effect of organizational level learning show ($\beta = -0.4500$, $SE = 0.0654$) statistically significant with 95% CI (-0.6258, -0.2906) indicates that organizational learning facilitates the consistency and availability of information at organization, which eventually reduce role ambiguity and interpersonal conflict consequently. Finally for inter-organizational learning ($\beta = -0.3506$, $SE = 0.0504$) is statistically significant indirect effect with 95% CI (-0.4837, -0.2247), suggests that exchanges of learning and knowledge across organizational boundaries contribute to reduced role ambiguity and subsequently helps in lowering interpersonal conflict.

Table 5

Indirect Effect Organizational Learning and Interpersonal Conflict

Variable	Standardized Indirect effects (β)	SE	95% biased corrected confidence interval	
			Lower Bounds	Upper Bounds
OL-RA- IPC	-.4753**	.0683	-.6517	-.2949
OLIN-RA- IPC	-.3992**	.0594	-.5565	-.2523
OLG-RA- IPC	-.4560**	.0638	-.6250	-.2956
OLO-RA- IPC	-.4500**	.0654	-.6258	-.2906
OLIO-RA- IPC	-.3506**	.0504	-.4837	-.2247

Organizational Learning (OL) (Independent Variable); OLIN=Individual level Learning (Independent Variable); OLG= Group Level Learning (Independent Variable); OLO= Organizational Level Learning (Independent Variable); OLIO=Inter-Organizational Level Learning (Independent Variable); Role Ambiguity (RA) (Mediator); Interpersonal Conflict (IPC) (Dependent Variable); Bootstrap Standard Error (SE); Number of bootstrap samples are 5000

5. Discussion

The study examine the mediating role of role ambiguity in relationship between organizational learning and interpersonal conflict. The analysis and results provided the empirical evidences that organizational learning is negatively associated with interpersonal conflict and role ambiguity, and role ambiguity mediates the relationship between organizational learning and interpersonal conflict. The findings suggest that for performance-related outcomes and employee productivity it is important to have role clarity and better interpersonal relationships. Conflict is influenced by workplace conditions and may be associated with emotional and behavioral outcomes, but conflict is a multi-dimensional phenomenon. Therefore, interpersonal conflicts should not be generalized to all types of disagreements that have evolved. Job related disagreements can evolve due to role ambiguity which can lead to interpersonal conflicts and role ambiguity and interpersonal conflict is positively associated.

The findings are also in-line with the broader organizational learning literature, where it is emphasized that organizational learning is more than individual knowledge acquisition. Learning becomes organizationally meaningful when knowledge is transferred, retained, interpreted collectively, and incorporated into organizational routines. Besides that, organizational learning can be constrained by different barriers which require proper mechanism for converting individual knowledge into collective knowledge to use it as useful organizational practice (Balarezo et al., 2024b). Employee also require information required related to job, responsibilities and performance; and when this information and knowledge is effectively



shared in policies and procedures, employee feels clarity about their roles, are then able to perform as per the organization's expectations. Therefore, the negative association between organizational learning and role ambiguity provides support for integrating organizational learning with role-based explanations of employee experiences. The bootstrapped indirect effect reported in the manuscript is statistically different from zero because the confidence interval does not include zero. This provides evidence consistent with the proposition that role ambiguity is an explanatory mechanism connecting organizational learning with interpersonal conflict.

The proposed mediation model also implies that role ambiguity is positively related to interpersonal conflict. The theoretical explanation is that uncertainty regarding responsibilities, authority, priorities, procedures, and performance expectations may create conditions in which employees interpret workplace situations differently. Where employees are uncertain about task ownership or expected behavior, disagreements may emerge concerning who should perform particular activities, how work should be completed, or which priorities should receive attention.

This argument is consistent with the established role-stressor literature and with recent evidence demonstrating that role ambiguity remains relevant to employee experiences and organizational outcomes. Recent research has examined role ambiguity in relation to work alienation, turnover-related processes, and occupational stress, demonstrating that uncertainty surrounding one's role remains an important organizational phenomenon.

The findings of the study are meaningful because at some points shifts the focus of management from interpersonal conflict to roles and their communication to employees, which can be a potential cause of unrest and conflicts at the organization.

6. Limitations and Future Research

Despite its theoretical and practical implications, the study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings. Longitudinal or time-lagged research would be necessary to provide stronger evidence regarding whether organizational learning precedes changes in role ambiguity and whether those changes subsequently influence interpersonal conflict. The study is based on self-reported survey measures collected using convenience sampling from service industry. Future research can collect data from employees having temporal separation and from multiple data sources where conflicts are reported using different sampling method from different sectors and different geographical areas analyzed through longitudinal or multilevel research.

The study only explains role ambiguity as a theoretical meaningful explanation, whereas future research can include psychological safety, communication quality, trust, perceived organizational support and other such factors as mediators. Leadership styles and organizational climate can also be studied in future research for better understanding.

Author's Contributions

All authors participated in ideation, development, and writing the manuscript. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

Funding Statement

The authors did not receive financial support from any funding agency or external organization for the research, authorship, or publication of this article.

Informed Consent

Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to data collection. Participants were informed about the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of their participation, and their right to withdraw at any time without any consequences. The confidentiality and anonymity of respondents were guaranteed throughout the research process.



Data Availability

The datasets generated and analysed during the current study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request. The authors are committed to transparency and will provide detailed methodological information and analysis protocols upon request.

References

- Akbar, H. (2003). Knowledge levels and their transformation: Towards the integration of knowledge creation and individual learning. *Journal of Management Studies*, 40(8), 1997–2021. <https://doi.org/10.1046/j.1467-6486.2003.00409.x>
- Akinci, C., & Macpherson, A. (2025). 'A marriage of convenience': Inter-organizational learning through strategic collaboration. *British Journal of Management*, 36(3), 1205–1218. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8551.12898>
- Anjum, P., Naeem, K., & Shama, S. (2026). Micromanagement, psychological well-being, and work-life balance: Examining their impact on organizational commitment among Generation Z in Pakistan. *Journal of Management & Social Science*, 3(2), 279–298.
- Argote, L. (2006). Organizational learning: Creating, retaining and transferring knowledge. In M. Easterby-Smith & M. A. Lyles (Eds.), *The Blackwell handbook of organizational learning and knowledge management* (2nd ed.). Wiley-Blackwell. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199275212.003.0015>
- Argote, L. (2011). Organizational learning research: Past, present and future. *Management Learning*, 42(4), 439–446. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1350507611408217>
- Argote, L., & Miron-Spektor, E. (2011). Organizational learning: From experience to knowledge. *Organization Science*, 22(5), 1123–1137. <https://doi.org/10.1287/orsc.1100.0621>
- Argyris, C., & Schön, D. A. (1978). *Organizational learning: A theory of action perspective*. Addison-Wesley.
- Balarezo, J. D., Foss, N. J., & Nielsen, B. B. (2024). Organizational learning: Understanding cognitive barriers and what organizations can do about them. *Management Learning*, 55(5), 741–768. <https://doi.org/10.1177/13505076231210635>
- Burney, L., & Widener, S. K. (2007). Strategic performance measurement systems, job-relevant information, and managerial behavioral responses—Role stress and performance. *Behavioral Research in Accounting*, 19, 43–69.
- Chang, S., & Lee, M. (2007). A study on relationship among leadership, organizational culture, the operation of learning organization and employees' job satisfaction. *The Learning Organization*, 14(2), 155–185. <https://doi.org/10.1108/09696470710727014>
- Cheng, C. H., Li, M. H., Tang, B. J., & Cheng, Y. R. (2024). The impact of knowledge management and organizational learning promotion in small and medium enterprises on the implementation of Industry 4.0 and competitiveness. *Administrative Sciences*, 14(8), Article 161. <https://doi.org/10.3390/admsci14080161>
- Crossan, M. M., Lane, H. W., & White, R. E. (1999). An organizational learning framework: From intuition to institution. *Academy of Management Review*, 24(3), 522–537. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.1999.2202135>
- Dapeng, L., Naeem, K., Durrani, D. K., & Anjum, M. A. (2019). High-performance work practices versus work-role ambiguity. *Human Systems Management*, 38(2), 141–148. <https://doi.org/10.3233/HSM-180381>
- De Dreu, C. K. W., & Weingart, L. R. (2003). Task versus relationship conflict, team performance, and team member satisfaction: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 88(4), 741–749. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.88.4.741>
- Fiol, C. M., & Lyles, M. A. (1985). Organizational learning. *Academy of Management Review*, 10(4), 803–813. <https://doi.org/10.2307/258048>
- Friedman, V. J. (2002). The individual as agent of organizational learning. *California Management Review*, 44(2), 70–89. <https://doi.org/10.2307/41166123>



- Gunsel, A., Siachou, E., & Acar, A. Z. (2011). Knowledge management and learning capability to enhance organizational innovativeness. *Procedia – Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 24, 880–888. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2011.09.012>
- Hoy, F. (2008). Organizational learning at the marketing/entrepreneurship interface. *Journal of Small Business Management*, 46(1), 152–158. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-627X.2007.00237.x>
- Jones, O., & Macpherson, A. (2005). Organisational learning and strategic renewal in owner-managed SMEs: Institutionalizing network knowledge. In *Proceedings of the Sixth International Conference on HRD Research and Practice across Europe*.
- Jung, J. H., Choi, G., & Ang, S. (2024). Does belief in supernatural agents moderate the association between interpersonal conflict at work and worker well-being? *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 63(3), 596–616. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jssr.12913>
- King, W. R. (2009). Knowledge management and organizational learning. In W. R. King (Ed.), *Knowledge management and organizational learning* (Annals of Information Systems, Vol. 4, pp. 3–13). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4419-0011-1_1
- Lane, P. J., & Lubatkin, M. (1998). Relative absorptive capacity and interorganizational learning. *Strategic Management Journal*, 19(5), 461–477.
- Levitt, B., & March, J. G. (1988). Organizational learning. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 14, 319–340.
- Lloria, M. B., & Moreno-Luzon, M. D. (2014). Organizational learning: Proposal of an integrative scale and research instrument. *Journal of Business Research*, 67(5), 692–697. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2013.11.029>
- Maisonneuve, F., Groulx, P., Galy, A., Chênevert, D., & Cossette, M. (2024). The cost of protecting resources: A cross-sectional study on the interaction between LMX and role ambiguity on work addiction and burnout among Canadian first-level healthcare managers. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 15, Article 1298001. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2024.1298001>
- Marginson, D. (2006). Information processing and management control: A note exploring the role played by information media in reducing role ambiguity. *Management Accounting Research*, 17(2), 187–197. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.mar.2005.11.002>
- Naeem, K., Karim, J., & Khan, A. (2019). Competition shadow relation with organizational learning. *Pakistan Studies*, 10(2).
- Naeem, K., Khan, M. A., Lodhi, S., & Ibrar, M. (2022). Impact of Big Five factors of personality factors on employee turnover intentions in private banking sector; Mediating effect of work-life balance. *Competitive Educational Research Journal*, 3(1), 157–175. <https://cerjournal.com>
- Naeem, K., Shah, J. A., Durrani, D. K., Khan, A., & Naeem, I. (2026). Organizational learning and job embeddedness: An analysis in the service industry. *International Journal of Business and Management Sciences*, 7(4), 315–325. <https://doi.org/10.63468/ijbms.7.4.22>
- Nikolova, I., Caniëls, M. C. J., & Sverke, M. (2023). Qualitative job insecurity and extra-role behaviours: The moderating role of work motivation and perceived investment in employee development. *Economic and Industrial Democracy*, 44(2), 547–572. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0143831X221081167>
- Pérez López, S., Montes Peón, J. M., & Vázquez Ordás, C. J. (2006). Human resource management as a determining factor in organizational learning. *Management Learning*, 37(2), 214–239. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1350507606063442>
- Pervez, A., Naeem, K., Naeem, I., Lodhi, S., & Khan, M. C. (2022). Role ambiguity versus job embeddedness; Mediation of interpersonal conflict. *Journal of Contemporary Issues in Business and Government*, 27(5), 2635–2644. <https://cibg.org.au/>
- Rizzo, J. R., House, R. J., & Lirtzman, S. I. (1970). Role conflict and ambiguity in complex organizations. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 15(2), 150–163. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2391486>
- Ruiz, J. G., Mintzer, M. J., & Leipzig, R. M. (2006). The impact of e-learning in medical education. *Academic Medicine*, 81(3), 207–212. <https://doi.org/10.1097/00001888-200603000-00002>



- Saadat, V., & Saadat, Z. (2016). Organizational learning as a key role of organizational success. *Procedia – Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 230, 219–225. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2016.09.028>
- Saikrishna, M. B. (2025). Managing interpersonal workplace conflict: A configurational approach. *International Journal of Conflict Management*, 36(5), 943–972.
- Salk, J. E., & Simonin, B. I. (2012). Collaborating, learning and leveraging knowledge across borders: A meta-theory of learning. In M. Easterby-Smith & M. A. Lyles (Eds.), *Handbook of organizational learning and knowledge management* (2nd ed., pp. 605–633). Wiley.
- Sanabria, P. E., Aponte, D., & Zapata, C. (2013). A model of organizational learning in practice. *Estudios Gerenciales*, 29, 439–444. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.estger.2013.11.009>
- Sawyer, J. E. (1992). Goal and process clarity: Specification of multiple constructs of role ambiguity and a structural equation model of their antecedents and consequences. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 77(2), 130–142. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.77.2.130>
- Shepherd, C. D., & Fine, L. M. (1994). Role conflict and role ambiguity reconsidered. *Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management*, 14(2), 57–65. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08853134.1994.10753985>
- Singh, J. (1993). Boundary role ambiguity: Facets, determinants, and impacts. *Journal of Marketing*, 57(2), 11–31. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1252024>
- Slattery, J. P., Selvarajan, T. T., & Anderson, J. E. (2008). The influences of new employee development practices upon role stressors and work-related attitudes of temporary employees. *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 19(12), 2268–2293. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09585190802479512>
- Srikanth, P. B., & Jomon, M. G. (2013). Role ambiguity and role performance effectiveness: Moderating the effect of feedback seeking behaviour. *Asian Academy of Management Journal*, 18(2), 105–127.
- Swart, J., & Kinnie, N. (2010). Organisational learning, knowledge assets and HR practices in professional service firms. *Human Resource Management Journal*, 20(1), 64–79. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1748-8583.2009.00115.x>
- Van Woerkom, M., & Sanders, K. (2010). The romance of learning from disagreement: The effect of cohesiveness and disagreement on knowledge sharing behavior and individual performance within teams. *Journal of Business and Psychology*, 25(1), 139–149. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10869-009-9136-y>
- Vanishree, P. (2014). Impact of role ambiguity, role conflict and role overload on job stress in small and medium scale industries. *Research Journal of Management Sciences*, 3(1), 10–13.
- Vazquez, K. (2011). *Correlates of interpersonal conflict* [Doctoral dissertation, Florida Atlantic University].
- Vince, R., & Saleem, T. (2004). The impact of caution and blame on organizational learning. *Management Learning*, 35(2), 133–154. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1350507604043022>
- Wiseman, E. (2007). The institutionalization of organizational learning: A neoinstitutional perspective. *OLKC 2007: "Learning Fusion"*, 1112–1136.
- Zollo, M., & Winter, S. G. (2002). Deliberate learning and the evolution of dynamic capabilities. *Organization Science*, 13(3), 339–351. <https://doi.org/10.1287/orsc.13.3.339.2780>