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AN EXPLORATORY INVESTIGATION OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE
INFORMATION GAP AND ROLE CONFLICT AND AMBIGUITY IN
ORGANISATIONS

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for the degree of Master of Business Studies in Human
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ABSTRACT

The research on the information gap in organisations is very limited. This is partially due to the difficulties surrounding the theoretical definition and measurement of the construct.

The aim of the current research was to explore the multi-dimensional nature of the information gap, and to investigate the relationship between the information gap and role conflict and ambiguity in an organisational setting. The dimensions that were considered were the size of the gap, and the position of information levels within that gap.

Ten research questions provided a framework for the analysis of results. These objectives focussed on two areas. Firstly, the present and preferred use of various topics and sources of information, and the discrepancies resulting from this. This provided a replication of research done by Sligo (1986). The second focus of the research was an investigation of the relationship between the information gap and role conflict and ambiguity. In order to do this the methodology used by Sligo was refined to allow the position of information levels within the gap to be analysed.

The results of the research suggest that participants perceived the largest information gap on topics which gave them feedback about their performance. They preferred to receive information from formal interpersonal sources. Generally interpersonal sources were preferred over print sources. Investigation of the information gap and role stressors found clear associations between the size and position of levels of information within the gap, and the levels of role ambiguity and conflict found. As the size of the gap increased, higher levels of role conflict and ambiguity were found. Where the information gap was small, lower levels of conflict and ambiguity were found. The implications of these relationships for management intervention was discussed.

On the basis of the findings suggestions for future research were made. These included further investigation of the multi-dimensional nature of the information gap, and the need to look at other outcome variables for which the level of information gap may be an antecedent. It was also suggested that consideration be given to factors which may moderate the relationship between the gap and future outcome variables.

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