

## **From passive leaderships to hostility behaviors in demanding and stressful work contexts**

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### **Abstract**

The demanding and complex nature of the work of law enforcement professionals, along with the increasing pressure on them derived from the current ever-changing and even disruptive work environment, can lead these professionals to feel more stressed and less dedicated to work. Furthermore, the organizational structure in which law enforcement work can promote undesirable behaviors and impair their well-being. In work environments characterized by passive leaderships, as that of the law enforcement, employees can be unable to meet the job expectations given the lack of involvement of the leader in the decision-making processes and work duties. This situation may set off a negative spiral in which police professionals can show high levels of role conflict, which in turn can lead them to feel emotionally exhausted and exhibit hostile behaviors with both colleagues and service users. In this way, the leaders' avoidance of decision-making and demanding work responsibilities can lead law enforcement professionals to live very complicated role conflict situations, influencing very negatively their work. In other words, in avoided-based work environments, role conflict can act as a negative driver of the employees' well-being, who may end up exhibiting hostile actions with people around them. We hypothesize that strengthening the potential positive effects of several personal resources and organizational variables, police professionals can protect themselves from the consequences of role conflict situations within stressful work environments.

On a sample of law enforcement professionals and drawing on theoretical frameworks of challenge-hindrance stressors (Cavanaugh et al., 2000) and the conservation of resources (Hobfoll et al., 2018) theories, the study addresses two research questions: i) analyze the role of role conflict on both employees' hostility and emotional exhaustion in work environments where passive leaderships are present, ii) analyze the role of personal resources and organizational variables as buffers of role conflict situations in demanding and stressful work contexts.

The results suggest that passive leaderships can act as drivers of role conflict events, which, in turn, lead to negative situations related to the employees' well-being and work-related behaviors. It seems clear that this kind of negative situations can be the origin of new role conflicts, giving rise to new negative situations which, in turn, fuel a destructive spiral for the employees and for the organization. Moreover, job resources as self-efficacy or organizational variables as interactional justice, meaning of work or positive family-work enrichment can act as moderators of the negative consequences of role conflict, allowing law enforcement professionals to meet their expectations when passive leaderships are present. Thus, these variables can help law enforcement professionals ensure their well-being and avoid inappropriate and hostile behaviors when expectations and policies are inconsistent or poorly defined.

The huge importance of law enforcement professionals' work and its repercussions for the society require the effective formulas to avoid the destructive consequences of role conflict. Avoiding passive leaderships and promote constructive ones can thwart the presence of role conflict in law enforcement institutions. In this way, workspaces based on fostering transparent and fluid communication, participation in decision making, consistent expectations, and well-implemented policies, procedures, or systems are helpful for improving the well-being of law enforcement professionals, while avoiding counterproductive behaviors. In addition, respectful interpersonal treatment, clarity in decision-making procedures, strengthening service values and promoting the enrichment between family and work can also lead to positive experiences and behaviors in the workplace. It is mandatory that human resource managers and policy makers design and implement strategies based on stimulating positive experiences in which human resources development, public service quality and employees' well-being are main priorities.

## **References**

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