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CONFLICT AND AMBIGUITY AS MEDIATORS BETWEEN JOB CREEP AND EMPLOYEE VOICE

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Abstract: *The aim of this study is to examine the effect of job creep on employee voice and the mediating roles of role conflict and role ambiguity. Using a quantitative relational survey design, data were collected through questionnaires from 393 healthcare employees at Karaman Hospital. Reliability, frequency, and correlation analyses were conducted using IBM SPSS; confirmatory factor analysis was performed with IBM SPSS AMOS; and mediation analyses were carried out using Hayes' Process Macro Model 4. The results indicate that job creep significantly increases both role conflict and role ambiguity. In addition, role conflict and role ambiguity have positive effects on employee voice. Together, job creep, role conflict, and role ambiguity explain a substantial proportion of the variance in employee voice. Mediation analyses further revealed a significant indirect effect of job creep on employee voice, indicating that role conflict and role ambiguity partially mediate this relationship at a low level.*

Keywords: *Job Creep, Employee Voice, Role Conflict, Role Ambiguity, Healthcare Workers.*

JEL classification: D23, M10, M12

INTRODUCTION

In contemporary work settings, the increasing flexibility, ambiguity, and incremental broadening of job descriptions often lead to misalignments between employees' actual responsibilities and organizational expectations. One prominent manifestation of this phenomenon is job creep, which describes the gradual normalization of additional tasks that employees initially undertake on a voluntary basis but that later become implicitly embedded in their formal roles (Van Dyne & Ellis, 2004). This dynamic can be meaningfully interpreted through Role Theory, which posits that unclear, inconsistent, or competing role expectations disrupt individuals' ability to perform effectively

within organizations (Kahn et al., 1964). Both classical and contemporary studies consistently demonstrate that role conflict and role ambiguity are strongly associated with adverse outcomes, including burnout, reduced job satisfaction, heightened turnover intentions, and diminished performance (Rizzo et al., 1970; Örtqvist & Wincent, 2006). These role-related stressors tend to be particularly pronounced in high-demand sectors such as healthcare, where emotionally charged tasks and time-sensitive decision-making are common, thereby intensifying employees' experiences of emotional exhaustion (Mwakyusa & Mcharo, 2024).

Role-related stressors also shape how employees communicate and engage within organizational settings. Employee Voice refers to employees' discretionary expression of constructive ideas, concerns, or suggestions intended to support organizational improvement (Morrison, 2014). However, voice behavior is likely to diminish in contexts characterized by uncertainty and role conflict, as employees may fear that speaking up could overstep role boundaries, expose them to interpersonal or professional risks, or trigger negative reactions. Such concerns are especially salient when role expectations are ambiguous or when employees face competing demands (Tangirala & Ramanujam, 2008). Empirical evidence further indicates that role conflict undermines job satisfaction and work motivation, which in turn weakens employees' willingness to engage in voice behaviors (Jawahar et al., 2023; Rizzo et al., 1970; Örtqvist & Wincent, 2006). In contrast, supportive leadership practices and psychologically safe work environments can buffer these negative effects by fostering trust and encouraging employees to share their views openly (Qi & Liu, 2017; Soyalina & Karabey, 2020; Jabbar, Haider & Qureshi, 2023).

Within this framework, the literature reveals a notable gap in empirically testing an integrative model that explains how job creep influences employee voice through the mechanisms of role conflict and role ambiguity. Research on job creep has largely concentrated on outcomes such as increased workload, extra-role behaviors, and burnout (Van Dyne & Ellis, 2004), whereas studies on employee voice have predominantly examined antecedents including leadership practices, psychological safety, and organizational climate (Morrison, 2014). Despite this separation, prior work provides indirect evidence that the subtle expansion of job responsibilities and escalating job demands obscure role boundaries, thereby heightening role conflict and role ambiguity (Jackson & Schuler, 1985). Accordingly, examining the effects of job creep on employee voice via these role-related stressors offers a meaningful contribution by addressing an important theoretical and empirical gap in the literature. Moreover, analyses conducted within the healthcare context are expected to yield valuable practical insights for clarifying task allocation and reinforcing organizational communication channels.

Accordingly, this study seeks to investigate the mediating roles of role conflict and role ambiguity in the relationship between job creep and employee voice within the healthcare sector, a context characterized by its dynamic structure and continuously evolving conditions. The findings are expected to offer valuable insights into improving task allocation processes and strengthening organizational communication channels. In this respect, the first section of the study outlines the concepts of job creep, employee voice, role conflict, and role ambiguity within a theoretical framework and evaluates the relationships among these variables based on the existing literature. The second section details the research methodology, followed by the presentation of

empirical findings in the third section. Finally, the concluding section discusses the results, offers recommendations for practice, and emphasizes the study's theoretical contributions.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

Job Creep

Job creep refers to the process through which additional tasks that employees initially undertake on a voluntary basis are gradually absorbed into their routine job responsibilities over time (Van Dyne & Ellis, 2004). This process often results in a misalignment between employees' assumed roles and organizational expectations, thereby contributing to increased workload and strain. Job creep typically emerges from the progressive blurring, flexibilization, and expansion of job descriptions, conditions that can generate stress related to both task execution and broader organizational roles (Kahn et al., 1964).

From the perspective of Role Theory, job creep can be interpreted as a salient indicator of role conflict and role ambiguity. When role expectations are unclear or contradictory, employees' functional behaviors are disrupted, leading to adverse outcomes such as heightened burnout, reduced job satisfaction, and stronger intentions to leave the organization (Rizzo et al., 1970; Örtqvist & Wincent, 2006). These effects are particularly pronounced in sectors such as healthcare, where rapid decision-making and emotionally demanding tasks are integral to daily work. In such contexts, excessive job demands intensify role-related stressors and substantially increase employees' levels of emotional exhaustion (Mwakyusa & Mcharo, 2024).

Job creep may also influence employees' internal communication and participation behaviors within organizations. As workload intensifies and uncertainty increases, employees may become more hesitant to express their views, which can ultimately suppress employee voice. Empirical studies indicate that job overload can affect employee voice both directly and indirectly by heightening role conflict and role ambiguity (Van Dyne & Ellis, 2004; Jawahar et al., 2023).

Although prior research on job creep has predominantly emphasized outcomes such as workload, burnout, and extra-role behaviors, studies on employee voice have largely focused on antecedents including leadership, psychological safety, and organizational climate (Morrison, 2014). Against this backdrop, examining the influence of job creep on employee voice through role-related stressors addresses an important theoretical and practical gap in the literature. Such an approach is particularly valuable in the healthcare context, where it can offer actionable insights for improving task allocation practices and strengthening organizational communication processes.

Employee Voice

Employee voice was initially conceptualized by Hirschman (1970) as engaging in constructive, solution-oriented actions aimed at improving an unsatisfactory situation rather than withdrawing from it. More broadly, employee voice refers to employees' expression of ideas, suggestions, concerns, or opinions with the intention of contributing to organizational improvement and development (Derin, 2017; Ekrot, Rank & Gemünden, 2016). By enabling employees to share their views on organizational practices and the work environment, employee voice supports continuous learn-

ing, adaptation, and organizational growth (Van Dyne & LePine, 1998). In practice, voice behaviors may take the form of problem-solving efforts, process improvements, proposals for organizational advancement, and the introduction of innovative ideas (Withey & Cooper, 1989).

From a managerial perspective, employee voice reflects an organizational climate in which employees' ideas are valued and human capital is recognized as a strategic resource. By drawing on diverse viewpoints and experiences, organizations can develop more comprehensive approaches to problem-solving and foster institutional development (Göktaş Kulualp, 2016). Furthermore, employee voice has an inherently political dimension, as employees tend to express their views strategically by selecting an appropriate time, manner, and communication channel while considering their personal interests and social relationships within the organization (Morrison & Milliken, 2000; Hung et al., 2012). In some cases, voice behavior is driven by the intention to preserve interpersonal harmony or strengthen social ties rather than to directly challenge organizational practices (Brinsfield, 2009). Accordingly, organizational voice initiatives are more likely to support change and development when they are framed in a constructive and cooperative manner instead of being perceived as confrontational or overtly critical (Dutton & Ashford, 1993; Brinsfield, 2009).

Employee voice can also be explained through motivational theories. From the perspective of Expectancy Theory (Vroom, 1964), employees are more likely to engage in voice behavior when they believe that expressing their opinions will lead to positive outcomes. In this respect, reward mechanisms such as recognition, feedback, and promotion opportunities play an important role in sustaining and reinforcing voice behavior over time (Premeaux, 2001).

H1: Job creep positively affects employee voice.

Role Conflict and Role Ambiguity

Role conflict arises when employees are confronted with role demands that are incompatible, inconsistent, or cannot be fulfilled simultaneously (Rizzo, House & Lirtzman, 1970; Örtqvist & Wincent, 2006). It may manifest when employees are required to prioritize one set of role expectations at the expense of another or when they face contradictory expectations originating from different sources within the organization (Rizzo, House & Lirtzman, 1970). Together with role ambiguity, role conflict constitutes a central source of role-related stress, as it heightens uncertainty regarding task expectations and undermines employees' ability to perform their roles effectively (Kahn et al., 1964).

Role ambiguity represents a core component of role stress and emerges when expectations regarding employees' duties and responsibilities are insufficiently defined within the framework of Role Theory. Kahn and colleagues (1964) describe role ambiguity as a condition in which employees lack clear criteria to guide their behavior because organizational expectations are unclear. Similarly, Rizzo, House, and Lirtzman (1970) conceptualize role ambiguity as the absence of reliable information regarding how, when, and according to which standards job tasks should be performed. A substantial body of research indicates that role ambiguity is associated with adverse outcomes, including reduced job satisfaction, diminished performance, elevated stress levels, and burnout (Jackson & Schuler, 1985; Fisher, 2001).

Role ambiguity also exerts a direct and negative influence on employees' voice behavior. When employees experience uncertainty, they often struggle to determine which behaviors are appropriate and tend to perceive speaking up as carrying greater personal and professional risk (Detert & Burris, 2007). As a result, role ambiguity weakens employees' willingness to offer constructive suggestions or to raise concerns about organizational issues (Morrison, 2014). In such uncertain environments, the inability to anticipate the potential consequences of voicing opinions leads employees to view voice behavior as a risky course of action.

A review of the existing literature indicates that studies directly addressing employee voice and role ambiguity in combination remain relatively scarce. Most prior research has examined voice behavior through constructs that are conceptually related to role ambiguity, such as role clarity, role stressors including role conflict and role overload, or broader forms of role uncertainty (Detert & Burris, 2007; Morrison, 2014; Tangirala & Ramanujam, 2008; Maynes & Podsakoff, 2014). Within this context, findings consistently suggest that role conflict and role ambiguity constrain employees' willingness to express their views on organizational processes, as unclear job expectations lead employees to perceive voice behavior as both risky and potentially costly (Li et al., 2010; Sias & Duncan, 2019). Accordingly, while the relationship between employee voice and role ambiguity is theoretically robust and indirectly supported by empirical evidence, it has seldom been examined explicitly in the literature.

Similarly, although studies that directly examine the concept of job creep within the role conflict and role ambiguity literature remain limited, a growing body of research demonstrates that related work demands such as work intensification, role expansion, workload creep, and job creep contribute to increased role ambiguity by obscuring role boundaries (Jackson & Schuler, 1985; Morrison, 2014). When the literature is considered as a whole, evidence suggests that job creep reinforces both role conflict and role ambiguity among employees (Ojha, 2025; Wang & Wang, 2025). These heightened role stressors, in turn, exert a constraining effect on employee voice by increasing perceived risks and reducing employees' willingness to express their views (Li et al., 2010; Maynes & Podsakoff, 2014; Morrison, 2014; Sias & Duncan, 2019; Tangirala & Ramanujam, 2008).

Drawing on these theoretical arguments and empirical findings, the present study formulates the following hypotheses to examine the potential interactions among the research variables:

H2: Job creep increases employees' perceptions of role conflict and role ambiguity.

H3: Role conflict and role ambiguity positively affect employee voice.

H4: Role conflict and role ambiguity mediate the relationship between job creep and employee voice.

Based on the existing literature, the present study develops the research model illustrated in Figure 1 to examine the relationships among job creep, employee voice, and perceptions of role conflict and role ambiguity among healthcare workers. The model incorporates four hypotheses designed to test the proposed relationships. Within this framework, job creep is specified as the independent variable, employee voice as the dependent variable, and role conflict and role ambiguity as mediating variables.

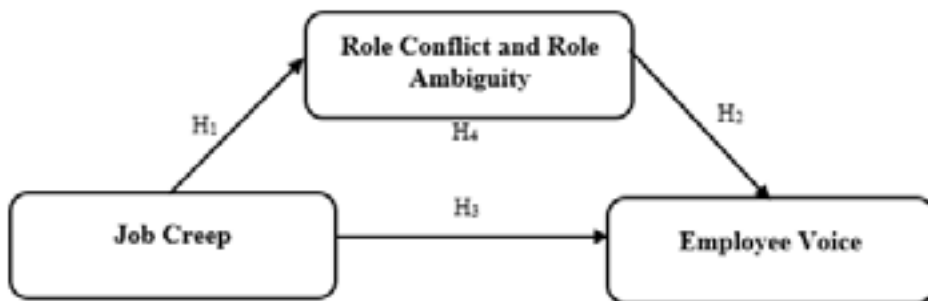


Figure 1. Conceptual Model of the Study

Source: Developed by the authors

METHOD

This study adopts a quantitative research design within the field of social sciences and focuses on examining relational associations and linear effects among the study variables. Data were collected through structured questionnaire forms administered to employees working in the healthcare sector using a convenience sampling approach. The central research question guiding the study is whether role conflict and role ambiguity mediate the effect of job creep on employee voice, and the research model was constructed accordingly. Face to face survey administration was employed during the data collection process.

Purpose and Significance of the Study

The primary aim of this study is to examine the effect of job creep on employee voice and to investigate the mediating roles of role conflict and role ambiguity in this relationship. Specifically, the study explores whether task demands that extend beyond formal job descriptions generate uncertainty among employees and how such uncertainty influences internal organizational expression behaviors. By focusing on healthcare workers, the study seeks to provide a deeper understanding of organizational communication processes and employee responses to uncertainty in high-demand work environments. Within this framework, role conflict and role ambiguity are conceptualized as critical mechanisms linking job creep to employee voice, with the assumption that the observed effects primarily operate through these role-related processes.

In increasingly uncertain and flexible work environments, emerging phenomena such as job creep necessitate a reconsideration of traditional job design approaches. By examining job creep through the lens of employee voice, this study offers a novel contribution to the literature, shifting the focus from predominantly negative outcomes toward behaviors that support organizational learning and development. Moreover, the study advances existing research by conceptualizing role conflict and role ambiguity not only as sources of strain but also as influential factors shaping employees' willingness to speak up. Findings derived from the healthcare context are expected to shed light on the structural dynamics that affect employee voice, particularly under conditions of crisis, workload pressure, and limited organizational resources.

Population and Sample

The population of the study comprises employees working at Karamanoğlu Mehmetbey University Karaman Education and Research Hospital between June 15 and June 30, 2025. The study sample consists of 393 healthcare workers who voluntarily participated in the research and were selected using a convenience sampling method. To ensure an adequate sample size for statistical analysis, methodological guidelines suggest that the number of participants should be at least five to ten times the number of measurement items included in the scales (Hair et al., 2006; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). As the collected data meet this criterion, the sample size was considered sufficient for the analyses conducted in the study.

Data Collection Tools

To assess levels of job creep in the study, the Job Creep Scale developed by Canbolat (2024) was employed. This scale consists of 13 items with 3 dimensions of additional workload, helpfulness, and withdrawal. Employee voice was measured using the 1 dimensional, 6 item Employee Voice Scale originally developed by Van Dyne and LePine (1998) and later adapted into Turkish and validated by Arslan and Yener (2016). Perceptions of role conflict and role ambiguity were measured with the Role Conflict and Role Ambiguity Scale developed by Rizzo, House, and Lirtzman (1970). This instrument includes 14 items, of which 8 measure the role conflict dimension and 6 measure the role ambiguity dimension. The Turkish adaptation and validation of the scale were conducted in prior studies by Yıldırım (1996), Çelik (2013), and Doğan et al. (2016). Accordingly, in the present study, role conflict and role ambiguity were treated as two distinct variables derived from the same measurement instrument. In the original scale structure, lower scores indicate higher levels of role ambiguity. To ensure clarity and consistency in interpretation, the role ambiguity items were reverse coded prior to analysis, following the approach suggested by Doğan, Demir, and Türkmen (2016).

All measurement instruments used in the study have demonstrated acceptable validity and reliability in previous research and are widely utilized in the social sciences literature. In the present study, all scales were administered using a five point Likert type format ranging from “1 = Strongly Disagree” to “5 = Strongly Agree”.

Ethical permissions for the study

In this study, all the rules specified in the “Directive on Scientific Research and Publication Ethics of Higher Education Institutions” were followed. None of the actions specified under the second section of the directive, “Actions Contrary to Scientific Research and Publication Ethics”, have been carried out.

Ethics committee permission information

Name of the ethics review board: Karamanoglu Mehmetbey University

Date of ethical assessment decision: 07.05.2025

Ethics assessment certificate number number: 05.24.2025-261036

ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

In line with the study’s objective of examining the relationships among job creep, employee voice, role conflict, and role ambiguity, frequency analyses were first carried out to describe the demographic characteristics of the participants. The internal

consistency of the measurement instruments was assessed by calculating Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficients. Subsequently, correlation analyses were conducted to determine the direction and strength of the relationships among the variables and to provide a preliminary evaluation of potential multicollinearity issues.

To examine the construct validity of the scales, confirmatory factor analysis was performed using IBM SPSS AMOS. Finally, the proposed hypotheses were tested through mediation analysis employing Hayes' PROCESS Macro, Model 4. This analytical approach enabled the examination of both direct and indirect effects among the study variables within the proposed research model.

The results of the frequency analysis conducted to describe the demographic characteristics of the participants are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic Findings (n=393)

Variable	n	%	Variable	n	%
Gender			Monthly Income		
Female	178	45.3	50.000 and below	90	22.9
Male	215	54.7	50.001-65.000	110	28.0
Age			65.001-75.000	74	18.8
18-24	53	13.5	75.001-90.000	60	15.3
25-29	119	30.3	90.000 +	59	15.0
30-34	89	22.6	Work Experience		
35-40	66	16.8	1-5 years	157	39.9
41 +	66	16.8	6-11 years	62	15.8
Marital Status			12-19 years	120	30.5
Single	146	37.2	20-25 years	18	4.6
Married	209	53.2	25 +	36	9.2
Divorced	38	9.7	Number of Children		
Title			-	164	41.7
Midwife / Nurse	89	22.6	1	73	18.6
Auxiliary Services Personnel	257	65.4	2	110	28.0
Physician	47	12.0	3	28	7.1
			4	18	4.6

Source: Compiled by the authors based on the study data

According to the results presented in Table 1, most participants were male (54.7%), aged between 25 and 29 years (30.3%), married (53.2%), and employed in auxiliary services (65.4%). In addition, a considerable proportion of the sample reported a monthly income ranging from 50.001 to 65.000 TL (28.0%), had one to five years of work experience (39.9%), and did not have children. Following the frequency analyses, correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationships among the study variables. The results of this analysis are reported in Table 2.

Table 2. Correlation Analysis Findings (n=393)

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1- Job Creep	3.53	.8026	(.897)	.921*	.670**	.689**	.597**	.182**	-0.092	.466**
2-AddWorkload	3.52	1.0115		(.912)	.473**	.522**	.538**	.220**	-0.019	.405**
3-Helpfulness	3.83	.9049			(.859)	.143**	.572**	0.129*	-0.072	.341**
4- Withdrawal	3.14	1.1682				(.867)	.255**	0.028	-.167**	.333**
5- Employee Voice	3.66	.9576					(.932)	.241**	-.100*	.578**
6- Role Conflict and Role Ambiguity	3.22	.6625						(.811)	.827**	.272**
7- Role Conflict	2.91	1.1759							(.958)	-.316**
8- Role Ambiguity	3.63	.9153								(.922)

Source: Compiled by the authors based on the study data

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level. * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level

Note: Values in parentheses indicate the Cronbach's alpha coefficients of the scales and subdimensions

According to the results presented in Table 2, a statistically significant, positive, and moderate relationship was observed between job creep and employee voice. Job creep also exhibited statistically significant, positive, and low-level correlations with role conflict and role ambiguity. Similarly, employee voice was found to be positively and significantly associated with both role conflict and role ambiguity at a low level.

An examination of the subdimensions reported in Table 2 indicates that job creep was not significantly correlated with role conflict, whereas it demonstrated a statistically significant, positive, and moderate association with role ambiguity. The additional workload and helpfulness dimension showed a moderate correlation with employee voice and a low correlation with the overall role conflict and role ambiguity scale. This dimension was also moderately and positively related to the role ambiguity subdimension, while no significant relationship was identified between additional workload and helpfulness and role conflict. The withdrawal dimension displayed a low-level positive correlation with employee voice and role ambiguity, as well as a low-level negative correlation with role conflict and with the combined role conflict and role ambiguity scale, all of which were statistically significant.

Furthermore, employee voice exhibited a low-level positive correlation with the overall role conflict and role ambiguity scale, a low-level negative correlation with role conflict, and a moderate-level positive correlation with role ambiguity. A statistically significant, moderate, and negative correlation was also identified between role conflict and role ambiguity. The reliability of the data was supported by the high Cronbach's alpha coefficients obtained for all scales, indicating satisfactory internal consistency.

Following the correlation analysis, a Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was conducted to assess the construct validity of the measurement instruments. The results of the first-order multifactor CFA performed for the job creep scale are presented in Figure 2.

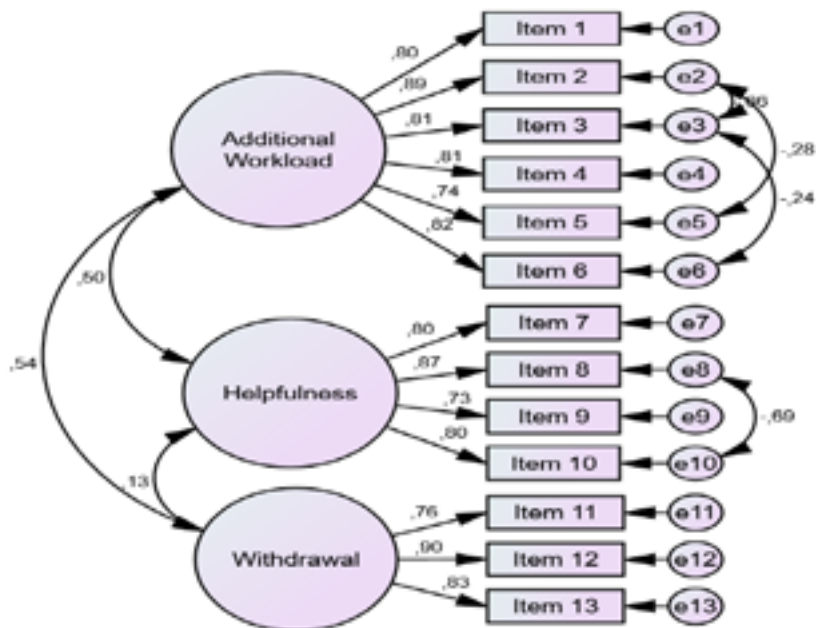


Figure 2. Confirmatory Factor Analysis Results of the Job Creep Scale

Source: Prepared by the authors based on the analysis results

According to Figure 2, the standardized factor loadings of the items included in the scale range from 0.73 to 0.90. Figure 3 presents the one-factor Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) model conducted to assess the construct validity of the employee voice scale.

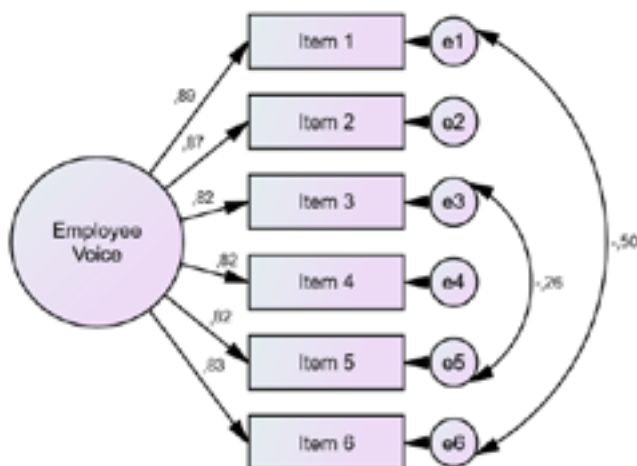


Figure 3. Confirmatory Factor Analysis Results of the Employee Voice Scale

Source: Prepared by the authors based on the analysis results

The results presented in Figure 3 indicate that the standardized factor loadings of the items in the employee voice scale range between 0.82 and 0.89, suggesting that

all items load strongly on the underlying construct. These values reflect a high level of convergence among the items and provide robust evidence for the construct validity of the employee voice scale within the study sample.

Figure 4 illustrates the first-order multifactor CFA model performed to examine the construct validity of the role conflict and role ambiguity scale.

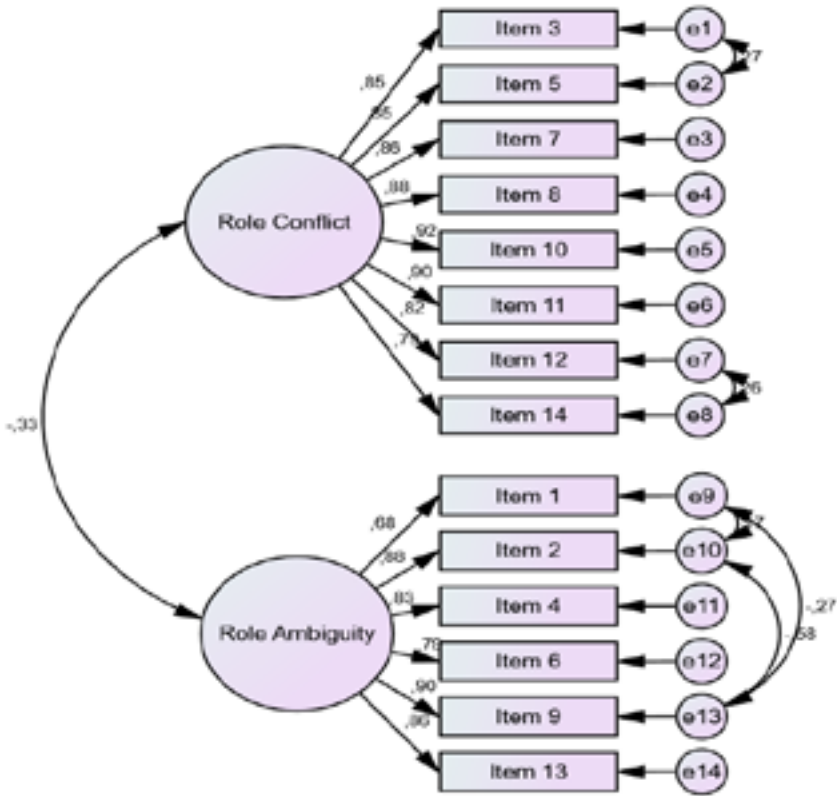


Figure 4. Confirmatory Factor Analysis Results of the Role Conflict and Role Ambiguity Scale

Source: Prepared by the authors based on the analysis results

Accordingly, the standardized factor loadings of the items included in the scale range between 0.68 and 0.92, indicating that the items demonstrate acceptable to strong associations with their respective latent constructs and contribute meaningfully to the measurement structure of the scale. Across all three scales, the factor loadings of the items exceed the threshold value of 0.40. This finding suggests that each item shows a satisfactory level of alignment with the dimension to which it belongs (Başar, 2016). Table 3 presents the goodness of fit indices obtained from the Confirmatory Factor Analysis for all measurement scales used in the study.

Table 3. CFA Model Fit Indices of the Scales

Index	Job Creep Scale	Employee Voice Scale	Role Conflict and Role Ambiguity Scale	Good Fit Values	Acceptable Fit Values
χ^2/df	3.461	2.701	3.240	<3	3< (χ^2/df)<5
RMSEA	.079	.066	.076	<.05	<.08
SRMR	.045	.015	.038	<.05	<.08
CFI	.956	.994	.968	>.95	>.90
NFI	.939	.990	.955	>.95	>.90
GFI	.932	.985	.925	>.95	>.90

Note: χ^2/df = chi square to degrees of freedom ratio; RMSEA = root mean square error of approximation; SRMR = standardized root mean square residual; CFI = comparative fit index; NFI = normed fit index; GFI = goodness of fit index. Source: Gürbüz (2021)

Source: Compiled by the authors based on the study data

According to the results presented in Table 3, the SRMR and CFI values of the job creep scale indicate a good model fit, whereas the remaining fit indices fall within the acceptable fit range. For the employee voice scale, the RMSEA value reflects an acceptable fit, while the other fit indices demonstrate a good fit. Similarly, the role conflict and role ambiguity scale exhibits acceptable fit levels for the χ^2/df , RMSEA, and GFI indices, and good fit levels for the remaining indices. Taken together, the results shown in Figures 2, 3, and 4 and those reported in Table 3 support the structural validity of all measurement scales based on the data obtained from the participants.

Following the establishment of construct validity, the research hypotheses were tested using PROCESS Macro Model 4 developed by Hayes (2018). Bootstrapping with 5.000 resamples was employed in the analyses. The results of these analyses are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Regression Analysis Results for the Mediation Test (n=393)

Predictor Variables		Outcome Variables								
		M (Role Conflict and Role Ambiguity)					Y (Employee Voice)			
		β	S.H.	%95 GA		β	S.H.	%95 GA		
				LLCI	ULCI			LLCI	ULCI	
X (Job Creep)	a	.151*	.041	.0698	.2312	c'	.682*	.049	.5868	.7779
M (Role Conflict and Role Ambiguity)	-	-	-	-	-	b	.197*	.058	.0815	.3131
Constant	i_M	2.691*	.148	2.398	2.983	i_Y	.616*	.235	.1550	1.078
Total Effect (c)							.712*	.048	.6169	.8072
Mediating Effect							.029*	.014	.0078	.0619
$R^2 = .033$							$R^2 = .374$			
$F_{(1,391)} = 13.448; p < .001$							$F_{(2,390)} = 116.601; p < .001$			

Note: * $p < .001$; S.E.: Standard Error; CI: Confidence Interval. Unstandardized beta coefficients (β) are reported

Source: Compiled by the authors based on the study data

According to the findings presented in Table 4, Job creep demonstrated a significant and positive effect on employee voice ($\beta = .682$, 95% CI [.5868, .7779], $t = 14.038$, $p < .001$). Together with role conflict and role ambiguity, job creep accounted for approximately 37% of the variance in employee voice ($R^2 = .374$). When role conflict and role ambiguity were excluded from the model, job creep continued to exert a significant and positive effect on employee voice ($\beta = .712$, 95% CI [.6169, .8072], $t = 14.707$, $p < .001$). Thus, Hypothesis H1 was supported. In addition, job creep was found to have a significant and positive effect on role conflict and role ambiguity ($\beta = .151$, 95% CI [.0698, .2312], $t = 3.6671$, $p < .001$), explaining approximately 3% of the variance in these variables ($R^2 = .033$). Accordingly, Hypothesis H2 was supported. Furthermore, role conflict and role ambiguity were found to significantly and positively affect employee voice ($\beta = .197$, 95% CI [.0815, .3131], $t = 3.3510$, $p < .001$), supporting Hypothesis H3. Finally, mediation analysis indicated that the indirect effect of job creep on employee voice through role conflict and role ambiguity was significant ($\beta = .029$, 95% CI [.0078, .0619], $p < .001$), providing support for Hypothesis H4. The fully standardized indirect effect size was .025, suggesting that the mediating effect in the proposed model is small in magnitude.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the effect of perceived job creep on employee voice among healthcare workers, as well as the mediating roles of role conflict and role ambiguity in this relationship. The results indicate that job creep has a significant and positive effect on employee voice, both directly and indirectly through role conflict and role ambiguity. Although the mediating effects of role conflict and role ambiguity are relatively small in magnitude, they are statistically significant. Accordingly, all hypotheses proposed in the study were supported.

The findings align with both classical and contemporary research emphasizing the role of role-related stressors in shaping organizational behavior. However, the result that job creep and role stressors are associated with increased employee voice partially diverges from the dominant perspective in the literature. Classical studies have predominantly suggested that role conflict and role ambiguity undermine motivation and job satisfaction, thereby inhibiting voice behavior (Örtqvist & Wincent, 2006; Detert & Burris, 2007; Maynes & Podsakoff, 2014; Li et al., 2010; Van Dyne & Ellis, 2004). In contrast, more recent studies propose that employees exposed to high job demands and role ambiguity may interpret these conditions as opportunities for improvement rather than as threats, leading to more proactive voice behaviors (Qi & Liu, 2017; Soyulina & Karabey, 2020; Jabbar et al., 2023; Jawahar et al., 2023; Ojha, 2025; Wang & Wang, 2025). From this perspective, the present findings suggest that in high-stakes contexts such as healthcare, employee voice may function as an adaptive mechanism for problem-solving and operational improvement. Therefore, the positive association between job creep and employee voice, mediated by role conflict and role ambiguity, supports the emerging view that role stressors can exert both inhibiting and activating effects on employee behavior, contingent upon contextual conditions.

The findings of this study can be explained within the framework of contemporary and contextual interpretations of Role Theory. According to Role Theory, an increase in workload complicates role expectations and leads to the emergence of role

stressors such as role conflict and role ambiguity (Rizzo et al., 1970). In this respect, the present study's finding that job creep increases both role conflict and role ambiguity is consistent with the theoretical assumptions of the model. Although classical approaches in the literature generally suggest that role stressors suppress employee motivation and adaptive behaviors, more recent studies, particularly those conducted in the healthcare sector, indicate that such stressors may also encourage employees to act in a more responsible, solution-oriented, and proactive manner. In line with this perspective, the present study demonstrates that job creep increases employee voice through elevated levels of role conflict and role ambiguity. This finding suggests that role stressors may serve not only as hindering factors but also as activating mechanisms depending on the contextual conditions. In this sense, the results support a more flexible and modern interpretation of Role Theory.

The findings make an important contribution to the literature by providing empirical evidence that role conflict and role ambiguity do not exclusively lead to negative outcomes, but can also foster proactive and constructive suggestion behaviors among employees. Moreover, while existing research on job creep has largely focused on unfavorable outcomes such as burnout, job satisfaction, or performance, this study addresses a notable gap by examining employee voice as an outcome variable. As employee voice directly contributes to organizational learning, engagement, and improvement processes, the results of this study extend the theoretical understanding of job creep and role stressors within organizational behavior research.

The findings of this study offer practical guidance for managers and human resources professionals, particularly in high-stress and decision-intensive environments such as the healthcare sector. Given that job creep increases employee voice through role conflict and role ambiguity, managers can benefit from carefully managing employees' additional responsibilities and task demands while simultaneously providing appropriate support and incentive mechanisms. In this context, strengthening psychological safety and adopting supportive leadership practices are critical for encouraging employees to express constructive suggestions and contribute meaningfully to organizational processes (Qi & Liu, 2017; Soyalina & Karabey, 2020; Jabbar, Haider, & Qureshi, 2023).

Despite its contributions, the study has several limitations. First, the data were collected from a single sector, namely healthcare, and within a specific geographic region, which limits the generalizability of the findings. Second, the use of cross-sectional and self-report survey data restricts the extent to which causal relationships can be inferred. Third, the analyses focused solely on role stressors such as role conflict and role ambiguity, while other potential psychological and organizational outcomes of job creep were not examined.

Future research may address these limitations by investigating the effects of job creep on employee voice across different sectors and cultural contexts. In addition, longitudinal and qualitative research designs could provide stronger evidence regarding causal relationships. Finally, future models may incorporate psychological variables beyond role stressors, such as burnout, motivation, and psychological safety, as well as organizational contextual factors including perceived organizational support and leadership style, in order to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the consequences of job creep.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

There is no conflict of interest between the authors.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

MS; FD: Idea.

MS: Design;

FD: Supervision;

MS, FD: Collection and/or processing of resources;

MS, FD: Analysis and/or interpretation;

MS, FD: Literature review;

MS, FD: Critical review

ETHICS COMMITTEE STATEMENT AND INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY COPYRIGHTS

The study adhered to the ethics committee's principles, and necessary permissions were obtained in accordance with intellectual property and copyright regulations.

USE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) TOOLS

This study utilized artificial intelligence tools limited solely to language editing purposes.

DATA AVAILABILITY

The dataset used in this study is available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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