

# Analysis of Formalism's Moderating Effect on the Relationships between Role Stressors and Work Anxiety — Viewpoints from Oriental Public Administration

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## Abstract

Riggs has proposed “formalism” of eastern administration for almost half a century, and no researcher has followed this up with empirical researches. Some researchers still criticize Riggs' formalism theory for lacking empirical data and research verification. This study attempted to explore whether formalism really influenced public servants' attitudes and perception. The study collected 357 valid Li clerks who worked at Department of Civil Affairs of Taipei City Government in Taiwan and employed structural equation modeling (SEM) and hierarchical regression to justify hypotheses being explored. The results show that formalism really moderates the relationships between role ambiguity, role conflict and work anxiety. This study also proved that formalism was a negative factor for public management in Taiwan. Additionally, role ambiguity; role conflict and role overload all positively affected work anxiety.

*Keywords:* Formalism, role ambiguity, role conflict, role overload, work anxiety.

## 1. Introduction

“Li” is traditionally Taiwan's local administration unit. Li clerks who are assigned by district offices are the front-line representatives of public officials since they often need to directly communicate and interact with Li residents. Li clerks are close to residents, taking initiatives to locate and resolve residents' municipal problems. Their conduct and performance have the most impact on Li residents' perception of government institutions.

In recent years, Taiwan's economic development has witnessed the M-shaped society, which has led to the rising number of the disadvantaged. In response, the department of civil affairs at city government has introduced various social welfare programs. Since the responsibility of the front-line Li clerks has increased, their face-to-face interactions with Li residents have also increased. Thus, the issue of role overload becomes inevitable. As front-line public officials, Li clerks not only implement and market the policies of district offices, but also respond to different needs of Li chiefs and residents. The role conflict and role ambiguity they experience cause pressure and work anxiety, particularly when