

Role conflict of business rescue practitioners

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Abstract

Background: Business rescue practitioners (BRPs) need to play certain personal and professional roles as business rescue practitioners, as well as in their own careers apart from business rescue. It is evident that a conflict exists as to where to allocate time regarding role priorities - however, research results and literature on this topic are limited.

Research purpose: The purpose of this study is to develop a better understanding of the roles played by BRPs, role conflict experienced by BRPs, and the extent to which conflict occurs specifically during the three phases of a business rescue operation.

Motivation for the study: In South Africa, the field of business rescue is still largely in its infancy, and the roles of BRPs have not been researched. Therefore, this study focused on this topic.

Research design, approach and method: This study employed a generic qualitative research design and made use of 12 semi-structured, face-to-face interviews with participants who were licensed BRPs. These were supplemented by a graphic presentation to elicit further results.

Findings: Findings indicate that significant role conflict exists between BRPs' rescue roles and their roles associated with their other priorities. It is revealed that roles could be placed into three categories: generic or dominant roles, enabler roles, and peripheral roles. Finally the study demonstrates that role conflicts which occur are a result of an imbalance of time demanded by the multiple role requirements within the BR process.

Key phrases

Balance; business rescue; conflict; demand; role theory and work-life balance

1. INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of business rescue (BR) in South Africa is a relatively new one and is still largely unexplored (Pretorius 2013:3). Although research in the field is growing (Calitz & Freebody 2016; Levenstein 2015; Pretorius & Holtzhauzen 2013; Rosslyn-Smith & Pretorius 2015; Rosslyn-Smith & Pretorius 2018), researchers still do not have a large base to work from. Chapter 6 of the “new” South African Companies Act 71 of 2008 (hereafter referred to as the Act) that introduced business rescue came into effect only in May of 2011 (Republic of South Africa 2008:Internet). The focus of this investigation is on the personal and professional roles played by business rescue practitioners (BRPs). Once appointed, BRPs have a duty to fulfil various roles that are crucial to the success of the rescue proceedings (Pretorius 2013:15).

Rescue proceedings take place over a short period of time and BRPs are under pressure of time constraints to fulfil each role successfully. This generally results in the BRPs spending most or all of their time involved with the rescue, leaving little or no time to dedicate to other role}. It can also be assumed that the *demand of time* to execute the roles that practitioners assume during rescue proceedings changes throughout the course thereof. Time constraints and varying demands of role priorities result in role conflict. Furthermore, the role expectations of BRPs differ during different phases of the rescue proceedings, as well as outside the rescue set-up. Role conflicts exist because fulfilling the priorities of one role makes it more difficult to fulfil the priorities of another. It is thus evident that a conflict exists over how to allocate time towards role priorities (De Villiers & Kotze 2003:15; Pluut 2016:2).

However, what has not been investigated in the existing literature is where the role conflict in prioritising arises during a rescue proceeding, and the extent to which such conflict exists. Therefore the purpose of this qualitative study is to develop a better understanding of the roles played by BRPs, role conflict experienced by BRPs, and the extent occurs, specifically during the first three phases of a business rescue operation (see Figure 1). The role responsibilities of the business rescue practitioner commence immediately on the day of appointment. The various demands for time of the roles played by the practitioner during rescue proceedings are, however, not static. This is because the tasks (Pretorius 2013:15) and therefore role expectations of the practitioner change during the course of rescue proceedings. Furthermore, at the end of an average working day, practitioners go home, where they must attend to various personal and family responsibilities.

For this reason, in addition to understanding the role conflict of business rescue practitioners, this study aimed to answer the following research questions:

- What business rescue roles and additional roles do business rescue practitioners play?
- Where in the process does role conflict arise for business rescue practitioners during a business rescue?
- How does role conflict of the business rescue practitioner change during the three phases of a business rescue?

The rest of the article is structured as follows: the first section explores existing literature that focuses on theory relating to business rescue, the roles that business rescue practitioners play in their personal capacities and in business rescue, as well as the role conflict associated with their various role responsibilities.

Secondly follows a discussion of the methodology used with particular reference to the research design, sampling, the data collection method, method of data analysis, and ethical considerations that were used in this study. The methodology section precedes the findings of this study which is followed by the discussion thereof. Lastly, the study concludes with a summary of the findings, theoretical and managerial implications, limitations of the study and recommendations for future research.

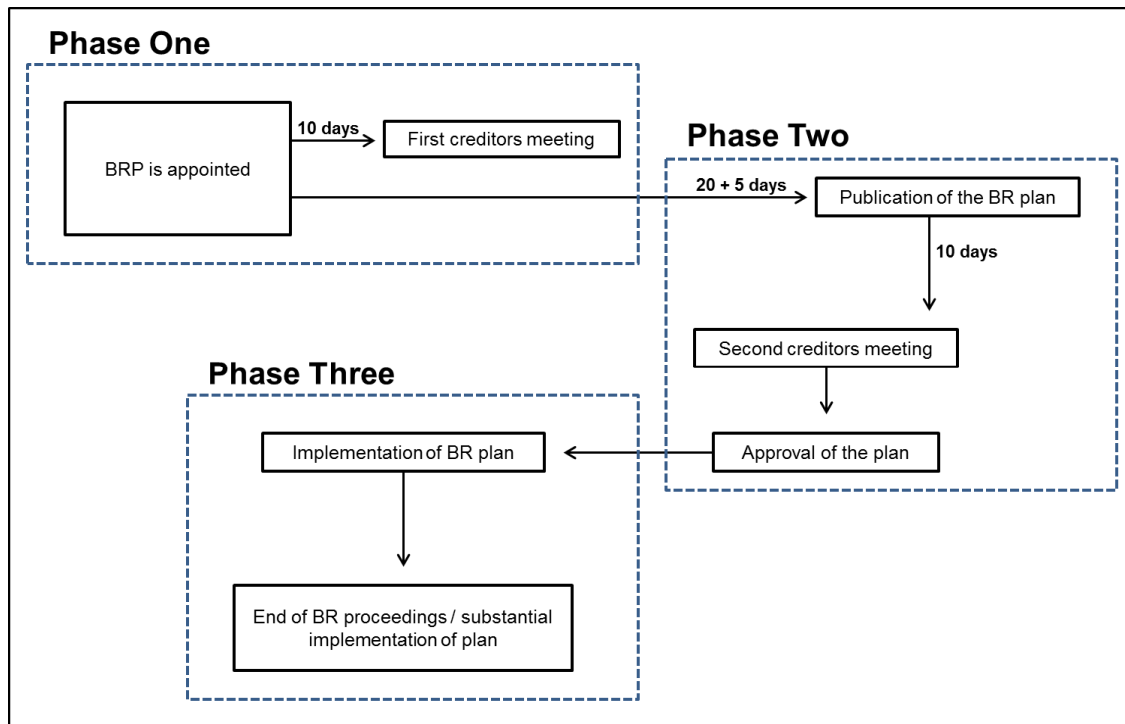
2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Business rescue in context

Business rescue proceedings take place within short timelines and BRPs are under pressure to fulfil various roles successfully under such constraints. Once appointed, BRPs have a duty to oversee rescue proceedings (Levenstein 2011:9) and to fulfil various and challenging roles that are crucial to the success of the rescue proceedings (Companies and Intellectual Property Commission 2016:Internet; Pretorius 2013:2). The business rescue timeline is of great importance and will be referred to as phases one, two, and three.

Figure 1 briefly shows the business rescue process and the phases relevant to this study and depicts what occurs during each of the three phases of business rescue.

FIGURE 1: Business rescue process and its phases



Source: Authors' own compilation

Specific activities take place in each of the phases of a business rescue. The first phase of business rescue is the time between the appointment of the BRP and the first creditors meeting. The BRP has 10 days from his or her appointment to convene and preside over this meeting (section 147). Within these first 10 days, the practitioner must inform all creditors about the meeting as well as investigate the affairs of the business so that the BRP can inform the creditors whether he or she believes that there is a reasonable prospect of rescuing the company (Levenstein 2011:36; Levenstein & Barnett n.d.:7).

The second phase of business rescue is the time between the first and second creditors meetings. During this phase, the BRP's responsibility is to prepare and publish a business rescue plan (Levenstein 2011:38). As demonstrated in Figure 1, as *20 + 5 days*, the practitioner has, since appointment, 20 days to prepare and submit a business rescue plan to the creditors timeously so that they have at least five days to review the plan. However, practitioners do have the option of applying for an extension of this time. Thereafter the BRP has 10 days from the publication of the plan to convene and preside over a second creditors

meeting, during which parties with a voting interest vote on the proposed plan (Levenstein & Barnett n.d.:7).

The third phase commences on implementation of the business rescue plan and lasts until substantial implementation is evident. In this phase, the BRP is involved in implementation of the proposed plan, should it have been approved at the second creditors meeting (Levenstein & Barnett n.d.:7; Raubenheimer 2012:2). During all three phases the BRP is expected to fulfil various roles related to the business rescue, in addition to other roles not related to business rescue.

2.2 Role theory

Role theory is often explained from different perspectives (Adigbuo 2007:88; Dreher & Uribe 2016:56; Henry & Stevens 1999:242) and is concerned with patterns of human behaviour that are focused on roles and role expectations, social positions and identities, social structure, and individual behaviours (Adigbuo 2007:88; Alin & Thornell 2016:8; Henry & Stevens 1999:242). Role theory is based on the notion that the behaviours and actions of individuals who occupy certain social positions are determined by the expectations and perceptions of those positions or roles (Alin & Thornell 2016:8; Duarte Alonso 2016:120).

This research proposes that business rescue practitioners occupy certain social positions (roles), and these positions or roles are accompanied by expected and perceived behaviours and actions which are applicable or appropriate to successful functioning of those roles (Jayasuriya & Bhadra 2014:169).

A role can be described as a position that holds certain responsibilities and/or expectations that need to be fulfilled or met in order to achieve a desired outcome (Biddle 1979:8). Roles can be work related, such as roles or positions assigned to individuals by the company they work for, (Pluut 2016:3), or non-work related roles (Biddle 1979:8; Jayasuriya & Bhadra 2014:169), which are roles that individuals play outside of work, such as being a child, parent, sibling, friend, caregiver, spouse, community member or roles during leisure time (Baran & Jones 2018:37; Pluut 2016:3). Roles included in this study are BRP roles during business rescue; as well as BRP roles outside of business rescue, such as a work role not related to business rescue, or roles of partner/spouse, parent/grandparent, community member, and also personal roles.

The roles of business rescue practitioners during a business rescue revolve largely around the duties and responsibilities of business rescue practitioners.

The Act identifies four main *tasks* that a BRP should execute during a business rescue. These include taking management control, investigating the affairs of the business, preparing the business rescue plan, and implementing the plan (Pretorius 2013:15). Further to these tasks, Pretorius (2013:15) identified “supreme task” as a fifth task. A BRP should follow the rules laid out by the court and report to the court as an officer of the court (Companies and Intellectual Property Commission 2016:Internet). Pretorius (2013) conducted research into these five tasks and identified 15 activities associated with the tasks of BRPs during business rescue proceedings. For the purpose of this research, BRP roles during business rescue proceedings were mapped to the activities and include: CEO/manager, investigator, planner, implementer, and officer of the court. These roles and activities are set out in Table 1.

TABLE 1: Roles, associated activities and activity explanations

Role	BR specific activity	Explanation: BRPs do/should...
CEO / Manager	Taking management control	Become visible, take charge of management, engage with decision-making structure as to establish authority
	Taking financial control	Obtain signing powers, assume payment control, control daily cash so that all decision-making and information flows via the BRP
	Clarifying roles	Advise management and directors of responsibilities, delegate tasks, inform and educate affected parties on their rights. This activity is done to improve communication and collaboration during the business rescue process
	Analysing feasibility	Determine causality and future demand, confirm capacity, calculate financial model, determine cash flow position, and identify caveats. This will help the BRP determine the reasonable prospect of the business
	Executing day-to-day jobs	Monitor operations, run daily affairs, visit regularly, and oversee delegations in order to supervise the business during business rescue
	Communicating	Meet and communicate regularly with all affected parties so that the BRP can obtain the necessary information and insight in order to enhance collaboration, establish control, and ensure impartiality
Investigator	Investigating affairs	Obtain necessary details, investigate caveats such as litigations and sureties, and confirm reporting lines so the he/she is able to understand and verify viability of a rescue
	Analysing the viability of a potential plan	Verify data integrity, investigate cash status, develop a balance sheet, and create a workable financial model in order to establish key elements for judgement and decision-making and to inform the rescue plan

	Meeting and collaborating with the relevant stakeholders	Build trust, ensure participation by stakeholders, involve all parties, be inclusive, and engage in decision-making to determine the style of the rescue and the cooperation of stakeholders
	Intervening in HR	Identify key employees, assess capabilities, establish key positions and involve process champions to create teams for execution of daily operations through delegations
Planner	Preparing the plan	Prepare the plan which includes various types such as skeleton and draft plans; involve relevant role players in the preparation of the plan
	Seeking post-commencement finance	Have an understanding of the extent of needs, engage possible sources such as bank, creditors, and other external sources to seek funding, since most rescues depend on some form of funding to keep the business going
Implementer	Implementing and executing the plan	Implement and execute the plan as a key goal of business rescue
Officer of the court	Abide by the law and comply with statutory processes	Maintain observation over dates and timelines, comply with procedures, notify properly, hold meetings, file notices and report to the court regularly, and take responsibility

Source: Authors' own compilation, adapted from Pretorius 2013:17

Role conflict is a common stressor in the lives of individuals, in this case business rescue practitioners, since they have to simultaneously play multiple roles such as mentioned in Table 1 (Biddle 1986:70; De Villiers & Kotze 2003:15). Role conflict occurs when the demands or expectations of a role interfere with, or make it more difficult to meet the demands or expectations of another role (De Villiers & Kotze 2003:15; Hämmig, Gutzwiller & Bauer 2009:2).

The impacts of role conflict have been extensively researched. Role conflict negatively affects job performance and job satisfaction, goal achievement, and individuals' belief in their ability to successfully fulfil the role. In addition, individuals experience work-related anxiety, lower commitment levels regarding their roles, higher turnover intention, as well as threatened self-esteem, reputation, and status (Novriansa & Riyanto 2016:70). The literature identifies five types of role conflict (see Table 2).

TABLE 2: Types of role conflict

Type of role conflict	Explanation	Reference
Intra-sender conflict	The role sender expects the role receiver to fulfil contradicting or inconsistent expectations. In other words, the expectations of the role sender contradict the norm	Bako 2014:36; Roussy 2013:553
Intra-role conflict	A personal conflict such as that the expectations of a particular role are inconsistent with the values, ethics and attitudes of the role receiver	Bako 2014:37; Roussy 2013:553
Inter-sender conflict	The role receiver receives expectations or demands from two different role senders, and these demands and expectations are incompatible	Bako 2014:36; Roussy 2013:553
Inter-role conflict	An individual enacts more than one role, and the expectations of one role are incongruent with the expectations associated with another role	Bako 2014:36; Roussy 2013:553
Role overload	The role receiver is required to fulfil a number of expectations from different roles and he or she does not have the capability, motivation, or time capacity to fulfil those roles effectively. Individuals experience role overload when the demands placed on them exceed their available resources	Bako 2014:15;Eissa & Lester 2017:310; Jha, Blaji, Yavas & Babakus 2017:284

Role theory also refers to role ambiguity which occurs when the role receiver is unsure about the expectations that he or she should fulfil within a particular role. Role ambiguity is a result of the lack of information or communication, and lack of specificity and consistency in the roles expected of the role receiver (Garcia & Martínez-Córcoles 2018:137; Jha *et al.* 2017:284). Work-life conflict is an inter-role conflict in which the demands of work-related roles and life-related roles are incompatible, and therefore fulfilling one role makes it difficult to fulfil another (Jayasuriya & Bhadra 2014:172; Rezene 2015:27). Work-life conflict is the conflict that exists between work and family obligations, as well as between work and private-life obligations (Hämmig *et al.* 2009:2; Munir, Nielsen, Garde, Albertsen & Carneiro 2011:1).

Focus on demand for time plays an important part in this study. Demand can be defined as an important requirement or need which is actively expressed (Oxford English Dictionary 2016:Internet). Demand in this study has been associated with demands placed on time, and psychological demand, both of which have been used in the explanation of conflict (De Villiers & Kotze 2003:16), and should be balanced in order to prevent such conflict.

Pluut (2016:129) suggests that role conflict, specifically inter-role conflict, be examined in three or more domains, for example *work-family-school* conflict. Since the problem experienced by business rescue practitioners is that not only do they have conflict that may occur between their own careers (their day-to-day job) and their personal lives, i.e. work-life/work-family conflict; but they also have their added profession of a business rescue practitioner and therefore an increased workload, which may conflict with their personal lives and their other working lives. Therefore, this research explores *work-family-life-business rescue* role conflict, and, includes all role conflict that may occur during and within the business rescue process.

It is evident that practitioners play various roles in both their personal capacities and their business rescue professions. It may become challenging for BRPs to fulfil each of these roles fully and successfully during the various phases of a business rescue operation. Since research results and literature on the current topic are limited, this research aimed to determine role conflict based on business rescue practitioners' perceptions of how they spend their time. Therefore, qualitative data was collected through semi-structured interviews and a graphic elicitation, to determine how business rescue practitioners spend their time during rescue proceedings, and where and to what extent conflict exists for practitioners during the process.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research design

This research paper is qualitative in nature and employs a basic or generic qualitative design. This study sought to investigate and describe the roles that business rescue practitioners play, how they perceive the time they spend on each of the roles, the perceived extent of conflict between roles played by business rescue practitioners, and the expansion of the current available knowledge on the roles and role conflict of business rescue practitioners (Percy, Kostere & Kostere 2015:78).

Table 3 provides a summary of the research design used in this research.

TABLE 3: Research design used in this research

Component	Description
Research problem	Business rescue is a relatively new phenomenon in South Africa, as well as role conflict of BRPs, of which not much is known
Research aim	To develop a better understanding of the roles of business rescue practitioners, and the extent to which conflict occurs during the first three phases of a business rescue operation
Research questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What business rescue roles and additional roles do business rescue practitioners play? ▪ Where does role conflict arise for business rescue practitioners during a business rescue? ▪ How does role conflict of the business rescue practitioner change during the first three phases of a business rescue?
Context	The profession of business rescue practitioners
Phenomenon investigated (UoA)	Role conflict measured as a demand for time towards role priorities
Unit of observation	Licensed business rescue practitioners
Method	Semi structured interviews
Logic linking data to propositions	Using demand for time of role priorities to understand the relevance of business practitioner roles and the conflict that exists between those roles
Criteria for interpreting the findings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Confirmation of roles by business rescue practitioners ▪ Time allocation towards role priorities to determine where role conflict occurs

Source: Adapted from Yin 2003:21

3.2 Sampling

The sample consisted of 12 licensed business rescue practitioners from the Gauteng province of South Africa. Snowball sampling was used to select subjects based on the recommendation of others (Plano Clark & Creswell 2015:334); such as on the recommendation of academics and other participants who agreed to participate in this research. Participants needed to be licensed business rescue practitioners who have had some experience in the field of business rescue.

According to the Act, BRPs can hold one of three types of licenses in order to be a qualified practitioner. Three of the participants in this study were junior practitioners and are licensed as such if they have experience in the business rescue field for a period of less than five

years. Three of the practitioners were experienced practitioners. Experienced practitioners are licensed if they have experience in the business rescue field for a period of at least five years or more. The remaining six practitioners held a senior practitioner licence since they had at least 10 years of experience. In addition, the BRPs came from various backgrounds. Four practitioners came from a business background, six from a financial background, and two from the legal profession.

3.3 Data collection

The primary source of data was semi-structured interviews with business rescue practitioners held during 2016. In addition, field notes were made by both the researchers and the subjects. The research included a tool in the form of a diagram or graphic elicitation to supplement the discussion guide (see Appendix A). The reason for this is that it would have been difficult to gather the relevant information by means of an interview alone, and therefore this graphic tool allowed participants to meaningfully contribute to the research (Crilly, Blackwell, & Clarkson 2006:341-342). The graphic tool allowed participants to freely add, remove, or change any of the content (which was developed from theory) on the diagram themselves. Business rescue practitioners were asked to indicate the percentage of time they spent on each role during each of the phases previously described. The time allocation by practitioners was used as a measure to determine role conflict and about where conflict occurred during the business rescue process.

3.4 Data analysis

A basic thematic analysis was used to analyse and report patterns or themes within the data, which allowed the researchers to make sense of business rescue experiences of BRPs (Clarke & Braun 2018:108). One of the researchers transcribed each interview and familiarised herself with the data, by critically and analytically reading and rereading the transcripts and listening to the interviews several times (Saldaña 2018:1707). The coding derived from the thematic analysis was used to report patterns common throughout the research, as well as to support the data collected from the graphic tool. Once themes were identified, they were presented to the second author as a means of expert checking in order to corroborate interpretations. Furthermore, member checking was employed by sending transcripts of interviews to subjects to verify the collected data.

Descriptive statistics were also used in this research to organise, summarise, and display the numerical data (Schwandt 2007:66) from the supporting graphic elicitation. Mean values of the time allocated to each of the roles was calculated to identify basic trends in the data

(May 2017:1602). The data spread has been represented graphically in the form of tables, charts, and graphs in the findings section. The reason for this is that graphic displays provide clarity on the data, and facilitate readability and understanding of the numerical data (Brown 2010).

3.5 Ethical considerations and trustworthiness

Data was collected only from participants who were willing to participate. Each of the participants was given the chance to refuse to be a part of the study (Boruch 2018:363). All responses remained anonymous and confidentiality was maintained. The processes and methods that were employed in this study have been described in detail, which would facilitate a greater understanding of the methods used in the study, and the effectiveness of the methods, should other researchers wish to repeat the study (Liu 2017:1514).

The researchers remained open to emerging patterns that might have differed from their own assumptions. The researchers retained all the notes, transcripts, and audio recordings that were made as a way of providing proof that the researchers' understanding and interpretations of participants' responses were in fact aligned with those of the participants (Liu 2017:1513).

4. FINDINGS

The following roles were identified by practitioners as additional roles to the five generic BR roles that were presented to them. These roles are presented in Table 4 and include: fiduciary/director, mediator, strategic problem solver, resource coordinator, lawyer (compliance role), coach, counsellor, and lastly, collaborator.

TABLE 4: Additional roles identified by BRPs

Role	Explanation	Reference
Director	A member of the board of a company, which manages the business and affairs of a company, that holds the responsibilities and liabilities of a director according to section 132 of the Act	Republic of South Africa 2008:Internet
Mediator	One who intervenes between multiple affected parties in order to facilitate the discussions between them, assists them in identifying issues and areas of compromise, and attempts to bring about an agreement in order to resolve a dispute	The South African Department of Justice and Constitutional Development 2016:Internet

Role	Explanation	Reference
Strategic problem solver	The practitioner's role of finding solutions to unique problems in order to rescue the company	
Resource coordinator	One who organises and coordinates economic resources in order to achieve a desired outcome	Leyden 2016:555
Lawyer (compliance role)	One who is versed in the law or legal profession. Since business rescues are largely legally driven, one might believe BRPs need to have a legal background, or at least have a very good understanding of relevant laws	Pretorius 2014:5
Coach	One who guides the members of a company during the implementation phase of a business rescue so that the company can effectively continue its operations after business rescue, by providing them with better focus, and making the company aware of its areas of incompetence and inefficiency	Boysen, Cherry, Amerie & Takagawa 2018:160
Counsellor	Person who provides advice to employees and directors regarding personal, social and psychological issues in order to help them cope with the inevitable change that accompanies business rescue	Owolabi 2018:211
Collaborator	One who placates and meets with affected parties	Pretorius 2014:11

For the purpose of this research, the roles were grouped into four role categories, namely: business rescue roles, work roles, family roles and life roles. The business rescue practitioner roles are the roles that are crucial to the success of a business rescue; these include the roles of an officer of the court, CEO/manager, planner, investigator, and implementer, as well as the additional roles which each BRP in this study identified. Secondly, the work role consists of the BRP's work or own career outside of business rescue. Thirdly, family roles include the roles BRPs might play as a parent or grandparent, and as a spouse or partner. Lastly, the life and/or social roles include a BRP's personal roles, community member role, and any additional roles that a BRP may have added, such as being a postgraduate student. Table 5 summarises the roles per role category.

TABLE 5: Summary of roles per role categories

Role categories	Generic roles	Additional roles
Business rescue roles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Officer of the court ▪ CEO/manager ▪ Planner ▪ Investigator ▪ Implementer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Counsellor ▪ Coach ▪ Strategic problem solver ▪ Resource coordinator ▪ Mediator ▪ Director/fiduciary ▪ Collaborator ▪ Lawyer (compliance role) ▪ Independence/Section 7K ▪ Adding to the profession
Work roles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Work/own career (outside of business rescue) 	
Family roles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Parent/grandparent ▪ Partner/spouse 	
Life roles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Community member ▪ Personal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Postgraduate student

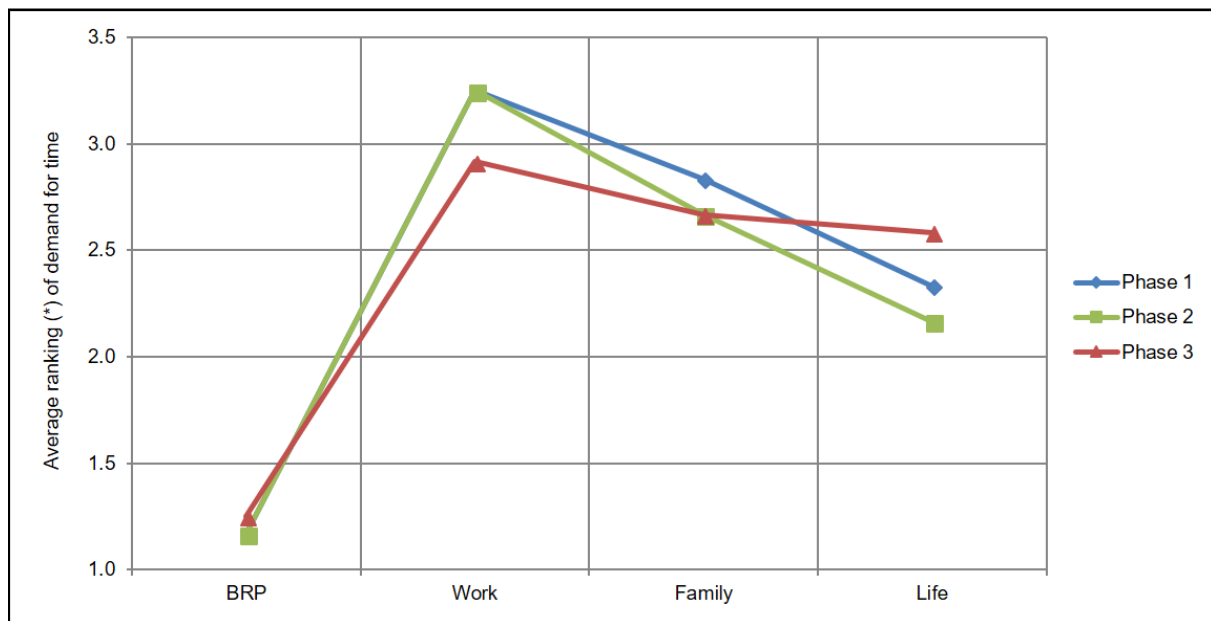
Source: Authors' own compilation

It must be noted that the last two additional BRP roles of independence/section 7K and adding to the profession have only been included in this section of the study for the purposes of reporting the findings but have not been included in the discussion. The reason for this is that independence/section 7K is a prerequisite to being a business rescue practitioner and adding to the profession does not directly relate to the business rescue process.

Figures 2 and 3 depict the time demands for each role category during each of the three phases, as well as the average demand for time of the five generic business rescue roles across the three phases. A ranking of 1 was allocated to the most time-consuming roles, while a ranking of 7 was allocated to the least time-consuming roles. Averages were

calculated for the five generic roles. The average values have been used as analysis in the graphs. Figure 2 depicts the business rescue-work-family-life/social role conflicts and the average ranking of demand for time of the four main role categories, which include BRP roles, work, family, and life.

FIGURE 2: Average ranking of time demand for the four role categories



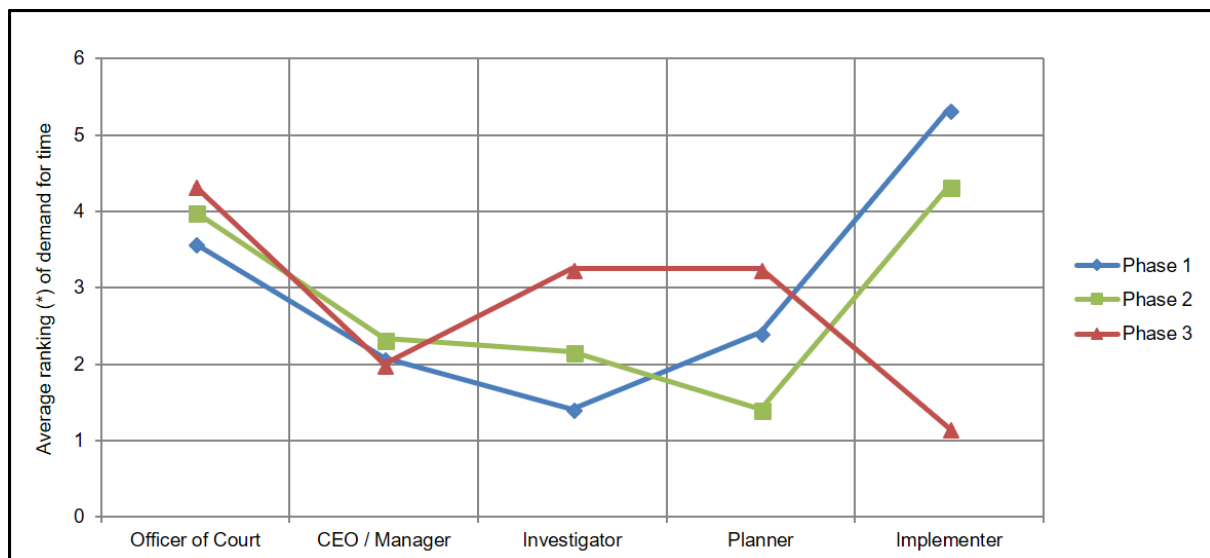
*Lowest score = highest time demand

Source: Authors' own compilation

Figure 2 represents demand for time and the way it changes throughout the three phases. The key roles and most time-demanding roles are the lowest points on the graph. The highest points on the graph represent the roles with the lowest demand on time. The figure shows the imbalance between the role categories, in that business rescue roles demand much more time from practitioners than their other roles. The key and most time-demanding roles were the business rescue roles, followed by life roles, then family, and lastly own work.

Figure 3 demonstrates how the business rescue practitioners spend their time during business rescue proceedings. It shows how they distribute their time between the business rescue roles during each of the three phases of a business rescue.

FIGURE 3: Average ranking of time demand for five generic business rescue roles



*Lowest score = highest time demand

Source: Authors' own compilation

Figure 3 represents the change in the demand for time of the five generic BRP roles across the three phases of a business rescue. The two roles that remain relatively unchanged across all three phases are officer of the court and CEO/manager. The priority time demand for the other three roles: investigator, planner and implementer, changes across all three phases. The role of an investigator was the most demanding in the investigation phase, and least demanding in the implementation phase. Planning was the most time-demanding in the planning phase, and least-time demanding in the implementation phase, along with investigator. Lastly, the implementer role did not demand much time in the investigation and planning phases, but, was the most demanding in the implementation phase.

5. RESEARCHERS' OBSERVATIONS REGARDING THE FINDINGS

This section of the findings reports on observations made by the researchers during interview conversations with the practitioners. The observations, particularly independence/section 7K, are antecedents that contribute to the main roles of focus in this research. During the interviews the researchers noted that practitioners often referred to *Independence* and *section 7K of the Companies Act*. Section 7K of the Act provides for the “efficient rescue and recovery of financially distressed companies, in a manner that balances the rights and interests of all relevant stakeholders” (Strime 2012:Internet).

The purpose of section 7K is for the BRP to remain independent, that is to assist the company but without getting so involved that one forgets to act in the best interest of all the parties involved. The researchers have omitted these from the discussion section of this study, since independence is perceived as a prerequisite for becoming a business rescue practitioner. The researchers have included it here for the purposes of reporting the findings, and under researchers' observations informing the findings, to make it clear that they were aware of it.

An important comment by the BRPs having to play multiple roles in both their personal capacities and the BR profession was that they needed help to fulfil every role, because it was not possible for each BRP to do everything on their own. Moreover, the general consensus of practitioners was that it was only possible to execute a maximum of three rescues at any one time, and if multiple rescues were being conducted, they needed to be in different phases. The reason for this is, again, that BR is so demanding that it becomes extremely difficult for practitioners to fulfil all the BRP roles for more than one rescue; they believed taking on more than they should, would affect the quality of their work.

In order to cope with demand, practitioners obtained assistance in the form of joint appointments, or outsourced particular roles to more experienced professionals. For example, practitioners from a financial background often brought in people well versed in law. Some practitioners referred to business rescue as a "*team sport*"; while others stated that a business rescue needs at least two skill sets. Eliciting help from other BRPs assists them in: their attempts to maintain balanced lifestyles, preventing the business rescue-work/family/life inter-role conflict, and building relationships and networks with one another. It was interesting to note that by only taking on joint appointments and using outside expertise and skills, practitioners are seeking, and potentially finding necessary social support within the business rescue working domain (Pluut 2016:23). The social support received from the business rescue work domain could help prevent the depletion of resources that results from high demands. In addition, the support may assist BRPs to cope with stress and manage work overload (Pluut 2016:25), since through joint appointments, BRPs can distribute their workload amongst each other, resulting in a lower demand placed upon them.

6. DISCUSSION

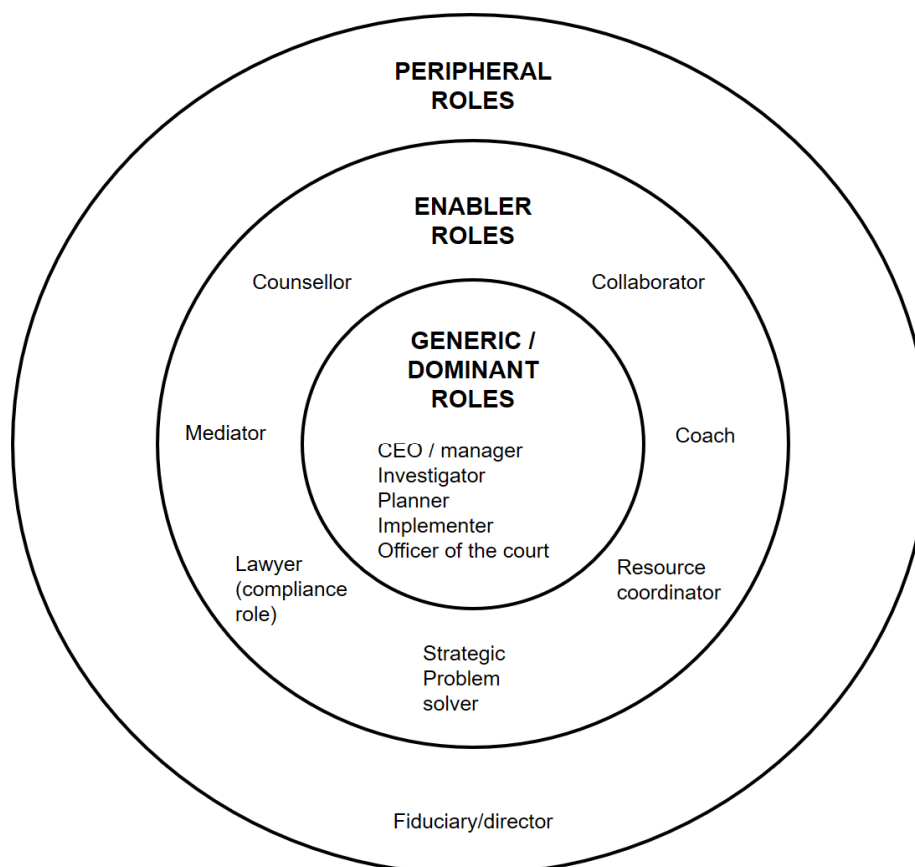
The purpose of this qualitative study was to develop a better understanding of the roles played by BRPs, role conflict experienced by BRPs, and the extent in which conflict occurs, specifically during the first three phases of a business rescue operation. This research

therefore explored three main areas to meet the purpose. These areas include: additional BRP roles, conflict experienced by BRPs, and the changes in demand for time across the BR phases. Each of these areas is discussed under a separate heading below.

6.1 Business rescue practitioner roles

As previously reported, the five generic roles include: officer of the court, CEO/manager, investigator, planner, and implementer. The following roles were identified as additional roles to the five generic roles: counsellor, collaborator, director/fiduciary, mediator, strategic problem solver, resource coordinator, lawyer, and coach. In order to gain more clarity on the demands placed upon time by the BRP roles, the roles have been included in Figure 4, which graphically illustrates this demand.

FIGURE 4: Average ranking of time demand for the four role categories



Source: Authors' own compilation

Looking at the time demand of each of the roles, the roles can be categorised on three levels: generic or dominant roles, enabler roles, and peripheral roles. The centre level

contains the five dominant BRP roles that are key to any business rescue. These roles are CEO/manager, investigator, planner, implementer, and officer of the court. These five roles were perceived as the most time consuming of all roles. This is in line with Pretorius' (2013) reports on tasks and activities of the business rescue practitioner. Although officer of the court has been included as a dominant role, the practitioners in this study identified it as a peripheral role, and therefore, once it has been complied with, it should be moved to the periphery of BR roles.

On the next level are enabler roles that support the dominant roles. The enabler roles include: counsellor, collaborator, mediator, strategic problem solver, resource coordinator, lawyer (compliance), and coach. Enabler roles are perceived as more time consuming roles than peripheral roles because they enable or make it possible for the practitioner to perform the dominant functions in a business rescue. For example, collaborating with affected parties allows the practitioner to effectively communicate with them, which might subsequently aid him or her in the investigating and planning phases of the business rescue.

The outer level consists of peripheral roles, which include: directory/fiduciary. This role is on the periphery since it is not a focused concern for the practitioners. Peripheral roles therefore are the least time-consuming roles, since they do not require a focused attention towards them; however, they should be complied with. Although the role of officer of the court was included in this study as a dominant role, since it was identified as one of the main tasks of BRPs by Pretorius (2013:17), the practitioners in this study believed that it is in fact a peripheral role, since they allocated either very little time or no time at all to the role. However, doing so did not diminish its importance as a role. The figure shows the core time demands on BRPs.

Practitioners referred to the time pressures placed upon them as BRPs during a business rescue, are of such an extent that they are often constantly busy with a business rescue. This appears to be due to the fact that business rescues have very short timelines, and presents a sense of urgency in that one must always be available. One practitioner confirmed that business rescue is an extremely time consuming job:

"I've got a limited resource of time ... you're always busy, so you are using every moment of every day, there's never a moment you've got nothing to do." (P08)

6.2 Role conflict experienced by business rescue practitioners

This study has identified conflicts that exist between BR roles and other roles (own work, partner/spouse, parent/grandparent, community member, and personal), as well as the conflicts amongst BR roles themselves. The role conflicts stem from imbalances of the time demanded by the various roles (Alin & Thornell 2016:9). Being a BRP was in conflict with the BRP's own work/career role. In this regard, practitioners often neglected their own business or work while they were busy with a rescue. The problem is that they needed to catch up on their other work after the rescue had been completed, which might then result in the notorious work-life conflict issue.

In addition, being a practitioner also conflicted with BRPs' time with their families. Although a few of the practitioners tried to maintain a balance by consistently allocating time to the parental/grandparental and spouse/partner roles across the three phases, the conflict was still present, as can be seen by the fact that they spent far more time fulfilling their BRP roles than they did in their family roles. Ironically, spending more time with one's family, particularly one's partner/spouse, provides the necessary social support needed to effectively function in life (Pluut 2016:23), while BRPs also have certain responsibilities towards their families.

Moreover, the BR role seems to conflict largely with the role of community member. This was evident from the fact that only six of the practitioners allocated time towards their role as a community member, while the other six did not. This suggests that the BRPs are missing a large social aspect in their lives by not involving themselves in the community, probably owing to the severe demands placed on time. The personal lives of BRPs also conflict with being a BRP (Hämmig *et al.* 2009:2; Munir *et al.* 2011:1), with many practitioners referring to sleeping very little, neglecting exercise, and awarding very little time to their own wellbeing. For practitioners, the easiest role to take time away from was from themselves, since it affected only them. The role conflict that exists between BRP roles and other roles is articulated by one practitioner:

"I was separated from my wife for eight months last year, mainly because of BRP work."

"As a parent it is extremely difficult to balance your life and give your children the time and attention they deserve."

"As a community member, I've had to essentially jettison all my involvement from all committees and institutions and things that I was a member of and involved in to focus on my work." (P05)

Therefore, it is noticeable that BRPs experience BRP-work conflict, BRP-family conflict, and BRP-life conflict. Inter-role conflict is present because as a BRP pursues the role priorities of a BRP, it becomes either impossible, or very difficult to fulfil his or her other work, family, and life roles (Bako 2014:36; Pluut 2016:3; Roussy 2013:553). Practitioners also reported experiencing conflict between certain BRP roles. Inter-role conflict appears to be present and inevitable in the business rescue process, and the process is found to be induced by conflict due the urgent nature of business rescue. However, of the five generic BRP roles, the roles as a planner and an investigator conflicted most often with the other BRP roles. The conflict regarding these two roles was evident, since many practitioners indicated not pursuing investigations further, either because of time constraints and monetary costs that might be involved, or because they did not want to risk undermining the management of the company and therefore the primary source of their information. The conflict that exists regarding planning and implementation is synonymous with inter-role conflict, because practitioners indicated that completely fulfilling their roles as an investigator would make it difficult to fulfil their roles as planners or managers of the business, for instance.

Another form of role conflict observed was that of inter-sender conflict. This is the conflict that exists because the BRP expectations sent from one sender, such as the Act, were often in conflict or inconsistent with those from other senders, such as the banks or directors of the company under rescue (Omar, Mohd & Ariffin 2015:53).

Often practitioners deal with conflicting expectations from the banks, creditors, employees, and directors of a company (Pretorius 2016), yet they are obliged to fulfil the obligations laid down for them in the Act. In addition, BRPs often have to deal with shareholders and directors who do not always understand the purpose and place of a BRP in a business rescue. Lastly, intra-sender conflict emerged as a form of role conflict, and is related mainly to the role as an investigator. Two of the practitioners in this study expressed their frustrations over not having any real power to investigate the affairs of a company (similar to that of a liquidator), while the Act clearly requires a thorough investigation, for example:

“The court expects me to investigate the affairs, but it doesn’t allow me to do a 417 enquiry, so I can’t subpoena people to come and testify.” (P08)

Intra-sender conflict further exists here because the BRP is supposed to conduct the task of investigating within specified limits, but does not have any resources, capacity, or in this case, power to do so (Omar *et al.* 2015:53). It seems practitioners would appreciate the use of the powers laid out in section 417 of the Act. These powers would entitle the practitioner

to summon before the court any person who might be able to provide information regarding affairs, trade, and property of the company (Lovells 2015:Internet). Perhaps the possession of such powers might assist practitioners to fulfil their role as an investigator more quickly and efficiently, leaving them with more time to fulfil other BRP roles, and therefore reducing the demand pressure placed upon them by having to fulfil multiple roles.

6.3 Changes in time demand across the business rescue phases

Each phase in a business rescue placed different time demands on each of the various roles. Of the five generic roles, the role as an investigator was the most time-consuming in the investigation phase, and least time-consuming in the implementation phase.

Secondly, and logically, the role as a planner was the most time-consuming role in the planning phase, but remained third most time-consuming in the investigation and implementation phases. This is in line with business rescue literature, which describes the investigation and planning phases as the phases that require the investigation into affairs and preparation of the BR plan (Levenstein 2011:36; Levenstein & Barnett n.d.:7).

Thirdly, the demand on time from the CEO/manager role did not change drastically across the phases, and was therefore a constant time consumer throughout the process. Of the five generic roles, the role as an implementer demanded the most time during the final phase, which is in line with Chapter 6 of the Act, and with business rescue literature, which describes phase 3 of this research as the implementation phase (Raubenheimer 2012:2).

Lastly, the role as an officer of the court was perceived as one of the least time-consuming roles in all three phases, since it is a compliance role and does not demand time once it is complied with. The demand for time from the additional roles did not change very much across the three phases.

From the findings, it appears that there were no significant changes in the demand for time from the roles unrelated to BR. More time was spent on life roles, followed by family, and lastly work/own career in all three phases.

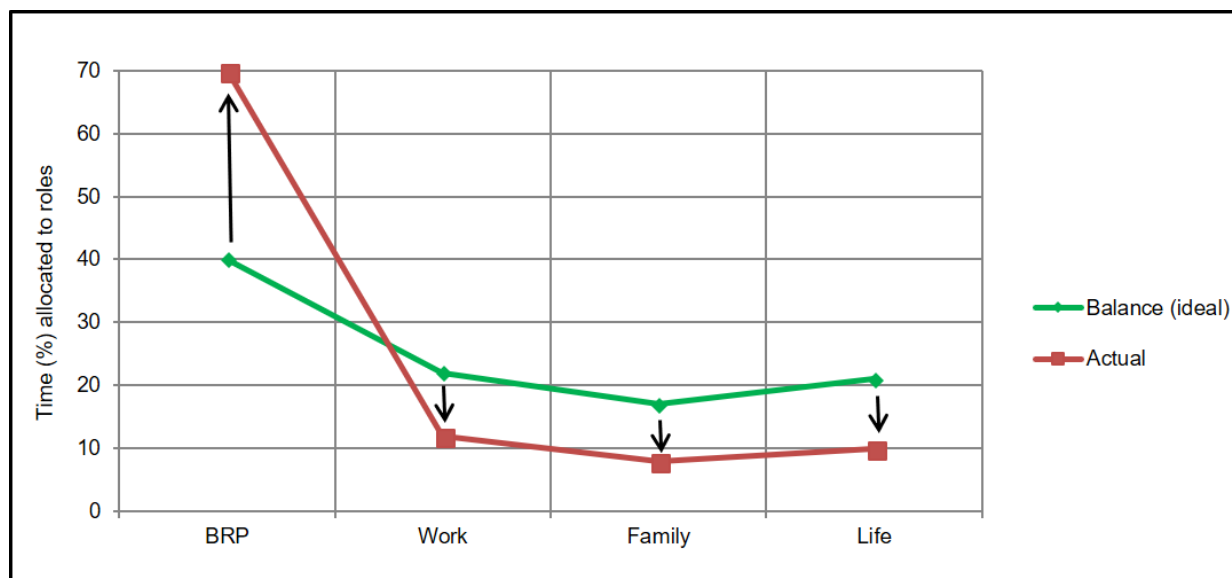
Furthermore, more time was spent in the implementation phase on own work/career than in the investigation and planning phases. Family received more time in the investigation phase than in the planning or implementation phases, and the planning phase allowed for practitioners to spend more time on life roles. It was, however, evident that practitioners had more time to spend on roles unrelated to BR in the implementation phase. Practitioners had

little time available in the planning phase to spend on roles unrelated to business rescue, since the planning phase was the most demanding phase for BR roles.

On the basis of the findings it can be concluded that three forms of role conflict arise for BRPs: inter-role conflict, inter-sender conflict, and intra-sender conflict. Inter-role conflict was present between BR roles and unrelated BR roles, and significantly so. BRPs spend much more time fulfilling their BR roles than they do their other roles; therefore, the notorious work-life/work-family conflict arises in the BR process. The conflict that exists in this study is BR-work conflict, BR-family conflict, and BR-life conflict. Inter-sender conflict is also present, as there were conflicting expectations between the BRPs' duties in terms of the Act and expectations from the banks or directors of the company under rescue. Lastly, intra-sender conflict was apparent, as BRPs are expected to investigate affairs according to the Act, but are given no legal powers to do so, such as a section 417 enquiry, which is present in the liquidation process.

Furthermore, the role conflicts that occurred were as a result of an apparent imbalance of time demanded by the various roles as reported. Each individual has a chosen point of time allocation towards their roles. These time allocations are perceived as their own personal balance of roles. However, role conflict occurs when the demand for time placed upon the individuals, forces them to deviate from their ideal balance of time demand, thus causing an imbalance between expectation and actual time spent.

Figure 5 is a framework that represents a role-conflict gap that shows the extent of this conflict for BRPs across their four role categories of BRP, work, family, and life.

FIGURE 5: Role conflict framework based on time demand by role categories

Source: Authors' own compilation

The balance line represents the hypothetical ideal situation in which individuals can use their own free choice to determine which roles should be allotted time and how much time should be allocated. The ideal situation therefore represents one's perceived balance of time demand. The actual line, on the other hand, shows how the ideal situation becomes distorted as a result of the demand of time forcing the practitioners to spend more time on some roles than they would prefer to, resulting in, the imbalance that is role conflict. The key finding here is that BRPs have an idea of how they think they should spend their time, but the business rescue process forces them to deviate from their ideal situation, and in doing so causes a conflict of roles. Furthermore, the extent of the conflict is driven by the phases and the time limits laid out in the Act.

7. CONCLUSION

7.1 Summary of findings and theoretical implications

This paper aimed to provide a better understanding of the roles played by BRPs, role conflict experienced by BRPs, and the extent to which conflict occurs, specifically during the three phases of a business rescue operation. Based on the responses from 12 interviews with business rescue practitioners, with the aid of the graphic elicitation, it was possible to explore and gain a better understanding the BRPs' business rescue experiences, to determine: whether BRPs believed they fulfilled additional roles (other than the five generic

roles); whether role conflict was present for BRPs during the business rescue process; and to what extent that conflict existed.

The study described eight new BR roles in addition to the five generic BR roles (officer of the court, CEO/manager, investigator, planner, and implementer). These roles included: counsellor, collaborator, director/fiduciary, mediator, strategic problem solver, resource coordinator, lawyer, and coach. Furthermore, the study revealed that the BR roles could be placed into three levels of categories: generic or dominant roles; enabler roles; and peripheral roles.

This research provides valuable insight into the role conflict that arises for business rescue practitioners. BRPs experienced inter-role conflict, inter-sender conflict, and intra-sender conflict. BRPs experienced significant inter-role conflict between their BR rescue and their personal and social roles. This research identified these conflicts as BR-work conflict, BR-family conflict, and BR-life conflict. Furthermore, this study demonstrated that role conflicts that occurred were as a result of an imbalance of the time demanded by the various roles. Thus, role conflict arose when the demand for time placed upon practitioners forced them to deviate from their ideal balance of demand for time, which was based on their own free choice of where they would prefer to spend their time.

The research did, however, indicate that BRPs had more disposable time during the implementation phase, while the phase between the first and second creditors meetings was the most demanding phase in terms of time. Lastly, and logically, of the BR roles, the investigator role was the most time demanding during the investigation phase, planner the most time demanding during the planning phase, and implementer the most time demanding during the implementation phase, which is in line with the general business rescue process outlined in the Act. This research has therefore contributed to the literature available on the roles that BRPs play during their everyday lives and in their own personal and social capacities, as well as the extent to which time is demanded by these roles, particularly the BR roles.

7.2 Limitations and recommendations for future research

There is no study without limitations; this study is no exception. The sample used is not representative of all business rescue practitioners, and therefore cannot be generalised as such. Results were based on practitioners' personal experiences with business rescue, as well as their own personal lives; for example, some practitioners did not have children or grandchildren, so the parental role did not apply to them. So, although the findings cannot be

generalised, this study provides a starting point for future research in the area of role conflict of business rescue practitioners.

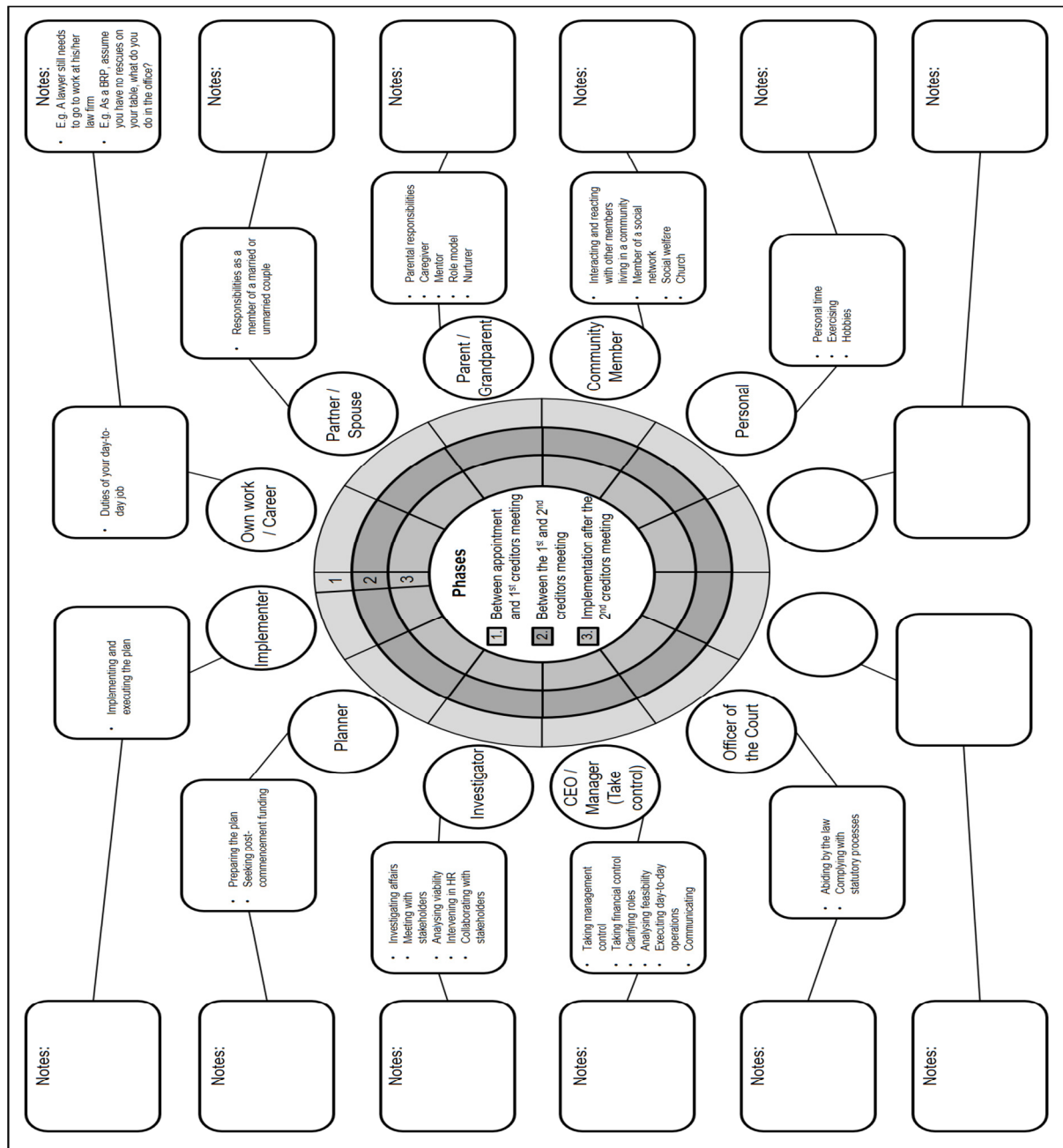
In order to improve the study, the researchers suggest, firstly, that a further study should include a greater number of practitioners in the research. Secondly, practitioners in this study resided only in the Gauteng province of South Africa, and a larger distribution of practitioners across the nine provinces in South Africa should be considered. Future research should consider the role conflicts experienced by practitioners who take on business rescues as joint appointments, to determine whether those practitioners experience the same types of role conflict, and as severe a role conflict, as single practitioners experience. Furthermore, research might consider including practitioners who have either lost their licence as a practitioner, been removed from a business rescue, or who have decided to end their career in business rescue, as this might reveal different role conflict results. Lastly, a study might explore the strategies used by practitioners in order to cope with role conflicts.

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APPENDIX A: Graphic elicitation

FIGURE 6: Graphic elicitation / diagram used to support the discussion guide



Source: Authors' own compilation

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