

Assessing the Role Clarity and Ministry Effectiveness in Multi-Staff Church Administration in Lagos West Baptist Conference, Lagos, Nigeria

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<https://doi.org/10.56201/ijrcp.vol.11.no7.2026.pg65.77>

Abstract

The increasing complexity of contemporary church administration has heightened the need for clearly differentiated pastoral responsibilities within multi-staff ministry structures. Although multi-staff ministry provides opportunities for shared leadership and specialised service, unclear roles, overlapping responsibilities, and ambiguous authority may undermine ministry effectiveness. This study assessed the role clarity and ministry effectiveness in multi-staff church administration, with particular attention to how clearly defined responsibilities, authority, communication, and accountability shape pastoral collaboration. The study adopted a qualitative research design within an interpretivist paradigm. Data were obtained through semi-structured interviews with ten purposively selected pastors comprising five Senior Pastors and five Associate Pastors serving in multi-staff Baptist churches. Interview data were analysed using Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis. Findings revealed that role clarity facilitates workload sharing, ministry specialisation, communication, coordination, accountability, and effective ministry delivery. Conversely, role ambiguity, overlapping responsibilities, ineffective communication, and unclear authority constrain collaborative ministry and administrative effectiveness. The study concludes that role clarity is a significant organisational condition for effective multi-staff ministry and recommends intentional role definition, communication, delegation, and accountability structures. The study contributes qualitative insight to scholarship on pastoral leadership and church administration within the Nigerian Baptist context.

Keywords: Role Clarity, Ministry Effectiveness, Multi-Staff Ministry, Church Administration, Pastoral Leadership

Introduction

Contemporary pastoral ministry operates within increasingly complex spiritual, relational, and administrative environments. Pastors are expected to provide preaching, discipleship, pastoral care, counselling, leadership development, conflict management, and strategic administration, making it increasingly difficult for one pastoral leader to address every dimension of congregational life effectively. Consequently, churches have increasingly adopted multi-staff and collaborative leadership structures that distribute ministerial responsibilities among pastors with complementary competencies (Pearce & Conger, 2003; Banks et al., 2022; Bonini et al., 2024).

Multi-staff ministry, however, introduces an organisational question that is often less visible than leadership distribution: how clearly do those who occupy ministerial roles understand their roles? In a multi-staff church, Senior and Associate Pastors may share a common ministry vision while carrying different responsibilities, levels of authority, and reporting relationships. Where these distinctions are clearly communicated, pastoral personnel can concentrate on their respective assignments while coordinating their efforts toward shared ministry objectives. Where they remain unclear, overlapping responsibilities, uncertainty, communication difficulties, and interpersonal tensions may undermine the very collaboration that multi-staff ministry is intended to promote. Thus, this study identifies role clarity, communication, and conflict management as important dimensions of effective multi-staff pastoral administration.

Role clarity therefore occupies an important position in understanding ministry effectiveness within multi-staff church administration. Role clarity concerns the extent to which individuals understand their responsibilities, authority, reporting relationships, and performance expectations. In a pastoral team, clarity enables ministers to understand not only what they are expected to do but also how their responsibilities relate to those of other leaders. Role ambiguity, by contrast, can produce duplication, confusion, weakened accountability, and conflict (Afolaranmi, 2021). This distinction makes role clarity particularly relevant to churches where pastoral authority and responsibility are distributed across multiple ministers (Eyinnaya & Adeleke, 2025).

The issue is significant within the wider scholarly debate on collaborative leadership. Research has associated shared and collaborative leadership with improved organisational performance, innovation, member engagement, leadership development, and sustainability (Carson et al., 2007; Foppen & Van Saane, 2023; Bonini et al., 2024). However, collaboration does not necessarily mean that all leaders perform the same functions. Effective collaboration requires appropriate differentiation of responsibility alongside coordination of effort. Thus, the effectiveness of a multi-staff structure may depend not simply on the presence of several pastoral leaders but on whether their roles are clear enough to allow responsible delegation and coordinated action.

This concern is relevant across diverse church contexts. In the North American debate, collaborative and shared leadership scholarship has increasingly examined how distributed responsibility contributes to organizational performance and team effectiveness. This is necessary because it is becoming increasingly difficult for any single individual to possess all the skills and abilities required to lead organisations completely today (O'Toole, Galbraith, & Lawler, 2002).

In European religious leadership scholarship, attention has similarly expanded toward collaborative leadership, participation, leadership development, and organisational effectiveness (Foppen & Van Saane, 2023). In African contexts, scholarship has considered pastoral leadership, church administration, pastoral wellbeing, and the organisational challenges associated with contemporary ministry. Nigerian studies have specifically reported the significance of leadership structures, collaborative leadership, transformational leadership, and sound church administration

for pastoral and congregational effectiveness (Lawal, 2020; Siyanbola et al., 2024; Ajani & Afolaranmi, 2025; Okunoye & Afolaranmi, 2026).

Despite these developments, the literature has paid comparatively limited attention to role clarity as a distinct organisational condition underlying ministry effectiveness in multi-staff churches. Existing scholarship has more frequently examined leadership styles, church administration, church growth, pastoral effectiveness, and collaborative leadership. Less attention has been given to how Senior Pastors and Associate Pastors experience and interpret role expectations, authority, delegation, accountability, and responsibility within the same multi-staff structure. This constitutes an important gap because role ambiguity may weaken communication and coordination even where the broader leadership structure is collaborative.

Against this background, this study examines the relationship between role clarity and ministry effectiveness in multi-staff church administration. It is anchored in Role Theory, which provides a framework for examining how role expectations, responsibilities, authority, and boundaries shape individual and organisational functioning. The study adopts a qualitative approach, drawing on semi-structured interviews with Senior and Associate Pastors to explore how role clarity is experienced and how it relates to communication, delegation, accountability, collaboration, and ministry coordination.

The study contributes to the discussion by shifting attention from the general benefits of multi-staff ministry to a more specific organisational question: what conditions enable multiple pastoral leaders to function effectively together? By focusing on role clarity, the study provides a more precise account of how differentiated pastoral responsibilities can be coordinated toward effective ministry and extends the application of Role Theory to contemporary church administration.

Review of Literature

The increasing complexity of contemporary church ministry has shifted pastoral leadership from a predominantly individual responsibility to a more collaborative organisational function. Expanding congregations, diversified ministries, technological developments, administrative demands, and the need for specialised pastoral competencies have encouraged churches to adopt multi-staff ministry structures, in which several pastors share responsibility for accomplishing the local church's mission. Multi-staff ministry provides opportunities for role differentiation, workload distribution, specialised ministry, leadership development, mutual accountability, and continuity (Eyinnaya & Adeleke, 2025). In this regard, Anumaka (2021) presents the Antioch church as a model of multi-staff leadership in which diverse leaders functioned collectively rather than through isolated or competitive leadership. Similarly, Nganyu et al. (2025) found that collaborative ministry models can strengthen church leadership effectiveness through mutual decision-making, transparency, trust, teamwork, and shared responsibility.

Within multi-staff church administration, role clarity becomes particularly important because collaborative leadership does not eliminate distinctions between pastoral positions. Role clarity refers to the extent to which individuals understand their responsibilities, reporting relationships, authority boundaries, and expected outcomes within an organisational structure (Kahn et al., 1964). In pastoral ministry, this understanding extends beyond task allocation to include decision-making authority, pastoral boundaries, ministry priorities, functional specialisation, and accountability. Senior and Associate Pastors may share a common ministry vision while exercising different responsibilities in preaching, pastoral care, discipleship, Christian education, missions, administration, youth ministry, counselling, and other areas (Eyinnaya & Adeleke, 2025). Clearly differentiated responsibilities enable pastoral leaders to concentrate on their respective

assignments while coordinating their efforts toward shared ministry objectives (Banks & Ledbetter, 2022; Banks et al., 2016; Northouse, 2022).

The significance of role clarity is reinforced by organisational leadership scholarship. Kahn et al. (1964) and Rizzo et al. (1970) link role ambiguity to uncertainty about expectations, responsibilities, and authority, with potential consequences for individual and organisational functioning. In contrast, clear role expectations can strengthen coordination, accountability, trust, and collaborative performance. Pearce and Conger (2003) argue that distributed leadership becomes effective when individuals contribute complementary competencies within a coordinated structure, while Carson et al. (2007) similarly identify trust, shared responsibility, and mutual accountability as important conditions for effective collaborative leadership. Breedt & Niemandt (2013), examining shared leadership in ministry contexts, similarly identified spiritual giftedness, relational support, and biblical shared leadership as prominent practices in effective ministry teams. Thus, multi-staff ministry is not simply appointing several pastors; it is a coordinated leadership arrangement that requires clarity about responsibility, authority, and accountability.

Multi-Staff Ministry and Ministry Effectiveness

Multi-staff ministry is effective when the distribution of pastoral responsibility builds ministry capacity rather than creating organisational confusion. The structure allows churches to deploy different pastoral competencies across preaching, pastoral care, discipleship, administration, missions, leadership development, and congregational engagement. Contemporary research on collaborative ministry indicates that shared leadership can improve decision-making, staff satisfaction, transparency, trust, and leadership effectiveness when supported by appropriate teamwork and communication mechanisms (Nganyu et al., 2025). Recent ecclesial research similarly indicates that shared leadership can enhance collaboration and decision-making while also revealing challenges associated with communication, interpersonal dynamics, and decision-making inefficiencies (Mickel, 2026).

Ministry Effectiveness

Ministry effectiveness is increasingly understood as more than numerical church growth; it encompasses the church's capacity to fulfil its spiritual and organisational mission through effective leadership, pastoral care, discipleship, administration, leadership development, congregational participation, and community engagement (Okunoye, 2026; Ayandokun, 2020). Contemporary leadership scholarship similarly emphasises organisational adaptability, leadership sustainability, and effective deployment of human resources as dimensions of organisational effectiveness (Bonini et al., 2024; Foppen & Van Saane, 2023). Nigerian scholarship also links effective church leadership to administrative competence, leadership structure, innovation, and organisational development (Lawal, 2020; Siyanbola et al., 2024).

Role Clarity and Ministry Effectiveness in Multi-Staff Church Administration

The relationship between role clarity and ministry effectiveness lies in how clearly defined pastoral responsibilities can transform multiple leadership positions into a coordinated ministry system. Multi-staff ministry can give churches greater leadership depth and specialised competencies, but these benefits may weaken when pastors are uncertain about their responsibilities, authority, or accountability. Role clarity therefore provides an organisational foundation for effective delegation, communication, teamwork, and pastoral coordination (Kahn et al., 1964; Rizzo et al., 1970).

Within the Nigerian Baptist context, this relationship is particularly significant because pastoral leadership requires both pastoral oversight and collaborative participation. Clear expectations, appropriate delegation, regular communication, mutual respect, and shared accountability can enable differentiated pastoral roles to operate cooperatively rather than competitively. However, although existing scholarship has examined pastoral leadership, multi-staff ministry, shared leadership, church administration, communication, conflict management, and ministry effectiveness, it has paid less attention to role clarity as an organisational condition shaping ministry effectiveness within multi-staff church administration. This study addresses that gap by examining how clearly defined pastoral responsibilities, authority, delegation, communication, and accountability contribute to effective collaborative ministry.

Review of Empirical Literature

Empirical studies on multi-staff ministry indicate that distributing pastoral responsibilities can improve ministry effectiveness when supported by appropriate organisational structures. Ayo-Obiremi (2017) found that congregations with more than one full-time minister reported stronger pastoral care, higher member satisfaction, and increased volunteer participation. Similarly, Ayandokun (2020), studying Nigerian Baptist churches, observed that leadership plurality encouraged shared decision-making, innovation, and contextual responsiveness. Ingersoll and Dunaetz (2025) also found differences in the challenges smaller and larger churches face, highlighting the growing complexity of pastoral leadership as congregational demands expand. International evidence similarly supports the potential benefits of collaborative pastoral structures. Nganyu et al (2025) reported that effective collaborative pastoral leadership enhances decision-making. This, in turn, enhances ministerial effectiveness, as leaders with a corporate theological vision and egalitarian philosophy are better positioned to resolve current ministry challenges. At the same time, Bjorke (2018) linked multi-staff ministry to accountability, mutual support, and broader ministry engagement. Ossai (2022) likewise presents collaborative ministry as an important avenue for effective pastoral work. These findings suggest that multi-staff structures can increase ministry capacity, but their effectiveness depends upon how responsibilities are distributed and coordinated. More directly relevant to the present study, empirical literature identifies role clarity as an important condition for successful multi-staff ministry. Evidence from African church contexts indicates that multi-staff churches with documented role descriptions, regular staff meetings, and shared decision-making experience fewer leadership conflicts and stronger organisational trust. Conversely, unclear roles, weak communication, and inadequate governance are associated with role ambiguity, duplicated duties, interpersonal conflict, and administrative inefficiency. This aligns with Rizzo et al. (1970), whose empirical work established the organisational consequences of role conflict and ambiguity.

The Nigerian and African evidence further demonstrates that role clarity cannot be separated from communication, delegation, and accountability. Okunoye (2025) and Ishola & Fatiloro (2024) identify unclear ministerial expectations and inadequately structured leadership arrangements as sources of tension and inefficiency, while Eyinnaya & Adeleke (2025) emphasise clear responsibilities, communication systems, and accountability frameworks as important to sustainable multi-staff ministry. These findings are particularly relevant to relationships between Senior and Associate Pastors, where differences in authority and responsibility may create tension if expectations are not clearly communicated.

Empirical evidence also suggests that multi-staff ministry does not automatically guarantee effectiveness. Comparative studies indicate that its success depends on governance clarity,

organisational capacity, contextual suitability, communication, and clearly differentiated leadership roles. Without these conditions, multi-staff structures may create authority conflicts and organisational fragmentation despite their potential advantages in specialisation and workload distribution. Although previous studies have examined collaborative pastoral leadership, multi-staff ministry, role ambiguity, church administration, and ministry effectiveness, limited empirical attention has specifically examined how role clarity contributes to ministry effectiveness within multi-staff church administration. In particular, research has paid insufficient attention to how Senior and Associate Pastors experience role expectations, authority, delegation, communication, and accountability in their everyday ministry relationships. The present study addresses this gap by examining these dimensions through the experiences of pastors serving in multi-staff church contexts.

Theoretical Framework: Role Theory

This study is anchored in Role Theory, particularly the understanding of role expectations, role conflict, and role ambiguity developed within organisational scholarship (Kahn et al., 1964; Rizzo et al., 1970). In multi-staff church administration, the theory offers a useful lens for examining how clearly defined responsibilities, authority, expectations, and accountability shape interactions between Senior and Associate Pastors. Role Theory is particularly relevant to multi-staff church administration because Senior and Associate Pastors occupy distinct but interconnected ministerial positions. Their effectiveness depends not only on their individual competencies but also on their understanding of what they are expected to perform, the authority attached to their responsibilities, and how their roles relate to those of other pastoral leaders. From this perspective, clearly differentiated roles can facilitate communication, delegation, accountability, and collaboration, while unclear boundaries may produce duplication, tension, and administrative inefficiency. Accordingly, the study uses Role Theory to examine how role expectations, responsibility, authority, delegation, communication, and accountability shape ministry effectiveness within multi-staff church administration. The theory provides the analytical lens through which participants' experiences are interpreted rather than serving as a statistical model of causation.

Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative research design within an interpretivist paradigm to explore how role clarity relates to ministry effectiveness in multi-staff church administration. Purposive sampling was used to select ten pastors comprising five Senior Pastors and five Associate Pastors with direct experience of multi-staff ministry. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews lasting 35 to 60 minutes, audio-recorded with participants' consent. The transcripts were analysed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase thematic analysis. Credibility was strengthened through prolonged engagement and verbatim quotations, while participant codes protected confidentiality.

Table 1. Profile of Participants

Code	Position	Years in Ministry
SP1	Senior Pastor	30
SP2	Senior Pastor	21
SP3	Senior Pastor	18
SP4	Senior Pastor	17

Code	Position	Years in Ministry
SP5	Senior Pastor	17
AP1	Associate Pastor	10
AP2	Associate Pastor	11
AP3	Associate Pastor	12
AP4	Associate Pastor	8
AP5	Associate Pastor	6

Source: Fieldwork (2026).

Note: Participants were drawn from multi-staff church ministry contexts.

Table 1 presents an equal representation of Senior and Associate Pastors, providing complementary perspectives on role expectations and collaborative pastoral administration. Their varied years of ministerial experience provided informed perspectives on responsibility, authority, delegation, communication, and accountability within multi-staff ministry.

Findings and Discussion

The thematic analysis generated four major themes that explain participants' perceptions of role clarity and its contribution to ministry effectiveness in multi-staff church administration. The themes align directly with the study objectives and provide a comprehensive understanding of how clearly defined pastoral responsibilities influence collaborative ministry within the Baptist context.

Table 2: Summary of Emergent Themes

Theme	Description
Theme 1	Role Clarity in Multi-Staff Church Administration
Theme 2	Contribution of Role Clarity to Ministry Effectiveness
Theme 3	Challenges Affecting Role Clarity in Multi-Staff Ministry
Theme 4	Strategies for Strengthening Role Clarity and Ministry Effectiveness

Source: Field Interview Analysis (2026).

Table 2 presents the four themes that emerged from the thematic analysis of the interview data. The themes reflect participants' collective understanding of role clarity as an important organisational condition for effective multi-staff ministry. The first theme shows how pastoral responsibilities are defined and differentiated between Senior and Associate Pastors, while the second shows how role clarity contributes to ministry effectiveness. The third highlights organisational and interpersonal challenges that affect role clarity, whereas the fourth identifies practical strategies for strengthening role clarity and ministry effectiveness. Collectively, these themes indicate that ministry effectiveness depends not only on having multiple pastors but also on the quality of role definition, communication, delegation, and leadership relationships within the pastoral team. The thematic analysis of the interview transcripts produced four interrelated themes that explain participants' perceptions of role clarity within multi-staff church administration. Rather than emerging as isolated issues, the themes reveal a progressive pattern in which participants first described how pastoral responsibilities are differentiated, then explained how role clarity contributes to ministry effectiveness, identified the major challenges associated

with unclear roles, and finally proposed practical strategies for strengthening role clarity. This progression reflects the interconnected nature of multi-staff pastoral administration. It shows that ministry effectiveness depends not merely on the presence of multiple pastors but on the quality of role relationships, communication, accountability, and shared commitment to the church's mission. Moreover, the themes in Table 2 also align directly with the study's objectives and provide the analytical framework for the discussion that follows. Accordingly, each theme is discussed in relation to participants' experiences, relevant literature, and the assumptions of Role Theory in order to demonstrate how role clarity contributes to ministry effectiveness within multi-staff church administration.

Table 3: Summary of Major Findings

Research Objective	Major Finding
Examine the nature of role clarity among pastoral staff in multi-staff churches	Clearly differentiated responsibilities, delegated authority, and defined areas of ministry enable Senior and Associate Pastors to understand their respective roles and responsibilities.
Explore the contribution of role clarity to ministry effectiveness	Role clarity strengthens communication, delegation, coordination, accountability, workload sharing, and effective ministry delivery.
Identify challenges affecting role clarity in multi-staff church administration	Role ambiguity, ineffective communication, overlapping responsibilities, unclear authority, and interpersonal tensions remain major barriers to effective collaboration.
Propose strategies for strengthening role clarity and ministry effectiveness	Clearly defined responsibilities, regular communication, appropriate delegation, mentoring, accountability, and shared vision enhance role clarity and ministry effectiveness.

Source: Field Interview Analysis (2026).

Table 3 shows that the findings align closely with the study's objectives. Role clarity emerged as an important organisational condition that strengthens both the spiritual and administrative dimensions of multi-staff ministry. While participants acknowledged challenges related to communication, overlapping responsibilities, authority, and interpersonal relationships, they consistently emphasised that clearly defined ministerial responsibilities, appropriate delegation, sustained communication, and accountability provide practical pathways to improve ministry effectiveness. These findings reinforce Role Theory's assumption that organisational effectiveness is influenced by the clarity of expectations, responsibilities, and relationships attached to organisational positions. The synthesis of the findings therefore provides the basis for the conclusions and recommendations presented in the succeeding section.

Conclusion

This study examined role clarity and ministry effectiveness in multi-staff church administration. The findings indicate that clearly differentiated ministerial responsibilities, authority, communication, delegation, and accountability are important to effective pastoral coordination.

Role clarity enables Senior and Associate Pastors to understand their respective responsibilities while working toward a shared ministry vision. Conversely, role ambiguity may contribute to overlapping responsibilities, communication difficulties, tension, and weakened accountability. The study therefore concludes that effective multi-staff ministry depends not merely on the presence of multiple pastoral leaders but on the organisational clarity within which they function. Regular communication, appropriate delegation, mentoring, accountability, and shared vision can strengthen role clarity and facilitate effective collaboration. By applying Role Theory to multi-staff church administration, the study highlights role clarity as an important organisational condition for effective pastoral ministry. The findings provide a basis for strengthening pastoral structures and collaborative ministry practices within contemporary churches.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the study recommends the following:

1. **Multi-staff churches should establish clear role descriptions:** Senior and Associate Pastors should have clearly documented responsibilities, authority boundaries, reporting relationships, and accountability expectations to minimise ambiguity and duplication.
2. **Churches should institutionalise regular pastoral communication:** Scheduled staff meetings should be used to clarify responsibilities, coordinate ministry activities, review challenges, and strengthen shared understanding among pastoral leaders.
3. **Senior Pastors should strengthen delegation, mentoring, and accountability:** Associate Pastors should receive appropriate delegated authority, guidance, and constructive supervision to enable them to perform assigned responsibilities effectively while remaining accountable.
4. **Churches should periodically review pastoral roles:** Role arrangements should be reviewed as congregational needs, ministry priorities, and organisational structures change. Such reviews should preserve the church's shared vision while allowing appropriate flexibility in pastoral responsibilities and encouraging mutual respect, collaboration, and constructive conflict management among pastoral staff.

Practical Implications

The findings have practical implications for administering multi-staff churches. They indicate that the effectiveness of having multiple pastors depends substantially on how clearly their responsibilities, authority, and accountability are understood. For Senior Pastors, role clarity provides a basis for effective delegation and coordination without relinquishing overall pastoral oversight. For Associate Pastors, it creates the organisational confidence necessary to exercise delegated responsibilities and contribute meaningfully to the church's ministry objectives. The findings further imply that communication is central to sustaining role clarity because pastoral responsibilities may evolve with congregational growth and changing ministry demands. Consequently, role clarity should be understood as a continuing administrative process rather than a one-time assignment of duties. The study also highlights the practical importance of balancing differentiated responsibilities with shared vision and collaboration. When such balance exists, multi-staff structures can facilitate pastoral care, teamwork, accountability, leadership development, and more coordinated ministry delivery.

Contributions to Knowledge

This study contributes to scholarship on church administration and pastoral leadership by positioning role clarity as an important organisational condition of ministry effectiveness in multi-

staff church administration. Rather than viewing multi-staff ministry simply as a mechanism for distributing pastoral workload, the study shows the importance of clearly defined responsibilities, authority, communication, delegation, and accountability in turning multiple pastoral positions into a coordinated ministry structure. The study makes a theoretical contribution by applying Role Theory to the administration of multi-staff churches, particularly the relationship between role expectations, role ambiguity, and effective pastoral coordination. Empirically, it contributes qualitative evidence from the experiences of Senior and Associate Pastors, thereby providing insight into how role clarity operates within actual pastoral relationships. Contextually, the study adds to the relatively limited empirical literature on multi-staff church administration within the Nigerian Baptist setting. Practically, it provides an evidence-informed basis for strengthening role definition, communication, delegation, mentoring, and accountability in multi-staff pastoral structures. It further contributes by linking role clarity directly to ministry effectiveness rather than treating these as separate administrative concerns. The study demonstrates that clear expectations can support coordinated decision-making, reduce overlapping responsibilities, strengthen mutual accountability, and facilitate the complementary deployment of pastoral gifts. It therefore provides a conceptual and practical foundation for future studies examining pastoral role structures, collaborative leadership, and organisational effectiveness across different denominations and church contexts.

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