



## MODERATING THE EFFECT OF WORK ENGAGEMENT ON EMOTIONAL EXHAUSTION AND WORK-LIFE CONFLICT, WITH A FOCUS ON NIGERIAN WORKERS

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**ABSTRACT:** *This research aims to investigate the moderating effect of work engagement on the relationship between emotional exhaustion and work-life conflict among Nigerian policemen. It employs a quantitative research design, using a survey questionnaire to collect data from a sample of 150 Nigerian policemen that were purposively. The data collected was analyzed using statistical techniques such as regression analysis to test the hypotheses. This paper finds a significant relationship between emotional exhaustion and work-life. In addition, it revealed that work engagement significantly moderates the effect of the relationship between emotional exhaustion and work-life conflict among Nigerian policemen. Thus, it concludes that Nigerian policemen, the police force, and other organizations should endeavor to identify the predictors of emotional exhaustion and work-life conflict and work towards minimizing their effects on the employee. Moreso, work engagement should be strategically employed to mediate the effect of the relationship between emotional exhaustion and work-life conflict. This study was conducted only in the sample of police officers in Ogun State. Similar studies are also crucial in different sectors to see the perspective of the subject as a whole*

**KEYWORDS:** Work-life conflict, Emotional exhaustion, Work engagement, Productivity.



## INTRODUCTION

Work-life conflict has been a major concern for employees in various organizations. The Nigerian Police Force is not an exception, as its members often experience work-life conflict due to the nature of their job. Nigerian police officers occupy a central role in the protection of lives and properties, maintaining law and order as well as providing a safe and secure environment for Nigerians (Terzungwe, Okhakhume & Daudu, 2017). Experience has shown that officers are faced with a lot of challenges, in the course of carrying out their primary assignments. These challenges occur as a result of a sharp rise in insecurity across the country; whereby, officers are faced with cases of armed robbery, kidnappings, terrorism, and religious/communal crisis among others in the society.

According to Soul, John and Barnabas (2014), many police officers strive to ensure they balance their time between work engagement and family. This resulted in a situation known as work-life conflict among them. Similarly, police officers are faced with problems while discharging their duties as a result of their exposure to various work-related issues. These challenges have a tendency to hamper the officers' psychological well-being, as they struggle to cope with pressure from each angle (Saidu, 2013). In the light of this, a definition of these concepts becomes important.

Firstly, work-life conflict is regarded as a form of conflict between individuals' different roles within work and family domains, where the requirements and demands of the two domains are discordant (Rathi & Barath, 2013). It has been defined as the "inter-role conflict that occurs when the demands of work interfere with the demands of family or personal life" (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985, pp 7244-7245). Crawford, Shaine, Whitman and Kacmar (2016) posited that a high level of work family conflict has serious effects on both personal and organizational life. In another dimension, Terzungwe, Okhakhume and Daudu (2017) found that work-life conflict significantly influenced psychological well-being among police Officers and recommended that the government should evolve policies that are aimed at reducing work-life conflict and work stress among police officers. Wang, Tsai, Lee and Ko (2021) also reported the relationships among work-family conflict (WFC), family-work conflict (FWC), emotional exhaustion and task performance of service workers.

Work-life conflict is a form of obstacle to the struggle to get resources between two important domains in an individual's life. If the demands in the work are too high and someone must reconcile them with housework, and no one has to give up something, this will cause the threat of loss of resources (Purwayoga *et al.*, 2019). Therefore, it is seen as having a negative impact on individual attitudes and behavior.

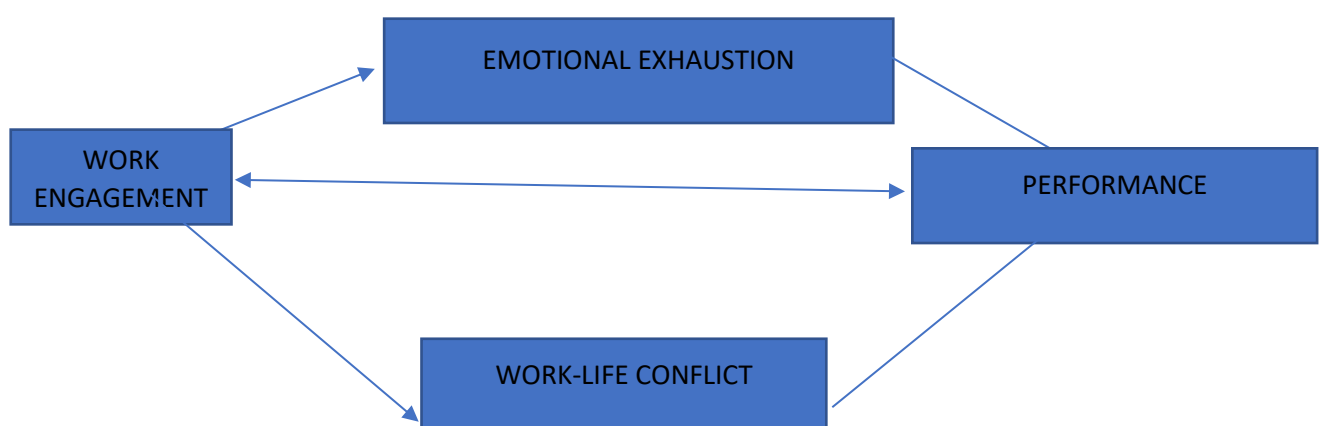
The second concept, *emotional exhaustion*, is a feeling that the emotional resources a person possesses have been drained due to overwhelming demands that consume his/her time and energy according to Avdija and Roy (2013). It is considered as an important aspect of burnout, which is a state of physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion occasioned by prolonged exposure to stressful work situations (Maslach & Leiter, 2016). Previous studies have shown that emotional exhaustion is positively related to work-life conflict (Barnett & Hyde, 2001; Frone, Russell & Barnes, 1996), which indicates that employees who experience high levels of emotional exhaustion may struggle to balance their work and personal responsibilities. The main cause of emotional exhaustion is stress triggered by several antecedents including job demands, workload, time pressure, role conflict, role ambiguity, lack of feedback and

autonomy and work-life conflict (Maslach, 2003). This can result in absenteeism, intention to leave, lower productivity, decreased job satisfaction, commitment, employee engagement, and organizational citizenship while employees may also suffer several outcomes such as decrease in life satisfaction, anxiety, depression, sleep disorders and health problems (Maslach, 2003; Avdija & Roy, 2013; Hall, Dollard, Tuckey, Winefield & Thompson, 2010; Jensen & Rundmo, 2015).

Finally, the third construct *work engagement*, according to Agoi (2015) represents an indication that personal (energetic) resources are brought into the organization by employees. It is a positive work-related state characterized by high levels of energy, dedication, and absorption in work (Schaufeli et al., 2002). Work engagement has been found to be negatively related to work-life conflict (Bakker, Demerouti & Euwema, 2005; Halbesleben, Harvey & Bolino, 2009), suggesting that employees who are highly engaged in their work may be better able to manage the demands of work and personal life.

Recent research has suggested that work engagement may moderate the relationship between emotional exhaustion and work-life conflict, such that the negative effect of emotional exhaustion on work-life conflict is weaker for individuals with higher levels of work engagement (Bakker, van der Zee, Lewig & Dollard, 2016; Hakanen, Bakker & Schaufeli, 2006). This suggests that work engagement may serve as a resource for employees experiencing emotional exhaustion, helping them to better manage the demands of work and personal life.

Emotional exhaustion has been identified as one of the factors that contribute to work-life conflict among employees. Work engagement has been suggested as a potential moderator of the relationship between emotional exhaustion and work-life conflict. However, research on the moderating effects of work engagement on the relationship between emotional exhaustion and work-life conflict among Nigerian workers is limited. Given the unique cultural and organizational context of Nigeria, it is important to examine the extent to which work engagement may buffer the negative effects of emotional exhaustion on work-life conflict among Nigerian workers.



**Figure 2.1: Conceptual Framework**

*Source: Researchers' Idea (2023)*



Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual model developed in this study. This study offers contribution to the existing literature on the concepts and serves as a medium for more research on the resultant effects arising from implications of work-life conflict and emotional exhaustion in the workplace. On this basis, the following underlisted hypothesis are proposed for this study based on the descriptions in theoretical and empirical studies.

### **Hypotheses:**

Ho1: Emotional exhaustion has a positive effect on work-life conflict among Nigerian policemen.

Ho2: Work engagement moderates the relationship between emotional exhaustion and work-life conflict among Nigerian policemen.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Theoretically, the relationship between experienced imbalance between work-life conflict (demands between workers, their job and family) and emotional exhaustion can be explained through the loss spiral assumption that is posed in the conservation of resources (COR) theory. This theory offers a framework which helps to understand responses to stress and suggests that stress emanates from issues involving threatened or actual loss of valued resources. Furthermore, it is the desire to defend, conserve, and acquire these valued resources which motivates human behavior in the face of stress. According to the COR theory, loss is more salient than gain, and loss begets loss.

COR theory has received much empirical support and is particularly helpful in understanding relationships between stress and physical health. It offers fundamental insights that have guided research on coping with chronic illness, medical consequences of natural disasters, and long-term effects of occupational burnout. It has implications for disaster intervention and for improving medical care – especially for those with histories of trauma. COR theory may prove especially useful in understanding health-related resources and the mechanisms by which risk and resilience factors cluster together and impact health.

COR theory has been utilized when studying work/life stress. In work/life stress, COR research has looked at how the distribution of one's resources have affected their home life, with some articles finding that putting too much of one's resources into one's work may lead to family problems at home (Grandey & Cropanzano, 1999). Research into COR theory and burnout has examined how the use of resources has impacted one's mood, with recent research finding that emotional exhaustion had the strongest relationship with depressive symptoms.



## METHODOLOGY

The study employed a quantitative research design, using a survey questionnaire to collect data from a sample of Nigerian policemen. The population in this study were the entire Senior Police Officers in Ogun State which amounted to four hundred and fifty-six (456) according to the National Bureau of Statistics (2020). Due to the large value of the population, 150 respondents were purposively chosen as the sample size for the study. Among the 150 questionnaires administered, only 120 were qualified and appropriate for further analysis owing to incomplete filling. The questionnaire consisted of four sections, namely: demographic information, emotional exhaustion (adapted from the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI), work engagement (adapted from the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) and work-life conflict adapted from the Work-life conflict Scale (WFCS). Data obtained from the survey were analyzed using both descriptive statistics such as percentage and frequency counts and inferential statistics such as ordinary least squares to test the hypothesis with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 19.0. A hypothesis is considered significant when the p-value is less than 0.05.

For the purpose of this research, the model is specified thus:

$$WLC = f(EE) \dots\dots\dots (3.1)$$

$$WLC = f(WE) \dots\dots\dots (3.2)$$

Where:

WLC = Work-life Conflict

EE = Emotional Exhaustion

WE = Work Engagement

The models above are restated explicitly as below:

$$WLC = \alpha_0 + \alpha_1 EE + \alpha_2 WE + \mu_t \dots\dots\dots (3.3)$$

Where:

$\alpha_0, - \alpha_2$  = parameters estimate in the model

$\mu_t$  = Stochastic error term

### Analysis of the Administered Questionnaire

The result in table 4.1 reveals that out of the 150 questionnaires that were sent out for filling, 120 representing 80% were filled, while 30 representing 20% were not returned by the respondents. This is an indication that the analysis of the items on the questionnaires were based on 120 respondents, being the number of the questionnaires duly and adequately filled and returned.

**Table 4.1: Analysis of the Administered Questionnaires**

Questionnaires	Responses	Percentage (%)
Number of filled	120	80%
Number of Unfilled	0	0%
Number Not Returned	30	20%
Total	150	100%

Source: *Field Survey, 2023*

### Analysis of the Background Information of the Respondents

Table 4.1.2 showed the demographic information of the respondents of this study. It was revealed by the findings that none of the respondents was within the age range of 18 to 25 years and also within that of 26 to 35 years. 27 representing 22.5% were within 36 to 45 years old, 72 (60%) were within 46 to 55 years, while those within the range of 56 years and above were 21 representing 17.5%. This implies that the majority of the respondents were within the age range of 46 to 55 years.

Also, the gender statistics of the respondents was shown from the table; it was revealed that 83 representing 69.2% of the respondents were male while the remaining 37 (30.8%) were females. This is an indication that the respondents consist of more male than females. Furthermore, it was shown by the table that 28 (23.3%) of the respondents were still single, 92 (76.7%) were married, there is a record for those who are divorced or widowed among the respondents. This implies that the majority of the respondents were married.

Similarly, the table revealed that 2 (1.7%) of the respondents are secondary school leavers, 26 (21.7%) of the respondents were higher education diploma holders, 63 (52.5%) were bachelor degree holders, 25 (20.8%) were master's degree holder while 4 representing 3.3% were doctorate degree holders. This implied that most of the respondents of this study were bachelor's degree holders. Lastly, it was shown from the table that 45 (37.5%) of the respondents are ASP II, 42 (35%) are ASP I, 19 representing 15.8% are DSP while those who are SP are 9 representing 7.5% of the respondents. 5 (4.2%) of the respondents are within the rank of a CSP. This is an indication that the majority of the respondents are ASP II.

**Table 4.2: Background Information of the Respondents**

Demographic factors	Description	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percentage
Age	18 – 25	0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	26 – 35	0	0.0	0.0	0.0
	36 – 45	27	22.5	22.5	22.5
	46 – 55	72	60	60	82.5
	56 and above	21	17.5	17.5	100.0
	Total	120	100.0	100.0	
Gender	Male	83	69.2	69.2	69.2
	Female	37	30.8	30.8	100.0
	Total	120	100	100	
	Single	28	23.3	23.3	23.3
	Married	92	76.7	76.7	100.0





Marital Status	Divorced	0	0	0	
	Widowed	0	0.0	0.0	
	Total	120	100.0	100.0	
Highest Level of Education	Secondary School	2	1.7	1.7	1.7
	Higher education diploma	26	21.7	21.7	23.4
	Bachelor's degree	63	52.5	52.5	75.9
	Master's degree	25	20.8	20.8	96.7
	Doctorate degree	4	3.3	3.3	100.0
	Total	120	100	100	
Rank	ASP II	45	37.5	37.5	37.5
	ASP 1	42	35	35	72.5
	DSP	19	15.8	15.8	88.3
	SP	9	7.5	7.5	95.8
	CSP	5	4.2	4.2	100.0
	Total	120	100	100.0	

Source: *Field Survey, 2023*

## Analysis of the Research Hypothesis

### Hypothesis 1

H<sub>0</sub>: Emotional exhaustion has no positive effect on work-life conflict among Nigerian Policemen.

**Table 4.3: Simple Regression Analysis Showing Significant Effect of Emotional Exhaustion on Work-Life Conflict among Nigerian Policemen**

Model	Coefficients	Std Error	R	R <sup>2</sup>	F	Prob
Constant	2.387	1.032	0.428	0.183	10.535	0.002
Emotional exhaustion	0.458	0.141				

**Dependent Variable: Work-Life Conflict**

Source: *Data Analysis, 2023*

In table 4.3, the R-square, which showed the overall explanatory power of the model, revealed that the independent variable (emotional exhaustion) explained about 18.3% of the systematic variation of the dependent variable (work-life conflict). The overall fitness of the model as shown in the F-statistics of 10.535 with a probability of 0.002 was statistically significant as it was lesser than the standard critical p-value of 0.05. The linearized functional specification of the model was appropriate. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative hypothesis accepted. Hence, emotional exhaustion has a positive effect on work-life conflict among Nigerian policemen.



## Hypothesis 2

H0: Work engagement does not moderate the relationship between emotional exhaustion and work-life conflict among Nigerian policemen.

**Table 4.4: Model Summary**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimates	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.856a	.628	.614	5.24321	.576	45.878	2	14	.002
2	.937b	.741	.722	<b>5.34145</b>	<b>.024</b>	<b>32.354</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>.000</b>

a. Predictors: (Constant), normal, emotional\_exhaustion

b. Predictors: (Constant), normal, emotional\_exhaustion, ee\_x\_normal

From the highlighted column, R Square change which shows the variation explained by the addition of the moderator is shown as 0.024. This means that 2.4% variation in the model can be explained by the additional interaction term. Also, the significant value indicated that the model is statistically significant given its significant value of 0.000 therefore, this necessitates the rejection of the null hypothesis and the acceptance of the alternative hypothesis. Hence, it can be concluded that work engagement moderates the relationship between emotional exhaustion and work-life conflict among Nigerian policemen.

## DISCUSSION

Based on the results of the analysis above, it is known that emotional exhaustion has a positive effect on work-life conflict among Nigerian policemen. This means that if the emotional exhaustion experienced by police officers is high, it can result in work-life conflict and thereby result in negative discharge of duties. The result of this study is in line with research conducted by Awisal, Armida and Rini (2019), Yavas *et al.* (2011), Van Ruysseveldt, Barnett and Hyde (2001), Frone, Russell and Barnes (1996) and Yeh, Chang, Hsu, Huang and Yang (2021) who stated that the emotional exhaustion experienced by employees has negative relationship on his/her work-life conflict. This may be experienced in various forms such as: workload, time pressure, role conflict, role ambiguity, lack of feedback and autonomy and work-life conflict. Thereby affecting efficient and effective service delivery within the organization.

In addition, work engagement was found to have significant moderation on the relationship between emotional exhaustion and work-life conflict. This outcome is at variance with the study conducted by Leiter (2010) which stated that an employee that is engaged, will be motivated to strive forward towards challenging goals and expect success. However, the emphasis in this current study is that if work engagement is higher, it can cause emotional exhaustion and by extension, lead to work-life conflicts. Work engagement is a positive energy that motivates employees to improve performance; this energy is in the form of dedication to work, enthusiasm and interest, commitment in carrying out work (Yucel *et al.*, 2020). Its moderating effect on emotional exhaustion and work-life conflict deserves management attention towards the success of the organization





The main limitation of this study is that it was conducted only in the sample of police officers in Ogun State. Similar studies are also crucial in different sectors to see the perspective of the subject as a whole. For this reason, it will be useful to carry out similar studies in different sectors to establish a general framework. Research in different sectors and samples will provide more robust findings for organizations, society and administrators related to the study subject.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study was carried out on moderating the effect of work engagement on emotional exhaustion and work-life conflict, with a focus on Nigerian workers, specifically, the police officers. The study found a significant relationship between work-life conflict and emotional exhaustion. In addition, it revealed that work engagement significantly moderates the effect on the relationship between emotional exhaustion and work-life conflict.

The study therefore recommends that Nigerian policemen, the police force, and other organizations should endeavor to identify the predictors of emotional exhaustion and work-life conflict and work towards minimizing their effects on the employee. Moreover, work engagement should be strategically employed to mediate the effect of the relationship between emotional exhaustion and work-life conflict.

The study suggested that management should implement family-friendly policies, improve incentive mechanisms as well as help employees balance the relationship between family and work effectively. Finally, it recommended that work engagement should be used as a resource for employees experiencing emotional exhaustion, helping them to better manage the demands of work and personal life.

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