

# Psycho-Demographic Predictors of Work-Family Conflict: A Case Study of Nigeria Maritime Staff

Eyisi I. Meek

Department of Psychology, Covenant University, Nigeria

**Abstract:** *Necessitated by the increasing work-family conflict among the general adult populace, this study investigated the psycho-demographic (life orientation, ambiguity tolerance & sex) predictors of work-family conflict among employees of the Nigeria Maritime Industry in Lagos metropolis. With a sample size of 182 employees who were selected using a stratified sampling technique, data were collected using standardized questionnaires and analyzed with SPSS 20.0. The results showed that life orientation and ambiguity tolerance had significant joint and independent prediction on the work-family conflict of research participants. Further findings showed that there was no significant sex difference in work-family conflict among research participants. Consequently, the discussion and implication of findings, and the recommendations were presented in the paper.*

**Keywords:** Life Orientation, Ambiguity Tolerance, Sex and Work-Family Conflict

## 1. Introduction

Necessitated by the increase and negative impacts of work-family conflict in the work-place, it is imperative for research to proffer answers capable of mitigating against the rise in work-family conflict in the workplace setting. Workplace Conflict Statistics (2018) reported that work-family conflict increased by 52% of recent in the world population, with the medical, engineering and banking professions reporting the highest. Consequently, the present study aims to study the joint and independent contributions of psychological and demographic variables in predicting work-family balance among Nigeria maritime employees. The psychological variables of consideration in this study are life orientation and ambiguity tolerance. Some studies suggest that work-family conflict has grown in recent times because of the increase in women's labor force participation. Thus, having the right knowledge of work-family conflict is imperative for organizational success.

Work-family conflict is the imbalances between the demands of work and family (Justin, 2017). There are two types of work-life balance; work interfering with personal life, and personal life interfering with work (Frone, Russell & Cooper, 1992). During the incidence of work interfering with personal life, an employee's work prevents him or her from attending to the demands of personal life which he or she also ought to attend to, for example a person's work taking over the time he should have spent viewing movies at the cinema with his family. As for the second type which is personal life interfering with work, describes a situation when a person's personal life prevents him from attending to the demands of his work, for example such a person might be spending few hours at work because of personal life demands he or she has to attend to, such may include dropping or picking up children from school.

Most employees find it difficult to strike a balance between these two variables, i.e. work and family. Most employees that

fail to strike proper balance between these two variables usually achieve minimal productivity in the workplace. Changes in the workplace setting and demography of employees have also contributed to the dynamism in work-family conflict experience for example, a single employee who later gets married may report high work-family conflict due to the new role that has just been assumed. Work-family conflict if not curtailed is also a major stressor in the workplace.

Life orientation as a psychological construct is concerned about the self in relation to others and the environment. The focus of life orientation is to equip individuals in order to engage in meaningful or purposeful roles within the environment. Life orientation is also focused with giving individuals a maximum life quality in their daily functioning. An employee's orientation about life could be a significant factor controlling his work-family conflict. Thus this current study considers it useful to examine life orientation as a correlate of work-family conflict. Ambiguity tolerance refers to the possible extent to which individuals have strong beliefs in their abilities to persist in the face of adversities. An employee high on ambiguity tolerance will still perform optimally even when a new role has been assumed or in the face of organizational change. Ambiguity tolerance is thus a key attribute for employees that want to be productive and work with family demands. Contemporary organizations usually perceives the trait of ambiguity tolerance during job screening, such that prospects that do not meet this requirement are either screened out or recommended for training programs.

## 2. Purpose of Study

The following were the purposes of the present study:

- 1) To investigate the joint prediction of life orientation and ambiguity tolerance on work-family conflict among Nigeria maritime employees

Volume 8 Issue 4, April 2019

[www.ijsr.net](http://www.ijsr.net)

Licensed Under Creative Commons Attribution CC BY

- 2) To investigate the independent prediction of life orientation and ambiguity tolerance on work-family conflict among Nigeria maritime employees.
- 3) To investigate sex difference in work-family conflict among Nigeria maritime employees.

### 3. Research Questions

The following research questions were raised and answered in this study:

- 1) Do life orientation and ambiguity tolerance have significant joint prediction on the work-family conflict of Nigeria maritime employees?
- 2) Do life orientation and ambiguity tolerance have significant independent prediction on the work-family conflict of Nigeria maritime employees?
- 3) Are there sex differences in work-family conflict among employees of Nigeria maritime employees?

### 4. Theoretical Framework

#### Inter-Role Conflict Theory

Inter-role conflict theory refers to the stress encountered when addressing the demands of one aspect makes it cumbersome to meet the demands of another aspect within an individual (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). For example, an employee is required to work overtime in the office on a Friday, at the same time the family expects that employee to be home early from work because they go clubbing every Friday. In such situation, the employee's work is clashing with family demands. Consequently, there is high propensity that such employee could be stressed in trying to maintaining an equilibrium between work and family demands. The hallmark of the inter-role conflict theory is that employees perform best when there is a proper balance between work demands and family demands.

#### Expectancy-Value Model: A Theoretical Model of Life Orientation

Sheier and Carver (1998) developed the expectancy-value models to explain the influences of optimism and pessimism on human behavior. This theory holds that human behavior is aimed at attaining certain goals. Goals refers to end-states that people see as being either desirable or undesirable. Consequently, the expectancy-value model holds that the perception of a valued goal is what motivates action. The expectancy-value model pays critical attention to the roles of optimistic and positive beliefs in shaping human behaviors. In addition, the theory also considers the way optimistic and positive beliefs can be shaped towards maximizing its benefits on the physical and psychological wellbeing of human beings. Sheier and Carver (1985) holds their life orientation construct on the extent of optimism and pessimism shown by individuals. This suggests that the strength of optimism or pessimism is imperative enough to predict the life orientation of persons, which also further predicts their stress coping strategies. Hence, one would expect that the higher a person's life orientation, the higher will be the stress coping strategy of

a person, while the lower a person's life orientation, the lower the stress coping strategy of that person.

#### Resilience Theory

Rutter (1987) developed the resilience theory to explain why individuals thrive to attain success despite the presence of adversities in the environment. Resiliency theory in this study provides a theoretical background for ambiguity tolerance among employees. To be resilient means a person's ability to tolerate ambiguous situations. Some psychologists consider ambiguity tolerance as a personality trait, while others consider it as a coping skill. In either way, ambiguity tolerance or resilience is a reflection of an individual's ability to survive in the face of difficulties. This trait is highly for employees' ability to achieve an equilibrium between the demands of their work and the demands of their personal lives. Hence, it is expected that the more tolerant to ambiguity/resilient an employee is, the greater the propensity for striking an equilibrium between the demands of work and personal life by that employee. In summary, three theories were adopted in this study for the purpose of explaining the predictors of work-family conflict among employees. Appropriate knowledge was drawn from existing theories in illustrating these theoretical perspectives, and this gives a pathway for the study.

### 5. Empirical Findings

#### Life Orientation and Work-Family Conflict

Ahmad (2018) investigated the influence of life orientation on work-family conflict, using a sample of 350 bankers in Qatar, findings showed that employees with good role values in life also showed low work-family conflict compared to employees with negative role values. In another study by Livingston and Judge (2018), the effects of life orientation and work-family conflict was tested using a sample of 196 employees, the findings showed that work-family conflict was significantly negatively related with the life orientation of employees. Consequently, Ahmad (2018); Livingston and Judge (2018) suggested that there is a research gap on the predictors of work-family conflict in non-banking professions. Hence, further studies can be extended on this.

Ogonome and Iketu (2011) investigated the influence of life orientation on work-family conflict among randomly selected teachers in Oyo state metropolis. Using a sample size of 313 participants, findings showed that life orientation significantly predicted work-family conflict among teachers in Oyo state. Further findings showed that females scored significantly higher than male teachers on work-family conflict. Thus, Ogonome and Iketu (2011) recommended that further studies in this area are required to develop intervention methods that strengthen the relationship between life orientation and work-family conflict. Furthermore, further studies are also required to identify other psychosocial variables contributing to work-family conflict among employees of various sectors.

Ogundele, Ayobami, Ayodeji and Shittu (2017) carried out a study to examine the psychosocial predictors of life orientation among randomly selected doctors in Kwara state Nigeria.

Using a sample size of 212 doctors in Kwara state, findings showed that doctors with high life orientation reported lower work-family conflict while doctors with low life orientation reported high work-family conflict between their jobs and families demands. Ogundele, Ayobami, Ayodeji and Shittu (2017), thus further studies in this area are required to cut across wider settings in order to enhance generalizability effects of findings and increase our understanding of the linkage between psychosocial variables and work-family conflict among employees from various professions in the workplace setting.

### Ambiguity Tolerance and Work-Family Conflict

Kim and Windsor (2015) examined the influence of ambiguity tolerance on nurses' work-family conflict using a sample of 510 nurses in England, the findings showed that nurses with high ambiguity tolerance reported high good work-family balance especially in the face of organizational change. Kim and Windsor (2015) recommended for regular training of employees on this trait and further studies should replicate their study using different professions for the purpose of a wide comparison of work-family conflict across various work professions.

Nyaledzigbor (2016) examined the influence of social support and ambiguity tolerance on work-family conflict among Ghanaian women using a sample of 413 women, the findings showed that there was no significant association between ambiguity tolerance and work-family conflict. Mohammed-Kohler (2018) in a study examined the influence of ambiguity tolerance on work-family conflict among employees in Cape Coast, findings showed that ambiguity tolerance significantly predicted work-family conflict among employees in Cape Coast.

Olaniran, Anifowose and Odekunle (2018) investigated the psychosocial predictors of work-family conflict among traders in Osun state, using a sample size of 427 randomly selected traders in Osun state, findings showed that traders with high ambiguity tolerance reported low conflict between their work and family, while traders with low ambiguity tolerance reported high conflict between their works and family. In essence, it was found that there was a significant negative relationship between ambiguity tolerance and work-family conflict among traders studied in Osun state.

### Employee's Sex and Work-Family Conflict

Ezeh, Opkachi and Okechukwu (2018) investigated the relationship between employee's sex and work-family conflict among university lecturers of the Imo state university. Using a sample size of 712 lecturers of Imo state university, findings showed that female lecturers reported significantly higher work-family conflict than male lecturers. Consequently, it was thus suggested that organizational interventions that mitigate against work-family conflict should target more females than males. Braunstein-Bercovitz, Frish-Burstein, and Benjamin (2017) used a sample of 146 young employees to study the role sex in maintaining work-family conflict among employees in Germany, the findings showed that there was no

significant sex difference in work-family conflict between employees. Braunstein-Bercovitz, Frish-Burstein, and Benjamin (2017). Lastly, Ollier-Malaterre (2015) reported in a study after investigation that male employees experience more work-family conflict than their female counterparts. Hence, there is a research gap on the comparison of sex difference in work-family conflict across various professions, consequently further studies will be required to extend knowledge on this.

### Research Hypotheses

- 1) Life orientation and ambiguity tolerance will have significant joint and independent prediction on the work-family conflict of Nigeria maritime industry employees.
- 2) Female employees of Nigeria maritime industry will report significantly higher work-family conflict than their male counterparts.

## 6. Methodology

This study adopted a cross-sectional survey design and made use of 182 research participants which comprised both males and females. A stratified sampling technique was used in the selection of research participants from the Lagos based Nigeria maritime industry. Useful ethical considerations which included informed consent, equal treatment and respect for participants, and confidentiality were applied to research procedures. The research instruments for the study were life-orientation scale developed by Gustems-Carnicer, Calderon and Santacana (2014); ambiguity tolerance scale developed by Herman, Stevens, Bird, Mendenhall and Oddou (2010); and work-family conflict with a scale originally developed by Shobitha and Sudarsan (2014). These instruments were standardized by the authors, reviewed by the researcher of the present study and considered appropriate for the present study.

## 7. Results

### Hypothesis One:

Hypothesis one stated that life orientation and ambiguity tolerance will have significant joint and independent prediction on work-family conflict among employees of Nigerian Maritime in Lagos metropolis. This was tested using multiple regression analysis and the result is presented on the table below:

### Summary of multiple regression analysis table showing the independent and joint prediction of life orientation and ambiguity tolerance on work-family conflict

Variables	R	R <sup>2</sup>	F	P	Beta	t	Sig
Life orientation					-.53	-6.74	P<.01
Ambiguity tolerance	.85	.72	226.33	<.01	-.34	-4.29	P<.01

This table presents result on the joint and independent prediction of life orientation and ambiguity tolerance on work-family conflict. It is shown that life orientation and ambiguity tolerance had a significant joint prediction on work-family conflict [R = .85; R<sup>2</sup> = .72; F (2, 182) = 226.33; P<.01]. Further

results showed that life orientation ( $\beta = -.53$ ;  $t = -6.74$ ;  $P < .01$ ) and ambiguity tolerance ( $\beta = -.34$ ;  $t = -4.29$ ;  $P < .05$ ) had significant independent predictions on work-family conflict. These results confirm the stated hypothesis, hence, hypothesis one is accepted in this study.

### Hypothesis Two:

This stated that female employees will significantly report higher work-family conflict than their male counterparts. This was tested using t-test for independent samples and the result is presented below;

### Summary of t-test table showing the sex differences on work-family conflict

Dependent	Sex	N	Mean	SD	t	df	P
Work-family conflict	Male	98	9.32	3.75	-.074	180	>.05
	Female	84	9.36	3.65			

The above table presents results on the sex differences on work-family conflict among Nigerian Maritime employees in Lagos metropolis. It is shown that female (9.36) employees reported higher mean score than their male (9.32) counterparts although the difference did not approach a significant level, hence there is no significant sex difference in employees' work-family conflict [ $t(180) = -0.74$ ;  $P > .05$ ]. Consequently, the result falsifies the stated hypothesis, hence hypothesis two is rejected in this study.

## 8. Discussion

The aforementioned results showed that employees' life orientation and ambiguity tolerance are significant joint and independent predictors of work-family conflict among Nigeria maritime employees. This observed significance thus implies that the orientation that employees have towards life and their tolerant for stressful situations are very important in predicting their ability to strike an equilibrium between their work demands and family demands. Thus, an implication of this finding is that employees with a poor life orientation and inability to tolerate ambiguous situations will be frequently overwhelmed by work-family conflict. Lastly, it was reportedly observed that female employees scored a higher mean score than their male counterparts on work-family conflict, however the difference in scores did not approach a significant level. Consequently, a major implication of this second finding is that in designing organizational interventions that addresses work-family conflict, it will be required that organizational leaders and managers target both male and female employees with more emphasis on females. With these empirical findings taken into consideration, it is expected that work-family conflict should be significantly minimized.

## 9. Recommendation and Conclusion

On the bases of the findings from this study, the following recommendations were made:

1) Firstly, the researcher recommends that workshops that train employees on positive life orientation and ambiguity

tolerance should be encouraged and strengthened among employees in the maritime industry.

- 2) Secondly, the researcher recommends that periodic avenues should be created within the work-place setting where employees can be merged together to have a focus group discussion on how to balance their work-family demands.
- 3) Thirdly, the researcher recommends that periodically employees should be screened for possible health problems arising from work-family imbalances.
- 4) Fourthly, it was recommended that female employees should be considered as well as male employees during the design of workplace programs that addresses work-family conflict.
- 5) Lastly, due to the shortage of resources the present study was limited by its inability to compare work-family conflict across various work professions, hence further studies should bridge knowledge gap on this using larger sample size than was used in this study

This study concluded that life orientation and ambiguity tolerance have significant joint and independent prediction on work-family conflict. It was also concluded that there was no significant sex difference on work-family conflict among research participants in this study. Consequently, the discussion of findings and appropriate recommendations were thus presented in this paper.

## References

- [1] Ahmad, (2018). The influence of life role values on work-family conflict among bankers in Qatar. *Iranian Journal of Organizational Studies*, 157, 113-142.
- [2] Braunstein-Bercovitz, Frish-Burstein, and Benjamin (2017). The relationship between employees' sex and work-family conflict among young employees in England. *British Journal of Organizational Review*, 142, 63-81.
- [3] Ezeh, Opkachi & Okechukwu (2018). The relationship between employees' sex and work-family conflict among university lecturers of the Imo state university. *Nigerian Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 92, 71-93.
- [4] Frone, Russell & Cooper, (1992). The influence of resilience on work-family conflict. *British Journal of Personality Studies*, 12, 34-58.
- [5] Greenhaus & Beutell, (1985). Inter-role conflict theory. *Stamford University Printing Press*.
- [6] Justin, (2017). Work-family conflict in the 21st century. *Oxford University Printing Press*.
- [7] Kim & Windsor (2015). The influence of ambiguity tolerance on nurses' work-family conflict in England. *British Journal of Personnel Psychology*, 137, 88-96.
- [8] Livingston & Judge (2018). The effects of life orientation on work-family conflict among employees in Washington. *American Journal of Organizational behavior*. 435, 72-91.
- [9] Mohammed-Kohler (2018). The influence of ambiguity tolerance on work-family conflict among employees in

- Cape Coast. *British Journal of Management Studies*, 125, 88-110.
- [10] Nyaledzigbor (2016). The influence of social support and ambiguity tolerance on work-family conflict among Ghanaian women. *African Journal of Management Studies*, 84, 31-47.
- [11] Ogonome & Iketu (2011). The influence of life orientation on work-family conflict among randomly selected teachers in Oyo state metropolis. *African Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 32, 120-132.
- [12] Ogundele, Ayobami, Ayodeji & Shittu (2017). Psychosocial predictors of life orientation among randomly selected doctors in Kwara state Nigeria. *Nigerian Journal of Organizational Psychology*, 55, 22-41.
- [13] Olaniran, Anifowose & Odekunle (2018). The psychosocial predictors of work-family conflict among traders in Osun state. *African Journal of Management Studies*, 77, 32-45.
- [14] Ollier-Malaterre (2015). An examination of the concept of work-family conflict. *Cambridge University Printing Press*.
- [15] Rutter (1987). Resilience theory. *Oxford University Printing Press*.
- [16] Sheier & Carver (1998). Expectancy-value model; a theory for life orientation. *Oxford University Printing Press*.
- [17] Workplace Conflict Statistics (2018). *Annals of Organizational Review*, 312, 777-782.