



## The Association of Job Demands and Resources with Strain-Based Conflict Among Nigerian Prison Officers

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**Abstract:** Work-home balance is an important goal for most employees, including prison officers; however, work-family conflict occurs when the work and home domains are out of balance. Strain-based conflict is one type of work-family conflict, and it occurs when work problems follow a person home and create conflict at home. The current study used the job demands-resources model to determine how the demand variables of role overload, fear of victimization and the resource variables of instrumental communication, quality supervision, and job autonomy were related to the strain-based conflict of surveyed officers at a southeast Nigerian prison. Based on multivariate regression analysis of survey data from 120 Nigerian prison officers, role overload and fear of victimization had significant positive associations with strain-based conflict and instrumental communication and job autonomy had significant negative associations. Quality supervision had a nonsignificant negative association with work-family conflict.

**Keywords:** Prison Officers; Job Demands-Resources Model; Work-Family Conflict; Correctional Staff; Nigeria

Prisons are found across the globe. Prisons play a vital role in the criminal justice system. Officers are an important resource for correctional facilities. Officers are responsible for a myriad of duties, tasks, and responsibilities for the operation of a correctional institution (Armstrong et al., 2015; Armstrong & Griffin, 2004). Working as a correctional officer is a unique occupation involving holding individuals against

their will, ensuring they follow institutional rules, and preventing escapes (Lambert, Hogan, Camp et al., 2006; Lambert, Liu et al., 2020). As Armstrong and Griffin (2004) pointed out, “few other organizations are charged with the central task of supervising and securing an unwilling and potentially violent population” (p. 577). The work environment of prisons likely affects staff and their home lives (Armstrong et al., 2015; May et al., 2020). It is possible that problems at work follow officers home, causing conflict in the home domain. For most adults, the two primary life domains are work and home. Ideally, these two domains are balance with one another. For some adults, this is not possible and problems and issues in one domain spillover into the other domain causing conflict (Lambert, Hogan, Camp et al., 2006). This spillover is referred to as work-family conflict (Armstrong et al., 2015). Strain-based conflict is a type of work-family conflict that occurs when work problems spill over and causes problems and conflict in the home life of a person (Hogan et al., 2006; May et al., 2020). In other words, it occurs when work frustrations are brought home and produce conflict and problems with other members of the household and decrease the overall quality of home life (Armstrong et al., 2015; May et al., 2020).

Despite officers’ importance in correctional facilities and their unique work environment, there has been little research to date on how different workplace variables are linked with the strain-based conflict of prison officers (May et al., 2020). The current study researches how workplace variables are linked to prison officer strain-based conflict using the job demands-resources model. The job demands-resources model divides workplace variables into two general groups of job demands and job resources (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Keena et al., 2022). Job demands make work more difficult and unpleasant. Job resources make the job more successful and pleasant (Demerouti et al., 2001; Elechi et al., 2018). In the current study, the job demands were role overload and fear of being victimized at work and the job resources were instrumental communication, quality supervision, and job autonomy. The data for the current study was from the survey results of 120 officers at a prison in southeast Nigeria.

## Literature Review

### *Work-Family Conflict*

For most adults, work and home are two primary domains (Lambert, Hogan, Camp et al., 2006; Netemeyer et al., 1996). When these two domains are in sync, there is work-family balance. When there is spillover between the two domains, work-family conflict occurs (Hogan et al., 2006; O’Driscoll et al., 2013). Work and family conflicts can be bidirectional, meaning that work demands can follow a person home, resulting in conflict and demands at home; conversely, problems at home can follow a person

to work, also resulting in conflict (Brough & O'Driscoll, 2005; Netemeyer et al., 1996). When the former occurs, it is often referred to as work-on-family conflict, and when the latter occurs, it is often referred to as family-on-work conflict (Lambert, Hogan, Camp et al., 2006). Strain-based conflict, time-based conflict, and behavior-based conflict represent the three major forms of work-on-family conflict (Lambert, Hogan, Camp et al., 2006; Netemeyer et al., 1996). Time-based conflict occurs when a person's work schedule conflicts with family needs. Behavior-based conflict occurs when work roles and home roles are incompatible (Armstrong et al., 2015; Lambert, Hogan, Camp et al., 2006). Strain-based conflict, the focus of the current study, takes place when work demands and issues are carried over into the home, resulting in problems and conflict among family and home members (Brough & O'Driscoll, 2005; Lambert, Hogan, Camp et al., 2006).

Research to date indicates that work-family conflict has negative effects of correctional staff. Akoensi (2018) observed that work-family conflict was mainly unidirectional, with work negatively impacting the home life and that work-on-family conflict had a negative effect on the mental well-being of prison officers. Work-family conflict has been reported to lower job satisfaction (Armstrong et al., 2015; Lambert et al., 2003; Lambert, Hogan, Camp et al., 2006; Lambert, Liu et al., 2020; Vickovic & Morrow, 2020), decrease job involvement (Liu et al., 2020), and reduce organizational commitment of correctional staff (Hogan et al., 2006; Lambert, Hogan, Camp et al., 2006; Lambert et al., 2014; Lambert, Liu et al., 2020). Further, work-family conflict has been found to raise the job stress, burnout, and psychological depression for correctional staff (Akoensi & Annor, 2021; Armstrong et al., 2015; Griffin, 2006; Lambert & Hogan, 2010; Lambert, Hogan, & Allen, 2006; Lambert, Hogan, & Altheimer, 2010; Lambert et al., 2005, 2007; Lambert, Lanterman et al., 2022; Liu et al., 2017; Obidoa et al., 2011; Triplett et al., 1999; Vickovic & Morrow, 2020). Research indicates that work-family conflict has negative outcomes for correctional staff, particularly strain-based conflict; however, research on what variables contribute to strain-based conflict of correctional staff is lacking.

A handful of published studies have explored how different workplace factors potentially contribute to correctional staff strain-based conflict, a major part of work-on-family conflict (Lambert, Minor et al. 2015; May et al., 2020). Lambert and Hogan (2006) reported that fear of being victimized on the job and role ambiguity was significantly associated with higher levels of strain-based conflict, and organizational fairness was related with lower levels. Lambert, Minor et al. (2015) observed that role conflict, perceived dangerousness of the job, and role overload were all associated with higher strain-based conflict. Lambert et al. (2013) reported that both distributive justice (fairness of employee outcomes) and procedural justice (fairness in precures to

reach employee outcomes) were related to higher levels of strain-based conflict among correctional staff; however, May et al. (2020) reported that only procedural justice (and not distributive justice) were related to lower levels of strain-based conflict.

Only a few studies have examined how a handful workplace variables are related to strain-based conflict among correctional staff. The limited research to date suggests that some workplace variables are linked to strain-based conflict; however, additional research is needed, particularly in light of the demanding occupation correctional officers face and the harm done by strain-based conflict. May et al. (2020) noted that prison staff have a higher level of strain-based conflict than many other occupations. Strain-based conflict causes problems and strain at home that detract from the quality of life for prison officers (Lambert et al., 2014; Triplett et al., 1999). Work in a prison is a demanding job, and having a positive home life allows officers a place to relax and recharge for another day at work. Correctional facilities should avoid contributing to the strain-based conflict as much as possible. The current study adds to the literature by using the job demands-resources model to examine how the job demands of role overload and fear of victimization at work and the job resources of instrumental communication, quality supervision, and job autonomy were associated the strain-based conflict of Nigerian prison officers.

### *Job Demands-Resources Model*

The job demands-resources model was developed to explain the well-being of employees (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). This model postulates strain occurs when demands are high and resources are low, and resources can reduce or buffer the effects of strain from the job (Demerouti et al., 2001). The model divides workplace variables into the groupings of job demands and job resources (Demerouti & Bakker, 2011). Job demands place demands on people, resulting in psychological strain (Hall et al., 2010; Schaufeli & Taris, 2014). Demerouti et al. (2001) pointed out that job demands are “those physical, social, or organizational aspects of the job that require sustained effort and are therefore associated with physiological or psychological costs” (p. 501). In the end, it is unlikely that the psychological strains from job demands will stop at the end of a work shift but are likely to follow a prison officer home, causing strain-based conflict.

Job resources aid workers in being successful at their jobs, which in turn, results in feelings of accomplishment and make the job more pleasant (Demerouti & Bakker, 2011). Demerouti et al. (2001) noted that job resources were “those physical, social, or organizational aspects of the job that may do any of the following: (a) be functional in achieving work goals; (b) reduce demands and the associated physiological and psychological costs; (c) stimulate personal growth and development” (p. 501). Job resources can also help buffer job demands (Mauno et al., 2006). Job resources

generally produce positive psychological feelings, which, in turn, increase the chances for beneficial outcomes, such as job satisfaction, and reduce negative outcomes, such as strain-based conflict (Hu et al., 2011; Schaufeli & Taris, 2014). The positive feelings that result from work being more pleasant and productive are likely to result in greater psychological feelings, which likely follow a prison officers home, resulting in more positive home interactions and experiences. Missing or low job resources can themselves become job demands in themselves, resulting in greater psychological strain (Mauno et al., 2006). For the current study, the measured job demand variables were role overload and fear of victimization, and the measured job resource variables were instrumental communication, quality of supervision, and job autonomy.

Role overload refers to being asked to handle too many job tasks and not being provided sufficient equipment or time to do the assigned duties (Elechi et al., 2018; Lambert, Hogan, Jiang et al., 2009). It is a job demand because it puts pressure on the person, often resulting in frustration and strain. The resulting psychological frustration and strain is likely to follow an officer home, resulting in conflict. Role overload was hypothesized to have a positive association with strain-based conflict among Nigerian correctional staff (*Hypothesis 1*).

Fear of victimization is the perception of being at risk of being hurt while on the job and is a view that the job is dangerous (Lambert et al., 2005, 2018). Fear of victimization is a job demand because it places worry and psychological strain on a person, and that strain does not vanish at the end of the work shift (Haynes et al., 2020). It likely follows a prison officer home, negatively impacting the home domain. Fear of victimization was, therefore, postulated to have a positive relationship with Nigerian prison officer strain-based conflict (*Hypothesis 2*).

Instrumental communication is the “degree to which information about the job is formally transmitted by an organization to its members” (Agho et al., 1993, p. 1009). Instrumental communication is a job resource because it can help officers become more effective at their jobs and sends a message that officers are valued and respected by the correctional organization (Elechi et al., 2018; Lambert et al., 2008). Furthermore, information from instrumental communication can assist officers in avoiding job demands or help to minimize them (Lambert et al., 2002; Lambert et al., 2008). A lack of instrumental communication creates problems and frustration for prison officers (Lambert & Hogan, 2009; Lambert et al., 2016). The positive work feelings from instrumental communication should follow officers home, resulting in less conflict in the home domain. Among Nigerian prison staff, instrumental communication was predicted to have a negative association with strain-based conflict (*Hypothesis 3*).

Quality of supervision focus on perceptions that quality supervision is provided, which is a job resource. Quality supervision provides control, structure, guidance,

and support for officers and generally aids officers being more effective, efficient, and successful at work (Griffin, 2006; Lambert, Hogan, Altheimer, & Wareham, 2010). Furthermore, quality supervision often assists prison officers in dealing with job demands (Brough & Williams, 2007; Grossi et al., 1996; Lambert, Hogan, Moore et al., 2009;). Low or missing quality supervision often makes the job more difficult and demanding, which results in psychological strain (Cullen et al., 1985; Elechi et al., 2018). Quality supervision was hypothesized to result in lower strain-based conflict among Nigerian prison staff (*Hypothesis 4*).

Job autonomy is the perceived degree of control of job tasks and the order of these tasks (Elechi et al., 2018; Lambert et al., 2007). Job autonomy is a job resource because it gives officers flexibility in doing the job (Brough & Williams, 2007; Keena et al., 2020). Additionally, job autonomy can result in officers being more productive and successful at work, increasing positive feelings (Lambert, Hogan et al., 2015). Further, job autonomy sends a message that the organization trusts and values the office (Lambert et al., 2007; Qureshi et al., 2023). The positive feelings from job autonomy should result in less conflict at home since the positive feelings do not end when leaving work but likely follow officers home. Conversely, low job autonomy or a lack of job autonomy likely result in frustrating and this psychological strain can follow officers home, decreasing their quality of their home life (Garland et al., 2013). Job autonomy was postulated to have a negative relationship with Nigerian prison officer strain-based conflict (*Hypothesis 5*).

### ***Corrections in Nigeria***

In order to place the current study and its findings into perspective, a brief overview of Nigerian prisons is provided. The prison system in Nigeria traces its roots to British colonization, where prisons were used to control the indigenous population (Elechi et al., 2018; Lambert et al., 2021). After independence from Great Britain in 1960, the use of prisons continued in Nigeria (Elechi et al., 2020; Lambert, Lanterman et al., 2022). Today, Nigeria is a federal republic comprised of 36 states and Abuja, the federal capital territory (Elechi et al., 2020; Lambert et al., 2019). The Nigerian Correctional Service, formerly known as Nigerian Prisons Service, a federal agency overseen by the Nigerian Ministry of Interior. In 2022, there were about 79,000 persons held in 240 Nigerian correctional facilities (World Prison Brief, 2023). Unlike the U.S. and many other Western nations, prisons in Nigeria hold both pretrial detainees and convicted individuals (Lambert et al., 2021; World Prison Brief, 2023). Approximately 68% of those being held in Nigerian prisons are pretrial detainees, and the prison system is about 137% over capacity (World Prison Brief, 2023). The incarceration rate of 30 per 100,000 in 2020 is significantly below the U.S. incarceration rate of 505 per 100,000 (World Prison Brief, 2023).



The conditions of Nigerian prisons have been described as poor (Elechi et al., 2018; Lambert, Otu et al., 2022). As noted above, overcrowding is an issue, and overcrowding has resulted in problems with living conditions and provided services (Chukwudi et al., 2019; Lambert, Otu et al., 2022). As noted by Oyeyipo et al. (2021), “In recent years, one of the major challenges confronting the Nigerian Prisons is the problem of overcrowding. The problem has snowballed into various dimensions such as poor feeding, dilapidated structures and unhygienic environment affecting the health of the inmates” (p. 1). In addition to overcrowding, a lack of government funding contributes to the poor conditions in Nigerian correctional institutions. Even though more than 70% of those held in Nigerian prisons are pretrial detainees, funding is only provided for sentenced inmates (Elechi et al., 2020; Lambert, Lanterman et al., 2022; Saleh-Hanna, 2008). The living conditions contribute to the work demands faced by Nigerian prison officers. There are also staffing shortages at many Nigerian correctional facilities (Elechi et al., 2020; Lambert et al., 2021; Nwosuji, 2015). In light of the work conditions, reducing strain-based conflict is important. Aforementioned negative conditions are often beyond the control of administrators of correctional facilities. This means knowing how the job demands of role overload and fear of victimization and the job resources of instrumental communication, quality of supervision, and job autonomy are related to the strain-based conflict of officers is important because these workplace variables can be changed by Nigerian prison administrators.

## Methods

### *Participants*

After securing human subjects' approval, a prison in southeast Nigeria was selected because one of the authors had access to this correctional facility. The prison housed about 1,000 incarcerated individuals who were classified as medium security level, and this prison employed 246 full-time officers. Due to limited financial resources, it was not possible to survey all staff members; instead, a random sample of 145 prison officers was done to ensure power of analysis of at least 100 completed surveys was met. Using the staff identification numbers, a simple random sample of 145 officers was undertaken. A computer program randomly selected the staff employee numbers and the selected officers received a study packet. The study packets contained a cover letter, informed consent, a questionnaire, and a return envelope. The cover letter informed the staff the purpose of the study, that participation was voluntary, that there was no reward or punishment for participating or declining to participate in the study, that any questionnaire item be skipped, that returned questionnaires were anonymous, and how to return a questionnaire. Officers were allowed to complete the survey at

work. A total of 120 usable surveys were used in the current study, a response rate of 83%. Among those who responded, the median age was 38, ranging from 23 to 60 years old. Approximately 68% of the participants were men, and 32% were women. The median length of in the position was 6 years, ranging from 0 to 28 years. About 70% of those who responded were line staff (i.e., did not supervise other prison staff). Based on information from human resources, the demographic characteristics of those who responded were similar to the overall prisons officer complement for the selected prison.

### *Variables*

**Dependent Variable.** Strain-based conflict was the dependent variable and was measured using four items adapted from Lambert, Morrow et al. (2020). The four items, which had a Cronbach's alpha of .91, were: 1) Work makes me too tired or irritable to fully enjoy my family social life; 2) Due to all the work demands, sometimes when I come home, I am too stressed to do the things I enjoy; 3) When I get home from work, I am often too stressed to participate with family or friends; and 4) I find that I frequently bring home problems from work which hurts my relations with others. The strain-based conflict items were answered using a six-point Likert Scale ranging from strongly disagree (coded 1) to strongly agree (coded 6), and the responses were summed together to form an additive index.

**Independent Variables.** The personal characteristics of age, gender, tenure, educational level, and line staff were included more as control than explanatory variables. Age was measured in continuous years. Gender was coded as 0=women and 1=men. Tenure in the position was measured in years. Educational level was a dichotomous variable representing if the responding officer had earned a college degree (coded 1) or not (coded 0). A variable labelled line staff represented if the responding officer was not a supervisor of other prison staff (coded 1) or was a supervisor of other staff (coded 0).

The two job demand variables used in the current study were role overload and fear of victimization. The job demand variable role overload was measured using items from Triplett et al. (1996). The items were: 1) I often receive an assignment without adequate resources and materials to get it done; 2) I am responsible for almost an unmanageable number of assignments and job duties; and 3) I consider myself overworked on my job. Based on a Cronbach's alpha of .90, the responses to these items were summed together to form an additive index for role overload. Fear of victimization was measured using three items adopted from Cullen et al. (1985), and these items had a Cronbach's alpha value of .94. The items were: 1) I work at a dangerous job; 2) My job is a lot more dangerous than most jobs in the community;



and 3) At my job, there is a real risk of being hurt or injured. The role overload and fear of victimization were measured using a six-point Likert Scale ranging from strongly disagree (coded 1) to strongly agree (coded 6). Additive indexes for role overload and fear of victimization were formed by summing the responses for the corresponding items for the particular concept.

The job resources of instrumental communication, quality supervision, and job autonomy were measured for the current study. The four items measuring instrumental communication items were adapted from Curry et al. (1986) and had a Cronbach's alpha value of .93. Respondents were asked "how informed are you" about the following aspects of your job: 1) What you need to know to do the job correctly; 2) What is most important about the job; 3) How the equipment is used; and 4) Rules and regulations. The items, which had a Cronbach's alpha of .91, were added together to form an index measuring instrumental communication. The instrumental communication items were measured using a five-point scale of not informed at all (coded 1), informed very little (coded 2), informed somewhat (coded 3), informed (coded 4), and very well informed (coded 5). Quality supervision was measured by five items adapted from Griffin et al. (2012): 1) My supervisor tends to talk down to employees (reverse coded); 2) My supervisor gives me advance notice of changes; 3) My supervisor looks out for my personal welfare; 4) When decisions are made by my supervisor, persons affected are asked for their ideas; and 5) My supervisor is friendly and approachable. The responses to the supervision items were summed together to form an index, which had a Cronbach's alpha value of .89. Using three items adapted from Curry et al. (1986), job autonomy was measured using three items: 1) I have flexibility in how and when to do my job duties; 2) I have a great deal of say in how my job is done; and 3) My job does not allow me much opportunity to make my own decisions (reverse coded). Based on a Cronbach's alpha value of .93, the response to the three items were added together to form an index for job autonomy. The items for quality supervision and job autonomy were answered using a six-point Likert scale of strongly disagree (coded 1) to strongly agree (coded 6).

## Results

The descriptive statistics for the study variables are presented in Table 1. There appeared to be significant variation in the dependent and independent variables (i.e., none were constants). The data conformed approximately to a normal distribution based on the skewness and kurtosis statistics. Likewise, the median and mean values for the variables were similar to one another, also suggesting a normal distribution. As previously indicated, all the variables measuring latent concepts (e.g., job stress) had Cronbach's alpha values of .89 or higher, which is viewed as good.

**Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables**

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>Max</i>	<i>Med</i>	<i>Mn</i>	<i>SD</i>
Age	Measured in continuous years	23	60	38	39.48	8.37
Gender	68% men (coded 1) 32% women (coded 0)	0	1	1	0.68	0.47
Tenure	Tenure in position in years	0	28	6	7.09	5.45
Educ Level	50% college degree (coded 1) 50% no college degree (coded 0)	0	1	.50	.50	.50
Line Staff	70% Line Staff (coded 1) 30% Supervisor (coded 0)	0	1	1	.70	.39
Overload	3 item additive index, $\alpha = .90$	3	18	12	11.09	4.40
Fear of Vict	3 item additive index, $\alpha = .94$	3	18	15	14.58	4.29
Inst Comm	4 item additive index, $\alpha = .91$	7	20	17	16.78	3.12
Supervision	5 item additive index, $\alpha = .89$	6	30	20	19.18	6.23
Job Auto	3 item additive index, $\alpha = .93$	3	18	10	9.86	4.50
Strain	4 item additive index, $\alpha = .91$	4	24	17	16.18	5.54

*Note:* Min stands for minimum value, Max for maximum value, Med for median value, Mn for mean value, SD for standard deviation values, Educ Level for educational level, Overload for role overload, Fear of Vict for fear of being victimized at work, Inst Comm for instrumental communication, Supervision for quality of supervision, Job Auto stands for job autonomy, Strain for strain-based conflict, and  $\alpha$  for the Cronbach's alpha value, a measure for internal reliability. The number of usable surveys was 120.

A correlation matrix is presented in Table 2. Among the personal characteristics, age, gender, educational level, and line staff had nonsignificant correlations with the dependent variable strain-based conflict. Tenure in the position had a negative correlation, which means the more time a respondent had been a prison officer, the less strain-based conflict reported. Both role overload and fear of victimization had significant positive correlations with the dependent variable, which means increases in either of these job demands were related to greater conflict at home. All three of the job resource variables had significant negative correlations with the dependent variable, which means increases in instrumental communication, quality supervision, and job autonomy were associated with decreases in strain-based conflict. The job demand variables had larger sized correlations than did the job resource variables (Cohen, 1988).

An Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression equation was estimated with strain-based conflict as the dependent variable and the personal, demand, and resource measures as the independent variables. The results of this regression analysis are reported in Table 3. Multicollinearity (i.e., when two or more independent variables share too much of an overlap) was not an issue. Multicollinearity is seen as a problem when Variance Inflation Factor scores (VIF) exceed 5 (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). As indicated in Table 3, none of the VIF scores were higher than 1.50. The issues of

**Table 2: Study Variables Correlation Matrix**

Variable	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.
1. Age	1.00										
2. Gender	-.02	1.00									
3. Tenure	.32**	-.05	1.00								
4. Educ	.19*	-.05	-.07	1.00							
5. Line	-.37**	-.09	-.06	-.24**	1.00						
6. Overload	.07	.14	-.35**	.11	-.04	1.00					
7. Fear	-.05	.12	.03	.09	.01	.32**	1.00				
8. Inst Com	.12	-.07	.22**	.10	-.24**	-.32**	-.07	1.00			
9. Supervision	.18	-.17	.30**	.04	-.28**	-.40**	-.09	.20*	1.00		
10. Job Auto	.14	-.04	.33**	.02	-.22**	-.34**	-.15	.25**	.32**	1.00	
11. Strain	-.03	.11	-.22*	.15	.01	.50**	.61**	-.29**	-.29**	-.36**	1.00

*Note:* Educ stands for educational level, Line for line staff, Overload for role overload, Fear for fear of being victimized at work, Inst Com for instrumental communication, Super for quality of supervision, Job Auto stands for job autonomy, and Strain for strain-based conflict. See Table 1 for the descriptive statistics of the variables and how they were coded.

\*  $p \leq .05$  \*\*  $p \leq .01$

outliers, influential cases, normality, linearity and homoscedasticity of residuals, and independence of errors (all of which can affect the regression results) were tested and found not to be an issue (Berry, 1993; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013).

The R-squared value was .54, which means the independent variables as a group accounted for about 54% of the observed variance in the strain-based conflict measure. In the multivariate analysis, none of the personal characteristics had significant associations with the dependent variable. Both job demand variables had significant positive effects. Increases in role overload and fear of victimization were associated with heightened conflict in the home domain. Both instrumental communication and job autonomy had significant negative effects on the dependent variable. In other words, increases in either of these job resource variables were associated with lower conflict at home from work. Quality supervision had a nonsignificant negative relationship with strain-based conflict. The absolute value ranking of the standardized regression coefficients (values in the  $\beta$  in Table 3) indicates the magnitude of effects. Among the significant variables, fear of victimization had the largest sized effect, more than three times that of role overload which had the second largest sized effect. Instrumental communication and job autonomy followed closely in terms of size of the effect on strain-based conflict.

**Table 3: OLS Regression Results for Strain-Based Conflict Among Nigerian Correctional Staff**

<i>Variable</i>	<i>B</i>	$\beta$	<i>VIF</i>
Age	.02	.03	1.41
Gender	-.12	-.01	1.08
Tenure	-.08	-.08	1.50
Educational Level	.95	.09	1.12
Line Staff	-.70	-.06	1.42
Role Overload	.20	.16*	1.74
Fear of Victimization	.66	.51**	1.20
Instrumental Communication	-.27	-.15*	1.23
Supervision	-.10	-.11	1.42
Job Autonomy	-.19	-.15*	1.31
R-Squared		.54	
F Value (degrees of freedom)		13.07 (10,109)**	

*Note:* B represents the unstandardized regression coefficient,  $\beta$  the standardized regression coefficient, and VIF as the variance inflation factor score. A total of 120 participants returned a completed survey. Please see Table 1 for a description of the variables, how they were coded, and their descriptive statistics.

\*  $p \leq .05$  \*\*  $p \leq .01$

## Discussion and Conclusion

The current results support the contention that, in general, workplace variables are linked to strain-based conflict among the studied Nigerian prison officers. As a group, the independent variables explained slightly more than half the observed variance, which indicates that they likely play a role in work spilling over to home. It appears that work does not stop at the front gate at the end of the shift but follows officers home, affecting their home lives. It is not a surprise that workplace variables affect prison officers at home. Work is a major domain in the lives of correctional staff (May et al., 2020). In addition, the overall results support the job demands-resources model. The job demand variables as a group were associated with greater home conflict and the job resource variables as a group were related to lower strain-based conflict for officers.

Of the five measured workplace variables, four had significant associations with the dependent variable in the multivariate OLS regression analysis. Specifically, role overload, fear of victimization, instrumental communication, and job autonomy were significant predictors of strain-based conflict, but quality supervision was not. Being overloaded is not a pleasant feeling. As hypothesized, role overload, as a job demand, resulted in greater conflict at home. Being strained at work from being overloaded does not stop once the work shift ends but follows an officer home and detracts from home life. Correctional organizations need to be aware of role overload and take steps to

stop or reduce the occurrence of role overload. Officers need to be asked to provide their thoughts on where role overload is occurring and their suggestions of how to address it. Supervisors and managers need to be trained about role overload and how to reduce it. A review of custody positions should be done to ensure that the requirements of different positions are similar in their demands. An analysis of positions could reduce role overload. In their study of U.S. prison staff, Lambert, Hogan et al. (2022) pointed out that the position of armed patrol officer required an officer to drive a vehicle around the perimeter of the facility for the entire shift, waiting for an alarm, which could result in role underload. They also noted the position of yard patrol officer consisted of walking most of the shift to check doors, windows, and other security points, which could result in role overload. Lambert, Hogan et al. (2022) suggested having officers switch the positions of armed patrol officer and yard patrol officer every few hours to reduce the occurrence of role underload and role overload.

As postulated, fear of victimization as a job demand had a significant positive relationship with strain-based conflict. Being concerned about one's safety at work likely takes a psychological toll on officers and this toll does not end once the work shift ends. It can follow an officer home and cause problems with interactions with family and friends. Moreover, fear of victimization had the largest sized effect, more than three times of any of the other significant variables. Correctional organizations need to be aware of the concern of being at risk at work among prison officers and undertake efforts to reduce this job demand. Officers need to be sought their input on what aspects of the job which make them feel at risk and their suggestions for reducing this job demand. For example, poor lighting in an area or blind spots could be addressed with improved lighting or mirrors to remove blinds. Areas of training deficiency, such as how to deescalate conflict, could be addressed with specialized training. Insufficient staff in high-risk areas could be addressed by assigning more staff in these areas. Additionally, officers need to be provided with coping skills so they can positively deal with fear of being victimized. Supervisors and managers need to be made aware of fear of victimization and how to recognize it and reduce it.

As predicted, instrumental communication as a job resource was associated with lower strain-based conflict among the studies Nigerian prison officers. Instrumental communication likely allows officers to be more effective at their jobs, which likely results in positive feelings for doing a job well. In addition, being provided with instrumental communication sends a message to officers that they are valued and respected. Prisons need to also be aware of instrumental communication and seek to improve it. Officers should be asked about areas they see that instrumental communication needs to be improved. Supervisors and managers need to be trained on the importance of instrumental communication and to ensure all staff being supervised

receive in a fair and clear manner all necessary communication to be successful in their jobs. Correctional organizations need to ensure that there is no favoritism with instrumental communication. Both officers and the employing prisons will benefit for regular instrumental communication of salient information to all staff.

As hypothesized, job autonomy, a job resource, had a significant negative association with the dependent variable. Being allowed flexibility in the job, such as order of tasks, makes the job more successful. Additionally, job autonomy sends a message that the officer is trusted and respected by the prison. Psychological positive feelings that likely result from job autonomy appear to follow an officer to the home domain, decreasing strain-based conflict. Correctional agencies need to be aware of job autonomy and allow it when appropriate. This means taking time to train officers so they can engage in productive and appropriate job autonomy. If job autonomy is not currently possible because the officer is not ready (e.g., needs to be trained) or it is not possible for particular posting or task (e.g., legal reasons), there needs to be a discussion with the officer of the reason or reasons why the requested job autonomy is not possible, and, if possible, what needs to occur before job autonomy can be granted. Job autonomy is not automatic. It is earned and there must be a discussion when it is granted, expanded, contracted, or denied.

Unlike postulated and surprisingly, quality supervision was not a significant predictor of strain-based conflict in the multivariate regression analysis. Quality supervision was expected make the job more pleasant and more productive, which would result in positive psychological feelings which would follow officers home, decreasing strain-based conflict. It is important to note quality supervision had a significant negative correlation with strain-based conflict. In multivariate OLS regression, the resulting regression coefficient of an independent variable represents the direct effects of a variable on the dependent variable with the shared effects with the other independent variables are removed (Berry, 1993). Quality supervision could have indirect effects on the dependent variable through other significant predictors. As shown in Table 2, quality supervision has a significant negative association with role overload. It could be that poor supervisors increase the role overload of officers, which, in turn, results in greater strain-based conflict, and good supervisors reduce role overload for officers, which in turn results in less conflict at home for officers. As also shown in Table 2, quality supervision had significant positive correlations with instrumental communication and job autonomy. Quality supervisors are likely to engage in instrumental communication and train and allow officers the opportunity for job autonomy. Instrumental communication and job autonomy result in less conflict at home for officers. Future research is needed to determine whether the current results, including quality supervision not having a direct effect on strain-based conflict, can be



replicated. Further, future studies need to explore and test whether quality supervision has indirect effects through other workplace job demands and resources on strain-based conflict.

The nonsignificant relationships between the personal characteristics with strain-based conflict in the regression analysis are actually encouraging findings for correctional organizations. Changing personal characteristics often is not possible nor ethical or legal. The significant variables were workplace variables of role overload, fear of victimization, instrumental communication, and job autonomy. These variables are within the control of correctional administrators to address either by reducing their occurrence in terms of job demands or by increasing their occurrence in terms of job resources.

As with many research studies, the current study had limitations. Staff from a single prison in southeast Nigeria were studied. Staff from other correctional facilities, including different types (e.g., jails, private, juvenile, low security, etc.), regions, and nations, need to be studied to determine whether the findings in the current study are universal or are contextual and situational, varying across different types of correctional facilities and locations. More items should be used to measure strain-based conflict, role overload, fear of victimization, and job autonomy. These concepts were measured with three items. Future studies should examine how workplace variables using the job demands-resources model as a guide are related to other prison officer outcomes, such as job performance, organizational citizenship behaviors (going up and beyond what was expected at work), job burnout, turnover, and absenteeism. Future research is needed to explore the impact of strain-based conflict on prison officers over their career, such as their happiness, physical health, and mental health. Research is also needed on the most effective and efficient methods to lower role overload and fear of victimization among prison officers. Likewise, studies are needed on the most effective and efficient ways to increase instrumental communication and raise job autonomy. The current study was cross-sectional, which means that causality cannot be empirically demonstrated. In order to show causality, a longitudinal design is needed. It is clear that additional research is needed.

In conclusion, prisons are found around the world. Prison officers are a valuable resource. Work issues can follow officers home, resulting in strain-based conflict. Strain-based conflict is a type of work-family conflict. Work and home are two major domains for many individuals. When the two main domains spillover into one another, conflict often occurs. Strain-based conflict occurs when work factors and issues follow a person home and cause disruption and problems in the home domain. While strain-based conflict is a negative outcome, there has been little research on how workplace variables are associated with strain-based among prison officers. Using the job demands-resources model as a

guide, the current study examined how the workplace variables of role overload, fear of victimization, instrumental communication, quality supervision, and job autonomy were associated with strain-based conflict among officers at a southeast Nigerian prison. The job demands of role overload and fear of victimization had significant positive associations with strain-based conflict, which increases in either were linked to higher conflict at home. On the other hand, instrumental communication and job autonomy were inversely related to strain-based conflict. Surprisingly, quality supervision did not have a significant association with home conflict in the multivariate regression analysis. The current findings are important and should spark additional research on the workplace variables linked to work spilling over to affect home life of officers. This research will invest in prison officers and hopefully improve their lives. Research is needed involving officers across the globe. It is hoped that the current study will spark interest and research in strain-based conflict, as well as other types of work-family conflict. Doing nothing will not solve the issue of work-family conflict, especially strain-based conflict.

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