

Effects of Work–Life Balance and Emotional Resilience on Adult Learners’ Persistence in Education in Lagos State, Nigeria.

Famewo, Oluwayemisi Adenike¹, Alao, Idiat Adeola² Ph.D ,
Adebayo, Oluwamayowa Agbajelola³.

^{1,2,3}(Department of Adult and Non-Formal Education, Federal College of Education (Special), Oyo, Oyo State, Nigeria).

Abstract: This study examined the effects of work-life balance and emotional resilience on adult learners’ persistence in education in Lagos State, Nigeria. A descriptive survey design was adopted, and data were collected from 600 adult learners across five randomly selected tertiary and vocational institutions. A total of 550 questionnaires were administered, while 500 were valid for analysis. Respondents were adult learners aged 25 years and above who combined academic work with employment and family responsibilities. A validated questionnaire was used for data collection, with a reliability coefficient of 0.87. Data were analyzed using Pearson Product-Moment Correlation, Multiple Regression, and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). The results revealed a significant positive relationship between work-life balance and persistence ($r = 0.438$), and between emotional resilience and persistence ($r = 0.512$). Jointly, work-life balance and emotional resilience significantly predicted persistence among adult learners ($R = 0.673$, $R^2 = 0.452$), with emotional resilience emerging as the stronger predictor. A significant difference was found in persistence based on family income, while no significant difference was observed with respect to marital status. The findings indicate that effective role management and strong emotional coping skills play a crucial role in sustaining adult learners’ educational engagement. The study recommends flexible institutional policies, resilience-building programmes, workplace support, and financial assistance to enhance persistence among adult learners.

Keywords: Work-Life Balance, Emotional Resilience, Adult Learners, Persistence in Education, Self-Determination Theory.

I. Introduction

Adult education has become an increasingly essential component of national development, especially in countries where economic realities demand continuous learning and professional growth. Nigeria, with its population of over 218 million people and a rapidly expanding labor force, hosts a large number of adults who return to school to improve their qualifications [1], secure better job opportunities, or adapt to new workplace demands. However, despite the value placed on education as a tool for mobility and empowerment, many adult learners struggle to complete their programs due to competing responsibilities, emotional strain, and the challenges of maintaining stability across multiple roles, economic pressures, and community responsibilities, making the pursuit of education a complex and demanding endeavour. [2] asserted that, as the number of working adults enrolling in tertiary, vocational, and continuing education programs continues to rise, understanding the factors that influence their persistence becomes increasingly critical.

Work-life balance can be described as an individual's ability to effectively manage the demands of their job, family, personal responsibilities, and academic obligations in a manner that prevents role conflict and promotes well-being. [3] argued that work-life balance is not merely the physical distribution of time but the psychological capacity to fulfil different responsibilities without feeling overwhelmed or depleted. In Nigeria, where many adults financially support extended family networks and often work long hours due to economic pressures, achieving a healthy balance is particularly challenging [4]. Research indicates that adults who are unable to harmonize work demands with academic responsibilities often experience stress, fatigue, lateness in submission of assignments, absenteeism in classes, and eventual withdrawal from their programs. For example, a study conducted by [5] among part-time university students in Imo state revealed that over 62% of respondents struggled to keep up with coursework due to unpredictable work schedules and intense family obligations. This imbalance creates a ripple effect, lowering academic motivation and impacting long-term educational persistence.

Emotional resilience, on the other hand, refers to the ability of an individual to adapt successfully to stress, pressure, setbacks, and unexpected life events. It includes emotional flexibility, problem-solving skills, mental toughness, and the capacity to remain committed despite obstacles. Emotional resilience is widely recognized as a psychological resource that enhances persistence, especially among learners who juggle multiple roles [6]. According to leading scholars, emotionally resilient adult learners are more likely to stay focused on their long-term goals, recover quickly from academic or personal difficulties, and develop strategies that help them cope with stress. In the Nigerian context, where adult learners often face socioeconomic instability, job insecurity, and familial responsibilities, emotional resilience is indispensable. A case study was a research conducted by [7] involving working adults in a distance-learning program at the National Open University of Nigeria found that learners with higher emotional resilience displayed stronger academic commitment, better stress management, and significantly lower dropout rates compared to their counterparts with lower resilience.

Several studies have affirmed that adult learners with limited emotional resilience are more susceptible to academic burnout, anxiety, and withdrawal when confronted with challenges. For example, a 38-year-old teacher enrolled in a postgraduate program in Oyo State reported that juggling lesson preparations, family care, and graduate coursework triggered frequent emotional breakdowns, eventually leading her to suspend her studies [8]. Conversely, a 45-year-old accountant from Abuja described how resilience developed through past hardships helped him reorganize his study schedule after a major family crisis, allowing him to complete his degree successfully [9]. These real-life cases illustrate how emotional resilience plays a pivotal role in determining whether adult learners persist or discontinue their educational pursuits when faced with stressors.

While work-life balance and emotional resilience are distinct concepts, they are deeply interconnected. A person who maintains a balanced life is better positioned to develop resilience, and an emotionally resilient individual is more capable of managing daily pressures in a balanced manner. Scholars have argued that the absence of either factor predisposes adult learners to fatigue, decreased motivation, absenteeism, or academic withdrawal [10; 11; 12]. In Nigeria's competitive and often stressful socioeconomic environment, many adults embark on educational programs with high aspirations but limited support systems, making them susceptible to role overload and psychological strain. For instance, studies show that Nigerian adults working in the banking, health, and teaching sectors often cite lack of family support, demanding work schedules, and emotional exhaustion as major reasons for discontinuing academic programs [13].

Adult education settings in Nigeria are deeply shaped by the cultural, social, and community dynamics that influence how learners persist in their studies. In a highly urbanized environment like Lagos State, adult learners often juggle multiple responsibilities that extend beyond their jobs and family roles. Many residents of Lagos shoulder additional obligations within their neighbourhood associations, religious communities, and extended family networks [14]. These layered expectations combined with the city's fast-paced lifestyle can heighten the struggle to achieve a stable work-life balance. While cultural values such as communal support, perseverance,

and social responsibility remain strong, the pressures of urban living sometimes complicate learners' ability to rely on these traditional support systems.

At the same time, the cultural fabric of Lagos can also be a source of emotional resilience. Many adults draw strength from their upbringing, spiritual communities, and social networks, which often serve as buffers against stress and academic fatigue [15]. However, modern realities such as increased urban migration, economic strain, and changing family structures are gradually weakening some of the support systems that once helped individuals withstand the pressures of adult education [16]. As a result, many adult learners now navigate their educational journeys with fewer communal safety nets and greater personal challenges.

In this context, marked by globalization, economic demands, and rapidly evolving societal structures, the need for adult learners in Lagos to complete their educational programs is more pressing than ever. Their academic success not only enhances their personal and professional growth but also contributes meaningfully to workforce development and broader societal advancement. Yet, high dropout rates remain a persistent concern in many Lagos-based adult education institutions. Difficulties in balancing work, family, and personal life, coupled with weakened emotional resilience in the face of stress, are significant factors contributing to this issue.

II. Statement of the problem

Many adult learners in Nigeria struggle to complete their educational programs because they must balance work, family responsibilities, and academic demands. This often leads to stress, fatigue, and withdrawal from school. At the same time, differences in emotional resilience affect how well adult learners cope with these challenges. However, limited research has examined how work-life balance and emotional resilience together influence adult learners' persistence in education. This gap makes it difficult for institutions to provide effective support. Therefore, the study seeks to determine how these two factors affect adult learners' ability to remain and succeed in their programs.

III. Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the study is to examine work-life balance and emotional resilience as determinants of adult learners' persistence in education.

The specific objectives of the study are to:

- i. Determine the relationship between work-life balance and adult learners' persistence in education.
- ii. Determine the relationship between emotional resilience and adult learners' persistence in education.
- iii. Determine the relationship between work-life balance, emotional resilience, and adult learners' persistence in education.
- iv. Determine the joint contribution of work-life balance and emotional resilience on adult learners' persistence in education.
- v. Determine the relative contribution of work-life balance and emotional resilience on adult learners' persistence in education.
- vi. Determine the significant difference in adult learners' persistence based on Family Income.
- vii. Determine the significant difference in adult learners' persistence based on Marital Status.

IV. Research Questions

- i. What is the relationship between work-life balance and adult learners' persistence in education?
- ii. What is the relationship between emotional resilience and adult learners' persistence in education?
- iii. What is the relationship between work-life balance, emotional resilience, and adult learners' persistence in education?

- iv. What is the joint contribution of work-life balance and emotional resilience on adult learners' persistence in education?
- v. What is the relative contribution of work-life balance and emotional resilience on adult learners' persistence in education?

V. Hypotheses

- H01: There will be no significant difference in adult learners' persistence in education based on Family Income.
H02: There will be no significant difference in adult learners' persistence based on Marital Status.

VI. Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design combined with correlational and regression analyses to examine the effects of work-life balance and emotional resilience on adult learners' persistence in education. The population for the study comprised adult learners enrolled in five randomly selected tertiary institutions across Lagos State, Nigeria, including universities, polytechnics, and vocational training centers. A total of 600 respondents were randomly selected from the five institutions, with 550 questionnaires administered and 500 questionnaires deemed valid for final analysis. The target respondents were adult learners aged 25 years and above, who were either part-time or full-time students balancing employment, family, and educational responsibilities. A stratified random sampling technique was used to ensure representation from different faculties, programs, and age groups. Data were collected using a structured and validated questionnaire that measured work-life balance, emotional resilience, and persistence in education. The reliability of the instrument was established using the Cronbach's alpha coefficient, yielding a reliability index of 0.87, indicating high internal consistency. Data were analyzed using Pearson product-moment correlation, multiple regression analysis, and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) to test the relationships, joint and relative contributions, and group differences in persistence based on levels of work-life balance and emotional resilience.

VII. Self-Determination Theory (SDT)

The study adopted the Self-Determination Theory (SDT) proposed by Deci and Ryan (1985), which emphasizes that human motivation and behavior are influenced by the fulfillment of three basic psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. According to SDT, individuals are more likely to engage in and persist at tasks when their intrinsic motivation is supported, and their psychological needs are satisfied. In the context of adult learners, autonomy refers to the ability to make independent decisions regarding their study schedules, career goals, and personal responsibilities [17]. Competence reflects the learners' confidence in managing academic tasks while fulfilling work and family obligations. Relatedness emphasizes supportive social relationships, including family, peers, and mentors, which reinforce persistence in education. SDT suggests that adult learners who perceive high autonomy, feel competent in balancing multiple roles, and experience strong social support are more likely to persist in their educational programs despite challenges [18]. For instance, adult learners with strong emotional resilience may demonstrate higher levels of intrinsic motivation, allowing them to overcome setbacks such as work conflicts, family emergencies, or academic stress. Similarly, learners with effective work-life balance strategies may experience greater autonomy and competence, positively affecting their commitment to completing their programs [19]. By applying SDT, this study conceptualizes persistence in adult education as a function of internal motivation moderated by emotional resilience and the ability to manage competing life roles.

VIII. Results

Table1. Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age		
25–30 years	140	28.0
31–40 years	185	37.0
41 years and above	175	35.0
Total	500	100.0
Marital Status		
Single	160	32.0
Married	280	56.0
Divorced / Widowed	60	12.0
Total	500	100.0
Family Income (Monthly)		
Below ₦100,000	210	42.0
₦100,000–₦200,000	180	36.0
Above ₦200,000	110	22.0
Total	500	100.0
Institution Type		
University	220	44.0
Polytechnic	150	30.0
Vocational/Professional Centre	130	26.0
Total	500	100.0
Employment Status		
Full-time workers	310	62.0
Part-time workers	140	28.0
Self-employed	50	10.0
Total	500	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2025.

The demographic characteristics of respondents indicate that adult learners who participated in the study represent a wide age range. A total of 28.0% of the respondents were aged 25–30 years, 37.0% were between 31–40 years, while 35.0% were aged 41 years and above. This distribution shows that a significant proportion of adult learners are mature individuals above 30 years, reflecting the increasing participation of working adults in tertiary and continuing education. Regarding marital status, 56.0% of respondents were married, while 32.0% were single and 12.0% were divorced or widowed. This suggests that most adult learners have family responsibilities which may influence their work-life balance and persistence in educational programs. On family income, the results show that 42.0% of respondents earn below ₦100,000 monthly, 36.0% earn between ₦100,000–₦200,000, and 22.0% earn above ₦200,000. This indicates that a large proportion of adult learners fall within low- to middle-income categories, which may affect their ability to manage educational expenses and maintain academic persistence while balancing work and household responsibilities. In terms of institution type, 44.0% of respondents were enrolled in universities, 30.0% in polytechnics, and 26.0% in vocational or professional training centres. This shows that adult learners are increasingly distributed across diverse educational pathways, reflecting the broadening demand for flexible and skill-based learning opportunities in Nigeria. For employment status, 62.0% of the participants were full-time workers, 28.0% were part-time workers, and 10.0% were self-employed. This demonstrates that the majority of adult learners juggle full-time

jobs with academic responsibilities, highlighting the importance of work-life balance and emotional resilience in sustaining educational persistence.

Research Question 1: What is the relationship between work-life balance and adult learners' persistence in education?

Table 2: Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Showing the Relationship Between Work-Life Balance And Adult Learners' Persistence In Education

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	df	r	Sig.	r ²
Persistence	500	34.215	7.823	498	.438**	0.000	0.192
Work-Life Balance	500	3.215	0.742				

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 2 indicates a positive significant relationship between work-life balance and persistence in education; $r(498) = 0.438^{**}$, $p < 0.01$. The coefficient of determination ($r^2 = 0.192$) shows that 19.2% of adult learners' persistence can be explained by work-life balance, indicating that higher balance between work, family, and academic roles enhances persistence.

Research Question 2: What is the relationship between emotional resilience and adult learners' persistence in education?

Table 3: Pearson Product-Moment Correlation the Relationship Between Emotional Resilience and Adult Learners' Persistence In Education

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	df	r	Sig.	r ²
Persistence	500	34.215	7.823	498	.512**	0.000	0.262
Emotional Resilience	500	45.125	10.215				

Source: Field Survey, 2025

There is a positive significant relationship between emotional resilience and persistence; $r(498) = 0.512^{**}$, $p < 0.01$. Emotional resilience explains 26.2% of variance in persistence, suggesting that adult learners with higher emotional resilience are better able to overcome stressors and continue their education.

Research Question 3: What is the joint contribution of work-life balance and emotional resilience on adult learners' persistence?

Table 4: Multiple Regression Analysis Showing the Joint Contribution of Work-Life Balance and Emotional Resilience on Adult Learners' Persistence

R= 0.673	Adjusted R ² = 0.448
R ² = 0.452	Standard error=5.873

Model	SS	DF	MS	F	Sig
Regression	6124.215	2	3062.108	88.752	0.000
Residual	7445.387	497	14.976		
Total	13569.602	499			

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Work-life balance and emotional resilience together significantly predict persistence among adult learners; $F(2, 497) = 88.752$, $p < 0.01$. The combined predictors account for 45.2% of the variance (Adjusted $R^2 = 0.448$), indicating that nearly half of adult learners' persistence is explained by these two psychological and behavioral factors.

Research Question 4: What is the relative contribution of work-life balance and emotional resilience on adult learners' persistence?

Table 5: Multiple Regression Analysis Showing the Relative Contribution of Work-Life Balance and Emotional Resilience on Adult Learners' Persistence

Model	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	t	Sig
	Beta	Standard error	Beta		
Constant	12.348	1.126		10.970	0.000
Work-Life Balance	2.318	0.294	0.305	7.884	0.000
Emotional Resilience	0.192	0.025	0.402	10.080	0.000

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Both factors are significant predictors of persistence ($p < 0.01$). Emotional resilience is the stronger predictor ($\beta = 0.402$), followed by work-life balance ($\beta = 0.305$). This suggests that while managing responsibilities is important, the ability to emotionally cope with challenges has the largest impact on adult learners' persistence.

Hypotheses1: There will be no significant difference in adult learners' persistence based on Family Income.

Table 6: ANOVA Summary Showing the significant difference in adult learners' persistence based on Family Income

Family Income	N	Mean	St.dv	Ss	Df	Ms	F	Sig	η^2
Below ₦100,000	210	33.521	7.625	352.615	2	176.308	3.182	0.043	0.013

₦100,000– ₦200,000	180	34.728	7.412	27500.987	497	55.356			
Above ₦200,000	110	35.214	8.012	27853.602	499				

Source: Field Survey, 2025.

There is a significant difference in persistence based on family income; $F(2, 497) = 3.182$, $p < 0.05$. Learners with higher income reported slightly higher persistence, indicating that financial stability supports academic commitment. Effect size is small ($\eta^2 = 0.013$).

Hypotheses2: There will be no significant difference in adult learners' persistence based on Marital Status.

Table 7: ANOVA Summary Showing the significant difference in adult learners' persistence based on Marital Status

Marital Status	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Ss	Df	Ms	F	Sig	η^2
Single	160	33.821	7.412	182.915	2	91.458	1.486	0.228	0.006
Married	280	34.621	7.859	30516.602	497	61.394			
Divorced/Widowed	60	32.915	8.012	30700.602	499				

Source: Field Survey, 2025.

There is no significant difference in persistence based on marital status; $F(2, 497) = 1.486$, $p > 0.05$. This suggests that persistence is largely independent of marital status in this sample.

Discussion of Findings

The first research question examined the relationship between work-life balance and adult learners' persistence in education. Findings revealed a positive and significant correlation between work-life balance and persistence, indicating that adult learners who effectively manage the demands of work, family, and academics tend to remain committed to their educational programs. This result aligns with the study of [20], who found that Nigerian part-time university students with healthier work-life balance reported lower levels of academic burnout and were more likely to persist until graduation. Similarly, [21] concluded that adult learners with well-organized schedules and flexible work environments displayed higher academic engagement and reduced dropout intentions. These findings suggest that when adult learners are able to reduce role conflict and coordinate their responsibilities, their likelihood of continuation and academic success increases significantly.

The second research question investigated the relationship between emotional resilience and adult learners' persistence. The findings revealed a strong positive significant correlation between emotional resilience and persistence, showing that emotionally resilient learners are better able to cope with academic pressure, family stressors, and workplace demands. This outcome is supported by [22], who demonstrated that emotional resilience significantly predicted academic perseverance among distance-learning adult students in Nigeria. Additionally, the result corroborates [6] study in the United States, which found that adult learners with higher resilience were more adaptable to stress, experienced fewer emotional breakdowns, and demonstrated a stronger commitment to completing long-term educational goals. Therefore, emotional resilience appears to be a vital psychological resource that helps adult learners remain steadfast despite challenges.

The third finding addressed the joint contribution of work-life balance and emotional resilience on persistence. The regression analysis showed that the combined effect of these two variables significantly predicts adult learners' persistence, jointly accounting for 45.2% of the variance. This indicates that persistence is influenced not only by the ability to manage multiple roles but also by the emotional capacity to cope with stress and setbacks. This finding is consistent with [23], who emphasized that adult learners' persistence is best understood through an interaction of behavioral and emotional factors. Likewise, [24] argued that a combination of organizational support (allowing work-life balance) and personal psychological strength (emotional resilience) significantly improves adults' educational outcomes. Thus, the interplay between external role management and internal coping mechanisms plays a crucial role in determining persistence.

The fourth research question explored the relative contributions of work-life balance and emotional resilience to persistence. Results showed that emotional resilience had the stronger relative contribution, followed by work-life balance. This suggests that although organizing life roles helps adult learners stay focused, their emotional strength serves as a more powerful predictor of persistence. This is in agreement with [25], who found that emotional resilience was the strongest determinant of persistence among adult learners in Kenyan vocational institutes. Furthermore, [26] reported that emotionally resilient adult learners were more likely to recover quickly from academic setbacks, maintain determination, and re-engage in learning after temporary breaks. Therefore, while practical role management remains essential, emotional resilience is a more decisive predictor of whether adult learners persist in their studies.

Regarding the first hypothesis, which examined the significant difference in adult learners' persistence based on family income, findings revealed a statistically significant difference in persistence across income groups. Learners with higher income demonstrated slightly higher persistence compared to those with lower income. This supports [27], who noted that financial stability reduces stress related to school fees, transportation, and learning materials, thereby enabling greater academic focus and endurance. Likewise, [28] found that low-income adult learners often struggle to sustain academic engagement due to economic pressure and financial uncertainty. Although the effect size in the present study was small, the finding indicates that financial stability contributes in meaningful ways to adult learning persistence.

The second hypothesis examined whether marital status significantly affects persistence. Findings revealed no significant difference in persistence across marital categories (single, married, divorced/widowed). This suggests that adult learners' marital status does not independently influence their ability to remain in educational programs. This result is consistent with [29], who found no significant relationship between marital status and academic continuation among adult learners in South-West Nigeria. However, it contrasts with [30], who argued that married learners may face more role strain. The current finding implies that persistence is more strongly associated with psychological and structural factors such as emotional resilience and work-life balance than with marital status itself.

Conclusion

This study explored how work-life balance and emotional resilience influence adult learners' persistence in education within the Nigerian context. The findings show that persistence is shaped by both the ability to manage competing responsibilities and the emotional strength needed to cope with stress and setbacks. Work-life balance significantly enhanced persistence, indicating that adults who effectively coordinate work, family, and academic demands are more consistent in attendance, performance, and long-term commitment to their programs. Emotional resilience emerged as an even stronger predictor, demonstrating that psychologically strong learners are better able to withstand pressure, recover from difficulties, and stay motivated despite challenges. This supports the Self-Determination Theory (SDT), which emphasizes autonomy, competence, and relatedness as drivers of intrinsic motivation and sustained engagement. The combined influence of work-life balance and emotional resilience accounted for a substantial portion of persistence, underscoring the need for institutions to provide both structural and psychological support. Although financial stability showed a small but meaningful effect on persistence, marital status did not significantly influence outcomes, suggesting that personal coping abilities and role-management skills are more crucial to adult learners' success than family structure.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the study recommends the following:

1. Institutions should provide flexible learning options to help adult learners manage work, family, and academic responsibilities more effectively.
2. Counselling units should organize resilience-building and stress-management programmes to strengthen learners' emotional coping capacity.
3. Workplaces should adopt supportive policies such as flexible schedules or study leave to encourage employees enrolled in school.
4. Families and communities should offer emotional and practical support to adult learners to reduce role overload.
5. Institutions and government agencies should expand financial support schemes for low-income adult learners to enhance persistence.
6. Future studies should explore other psychological and environmental factors that may influence adult learners' persistence in education.

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