

A PATH ANALYTIC INVESTIGATION OF BIG - FIVE FACTOR ON JOB BURNOUT AMONG GRADUATE POLICE OFFICERS IN SOUTHWESTERN NIGERIA

**Amos Oyesoji Aremu
Solomon Adekunle Odedokun**
University of Ibadan

Abstract

The study investigated the direct and indirect effects of neuroticism, extraversion, conscientiousness, openness and agreeableness on graduate police officer's job burnout in South-western Nigeria. The study adopted a survey research design of ex-post facto type. The Multi-stage random sampling technique was used to select 1,220 graduate police officers from the six commands in south-western Nigeria. Two instruments were used: the NEO Five Factor Inventory ($\alpha = 0.73$) and the Maslach Burnout Inventory ($\alpha = 0.87$). Data were analyzed using multiple regression model and path-analysis in order to estimate the co-efficient of structural equation of the hypothesized model. Results from the analysis indicated that the most meaningful causal model was tenable. And that the five predicting variables accounted for 38.7% (direct effect) and 61.3% (indirect effect) of the variability in the criterion. Findings indicated a positive association between extraversion, neuroticism and job burnout among graduate police officers studied. The implications of this for policing practice and paradigm shift were also discussed.

Key words: Job burnout, Big five factor, graduate police officers

Introduction

The quality of service delivery and professionalism of the Nigerian Police has fallen below the acceptable standard. The nation is currently at crossroads in terms of security challenges. This could be seen in diverse manifestations of crimes and criminal acts being perpetrated virtually every day in all nooks and crannies of the nation. This is as a result, among other reasons, of public disdain for the rank and file. In effect, service delivery of the police in Nigeria is measured using public barometers. While the public measure of the police service delivery is in itself a subject of debate, the Nigeria Police has not fared well using other indices: corruption, extra judicial killing, inter-personal relationships and, currently, curtailing of home-grown terrorism. The aggregation of these and other challenges confronting police personnel in Nigeria could certainly have psychological toll on the rank and file. Akin to these, the number of police personnel, which is about 375,000, when compared with the population of about 175 million people, falls short of the United Nations' recommendation of one police to four hundred citizens.

All over the world, the police form a vital arm of government which is responsible for the enforcement of law and order within the state. According to Alemika (1993), the society, for its defense, needs a well-led, well-trained and well-disciplined force that can be trusted, and enough for the state to prevent crime before it happens or if it happens, to detect crime and bring the accused to justice. Anything short of this defeats the principles of effective policing as enunciated by Robert Peel in the 1827 bill to the British Parliament. Aremu (2014) taking a clue from Robert Peel's police principles, notes that many years after the principle were spelt out in the legislation that established police institution in London, the principles are still crucial to 21st century policing. In spite of this, the magnitudes of crime and criminal activities have not abated. The police personnel are overstretched and stressed. Aremu (1998) submits that the overall effect is that police personnel in Nigeria seem frustrated and helpless and this makes the citizens to hold the police profession in very low esteem.

The manifest frustration evident among police personnel and its attendant negative impact on police effectiveness has become a concern for police officers and researchers. Evidences from police researches by Akinawo (1994, 1995), Aremu & Idowu (2001), Aremu & Adeyoju (2003), Aremu (1996, 1998), have shown that all is not well with the present policing system in Nigeria. Although the research documentation from the scholars on police cited is not categorical, the inference is that the personnel are over-burdened.

Policing job, perhaps more than any professions, not only requires absolute professionalism, but also total commitment expected to make the practitioners proactive and efficient. This becomes

expedient in a multi-ethnic country like Nigeria with increase profiling of crime and peace-threatening activities, like kidnapping, ethnic crisis, armed robbery, religious crisis, extra-judicial killing, political violence, and, of recent, the Boko Haram saga. All these could exert much pressure on the personnel of the Nigeria Police.

One fundamental problem that could confront the police is job burnout. A high level of burnout can have significant implications for police organizational performance. For example, burnout has been strongly linked with a number of key work-related attitudes and behaviors, including organizational commitment, absenteeism, resignation, and job performance (Cropanzano, Rupp, & Byrne, 2003; Davey, Obst, & Sheehan, 2001; Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998; Wright & Cropanzano, 1998).

Burnout is one of the most familiar terms used when expressing the cost of caring. For many years, burnout has been recognized as an occupational hazard for various people-oriented professions, such as human services, education, health care, and police. Freudenberger & Richelson (1980) view burnout as a state of fatigue or frustration brought about by devotion to a cause or a way of life, or relationship that failed to produce the expected reward. Maslach & Jackson (1981) provide a more detailed definition of burnout as a syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment. This definition can be situated in police work because, according to Aremu (1998), policing job is about human contact.

One key aspect of the burnout syndrome that describes increase depletion of emotional resources and inability to give of oneself at a psychological level is emotional exhaustion. The second aspect is the development of negative cynical attitudes and feelings about one's clients. Such negative reactions to clients may be linked to the experience of emotional exhaustion. This callous or even dehumanized perception of others can lead staff to view their clients as somehow deserving of their troubles (Ryan, 1971). The attitude of the police towards the public could be explained in this context. The third aspect of the burnout syndrome is the tendency to evaluate oneself negatively, with regard to one's work with clients. Workers feel unhappy about themselves and dissatisfied with their accomplishments on the job. Generally, police personnel in Nigeria are dissatisfied with their job (Aremu 1998; Akinawo 1994). From the above viewpoints in literature, it could then be deduced that stress is a major determinant of job burnout.

In Nigeria, a high level of stress has been observed among the working class (Ndom & Makanjuola, 2004). Adeyemo & Ogunyemi (2005) assert that workers, who are involved in personal interaction, including the police, are more vulnerable to occupational stress and job burnout. There is the problem of image. Added to this is the harrowing climate in which they work. They also contend with many challenges in the course of their duties like negative perception from the public, poor funding and mismanagement of available funds, in-fighting among senior officers for promotion/posting, decayed state of discipline, inadequate basic and continuous training of police personnel, obsolete and outdated arms and ammunition, overcrowded barracks, lack of conducive offices and working materials. These militate against their work performance, efficiency and effectiveness and could also endanger them emotionally and thereby, making them to face serious job burnout while on duty.

Studies have been conducted on burnout and personality factors, but not much has been done on the police, especially in Nigeria, where studies of Akinawo (1994,1995), Aremu & Idowu (2001), Aremu & Adeyoju (2003) Aremu (1996,1998), and others have concentrated on variables like mentoring, organizational commitment, job satisfaction, pro-social behaviors and emotional intelligence. While these studies are themselves not exhaustive, their import on the development of literature on the police work cannot be ignored. Although these studies were carried out on different populations other than the focus of this study, attempting to investigate the influence of the constructs on the graduate police officers would boost the literature on the police and personality factors. This study investigated the influence of personality on job burnout among graduate police officers using a path analytic approach.

The current study

Given the paucity of studies on the two concepts in this study (job burnout and graduate police officers), this study investigated job burnout among graduate police officers in Nigeria. It also investigated the big-five personality domain (neuroticism, extraversion, conscientiousness,

agreeableness and openness to experience) on job burnout of the police officers. The direct causal effects of the factors were measured with a view to identifying the most meaningful causal linkages among the dummy variables and job burnout among the officers. This will not only enrich the theoretical postulation on big five factor and job burnout. This study adds to empirical assertions with special reference to a special group of population, graduate police officers, and to Nigeria in particular. It is assumed that the participants had traits of the big- five personality factors and have the tendency to experience job burnout in view of the peculiarity of the profession. Based on these, the following research questions were answered in the study.

1. What is the most meaningful causal model involving the big -five factor and graduate police officer's job burnout?
2. What are the directions and estimates of the strengths of the causal paths of the factors in the model?
3. * What are the direct and indirect effects of the factors on job burnout among graduate police officers in south western Nigeria?
4. What proportion of the total effects of the factors are direct and indirect?
5. What is the relative effect of the factors on job burnout among the officers?

Method

Design and Participation

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design using the *ex-post* facto type. The Nigeria Police Force with about 375,000 officers, constituted the population of this study. From this population, one thousand, two hundred and twenty (1,220) graduate police officers were randomly selected. Graduate police officers are officers of the Nigeria Police Force who entered into the force as graduates (Bachelor of Science / Bachelor of Arts / Bachelor of Education/ Bachelor of Technology and Higher National Diploma) and were trained in the Police Academy. At the end of their training at the Nigeria Police Academy, the trainee-cadets are in the class of the senior cadre officers of the Nigeria Police Force.

The participants consisted of three hundred and sixteen female (25.9%) and nine hundred and fourteen male (74.0%). The ages of the respondents ranged from 30 years to 52 years, with mean and standard deviation of ages as 38 years and 4.62, respectively.

Instrumentation

The quantitative data gathering involved the use of the following two questionnaires:

NEO 5-Factor Inventory

This is a 60-item instrument developed by Costa & McCrae (1990). Items in the instrument represent each of the 5 personality domains. They are as follows: Neuroticism- 'I am easily disturbed'; Extraversion- 'I talk a lot'. Conscientiousness- 'I like order', Openness to experience -'Once I find the right way to do something, I stick to it', Agreeableness 'I try to be courteous to everyone I meet'. It has a 5- point structure response format, ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5). Costa & McCrae (1998) reported 0.87 as a convergent correlation coefficient on the 5 personality domains measured by the instrument. The internal consistency of the scale was established by this study and it returned a Cronbach coefficient alpha of 0.81.

Maslach Burnout Inventory

This instrument was designed to measure an individual job burnout experience of the police officer. It was adapted from Maslach Burnout Inventory (1981). This scale has 22 items to be responded to on 5- point scale : "never" (1), "a few times a year" (2) "a few times a month" (3), "once a week" (4), "everyday" (5). The items are distributed in three dimension emotional exhaustion (feelings of being emotionally sapped), depersonalization (feelings of impersonal response towards recipients of the service) personal accomplishment (diminished feelings of competence and success in working with people). The instrument was reported to have alpha reliability co-efficient of 0.90 for emotional exhaustion, 0.78 for depersonalization and 0.76 for personal accomplishment in the Cronbach alpha

scale. The internal consistency of the scale was established by this study and it returned a Cronbach coefficient alpha of 0.87. Two of the items are 'I feel frustrated by my job'; and 'I feel like I am at the end of the rope'.

Procedure

An official permission for the administration of instruments was obtained from the Commissioner of Police in each of the states and area commands visited and appropriate information was collected from graduate police officers through the questionnaires.

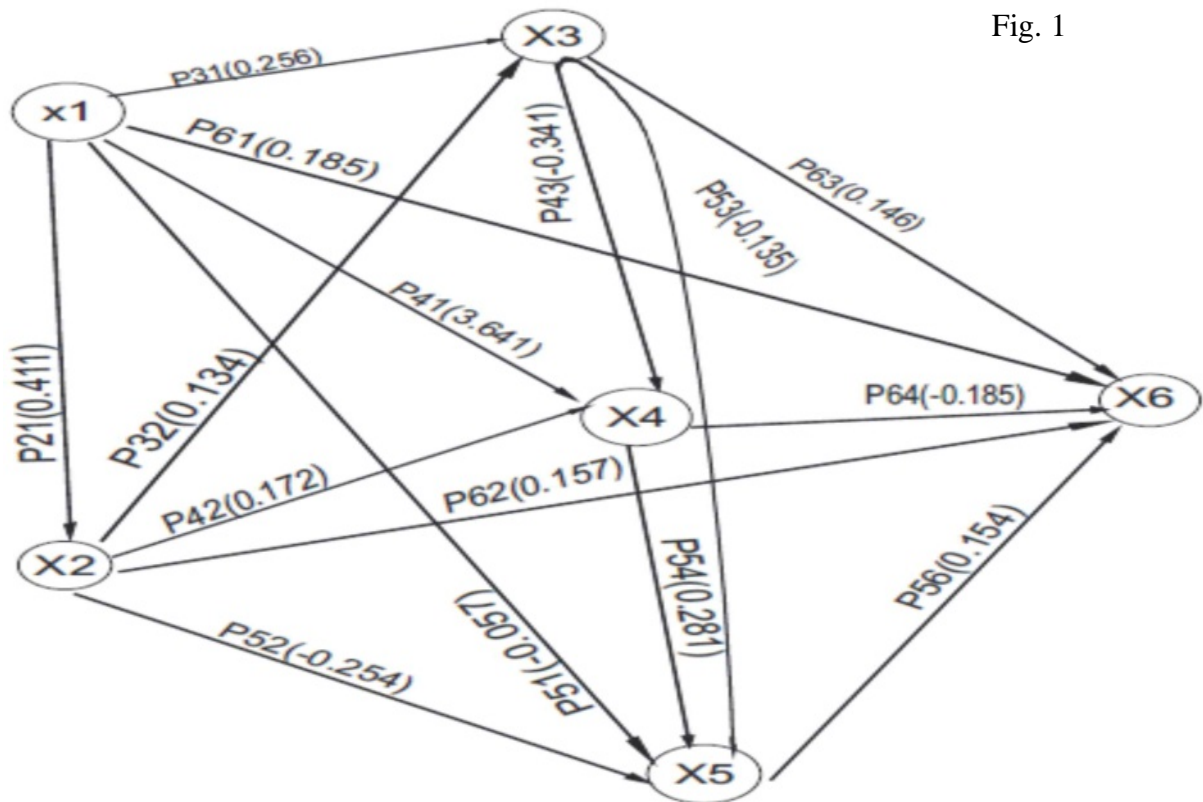


Fig. 1

NOTE : Fig I Shows the hypothesized causal model of the big five factor and job burnout among the graduate police officers while Fig 2 Shows the reproduced causal model of the big five factors and job burnout among the graduate police officers.

Results

In this study, the most meaningful causal model involving neuroticism, extraversion, conscientiousness, agreeableness and openness to experience and job burnout among graduate police officers is shown in the Fig 2 (trimmed from Fig. 1 based on statistical significance and meaningfulness of the paths). From Fig.2, reveals that 12 out of the 15 hypothesized paths met the criteria of significance at 0.05 level of significance. The more parsimonious model, therefore, has 12 survival paths.

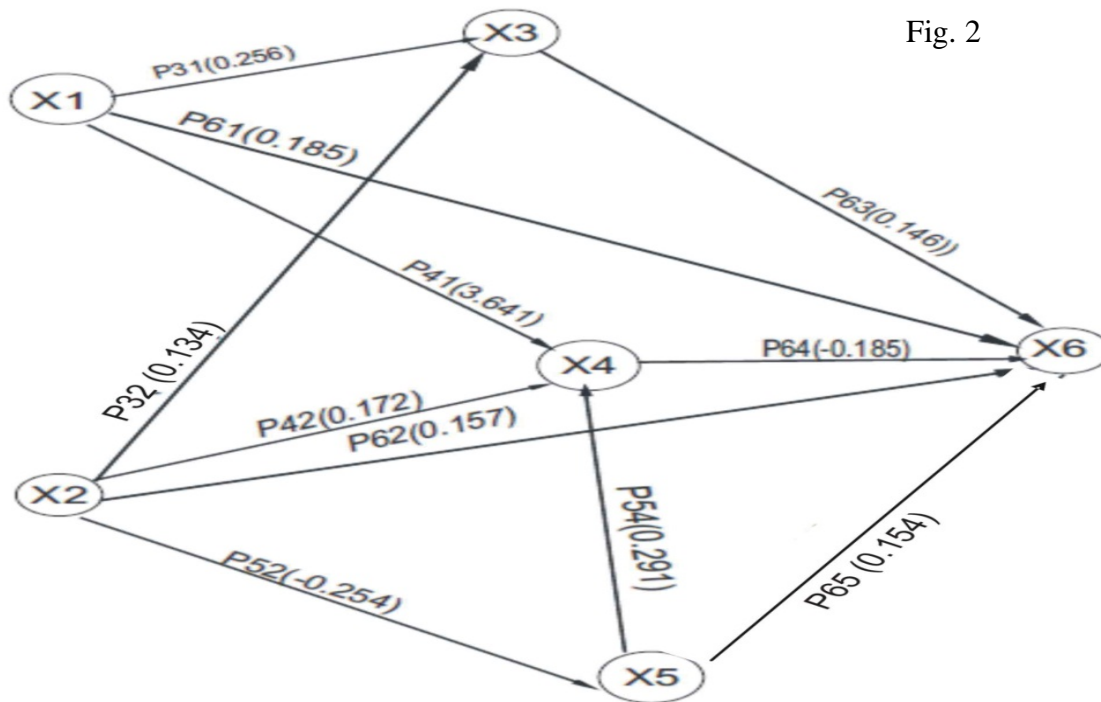


Fig. 2

Table 1:

Variables	X ₁	X ₂	X ₃	X ₄	X ₅	X ₆
X ₁	1.00	0.07	0.06	0.08	0.64	0.67
X ₂	0.07	1.00	0.11	0.24	0.02	0.01
X ₃	0.05	0.17	1.00	0.34	0.19	0.35
X ₄	0.07	0.26	0.33	1.00	0.05	0.45
X ₅	0.51	0.06	0.18	0.05	1.00	0.48
X ₆	0.58	0.05	0.42	0.45	0.56	1.00

Correlation is significant at 0.05

Note:

A: Entries above the diagonal are the original correlation coefficients.

B: Entries below the diagonal are the reproduced correlation coefficients.

X₁ = Job burnout X₂ = Agreeableness X₃ = Conscientiousness

X₄ = Openness X₅ = Extraversion X₆ = Neuroticism

Discussion

The results of this study confirmed the fact that job burnout among the graduate police officers is as a result of personality traits ($F=14.653, p < 0.05$). Out of the 15 hypothesized paths (Fig 1), 12 significant pathways survived in the model. The survived pathways were derived from the unreported structural equations. With this, the most meaningful causal model (Fig 2) of the study was produced. The results showed that the proportion effects of the five variables on the dependent variable accounted for 38.7% of the total variance on job burnout of the officers. This statistically implies that 61.3% of the total variance of the dependent variable might be due to other factor not reported in the current study.

The results on the multivariate effects of the independent variables showed that the variables could significantly predict job burnout among the officers. These empirical facts suggest that job burnout among the officers could be linked to the Big five- factors. Although, studies on the Big five-factors have consistently confirmed their dominance on human behaviour (Funder & Dobroth, 1987; Bolger & Schilling, 1991; Costa and McCra, 1998) and reported across the ages (Noller et al., 1987; Ostendoif & Angleitner, 1994), no study has been conducted on the causal influence of the Big 5-

Factors on job burnout among the graduate police officers in Nigeria. Akinnawo (1994, 1995), Aremu & Idowu (2001), Aremu & Adeyoju (2003) and others focused on variables like mentoring, organizational commitment, job satisfaction, pro-social behaviours, emotional intelligence and adolescent rebelliousness. The results in this study further confirmed the influence and potency of neuroticism, extraversion conscientiousness, agreeableness and openness to experience on job burnout among graduate police officers in Nigeria.

Given that job burnout is generally perceived negatively and its consequential effects on the well-being of police officers and security of any nation, the leadership of the police, which is saddled with the responsibilities of recruitment of police officers should, as a matter of urgency, consider the personality factors raised in this study in the enlistment of police cadet. This is because the factors have proven, beyond reasonable doubt, their potency in predicting job burnout among the graduate police officers.

The results of the direct and proportional magnitude of the causal variables on the job burnout showed that neuroticism had the most effective causal variables on the dependent variables, with a correlation co-efficient of 0.672 (significant at 0.05) as shown in Table 1, and path causal coefficient of 0.581 (direct effect on job burnout) . This was followed by extraversion, which had a correlation co-efficient of 0.64 (significant at 0.05) and path causal coefficient of 0.51). Thus, neuroticism and extraversion significantly correlated with job burnout of the officers. This result confirmed the assertion of Buhler and Land (2003), who observed a positive relationship between extraversion and emotional exhaustion and depersonalization in a sample of intensive care unit of nursing staff. In addition, Eastburg, Williamson, Gorsuch, & Ridley (1994) found that extraverted nurses required more work-related peer support than did introverted ones to avoid emotional exhaustion.

Deary et al. (1996), Hills & Norvell (1991), Lingard (2003), and Zellars, Perrewe & Hochwarter (2000) investigated the relationship between neuroticism and burnout. They claim that individuals who are higher in neuroticism are more likely to report feelings of emotional exhaustion, lower levels of personal achievement if health care providers dehumanize their patients (depersonalization). Lastly, in a study of 234 highway patrol officers, Hills & Norvell (1991) found not only that neuroticism was highly correlated with burnout, but also that it moderated the detrimental impact of daily hassles. The three other factors- agreeableness, openness to experience and conscientiousness had indirect influence on job burnout in the study. This shows that the affected personality traits indirectly influenced job burnout among the officers.

Implications

The findings have practical relevance to Nigeria Police Force and scholars who wish to further explore the burnout-personality association. If, as the findings suggests, neuroticism and extraversion have a positive impact on job burnout, then it is necessary to recruit, promote and invest in developing those individuals (police cadets) who do not exhibit such traits. The Nigeria Police Force can utilize the findings when developing their recruitment, selection and training strategies for management and leadership positions. This can be combined with selection procedures that take into account the personality traits of individuals particularly agreeableness and conscientiousness.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that the Nigeria Police authority fails to recognize the value and purpose of psychometric and other employment tests during the selection process. Instruments such as 'Personality Audit' developed by Kets de Vries et al. (2006) could be utilized by the organisation in order to scientifically identify the most 'suitable' individual for the position. For example, Personality Audit, can be utilized at any stage of the human resources cycle, from recruitment to behaviour modification initiatives, in order to proactively intervene and identify 'blind spots' of individuals, thus consequently mitigating the negative effects of burnout.

Lastly, a proactive approach to managing job burnout that the officers encounter especially the graduate police officers, in their day to day activities should be addressed by the authorities.

Limitations and future directions

It is widely acknowledged that surveys measuring sensitive issues, such as burnout levels and personality traits, have inbuilt limitations either within the instruments used or based on the fact that

the tools used for data collection are based on the self-report format. Regarding the latter issue, we have to bear in mind the human dimension and the integrity and honesty of reporting personal views, while assuring that the statements within the questionnaire are clearly understood by the population being investigated.

Another limitation is that three out of the twelve zonal commands of the Nigeria Police Force were covered by this study. Covering more zonal commands could lead to better and more representative findings. It is suggested that subsequent studies on this or similar topics should extend the scope of this study.

Conclusions

In conclusion, it is shown in this study that job burnout, which could be influenced by the Big-five factor could be managed if there is a proper understanding of the personality of the police officers. This also suggests that personality factors occupy an indispensable position in the understanding and management of job burnout among graduate police officers. It can then be deduced that productive, efficient, effective and excellent policing could only be achieved when these personality variables are well managed among graduate police officers.

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