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Personality Traits an Essential Feature of Police Officers' Job Satisfaction

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Abstract

The study investigated personality traits (agreeableness, conscientiousness, openness to experience, extraversion, neuroticism) as essential features of police officers job satisfaction. One hundred and fourteen (114) police officers participated in the study and they were drawn from Enugu state police command using multi stage sampling technique (balloting & criterion). Participant's ages range from 20 to 60 years with mean age of 31.01 and S.D of 6.19. Two instruments were used for data collection; Big Five Personality Inventory (John, Donahue, & Kentle 1991) and Hackman and Oldham's (1975) job satisfaction scale. Two hypotheses were formulated and tested as the study adopted a cross sectional survey design and hierarchical multiple regression was used to analyse the data. Findings indicated that personality characteristics (extraversion) negatively predicted job satisfaction while (conscientiousness) positively predicted job satisfaction. The finding has some practical implication and could be used for recruitment, selection and career development purposes in the Nigerian police force.

Keywords: *Job satisfaction, Personality traits, Police officers, psychological wellbeing*

Introduction

Police officers are the backbone of security in every nation and their feelings of wellbeing, contentment and satisfaction at work have aroused the interest of different scholars (Demou, Hale & Hunt, 2020). This is because police officers job satisfaction can be seen as an indication of psychological well-being and can contribute to employee behavior that influences the functioning of every society as low job satisfaction is more likely to provide inferior services (Buama, 2019). Job satisfaction is defined as an individual's overall feeling about their job that has a direct impact on one's personal, social, and organizational life, as well as playing a key role in one's mental and physical health (Golpayegan, 2017). There are several reasons why job satisfaction is important to police organizations. First, negative attitudes toward work can adversely affect job performance in both the quantity and quality of services provided. Thus, poor performance can impact police-community relations by adversely affecting public attitudes toward the police. In other words, job satisfaction in law enforcement is important because it promotes continuity of a professional and cohesive police force that works well, follows proper policy and procedures, and provides the services needed to citizens. A satisfied

police officer works as an ambassador who takes pride in his job, achievements and overall well-being of the citizens they swore to protect. On the other hand, dissatisfied workers experience lower morale and productivity in the workplace, poorer performance, higher job stress and are likely to engage in unethical behaviors such as extortion, brutality, bribery, torture to force confessions, coercion and falsification of evidence.

Looking at the above indications the role of police officers is quintessential to the society as they maintain law and order, protect property and preserve the quality of life in the communities they serve. There are many challenges embedded in the work role of police officers since they face pressure and stress due to several factors such as politics and interpersonal relations. On another level, their performance and job satisfaction can be affected not only by external factors such as long hours, workload, pay, poor communication with colleagues and superiors and promotion chances but also by police officers' personality traits and individual qualities hence the interest in this study. Studies (e.g. Sowunmi (2022); Kumari, et al. 2022) propose that the differences in the level of satisfaction amongst employees could be a consequence of employee's personality, since some of the personality traits and satisfaction were found to be strongly associated. A personality trait is a persistent pattern of thinking, feeling, or acting that can be seen across time and in a variety of settings (Judge & Lanen, 2001). Personality traits are also understood as patterns of thought, feeling, and behaviour that are relatively enduring across an individual's life span.

The traits that constitute the five-factor model are openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness and neuroticism (OCEAN). This is a group of five bipolar trait categories that make up the most extensively used personality structure model (Soto, 2018). It is important to note that each of the five personality factors represents a range between two extremes. For example, extraversion represents a continuum between extreme extraversion and extreme introversion. In the real world, most people lie somewhere in between the two polar ends of each dimension. Big Five personality traits (McCrae & Costa, 1991) are characterized as:

Openness to experience: defines individuals who are divergent thinkers, smart, creative, scientific, artistic, and liberal. These individuals have the tendency to experience the unconventional, a preparedness to entertain new ethical, political and social ideas and a willingness to question authority. Open individuals are curious about both inner and outer worlds, and their lives are experientially richer. A willingness to entertain novel ideas and unconventional values, enable such individuals to experience both positive and negative emotions more keenly as oppose to individuals that are closed who are conventional in

behaviour and conservative in outlook and prefer the familiar to the unusual. (Coetzer & Rothmann, 2001).

Conscientiousness concerns the extent to which individuals are hardworking, accountable, systematic, result oriented, determined, reliable and initiator. Conscientiousness has a downside, such as leading to workaholic behaviour, annoying fastidiousness or compulsive neatness.

Extraversion involves the extent to which an individual is outgoing, friendly, likeable, socially confident, tendency to concern with external but also are surgent (dominant & ambitious) and active (adventurous & assertive) as opposed to being reserved, timid and quiet.

Agreeableness refers to being kind, cooperative, sympathetic, warm, trusting, and considerate. An agreeable person is sympathetic to others, fundamentally unselfish and eager to help, and in return, believe that others will equally be supportive. In contrast the disagreeable/antagonistic person is sceptical of others' intentions, egocentric, and competitive rather than co-operative.

Neuroticism involves the degree to which an individual is overanxious, nervous, obsessive, jumpy, compulsive, nervy, vulnerable and full of negative emotions. It is also an indication that a person is prone to being less able to control impulses, experience irrational ideas, and cope poorly with stress. However, a low score on neuroticism is indicative of emotional stability which is the second most important characteristic that affects the employability of job applicants.

According to the trait activation theory employees are likely to find happiness and experience job satisfaction in a work setting that allows them to exhibit their distinct personality attributes (Tett & Burnett, 2003). So, against this background, this study hypothesized that personality traits (extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness, neuroticism & conscientiousness) will predict job satisfaction among police officers in Enugu Metropolis.

Method

Participants

One hundred and fourteen (114) police officers who were randomly selected from Enugu State police command South-Eastern Nigeria participated in this study. Their ages ranged from 20 to 60 years (mean age = 31.01, S.D of 6.19 years). Information on participant's age, educational qualification, rank, gender and marital status were obtained and served as control.

Instrument

Big Five Inventory

The big five inventory is a 44-item inventory developed by John, Donahue & Kentle (1990) which assesses personality from five distinct dimensions: Extraversion (8 items), Agreeableness (9 items), Conscientiousness (9 items), Neuroticism (8 items) and Openness to experience (10 items). John, Donahue & Kentle (1991) reported a Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient of .80. According to Omoluabi (2002), BFI was adapted for the use of professionals in Nigeria after several years of research at restandardizing it in order to enhance its suitability and relevance for Nigerians.

Job Satisfaction Scale (JSS)

Hackman and Oldham's (1975) job satisfaction scale is designed to measure perceptions of employee's level of satisfaction with their jobs. The instrument comprise of three sample items e.g I am satisfied with my job currently with the response format ranging from 1 – strongly disagree to 5 – strongly agree). Hackman and Oldham's (1975) obtained the alpha coefficient of 0.85 for the three items. Omoluabi (2002) adopted the use of this instrument on a Nigerian sample.

Procedure

Copies of questionnaire were administered to the participants by the researchers in their various command and stations with the aid of two research assistants. There was no monetary reward or any other form of inducement given to the participants for been a part of the study. Hence, participation in the study was voluntary and there was informed consent. All the participants were very co-operative regardless of their busy schedule and had no difficulty in completing the inventories for the study.

Design/Statistics

This is a cross-sectional survey research. Multiple Regression analysis was adopted to analyse the data and test the hypotheses of the study. The choice of this statistics is in line with recommendations such as Terraciano, McCrae & Costa (2006).

Results

Table 1: descriptive statistics

S/	Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
N														
1	Job satisfaction	9.18	3.90	1	.035	-.007	.084	-.038	.040	-.130	-.106	-.021	-.017	.016
2	Neuroticism	25.63	6.00		1	.530	.626	-.177	-.060	-.009	-.022	-.140	-.013	.019
3	Extraversion	29.24	4.23			1	.480	-.078	-.328	.061	-.041	-.101	.045	-.019
4	Openness	34.62	2.84				1	-.123	.142	.000	-.033	-.177	.050	.089
5	Agreeableness	26.37	2.24					1	.103	-.145	-.099	-.012	-.018	.060
6	Conscientiousness	23.92	3.12						1	-.046	-.075	-.057	-.007	.089
7	Age	31.01	6.19							1	-.257	-.170	.077	-.037
8	Gender	1.781	.416								1	-.014	.068	.206
9	Marital status	1.04	.185									1	-.044	.040
10	Rank	3.45	1.93										1	.149
11	Educational status	2.30	.977											

Table 1 above shows that job satisfaction did not correct with any of the predictor variables but has negative interaction with extraversion at $r = -.0(r = -.007)$, agreeableness at $r = -.0(r = -.038)$, age at $r = -.1(r = -.130)$, gender at $r = -.1(r = -.106)$, Marital status at $r = -.0(r = -.021)$ and rank $r = -.0(r = -.017)$. This implies that the increase in the listed variables will cause the decrease in job satisfaction.

Table 2: regression statistic

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	UnSt	St	t	Sig.
1	.104 ^a	.011	-.035				.102
Neuroticism				-.007	-.010	-.077	.939
Extraversion				-1.051	-	-	.014
					1.055	1.433	
Openness				.154	.112	.833	.453
Agreeableness				-.054	-.031	-.315	.754
Conscientiousness				1.011	1.008	1.077	.032
2	.235 ^b	.055	-.036				.097
Age				-.121	-.191	-	.068
						1.844	
Gender				-1.622	-.173	-	.100
						1.661	
Marital status				-1.087	-.051	-.515	.608
Rank				-.008	-.004	-.040	.968
Educational status				.174	.044	.434	.665

Dependent variable= job satisfaction, at $p < .05$. R= relationship, R²= relationship square, UnSt= unstandardised, St= standardise

Table 2 above shows that personality characteristics (neuroticism at sig. .939, openness at sig. .407, and agreeableness at sig. 754) failed to predict job satisfaction because their sig. value is higher than the threshold value of at $p < .05$, extraversion at sig. .014, which is lower than the value of at $p < .05$ predicted job satisfaction. Neuroticism, extraversion and agreeableness indicated a negative interaction with job satisfaction; this means that the increase in the listed dimensions of personality traits will cause a decrease in job satisfaction, and conscientiousness at sig. 032 positively predicted job satisfaction because its value falls below the value of at $p < .05$.

.05. Personality traits indicated no relationship with job satisfaction at $r = .1$ ($r^2 = .01$), the independent variable contribute 1% variance to the dependent variable at $r^2 = .011$, and personality characteristic failed to predict job satisfaction at sig. value of .102 which is higher than the benchmark of f at $p < .05$.

Discussion

This study investigated personality traits (agreeableness, conscientiousness, openness to experience, extraversion & neuroticism) as essential features of police officers job satisfaction. The result of the findings showed that extraversion negatively predicted job satisfaction and this implies that the more an individual is outgoing since extroversion is the dimension that measures sociability, assertiveness, and activity the less affective response displayed towards their job. The first result which stated that extraversion negatively predicted job satisfaction is inconsistent with previous empirical research findings obtained by Petasis and Economides (2020) whose result indicated that the correlation of conscientiousness, extraversion, openness to experience and agreeableness to job satisfaction were not significantly linked while neuroticism had a moderately negative correlation with job satisfaction. The second result indicates that conscientiousness positively predicted job satisfaction among police officers. This finding indicates that police officers who are orderly, competent, dutiful and disciplined are more likely to be satisfied with their job probably because such people exhibit more impulse control, task orientation and goal-directedness. The regiment structure inherent in the job demands of the police workforce may also have contributed to the outcome of this finding. This result is not in line with findings by Tham and Wong (2021) who found that conscientiousness did not have any relationship with job satisfaction. According to dispositional theorist this is the proof that correspondence between characteristics of a person and the work will result in positive psychological, physiological, and behavioural outcomes hence the reduction in job dissatisfaction, anxiety, and even irritation at work.

Conclusion

Based on the information provided by the present study, it may be helpful for the Nigerian police force to make strategies, organizational decisions and policies regarding job satisfaction, recruitment, selection and career development purposes as well as improved performance with a focus on recruiting conscientious officers.

This study is based on self-reporting surveys and may be biased by subjects' subjective perceptions and subjects' comprehension of the questions may also create bias in the results. The cross-sectional nature of this study is an important weakness which hampers causal interpretations of the results. However, the results of the study were in line with existing theoretical backgrounds and previous studies which had reported a relationship between personality traits and job satisfaction. This study is an attempt to prompt researches in the Nigerian context on the area of job satisfaction among the police workforce. Future researchers should endeavour to discover the individual and adherent patterns of job satisfaction and the human personality especially among police officers in the Nigerian context as they strive to maintain law and order in the society.

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