

ASSESSMENT OF PERSONALITY TRAITS AMONG RECRUITS OF THE NIGERIAN POLICE ACADEMY

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Abstract

The study is aimed at assessing personality traits of candidates seeking for admission into the Nigerian Police Academy (NPA). The researchers used past records of the recruitment exercise at the Nigerian Police Academy, Wudil-Kano to examine the personality profiles of the candidates and their performance ability. A total of 2,453 (comprising of 2,173 males and 280 females) candidates were assessed on personality traits of Extraversion-Introversion, Neuroticism and Psychoticism using the short form of Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (EPQR-S). The age range was from 18 years to 29 years, while the mean age for the group was 20.09. Results of the study indicate that 2,206 (89.9%) candidates manifested stable personality traits, while 247 (10.1%) candidates manifested unstable personality traits of neuroticism and emotional instability which are likely to affect their performance during training and subsequent adjustment as law enforcement officers. The relevance of the study to the selection process and monitoring of cadets' performance during training in the Police Academy was discussed.

Key words: Assessment, Personality traits, Recruitment and Policing.

INTRODUCTION

The nature of Police job is a labor-intensive work that requires both physical and emotional fitness. A high level of emotional dedication is demanded in the performance of police duties in difficult and unsafe situations such as chasing down criminals, crackdowns, participating in interventions, establishing contact with hostile and aggressive people, helping desperate people and so forth. This indicates that the nature of police work is very complex and challenging. To meet up with these challenges, the Nigerian Police Academy (NPA) Wudil, Kano which was established by the Federal Government of Nigeria in 1988 was subsequently upgraded to the degree awarding institution in 2013 for the purpose producing high quality manpower police personnel at the Assistant Superintendent of Police (ASP) and Inspectorate Cadre. The institution had introduced selection process for candidates that involved conducting in-depth psychometric procedures to admit candidates into the Academy. The recruitment process involved a multi-step process; one of which is Psychological Assessment, intended to contribute information on the overall personality profiles of the candidates seeking admission in the Nigerian Police Academy.

Psychological testing has been considered a useful tool for assessing law enforcement officers since the 19th century (Drees, Ones, Cullen, Spilberg, & Viswesvaran,

2003). Today, a growing body of evidence suggests that job performance depends to a large extent on features that are not entirely knowledge or skills, but on individual dispositions (Barrick & Mount, 2005; Conard, 2006; Ozer & Benet-Martínez, 2005). Although, cognitive abilities have traditionally been used as the main measure to select police candidates, meta-analytic studies have shown the benefits of assessing personality traits as job predictors (Aamodt, 2004a, 2004b; Barrick & Mount, 1991; Salgado, 1997; Tett, Jackson & Rothstein, 1991).

Personality assessment has been considered as one of the major dimensions used for personality measures in personnel selection (Guion & Gottier, 1965; Mischel, 1968). Barrick, Mount and Judge (2001) reported that no one method has been systematically used to compose a small, manageable set of personality predictors. Personality is an essential issue for human resource management since it considers the importance of values, perceptions and other personal features of workers (Guney, 2006). In addition, personality is used in several management processes while hiring, placing, promoting, and so on. Especially, using personality features while choosing personnel for various duties in the organizations are beneficial to have better work-person organization fit (Stanton & Matthews, 1995).

The primary emphasis of law enforcement

selection efforts has been to study the link between personality traits and job performance, and in most cases, personality has been found to be a good predictor of job performance (Tett, Jackson, & Rothstein, 1991). Personality can add further confirmation of good performance beyond other predictors (e.g., cognitive ability). It can help in the assessment of potential interpersonal skills and can be paramount in selecting employees that have the greatest potential for working together and developing positive relationships. Screening for the personality characteristic of conscientiousness can be beneficial, as it has been shown to be associated with job performance (Arrigo & Clausen, 2003). Personality traits are primary motivational factors in risk-taking behaviors.

Furthermore, Agashua (2014) reported that personality traits of Introversion-Extroversion dimension identify the strengths (Profitable traits) and weaknesses of the candidates, while Neuroticism dimension detects candidates who are most vulnerable to the stresses of academic training and law-enforcement duties. He described Psychoticism as a dimension of personality that determines candidates with psychopathic tendencies such as bullying and aggressive behaviour, proneness to corrupt practices and anti-social behaviours. The Lie Scale dimension detects those individuals who are dishonest or prone to present themselves in a socially desirable light. Reports of another study

show that Police officers who score high on the Lie scale demonstrate poor judgements in the field, particularly under emergency or crisis situation, and become confused and disorganised (Bartol, 1991).

One of the justifications or pressing reasons for using personality variables in the selection process is to control the chances of a dangerous officer being allowed in such an authoritative position (Varela, Boccaccini, Scogin, Stump, & Caputo, 2004). Excessive authoritarianism can be a problematic quality among police officers, primarily because the role of Police officer is an authoritative position. It is on this note that the researchers carried out this research to assess the personality traits among recruits of the Nigerian Police Academy.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of the present study is to assess the personality traits among candidates seeking admission into the Nigerian Police Academy. Specific objectives include; to identify personality traits of the candidates in order to build their profiles and to determine if personality traits had impact on their performance during training in the Academy.

Literature Review

Empirical evidence indicates that personality assessment is one of the most important methods in the selection of law enforcement personnel. Highly influential meta-analytic studies by Barrick and Mount

(1991), Tett, Jackson and Rothstein (1991) and Salgado (1997) included police officers as one of their occupational groups to illustrate the validity of personality predictors for performance appraisal. In his comprehensive report, Aamodt (2004) reviewed many studies using personality variables to assess different police performance outcomes, highlighting the importance of personal dispositions for predicting performance in these contexts. Other meta-analytic studies also indicate the usefulness of personality measures as screening tools in law enforcement contexts (Varela, Boccaccini, Scogin, Stump & Caputo, 2004).

Forero, Gallardo-Pujol, Maydeu-Olivares and Andrés-Pueyo (2009) studied the effect of personality and motivation on actual performance and how well training in the Police Academy predicts performance. Three different personality assessments were used to measure different facets of personality. Results demonstrated that job performance could be predicted by psychological data, but that the relationship was mediated by training. They also found that successful Police officers tended to have higher emotional stability and conscientiousness than non-successful Police officers. These findings add credence to previous studies that high emotional stability and conscientiousness are good indicators of performance.

Further review indicates that Black (2000)

found significant univariate correlations between the Neuroticism (N), Extraversion (E), and Conscientiousness (C) domains of the NEO Personality Inventory-Revised (NEO PI-R) and a global measure of performance that included academic performance, physical performance, handling firearms, driving, and other skills. Black considered the isolated effect of personality on prediction and performed a multivariate analysis with domain scores to predict global performance.

Detrick, Chibnall and Luebbert (2004) extended the findings of Black in an American sample using disciplinary outcomes as an outcome criterion. First, they explored academic performance, finding positive relationships at the facet level between performance and the facet values from the Openness (O) domain and Excitement-Seeking from the Extraversion domain. These domains accounted for a significant percentage of performance variance (24% to 25%). These authors also found more specific relations between personality and individual skills. For firearms performance, anxiety was the facet that was the best predictor. Physical performance was predicted at the facet level by Deliberation (Conscientiousness), Fantasy (Openness), and Activity (Extraversion). With respect to Absenteeism, the model had an overall predictive accuracy of 95%; significant predictors were Self-Conscientiousness (N), Altruism (Agreeableness), Feelings

(Openness), Order (Conscientiousness), Positive Emotions (Extraversion), and Vulnerability (Neuroticism). Interestingly, Detrick and colleagues found that trainees who did not graduate from the Academy scored significantly higher on Depression, Impulsiveness, and Vulnerability scores (Neuroticism) and lower on Competence (Conscientiousness).

All these findings are in agreement with the results of meta-analyses by Barrick and Mount (1991) in the United States and by Salgado (1997) in the European Union, which identified these traits as important personality factors for police performance. These results also collaborate the existing literature on job personality and job performance in law enforcement and non-law enforcement populations (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Piedmont & Weinstein, 1998; Salgado, 1997; Tett, *et al.*, 1991). In spite of this support for trait assessment in personnel selection, different occupational contexts demand different personality traits, and assessment tools can be explicitly aimed to appraise these traits either in isolation or in combination (Tett, *et al.*, 1991).

METHOD

Design

The researchers adopted a retrospective survey design to assess the personality traits among candidates seeking for admission into the Nigerian Police Academy, Wudil-

Kano.

Participants

A total of 2,453 candidates (comprising 2173 males and 280 females) across the 36 States and FCT Abuja were assessed on personality traits for the Nigerian Police Academy Selection Board. The age range was from 18 years to 29 years, while the mean age for the group was 20.09.

Instrument

The Short form of Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (EPQR-S) devised by Eysenck, Eysenck and Barret (1985) was used for the purpose of measuring personality. The EPQR-S is the shortest version of the series of personality inventories which consists of 48 items with 12 items per scale designed to measure four aspects of personality including Psychoticism (Tough minded), Extraversion, Neuroticism and "Lie Scale" which attempts to measure a tendency on the part of the individual to "fake good". In addition, Eysenck, *et al.* (1985) reported alpha reliability coefficient of the EPQR-S for the 4 subscales for male and female as follows: P = (0.62 -males), (0.61-females), E= (0.88-males), (0.84-females), N= (0.84-males), (0.80-females), L= (0.77-males), (0.73-females). The Nigerian norms formed the basis for interpreting the scores of the candidates. Candidates who score higher than the norms on scale P and N manifest the typical personality characteristics. In the case of scale E, a score higher than the norm

indicates extraversion and a score lower than the norm indicate introversion (Eysenck, Adelaja & Eysenck, 1978).

In the present study, the norms were used as criteria for categorizing participants into high or low scorers on each of the PEN scales such that high scorers on the P scale were categorized as tough-minded, whereas low scorers were categorized tender-minded. High scorers on the E scale were categorized as extroverts while low scorers were categorized as introverts. Furthermore, high scorers on the N scale were categorized as neurotics, whereas low scorers were categorized as non-neurotics. The EPQR-S is widely used in cross cultural studies including Nigeria, with high reliability coefficients (Barret & Eysenck, 1984; Jegede, 1980 & Osinowo, 1994).

RESULTS

The results of the study are presented as follows:

Table 1: Summary of stable and unstable Personality of Candidates

Variables	Frequency	Percentages	
Personality	Stable	2,206	89.9
	Unstable	247	10.1
	Total	2453	100

Result presented in table 1 indicates that 2,206 (89.9%) candidates manifested stable personality traits, while 247 (10.1%)

Procedure

The Chief psychologist on the Nigerian Police Academy Selection Board adopted a comprehensive assessment which includes interview of the candidates and the administration of the Short form of Eysenck Personality Questionnaire-EPQR-S. The assessment of the candidates was conducted in three (3) batches; each batch was allowed 1hr 40 minutes to complete the tests which comprised of EPQR-S and other psychological tests. When the time elapsed, the candidates submitted the questionnaires for analysis.

Method of Data Analysis

The data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics of frequencies and percentages and the results presented.

candidates manifested unstable personality traits of neuroticism and emotional instability.

Table 2: Profiles of Personality traits for Police Candidates

Variables		Frequency	Percentages
Psychoticism	Low	2,233	91.0
	High	220	9.0
	Total	2,453	100
Extraversion	Low	2,162	88.1
	High	291	11.9
	Total	2,453	100
Neuroticism	Low	2,026	82.6
	High	427	17.4
	Total	2,453	100
Lie	Low	2,102	85.7
	High	351	14.3
	Total	2,453	100

Result presented in table 2 showed 2,233 (91.0%) police candidates exhibited low psychoticism trait-indicating tender-mindedness, while 220 (9.0%) exhibited high psychoticism trait-indicating tough-mindedness; 2,162 (88.1%) police candidates exhibited low extraversion trait-indicating they were introverted and reserved, while 291 (11.9%) exhibited high extraversion trait-indicating they were sociable, outgoing and domineering. Similarly, 2,026 (82.6%) police candidates exhibited low neuroticism trait-indicating they were emotionally stable and self-confident, while 427 (17.4%) exhibited high neuroticism trait-indicating they were emotionally unstable, anxious and insecure. Lastly, 2,102 (85.7%) police candidates scored low on lie scale while 351 (14.3%) scored high on lie scale indicating a

tendency towards social desirability responses or faking of responses.

DISCUSSION

Many studies conducted on Police personality assessment have centered on predicting performance during training. In this present study, the researchers focused on assessing the personality of the candidates seeking admission into the Nigerian Police Academy in order to identify personality traits of the candidates so as to build their profiles and to determine the traits that will enhance the performance of the candidates on training in the Academy. The results and findings of the research are discussed thus:

A total of 2,453 police candidates participated in this study. Out of this

number, 52.5% of the candidates who were assessed for personality manifested unstable personality traits of psychoticism and neuroticism. This implies that more than half of the candidates who manifested emotional instability may experience some challenges while in training. Further break down of the results indicate that 9.0% of the candidates exhibited high psychoticism trait. This finding supports the evidence that comes from the fact that students with high scores on the psychoticism scale tend to think there is nothing wrong with truancy (Jones & Francis, 1995) and to have negative attitudes to school and school-work (Francis & Montgomery, 1993). In this finding, it is clear that police candidates who scored higher on psychoticism trait may likely have more difficulties in their training and even when they are commissioned as Police officers.

Result shows that 11.9% exhibited high extraversion trait. Individuals who score higher on *Extraversion* are ambitious, outgoing, pro-social and communicative. Moreover, Extraversion is a strong predictor for leadership responsibilities and behaviors (Judge, Higgins, Thoresen & Barrick, 1999). Further study by De Raad and Schouwenburg (1996) indicates that higher energy levels and positive attitude of students which are ingredients of extraversion are expected to lead to a desire to learn and understand. Thus, candidates who score higher on extraversion trait are more likely to advance in their career as

they have more prospects for further training opportunities.

In addition, result of the study shows that 17.4% of the candidates exhibited high neuroticism trait-indicating they were emotionally unstable, anxious and insecure. This finding implies that candidates identified with neurotic trait of personality might encounter challenges on training or while carrying out their statutory duties of maintaining law and order. This will in turn affect their ability to perform optimally and even when they are commissioned as Police officers. This finding supports the research conducted by Ng, Sorensen and Eby (2005) in which they reported that *neuroticism* hinders effective career management and is associated with low career self-efficacy as it also leads to emotional instability and stress, especially in the work context (Hartman & Betz 2007). Neurotic individuals might avoid the extra demands of Further Education and Training (FET) and supervisors may have less confidence in these individuals to succeed in training. In addition, neuroticism is also believed to affect students' ability by directing their attention away from study and their anxious emotions and self-talk (De Raad & Schouwenburg, 1996), which may also be related to the observation that less-resilient students have lower academic achievement (Hojat, Gonnella & Vogel, 2003).

Finally, result indicates that 14.3% of the candidates scored high on the lie scale. This

personality trait is considered to be a measure of social conformity (Francis, Pearson & Stubbs, 1991). Those who scored high on the scale have the tendency to “fake good” which in actual fact they are not.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The nature of Police work is an intensive job that demands a high level of emotional stability to enable police personnel to perform their duties even in difficult and unsafe situations. Therefore, officers working in different units are required to have stable personality characteristics that can help them discharge their duty effectively. In this study, the personality assessment of Police candidates seeking for admission at Nigerian Police Academy, Kano were examined to determine personality traits that are desired of a Police officer. Consequently, findings of the study indicate that only personality trait of extraversion strongly predicted performance of candidates on training. Candidates who manifested personality traits of psychoticism and neuroticism are more likely to experience emotional instability. The implication of this finding is that the performance of the candidates will be adversely affected while on training in the Academy. Based on these findings, the researchers therefore recommend the following:

1. That candidates with stable and suitable personality profiles seeking admission into police academy should be considered for selection

into the degree programme of the Nigerian Police Academy.

2. Candidates with evidence of unstable personality profiles should be considered only with the discretion of the NPA Selection Board.
3. Result of Psychological Assessment should form part of the bases for monitoring the performance of Cadets during training in the Academy.

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