



ASSESSMENT OF CONSCIENTIOUSNESS EFFECT ON WORKERS' BURNOUT AMONG HEALTH CARE WORKERS IN ENUGU STATE

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Abstract: *The impact of conscientiousness has been shown to be equivalent to the effect of cardiovascular diseases. Conscientiousness despite being a trait continues to show changes well into middle age. The study therefore assesses the effect of Conscientiousness on the workers burnout in Enugu State University Teaching Hospital, Parklane, Enugu using descriptive research design. The study population comprises of One hundred and forty eight (148) hospital staff drawn from Enugu State University Teaching Hospital, Parklane. Three instruments were used in the study. They are Maslach Burnout Inventory Scale (MBI) (Maslach & Jackson 1981), Big Five Inventory (BFI) (John, Donahue & Kentle 1990) and structured questionnaire which seek to obtain information about the participants' demographic data. The data obtained from respondents were analyzed by computing the means, standard deviations, and correlations and hierarchical Multiple Regression the study variables, The result of the study shows that amongst the control variables, only educational qualification of workers was a significant (negative) predictor of worker's burnout ($\beta = -.25, p < .01$), but the control variables all accounted for 6% of the variance worker's burnout ($\Delta R^2 = .06$). Conscientiousness was a positively significant predictor of worker's burnout ($\beta = .17, p < .05$), accounting for 3% of the variance in worker's burnout ($\Delta R^2 = .03$). The study concludes that workers, who possess the characteristics of conscientiousness like; doing things efficiently, being a reliable worker, making plans and following it through, will rather experience burnout as a result of their personality trait. It was recommended that organizations interested in creating work environments that foster high levels of job satisfaction can do so using the mechanisms which creates room for individuals with higher levels of conscientiousness to be employed.*

Keywords: *Conscientiousness, Workers, Burnout*



INTRODUCTION

In our environment, we often see employees experiencing effects of unrelenting stress and demands of work as one comes to work with the expectation that some needs will be met (general psychological theory): Justice, Fair reward, Some social need of 'self-realization' as Maslow liked to put it, Need for a break; concentration and work input should follow an 'analogue' cycle of increase and decrease, including breaks - need of some degree of freedom regarding one's actions; Workers probably do not come to work with the expectation of all needs being met (as need for intimacy or sex), being involved as a full person including one's emotions, private life being claimed in work situations.

Some workers in the process of being thorough get overwhelmed with their job responsibility and thus they are exhausted overtime when many and more needs are not been fulfilled, while the initial expectation that it was reasonable for them to be fulfilled at work are not been met. Sometimes frustrations emerge at the workplace; the context of the worker in the physical work environment, the context of work culture, the context of interactions with specific co-workers regarding specific aspects of work can trigger burnout. As one health practitioner pointed out a series of work-contextual disappointments can set off feelings of burnout for a worker.

Burnout is not an illness that happens purely within the brain or body; it is an illness related to the usual contextual interactions. When needs are not met, but the situation continues leading to emotional depletion or emotional exhaustion. When a series of emotional depletions has taken place, the situation is being experienced as a threat or danger for the individual. As long as the individual is emotionally depleted, but is still working out ways of coping that do not seem hopeless to him, the worker may be in large distress, but has not fallen ill yet. It is the overwhelming social exhaustion together with the giving up of conscious solution efforts that characterizes the fall into burnout. Conscientiousness predicts most of the major preventive and risky behaviors for both physical health and morality (Bogg & Roberts 2004). Conscientiousness plays a role in most of the major domains of life and positive aging. It is one of the most reliable indicators of work outcomes, including job performance (Dudley, OrvisiLebieck, & Cortina, 2006).

Conscientious individuals usually tend to be efficient, organized and workaholics which often tilts to burnout. This trait could manifest and remain stable as a result of incentives



they get at the work place or it could be what comes from the inside i.e. intrinsic motivation. Better health habit is an obvious explanation for the connection between conscientiousness and good health. The impact of conscientiousness has been shown to be equivalent to the effect of cardiovascular diseases. Conscientiousness despite being a trait continues to show changes well into middle age (Helson & Kwan, 2000). Specifically, people tend to increase in conscientiousness in young adulthood (Robins, Fraley, Roberts & Trzesniewski 2001). Hence, lack of better health gives an explanation for the connection between conscientiousness and burnout. This study therefore assess the effect of conscientiousness on the workers burnout in Enugu State University Teaching Hospital, Parklane, Enugu

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The main objective of the study is to assess the effect of Conscientiousness on the workers burnout in Enugu State University Teaching Hospital, Parklane, Enugu.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURES

Conscientiousness refers to individual differences in the propensity to follow socially prescribed norms for impulse control, to be task – and goal directed, to be dutiful, delay gratification, and follow norms and rules (John & Srivastava, 1999). Bakker, Zee, Lewig, and Dollard (2006), maintained that conscientiousness is the personality trait of being thorough, careful or vigilant. It is related to impulse control, however differentiated from the problems of impulse control associated with the other personality traits, such as (high) extraversion (low) agreeableness, (high) openness and (high) neuroticism. According to Bakker et al. (2006) conscientiousness is not just about getting to the work place on time, in a freshly ironed outfit; it is a fundamental personality trait that influences whether people set and keep long-range goals, deliberate over choices or behave impulsively and take seriously obligations to others. It is a key ingredient in success.

Hooker (1994) opined that conscientiousness is associated with problem focused coping and less use of emotion focused coping. O'Brien and (1996) has indicated that those higher on conscientiousness used significantly less escape – avoidance and less self blaming strategies in coping across stressful situations than those lower on conscientiousness. And in a similar way, those higher on conscientiousness also displayed a greater tendency to engage in problem solving



Conscientiousness' may shape career choices, friendship, the stability of marriage, and many other aspects of life that affect health and, longevity. People with conscientious personalities are less likely to engage in harmful behaviors such as smoking, alcoholism, risky driving and more likely to adhere to positive health behaviors (Chicago tribune 2012). Conscientious individuals are likely to be conformists, acting in accordance with what is expected of them at the work place. Conscientious people are efficient and organized as opposed to easy – going and disorderly. As Bakker, Zee and Follard (2006) stated, conscientious people exhibit tendency to show self-discipline, act dutifully, and aim for achievement, they display planned rather than spontaneous behavior, and they are generally organized and dependable. Hence, conscientiousness, intelligence and achievement motivation have each been associated with better performance of work (Gelissen, Aronsson, & Roberts 2002; 2006; 2007).

Roberts, Fayard, Edmonds & Meints, (2009) noted that conscientious people tend to be super organized, responsible, and plan ahead. They work hard in the face of challenges and can control the impulses. Probably, the above explanations about conscientiousness accounts for why it is a spectrum of constructs that describe individual differences in the propensity to be self – controlled, responsible to others, hardworking to be self-controlled, responsible to others, hardworking, orderly, and rule abiding (Roberts Jackson, Fayard, Edmonds & Meints, 2009). Apart from the goodness of conscientiousness, it is noteworthy that importance of conscientiousness to health appears disputable.

Scholars have continued to undertake study relating workers performance and conscientiousness as well as burnout in various field. In a study by Mohammad, Nader and Aryan (2011) on effect of personality traits on job burnout reported a negative impact of extraversion on job burnout (-0.08), negative impact of agreeableness on job burnout (-0.15), positive impact of conscientiousness on job burnout (0.02), positive impact of neuroticism on job burnout (0.22) and negative impact of openness on job burnout (-0.11). In a similar study undertaken by Hamze and Zahra (2010) on the relationship between Burnout as measured by the Maslach Burnout Inventory (Maslach, Jackson, and Leiter, 1996) and the Big Five Personality Factors (Costa, and McCrae, 1989) reported that extroversion, agreeableness, and openness of experience had negative relationships with



job burnout. On the other hand, there were positive relationships between conscientiousness and neuroticism with job burnout.

Syed (2013) uphold by Mohammad, Nader and Aryan (2011) by reporting that conscientiousness was negatively and significantly related to dimensions of burnout. Neuroticism was found to be positively and significantly related to dimensions of burnout. In addition, the study multiple regression result shows that conscientiousness significantly predicts all the dimensions of burnout and neuroticism significantly predicts only emotional exhaustion and reduced personal accomplishment dimensions of burnout. Kursad (2014) study also revealed that the participants demonstrated highest participation regarding personality characteristics respectively in conscientiousness, agreeableness, and openness to experience, extraversion and emotional stability dimensions. Participants' emotional exhaustion levels are at the medium level, while reduced personal accomplishment and depersonalization levels are low. Statistically significant middle to low level negative correlations was found between teachers' personal characteristics and burnout levels. Thus, it is analyzed that increase the teachers' positive views about personal characteristics, their burnout levels decrease.

Also Kyle (2012) report indicated a strong effects for autonomy and conscientiousness and its facets on job satisfaction, and a strong effect of autonomy on person-job fit, but did not find evidence of interactions between autonomy and conscientiousness or any of its facets. Moreover, the results indicate that person autonomy fit mediates the effect of autonomy on these two attitudinal outcomes. Based on these results, it is suggest that organizations interested in creating work environments that foster high levels of job satisfaction can do so using at least two mechanisms: 1) by selecting individuals with higher levels of conscientiousness and 2) by providing high levels of autonomy in the workplace.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

Descriptive research design was adopted in the study.

Population of the Study

The study population comprises of One hundred and forty eight (148) hospital staff drawn from Enugu State University Teaching Hospital, Parklane, Enugu. Participants comprised of



medical workers such as nurses, medical lab scientists, doctors, pharmacist, administrative officers within the age bracket of 19 – 70 years.

Instrument for Data Collection

Three instruments were used in the study. They are Maslach Burnout Inventory Scale (MBI) (Maslach & Jackson 1981), Big Five Inventory (BFI) (John, Donahue & Kentle 1990) and structured questionnaire which seek to obtain information about the participants' demographic data.

Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) (Maslach & Jackson 1981)

The Maslach's burnout is a 22-item inventory developed by Maslach and Jackson (1981) to measure respondent's level of burnout at work. The items for the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) were designed to measure hypothesized aspects of the burnout syndrome. Responses were gathered on a 6 Likert-type scale. For each item, responses ranged from a few times a year 1 to a few times a week 6; with the first indicating respondent's lower level of burnout, while the later represent respondent's highest level of burnout. Maslach and Jackson (1981) reported a Cronbach's alpha reliability index of .80

Big Five Inventory (John, Donahue & Kentle 1990)

The 8 items out of the 44-item inventory developed by John, Donahue & Kentle (1990) was used to measure conscientiousness. According to Omoluabi (2002), BFI was adapted for the use of professionals in Nigeria after several years of research at re-standardizing it, in order to enhance its suitability and relevance for Nigerians. John, Donahue & Kentle (1991) reported a Cronbach alpha coefficient of reliability of .80 and a 3-month test-retest reliability of .85 for the BFI. The authors also reported mean convergent validity coefficients of .75 and .85 with the Big Five Instruments authored by Costa & McCrae (1992) and Goldberg (1992) respectively.

Procedure

The researcher with a letter from the Department of Sociology/Psychology/Religion obtained permission from the Director of the hospital used for the study. Afterwards, the researcher was assigned a staff as a guide in administering the questionnaires. Before administering the questionnaire, the researcher created rapport with the participants, in which case the participants were told that the exercise is purely for academic research purposes. Participants were equally assured that their responses will be treated with utmost



confidentiality and that participation in the study was voluntary. The questionnaires were collected back from the participants after they were filled. Two hundred (200) questionnaires were distributed. At the end of administering the questionnaires, one hundred and sixty (160) questionnaires were returned. The returned questionnaires were cross checked after they were collected back from the participants. After cross checking the questionnaires, only one hundred and forty eight (148) questionnaires were found to be properly filled and were used for data analysis.

Design/Statistics

The data obtained from respondents were analyzed by computing the means, standard deviations, and correlations among the study variables. Thereafter, to test the hypotheses, Hierarchical Multiple Regression was conducted in which burnout was the dependent variable. The variables were entered into the equation in steps. In the first step of the equation, demographic variables (gender, age, marital status, religion, ethnic group and highest educational qualification) were entered in order to control for the likely impact they may have on worker's burnout. Conscientiousness was entered in step 2 of the equation, all in a bid to test the extent to which they serve as determinants of worker's burnout. Statistical Package for the social science (SPSS) version 20 was employed for the data analysis.

Result

Information about participants demographics such as gender, age, marital status, religion, highest educational qualification, ethnic group, number of years of working experience, and number of years in the organization were gotten using the questionnaires. Out of the participants that participated in the study; forty one (41) were males, while one hundred and seven (107) were females. Seventy seven (77) were married, sixty seven (67) were single, two (2) were widows while two (2) were equally widowers. For religion; one hundred and forty five (145) were Christians, while only three (3) belong to Islamic religion. For ethnic group; one hundred and thirty two (132) were Igbos, four (4) were Hausas, seven (7) were Yoruba's, four (4) also belong to other ethnic groups, while one (1) is a missing value for ethnic group. Fifteen (15) were SSCE holders, thirty eight (38) were OND/NCE holders, sixty two (62) were HND/BSC holders, twenty (20) were MSC holders, only three (3) Ph.D



holders, while 10 were missing values. 115 persons are 1st degree holders while 23 participants hold higher degrees.

Table 1: Correlations of demographic variables, conscientiousness, motivation and burnout among workers

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1 Gender	-						
2 Age	-.27***	-					
3 Marital status	-.14*	-.21**	-				
4 Religion	-.23**	.12	.04	-			
5 Ethnic Group	-.06	.08	.01	.25**	-		
6 Highest Education	-.13*	.31***	.04	-.11	.09	-	
7 Conscientiousness	.04	-.09	.17	.00	.15*	-.00	-
8 Burnout	.01	-.09	.07	.03	-.01	-.25***	.17**

*** p < .001; ** p < .01; * p < .05

Result of table one above showed that amongst the demographic variables (gender, age, marital status, religion, ethnic group, and educational qualification), only educational qualification have significant negative relationship with worker's burnout ($r = -.25, p < .001$). However, gender, marital status as well as religion all had non-significant positive relationship with worker's burnout; but age and ethnic group all had no-significant negative relationship with worker's burnout. Result of correlation coefficient equally showed that conscientiousness was positively significantly associated with worker's burnout ($r = .17, p < .01$).

Table 2: Hierarchical multiple regression predicting workers' burnout from conscientiousness and motivation.

Predictors	Step 1			Step 2			Step 3		
	B	B	T	B	β	T	B	B	t
Gender	-.57	-.01	-.15	-.94	-.02	-.24	-.89	-.02	-.23
Age	.00	.00	.02	.03	.01	.13	-.00	-.00	-.01
Marital status	2.61	.08	.92	1.71	.05	.60	1.87	.06	.65
Religion	-1.47	-.01	-.12	-.78	-.01	-.06	-.49	-.00	-.04
Ethnic Group	.31	.01	.12	-.56	-.02	-.22	-.41	-.01	-.16
Highest Education	-5.61	-.25**	-2.89	-5.61	-.25**	-2.92	-5.51	-.25**	-2.85
Conscientiousness				.65	.17*	2.03	.60	.16	1.83
AR ²	.03**			.05**			.05		
ΔR^2	.06**			.03*			.00		
ΔF	9.50**			4.73*			.32		

* p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001



The results of the Hierarchical Multiple Regression in Table 2 above indicate that the control variables (gender, age, marital status, religion, ethnic group and highest educational qualification) entered in step 1 of the equation were able to collectively explain statistically significant .3% variance in worker's burnout (Adjusted $R^2 = .03$, $p < .01$), with only highest educational qualification ($\beta = -.19$, $p < .01$) making significant negative contributions in determining worker's burnout, whereas gender, age, marital status, religion, and ethnic group did not make any significant contribution. The negative impact implies that the more educational qualification an individual has, the more committed he/she will be to work demands and this sometimes may lead to burnout. When conscientiousness was entered in step 2 of the equation, it accounted for statistically significant 3% variance as a determinant of worker's burnout ($\Delta R^2 = .03$, $p < .01$), however making unique and statistically significant positive impact in determining worker's burnout ($\beta = .17$, $p < .05$). Workers who are more dedicated, diligent, committed may as a result experience burnout, other than workers who do not show dedication or seriousness at work. Lastly, age was entered in step 3 of the equation. Unlike conscientiousness, it did not add any variance impact as a determinant of worker's burnout; hence, it made a statistical significant contribution in determining worker's burnout.

Summary of Findings

1. In the correlations table, highest educational qualification was significantly and negatively associated with worker's burnout ($r = -.25$, $p < .001$); but conscientiousness had a significantly positive relationship with worker's burnout ($r = .17$, $p < .01$),
2. Amongst the control variables, only educational qualification of workers was a significant (negative) predictor of worker's burnout ($\beta = -.25$, $p < .01$), but the control variables all accounted for 6% of the variance worker's burnout ($\Delta R^2 = .06$).
3. Conscientiousness was a positively significant predictor of worker's burnout ($\beta = .17$, $p < .05$), accounting for 3% of the variance in worker's burnout ($\Delta R^2 = .03$).

Discussion

This study investigated the impact of conscientiousness, on workers burnout. The result of the findings showed that Conscientiousness was a positively significant predictor of worker's burnout. The study hypothesis which stated that there was no statistically significant impact



of conscientiousness on workers burnout was accepted. The findings of the study are consistent with results obtained by Mohammad, Nader, & Aryan (2011) & Hamze & Zahra (2010) indicating that participants demonstrated highest participation regarding personality characteristics conscientiousness. Equally, that there were positive impact and positive relationships between conscientiousness with job burnout. The finding is however inconsistent with previous empirical research findings by Kursad 2014; Azeem 2013) showing that Participants' emotional exhaustion levels are at the minimal level, while reduced personal accomplishment and depersonalization levels are low. Also, conscientiousness was negatively and significantly related to dimensions of burnout.

As found in big five personality theory, a high score of conscientiousness in a career test is an important indicator of success. Hence, Toegel and Barsoux (2012) in big five personality theory maintained that one good reason for this is that this domain includes the trait known as need for achievement. Therefore, individuals who possess these traits are dependable, organized, and persevere, which means they will accomplish their professional goals. Research shows that the conscientiousness personality trait relates to job performance across different types of occupations. And that a person who scores high in conscientiousness on a personality test will be better suited to perform a job. More so, conscientiousness is also a general predictor of job performance; implying that conscientiousness is related to better health and longevity. Most interesting is that conscientious individuals are motivated toward achievement through social conformity.

Implications of the Study

The findings of this research have practical implications. Conscientiousness is a significant predictor of burnout among workers. The implication of this finding is that individuals who possess personality characteristics that make them to work efficiently, become reliable, persevering until the end of a task, and especially making plans and following them get so much engrossed with their work that they value their job more than anything. And as a result, they usually think less of any form of harm that may arise. Since they tend to take their task too seriously, hence they work most times to make their organization the best without expecting rewards. However, personality characteristics is important especially at the world of work, it is noteworthy that managers or employers of workers with such qualities should take special care of them, at least to reduce the extent of negative effect.



Another classic reason why this study is serving as a clarion call is that such workers most times are genius. If they are not followed with necessary care and reward, they may not last long due to work stress.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The study concludes that workers, who possess the characteristics of conscientiousness like; doing things efficiently, being a reliable worker, making plans and following it through, will rather experience burnout as a result of their personality trait. Conscientious individuals are likely to be conformists. Acting in accordance with what is expected of them at the work place. Conscientiousness' within the individual may shape career choices, friendship, the stability of marriage, and many other aspects of life that affect health and, longevity. The participants demonstrated highest participation regarding personality characteristics respectively in conscientiousness, agreeableness, and openness to experience, extraversion and emotional stability dimensions. It is suggested that organizations interested in creating work environments that foster high levels of job satisfaction can do so using the mechanisms which creates room for individuals with higher levels of conscientiousness to be employed

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