
The Relationships between Job satisfaction and personality factors and Burnout among Professional Caregivers of People with Intellectual Disability.

⁽¹⁾.Ouwabusola Famurewa

⁽²⁾.Ojo Adeshina Akinwumi(PhD).

Pivotwvs1@gmail.com

Department of Psychology

Lead City University,Ibadan,Oyo State,Nigeria.

Abstract

This study investigated the relationships between job satisfaction, personality factors, and burnout among professional caregivers of individuals with intellectual disability. Using a cross-sectional correlational design, data were collected with the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI), Job Satisfaction Survey (JSS), and Big Five Inventory. A total of 34 participants completed the study, allowing for analysis of correlations between personality traits, job satisfaction, and burnout outcomes. Results indicated that job satisfaction was positively correlated with conscientiousness ($r=.419$, $p=.007$) and openness to experience ($r=.443$, $p=.006$), confirming that personality is a predictor of satisfaction at work. In contrast, neuroticism showed no significant correlation with burnout on emotional exhaustion ($r=.071$, $p=.650$), depersonalization ($r=.128$, $p=.411$), or personal accomplishment ($r=-.183$, $p=.218$). Conscientiousness correlated negatively with burnout: emotional exhaustion ($r=-.429$, $p=.006$) and depersonalization ($r=-.554$, $p=.000$), while showing a positive association with personal accomplishment ($r=.537$, $p=.000$). Similarly, openness to experience correlated negatively with emotional exhaustion ($r=-.377$, $p=.019$) and positively with personal accomplishment ($r=.666$, $p=.000$), though no significant relationship was found with depersonalization ($r=-.260$, $p=.095$). Overall, the findings highlight that positive personality traits (conscientiousness and openness) buffer against burnout and enhance job satisfaction, whereas neuroticism did not emerge as a predictor in this study.

Keywords: Job Satisfaction, Personality Factors, Burnout, Professional Caregivers, Intellectual Disability



Introduction

Initially burnout was first thought to be a social problem with very broad ideas (Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998, p. 6). However, research has shown its severity and populace especially amongst the human service professions. Burnout is now named a psychosocial syndrome which occurs in response to high work demand and limited coping ability. It is classified as a life management problem under the code z73.0 in the ICD-10 classification. (Silva et al, 2009, p. 52)

Pines, Aronson & Kafry (1981) noted that high prevalence of burnout among professional caregivers is as a result of their innate desire to make a difference in the lives of their client. Due to these high and sometimes unattainable goals set caregivers push themselves beyond their limits and if the goals fail to actualize, it creates a feeling of anxiety and discouragement which can lead to burnout.

The majority of the studies of burnout are mainly available in western societies including Europe, America, and Australia who have reported high burnout. This is not to conclude that there are no studies in other continents, studies have been carried out in countries such as Taiwan who found 26 percent of teaching staff to experience burnout, in Japan 59.2 percent of Japanese nurses of mental health patient are said to have experienced burnout. (Silva et al., 2009). As such the researcher's aim is also to add to existing studies on burnout among professional caregivers.

Work demands including overload, role conflict, uncertainty, and limited work resources, working long hours, and limited or no feedback from organizations have been cited as causes of burnout in human services. However, one aspect that is important and is often ignored is the person's personality traits (Bakker, Van Der zee, Lewig & Dollard, 2006.). According to Cervone & Pervin (2010) personality is the unique mental attribute that makes an individual different. These attributes include ways of thinking, feeling and behaving that set individual apart from others. In a review of hundreds of personality traits and burnout studies conducted, personality traits including hardiness, achievement, self-esteem, type A behavior, and locus of control was found to be a contributing factor as well as a moderating factor of burnout. (Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998). Therefore personality plays a key role in understanding burnout.

Individual personality is said to be responsible for how people react in situations including perceived threats to wellbeing at work, daily lives and the environment in general. (Endler, 1975; Endler & Edward, 1982 cited in Vollrath, 2001, p. 335). Some theorist believes that personality is



the main reason people experience burnout at work, as noted by Swider & Zimmerman (2010) people adapt and view change as part of the job situation, however, individual personality is innate and unchanging. According to Eysenck & Eysenck, 1985; Spielberger (1975) one of the most researched individual personality traits is one which predicts an emotional reaction in a stressful state. Both Neuroticism and anxiety traits have been found to stimulate a negative psychological reaction to stressful and un-stressful events. (As cited in Vollrath, 2001, p. 335). Therefore both traits (neuroticism and anxiety) will react negatively when confronted with negative situation. It is expected therefore in the present study to have a positive correlation between neuroticism and burnout. For other theorists, burnout simply does not occur as a result of personality, neither is it based solely on work stressful demands.

Personality factors play a significant role in how an individual appraise external demand according to (Eysenck, 1998). He postulates burnout or stress arises as a result of the interaction that goes on between the person and the environment. A model that best described this situation is the transactional model. The transactional model was proposed by Lazarus & Folkman (1984) and they assume that people become stressed or burned out because of the relationship that occurs between the two factors the 'person' and their 'environment' (including work demand, and home,).The core of this model is the individual's coping ability. (Taylor, 2009)

According to Taylor S, (2009) coping is the individual's ability to view outward demands and then evaluate these demands internally to decide whether it is a threat or benefit. Outward demands are external demands found in the environment as discussed above and the way the person react emotionally is due to their personality type. For Lazarus & Folkman the idea is that coping is a trait; that is the coping style an individual engages in is based on their traits characteristics. The two popularly discussed coping styles are 'problem-focused coping' and 'the avoidance coping'. Minamiguchi (2015) noted that personality types such as openness, extroverts, gentleness are considered to be positive and individuals who possess these characteristic traits are said to use active form of coping that deals with the problem directly (Problem-focused), for example, they might speak to a manager, seek support from other colleagues, go on holiday to refresh to deal with a demanding situation. People who use available resources and engage problems directly are found to enjoy their work and are satisfied with work outcomes in general. According to the research conducted by Hatton et al. (1999) on contributing factors of stress and work satisfaction among professional caregivers of people with disability. They found that individuals who reported less



stress and increased job satisfaction reported that these occurred as a result of the support they received from their managers and other workers alike. The other form of coping is the avoidance coping and Individuals with traits of anxiety or neuroticism are said to engage in a coping method that does not deal straight on with the problems but find alternative and often negative means of dealing with the problem including the use of alcohol, unhealthy eating habits, and they generally shy away from seeking help (Minamiguchi, 2015).

From the two coping styles discussed it is obvious that in order to deal with demanding situations effectively, problem-focused coping should be the preferred choice as it deals can serve as a buffer against burnout. MacArthur & MacArthur (1998) noted that the reason why some people will go to length to deal with a demanding situation positively, while others will merely avoid dealing with the same situation which impacts on them negatively is because of personality difference. Individuals who deal with work situations effectively are characterized by positive personality types such as openness to experience (Minamiguchi, 2015). Hence, it is imperative to measure personality and its relationship to work satisfaction in this present study.

One model that evaluates individual personality types in more depth and has become of the most popularly researched by students and researchers alike is the Big Five Model by McCrea & John (1992). The big five scale often called the ocean five is also one of the most popular instrument used to measure correlations between individual personality, and stress and burnout (Vollarath, 2001, p. 335). Personality types have been grouped under five main factors, but within the core factors are several traits. An example of this is the personality type Neuroticism consist of several traits including hostility, anger, impulsions, fearfulness, and anxiety. The five main personality types are 1) Neuroticism versus emotional stability, 2) Extroverts 3) Openness to experience 4) Agreeableness and 5) Conscientiousness. (Vollarath, 2001, p. 338). However, in this study only 3 aspects (Neuroticism, Openness to experience, and conscientiousness) will be examined below:

This personality type appears to be one of the most researched and according to Barrick & Mount (1991) neuroticism and extroversions are two of the biggest of personality types. Individuals who fall under this personality type display characteristics such as anxiety, fearfulness, vulnerability, depression, and are in a constant of anxiety whether they are exposed to stress or not. Neuroticism appears to have been found to be the most positively correlated with all three aspects of the burnout (emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and loss of accomplishment) the most (Schaufeli & Enzmann 1998). Based on characteristic that are said to accompany the behaviors of



these individuals and the coping strategy they employ, it is postulated that neuroticism will be positively associated with all three aspects of burnout. Some of these characteristics include lack of confidence and self-belief, individuals with this personality type tend are said to have a tendency to fail at a targeted goal (Bakker et al, 2006). Furthermore, is that such individuals would engage in negative avoidance approach to deal with stress instead of finding or using alternative positive means (Bolger (1990); Heppner, Cook, Wright, & Johnson (1995, as cited in Bakker, et al, 2006, p 36).

In a study of conducted on a nursing sample by Zellars, Hochwarter, Perrewe, Hoffman, & Ford (2004), neuroticism was found to correlate positively with an aspect of burnout (emotional exhaustion). Also Kenney (2013) also found a positive correlation between job stress in teachers with neuroticism personality type, whilst the four remaining personality types (conscientiousness, agreeableness, and openness to experience and extroversion) showed no correlations at all. Therefore, in this present study, it is expected that neuroticism will correlate positively with burnout. Individuals with this personality type are considered to be self-motivated, disciplined and goal achievement driven. (Bakker et al, 2006). They engage in problem focused coping strategy, persevering and striving at completing set task. Research has found a positive correlation between individuals with this personality type and accomplishment of goals (Piedmont 1993; Deary et al.1996; & Deary et al. 2003, as cited in Bakker et al, 2006, p. 36).

In a research conducted by Lepine, Lepine & Jackson (2004) on the relationship between ‘motivation, learning performance and stress’, their result indicated that individuals who are task driven, self-motivated and desire to accomplish goals which are characteristics of conscientiousness correlated negatively with emotional exhaustion. Another important aspect worthy to note is that conscientiousness have been found to correlate positively with depersonalization on a study conducted on nursing student over a long period of time (Deary et al, 2003, as cited in Bakker et al, 2006). Explanation given by the researchers is that people high on these traits are so task driven, and have their mind set on achieving, can tend to push others too hard, hence not showing people the love and care they deserve in the process. However, the researcher found no other study to support this finding. Nevertheless, in this present study it is expected that conscientiousness will correlate negatively with burnout

People with this personality type are considered as adventurous, open to new experience, spontaneous, innovative and tend to have a desire for learning and growth, additionally, people with



this personality type are also said to use humor as a way of dealing with stress (Bakker et al, 2006). From the literature review conducted there are very limited research on openness to experience and burnout. One of few studies was conducted by Zellers et al (2010) which found that openness to experience increased personal accomplishment and they also found that depersonalization correlated negatively with openness to experience. Therefore, it is expected that openness to experience will correlate negatively with burnout as these individuals are independent, with strong desire to learn and achieve that drives them to succeed.

Methodology

The participants in this study were professional caregivers of individuals with intellectual disability, selected because prior research has shown that they are particularly vulnerable to burnout due to the heavy demands of their roles. The study adopted a quantitative, cross-sectional correlational design, using three established instruments. Burnout was measured with the Maslach Burnout Inventory (Maslach & Jackson, 1986), a 22-item tool assessing emotional exhaustion (9 items), depersonalization (5 items), and personal accomplishment (8 items) on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from “never” to “everyday.” High scores on emotional exhaustion and depersonalization indicate greater burnout, while higher personal accomplishment reflects stronger perceived competence. The MBI is widely recognized as a gold-standard measure with strong internal consistency (Cronbach alpha: 0.90 for emotional exhaustion, 0.76 for depersonalization, 0.76 for personal accomplishment). Job satisfaction was assessed using the Job Satisfaction Survey (Spector, 1994), a 36-item tool covering nine subscales—pay, promotion, supervision, rewards, benefits, growth, operating conditions, nature of work, and communication—scored on a 6-point Likert scale. This tool has demonstrated high reliability ($\alpha=0.91$ for the whole scale) and consistent use across large samples. Personality traits were measured with the Big Five Inventory (John & Srivastava, 1999), focusing on 27 items relating to neuroticism, conscientiousness, and openness. Responses were rated on a 5-point Likert scale, with both positive and negative keyed items. Reliability tests have shown coefficient alphas of 0.83 or higher across subscales, establishing it as a valid and reliable tool. Together, these instruments provided comprehensive data on caregiver burnout, job satisfaction, and personality traits.

Results

Table 1: Job satisfaction and personality conscientiousness and openness to experience

		Job satisfaction
Conscientiousness	Correlation Coefficient	.419**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.007
	Kandall's tau b	N 23
Openness to experience	Correlation Coefficient	.443**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.006
	N	21

H1: There will be a positive correlation between Job satisfaction and personality types (openness to experience, and conscientiousness): A Kendall's tau b correlation found that there was a positive correlation between job satisfaction and conscientiousness (tau b (23) =0.05, p=.007) and a positive correlation with openness to experience (tau b (21) =0.05, p= .006). Therefore, personality is a predictor of job satisfaction.

Table 2: *Neuroticism and burnout*

			Neuroticism	Emotional Exhaustion
Kendall's tau_b	Neuroticism	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.071
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.650
		N	26	22
	Emotional Exhaustion	Correlation Coefficient	.071	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.650	.
		N	22	25
	Depersonalisation	Correlation Coefficient	.128	.463**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.411	.004
		N	24	23
Personal Accomplishment	Correlation Coefficient	-.183	-.402**	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.218	.008	
	N	25	24	

H2: Neuroticism will correlate positively with all three aspects of burnout: A Kendall's tau b correlation found that there was no significant association between neuroticism and burnout

emotional exhaustion (tau b (22) = 0.05, p = .650) depersonalization (tau b (24) = 0.05, p = .411) and personal accomplishment (tau b (25) = 0.05, p = .218)

Table 3: Conscientiousness and burnout

			Conscientiousness
Kendall's tau_b	Conscientiousness	Correlation Coefficient	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.
		N	27
		Emotional Exhaustion	
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.006
		N	23
	Depersonalization	Correlation Coefficient	-.554**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
		N	25
	Personal Accomplishment	Correlation Coefficient	.537**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
		N	26

H3: Conscientiousness will correlate negatively with burnout: A Kendall’s tau b found a significant negative correlation between conscientiousness and burnout emotional exhaustion (tau b (23) = 0.05, p = 0.06), depersonalization (tau b (25) = 0.05, p = .000) and personal accomplishment (tau b (26) = 0.05, p = .000). Therefore, individuals high on conscientiousness have the ability to minimize the risk of developing burnout and increase personal accomplishment.

Table 4: openness to experience and burnout

			Openness to experience
Kendall's tau_b	Openness to experience	Correlation Coefficient	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.
		N	25
	Emotional Exhaustion	Correlation Coefficient	-.377*
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.019
		N	21

Depersonalization	Correlation Coefficient	-.260
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.095
	N	24
Personal Accomplishment	Correlation Coefficient	.666**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	25

H4: Openness to experience will correlate negatively with burnout: A Kendall's tau b correlation found a negative significant correlation between openness to experience and emotional exhaustion ($\tau_b(21) = 0.05, p = .019$) but found that there was no significant association between openness to experience and depersonalization ($\tau_b(21) = 0.05, p = .095$). A negative significant correlation was found between openness and personal accomplishment ($\tau_b(25) = 0.05, p = .000$)

Discussions

According to Lazarus and Folkman (1984) personality factors and coping resources play a significant role in how an individual appraise their environment or job demands. Coping according to this model is a trait. Positive coping is associated with seeking help and support, and finding last solution to when problems arises, whereas negative form of coping employ negative avoidance coping to get through a problem including alcohol use, and withdrawing from social activities. Openness to experience are characterized with positive coping that finds solution when problems occurs and as such correlated negatively with burnout (Minamiguch, 2015). Hatton et al. (1999) on contributing factors of stress and work satisfaction among professional caregivers of people with disability. They found that individuals who reported less stress and increased job satisfaction reported that these occurred as a result of the support they received from their managers and other workers alike. As seeking support when problem arises is one of the characteristic of people with the personality type openness to experience, this present study hypothesized that openness to experience and a second personality type also characterized by positive attributes conscientiousness were predicted to correlate positively with job satisfaction. The result from this study confirmed this prediction and revealed a positive association between personality types (openness to experience and conscientiousness) and job satisfaction. Therefore, this study suggests that personality can predict work satisfaction.

This present study did not find any correlation between personality type neuroticism and burnout as previous research showed. Bakker et al (2006) noted that people with neurotic trait tend to

engage in self-condemnation and an overall feelings of not been good enough hence they are not able to achievers. Neuroticism is also characterized by negative traits including anxiousness, conceived actions with little thoughts, and a state of feeling unsafe (Vollrath, 2001, p. 338). Neuroticism has also been found to correlate the most with burnout and people with this personality type are said to engage in coping methods that are negative or that avoid and find alternative means to suppress the stressor (Bakker et al. 2006, p. 36). However, this study found no relationship between the two variables.

Conscientiousness was found to be negatively correlated with burnout in this present study. Conscientiousness lowered the effects of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and it increased personal accomplishment amongst participants. This study supports previous studies conducted by (Piedmont 1993; Deary et al.1996; & Deary et al. 2003) which all found that individuals with the personality type of conscientiousness tend to be personal achievers because they are self-driven and goal oriented. Therefore, this study support the theory cited in Bakker et al, 2006 that conscientiousness is a positive personality characterized by self-motivating attribute that accomplishes set task

Professional caregivers of individuals with intellectual disability in this present study revealed that the trait openness to experience was found to correlate negatively with emotional exhaustion and it increased caregivers desire for personal accomplishment coinciding with the study conducted by Zellers et al (2010) which found that openness to experience correlated positively with personal accomplishment. According to Costa & McCrea (1992) individuals with the trait openness to experience often have a desire to learn and acquire knowledge, hence the result that was revealed in this present study. These individuals are considered intellectual high achievers. (Bakker et al, 2006, p. 37). Caregiver's analysis however did not show any association between openness to experience and depersonalization.

Conclusion

The study provides valuable insight into how personality traits influence burnout and job satisfaction among caregivers of people with intellectual disability. While earlier research has consistently linked **neuroticism** with higher levels of burnout, this study did not find significant



associations. This discrepancy may reflect sample size limitations or contextual differences in organizational environments.

More importantly, the results emphasize that **conscientiousness and openness to experience are protective personality factors**. Conscientiousness was associated with lower emotional exhaustion, reduced depersonalization, and greater personal accomplishment, confirming its role as a resilience factor in demanding caregiving environments. Similarly, openness to experience was found to reduce emotional exhaustion and increase personal accomplishment, indicating that caregivers with creative, adaptable, and learning-oriented tendencies experience less burnout and more fulfillment in their roles.

These findings underscore the need for organizations to recognize the role of personality in shaping staff well-being. Job satisfaction is not solely dependent on external factors such as pay or workload but is also influenced by the intrinsic qualities of staff members. Caregivers who exhibit openness and conscientiousness tend to engage in problem-focused coping strategies and adapt positively to challenges, which enhances both satisfaction and resilience.

Recommendations

1. **Integrate Personality Assessments in Recruitment:** Organizations should consider incorporating validated personality measures (e.g., Big Five) into hiring and staff development processes to identify candidates with traits such as conscientiousness and openness that are associated with lower burnout risk.
2. **Develop Training on Coping Strategies:** Provide structured programs to help staff, particularly those with higher neurotic tendencies, to adopt problem-focused coping strategies rather than avoidance-based approaches.
3. **Enhance Job Satisfaction Initiatives:** Improve communication, recognition, and growth opportunities in organizations, as these support the natural strengths of conscientious and open caregivers, reinforcing their sense of accomplishment.
4. **Promote Professional Development:** Encourage continuous learning and creative engagement opportunities for staff to align with the strengths of openness to experience, which was shown to reduce emotional exhaustion.

5. **Targeted Support for At-Risk Groups:** While neuroticism did not show a significant link to burnout in this study, caregivers with such tendencies may still benefit from stress management workshops and counseling services as preventive measures.
6. **Future Research:** Larger studies across multiple caregiving contexts are recommended to validate these findings, especially concerning neuroticism, and to further explore how personality interacts with organizational support systems in predicting burnout and satisfaction.

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