

## Job burnout and intention to quit: an empirical study of the Nigeria Police

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### Keywords

Burnout, Intention to Quit, Stressor, Police Officers, Nigeria

### Abstract

*This paper examines the impact of job burnout on the intention to quit among the Nigerian Police. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. Data used were collected using questionnaires administered to one hundred and fifty police officers of different ranks ranging from rank and file, inspector and senior officer that were selected using stratify random sampling technique in three divisional headquarters in Akure, Ondo state. The paper revealed that there is a significant positive relationship between job burnout and intention to quit. Besides, the study discovered that police officers experience burnout based on different biographical and personality factors and there was a positive correlation between age, level of education, years of experience, and job burnout on one hand and intention to quit on another hand. The paper concluded that effort should be made by the Police Service Commission to manage effectively those factors that cause burnout in order to make police officers have affective commitment to their job and reduce possible turnover among the police officers. Lastly, additional qualifications possessed by police officers should be a strong point in the Police promotion criteria.*

### 1. Introduction

One of the important issues being discussed in organizations across the globe today is the issue of job burnout and the readiness of employees to leave organizations. Burnout and turnover are common in the life cycle of any organization and burnout is one of the reasons for employees to leave an organization (Malik *et al.*, 2010). Burnout is an individual's response to chronic emotional stressors within the workplace (Maslach *et al.*, 2001). Burnout incites employees to leave the organization and it is also responsible for low employee job satisfaction in a service industry (Lazaro, Shinn & Robinson, 1984; Jackson, Schwab & Schuler, 1986; Shirom, 1989). According to Pines & Kafry, (1978), people who are in the service industry are more exposed to burnout because they experience more demanding job requirements.

The behavioral outcomes in all job providing sectors do matter a lot for an organization to grow, however, their importance in security service is much higher because of the increasing trend in civil unrest and terrorist attacks all over the world. Dissatisfied military personnel

cannot be expected to interact with the general public effectively, resulting in the extra judiciary killing, slow response to distress calls, and intension to quit the job.

Military personnel face a number of frustrations from both the internal and external environmental context of the organization in which they work. Apart from organizational stressors, they also have to cope with traumatic stressors as a result of the nature of their work and individual factors such as personality and family demands. The role of security officers to protect life and property has always been associated with the attendant risks and difficulties that can be found in the process of fighting and preventing crimes (Agboola and Jeremiah, 2011). Security agents must be prepared to effectively respond to a variety of scenarios as part of their daily duties. Some of these situations are stressful, frustrating, dramatic and sometimes emotionally challenging (Lynch, 2007).

Recently, Nigeria's sovereignty has been threatened by the activities of the various regional militants such as Boko Haram and Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND). The activities of these militants have endangered the work of security agents in the country, particularly, the Nigerian Police because they are the primary target of these militants. Hence, Nigerian policemen have been exposed to both physical and mental stress, frustration, and emotional challenges.

In the light of an increasing emphasis on police responsibility, accountability and performance, burnout and intention to quit among police personnel is a significant issue that subsequently merits particular attention. This paper is therefore designed to investigate empirically the relationship between job burnout and intention to quit, and the socio-psychological effect of age, gender, qualification, and experience on burnout and intention to quit among police officers in the Nigerian Police.

## **2. Conceptual Considerations and Relevant Literature**

### **2.1 Job Burnout**

Occupational burnout is a state of emotional, mental, and physical exhaustion caused by excessive and prolonged stress (Wikipedia, 2012). Occupational burnout is characterized by exhaustion, lack of enthusiasm and motivation, feeling drained (Potter, 2005). It may also involve frustration and/or negative emotions and cynical behavior (Roche, Maree, Hear, Jarrod, 2011). The resultant effect of occupational burnout is reduced professional efficacy within the work place (Maslach, Jackson and Leither, 1996).

Occupational burnout is typically and particularly found within the human service professions. Such jobs that naturally experience high amounts of occupational burnout include social workers, teachers, lawyers, police officers, nurses, and physicians (Jackson, Schwab & Schuler, 1986). One of the reasons adduced for the high prevalence of burnout in human service professions is due in part to the high-stress environment, emotional involvedness, and outcomes that might be independent of the effort exerted by the working individual.

Burnout can result when people give too much, for too long, and receive little benefit or rewards in return (Agboola and Jeremiah, 2011). According to Agboola and Jeremiah (2011), burnout can be perceived as a state of exhaustion that results from long-term imbalance between investment and outcomes. Occupational burnout affects also social relationships and attitudes, making interactions at home and at work difficult either because of the social withdrawal of the burned-out person or making him more conflictable (Potter, 2005). Usually occupational burnout is associated with increased work experience, increased workload, but also absences and time missed from work. It shows up as an impaired empathy and cynical attitudes towards clients and/or colleagues and can result in thoughts of quitting a job (Elliot, Shewchuk, Hagglund, Rybarezyk and Harkins, 1996).

## 2.2 Intention to Quit

Intentions are the most immediate determinants of actual behavior. Turnover intentions imply a worker's decision to leave an organization on their own volition (Dougherty, Bluedorn and Keon, 1987). One of the primary consequences associated with burnout is intention to turnover. Empirical research has noted that high level of burnout resulted in an intention to quit one's job (Lee & Ashforth, 1993, 1996). In their study which examined the effects of stress on intentions to turnover, Lee and Ashforth (1996) suggested that two of the dimensions of burnout, emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, would be related to intentions to leave.

Empirical studies have linked job satisfaction and performance to an individual intent to quit the organization (Clegg, 1983; Cotton and Tuttle, 1986; Wayne, Shore and Liden, 1997; Bishop, Scoth and Burroughs, 2000). Intention to quit the organization is related to actually leaving the organization. This is based on the theory of reasoned action (Fishbein and Azjen, 1975) which links attitudes, behavioral intentions and behavioral action. The attitudes affecting intent to quit can be internal which include job satisfaction, pay satisfaction or perceived organizational support or they can be external which will include environment and working conditions (Glissmeyer, Bishop and Pass, 2012).

## 2.3 Empirical Relationship between Job Burnout and Intention to Quit

Many studies of police stress and burnout have paid attention to causes of burnout and effect on police officers. High levels of stress and burnout can have a significant impact on the occupational and personal well-being of officers. Research has shown that stress and burnout are linked to a range of negative individual outcomes including depression, mental strain, health problems and psychosomatic complaints (e.g. heart and circulatory disturbances, gastro intestinal complaints) and high risk or problematic patterns of alcohol consumption (Lynch, 2007; Burke and Mikkelsen, 2006; Gana and Boblique, 2000; Stearns and Moore, 1993).

Empirical findings have also revealed that high levels of stress and burnout can have significant implications for police organizational performance. Lynch (2007) noted that stress and burnout have been highly linked with a number of work related attitudes and behavior, including intentions to leave the organization, job satisfaction, motivation, job performance, absenteeism, and resignation. Brown and Camphell (1994) observed that it is generally accepted that high levels of occupational stress and burnout can reduce productivity. Police officers who

are emotionally exhausted and feel inefficient are less likely to deal with citizens' problems in a constructive manner (Kop, Euwema and Schaufeli, 1999). In addition, noted Lynch (2007), police burnout correlates with both the attitudes towards the use of violence, extra judiciary killing, and the reported actual use of violent behavior by police. This is supported by Mikkelsen and Burke (2004) who link burnout to negatives outcomes or symptoms for the families of police officers.

Research has identified some biographical and personality factors that have been associated with burnout and intention to quit. Among these factors are age, gender, and qualification of Police officers as probable causes of burnout (Maslach *et al*, 2001; Schaufeli & Enzmanu, 1998). To these factors, Agboola and Jeremiah (2011) added experience as another factor that is likely to lead to burnout in police officers.

### 3. Study Location and Method

This study employed survey design and it covered Akure command in Ondo state. Akure command consists of 13 divisions, among these divisions, five were purposively selected namely; division A, division B, Akure Area Commander Office (former Police headquarters), Fanibi and the State Police Headquarters. Police stations in Akure command were chosen because all the departments in the Nigeria Police are present in each of these stations. Besides, being in the state capital, the stations were considered to be always busy and they attend to most of the functions performed by the police nationwide. Thus, the study's findings could be generalized for the country's police force.

The study population consisted of the entire police officers in the various departments in the selected police stations. The Departments are A-department (general administration, personnel, discipline, and public relations); B-department (general duties, mobile police, traffic warden, armory, and bomb detecting unit); C-department (salary, store, tailoring unit, works and maintenance); D-department (investigation unit, intelligence unit); E-department (training and development, education); F-department (management services); G-department (computer unit); and medical department. Using stratified random sampling technique, 150 respondents were selected. Questionnaire on job burnout and intention to quit employed by Agboola and Jeremiah (2008) was adopted for the study.

The questionnaire was administered on the selected respondents, also interviews were conducted and limited to the purposively selected officers such as those in the category of rank and files (constables, corporals and sergeants); inspectors and senior officers (Assistant Superintendent of Police, Deputy Superintendent of Police, Superintendent of Police and Commissioner Superintendent of Police). Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used in analyzing the data collected.

#### 4. Discussion of Findings

POSITION	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Rank and file	102	70.8	70.8	70.8
Inspector	33	22.9	22.9	93.8
Senior officer	9	6.3	6.3	100.0
Total	144	100.0	100.0	
<b>DEPARTMENT</b>				
Valid DEPT A	8	5.6	5.6	5.6
DEPT B	63	43.8	44.1	49.7
DEPT C	28	19.4	19.6	69.2
DEPT D	24	16.7	16.8	86.0
DEPT E	4	2.8	2.8	88.8
DEPT F	2	1.4	1.4	90.2
DEPT G	12	8.3	8.4	98.6
MEDICAL	2	1.4	1.4	100.0
Total	143	99.3	100.0	
Total	144	100.0		
<b>QUALIFICATION</b>				
Valid SECONDARY	48	33.3	33.3	33.3
CERTIFICATE	33	22.9	22.9	56.3
DIPLOMA	40	27.8	27.8	84.0
BACHELOR/HND	19	13.2	13.2	97.2
POSTGRADUATE	4	2.8	2.8	100.0
Total	144	100.0	100.0	
<b>AGE</b>				
Valid LESS THAN 25	6	4.2	4.2	4.2
25-LESS THAN 30	41	28.5	28.5	32.6
30-LESS THAN 35	41	28.5	28.5	61.1
35- LESS THAN 40	26	18.1	18.1	79.2
40- LESS THAN 45	15	10.4	10.4	89.6
45 AND ABOVE	15	10.4	10.4	100.0
Total	144	100.0	100.0	
<b>GENDER</b>				
Valid FEMALE	58	40.3	40.3	40.3
MALE	86	59.7	59.7	100.0
Total	144	100.0	100.0	
<b>EXPERIENCE</b>				
Valid 0 - LESS THAN 5	20	13.9	13.9	13.9
5 - LESS THAN 10	39	27.1	27.1	41.0
10- LESS THAN 15	63	43.8	43.8	84.7
15 AND ABOVE	22	15.3	15.3	100.0
Total	144	100.0	100.0	

**Table 1:** Bio-Data of the Respondents

Table 1 above reveals the Bio-Data of the selected respondents. Table 1 show that the majority (70.8%) of the respondents is in the position of rank and file. While only 22.9% and 6.3% are in the rank of Inspector and Senior Officer respectively. Among the eight (8) departments, B-Department has the largest number of respondents (43.8%). Only 19.4% and 16.7% are in C-Department and D-Department respectively. Department F and G have the lowest respondents of 1.4%. In terms of educational qualification, it was discovered that 33.3% and 27.8% of the selected police officers were employed with secondary school certificates and National Diploma certificates respectively. Besides, the study showed that majority of the selected police officers are in the age bracket of 25-35 years (57%), while only 20.8% of the respondents claimed to be between 40 years and above. Moreover, 86 respondents which represent 59.7% of total respondents are male officers while 58 (40.3%) respondents are female officers. 43.8% of the sampled respondents have put 10-14 years into service. While 27.1% and 15.3% have 5-9 years and 15 and above years of experience, respectively.

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
<b>Attitudes and Feelings of the Respondents towards Police Work</b>			
I feel like I am an automatic pilot most of the time.	144	3.35	1.355
I want to leave my current organization should opportunity arise for me.	138	2.70	2.080
I feel like I need to take control of the people in my life.	144	3.84	1.198
Should opportunity present itself for me, I will still want to remain in my profession and organization.	144	3.97	2.690
I feel like burned out from my job.	144	2.21	1.306
I feel I am comfortable in my current job and profession.	144	3.68	1.288
I feel like giving up.	144	2.19	1.324
I have once thought of quitting my job and this profession.	138	2.59	1.483
I can't quit my job and this profession.	138	3.44	1.329
I think I am not as efficient at work as I should be.	142	1.33	.681
I want to withdraw from the constant demand on my time and energy from work.	140	1.42	.759
<b>Experienced Symptoms and Stressors</b>			
Tired at work even with adequate sleep	144	1.52	.719
Moody, irritable, or impatient over small problems	143	1.48	.701
I feel negative, futile, or depressed about work.	144	1.29	.657
My resistance to illness is lowered because of my work.	144	1.77	.980
My interest in doing fun activities is lowered because of my work.	140	2.08	1.170
I have difficulty in concentrating on my work.	144	1.22	.535
<b>Emotional Reactions to Operational Experience</b>			
Making a violent arrest	144	1.38	1.051
Shooting someone	144	.87	.602
Responding to a bloody crime scene	144	1.57	1.055
Personally knowing the victim	136	1.55	.926
Attending police funeral	140	1.61	.846
Experience a needle stick injury or other exposure to blood and body fluids.	139	1.22	.860
Valid N (listwise)	110		

**Table 2:** General Feelings, Experienced Symptoms and Stressors, and Emotional Reactions of the Respondents

Table 2 is divided into 3 sections namely: attitude and feelings of the respondents towards police work, experienced symptoms and stressors, and emotional reaction to operational experience. The first section of Table 2 revealed the general feelings and attitude of police officers towards their profession. The analysis revealed that majority of the respondents is willing to remain in the Police as shown by the Mean of 3.97 and Standard Deviation of 2.69 on a 5-point Likert scale. Other high expressed feelings and attitudes are the desire to take control of people (Mean = 3.84; SD = 1.198); comfortable in current job and profession (Mean = 3.68; SD = 1.29); cannot quit job and profession (Mean = 4.44; SD = 1.33); and feeling of being an automatic pilot most of the time (Mean = 3.35; SD = 1.36). Besides, above average of the respondents revealed that they have intentions of leaving the Police force if the opportunity arises; this is shown in the Mean of 2.70 and Standard Deviation of 2.08. The majority of officers in this category are those that have additional qualification but were not promoted.

However, the rate of burnout expressed by the respondents was below average with Mean of 2.21 on a 5-point Likert scale. Apart from the rate of burnout that was below average, inefficiency at work and intentional withdrawal of time and energy from work have rates that are far below average with Mean of 1.33 and 1.42 and SD of 0.681 and 0.759, respectively. This analysis shows that Nigeria police officers have positive feelings and attitude towards their profession. The symptoms that were often experienced among employees in organizations were contained in the second section of the table. The table shows that apart from reduction in fun activities of the respondents due to challenges of duty that has Mean of 2.08 and SD of 1.170, other symptoms that were experienced by the police officers have very low rates that are below average. For instance, difficulty in concentrating on work, futility or depression about work, and impatience over small problems has Mean of 1.22, 1.29 and 1.48 with SD of 0.535, 0.657 and 0.701 respectively. This analysis reveals that none of the stressors or symptoms was highly experienced by Nigeria police officers. The third section of the table shows the extent to which the Police Officers react to what they encountered during operations. On a 5-point Likert scale, there was no serious emotion that was expressed by the respondents while discharging their daily duty. The Mean of the emotional reactions are far below average. For instance, ratings of injury, making violent arrest and shooting criminals were rated below average. Also, responding to a bloody crime scene and personally knowing victims have Mean of 1.57 and 1.55 respectively. Attending the burial of fellow officers has the most serious emotion with Mean of 1.61.

AGE	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	% of Total N
LESS THAN 25	2.33	6	1.366	4.2%
25-LESS THAN 30	1.98	41	1.313	28.5%
30-LESS THAN 35	2.05	41	.973	28.5%
35- LESS THAN 40	2.46	26	1.529	18.1%
40- LESS THAN 45	2.67	15	1.496	10.4%
45 AND ABOVE	2.33	15	1.447	10.4%
Total	2.21	144	1.306	100.0%
GENDER				
FEMALE	2.24	58	1.393	40.3%
MALE	2.19	86	1.251	59.7%
Total	2.21	144	1.306	100.0%

QUALIFICATION				
SECONDARY	2.04	48	1.166	33.3%
CERTIFICATE	2.06	33	1.478	22.9%
DIPLOMA	2.38	40	1.295	27.8%
BACHELOR/HND	2.68	19	1.376	13.2%
POSTGRADUATE	1.50	4	.577	2.8%
Total	2.21	144	1.306	100.0%
EXPERIENCE				
0 - LESS THAN 5	1.80	20	.951	13.9%
5 - LESS THAN 10	2.41	39	1.446	27.1%
10- LESS THAN 15	2.16	63	1.298	43.8%
15 AND ABOVE	2.36	22	1.329	15.3%
Total	2.21	144	1.306	100.0%
POSITION				
Rank and file	2.06	102	1.225	70.8%
Inspector	2.48	33	1.460	22.9%
Senior officer	2.89	9	1.364	6.2%
Total	2.21	144	1.306	100.0%

**Table 3:** Effects of Age, Gender, Qualification, Years of Experience and Position on Burnout

Table 3 shows the effects of age, gender, qualification, job experience and position on job burnout. In terms of the effect of age on burnout, the highest expression of burnout was within the age range of 40-44 years with Mean of 2.67 and SD of 1.496. This was followed by 35-39, less than 25 and 45 and above which have Mean of 2.46 and 2.33 respectively. The least expression of burnout occurs within the age 25-29 and 30-34 with Mean of 1.98 and 2.05 respectively. The implication of this analysis is that job burnout is more rampant among officers that are between the age of 40 and 45. The reaction rate of burnout experienced by male and female police officers at work was also indicated in Table 3. Female police officers were more exposed to burnout at work than their male counterparts.

This is shown by the Mean of 2.24 for female police officers as against that of 2.19 for male police officers. Apart from postgraduate, there is a positive relationship between educational qualification and the feelings of burnout expressed by police officers at work; the higher the level of education, the higher the tendency for burnout.

In terms of the effects of burnout on job experience, Table 3 above shows that the highest feeling of burnout is felt among police officers that have just served between 5 and 9 years. This was followed by those that have served for a minimum of 15 years. The respondents that have served for less than 5 years expressed the lowest feelings of burnout. The respondents in the category of Senior Officer have the highest feelings of burnout at work with Mean of 3.22 and SD of 2.108. Following this are the police officers in the category of rank and file with Mean of 2.83 and SD of 2.225. Police officers in the rank of Inspector expressed the lowest feelings of burnout at work.



AGE	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	% of Total N
LESS THAN 25	1.67	6	.516	4.3%
25-LESS THAN 30	2.21	39	1.436	28.3%
30-LESS THAN 35	3.20	41	2.993	29.7%
35- LESS THAN 40	2.50	24	1.414	17.4%
40- LESS THAN 45	3.27	15	1.944	10.9%
45 AND ABOVE	2.85	13	1.405	9.4%
Total	2.70	138	2.080	100.0%
GENDER				
FEMALE	2.50	56	2.744	40.6%
MALE	2.84	82	1.470	59.4%
Total	2.70	138	2.080	100.0%
QUALIFICATION				
SECONDARY	2.24	46	1.251	33.3%
CERTIFICATE	2.33	33	1.384	23.9%
DIPLOMA	3.33	36	3.278	26.1%
BACHELOR/HND	3.00	19	1.563	13.8%
POSTGRADUATE	4.00	4	1.155	2.9%
Total	2.70	138	2.080	100.0%
EXPERIENCE				
0 - LESS THAN 5	2.39	18	1.501	13.0%
5 - LESS THAN 10	2.49	39	1.467	28.3%
10- LESS THAN 15	3.07	61	2.613	44.2%
15 AND ABOVE	2.30	20	1.593	14.5%
Total	2.70	138	2.080	100.0%
POSITION				
Rank and file	2.83	100	2.225	72.5%
Inspector	2.10	29	1.372	21.0%
Senior officer	3.22	9	2.108	6.5%
Total	2.70	138	2.080	100.0%

**Table 4:** Effects of Age, Gender, Qualification, Years of Experience and Position on Intention to Quit

Table 4 shows the effects of age, gender, qualification, experience and position on the respondents' intention to quit job owing to burnout at work. The Police Officers within the age bracket of 40 and 44 years have the highest feelings of intention to quit job with Mean of 3.27 and SD of 1.944. This was closely followed by police officers between 30 and 34 years of age with Mean of 3.20 and SD of 2.993. The intention to quit job was lowest among respondents within the age bracket of 25 years and below with the Mean of 1.67 and SD of 0.516.

In terms of gender, the intention to quit job was higher among male respondents than female respondents. The study revealed that there is a positive relationship between educational qualification and intention to quit. The expression of intention to quit was highest among police officers that have postgraduate degree and was lowest among officers with secondary school certificate with Mean of 4.00 and 2.24 respectively. The study revealed that postgraduate degree is not part of the criteria for promotion in the Nigeria Police Force. Besides, those that have additional higher qualifications apart from the one used to employ them were

not promoted. Hence, this may account for the positive relationship between educational qualification and intention to quit. The intention to quit is more pronounced among police officers that have served between 10 and less than 15 years. Those that have served for a minimum of 15 years have the lowest intention to quit their profession.

The senior officers have the highest intention to quit their job; this is shown by the Mean of 3.22. This is followed by the police officers in the position of rank and file with Mean of 2.83. The lowest expression of intention to leave was among police officers in the rank of Inspector.

		Burnout	Quit
Spearman's rho	Burnout		
	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.621**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
	N	144	144
Quit	Quit		
	Correlation Coefficient	.621**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
	N	144	144

**Table 5:** Spearman's Correlation Coefficient

Table 5 above shows that the Spearman's Correlation Coefficient is 0.621 (62.1%). This shows that there is a significant a positive relationship between job burnout and intention to quit. The result shows that 62.1% of variation in the intention to quit is being explained by job burnout. While the remaining 37.9% is explained by other variables not captured in this study. The relationship is statistically significant at the 0.01 level that is  $p$ -value  $0.000 < 0.01$ . This shows that the Null hypothesis is rejected while the alternative hypothesis is accepted which says that there is a positive relationship between job burnout and intention to quit.

#### 4. Conclusion and Recommendation

The study has attempted to empirically examine the relationship between job burnout and intention to quit in the Nigeria Police. Results from the study indicated that there is a positive relationship between job burnout and intention to quit. The finding supports the main hypothesis that most police officers may consider the option to quit as a result of stress and burnout. The effects of different socio-psychological variables on job burnout and intention to quit were empirically investigated. The study revealed that police officers experience burnout based on different biographical and personality factors such as age, qualification, gender, experience and position on job burnout and intention to quit. This study agrees with the findings of previous studies such as (Agboola & Jeremial, 2011; Maslach *et al*, 2001; Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998) that identified different biographical and personality factors as causes of burnout which can lead to intention to quit the service. The study recommends that efforts should be made by the Police Service Commission to effectively manage those factors that cause burnout in order to reduce turnover among police officers. Specifically, additional qualification should be a strong point in the Police promotion criteria.

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