

# Personality Traits as A Predictor of Burnout among Private Employees in Private Establishments

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## **Abstract**

*The study investigated the personality traits as a predictor of burnout among private employees in private establishments. 240 participants simple randomly drawn (80 across border) from Intafact beverages Ltd., Harbour Industrial Layout, Onitsha. Anambra State, Innoson Vehicle Manufacturing Co. Ltd; Innoson Industrial Estate, Akwa-uru Nnewi Anambra State and Ranbaxy Nigeria Ltd. Plot 5, Block K Apapa Isolo Express way Lagos comprised of 152 males (63.3%) and 88 females (36.7%) participated in the study. Their age ranged between 21-49 years with the average age of 35years. The Big Five Personality Inventory (BFDI) developed by O.P John et.al. (1991) and Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) developed by Christian Maslach (1981) were used to measure personality traits and burnout respectively among participants. A regression statistical analysis showed that agree ableness and conscientiousness were predictor of burnout among the participants, but the other personality traits like neuroticism, extroversion, Openness to experience was found not to be predictor of burnout among the participants. Discussion of the results together with recommendation were made*

**Key Words:** *Personality Traits, Burnout and Employees*

### **Introduction**

Since the pioneer paper about burnout (Maslach & Jackson, 1981) up to now, research into this concept had gotten stronger. Many studies have shown the importance of this syndrome concerning productivity and work efficacy, work absenteeism, ill-causative and Psycho-Pathology in addition to an important deterioration produced in social and family relationship. The term burnout is often described as an acute stress disorder or reaction characterized by exhaustion resulting from over work, with anxiety, fatigue, insomnia, depression, and impairment in work performance. Pines and Aronson, (1988) define burnout as “A reaction to work related stress; it involves emotional exhaustion, a feeling of being unable to accomplish any thing on the job, and a sense of helplessness and loss of control. It is specially common among the people in the industrial setting who feel frustrated by their inability to work as much respectively as they would like to.

Stress leads private employees’ to express themselves in a significant or different ways, problems in personal accomplishment, emotion exhaustion and depersonalization. The appearance of burnout has been both related to contextual and individual variables. Most of the explanatory models introduce both groups of variables with a net of multiple relationships (Maslach Leiter, 1997 & Shirom, 1989). Burnout could be explained as the transactional outcome of triggering contextual variables and the facilitating or inhibiting effect on personality variable (Shirom, 1989). As regards to personality, Eysenck & Eysenck, (1985) have found association between burnout and high score in neuroticism, introversion and Psychotism respectively using Big Five Model (Costa & Mc Crae, 1998). HobFoll and Shiron, (1993) have shown that neuroticism and introversion correlate with the three factors of burnout. More over, emotion exhaustion was associated with the dimensions of conscientiousness and agreeableness; depersonalization was associated with conscientiousness.

The study of personality types has indicated potentials positive outcome in identifying the needs of individuals and in helping improve their access to resources and assistance. Exploration of these themes with industrial management, however is lacking it has been suggested that there is a “personality profile” of person who are more prone to burnout when employed as a worker, but this

personality profile is generalized and refers to physiological traits such as age and gender, and professional traits such as the number of years employed as a worker. Employment in today's establishment or organization is very demanding and stressful. Work related stress can result in employees' burnout. This in turn, may affect the health, efficiency and happiness of the employees. As the study of burnout and its impact upon person in organizations become more profound, employees were recognized as industrial workers and the impact of burnout was closely linked to performance outcomes in some employees. Initially, work related stress, such as the inability to help co-worker or overtime was identified as the foremost cause of burnout. Gradually additional environmental factors, especially lack of incentive, support and encouragement from the management, were recognized as contributing to burnout and most importantly, it was recognized that burnout was a cumulative process associated with the industrial workers.

Genders were found to be significant predictors of burnout. Njoku (2010) found that male workers were significantly "more burnout" than females' workers. When individuals feel an inability to control or reduce stress to manageable level, they may become emotionally drained. Over period of time if work place demands supersede individual resources to adequately deal with them, emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and

reduced sense of personal accomplishment may occur (Maslach & Jackson, 1996). In examining the Syndrome of burnout it is imperative to take into account the concept of stress. Although stress and burnout are analogous, they are not one in the same it is important to note that stress may lead to burnout, but burnout may not be the result of stress alone; burnt is the result of unmediated stress, a stressful situation when an individual believes there is no "out" no Buffer, no support system, no adequate rewards.

The study therefore seeks to provide answer to:

- i. What extent will neuroticism personality traits predict burnout among employees in private establishments?
- ii. What extent will regreeableness personality trait predicts burnout among private employees in private establishments?
- iii. What extent will extroversion personality trait predict burnout among private employees in private establishments?
- iv. What extent will conscientiousness personality trait predict burnout among private employees in private establishments?
- v. What extent will openness to experience personality trait predict burnout among private employees in private establishments?

According to Conservation of Resources Theory (COR) propounded by Hobfoll (1989), individuals accumulate resources they can apply to accommodate, withstand, or overcome threats. They might accumulate personal resources, such as self-esteem and optimize material resources, such as money, condition resources, such as status, and social support. Stressful or traumatic events consume these resources, they by augmenting their sensitivity to subsequent stressors, according to this theory individuals experience stress whenever resources are depleted and, therefore, potentially inadequate to resolve any impending demands. In particular, when resources are actually depleted for example, when individuals lose money or status they experience actual stress (Hobfoll, 1989). In contrast, when resources are threatened for example the possibility that individuals might lose money or status is raised. They experience a state of anticipatory stress, (Hobfoll, 1989). Anticipatory stress can be acute as actual stress. Persistent levels of anticipatory stress can culminate in burnout. Burnout represents a sense of emotional exhaustion, coupled with both cynical attitudes about the organization and environment as well as a decline in the perceived capacity to perform effectively.

Most of us think of stress as environmental events that place demands on our lives, such as being in a car wreck. While there are some common ways we all experience stress, not everyone perceives the same

events as stressful. For example, one person may perceive an upcoming job interview as threatening, while another person may perceive it as challenging. To some degree, then, what is successful depends on how people cognitively appraise and interpret events. This view has been championed by Richard Lazarus (1993, 1996, 1998). Cognitive appraisal is Lazarus's term to describe individuals' interpretation of events in their lives as harmful, threatening, or challenging, and their determination of whether they have the resources to effectively cope with the event.

In Lazarus's view, events are appraised in two steps: Primary appraisal and secondary appraisal. In primary appraisal, individuals interpret whether an event involves harm or loss that has already occurred, a threat of some future danger, or a challenge to overcome. After individuals cognitively appraise an event for its harm, threat, or challenge, Lazarus says that they subsequently engage in secondary appraisal. In secondary appraisal, individuals evaluate their resources and determine how effective they can be used to cope with the event. This appraisal is called secondary because it comes after primary appraisal and depends on the degree to which the event has been appraised as harmful, threatening, or challenging. Coping involves a wide range of potential strategies, skills, and abilities for effectively managing stressful event. Lazarus believes an individual's experience of stress is a

balance or primary and secondary appraisal. When harm and threat are high, a challenge and resources are low, stress is likely to be high this could culminate in burnout, when harm and threat are low, and challenge and resources are high, stress is more likely to be low.

According to the Austrian – born Founder of stress resource, the late Hans Selye (1974, 1983), stress simply is the wear and tear on the body due to the demands placed on it. Any number of environmental events or stimuli will produce the same stress response in the body. Selye observed patients with different problem: the death of someone close, loss of income, arrest for embezzlement. Regardless of which problem the patient had, similar symptoms appeared: loss of appetite, muscular weakness, and decreased interest in the world. General Adaptation Syndrome (GAS) is Selye's term for the common effects on the body when demands are placed on it. The GAS consists of three stages: alarm, resistance, and exhaustion. First, in the alarm stage, the body enters a temporary state of shock, a time when resistance to illness and stress fall below normal limits. In trying to cope with the initial effects of stress, the body quickly releases hormones, which, in a short time, adversely affect the immune system's functioning. It is during this time that the individual is prone to infections from illness and injury. Fortunately, the alarm stage passes rather quickly as the body begins to

build up its resistance. In the resistance stage a number of glands throughout the body begins to manufacture different hormones that protect the individual in many ways. During this stage, the body's immune system can fight off infection with remarkable efficiency. Similarly, hormones that reduce inflammation normally are present at high levels. If the all-out effort to combat stress fails and the stress persists, the individual moves into the exhaustion stage. Now the wear and tear on the body takes its toll the person may collapse in a state of exhaustion and vulnerability to disease increases (burnout syndrome).

Personality theorists scrutinize patterns of behaviour to identify personality traits, broad dispositions that lead to characteristic responses. Traits theories propose that people have broad dispositions that are reflected in the basic ways they behave, such as whether they are outgoing and friendly or withdrawn and moody. Different explanations based on traits make up personality and durability. Although trait theorists sometimes differ on which traits make up personality they all agree that traits are the fundamental building blocks of personality (Johnson, 1997; Wiggins, 1997).

Gordon Allport (1937) was one of the earliest architects of the traits approach. One of his interests was in trying to establish the range of traits that make up personality, which was a herculean task. In one of his efforts he counted almost 18,000 dictionary

words that could be used to describe people (Allport & Odbert, 1936). Allport suggests that a reasonable research strategy would be to find overarching categories that reduce the vast number of words necessary to describe personality traits. In the 1940s and 1950s, researchers began to show interests in how traits can be clustered around a smaller number of factors. For example, Raymond Cattell (1943) selected sixteen personality factors and constructed a personality questionnaire based on his theory that those sixteen personality factors were stable.

Even fewer factors were proposed by Hans Eysenck (1947). By analyzing the personality tests results of large numbers of people, Eysenck found evidence for only two dimension of personality: stability versus instability, and introversion versus extraversion. Introversion is a tendency to be reserved independent and quiet. Extraversion is a tendency to be sociable, active, and fun-seeking. Eysenck also discovered that the dimensions of themselves can be related. For instance, an introverted stable personality is careful, even – tempered, and calm. An extraverted unstable personality is aggressive, excitable, and impulsive.

Many of today's trait psychologists are encouraged by growing evidence for not two, but five, basic dimensions of personality (Costa & McRae, 1995; McRae & Costa, 1997). These are sometimes referred to as "The big five". According to the Five-factor model personality consists

of five main factors: neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness, and conscientiousness. Each of these "big five" factor is a category, representing a continuum.

- *Neuroticism* is the degree to which an individual demonstrate emotional Mala adjustment and instability. Persons high on this trait (high N) are inclined to poor adjustment and psychological problems, including anxiety, anger, depression, self-consciousness, impulsivity and Vulnerability. Persons low on this trait (Low N) are better adapted, are more realistic, and tolerate frustration better than persons high on this traits.
- *Extraversion* is the amount and intensity of preferred interpersonal interactions. Extraverts (high E) tend to be high – spirited and energetic, while introverts (Low E) tend to be more reserved and passive.
- *Openness to experience* is the degree to which a person actively seeks out and appreciates experiences for their own sake. On one end of the continuum, open (high O) individuals show curiosity, Imagination, and some unconventionality in their values. They tend to experience emotions more vividly. Low O persons tend to be more conventional, conservative, and

rigid in their beliefs and have diminished emotional responsiveness.

- *Agreeableness* is the degree to which a person compassionately connects with others. Agreeable (high A) individual tends to be good – natured, trusting, and helpful. Antagonistic (low A) individuals tend to be suspicious, irritable and vengeful.
- *Conscientiousness* is the degree of organization, self – control, and persistence a person shows in pursuing goals. Conscientious (high C) people tend to be hardworking, ambitious, and driving. Non-conscientious (low C) people tend to be shiftless, negligent, and pleasure-seeking.

The most consistent finding regarding the relationship between personality and burnout has been found for neuroticism and extraversion (Buhler & Land, 2003). In a study conducted by Buhler and Land (2003) on Intensive Care Unit Staff, neuroticism demonstrated a significant positive relationship with emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. Several studies corroborated this finding. For example Baker *et. al* (2006) examined volunteer investigating Ministers and Kokkinos (2007) sampled Primary School Educators, their findings show that neuroticism is positively related to emotional exhaustion and

depersonalization. Miner (2007), examining burnout in Religious Ministers, established that neuroticism demonstrates a negative relation with personal accomplishment. High score on this factor are linked to emotions such as fear and frustration, whereas low score are related to a calm and relaxed disposition. The negative emotions common to neuroticism frequently lead to ineffective coping strategies (DeLongis & Holtzman, 2005). For example, there is evidence that individual who score high on neuroticism tend to make use of emotions focused coping, interpersonal withdrawal, escape avoidance self – blame, escapist fantasy, passivity and indecisiveness (Miner, 2007). These individual may also have a sense of apprehension, expecting the worst from a situation, while understand their own ability to cope with the demands of the situation. In addition, the tendency to anticipate the worst may result in reduced professional efficacy. Miner (2007) contends that since neuroticism represent a general tendency to negative in thinking, mood and coping, it is not surprising that such a style would be conclusive to a sense of emotion, exhaustion, together with anxiety and depression.

Extraversion has consistently been found demonstrate a relationship with burnout (Bakker *et. al*, 2006). Nwoye (2010) examined Nurses and established that this factor has a negative relation with emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, and a positive association with personal

accomplishment. People who score high on extraversion are generally high-spirited and energetic, they frequently experience optimism and enthusiasm, and experience augmented levels of energy. Thus, it appears that extraversion is related to the experience of positive affect. Wiggie, (2011) argued that the optimism, positive affect and energy and increased interpersonal communication, experienced by individuals scoring high on this factor may result in reduced experiences of emotional exhaustions and depersonalization. There is evidence that extraversion is related to problem focused coping, rational action, positive re-appraisal and cognitive reframing (DeLongis & Holtzman, 2005). Based on the aforementioned studies, it appears that extraversion is negatively related to emotional exhaustion and depersonalization and positively related to professional efficacy (Kokkinos, 2007).

The relationship between openness to experience and burnout is tentative (Bakker *et. al*, 2006), there is evidence that this factor is related to personal accomplishment (Bakker *et. al*, 2006). For example Nwoye, (2010) examining burnout and personality in Nursing Staff found out that this factor demonstrated a positive relationship with personal accomplishment. In addition, he found that openness to experience is negatively related to depersonalization. Openness to experience is related to adaptive and flexible coping and reduces levels of

distancing from others (DeLongis & Holtzman, 2005). Individuals scoring high on this factors may use humors as coping mechanism, where as those scoring low on this factor tend to make use of faith and distance avoidance coping strategies (Nwoye, 2010). Due to their awareness of the surroundings, individuals scoring high on this factor may be more attentive to stressors in their new environment and more likely to attempt new experiences. Stressful environments may thus be viewed by these individual as a challenge, and thereby, they may experience an increase sense of personal accomplishment and demolished emotional exhaustion (Bouchard *et. al*, 2004).

Agreeableness appears to demonstrate a positive relationship with personal accomplishment (Bakker *et. al* 2006). Furthermore, Deary *et. al* (1996) sampling Medical Doctors, found that agreeableness is negatively related to depersonalization. Olamide (2014), examining burnout in Psychiatrist Doctors and nurses in psychiatrist hospital similarly established this relationship.

Mamood (2014) exploring personality and burnout among Public Health Scientists, found that Agreeableness is negatively related to emotional exhaustion. Individuals scoring high on this factors tends to be trusting, co-operative, good natured and helpful. This factor, which is related to the caring and helping others, may allow an individual to manage with client and the



accompanying frustration. This may result in reduced feelings of depersonalization and emotional exhaustion and augmented experiences of personal accomplishment (Lee-Baggley *et. al*, 2004). Agreeableness has also been associated with social support. This may result in reduced feelings of depersonalization, emotional exhaustion and augmented experiences of personal accomplishment (Delongis & Holtzman, 2005).

Conscientiousness appears to relate to greater feelings of personal accomplishment (Kokkinos, 2007). For example, Hochwalder, (2006) found that this factor is positively associated with personal accomplishment. Kokkinos, (2007) established that there is a negative relationship between conscientiousness and personalization. He argued that the goal – directed behaviour and focus on efficacy demonstrated by individual scoring high on this factor may lead these individuals not to focus on clients, but more on achieving result, which leads to increased depersonalization. However the goal–directed behaviour and striving for accomplishment related to this factor may result in increased experiences of professional accomplishment (Lee–Baggley, 2004). High score on conscientiousness have been related to reduced use of escaped avoidance, and self-blame strategies, and the use of problem – solving strategies (Bouchard *et. al* 2004). There appears to be a relationship between high score

on conscientiousness and reduced experience of burn out (Bouchard *et. al* 2004).

## Method

### Participants

The participants were two hundred and forty (240) simple randomly drawn (80 across border) from Intafact Beverages Ltd. Harbour Industrial Layout, Onitsha Anambra State, Innoson Vehicle Manufacturing Co. Ltd, Innoson Industrial Estate, Akwa-Uru Nnewi Anambra State and Ranbaxy Nigeria Ltd. Plot 5, Block K Apapa Isolo Express way Lagos comprised of 152 Males (63.3%) and 88 females (36.7%). Their age ranged between 21-49 years with the average age of 35 years.

### Instrument

One of the instruments or scale used for the study was the Big Five personality inventory developed by John, OP and Srivastava, S (1991). The response pattern was designed in a Five point Lickert format ranging from 1-Disagree strongly, 2-Disagree a little, 3-Neither agree or disagree, 4-Agree a little and 5-Agree strongly. The psychometric property for the Big Five personality inventory was reported by John *et.al* (1991) using American samples and Umeh (2004) using Nigeria samples as thus:

Scale	American	Nigerian
	M & F (n-711)	M (n-60) F (n-60)
Extraversion	25.60	28.45, 27.10

<b>Agreeableness</b>	34.20	29.75, 28.73
<b>Conscientiousness</b>	32.40	29.10, 29.60
<b>Neuroticism</b>	24.00	23.43, 24.48
<b>Openness</b>	35.00	38.07, 35.18

The co-efficient of reliability provided by John *et. al* (1991) using Cronbach alpha was .80, and test-retest reliability of .85 after 3 months interval for the composite scale. Big Five personality Inventory has mean convergent validity co-efficient of .75 and .85 with the Big Five instruments authored by Costa and Mc Crae (1995) and Goldberg (1992) respectively. The divergent validity co-efficient obtained by Umeh (2004) with university maladjustment scale were extroversion .05, Agreeableness .13, Conscientiousness .11, neuroticism .39 and Openness .24. The other instrument used was the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) developed by Maslach (1981). The scale has a cronbach Alpha of 0.71, 0.90 (American sample) and 0.86 (Nigerian sample). Test – retest reliability (one month) for American sample was 0.60, 0.80. For the validity of the scale Maslach and Jackson (1986) obtained convergent Validity co-efficient ranging from 0.20 - 0.56 by correlating MBI with the peer rating score for different sample by correlating the sub scales of MBI with PSC, Omoluabi (1987). Coker (1999) obtained concurrent validity co-efficient in the range of 0.01, 0.36. It has a 22 items designed to asses burnout syndrome. This is a state of physical and emotion

depletion resulting from the conditions of work. It has 3 subscales namely Emotional Exhaustion (EE), Dehumanization and Resources Personal Accomplishment.

**Procedure:**

The instruments were administered to the participants during break time. They were given instructions on how to fill the instruments and after filling, the instruments were collected immediately by the researcher and with the help of a research assistant employed. These instruments correctly filled were eventually scored and used for the data analysis.

**Design/Statistics**

The study adopted the cross-sectional survey design and a regression statistical package was use for the data analysis.

**Results**

**Table 1: ANOVA Summary Table**

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean square	F	Sig
Regression	10131.490	5	2026.298	3.093	.010 <sup>a</sup>
Residual	153304.49	234	655.147		
Total	163435.98	239			

**Table 2: Model Summary**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R square	Std. Error of the estimate
Constant				
Neuroticism	.447	.270	.122	1.656
Agreeableness	.606	.265	.168	2.290
Extraversion	.404	.270	.132	1.495
Conscientiousness	-.525	.263	-.177	-1.997
Openness to experience	-0.019	.217	-.006	-.086

Model	B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.
Constant	70.886	8.939		7.930	.000
Neuroticism	.447	.270	.122	1.656	.099
Agreeableness	.606	.265	.168	2.290	.023
Extraversion	.404	.270	.132	1.495	.136
Conscientiousness	-.525	.263	-.177	-1.997	.047
Openness to experience	-0.019	.217	-.006	-.086	.932

1	.249 <sup>a</sup>	.062	.042	25.59585
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**Table 3: Summary of Beta Regression Co-efficient Table**

Based on the table one and two above, using Enter method, the result showed the ANOVA significant summary of  $F_{5, 240} = 3.09$ ,  $P < .05$ .

**Hypothesis 5:** The hypothesis which stated that openness to experience will significantly predict burnout was rejected. This means that openness to experience as a component of Big Five Personality factor is not a significant predictor of burnout among private employees or workers ( $\beta = -.006$ ;  $t = -.08$ ;  $P > .05$ ).

### Discussion

This work examined the personality traits as a predictor of burnout among private employees in private establishment. Five alternative hypotheses were tested. The first hypothesis which stated that neuroticism will significantly predict burnout among private industrial employees was rejected based on the statistical evidence obtained from the results. According to Bakker *et al.* (2006); Buhler & Land (2003) on the intensive care unit staff, Neuroticism demonstrated a significant positive relationship with emotional exhaustion and personalization but base on the current study neuroticism did not predict burnout among private employees in private establishment which means it is not consistent with the previous research. The second

hypothesis which stated that Agreeable will significantly predict burnout among private employees in private establishment was accepted based on the statistical evidence obtained from the results. This finding is not consistent with previous research; Premont (1993), exploring personality and burnout in occupational therapists, found that Agreeableness is negatively related to emotional exhaustion. Thus, Mamood (2014) stated that there is a negative relationship between Agreeableness and burnout and emotional exhaustion.

The third hypothesis which stated that extroversion will significantly predict occupational burnout among private employees in private establishments was rejected base on the statistical evidence obtained from the results. This finding is not consistent with the previous research. According to (Bakkel *et al.*, 2006; and Piedmont, 1993) extroversion has consistently been found to demonstrate a relationship with burnout. The fourth hypothesis which state that conscientiousness will significantly predict burnout among private employees in private establishment was accepted based on the statistical evidence obtained from the results. This finding is consistent with previous research. From the results obtained, it was found that conscientiousness had high scores which meant that as conscientiousness increased burnout will decrease since conscientiousness appears to be related to grater feelings of personal

accomplishment (Kokkinos, 2007). Thus, there appear to be a relationship between high scores on conscientiousness and reduced experiences of burnout (Bouchard, *et al*, 2004). The fifth hypothesis which stated that openness to experience will significantly predict burnout among the private employees in private establishments was rejected based on the statistical evidence obtained from the results. This finding is not consistent with previous research.

The findings from the results above revealed that Agreeableness (a person who is trusting and cooperative) and conscientiousness (a person who is responsible and orderly) were predictors of burnout among private employees in private establishment. Private employees with these personality traits were stressed due to the interpersonal relations around their job environment. The management and the employers have to closely watch and understood the personality traits because it will further affect their organizational performance positively or negatively on or off the organizational setting. Private employees shortfalls in stress culminate in burnout which will affect maximum productivity and efficiency. Furthermore, private employees in the private establishments have to really understand themselves to know whenever they are being stressed so as not to disturb the flow between them, co-employees, organization force and management/ employers in the organization setting.

From the above explanations the findings recorded in the study reveals that openness to experience, neuroticism and extraversion did not statistical significantly predict burnout in private employees in private establishments, while conscientiousness and agreeableness were statistical significant predictors of burnout in private employees in private establishments. Based on this establishment it means that personality goes a long way in affecting the performance and productivity of private employees in private establishments.

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