

Intra Conflict & Police Personality

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ABSTRACT

The policing function in any society faces a constant conflict to balance the needs/safety of their kith-kin and responsibility towards nation in crisis. The present study reviews the internal unrest in Law enforcement officers pertaining to family and duty as a function of personality during crisis. The study surveyed 50 police officers (44 male, 6 female). A Pearson co-relational analysis was used to measure the significance between personality and conflict. NEO-FFI scale was used for measuring personality. The present study also used the work family conflict scale- an adapted version of Netemeyer et al. instrument. It was hypothesized that individuals who score high on neuroticism face more work-family conflict as compared to individuals who scored high on agreeableness and openness to experience. With respect to gender, it was expected that women are more likely to face internal conflict as compared to men. Results showed that personality factors shared strong co-relation with conflict.

Keywords: *Role-Conflict, Personality, Work Family, Police Officers.*

The policing function is viewed increasingly in terms of the contractual relationship with the people where the safety of the public is of prime importance. But amidst this, the conflict faced by the police officials is often overlooked. Though few studies throw limelight on the intra conflict faced by the police officers, most research emphasizes on the police personality. The discussion in this paper is concerned with the intra-conflict faced by police officers as a function of their personality.

Allport has defined, "Personality is the dynamic organization within the individual of those psycho-physical system that determine his unique adjustment to his environment" The concept of police personality refers to the question whether police officers who are high on openness to experience face lower conflict as compared to those who are high on neuroticism. Multiple approaches balancing work and family are adapted depending on factors such as experience or personality. In any conflict situation effective behaviour is satisfactory to both parties as compared to ineffective behaviour .

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Rubin described the police personality as assertiveness and restlessness in addition to lot of physical energy. Skolnick described police officers by the elements of authority, danger and efficiency making up the whole of working personality. Lefkowitz believed that police officers could be described by means of trait syndromes that is cluster of characteristics (Forskning, 2006).

Police work is one of the highly stressful job as it requires individuals to continuously face physical dangers, putting their lives on line. (Jukes, 2007).

A study by Solveig Abrahamsen examined the personality characteristics in relation to job performance. Job performance was evaluated by examining preferences on conflict resolution tactics and their association with perceived levels of resistance in conflict situations. Results showed that police officials varied from reference group on four major personality dimensions excluding neuroticism. The variance obtained in the personality test by officers was much lower as compared to the reference group. Police officers were found to differ in terms of preferences for conflict resolution tactics. A weak relation was found between personality and preference for tactics (Forskning, 2006).

Studies on role conflict have linked it to causes like undercover duty and critical incidents. A study by Kaufmann, Smith and Palmatier (1994) on officers working under drug narcotics assessed individuals on communication difficulties, police issues and stress symptoms. Results showed that they caused negative impact on relationships and lives of the officers. Critical incidents contributing to role conflict are often manifested via anger or resentment towards family, resulting in stress and impact performance.

Though several programs assisting the officers are made, the programs are not mandatory and often carry a stigmatism. Thus police officers continue facing a high risk conflict attempting to balance work and family.

METHODOLOGY

The current study aimed at providing further knowledge on personality characteristics and the resultant effect on internal conflict of police officers. The NEO-FFI (NEO Five factor inventory) used in the current study can be defined in terms of 5 broad factors-Extraversion (talkative, assertive, energetic); Agreeableness (good-natured, cooperative, trusting); Conscientiousness (responsible, persevering, hardworking, planful); Emotional Stability (stable, not anxious, tolerant of stress); and Openness to Experience (intellectual, curious, imaginative, broad-minded). They have been detected across various cultures, languages and nationalities (Forskning, 2006). The study also examined the role conflict in job performance faced by police officers using the adapted version of Netemeyer et al.'s (1996) scale. The scale measures conflict in both directions. It includes 10 questions focussing on job-family conflict assessing the spill-over of job over family and family over job.(Colombo & Ghislieri, 2008)

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The present study hypothesized that police officers who are high on the 4 factors (extraversion, openness, conscientiousness and agreeableness) in relation to role conflict will face lower conflict resulting in an inverse co-relation while the trait on neuroticism was expected to co-relate positively to role conflict. It was also expected that role conflict faced by women will be higher as compared to men owing to extra responsibilities at home and resultant pressure of handling both.

The sample consisted of 50 participants who were police officers at the Azad Maidan police Station and who were on-duty at various corners. Some questionnaires were sent to the participants via email and whatsapp. The sample was predominantly male (88%) with smaller percentage of female officers (6%). Individuals were assessed for their role conflict by the adapted version of Netemeyer et al.'s (1996) scale and for personality by the NEO-FFI scale. The study involved a structured interview that assessed the conflict faced and how an individual is in general. When administering the study each question for the role conflict scale was assigned a 1-7 rating while the personality inventory included 1-5 rating. Some of the questions in the inventory were reverse scoring items. Unlike other items the scoring for these items were recoded and subtracted from 6. The reverse-scored items were 2R, 6R, 8R, 9R, 12R, 18R, 21R, 23R, 24R, 27R, 31R, 34R, 35R, 37R, 41R, 43R.

The participants were administered a questionnaire in which both the role conflict issues and personality traits were measured. The personality test of NEO-FFI involved 44 items measuring the 5 dimensions. The role conflict questionnaire in contrast presented the police officers with various situation based statements. Co-relation and aggregation was used for analysis. The values were also checked for significance using the two-tailed t-value table.

DISCUSSION

The current research discusses personality differences in the police and its impact on intra conflict. The results from the study will be presented in 3 parts. First, the officers' personality test scores were compared; second the degree to which officers vary in terms of work-life conflict and third, the degree to which personality test scores correlate with conflict.

The discussion concerns the specific personality characteristics of the police officers and its resultant impact on their behaviour. Totals, means and SD for the five personality factors for the sample are reported in Table 1.

| | EXTRAVERSION | AGREEABLENESS | CONSCIENTIOUSNESS | OPENNESS | NEUROTICISM | |
|-------|--------------|---------------|-------------------|----------|-------------|-------|
| TOTAL | 1445 | 1751 | | 1645 | 1765 | 1097 |
| MEAN | 28.9 | 35.02 | | 32.9 | 35.3 | 21.94 |
| SD | 4.36 | 4.78 | | 4.51 | 4.72 | 5.94 |

The police officers were high on **openness to experience**. This quality is needed to solve murder mysteries because one has to be intellectual, imaginative to search evidence. This was followed by **Agreeableness**. Police create trust and flexibility for the citizens by being co-operative and the citizens in return help them by reporting crimes. The third personality trait

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was **conscientiousness**. The police force in India is hard-working and this has been shown in many situations like the 26/11 attacks and Mumbai floods. Thus they act in a responsible and planful way. **Extraversion** was the next. A police officer has to take risks and be full of energy for any type of work. The lowest trait was **Neuroticism**. It is important for the police to show control over their impulsivity and think before they act practically as well as emotionally.

The relatively small SD indicated that the values were close to the mean of the data set. In the sample studied, 42% officers displayed highest in openness and 82% office displayed lowest ratings for neuroticism.

The personality traits of police officers are either inherent or due to occupational socialization. The psychological paradigm states that the characteristics possessed by the certain individuals lead them to choose a career in law enforcement. The personality traits entails prior to joining the police force. In contrast the sociological paradigm states that police officers develop the traits with progress in the profession. It is perceived to be a product of occupational socialization that is the process by which newcomers become full members of organizations or groups (Forskning, 2006).

The study also examined the role conflict in job performance faced by police officers. Data collected for the work-life conflict is in table 2.

| Sr.No | ALL QUESTIONS | Questions 1to 5 | Questions 6-10 |
|-------|---------------|-----------------|----------------|
| TOTAL | 2482 | 1428 | 1054 |

TABLE 2

Here, the WFC was higher than FWC indicating interference of work over family. The correlation value (0.56) was significant ($t_{48}=5.6, p \leq 0.01$). WFC pertains to interference of job on family responsibilities. This was also found in the survey where work priorities interfered with the social life. FWC pertains to interference of family on job duties and responsibilities. E.g. Instances where family pressures affect the performance.

In the policing duty it is found that while some are tough and offensive, others are caring and not offensive. "The mature man" is able to handle this conflict.

| | EXTRAVERSION | AGREEABLENESS | CONSCIENTIOUSNESS | OPENNESS | NEUROTICISM |
|----------------------|---------------|---------------|-------------------|---------------|---------------|
| CONFLICT CORRELATION | 0.056 | 0.052 | -0.181 | 0.102 | 0.265 |
| T VALUES | 0.42 | 0.35 | -1.29 | 0.70 | 2.7 |
| SIGNIFICANCE | $p \leq 0.01$ | $p \leq 0.02$ | $p \leq 0.01$ | $p \leq 0.01$ | $p \leq 0.01$ |

TABLE 3 represents the correlational coefficients (r) and the significance. The relationship between conflict and personality was investigated using Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient. The data depicted a significant correlation between extraversion, assertiveness and conflict. The results of openness to experience ($t_{48}=0.7, p \leq 0.01$) were in line with the studies conducted by Blickle (1995, 1997). The studies attributed the higher correlation to greater experience to conflict. Thus, when police officers prefer routine work and are less prone to new experiences, they may face fewer conflicts. The results of neuroticism were

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significant ($t_{48}=2.7$, $p \leq 0.01$) and showed that feelings like anger and hostility can lead to conflict and affect both family and work life. The r value of conscientiousness was negative stating that traits like orderliness lower the conflict faced. ($t_{48}=-1.29$, $p \leq 0.01$). Thus, intra-conflict faced by police officers is significantly related to their personality.

In conclusion, police officers constitute a rather homogeneous group when it comes to scores on the Big-5 personality dimensions. They faced the similar amount of conflict in both work and family. However, an officer's ability to cope with this conflict is enhanced or hindered by personality.

Certain limitations are as follows -The questionnaire had to be translated. The percentage of women was really low. Personality tests could have led to social desirability effect. Future studies could emphasize on more personality factors.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors colorfully declare this paper to bear not conflict of interests

Authors' note

Both authors have contributed equally.

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