The Application of the Personality Inventory (NEO-PI) in the Recruitment of Police Officers: A Perspective Study for Albania

Alfred NELA

Psychologist at the State Police, Albania
http://orcid.org/0000-0002-0031-3838
alfred.nela@asp.gov.al; alfrednela85@gmail.com

Altin NIKA

Psychologist at the State Police, Albania,
altinnika@yahoo.com
Correspondence: alfrednela85@gmail.com

Abstarct

One of the main focuses of police psychology is the psychological assessment of potential officers. The main purpose of the study is to evaluate how useful the NEO-PI inventory and its variants are in the recruitment of police officers.

A systematic review of the literature using Google Scholar, PsycNet and ScienceDirect databases was conducted. Key phrases such as "Big Five" and "police officer" or "NEO-PI" and "public safety officer" were identified and analyzed to filter the material.

Based on the studies using the application of the NEO-PI test in the recruitment of police officers, they provide significant data for psychological well-being, adaptability to work, and professional integrity.

The use of the NEO-PI in the selection process of police candidates provides meaningful data to police structures and other law enforcement agencies about mental health, skills, work performance, and professional ethics. Based on applied studies and international practices, the use of personality tests such as NEO-PI in our country would be effective for candidates, the police organization, the Security Academy, and for research purposes.

Keywords: *Public safety officer, police officer, test, Big Five, NEO-PI.*

Introduction

The application of psychological tests in predicting future performance has been documented as far back as 1300 B.C. The Israeli army operating under Gideon used military aptitude tests to select suitable soldiers. The Greek army, as noted by Plato, also implemented military skill testing to screen potential soldiers (Guion, 1976). More recently, some of the earliest published psychological tests were mental ability tests, which were developed by Cattell (1890) to examine which mental abilities are associated with success in school. Blau (1994) noted that psychological testing was used during World War I to select military personnel. At the beginning of 1919 until the end of the war, the Alpha and Beta tests were used in the recruitment of new soldiers (Larson, 1994; McGuire, 1994). These tests served as a model for their other testing and the Army General Classification Test (AGCT), which was designed and implemented during World War II, was created. studies have highlighted a link between individual traits of police officers and their job performance, highlighting that a potential officer's dispositions relate to their effectiveness at work (Stewart, 2008). In recent years, in Albania, several psychological instruments have been applied in the form of interviews in the recruitment process of applicants for police officers at the Security Academy. Currently, no standardized and unified instrument has been implemented, both in the recruitment process of competitors and for police officers..

Methods of systematic literature review

The purpose and objectives of the research

The study examined the usefulness of the NEO-PI inventory and its versions in the recruitment of police officers. The systematic literature review aims to identify and analyze the effectiveness of NEO-PI targeting in the recruitment of applicants for police work.
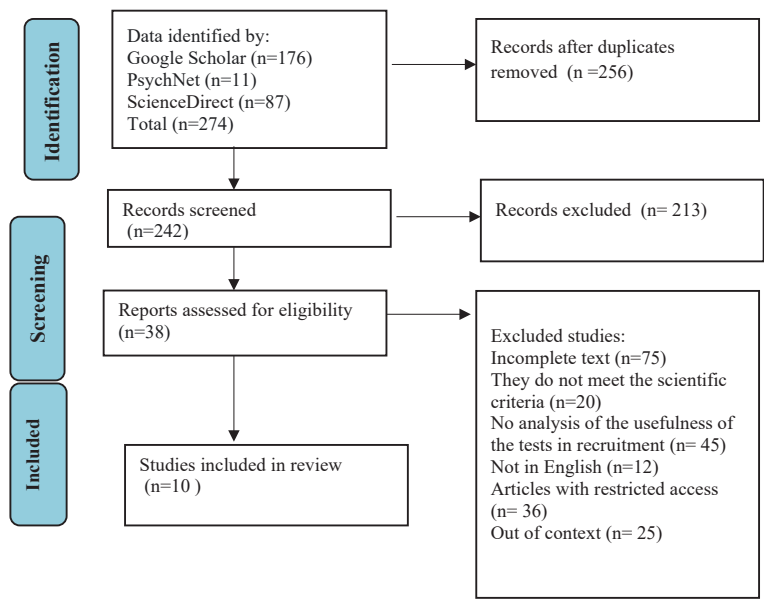
Search terms for literature and research techniques

The ScienceDirect, PsycNet, and Google Scholar databases were consulted, depending on the study's objectives. "Big Five" and "police officer," or "NEO-PI" and "public safety officer," were the precise search keywords.

Results

Ten publications were deemed appropriate for usage based on the selection criteria (Fig. 1). The study was created and according to the PRISMA process's report for systematic review standards for scientific articles (PRISMA, 2021).

FIG 1: Flow chart of the research strategy

Types of psychological tests used in the recruitment process of police officers

The use of psychological tests in the selection of applicants for police officers is a useful strategy in identifying individuals suitable to be successful employees in police structures. Certain characteristics are said to combine in law enforcement personnel to create a unique "police personality." For law enforcement personnel,

this personality type has been described as a particular value orientation. Bravery, loyalty, authoritarianism, cynicism, skepticism, physical courage, self-confidence, aggression, mistrust, secretiveness, conservatism, dogmatism, and alienation are among its interconnected personality traits. Skolnick (1966) argued that the work personality of the police officer consists of cynicism, suspicion, external isolation, internal solidarity, and conservatism (Zakaria et al., 2023). During the late 1970s, the most popular personality tests in police structures were the Minnesota Multiphase Personality Inventory (MMPI), California Psychological Inventory (CPI), Inwald Personality Inventory (IPI), 16 Personality Factors (16 PF), the Edwards Personal Preference Schedule (EPPS), and various projective tests (Fabricatore et al., 1978; Fabricatore, 1979; Inwald, 1982; Ostrov, 1986). The personality inventory (NEO-PI) was also used, which, in addition to being used in police institutions, has also been applied in other disciplines (Jonathan et al., 2013). In recent years, another set of psychological instruments has been implemented in the selection of police officers, such as the Personality Assessment Inventory (PAI), which is essentially a psychopathology test and has many similarities with the MMPI (Super, 2006). The M-PULSE is an instrument first introduced in 2008 that assesses a range of attitudes and beliefs specifically related to police work duties (Davis, 2008).

Personality Inventory (NEO-PI)

The Big Five are five fundamental personality qualities that are the focus of numerous contemporary and conventional psychological investigations. D.W. Fiske created the notion of five basic personality traits in 1949, and additional scholars including Norman, Smith (1967), and Goldberg (1990) have since added to it.The first version of the NEO was developed in 1978 by McCrae and Costa, which included only three personality domains: neuroticism, extraversion, and openness to experience, giving the instrument the name NEO. The NEO inventory was developed to assess stable personality characteristics in normal populations (Groth & Wright, 2016). It was later revised in 1985 and included the five traits, being renamed the Personality Inventory (NEO-PI). The inventory assesses individual traits in five dimensions, which are extraversion, neuroticism, openness to experience, conscientiousness, and agreeableness. In later periods, researchers updated it to other versions, such as the (NEO-PI-R) in 1992 and the (NEO-PI-3) in 2005. The NEO inventory is still widely used as the basis of personality studies. on a global scale. Another version was created based on the NEO-PI inventory by the Oregon Research Institute in collaboration with the International Personality Item Pool (IPIP-NEO) (Goldberg et al., 2006; Johnson, 2014).

The validity of NEO-PI and its versions in the recruitment of police officers

In evaluating psychological tests, two important components are predictive validity and concurrent validity. Predictive validity is the degree to which an inventory or test predicts a person's performance on the dimensions or attributes the instrument is designed to measure. An instrument has predictive validity if it is able to identify which candidates will or will not succeed in the job position for which they are competing. Concurrent validity is the degree to which a test or inventory identifies a person's actual performance on the dimensions and tasks it is supposed to assess (Bartol & Bartol, 2019). As an inventory that operationalizes the five-factor model, the (NEO PI-R) is often used in personnel selection. The California Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training has identified ten dimensions that increasingly serve as a model for screening police officer applicants. According to them, (NEO PI-R) seems suitable to be used as an instrument in the process of screening applicants for police work (Detrick & Chibnall, 2019). The personality traits of the five-factor model have demonstrated significant validity in predicting job performance (Hurtz & Donovan, 2000). A meta-analysis identified positive associations between some of the Big-Five domains and police officer performance. According to the authors, the strongest predictor of police work performance was the dimension of conscientiousness (Black, 2000). Also, the "Big-Five" approach has given positive results in predicting teamwork performance. Regarding this, in a review article, the "Big-Five" model was studied in the selection process of police personnel, the data reflected a positive correlation between extroversion and behavior related to teamwork (Rothstein & Goffin (2006). Also the findings of a another study presented significant data of (NEO) regarding group interaction style, verbal communication, leadership in emergency situations and leadership task behavior (Bowles & Bartone, 2017).Inventory (NEO-PI-3), u applied to 257 applicants for police officers, the results showed usefulness which can be used as a comparison group and reference point for future samples of recruits Chibnall et al., 2024). In another study (NEO-FFI) was applied to college students where the data showed a positive relationship between extraversion and conscientiousness, and a negative relationship between neuroticism and mental health (Yuan et al., 2011). The results of a study that explored the relationship between personality and job satisfaction among police officers showed that individuals with high conscientiousness and low neuroticism had better psychological well-being scores (Anum, 2023).

Despite its widespread use, the test (NEO-PI) presents several disadvantages that must be considered, especially when used in the context of police officer recruitment. Schmit and Ryan (1993) in their findings pointed out that the five

factor model is suitable for students and not for competitors for employment effect (Schmit & Ryan, 1993). An individual's emotional state at the time of testing can affect the results. If a candidate is under temporary stress or fatigue, this can negatively affect the assessment of their emotional stability or extraversion, giving an inaccurate result about their overall personality. The inventory (NEO-PI-R) is a standard test and does not have much flexibility to adapt to specific situations or special criteria that may be important in the recruitment of police officers. Some special structures or agencies have specific needs for their employees and may require more adapted instruments to evaluate potential candidates.

The role of the psychologist in the State Police in Albania

Psychological services in police structures in Albania started about a decade and a half ago. The work of the psychologist in the State Police is focused on the assessment, testing and psychological counseling of police officers. In 2021, the "Police Psychologist's Manual" was drafted. In cooperation with the Directorate of Human Resources and the Training Sector, under the General Directorate of the State Police. In 2022, a commission was created for the drafting of the standard procedure of assessment and psychological counseling, and trainings with international psychologists related to the recruitment procedures of applicants for police officers were also developed. For many years, psychologists from different structures of the State Police have been engaged in the selection of candidates for police officers at the Security Academy. Currently, the level of professional training of psychologists in the police organization in Albania is at satisfactory levels, based on qualifications, training, being licensed and involvement in scientific research.

Discussions

Based on the studies used, the primary purpose of the (NEO-PI) is the detailed description of the five personality dimensions and subscales. A significant part of the studies emphasize that the inventory (NEO PI-R) is suitable for use in the recruitment process of police officers (Detrick & Chibnall, 2017). Also, a limited number of researches have identified some limitations of the instrument. According to them the test (NEO-PI-R) focuses only on personality and does not measure other important skills such as cognitive skills, reaction in dangerous situations and the ability to make quick decisions. The test (NEO-PI-R) is more applied in European countries mainly in Scandinavian countries, unlike the Inventories (MMPI) and (CPI), which are widely used in English-speaking countries. Based on the widespread use of the NEO-PI inventory in countries similar to Albania, it

would be effective to standardize and apply the instrument in our country as well, in the police organization and in law enforcement agencies.

Conclusions

Five personality factors are thoroughly analyzed by the Personality Inventories (NEO-PI), which aids in behavior and performance prediction on certain tasks. In law enforcement agencies, the "Big-Five" model has proven to be a reliable predictor of both individual and group work success. Additionally, the exam is frequently utilized in academic research and the social sciences. Despite its broad application, some researchers have pointed out certain drawbacks and restrictions regarding its psychometric qualities. Researchers recommend the use of extra data, including clinical interviews, demographics, education, and employment information, when choosing candidates for police officer positions. Based on the Albanian context within the framework of the reformation of the police organization and alignment with contemporary standards, it is necessary to standardize and apply (NEO-PI) in the police structures and in the relevant law enforcement agencies. Knowing that the inventory (NEO-PI) is widely used in European countries, its application in Albania would be useful based on cultural similarities and some demographic aspects.

References

Anum, A., Acquah, B., & Osei-Tutu, A. (2023). Police Mental health in Ghana: Examining the effects of personality and police rank. *Trends in Psychology*, https://doi.org/10.1007/s43076-023-00302-x

Bartol W.R, Bartol A.M. (2019). *Introduction to Forensic Psychology: Research and Application, Education and Training.* SAGE Publications Ltd.

Black J. (2000). *Personality testing and police selection: Utility of the Big Five. New Zealand Journal of Psychology. 29*(1), 2–9.

Bowles S.V, Bartone P.T. (2017*). Handbook of Military Psychology Clinical and Organizational Practice,* Springer International Publishing.

Costa, P. X., & McCrae, R. R. (1985). NEO Personality inventory. *In PsycTESTS Dataset*. https://doi.org/10.1037/t07564-000

Chibnall, J. T., Detrick, P., & Kennedy, M. (2024). NEO-PI-3 Descriptive data for Police Officer applicants. *Journal of Police and Criminal Psychology*, https://doi.org/10.1007/s11896-024-09690-x

Davis, R. D., & Rostow, C. D. (2012). Matrix-Predictive uniform Law Enforcement Selection evaluation. *In PsycTESTS Dataset.* https://doi.org/10.1037/t05045-000

Darby J. (2023). What are the big 5 personality traits? Thomas International.

Detrick, P., & Chibnall, J. T. (2019). A Five-Factor model inventory for use in screening police officer applicants. *In IGI Global eBooks*, 1476–1489). https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-5225-8356-1.ch072

Detrick, P., & Chibnall, J. T. (2016b). A Five-Factor model inventory for use in screening police officer applicants. *In Advances in psychology, mental health, and behavioral studies (APMHBS) book series*, 79–92. https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-5225-0813-7.ch004

Fabricatore, J., Azen, S., Schoentgen, S., & Snibbe, H. (1978). Predicting performance of police officers using the sixteen personality factor questionnaire. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 6(1), 63–70. https://doi.org/10.1007/bf00890100

Guion R.M. (1976). Recruiting, selection, and job placement. In M. D. Dunnette. (Ed.) Handbook of industrial and organizational psychology, 777-828: https://doi.org/10.1177/01492063000260030

Groth-Marnat G, Wright A.J. (2016). *Handbook of Psychological Assessment*. John Wiley & Sons.

Lough, J., & Von Treuer, K. (2013). A critical review of psychological instruments used in police officer selection. *Policing an International Journal*, 36(4), 737–751. https://doi.org/10.1108/pijpsm-11-2012-0104

Goldberg, L. R. (1990). An alternative "description of personality": The Big-Five factor structure. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 59(6), 1216–1229. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.59.6.1216

Hurtz, G. M., & Donovan, J. J. (2000). Personality and job performance: The Big Five revisited. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 85(6), 869–879. https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.85.6.869

Johnson, J. A. (2014). Measuring thirty facets of the Five Factor Model with a 120-item public domain inventory: Development of the IPIP-NEO-120. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 51, 78–89. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrp.2014.05.003

McCrae, R. R., Costa, P. T., Jr, & Martin, T. A. (2005). The NEO–PI–3: A more readable revised NEO personality inventory. *Journal of Personality Assessment*, 84(3), 261–270. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327752jpa8403_05

Warne, R. T., Burton, J. Z., Gibbons, A., & Melendez, D. A. (2019). Stephen Jay Gould's Analysis of the Army Beta Test in the Mismeasure of Man: Distortions and Misconceptions regarding a Pioneering Mental Test. *Journal of Intelligence*, 7(1), 6. *https://doi.org/10.3390/jintelligence7010006*

Prisma. (2020). Prisma-statement.

Rothstein, M. G., & Goffin, R. D. (2006). The use of personality measures in personnel selection: What does current research support? *Human Resource Management Review*, 16(2), 155–180. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.hrmr.2006.03.004

Super, J. T. (2006). A survey of pre-employment psychological evaluation tests and procedures. *Journal of Police and Criminal Psychology*, 21(2), 83–87. https://doi.org/10.1007/bf02855686

Stewart C.O. (2008). *The Validity of the California Psychological Inventory in the Prediction of Police Officer Applicants Suitability for Employment*. Doctoral Dissertation, Pacific University.

Schmit, M. J., & Ryan, A. M. (1993). The Big Five in personnel selection: Factor structure in applicant and nonapplicant populations. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 78(6), 966–974. https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.78.6.966

Yuan, C., Wang, Z., Inslicht, S. S., McCaslin, S. E., Metzler, T. J., Henn-Haase, C., Apfel, B. A., Tong, H., Neylan, T. C., Fang, Y., & Marmar, C. R. (2010). Protective factors for posttraumatic stress disorder symptoms in a prospective study of police officers. *Psychiatry Research*, 188(1), 45–50. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psychres.2010.10.034

Zakaria, N. Z., Osman, I., & Noranee, S. (2023). Personality Traits and Job Performance of Police: A Systematic Literature review. *Information Management and Business Review*, 15(3(I)), 373–384. https://doi.org/10.22610/imbr.v15i3(i).3547