



MANAGING ANGER IN THE POLICE FORCE: THE NIGERIAN EXPERIENCE

NWINYE, MAXWELL

Department of Management, Faculty of Management Sciences, University of Port Harcourt, Choba,
Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria

Corresponding author: *NWINYE, MAXWELL

Phone: Email: Okenwinye@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

Anger is an emotion frequently expressed by employees in response to anxiety, frustration and hardship. The expression of anger attracts health and physical consequences depending on the magnitude of the situation. People do not have a choice whether to be angry or not it comes unexpected with warning signs that are destructive. Uncontrolled anger is disastrous as it affects mental health, personal and job relationship. Anger is a normal feeling that occurs on daily basis which people could exhibit negatively or positively. This study examines the effect of anger on the work behaviour of police officers in Nigeria. Thus, the findings of the study indicate that there is a significant relationship between anger and the work behaviour of police officers. This is demonstrated in the increase in police brutality in Nigeria and the public response with the ENDSARS protest and subsequent destruction of Police facilities and killings. The researcher therefore, recommended that government should provide adequate condition of service, train the office, and improve staff welfare to reduce anger among the police officers in Nigeria.

KEYWORDS

Anger, frustration, insufficient resources. Depression.

INTRODUCTION

Anger has no permanent residence in human life, it arises from frustration, wrong, revengeful act, personal defend, religion and culture. The environment where people work exposes individuals to anger but the ability to express the anger without causing harm or destruction to the system is imperative. Anger forms part of daily activities especially when a person persistently thinks negatively and develops feelings of hostility, irritation or impatience. Salary earners or non career servants are expected to focus their anger on problems affecting the organization not on people. Ordinarily, if someone is angry is easy to say something led to the anger or an individual is the cause of the anger. Responding to problem situation with anger is not a good option rather it makes the situation worse. For instance, a footballer who uses anger to play penalty kick is likely to play the ball outside the goal post. Lerner (2014) illustrated anger as the sadness, annoyance and aggressive reaction in response to frustration, unfulfilled goals, threat or workload. In a similar contribution, Ilhan (2014) asserted that anger is a damaging force that misleads workers to abandon their jobs resulting in mental and physical disorders. Anger entails destructive feelings that harm the holder and the environment creating problems in organization and personal relationship. Apparently, anger affects the performance of police officers who are expected to perform the civic responsibilities of protecting life and property. Police officers expression of anger leads to brutality, protest, negative organizational symptoms such as burning of police station, victimization of innocent citizens, bribery and corruption which jeopardizes the safety of members of the society (Irawanto&Primasari, 2015). It is not easy for individuals to avoid anger because anger is acquired behavior which is either observed in the road or at the workplace caused by inappropriate expression of anger. If the workers including the police officers have happy feelings and express anger positively, it leads to fair treatment, improve business life and personal relationships. Indeed, several police officers deployed to states like Imo, Rivers and Abia perform their duties in the face of work pressure or high demand at high risk situations on insecurity with no effective government policy to address their challenges (Griffiths, 2016).

Workers that adopt complex lifestyles are bound to get angry and improved anger never give people peace of mind. Top political office holders such as the president, governors, ministers, senators, managers and police men that work with anger are capable of creating conflict, division or ineffective administration unless they choose not to listen to the voice of ego and anger. This assumption is consistent with the bible quotation of Psalm 37:8 which states that cease from anger and forsake wrath, fret not you in any wise to do evil. Officers in Nigerian Police Force that dissociate themselves from anger may experience public favour with the believe that the solution to any problem begins with hopes for a better past. Individuals that exhibit anger, inequality, blame and revenge cause disunity or conflict in their workplace. Working in a highly stressful occupation attracts anger or risks for the psychological comfort of employees. Although, fighting cultism, rape, bomb attacks, violence in election, armed robbery and terrorism may also contribute to anger among police officers (Adekunle, 2017). Several factors have been identified as causes of police anger which include poor condition of service, anxiety, frustration, heavy workloads, less time for family, stress, abuse and insufficient resources (Schaible, 2018). This paper examines the effect of anger on the work behavior of police officers in Nigeria.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Anger

Kashdan & Biswas-Diener (2014) described anger as a mutual demonstrative feeling to distress which has low self esteem and significant effects on human body such as sleep problems, high blood pressure and muscle tension. Similarly, Ozkamalı & Buga (2010) emphasized that anger denotes a primitive action that carries sadness, rejection, frustration, depression and revenge against humanity. Anger is also instinctual reaction that is not consciously developed but expressed against injustice, abuse and discrimination. When anger is suppressed or not constructively exhibited it compels police officers on duty to express negative attitude, misconduct and experience accidental discharge leading to death of innocent people. Nevertheless, most persons feel happy when they are able to exhibit anger through aggressive behaviour towards an unfortunate event. The inability of police officers to control anger may result in poor decision making. Thus, the anger awareness between the victim and the perpetrator often creates fear, disagreement that is detrimental to the relationship which also affects the public image of Nigerian police force. It is not only the police that gets angry because members of the public may show anger when police officers manipulate information against victims, induce people to bear false witness, take bribe from suffering income earners, intimidation and unlawful detention (Rasdi, 2018). During 2019 governorship election in Rivers State about 500 youths were arrested by the police as a result of being angry (Nwinye, 2020).

Anger typically triggers embarrassment in the person who is angry and the recipient of the emotion. However, constructive anger enhances the achievement of demands, communication, and interpersonal relationships and prevents disturbance from internal reactive behaviours. Holding anger is not wrong if it could be defended. Positive expression of anger fosters trust, closeness and sympathy among the workers receiving low income despite the government neglect on providing social support programs like training and counseling. In spite of the adaptive functions of anger, exhibiting anger has some physical symptoms namely loud voice, throw or break things, insult or threaten people, clenched jaw, slap or fight (Şahin, 2005). Learning to control anger does not require taking problems or arguments personally. Furthermore, any person is free to be angry but it is not common to be angry with the right person, at the right time, and for the right purpose and in the right way. The anger of most police officers is on the contrary because they easily get angry when an individual insists on the right thing to be done, refuse to compromise and reject their threats.

Causes of anger

Numerous factors have been recognized as the reasons for police anger which include poor condition of service, anxiety, frustration, heavy workloads, less time for family, stress, abuse and insufficient resources (Schaible, 2018).

Poor condition of service

a. Poor condition of service signifies uncomfortable work environment with low incentives, salaries, out dated furniture or facilities and inadequate administrative policy. Ordinarily, condition of service is favourable when there is an attractive facility such as resources, buildings, comfort, lighting, management policies, sound ventilation, privacy and work balance (Iornem, 2017). Police officers express dismay over their poor condition of service that triggers anger and low commitment. Similarly, lack of government support programs increases police anger while on duty to the detriment of the society. These officers transfer anger to the recipient of this emotion which

eventually leads to forceful and unjustifiable demands (Finnegan, 2017). In situations where government refuses to provide well equipped office with conducive working conditions, the police officers are capable of intensifying anger or frustration against humanity.

b. Anxiety

Anger is a natural response to fear of loss of life, threats of violence or to physical abuse. Most employees especially the security men work with anxiety when there is high insecurity or terrorism within the work environment. The fear of accident or reprisal attack makes the police officers get angry when they are deployed to distrust or violence areas considering the fact that their job is not pleasant. An angry man could be exposed to danger because of his predicaments but where his expectations are fulfilled he expresses satisfaction to overcome risk.

c. Frustration

Frustration arises when a person did not achieve his goals. Anger is a reaction from frustration most importantly when employees get disappointment from a promise from the organization. Thus, an organization may promise the worker's salary increase with effect from the month of May 2021. From the indication of this promise, some workers relied on the promise to develop budget for their family unfortunately when the company withdraw from the pronouncement the workers express shock or anger. On several occasions the Federal government promised to provide good staff welfare for police officers but failed to implement which provoke anger among the police.

d. Heavy workload

This represents work pressure or work target that creates stress and extra busy conditions affecting the psychological and mental state of the employees. Additional responsibilities given to police officers by the Divisional Police Officers (DPO) or through the Commissioner of Police (CP) and the state cause anger that contributes to sleepless night with high risk. Workers that function under pressure may make mistakes that lead to low output.

e. Stress

Seaward (2017) noted that stress connotes nonspecific responses of the body to any demand or threat, which produces symptoms such as fast breathing, rise in blood pressure, release of hormones, tightening of muscles, perspiration and increased cardiac activity. Similarly, stress relates to an imbalance between job requirements and employee's ability to accomplish task. Stress also occurs when a person perceives that job demand is higher than the personal and social resources which is in his possession. Job stress is gradually a shared feature of modern life which results in escalation of anger in the workplace that disturbs health of workers and commercial loss (Mogadeghrad, 2014). Stress is the tension from work, family, health, money which makes people feel angry or out of control. Although, it is very easy for employees to hold anger when they experience stress. Schaible(2018) noted that the worker may express anger when the day is stressful unlike when there is no stress the employee expresses satisfaction to enhance his work attitude. Kula (2017) remarked that when officers in three states in Nigeria experienced high stress levels at the workplace the more likely they express anger and dissatisfaction with their jobs. Furthermore, Stress in organization makes some workers to engage in consistent drinking, smoking and discussion at the duty post that hinders the rate of production and personal reputation.

"a feeling or a condition a person experienced when that person perceives that demands

exceed the personal and social resources the individual is able to mobilize

f. Abuse

This entails the abnormal behaviour against an individual's will. Abuse may take the form of insulting others, insensitivity in office. Sexual abuse, forceful act, hired criticism, gossips and damaging character. All these misleading attitudes may be exhibited by police when they are angry or in search of stomach survival (Singh, 2017). Moreover, it is a deviant behaviour for a subordinate to insult his head of department.

g. Insufficient resources

When employees work with lack of equipment, inadequate raw materials and incompetent manpower they appear to be angry and dissatisfied. For example, if police officers are deprived of the required arms to fight terrorism, criminals and protect the safety of citizens they may be afraid to perform their duties effectively. In a normal system the job of police and other security agencies does not need low resources because of the risks involved. Despite the fact that these officers are trained to protect properties and safety of the nation, their lives should not be sacrificed on the altar of insufficient resources.

i. Less time for family

This symbolizes the imbalance between the job of a worker and the family. It occurs when the employee spent most of his time at work without having time with his family especially the children and wife. Lack of time for family with less reward attracts anger among the police which makes them feel frustrated and discontent. Apparently, employees that enjoy work balance are capable of increasing retention and dedication to duty.

Consequences of uncontrolled anger

a. Aggression

This refers to when an angry person attacks people verbally or physically by forcing his opinion on others. The anger of aggressive person is high and he uses terms and acts like sit down, intimidation, insult, threaten and hitting hand on the table whenever he is angry. The anger does not allow him to have patience for others input. When anger leads to aggression it leads to conflict such that no one benefits.

b. Depression

Depression signifies the level of anger that affects the feelings and thought of a person. Depression makes someone to feel inferior and unhappy. It keeps people in bondage to feel that the world is empty regardless of hard work. Those that experience depression are likely to lose interest in things that give happiness such as sex, church, work and interaction with friends. Most police officers that are depressed lose focus such that they go for arrest when the suspect is not within the environment.

c. Disrupts work relationship

A worker who gets angry easily may be isolated by his co-workers to prevent embarrassment. Frequent anger may influence the perpetrator to use abusive words against the supervisors and customers. Other staff could have a negative impression about the holder thereby sidelining him in certain job related activities. Anger interrupts the relationship with co-workers, friends and family

members. Indeed, several persons are not comfortable to have transactions with an angry man because at the point of anger he may reveal business secrets. Expression of anger could also lead to loss of employment and destroy workplace friendship.

d. Poor decision making

Anger makes it difficult for a person to concentrate with his job and plans to have good decision. If employee state of mind is not settled or occupied with anger he may have obstacle in making decision. Decision making requires peaceful atmosphere and body temperature. When anger leads to brain injury, high blood pressure and fast heart breathing it becomes difficult for the manager to preside meeting or take decision.

e. Leads to use of drugs or alcohol

Suppressed or uncontrolled anger creates the opportunity for police officers to engage in drinking of alcohols including use of drugs. Thus, using of drugs or alcohol cannot minimize anger or provide solutions to problem instead it may generate health problems to the holder. Failure to exhibit anger or control it effectively also contribute to physical health problems such as Headache, lack of sleep, heart problems, stroke and high blood pressure.

The Cycle of Anger

Marshall & Rossman (2016) asserted that anger is a natural emotion that classically follows five stages and cycle. The anger cycle includes trigger, escalation, crisis, recovery and depression.

1. The Trigger Phase

The trigger phase materializes when angry person perceives a threat or loss and his body is ready to respond. Although, this phase has an elusive change from an individual's normal or adaptive state into his stressed condition. The way anger is developed varies among individuals it may emerge from human thought processes and the environment.

2. The Escalation Phase

Escalation phase entails liberal appearance of the anger response. In this phase, the body of the holder prepares for a crisis after seeing the symptoms. This preparation is mostly physical and is showed through symptoms like fast breathing, increased heart rate, and high blood pressure. As soon as the escalation phase is established there is less chance of calming down the anger because this is the stage where the body prepares for fight or flight or withdrawal from anger.

3. The Crisis Phase

This is where the escalation phase is progressive and it is within the crisis phase that the anger reaction increases. Within this phase the body of the angry person is on full alert, prepared to take action in response to the cause. At this level, logic and rationality may be limited and the anger instinct is reacting seriously which indicates danger to both the holder and the recipient.

4. The Recovery Phase

The recovery phase arises when the anger has been expressed or controlled and the person gets recovered. In this stage, the person is aware of the procedures used in recovery from anger. Where the right intervention is utilized, the perpetrator returns to normalcy and continue activities.

5. The Depression Phase

The depression phase involves when the holder of anger feels guilty, regret, depression and embarrassment after recovery from anger. He feels less busy as the shock of the reactions of the anger is still fresh in his memory. He decides to operate with slow and steady to prevent anger inconveniences. Consequently, after the depression stage the holder automatically returns to a normal or adaptive phase where a new trigger may commence the entire cycle.

The researcher employed fight or flight theory for this study to explore the effects of anger among police officers in Nigeria. Fight or flight theory was formulated by Walter Cannon, which explains how people react to anger or threat. This theory states that when a person experience anger or faced with harm he may either aggress (fight) or withdraw (flight). It suggests that when an individual gets angry it causes harm to the physical body which leads to headache, stroke, high blood pressure and fast breathing. The application of this theory in organizations may help the police officers to know the causes of anger and the dynamics of anger management. This theory is also essential in reminding people to be in control of anger and where there is anger there should be immediate response to prevent subsequent injury.

STRATEGIES FOR MANAGING ANGER

a. Relaxation

The essence of controlling anger is to minimize the negative consequences and improve on the positive response. Relaxation denotes less thinking or feeling free irrespective of the pending tasks. A man who is relaxed cannot be angry at the same time. Anger boils the heart which exposes the holder to health and work problems. Officers that have frequent anger may overcome the consequences through relaxation which assists in reducing daily tension. Relaxation helps in improving life span of the employees it may also be in form of having rest, holiday, break and leave.

b. Humour

Humour represents things that make individuals to be happy. It involves creating activities like laughing, listening to news, music, friends' discussion and having interactions with village chiefs that are good at proverbs. It is also difficult to be angry when you're laughing. Persons with humour skills such as comedy, telling of story and funny disposition are capable of managing anger. The ability to introduce humour in the office could help in minimizing the burden of anger or frustration. Humour related actions are necessary to improve the living standard of people. In foreign countries like America, Britain, Germany and Canada, humour forms part of daily activities which cannot be conceived as hate speech or banned by the government.

c. Manage Your Thoughts

Another method of combating anger is to manage angry thoughts in certain situation. It requires awareness of symptoms of anger, understand how the body reacts and examine the evidence that supports individual idea. Search for alternative methods of handling a given situation or conflict. Indeed, inappropriate actions caused by anger could be replaced by more favourable alternatives. These alternatives include communicating effectively and listening carefully to avoid distortion of information. This could be achieved through training programmes.

d. Identifying the problem

Anger management is structured to provide solutions to problems affect the workforce. The ability of a manager to identify the actual problem of a given venture involves rigorous process that comes with confusion with numerous alternative courses of action. Sometimes, what the manager sees as the problem may not be the problem affecting the business unless there is thorough analysis and effective decision emerging from recognition of the causes of the problem or anger. Nevertheless, a problem that is defined and identified appears to be half solved because unidentified or unknown problems lead to anger, industrial conflict, waste of resources, low productivity and job dissatisfaction. Most of the managers and leaders made wrong decisions because they were unable to identify the real problems hindering their activities. For example, if the problem of poor educational standard in public university system is isolated and treated by the government, the regular Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) strike will be avoided. Government should identify the problem and find out the causes of the strike. The fundamental aim of problem identification is that if the problem is precisely identified it will provide quick solution. Therefore, if one of the causes of anger among police officers is identified as poor conditions of service, government should provide solution to address the problem.

CONCLUSION

The anger expressed by officers of the Nigerian Police Force has revealed that much attention is needed from the government policies, programs and laws to address the frustration affecting the police. It is obvious that the Nigerian police officers lack adequate knowledge on how to manage their anger. This study revealed the personal experiences and challenges faced by police officers in the discharge of their constitutional duties of protecting the lives and properties of Nigerian citizens. The NPF is a centralized institution where officers are vulnerable to anger and risk because they are posted to unfamiliar environment. In order to enhance their performances, a healthy government policy is needed not only to cater for their redeployments but also to cover their welfare, safety and health. There is evidence to show that police officers in Nigeria are suffering from poor condition of service and they need to be treated according to the international best practices of policing through adequate training, provisions of welfare packages and improved condition of services. Expression of fear and poor condition of service has significant effect on the anger level of police officers in Nigeria. Corruption among the police officers may be minimized when the officers are guaranteed of adequate condition of service. The researcher therefore recommended that government should provide favourable condition of service and improve staff welfare to reduce anger among the police officers.

References

- Adekunle, O. S. (2017). Impact of emotional intelligence, dispositional optimism, and emotional exhaustion on the psychological well-being of police officers in Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria. *International Journal of Innovation and Applied Studies*, 19(3): 717.
- Griffiths, T. H. (2016). Application of summative content analysis to a postal questionnaire. *Nurse Researcher*, 23(3): 30-36.
- Finnegan, P. (2017). *Raise your team's employee engagement score: A manager's guide*. Amacom, New York.
- Ilhan, K. H. (2014). *Anger Levels and Ways of Expressing Anger in the Working Environment for Nurses*. A Master Thesis submitted to Institute of Health Sciences, Haliç University, Istanbul.
- Iornem, K. S. (2017). *A Comparative Analysis of Job Satisfaction and Turnover Intention among Lecturers in Public and Private Owned Universities in Nigeria*. Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the award of Degree of Doctor of Philosophy, London School of Commerce/Cardiff Metropolitan University Of London.
- Irawanto, D., & Primasari, D. (2015). The effect of occupational stress on work performance of female employees: Study in Indonesia. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Management Research and Innovation*, 11: 336-345.
- Kashdan, T. & Biswas-Diener, R. (2014). *The upside of your dark side: Why being your whole self not just your good self drives success and fulfillment*. Penguin Random House LLC, New York.
- Lerner, H. (2014). *The dance of anger*. Varlık Publications, Istanbul.
- Mogadeghrad, A. M. (2014). Factors influencing healthcare service quality. *International Journal of Health Policy and Management*, 3(2): 77-89.
- Nwinye, M. (2020). Leadership predicament: An assessment of corruption and followers dissatisfaction in the government of Nigeria. *Ignatius Ajuru University/ Business & Marketing Chronicle*, 5(2): 17-29.
- Ozkamalı, E. & Buga, A. (2010). *Influence of an anger management training program on the trait anger levels of university students*. Journal of the Faculty of Education, Mersin University, 6(2): 50-59.
- Rasdi, I. (2018). Generic and police specific occupational risk factors of mental health and well-being among urban and sub-urban Malaysian traffic police officers. *Malaysian Journal of Medicine and Health Sciences*, 14(2): 87-94.
- Şahin, H. (2005). Theoretical foundations of anger control. Süleyman Demirel University, *Journal of the Burdur Faculty of Education*, 6(10): 1-22.
- Schaible, L. M. (2018). The impact of the police professional identity on burnout policing: *An International Journal of Police Strategies and Management*, 41(1): 129-143.
- Singh, A. P. (2017). Coping with work stress in police employees. *Journal of Police and Criminal Psychology*, 32(3): 225-235.
- Webster, J. H. (2014). Perceived stress among police officers: An integrative model of stress and coping Policing: *International Journal of Police Strategies and Management*, 37: 839-857.