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Exploring the Perceptions of Organizational Justice Issues on Job Satisfaction and Organizational Commitment of State Prison Staff

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Abstract

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MPA, Indiana Wesleyan University, 2020

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Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Public Policy and Administration

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Abstract

High turnover among correctional staff is a persistent challenge faced by institutions across the United States. Previous research has identified various factors influencing staff turnover intentions, with perceptions of fairness in the workplace playing a key role. Organizational justice theory offers a valuable framework for understanding how these perceptions influence job satisfaction and organizational commitment—factors linked to lower absenteeism and turnover intentions, as well as improved job performance and work-life balance. However, limited qualitative research has explored how these dynamics shape correctional staff experiences within state correctional facilities. The purpose of this study was to examine how correctional staff in Indiana perceive organizational justice in relation to job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and workplace outcomes. Using a basic qualitative approach, interviews were conducted with nine staff members representing multiple departments. Findings revealed that perceptions of distributive, procedural, and interactional justice were closely related to job satisfaction and commitment. Sixteen themes emerged across these dimensions, illustrating how perceptions of fairness in resource allocation, decision-making, and interpersonal treatment shaped staff attitudes and workplace experiences. The results offer practical guidance for correctional administrators seeking to address justice-related concerns, improve staff retention, and foster safer, more effective work environments. By highlighting the importance of fairness perceptions, this study contributes to positive social change through enhanced institutional stability and improved staff well-being.

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Dedication

I dedicate this project to my wonderful family: dad, mom (may she rest in peace), two sisters, nephew, and my Godson. They are the reasons I want to keep learning and growing so that I can support them. Also, I thank my church family and the priests who have helped and supported me spiritually. The staff and faculty at Walden University provided the best possible customer service and motivation to keep me moving forward in this journey. Finally, to correctional staff for putting their lives on the line to keep the communities safe.

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I want to give a big thanks to Almighty God, who gave me good opportunities and challenging times to shape me to be the person I am today. Also, to my sisters, Daniela and Simona, who reminded me that I can do anything I set my mind to. I also want to thank my parents, mama and tato, for immigrating to the United States so that we can pursue these wonderful opportunities. Another thanks to my church family, who continue to support me on this journey. Finally, a big thanks to Dr. Rutledge and Dr. Dailey for being a part of my committee and working with me throughout this challenging journey. I am so thankful to everyone in my life, as they believe in my abilities. The excitement I hear and see from all of them while working on this degree motivates me to always push through tough times and get to where I strive to be.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

Working in the field of corrections is often said to be a thankless job. Correctional staff work in a dangerous and hostile environment and usually work long and unusual hours, which can lead to fatigue, stress, and burnout, among various workplace factors. As a result, unsatisfactory workplace factors may lead to turnover intent, which is prevalent in the United States state prison system. For instance, the US Bureau of Labor Statistics (2022) predicted a 10% employment decrease in correctional officers and bailiffs from 2021 to 2031. Additionally, the Research Council of the American Correctional Association surveyed 23 correctional agencies from across the United States and found that turnover rates of correctional officers increased dramatically from past studies to 34%, and every institution that was surveyed reported a dramatic upsurge in correctional officer vacancies (Celi et al., 2024). Because there is a significant decline in correctional staff in the United States, it is essential to understand what factors lead to the high turnover intent of correctional staff in the United States. Several studies have explained the factors contributing to the turnover intent of correctional staff; however, there is little to no research regarding this matter in Indiana. Additionally, studies concerning correctional staff turnover intent also introduced the importance of how different factors are related to two workplace attitudes: job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

Further, various workplace factors may lead to negative (or positive) outcomes of two significant workplace attitudes: job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

Previously, researchers have indicated that positive levels of job satisfaction and organizational commitment lead to lower absenteeism and turnover intent, increased life satisfaction, and enhanced social interactions and job performance (Lambert et al., 2019). Job satisfaction and organizational commitment are two workplace attitudes studied in several research studies as they relate to the turnover intent of correctional staff. Additionally, several studies have included the correctional staff's perceptions of organizational justice on job satisfaction and organizational commitment. A review of the literature comprised numerous articles about different workplace factors contributing to turnover intent and how organizational justice plays a significant role in the two workplace attitudes.

In this study, I examined the factors contributing to turnover intent in correctional staff throughout the United States prison system. I also discuss the organizational justice theories and the evolution of these theories as they progress through public organizations, such as correctional facilities. The aim was to understand how the perceptions of organizational justice theories affect job satisfaction and organizational commitment and whether these perceptions contribute to workplace factors such as turnover intent, absenteeism, job burnout, job stress, and work-life balance. This study is significant because it fills a gap in understanding by focusing specifically on the perceptions of interactional, distributive, and procedural justice issues on organizational commitment and job satisfaction of Indiana state correctional staff and whether these factors play a role in turnover intent for Indiana state correctional personnel. The results of this study should aid the Indiana Department of Correction and the correctional administrators from

each facility by implementing fair and just organizational justice processes that will provide improved organizational commitment and job satisfaction of correctional staff. Fair and just organizational justice processes are a force of social change as they will allow correctional staff to receive the benefits of the job ethically while also improving organizational commitment and job satisfaction. Because correctional facilities employ individuals of diverse backgrounds, establishing ethically sound organizational justice to include fairness among all correctional staff can lead to maintaining a more robust correctional workforce.

This chapter will provide a detailed outline of my overall research. I will also give the background of the study, which will briefly summarize the relevant literature that prompted me to research organizational justice issues, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment of correctional staff. This chapter will also introduce the specific research problem to explain the importance and significance of this study within the public administration realm. Finally, I will explain the theoretical framework, nature of the study, operational definition of terms, assumptions, scope and delimitations, and limitations of this study.

Background

For this study, I reviewed the literature on factors that lead to turnover intent and the literature on organizational justice theories and how they relate to public policy and public administration organizations, predominately in correctional institutions. First, I reviewed the literature regarding factors leading to high turnover intentions among correctional staff. Organizational commitment (having some emotional connection to

one's workplace) has been a recurring term used to explain turnover intent. Griffin et al. (2020), Lambert et al. (2021), and Vickovic et al. (2022) found that organizational commitment has a significant relationship to turnover intent. Therefore, it is crucial to explore the factors or concepts that lead to positive or effective organizational commitment to understand why a correctional employee decides to stay working as a correctional employee as it pertains to organizational commitment.

Further, the discussion on job satisfaction can be perplexing as numerous factors may contribute to an employee's satisfaction or dissatisfaction within their workplace. For example, Lambert et al. (2021) and Haynes et al. (2020) found that trust between coworkers plays a significant role in whether prison staff are committed to the organization they work for and are satisfied with their positions in the workplace. There is still little empirical data explaining why correctional staff are possibly satisfied or dissatisfied with their positions and whether dissatisfaction with their jobs leads to turnover intent. Thus, this study aims to include organizational justice theories to explore various factors that explain the job satisfaction of state correctional staff. Additionally, this study examines whether perceptions of the three-dimensional organizational justice theories are essential to workplace outcomes for correctional staff in Indiana state correctional institutions.

Research on organizational justice theories and how these theories relate to public policy and administration have evolved for over 70 years. Researchers have differing opinions on what dimensions constitute organizational justice; some researchers only used two dimensions within their studies, while others used three or four dimensions. For

instance, in a study by Musdalifah et al. (2022), the researchers utilized distributive, procedural, interpersonal, and informational justice, while Cho and Sai (2013) used distributive, procedural, and informational justice within their study; however, Cho and Sai (2013) mentioned how interactional justice have subdimensions: interpersonal and informational justice. Researchers argue and often have different perceptions of the latter dimensions of organizational justice and which ones they use in their studies; however, most researchers can agree that interactional justice comprises the two subdimensions, which are interpersonal and informational justice. Additionally, most past literature focuses primarily on distributive and procedural justice. In this study, the three dimensions will be discussed as separate entities to explore the importance and individuality of each dimension and determine whether interactional justice is also significant to workplace attitudes of correctional staff since most past literature only includes distributive and procedural justice.

Although researchers have investigated this problem in other states, there is little to no literature on the perceptions of organizational justice issues on job satisfaction and organizational commitment of correctional staff in the Indiana Department of Corrections. Therefore, this study explored the three dimensions of organizational justice: distributive, procedural, and interactional justice, and how the perceptions of these dimensions affect job satisfaction and organizational commitment of state correctional officers. The importance of this study was to acknowledge the various factors that lead to employee job satisfaction and organizational commitment to determine why or why not the correctional staff continue working in the state prisons or perhaps why they might

leave their positions. This study is significant because it fills a gap in understanding by focusing specifically on the perceptions of distributive, procedural, interpersonal, and informational justice issues on organizational commitment and job satisfaction of Indiana state correctional staff and whether these factors play a role in turnover intent for Indiana state correctional personnel. The results of this study should aid the Indiana Department of Correction and the correctional administrators from each facility by implementing fair and just organizational justice processes that will provide improved organizational commitment and job satisfaction of correctional staff. Fair and just organizational justice processes are a force of social change as they will allow correctional staff to receive the benefits of the job ethically while also improving organizational commitment and job satisfaction. Because correctional facilities employ individuals of diverse backgrounds, establishing ethically sound organizational justice to include fairness among all correctional staff can lead to maintaining a more robust correctional workforce.

Problem Statement

There is a high turnover rate of correctional staff within the United States state prison system. Workplace factors may lead to negative (or positive) outcomes of two significant workplace attitudes: job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Past research indicates that positive levels of job satisfaction and organizational commitment lead to lower absenteeism and turnover intent, increased life satisfaction, and enhanced social interactions and job performance (Lambert et al., 2019). Therefore, it is confirmed that when there is an encouraging level of job satisfaction and organizational

commitment among correctional staff, it leads to even more significantly positive work and life outcomes.

Recent literature has focused primarily on how distributive and procedural justice affect correctional staff's job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Boetang and Hsieh (2019), Lambert et al. (2018), Lambert et al. (2019)., and Mashi (2018) found that organizational justice plays a significant role in workplace attitudes. Job satisfaction and organizational commitment have been two recurring workplace attitudes examined in the literature concerning turnover intent and organizational justice issues. Although researchers have investigated this problem in other states, there is little to no literature on the perceptions of organizational justice issues on job satisfaction and organizational commitment of correctional staff in the Indiana Department of Corrections. Additionally, past literature has taken a quantitative approach, showcasing the significant effects and relationships between organizational justice (mainly distributive and procedural justice). Nevertheless, there is still a lack of understanding of individual perceptions of organizational justice and how it relates to job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

The specific research problem is the limited understanding of how perceptions of organizational justice affect job satisfaction and organizational commitment among staff in Indiana correctional institutions. It is essential to understand the perceptions of organizational justice issues on job satisfaction and organizational commitment so that public administrators can determine what factors or concepts lead to employee dissatisfaction and a low level of organizational commitment and whether negative

perceptions of organizational justice play a role in dissatisfactory workplace attitudes. For instance, Musdalifah et al. (2022) focused on how organizational justice theories play a role in the overall satisfaction and perceived fairness of work outcomes in a federal workplace in Yogyakarta. They found that many employees positively perceive the organization in the four dimensions of organizational justice, and the organization supports the well-being of employees. Therefore, perceptions of organizational justice issues are significant in public policy and administration because they can help administrators understand how organizational factors and processes affect workplace attitudes and outcomes. Specifically, understanding the perceptions of organizational justice issues on job satisfaction and organizational commitment can help determine various factors that cause a correctional staff member to have positive or negative workplace attitudes.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore and better understand the perceptions of organizational justice issues on job satisfaction and organizational commitment of correctional staff within the Indiana Department of Corrections. It is essential to understand the perceptions of organizational justice issues on job satisfaction and organizational commitment of correctional staff to explore what leads to specific positive or negative workplace outcomes. This study utilized a basic qualitative design to interview correctional staff to understand better how they perceive the three dimensions of organizational justice and whether these perceptions influence their job satisfaction and commitment to the organization, whether negative or positive. Additionally, this

study aimed to identify whether the perceptions of organizational justice issues lead to certain workplace attitudes and outcomes, such as turnover intent, job stress, burnout, and absenteeism. In other words, this study explored whether perceptions of organizational justice issues can explain why correctional staff stay or intend to resign from their positions within the correctional institution.

Research Questions

Research Question 1 (RQ1): For Indiana correctional staff, what themes emerged based on the perceptions of organizational justice issues on job satisfaction and organizational commitment?

Research Question 2 (RQ2): How do the perceptions of organizational justice issues impact correctional employees' turnover intention?

Research Question 3 (RQ3): What other workplace factors are affected by perceptions of organizational justice issues?

Theoretical Framework

Theories on organizational justice have been researched heavily among many different researchers for over seven decades. There is a significant debate on what constitutes organizational justice, such as whether it includes two, three, or four dimensions. It is important to note that, in general, organizational justice concerns how people perceive fairness in an organizational setting (Greenberg, 1990). In this study, the three dimensions of organizational justice are explored. Further explanation of each dimension will be explained in chapter two, emphasizing why the three dimensions were chosen. Therefore, the theories that frame this study include Greenberg’s (1987) theory of

organizational justice, which includes distributive and procedural justice, and Bies and Moag's (1986) theory of organizational justice, which adds interactional justice as a third dimension within organizational justice.

Greenberg (1987) explored the distributive and procedural justice dimensions of organizational justice. Organizational justice theories have progressed throughout the years, with distributive justice being the first dimension to be discovered. Greenberg explains that distributive justice stems from Adams's (1965) equity theory, which explains that workers "compare the ratios of their own perceived work outcomes (i.e., rewards) to their own perceived work inputs (i.e., contribution) to the corresponding ratios of a comparison other (i.e., a coworker)" (as cited in Greenberg, 1990, p. 400). When there is an unequal ratio, this leads to negative perceptions of fairness. Thus, distributive justice focuses on a worker's perception of whether job outcomes or resources are fair within the workplace.

Next, the procedural justice dimension came to light. Thibaut and Walker (1975) shifted the fairness of an organization by focusing on the processes when it comes to making decisions. There is a distinction between distributive and procedural justice because the former concerns whether job outcomes such as pay, job assignment, or promotions are fair and equitable compared to what a worker has agreed to do. In contrast, procedural justice concerns whether the decision-making process in distributing particular resources was fair, just, and ethical.

Research on the dimensions of organizational justice has advanced throughout the years as more factors were found to be essential to include regarding perceptions of

fairness in the workplace. For example, Bies and Moag (1986) found a third dimension to organizational justice: interactional justice. Interactional justice concerns the interaction and quality of information given and how it is given regarding organizational outcomes. As organizational justice theories progressed, interpersonal justice also progressed, including two subdimensions: interpersonal justice and informational justice. Further review of these dimensions will be discussed in chapter two.

Organizational justice theories are relevant to this study to determine whether perceptions of fairness in an organization are essential in deciding workplace attitudes. Greenberg's (1987) theoretical work focuses on how individuals perceive work outcomes (distributive justice) and processes/behavior (procedural justice) instituted by the employing agency and how the outcomes and organization's behavior affect the workplace attitudes of employees. Bies and Moag (1986) introduced the interactional justice theory as an essential concept in organizational justice, as interpersonal communication between employees and supervising agencies plays a role in the perception of distributive and procedural justice.

Nature of the Study

This study utilized the qualitative approach to gain information to better understand the correctional officer's perceptions of organizational justice issues on job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Burkholder et al. (2020) define qualitative research as "an exploratory investigation of a complex social phenomenon conducted in a natural setting through observation, description, and thematic analysis of participants' behaviors and perspectives for the purpose of explaining and/or understanding the

phenomenon" (p. 83). A qualitative study was necessary for this particular study because of the lack of research regarding the perceptions of organizational justice issues on job satisfaction and organizational commitment of correctional officers in Indiana state correctional facilities. Additionally, the qualitative approach allowed me to gain more profound information on whether perceptions of organizational justice issues on job satisfaction and organizational commitment play a role in other workplace factors, such as turnover intent, absenteeism, job burnout, job stress, and work-life balance.

Moreover, to address the research questions in this qualitative study, the specific research design incorporated a basic quality design. I will utilize descriptive or contextual data to describe qualities or characteristics related to organizational justice issues, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment. The data was collected using a researcher-developed interview guide to conduct individual interviews; however, some interview questions reflected similar questioning from the study by Lambert et al. (2019), as well as criteria based on Bies and Moag's (1986) study. The questions were modified to allow open-ended questions so the interviewee could provide detailed explanations.

I requested permission from Indiana's Department of Correction to recruit at least nine correctional staff from two state correctional facilities in Indiana. Inclusion criteria for correctional staff included custody staff, case workers/managers, training officers, and the investigations and intelligence department. Participants varied from Indiana state correctional facilities from the northern region of Indiana, including facilities with low, medium, and high levels of security. Additionally, the chosen correctional facilities were those of all adult male facilities.

The data analysis followed Saldana's (2021) descriptive coding process and used first and second-cycle coding. The descriptive coding process first consisted of assigning words or phrases to identify common words or phrases used in the participants' responses. The second coding cycle included refining the codes into categories and, finally, themes that describe the overall or general meaning behind each coded category.

Operational Definitions

Organizational Justice is "the role of fairness as a consideration in the workplace" (Greenberg, 1990, p. 400).

Distributive Justice is "concerned with identifying the principles by which anything of value (money, goods, services, privileges, and so forth) can be fairly or equitably allocated among persons or groups (Thibaut & Walker, 1975, p. 3).

Procedural Justice refers to the fairness of the processes that guide decision-making (Greenberg, 1982).

Interactional Justice includes interpersonal communication, the quality of information given, and the timeliness of providing information from an organization's superiors (Bies & Moag, 1986).

Job Satisfaction is "how people feel about their jobs and different aspects about their jobs. It is the extent to which people like (satisfaction) or dislike (dissatisfaction) their jobs" (Spector, 1977, p. 2).

Organizational Commitment is "the relative strength of an individual's identification with and involvement in a particular organization" and "It can be characterized by at least three factors: (a) a strong belief in and acceptance of the

organization's goals and values; (b) a willingness to exert considerable effort on behalf of the organization; and (c) a strong desire to maintain membership in the organization" (Mowday et al., 1982, p. 27).

Turnover intention refers to the "cognitive process" in which "employees wanting or planning to quit their jobs" (Wells et al., 2016, para. 1).

Assumptions

The study explored whether perceptions of organizational justice issues on job satisfaction and organizational commitment of correctional staff are significant to workplace factors such as turnover intent, absenteeism, job burnout, job stress, and work-life balance. Therefore, it is assumed that organizational justice theories (or perceptions of fairness) play a role in determining a correctional staff member's job satisfaction and organizational commitment. This assumption is vital to the study because perceptions of fairness within an organization can help correctional administrators understand what factors may lead to low or high job satisfaction and organizational commitment, as well as the workplace factors listed above.

Another critical assumption to consider is how many dimensions constitute organizational justice. Numerous researchers have studied different aspects of organizational justice, and various interpretations or beliefs exist about what constitutes organizational justice. For example, some researchers believe there are only two dimensions, distributive and procedural because the interpersonal and informational justice dimensions can be linked to procedural justice. Other researchers will utilize the three dimensions, distributive, procedural, and interactional justice, as three separate

dimensions. Finally, some researchers will distinguish the four dimensions: distributive, procedural, interpersonal, and informational justice. I incorporated the three dimensions for this study: distributive, procedural, and interactional justice. Distributive and procedural justice are two distinct and widely known forms of organizational justice. Interactional justice was employed throughout this study instead of separating the term into two dimensions because of Bies and Moag's (1986) definition of interactional justice, which includes the level of interaction between employees of an organization and the timeliness of giving such information between employees.

Scope and Delimitations

Although there is plenty of research on organizational justice issues, factors that lead to turnover intent of correctional staff, and factors that contribute to job satisfaction and organizational commitment, there is little to no research regarding job satisfaction and organizational commitment, nor perceptions of organizational justice issues of correctional staff in Indiana state correctional facilities. Working in the field of corrections can be challenging, which may lead to turnover intent, absenteeism, job burnout, job stress, and difficulties in work-life balance. Using the organizational justice theories as a theoretical framework, this study addressed whether perceptions of fairness play some role in job satisfaction and organizational commitment and whether these work attitudes also impact turnover intent, absenteeism, job burnout, job stress, and work-life balance.

In this study, I interviewed different staff members from multiple departments in correctional facilities throughout Indiana. The staff members included custody staff, case

workers/managers, and the investigations and intelligence department. Custody staff were interviewed because they are considered the backbone of the prison operations, work closely with offenders and other workers, and there are plenty of opportunities for custody staff to get promoted, whether moving up in ranks within the custody department or to an administrative position. Case workers and managers were interviewed because they also work closely with offenders and other staff and have opportunities to move up in the ranks. The investigations and intelligence officers were interviewed, as this position is a significant promotional opportunity, and it can be challenging to attain this position. Although this study initially aimed to include training officers—given their role in onboarding new staff and maintaining ongoing training standards for veteran employees—I was ultimately unable to recruit participants from this group. Moreover, I decided to interview all these staff members because of their ability to move up in ranks and their ability and duty to make a considerable number of decisions within their daily job duties.

Moreover, correctional facilities employ more members of different departments outside of those whom I have interviewed. For example, prisons usually have a nursing department, a doctor and dentist, psychologists or mental health staff, maintenance, and food service workers. I did not include nurses, doctors and dentists, psychologists, and food service workers because they are often contractors. This study did not include maintenance workers because they focus on fixing mechanical, electrical, or other building needs. It is important to note that because one of the primary purposes of this study was to understand whether distributive justice (i.e., perceptions of fairness

regarding job assignment) affects job satisfaction and organizational commitment, these staff members will not be interviewed because their assignments are consistent. They do not get assigned to a specific post each day.

In this study, I interviewed 15 staff members throughout northern Indiana from correctional facilities that house adult men or women with low, medium, and high-level security. There is a potential for transferability given Indiana's diverse correctional staff; however, this exploratory qualitative study applied a researcher-developed interview guide. Therefore, this study can be replicated to understand the perceptions of organizational justice issues on job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Nevertheless, future researchers may utilize their own interview guide or different methods to explore this matter.

Limitations

Although this study addressed a gap in literature, there are some limitations. The study included a basic qualitative design in which a researcher-developed interview guide develops the interview questions; therefore, there may be little transferability and dependability. In other words, this study was exploratory because of the lack of research on the subject matter in state prisons throughout Indiana. However, interview questions were carefully constructed with guidance from similar studies that provided questionnaires from quantitative studies.

Another limitation is that only correctional staff in two different state prisons in Indiana will be interviewed that house adult males. Indiana has 18 state prisons, including those that house adult males, adult females, juvenile males, and juvenile females.

However, Indiana has different state correctional facilities, two adult male prisons were chosen because Indiana has more adult male prisons than adult females, juvenile males, and juvenile females. Additionally, a maximum of nine correctional staff were interviewed, which is another limitation because the state correctional facilities employ a significantly large number of employees. To address this limitation, I used purposive sampling to ensure I got a diverse pool of interviewees who met the inclusion criteria for this particular study.

As a former correctional employee in Indiana, ensuring a clear separation of my former role in the Indiana Department of Correction from my role as a researcher could be challenging. However, this study aimed to better understand the perceptions of organizational justice issues on job satisfaction and organizational commitment so that correctional administrators can understand whether the perceptions lead to specific work outcomes. I consulted with the Institutional Review Board and my committee members to address this limitation and ensure proper ethics.

Significance

This study is significant because it filled a gap in understanding by focusing specifically on the perceptions of distributive, procedural, and interactional justice issues on job satisfaction and organizational commitment of Indiana state correctional staff and whether these factors play a role in turnover intent, absenteeism, job burnout, job stress, work-life balance, or perhaps other work or life factors that affect correctional staff in their own personal ways. Organizational justice issues are significant regarding workplace outcomes because decision-making and final decisions are a huge part of a

correctional staff member's employment. Correctional staff must make decisions daily when it comes to dealing with offenders. However, there are also plenty of job advancement opportunities where upper management has to make tough decisions on who should get the promotion. These are part of organizational justice issues; therefore, it is essential to explore the perceptions of the organizational justice issues on job satisfaction and organizational commitment, as these can play a role in other workplace factors.

The results of this study should aid the Indiana Department of Correction and the correctional administrators from each facility by implementing fair and just organizational justice processes that will provide improved organizational commitment and job satisfaction of correctional staff. Understanding the perceptions of organizational justice issues on job satisfaction and organizational commitment can help correctional administrators realize how important it is to implement fair organizational work outcomes, processes, and communication because a lack of fairness may lead to unfavorable results for correctional staff members at all levels. This study aimed to assist the Indiana Department of Correction and its administrators in ensuring effective and efficient implementation of organizational justice issues to increase job satisfaction and organizational commitment while reducing turnover intentions.

Moreover, fair and just organizational justice processes are a force of social change as they will allow correctional staff to receive the benefits of the job ethically while also improving organizational commitment and job satisfaction. For example, plenty of research is on why correctional staff might leave their positions. However, there

is a lack of understanding of how perceptions of fairness within the workplace might contribute to positive or negative work outcomes concerning turnover intent, absenteeism, job burnout, job stress, and work-life balance. Because correctional facilities employ individuals of diverse backgrounds, establishing ethically sound organizational justice to include fairness among all correctional staff can lead to maintaining a more robust correctional workforce.

Summary

Correctional facilities employ diverse individuals throughout many departments within the prison who all work together to ensure the safety, security, and proper operations of the entire facility. Correctional staff from each department play a critical role in the daily operations of the facility, and decision-making is a significant part of their daily tasks. This study aimed to understand perceptions of fairness (or organizational justice issues) on job satisfaction and organizational commitment of prison staff in Indiana correctional facilities. Emphasis was placed on the three dimensions of organizational justice theories, distributive, procedural, and interactional justice, to understand how they play a role in job satisfaction and organizational commitment. The perceptions of organizational justice issues can also determine whether they impact other workplace outcomes, such as turnover intent, absenteeism, job burnout, job stress, and work-life balance. Moreover, chapter two focuses on the literature review, where there will be detailed explanations of the three organizational justice theories, as well as the importance of exploring the two workplace attitudes, job satisfaction and organizational

commitment, and how positive or negative perceptions contribute to turnover intent, absenteeism, job burnout, job stress, and work-life balance.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Correctional institutions face high turnover rates due to various factors that play a role in turnover intentions, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment. Consequently, there is a lack of knowledge on whether organizational justice or perceptions of fairness have a role in job satisfaction and organizational commitment of correctional staff in Indiana. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of organizational justice issues on job satisfaction and organizational commitment of the correctional staff. There are different departments within a prison, and correctional staff from each department play a critical role in maintaining the safety and security of those who occupy the facility. Given their dangerous environment, correctional facilities must maintain a safe number of staff to increase adequate safety and security measures.

In this chapter, a review of the literature showcases past studies on the evolution of organizational justice theories, how organizational justice impacts public organizations, and how organizational justice influences workplace outcomes such as job satisfaction and organizational commitment. The literature review also includes how other workplace factors are influenced by organizational justice, such as turnover intent, absenteeism, job stress, job burnout, and work-life balance. Past and current literature regarding perceptions of organizational justice on job satisfaction and organizational commitment explains that organizational justice, specifically distributive and procedural

justice, are significant factors that impact a correctional staff member's job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

Moreover, I review the definitions of organizational justice and its origins. I will also explain the significance of organizational justice as a theoretical framework for this current study. Finally, this literature review includes past research on organizational justice issues on job satisfaction and organizational commitment, organizational justice issues that turned into court cases, and articles that focus on the turnover intentions of correctional staff. It is important to note that past research utilized quantitative approaches to discover the significance of organizational justice issues on job satisfaction and organizational commitment. In contrast, this study used a qualitative approach due to a lack of understanding of perceptions of fairness in an organization on job satisfaction and organizational commitment of prison staff in Indiana state correctional facilities. Therefore, this study aimed to explore the perceptions of organizational justice issues on job satisfaction and organizational commitment of correctional staff to understand whether the perceptions of fairness lead to negative or positive workplace outcomes and attitudes.

Literature Search Strategy

I searched for critical terms and databases to obtain relevant information for this study. Most of the relevant literature spanned from 2018 to 2023; however, some articles were published more than five years ago, which shows that there has not been consistent literature throughout the years regarding the purpose of this study. Additionally, the

theoretical framework includes studies from the original authors conducted as early as the 1950's.

I utilized Walden University's library resources and Google Scholar search engine and obtained physical copies of books on organizational justice theories to gather information for the literature review. The key search terms I used were correctional officer turnover rate, employee turnover, corrections, correctional officer retention, correctional officer voluntary turnover, correctional staff, organizational justice, distributive justice, procedural justice, interactional justice, corrections officers, organizational commitment in corrections, work-family conflict, job satisfaction, job stress. The databases I used were APA PsycInfo, Emerald Insight, Gale Academic OneFile Select, Public Administration Abstracts, Social Sciences Citation Index, Supplemental Index, Business Source Complete, Complementary Index, and ScienceDirect. These databases included peer-reviewed journal articles, which I used to find relevant literature about the problem of the study and theoretical framework. Additionally, I utilized textbooks to get more original information from the organizational justice theories.

Theoretical Framework

The theory that shaped this study is organizational justice. Organizational justice is the perception of fairness in the workplace or organizations (Greenberg, 1990). Organizational justice has been studied for the past 70 years, creating dimensions of organizational justice. There is much debate on how many dimensions there are; however, past researchers acknowledged several critical aspects of organizational justice

that are important to consider when assessing the fairness of organizational outcomes. I focused on the three-dimensional organizational aspects of this study: distributive, procedural, and interactional justice. Each dimension of the organizational justice theory intertwines with one another and can play a crucial role in understanding the role that the perceptions of fairness play in job satisfaction and organizational commitment of correctional staff.

Distributive and Procedural Justice

Organizational justice has a complex yet thorough history of research. It is important to note that distributive justice was the first dimension to be researched before introducing the general overview of organizational justice. Distributive justice stems from Adam's (1965) equity theory, which states that individuals compare the work outcomes they receive from an organization (i.e., pay, rewards, benefits, job assignment) to the input the employee puts forth into their work (i.e., education, experience, time, dedication), and then compare those to that of their colleagues. Therefore, equity theory focuses on whether work outcomes have been distributed in a way that allows employees to receive what they deserve or measure up to. Hence, distributive justice was born. It is important to note that early research on the separate dimensions of organizational justice theories was prevalent in behavioral science research; however, because of the heavy emphasis on studying organizational justice in workplace settings, Greenberg (1987) proposed the term "organizational justice" as the studies tend to focus on understanding perceptions of fairness within the organization.

Moreover, Greenberg (1987) introduced the concept of organizational justice by separating distributive and procedural justice into two dimensions: reactive proactive dimension and process content dimension, resulting in four conceptualizations: reactive content, proactive content, reactive process, and proactive process. This conceptualization is necessary to show the interrelationship between distributive and procedural justice. Before this conceptualization, Greenberg studied multiple approaches to distributive and procedural justice from numerous authors. According to Greenberg (1987), the reactive component of justice means that people look to prevent or deter unreasonable situations, whereas the proactive theories of justice look at individuals who engage in ethical or favorable circumstances. Thus, reactive proactive approaches to justice focus on how people react in certain situations, whether negatively or positively.

The process content theory was derived from processes evident in the legal system. Greenberg (1987) explained that the process content component of justice "focus on the fairness of the procedures used to make organizational decisions and to implement those decisions," whereas the content dimension "concerns themselves with the fairness of the resulting distribution of outcomes" (p. 10). Therefore, the process content dimension focuses on whether the means to make organizational decisions were fair and resulted in a fair distribution of outcomes, which is part of procedural justice. Similarly, the reactive process theory is derived from Thibaut and Walker's (1975) theory on procedural justice, in which they explain the theory by utilizing the processes of the legal system. For example, the United States and British use the adversary system, where the judge is the ultimate decision-maker regarding the verdict but gives the attorneys the

responsibility of presenting evidence that the judge will incorporate into their decision. In contrast, in the inquisitorial system in continental Europe, the judge handles the entire process within a court case, such as processing and presenting evidence and deciding the verdict (Greenberg, 1987). Whether there is an adversarial or inquisitorial system, the main objective is that there is a specific process that decision-makers go through to come to some conclusion.

The reactive content theory investigates the perceptions of the allocation of resources. The reactive content theory explains how people react to undesirable situations, such as showing negative feelings or behavior because of unfair circumstances (Greenberg, 1987). The reactive content theory is a part of distributive justice because individuals react in a certain way based on how they feel toward the workplace outcomes given to them. If an individual puts in more effort and gets less than they believe they deserve, they will have negative feelings towards the organization. On the other hand, proactive content conceptualization concerns how people work towards implementing fair and just work outcomes so that what workers get is proportional to the amount of effort, skills, and knowledge they put into their daily work (Greenberg, 1987). In other words, the proactive content theory explains how workers are working preemptively to ensure fair allocation of resources within the workplace.

The reactive process theory concerns an individual's reaction to processes. Greenberg (1987) adds that the parties involved and outsiders are more likely to prefer the adversarial system since there is process control, rather than one individual handling all the facts and evidence and making their own decisions based on what they have

processed themselves. The proactive process theory, derived from the allocation preference theory, focuses on allocating resources, explicitly determining what processes individuals will utilize that will result in preferable, accurate, reliable, and ethical outcomes (Greenberg, 1987). Specifically, people tend to choose procedures that allow individuals to attain their goals. Furthermore, extensive research on separate justice theories has been conducted, which can confuse what each conceptualization entails. Greenberg (1987) focused on the taxonomy of organizational justice theories to better understand how each dimension is interrelated to one another and acknowledged that without proper knowledge of the differences between the dimensions, researchers could improperly or unethically implement specific terms within organizational justice theories that will result in adverse or unpreferred outcomes. Therefore, each dimension in Greenberg's taxonomy, which includes distributive and procedural justice, is equally essential so that organizations are cognizant of all the factors they need to consider when distributing resources and ensure that the process is fair and ethical.

Moreover, distributive and procedural justice are crucial when studying organizational behavior because they explain employee work attitudes. For example, Heneman (1985) found a significant correlation between perceptions of pay distribution and pay satisfaction (as cited in Greenberg, 1987). Thus, perceptions of distributive justice are essential to consider within organizations because the allocation of resources can affect employee satisfaction (negatively or positively) within the organization they work for. Regarding procedural justice, Greenberg (1986) found the importance of ethical procedural justice practices when it comes to performance appraisals (as cited in

Greenberg, 1987). Employees seek fair, consistent, and ethical measures when it comes to being evaluated based on their work performance. Altogether, distributive and procedural justice are critical components of an employee's work attitudes, as a fair or unfair distribution of resources and processes can affect their perceptions of justice within the workplace.

Extensive research on organizational justice theories focused on the perceptions of fairness in the distribution and processes of workplace outcomes; however, there was little research on the level of interaction in which workplace outcomes were discussed between upper management personnel and their subordinates. Bies and Moag (1986) introduced the interactional justice dimension of organizational justice, which explains that upper management level personnel must provide truthful explanations regarding workplace processes or procedures; they should be able to explain why and how decisions were made and have respectful interpersonal communication. Interactional justice means that management or leadership personnel must have practical interpersonal communication skills that allow their subordinates to gain the necessary information to understand why a particular decision was made. Further analysis of the interactional justice theory proposes that the general guidelines mentioned before play a role in workers' overall work attitudes. For instance, Bies (1987) assessed the explanation and level of respect that a supervisor provided to their subordinates and found a relationship between an explanation and respect to the perceptions of fairness within an organization (as cited in Pattnaik & Tripathy, 2019). Hence, how a supervisor or leader justifies the decisions can significantly impact how employees perceive fairness in the workplace.

Interactional Justice

There is little literature on interactional justice and the importance of how this dimension may affect job satisfaction and organizational commitment in the workplace, especially for correctional staff. Interactional justice is essential when choosing an organization to work for, as interpersonal relationships among coworkers and supervisors are crucial to an employee's overall work performance. Bies and Moag (1986) studied Master of Business Administration students and their perceptions of fairness in corporate recruitment practices, focusing on four principles that people would utilize to assess the interactional justice issues during their job search. The four principles are truthfulness, respect, propriety of questions, and justification.

Job searchers seek justice during job recruitment due to the uncertainty of the recruitment process; thus, the truthfulness criteria were assessed by perceptions of deception and candidness. Bies and Moag (1986) found that deception is a reoccurring theme in unjust recruitment practices as job seekers felt that the recruiter was not telling the whole truth or not following up on what was said during the recruitment process. On the other hand, candidness was another recurring theme. For example, Bies and Moag (1986) gave an example of how a job candidate explained that he appreciated the honesty that the job recruiter laid out and offered expectations of both the recruiter and the candidate. Altogether, job seekers are often anxious when choosing a job they are suited for and wonder if they will be selected to fulfill the position due to deception during the recruitment process; however, candidness can result in more positive views regarding the recruitment process.

Next, the principle of respect was evident when recruiters showed disrespectful language and attitude towards the job candidate. One of the job candidates was discouraged when a firm member lacked interpersonal communication skills through rude remarks and lack of eye contact during conversations (Bies & Moag, 1986). Therefore, a lack of respectful interpersonal communication may lead an employee to feel a lack of fairness in the workplace.

Thirdly, the propriety of questions was significant regarding inappropriate and injurious questioning. Two of the candidates experienced inappropriate and prejudicial questioning by prospective employers based on their gender and race, discouraging them; however, the candidates were aware of the unfairness and illegality of the questioning (Bies & Moag, 1986). Improper and prejudicial statements in questioning show the lack of fairness and respect for others because the candidates see that the employers are not looking at skill or experience; instead, they are looking more into demographic factors.

Finally, justification is essential when it comes to the recruitment process. For example, Bies and Moag (1986) share that a job candidate was called back for a visit for their second interview; however, an hour passed, and the candidate never received a response as to why he was not called back for the second interview. The researchers explained that individuals seek an explanation as to why a particular decision was made, which they perceive as fair when they understand the justification (Bies & Moag, 1986). When employers give updates or follow up on organizational decisions or situations that aris, employees (or prospective employees) can have some closure and respect for the employer's decisions.

Most recently, organizational justice theories have been utilized in research within public policy and administration organizations. Lambert and colleagues conducted plenty of research regarding the perceptions of organizational justice on job satisfaction and organizational commitment; however, only distributive and procedural justice were utilized within their theoretical framework. I chose to use organizational justice for the theoretical framework of this study because the objective is to understand what factors are essential to consider when understanding the levels of job satisfaction and organizational commitment of correctional staff. Lambert (2003) found that distributive and procedural justice were significant factors influencing job satisfaction and that only procedural justice was essential in organizational commitment for correctional staff. Therefore, exploring the perceptions of fairness within an organization is necessary to determine how job satisfaction and organizational commitment are affected. Additionally, it is vital to examine perceptions of organizational justice theories of correctional staff to determine whether the perceptions also play a role in other factors such as turnover intention, absenteeism, job burnout or stress, and work-life balance.

Literature Review Related to Key Concepts

Perceptions of fairness in the workplace have held considerable attention within organizations; however, earlier forms of justice were focused on social interactions or behavioral studies. Distributive justice was the first prominent dimension in the field of organizational justice, stemming from Adam's (1965) equity theory, which proposes that workers compare the amount of reward (monetary) they receive to the amount of work they put in and then compare the amount to others within the workplace. People seek

justice or equity when it comes to receiving rewards based on their performance within the workplace. The equity theory inspired further research to gain a deeper understanding of how the equity theory worked. For example, Adams and Freedman (1967) and Greenberg (1982) found that the amount of pay can affect workers' performance levels, such as doing less work when underpaid but working diligently when they are overpaid (as cited in Greenberg, 1990). Studies on equity theory have shown that salient work outcomes, such as pay, are significant to organizations as work outcomes can affect workers' behavior or overall performance.

Distributive and Procedural Justice

Equity theory has also inspired more research by expanding the concept into a multidimensional model. Leventhal (1976) recognized that equity theory only focused on the perceptions of fairness, whereas justice must include perceptions of fairness in organizational procedures. Therefore, the justice judgment model was enacted to explain the rules of justice regarding perceptions of fairness in the workplace. The justice judgment model includes distributive and procedural rules. According to Leventhal (1976), the distribution rule means that perceptions of fairness concerning rewards and contributions are equal when based on specific criteria set forth by an organization. Distribution rules include subdimensions such as the contribution rule, in which those who work harder should gain a better reward; the needs contribution is based on those who show that they deserve a higher reward should gain the higher award; the equality rule means that each worker gains an equal distribution of rewards. These distribution rules are assessed based on social circumstances that may change how rewards are

distributed. Procedural rules focus on the perceptions of fairness in distribution processes and are deemed just and fair. Therefore, procedural rules focus on whether processes are constant, meaning they are fair and equal across a diverse workforce or different situations.

As mentioned previously, organizational justice theories have existed for several decades, with extensive research on each dimension and the validity of each dimension. Folger and Konovsky (1989) suggested that procedural justice "is more closely related to the evaluation of system or institutional characteristics," while distributive justice "is more highly related to the evaluation of specific outcomes" (p. 115). Procedural justice is often invoked to assess the legitimacy of organizational processes, whereas distributive justice focuses on the result of the decisions made within an organization. In a study by Folger and Konovsky (1989) on the effect of distributive and procedural justice on employees in a manufacturing plant regarding pay decisions, they found that distributive and procedural justice plays a role in pay satisfaction for individual workers; however, the processes to establish pay raises also plays a significant role in organizational commitment and trust in supervisor. This study shows that perceptions of distributive and procedural justice are essential in satisfaction and organizational commitment within organizations; however, it is still unclear whether these findings apply to organizations across different fields, specifically in public policy and administration.

Research about distributive and procedural justice has continued to evolve throughout the years, finally shifting focus to how these two dimensions of organizational justice affect work outcomes. Pay satisfaction, job satisfaction, organizational

commitment, and relationship with the supervisor are a few of the many work outcomes that are typically assessed to determine whether distributive and procedural affect these outcomes. McFarlin and Sweeney (1992) conducted a quantitative study of bank employees to evaluate perceptions of distributive and procedural justice and their role in pay and job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and the bank employees' evaluation of their supervisor; they found that distributive justice is a strong predictor of pay and job satisfaction, while procedural justice has a significant effect on organizational commitment and evaluation of supervisor. McFarlin and Sweeney (1992) explain that workers tend to have positive views on organizations when the processes or decision-making is consistent and fair, regardless of the employees' pay; however, pay cuts may still cause harm to an employee regarding their financial situation, notwithstanding of fair and consistent organizational processes. Therefore, distributive justice is vital to a worker's pay and job satisfaction because employees feel they deserve satisfactory pay for the amount of work they put into the organization. In contrast, procedural justice is a significant factor in how workers perceive the organization. When organizations are consistent, fair, and just, workers are more likely to stay committed to their organization.

Organizational justice is significant in the legal field, as unfair work outcomes and procedures can lead to lawsuits. Chan (2000) highlights three landmark cases in which breaches of organizational justice, specifically distributive, procedural, and interactional justice, have led to lawsuits on organizations due to poor and unjust treatment of employees by their superiors. The first landmark case concerned a 1994 lawsuit against the company Texaco. The lawsuit showcases a violation of distributive,

procedural, and interactional justice because the complaint was that the company was notorious for denying promotions to minority employees and enabling racial injustice in the workplace. During the lawsuit, a recorded audio file revealed that Texaco management violated interactional justice when they made critical remarks against black employees, and they violated distributive and procedural justice when they threatened to subdue evidence of the lawsuit (Chan, 2000). The lawsuit resulted in new measures to address racial disparity in the company, such as promoting more minorities and awarding them more contracts and diversity training. This lawsuit shows that racial disparity is a detrimental violation of organizational justice, which can lead to high-class lawsuits. Interactional justice was violated when the management team spoke irreverently against their minority employees, and distributive and procedural justice were violated because the management team failed to offer a fair process for promoting minority employees within the company.

The second lawsuit pertained to a 1992 lawsuit against the State Farm Insurance company for failing to offer sales agent positions to women, violating organizational justice. In this lawsuit, a female employee who made a considerably low income sought a sales agent position but was denied the promotion due to being a female and not having a college degree. The management team explicitly told the female employees that they would not allow females to become sales agents; however, some male employees did not have a college degree yet still could obtain the sales agent position (Chan, 2000). This lawsuit violates interactional justice because the management team lied to the employee regarding the requirements to become a sales agent and distributive and procedural

justice was violated because the female employee was denied a promotion based on her sex and was not given a fair chance to get promoted.

Finally, the third lawsuit in 1993 was filed after female employees at Lucky Stores Inc. were denied promotional opportunities, violating both distributive and procedural justice. In this lawsuit, distributive justice was violated when Lucky Stores Inc. failed to offer promotional opportunities to their female employees and steered them to mundane and low-wage positions, and procedural justice was violated when Lucky Stores Inc. did not market promotional opportunities to the female employees (Chan, 2000). Similar to the case of Texaco, this lawsuit led to the policy forbidding racial and sex discrimination in hiring and promotional practices and offering training programs for females to learn more about managerial positions. This case shows that sex discrimination is a violation of distributive justice because individuals of the opposite sex from the management team are not given a chance to grow within a company based solely on their gender. Procedural justice was violated because of the management's decision only to require females to work at lower-level jobs because they are simply females and not based on their skill, education, or experience.

Furthermore, a review of the literature shows that researchers have different views regarding the dimensionality of organizational justice. For instance, most studies utilize the two dimensions of organizational justice to assess perceptions of fairness within organizations: distributive and procedural; other studies use the three dimensions: distributive, procedural, and interactional justice; finally, some studies have used the four dimensions: distributive, procedural, interpersonal, and informational justice.

Additionally, there is often debate on the distinctness of interactional, interpersonal, and informational justice. According to Bies and Moag (1986), interpersonal and informational justice are included in interactional justice. On the other hand, Colquitt (2001) focused his study on the construct validity of the dimensions of organizational justice by looking at two studies, in which one was in a university setting while the other was in an automobile manufacturing field, and found that the four-dimensional factor of organizational justice are separate and unique dimensions. The four dimensions of organizational justice are distinct because of their different effects on workplace factors such as satisfaction, commitment, leader evaluation, rule compliance, and collective esteem. Past research on the dimensions of organizational justice concludes that interactional justice falls under the definition of procedural justice; however, Colquitt (2001) found that combining interactional justice and procedural justice would hide significant distinctions between the two dimensions and, more specifically, it is essential to distinguish the two components of interactional justice: interpersonal and informational justice, as they also showed disparate effects within the research. Despite this new evidence regarding the construct validity of the dimensions of organizational justice, it is imperative to discuss whether specific workplace outcomes or attitudes are significant to the different dimensions of organizational justice as those variables play an important role in the construct validity.

Organizational Justice and Workplace Outcomes

More recently, literature on organizational justice has been prevalent in the field of corrections. Researchers specifically focused on how two workplace outcomes, job

satisfaction and organizational commitment, are affected by perceptions of organizational justice, namely distributive and procedural justice. In Lambert's (2003) quantitative study, the researcher focused on the effects of distributive and procedural justice on job satisfaction and organizational commitment on correctional staff in a midwestern facility and found that distributive and procedural justice have positive effects on job satisfaction; however, only procedural justice has a positive impact on organizational commitment. The research suggests that distributive justice significantly affects job satisfaction, while procedural justice significantly affects organizational commitment. For example, Lambert (2003) defines job satisfaction as the "assessment by a worker on whether his or her needs and wants are being met;" thus, distributive justice concerns the perceptions of fairness of work outcomes that organizations distribute (p. 162). Therefore, distributive justice is closely linked to job satisfaction because when people see work outcomes as fair and just, they are more likely to have a better outlook on their jobs. In contrast, Lambert et al. (2007) assessed the impacts of distributive and procedural justice on correctional staff job stress, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment on correctional staff, and they found that procedural justice had a significant effect on job satisfaction, while distributive and procedural justice both had adverse effects on job stress and organizational commitment. It is important to note that in Lambert's (2003) study, various staff members (such as correctional officers, counselors, medical staff, maintenance supervisors, first-line and middle supervisors, managers, and wardens) were surveyed at a midwestern correctional facility. However, it is unclear whether the correctional facility housed adults or juveniles, whereas, in Lambert et al. (2007), the

staff was at a midwestern correctional facility that housed young adult correctional facility and the staff surveyed included correctional officers, case managers, medical staff, industry staff, and food service workers. These two studies showed conflicting results because the first study showed that both procedural and distributive justice play a significant role in job satisfaction. In contrast, the second study showed that only procedural justice significantly influenced job satisfaction. Additionally, Lambert et al. (2007) added another workplace outcome, job stress, and found that distributive and procedural justice negatively influenced job stress and organizational commitment. Because of the uncertainty of the setting in the former study and the inclusion of upper management personnel, it is possible that these demographic factors played a role in the conflicting results.

Research on how organizational justice may affect work outcomes has also been conducted in other countries outside the United States; however, the results are similar to those within the United States. For example, Lambert et al. (2018) conducted an exploratory quantitative study on the effects of organizational justice (distributive and procedural only) on organizational commitment, job involvement, and job satisfaction in two Chinese prisons, one housing all adult males and the other housing all adult females; they found that distributive and procedural justice are significant to organizational commitment; however, distributive justice was the only dimension that showed a significant positive effect on job involvement and job satisfaction. The results of this study propose that distributive and procedural justice are crucial to the overall operation of the prison when staff view the organizational processes as fair and ethical (Lambert et

al., 2018). Thus, positive perceptions of distributive and procedural justice lead to more satisfied and committed correctional staff.

Perceptions of organizational justice on employee work outcomes expand beyond job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Mashi (2018) focused their quantitative study on local government staff in Nigeria to determine the effects of distributive, procedural, and interactional justice on job satisfaction, turnover intent, Organizational Citizenship Behavior, and deviant behavior. Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB) is an uncommon term in organizational justice literature; however, it is a crucial factor to consider. OCB refers to the behaviors that employees perform that are unique to them and transcend what the organization expects of their employees (Organ, 1988; Jandeska & Kraimer, 2005). Furthermore, Mashi found that all three dimensions of organizational justice significantly relate to job satisfaction, turnover intent, OCB, and deviant behavior. These results are consistent with past literature, showcasing that perceptions of organizational justice are important to various workplace outcomes. More specifically, this study's results explain that when employees perceive organizational treatment and procedures as fair, they are more likely to be satisfied with their jobs, which then leads to an increase in positive OCB by employees who are more willing to exceed in job performance and stray away from deviant workplace behavior (Mashi, 2018). Therefore, positive views on organizational justice led to positive work behaviors and more content workers.

Organizational justice literature is evolving as more factors are considered to determine whether perceptions of organizational justice affect various workplace

outcomes and attitudes. Cho and Sai (2013) focused on individual and organizational-level factors when exploring organizational justice issues. The authors used hierarchical linear modeling to examine the three dimensions of organizational justice, which are distributive, procedural, and informational justice. The organizational-level outcomes that the authors explored were the expectancy of career development, employee satisfaction, loyalty to senior leadership, and cooperation. Altogether, the authors found that all three dimensions of organizational justice are significantly associated with employee attitudes: expectancy of career development, employee satisfaction, loyalty to senior leadership, and cooperation. The authors conclude that "establishing fair practices deserves to be among the priorities of the federal government" (p. 244). The authors also found that individual-oriented outcomes, such as expectancy for career development and employee satisfaction, are influenced more by distributive justice. In contrast, organizational outcomes, such as loyalty to leadership and cooperation, influence procedural justice. Finally, informational justice has the highest coefficient for three outcomes and is crucial in the federal workplace.

Thus far, it is evident that perceptions of organizational justice are important in understanding what factors affect workplace attitudes of correctional staff, such as job satisfaction and organizational commitment. In a quantitative study by Lambert et al. (2019), a diverse staff at an adult male Southern correctional facility was surveyed to explore the perceptions of distributive and procedural justice on job satisfaction, organizational commitment, fear of victimization, role overload, and perceptions of training; and the researchers found that perceptions of quality of training and distributive

and procedural justice have a positive influence on job satisfaction; meanwhile, role overload had a negative impact, and perceptions of training and procedural justice have significant positive influences in organizational commitment. Interestingly, the results of this study also showed that correctional staff with college degrees had lower levels of job satisfaction and organizational commitment. However, female staff had higher levels of job satisfaction (Lambert et al., 2019). These results are consistent with past literature. It is important to note that quality of training is vital to a correctional staff's job satisfaction; however, when their role is overwhelming or uncertain, it leads to unsatisfactory perceptions of the job. Additionally, quality training fosters workers to commit more to the organization.

Literature on perceptions of organizational justice on job satisfaction and organizational commitment have been predominant in prisons housing adult males and females. However, Boateng and Hsieh (2019) studied the role that organizational justice has on job satisfaction and organizational commitment in five different correctional facilities in Ghana: one adult male facility, one adult women facility, one juvenile facility, one camp prison, and one prison headquarters; and they found that procedural justice has a positive effect on job satisfaction and organizational commitment and that perceptions of distributive justice are significant to job satisfaction; however, interactional justice did not have any significant relationship to job satisfaction or organizational commitment. Boateng and Hsieh (2019) explain that Ghana has a centralized government; thus, there is little need or opportunity to develop interpersonal relationships between subordinates and their superiors; thus, interactional justice is not

relevant to the correctional staff at Ghana correctional institutions. Moreover, distributive and procedural justice significantly influence job satisfaction and organizational commitment. The employees are likely to have fair and positive levels of job satisfaction and organizational commitment when the work outcomes and procedures are fair, ethical, and consistent, even when the employee does not obtain better work outcomes (Boateng & Hsieh, 2019). When organizations and their administrators provide just processes for distributing work outcomes, employees are more likely to be content with the decisions that the organizations make.

Job satisfaction and organizational commitment are two crucial workplace attitudes concerning the overall performance of correctional officers, and organizational justice is an important factor that affects these two workplace attitudes. Another factor that is critical to consider in the well-being of correctional staff is work-family conflict. May et al. (2020) focused on the perceptions of distributive and procedural justice on correctional staff in a Southern state adult-male prison and how it affects job stress and work-family conflict; they found that procedural justice is a significant factor in strain-based work-family conflict and higher levels of perceptions of procedural justice led to lower levels of strain based work-family conflict; however, distributive justice was an irrelevant contributing factor to work-family conflict. May et al. (2020) explain that the reason behind these findings regarding distributive justice is that the majority of staff that were surveyed were females who live in a more disadvantaged state within the United States; thus, there are not high expectations of providing higher wages given the resources by the state. Moreover, the results of this study indicate that procedural justice

had a significant influence on work-family strain because custodial staff more often encounter situations in which policies and procedures are stricter, which causes inflexibility in how and why decisions are made, which can lead to unfavorable outcomes for custodial staff (May et al., 2020). Hence, custodial staff are more likely to have strain-based work-family conflict than administrative staff when policies and procedures appear more unyielding and unfavorable towards custodial staff, leading them to stress and be overwhelmed due to the unjust procedures at work. In a similar study, Tran (2023) conducted a survey on state employees in Vietnamese to examine how work-family life may affect organizational commitment using occupational stress and organizational justice as the framework, and they found that work-family balance only partially affects organizational commitment and occupational stress; however, organizational justice has no effect or significant relationship to work-family conflict given the rural atmosphere and limited resources within the country; thus, the employees tend to appreciate their current positions despite unjust practices from their employers.

As mentioned previously, working in public institutions can be difficult and stressful. Therefore, administrators must understand what factors may lead to unfavorable work outcomes and set proper and efficient protocols to ensure an ethical and efficient work atmosphere. In a study of a Regional Personnel Agency in Yogyakarta, Musdalifah et al. (2022) used in-depth interviews to understand how perceived organizational support sustains employee performance by examining the four dimensions of organizational justice: distributive, procedural, interpersonal, and informational justice, and how they contribute to supervisor support, organizational rewards, and job conditions; and they

found that employees have a fair and positive perception of organizational justice and how the employers treat their workers because they care about their well-being and have a fair reward system. Thus, distributive, procedural, interpersonal, and informational justice perceptions show positive results when employees are given rewards that align with their job duties, feel that the organization cares for their well-being, and work in a healthy environment.

Mistreating workers can lead to poor performance or employee attitudes. Murtaza et al. (2023) focused on the effects of organizational justice (distributive, procedural, interactional, and informational justice) on Pakistani and French employees from the fields of education, health, and energy. They found that unfair practices within organizations have a positive relationship with job burnout and turnover intention and that organizational justice plays a significant role in predicting stress outcomes within the Pakistani population. The researchers explain that the Pakistani culture places a solid devotion to fidelity among groups, thus explaining why unfair organizational practices have a strong and positive relationship to unfavorable workplace outcomes and attitudes.

Organizational Commitment

Like organizational justice theories, organizational commitment is complex because there are a few different types of organizational commitment: affective, moral, and continuance. Continuance commitment is based on the investments such as time, benefits, and nontransferable job skills that employees put in their workplace due to the amount of time they have worked in the organization; moral commitment refers to the social connections or bonds workers make with coworkers and the organization they

work for that pulls them to stay (Lambert et al., 2021). On the other hand, affective commitment dives deeper into the meaning of organizational commitment that is unique to the other two types of organizational commitment. According to Allen and Meyer (1990) and Lambert et al. (2008), affective commitment is "the voluntary psychological bond that is formed by an individual to the employing organization" (as cited in Lambert et al., 2021, p. 91). For this study, affective commitment will be utilized due to the positive outcomes it has in the workplace. For example, Lambert et al. (2021) reviewed past research on how the importance and effects of organizational commitment in the workplace, and they found that affective commitment leads to positive workplace outcomes and is found to be strong and more optimistic when there is constructive management and leads to a stronger relationship and dedication to the organization. Affective commitment is a vital workplace factor because when employees are treated fairly and positively by management, they tend to create a positive perception of the organization, allowing them to continue to work in their current organization. This may also explain that ethical and respectful treatment by superiors helps keep positive employees, which is a factor in interactional justice.

Turnover Intent

Turnover intent is evident in the field of corrections; however, there are different factors to consider in explaining why correctional staff have a high turnover intention rate. In a study by Lambert et al. (2023), the researchers looked at how distributive and procedural justice may affect turnover intent while focusing on demographics of correctional staff at a Southern state prison and two workplace

variables: job stress and job involvement; they found that procedural justice had a significant impact on turnover intent, while distributive justice was not significant to turnover intent; additionally, job stress played a role in higher turnover intent, while job involvement had lower levels of turnover intent; finally, the age factor was the only significant factor that played a role in which older employees had lower intent to leave their work. Therefore, although work outcomes such as the goods or benefits that the correctional staff have do not determine whether correctional staff plan to stay or leave their positions, organizational procedures that determine work outcomes affect employees' decision to continue work or resign. Moreover, in a small focus group at the same prison within this study, Lambert et al. (2023) found that correctional staff did not accept their position due to pay; instead, they took the position because of the benefits that were offered, which were far better given the rural area they reside in, especially the women staff, who need the benefits to care for their family. Altogether, it is likely that distributive justice has no relation to turnover intent because employees are aware of what job and pay scale they are getting into. However, there is little explanation as to why procedural justice negatively affects turnover intent.

Summary and Conclusions

The literature reviewed presented several quantitative studies explaining the critical factors concerning perceptions of organizational justice on job satisfaction and organizational commitment in correctional staff. Additionally, studies have demonstrated how other work variables may be affected by perceptions of organizational justice, which are also important to consider in public institutions, such as the prison system.

Organizational justice, more specifically distributive and procedural justice, has some effect on job satisfaction and organizational commitment in correctional staff and other public sector employees. This literature review also found that job satisfaction and organizational commitment are significant factors in turnover intent. Although there was little literature on how interactional justice plays a role in job satisfaction and organizational commitment, it still needs to be explored, as communication among coworkers and supervisors can affect how employees feel about the organization they work for. Perceptions of organizational justice on job satisfaction and organizational commitment are crucial within the field of corrections because they can explain why correctional staff continue to work at the prison or why there is a high turnover intent. By researching organizational justice perceptions, correctional administrators can focus on implementing better policies and procedures to increase job satisfaction and organizational commitment to keep a healthy, ethical, and positive working atmosphere within their respective institutions.

Research on organizational justice theories has existed for over 70 years, with multiple researchers focusing on what constitutes organizational justice and how many dimensions are included in the overall term. In this literature review, most studies focused on the two dimensions of organizational justice: distributive and procedural justice. However, it is essential not to forget that three dimensions or four dimensions of organizational justice theories exist as the researchers found the importance of each dimension and how they affect employees' perceptions of fairness in the workplace. Although there is limited research on interactional justice or informational and

interpersonal justice, this makes room to utilize these dimensions to determine whether they are essential in other public institutions. For example, this literature review presented a study that explained how public employees experience positive job satisfaction when their employers treat them respectfully.

Moreover, exploring the perceptions of fairness within public organizations is crucial because negative perceptions can lead to undesirable outcomes in public institutions. For instance, this literature review introduced a few cases that showed how the adverse treatment of employees led to legal action that shed a negative light on the public organization as a whole. Public employees have rights, and unfair work outcomes, organizational decisions, and unjust treatment can lead to negative consequences that can hurt the organization in various ways.

This literature review heavily emphasized how job satisfaction and organizational commitment are two critical workplace outcomes that perceptions of organizational justice affect correctional staff. Although demographics may play a role in these results, it is more apparent that distributive and procedural justice had positive effects and a relationship to job satisfaction. On the other hand, procedural justice showed mixed results with positive and negative effects on organizational commitment. Additionally, demographics can play a role in these perceptions and other workplace factors, such as job stress, individual behavior, and work-family conflict.

Although this literature review presented perceptions of organizational justice issues on job satisfaction and organizational commitment through quantitative studies, it explained that organizational justice is vital in understanding job satisfaction and

organizational commitment in correctional officers. This literature review showcased the importance of organizational justice in prisons in the United States and examined the perceptions of other countries and governmental entities. Because there is little to no research on organizational justice perceptions in correctional staff in Indiana's state prison system, this current study integrated a qualitative approach to explore what other components affect the perceptions of organizational justice issues on job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Therefore, the next chapter focused on the methodology, instrumentation, and general procedures of conducting the research in exploring the perceptions of organizational justice issues on job satisfaction and organizational commitment of correctional staff in Indiana.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

Correctional staff play a pivotal role in maintaining the safety and security of the prison they are employed in. Each employee has a specific duty to fulfil the many different departments within the prison, and all are equally important. With the infamous high turnover intention rates within the United States concerning correctional staff, it is crucial to consider what factors or situations lead to turnover intent. Therefore, this study aimed to explore and better understand the perceptions of fairness of organizational justice issues on job satisfaction and organizational commitment of correctional staff in the Indiana Department of Corrections. Past literature indicates that the dimensions of organizational justice have a significant role in job satisfaction and organizational commitment of correctional staff. Nevertheless, little was known about how organizational justice plays a role in job satisfaction and organizational commitment of correctional staff in Indiana. Additionally, it was unknown whether perceptions of fairness in organizational outcomes lead to other workplace outcomes such as stress, burnout, absenteeism, and turnover intent. In this chapter, I discuss the research design and rationale by explaining the study's research questions and fundamental concepts. I will explain why it is important that this study be a qualitative study and my role as a researcher. Next, I include a detailed discussion on the methods of participation selection and the reasoning behind how they were selected, the instrumentation that was used to collect data, and how data analysis was conducted upon completion of data collection. Finally, I expounded on the issues of trustworthiness and the plan to ensure that this study

was an ethical and safe process during data collection, storage, analysis, and dissemination of data.

Research Design and Rationale

Employee satisfaction and organizational commitment are crucial factors that correctional administrators must consider when promoting or encouraging organizational justice. Because of the evident high turnover intentions among correctional staff in the United States state correctional system, the purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of fairness on job satisfaction and organizational commitment of correctional staff in the Indiana Department of Corrections. Additionally, it is crucial to examine these perceptions so correctional administrators can understand what their correctional employees feel or think regarding organizational justice and implement policies or protocols that will increase job satisfaction and organizational commitment among correctional workers to decrease turnover intention and, ultimately, actual turnover. Therefore, the research questions are:

RQ1) For Indiana correctional staff, what themes emerged based on the perceptions of organizational justice issues on job satisfaction and organizational commitment?

RQ2) How do the perceptions of organizational justice issues impact correctional employees' turnover intention?

RQ3) What other workplace factors are affected by perceptions of organizational justice issues?

The lack of research on perceptions of organizational justice issues on job satisfaction and organizational commitment in the Indiana Department of Corrections calls to explore what correctional staff say about fairness within their workplace and determine what themes emerge throughout the interviews with the correctional staff. For my planned research design, I utilized descriptive or contextual data to describe qualities or characteristics related to organizational justice issues, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment. The data was collected using a researcher-developed interview guide to conduct individual interviews. To address the research questions in this qualitative case study, the specific research design included a basic quality design, and the analysis followed Saldana's (2021) descriptive coding process and used first and second-cycle coding. I reviewed each interview through audio and transcripts during the data analysis to ensure they were thoroughly reviewed for accuracy and detail.

The central theme of this study is the three-dimensional organizational justice theories, which include distributive, procedural, and interactional justice. Organizational justice theories have been thoroughly researched for over seven decades, which includes the study of each dimension and how organizational justice theories play a role in the workplace. A review of the literature indicated that organizational justice is a complex theory, yet it is essential to consider when trying to understand perceptions of fairness of employees within organizations. For this study, I focused on Greenberg's (1987) theory of organizational justice, which focuses on distributive and procedural justice. Distributive and procedural justice are the predominant dimensions of organizational justice and are used primarily in organizational justice research. Greenberg (1987)

provided a taxonomy of organizational justice, which includes proactive-reactive and content-process theories. Proactive and reactive theories focus on how people perceive injustice or justice. The reactive theory centers on how individuals try to combat or ignore injustices they encounter. In contrast, the proactive theory centers on individuals' acts to uphold fairness. Furthermore, the process theory focuses on establishing organizational outcomes (such as pay, rewards/benefits, and positions), which is considered procedural justice. In contrast, the content theory looks at whether the allocation of organizational outcomes is fair and regarded as distributive justice. Therefore, distributive justice looks at whether workplace outcomes are equitable, while procedural justice concerns whether the processes in determining the allocation of resources are fair and ethical.

Fair and consistent workplace outcomes and the processes that come with them are essential within organizations because people deserve fair opportunities. However, it is also important to consider whether there is a thorough explanation as to why certain decisions or outcomes are made. Therefore, Bies and Moag (1986) discovered the interactional theory of justice, which holds that organizational superiors treat and communicate with their employees respectfully and provide information regarding organizational outcomes in a timely and informed manner. The interactional justice theory is a part of organizational justice because it allows workers to understand how and why decisions were made.

The three-dimensional organizational theory was chosen for this study to understand better how perceptions of fairness may influence job satisfaction and

organizational commitment among correctional staff. As noted previously, state correctional institutions experience high turnover intentions, so it is crucial to understand the causes of such high rates. Fairness in organizations is essential as workers deserve to receive workplace outcomes that are beneficial and reasonable, and they deserve to be treated with respect. This study incorporated interviews to allow participants the chance to explain their perceptions of fairness within the organization they work for to get a better understanding of the levels of job satisfaction and organizational commitment they may (or may not have) and how these perceptions may contribute to their willingness or unwillingness to continue employment.

Role of the Researcher

For this qualitative study, I utilized descriptive or contextual data to describe qualities or characteristics related to organizational justice issues, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment. Therefore, I conducted individual interviews with correctional staff to study their understanding of organizational justice and whether organizational justice issues influence their job satisfaction and organizational commitment levels. The data was collected using a researcher-developed interview guide to conduct the individual interviews. Additionally, the interview guide followed similar questioning to the study by Lambert et al. (2019); however, the questions were altered to be more open-ended to allow the participants to answer in detail or in their respective ways.

Potential barriers to collecting primary data included partner site agreement and access to participants to conduct the interviews. As a former correctional employee in

Indiana, ensuring a clear separation of my former role in the Indiana Department of Correction from my role as a researcher was challenging; however, because the state prisons have multiple different shifts and departments, there were a variety of potential participants to select from for this study that I have not met or know. Additionally, there are no current or active personal relationships with the participants and little to no professional relationships with the participants due to not working in the field for over six years. I utilized pre-IRB consultation to ask questions about these issues.

This study aimed to explore and better understand the role perceptions of organizational justice may have on correctional staff's job satisfaction and organizational commitment and whether these perceptions lead to turnover intention. Ethics was the utmost priority in this study because, in addition to the primary purpose of this study, this study also aimed to aid the Indiana Department of Corrections as it will allow administrators to implement or improve policies and procedures that will increase job satisfaction and organizational commitment because of the perceptions of organizational justice (if applicable). Ravitch and Carl (2021) emphasized the importance of internal and external transparency and how they affect the overall effectiveness of the study; the former focuses on the purpose of the study and being honest and transparent with participants, and the latter focuses on the validity and trustworthiness of the study. Therefore, to manage any researcher bias because of my past employment with the department, I constantly reminded myself of transparency throughout the research, worked with my committee to redirect my focus, and was transparent with the

participants so that there is a clear and thorough understanding of the purpose of this study.

Methodology

Participation Selection

I requested permission from Indiana's Department of Correction to recruit 15 correctional staff from two state correctional facilities in Indiana. This study was exploratory; therefore, it was important to interview 15 correctional staff or until saturation. Saturation involves researching until no new information is gathered, and the information obtained will be able to answer the overall research question(s) (Burkholder et al., 2020). Because there is little to no information regarding correctional staff's perceptions of organizational justice on job satisfaction and organizational commitment in Indiana, a minimum of 9 participants were interviewed to explore the topic. Indiana employs many correctional staff, and there are different shifts. Thus, I interviewed multiple staff members from each shift and different departments to reach saturation and a fair number of interviewees to answer the research questions.

Inclusion criteria for correctional staff included custody staff, case workers/managers, training officers, and the investigations and intelligence department. The inclusion criteria included current and former Indiana correctional staff because the former can provide insight into concerns that they are currently experiencing, and the latter can provide information on their past experiences and what led to their resignation or job satisfaction and organizational commitment to their jobs. Another critical factor that was considered in participant selection was the career stage. Because the purpose of

this study was to explore how organizational justice may influence job satisfaction and organizational commitment, participants consisted of staff and officers who have worked at the correctional institution for at least a year because that gives the correctional employee enough time to understand how the policies, procedures, and operations work within the prison. Participants were chosen from two different adult male state prisons in Indiana, including facilities with low, medium, and high levels of security.

The sampling strategy used to choose the participants was purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is a method in qualitative studies in which the researcher selects participants based on specific attributes that will help answer the overall research question(s) (Burkholder et al., 2020). Although some departments mentioned previously were not included in this current study, several other departments within the correctional institution encompassed participants from different shifts and ranks. However, it was crucial to focus on individuals who have been working or have worked at the prison for a year or more as they most likely have seen promotions or have more understanding of the underlying processes within the prison and its daily operations.

Due to the nature of this study, it was important to maintain the privacy and confidentiality of potential participants, whether they are current or former employees. I worked with the main office staff to assist me with recruitment for this study. Several different methods were used to recruit staff, as there was a lack of response; however, the Institutional Review Board and the main Indiana Department of Correction staff were able to provide helpful suggestions for recruitment. Therefore, the effective recruitment method was to post my invitation to recruit participants on social media, specifically

Facebook and LinkedIn. I posted on several local community groups and received a great response from former and current employees within the Indiana Department of Corrections. The participants messaged me on Facebook and then through the email system, where I asked some preliminary screening questions. After confirming their credentials, I allowed the participants to give me days and times that they are able to interview via Zoom. Once the interview day and time were confirmed, I sent them the Zoom link and consent form.

Instrumentation

For my planned research design, I utilized descriptive or contextual data to describe qualities or characteristics related to organizational justice issues, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment. The data was collected using a researcher-developed interview guide to conduct individual interviews; however, the interview questions were similar to the survey questions in Lambert et al. (2019), which was used in a study to investigate the effects of organizational justice (distributive and procedural justice) on job satisfaction and organizations commitment of correctional staff in a Southern state prison. Although the survey questions were used in the quantitative study, the questions were tailored to be open-ended to allow participants to explain their lived experiences regarding organizational justice issues. The interview questions concerning interactional justice were strictly researcher-developed due to the lack of research on the effects of interactional justice on job satisfaction and organizational commitment; however, the interview questions followed Bies and Moag's (1986) study on interactional justice.

Moreover, I conducted the interviews virtually through Zoom so that participants were in the comfort of their own homes to ensure anonymity and privacy. Additionally, I allowed participants to choose a day and time that works best for them to conduct the virtual interviews. The interviews were audio-recorded through Zoom, with the consent of the participants. The frequency of data collection was over four weeks to interview participants from all shifts and departments. I reminded the participants that the interviews will be confidential and stored securely. Transcripts were provided to allow participants to review the interview and make corrections if necessary.

Content validity is established as other researchers used the survey questions used in the Lambert et al. (2019) study. Because the questions would be tailored to open-ended questions, content validity was established by allowing participants to review transcripts so that if they needed to make changes or add anything, or if I, as the interviewer, had follow-up questions, it could ensure that the content would answer the overall research questions. The interviews were sufficient to answer the research questions because this study was exploratory and focused on understanding the perceptions of organizational justice issues on job satisfaction and organizational commitment and whether these perceptions are significant to the turnover intention of correctional staff, as well as explore whether other workplace factors are affected by perceptions of organizational justice issues.

Data Analysis Plan

The research questions for this study asked what themes emerge based on the perceptions of organizational justice issues on job satisfaction and organizational

commitment, whether the perceptions play a role in turnover intentions, and what other workplace factors are affected by perceptions of organizational justice issues. Qualitative research involves investigating participants' lived experiences regarding a particular event or phenomenon (Burkholder et al., 2020). This current study was qualitative because little to no research has been done regarding the perceptions of organizational justice issues on job satisfaction and organizational commitment within Indiana correctional institutions. Additionally, through the use of interviews, this study aimed to get a better understanding of the individual experiences of what correctional staff perceive of the organizational justice issues within their workplace, whether these perceptions influence their job satisfaction and organizational commitment, and then whether these perceptions impact turnover intention or other workplace factors.

Furthermore, data analysis included reviewing notes from the interview, audio recordings, and transcripts of the interviews to focus on any similarities and differences between each interview. Additionally, the data analysis followed Saldana's (2021) descriptive coding process and use first and second-cycle coding. First-cycle coding involves the process of deductive and inductive coding, where the former incorporates terminology derived or influenced from prior research studies, whereas the latter focuses on individualistic actions or terms in which the researcher observes how a participant response is portrayed, such as "emphases, repetitions, and negations" (Burkholder et al., 2020, p. 101). Deductive coding allowed me to determine whether there are similarities or themes and compare them to past studies. In contrast, inductive coding conveyed unique information from individual interviews and the possibility of discovering new

information. Once the first coding cycle was complete, second-cycle coding would occur. Second-cycle coding is a process that allows researchers to organize the data from first-cycle coding, such as removing unnecessary codes, combining similar codes, or changing the names of the former codes (Burkholder et al., 2020). In other words, second-cycle coding is a way in which data is reviewed and allows the refining of the codes into categories.

The descriptive coding process also provided a deeper understanding of the participants' responses. According to Maietta et al. (2018), descriptive coding helps determine the “who, what, where, and when of the data” (as cited in Burkholder et al., 2020, p. 101). Descriptive coding is essential to differentiate the lived experiences of different participants' responses. For example, in this study, I compared the lived experiences of a correctional officer to a correctional sergeant or lieutenant, to a caseworker, and so forth. Consequently, descriptive coding can add depth to the study because the researcher can understand if specific roles have significantly different perceptions of the phenomenon.

I also incorporated In Vivo Coding to increase the thoroughness of the data analysis for this study. In Vivo coding is when researchers utilize the exact terminology or phrases that participants express (Burkholder et al., 2020). In Vivo Coding is beneficial in the data analysis process because it allows researchers to truly understand participants' lived experiences in their unique way. In Vivo coding can help the researcher understand whether there are any similarities or themes regarding specific terms or phrases that the participants communicate in the interviews during qualitative

data analysis. Additionally, I utilized the NVivo qualitative data analysis software package to detect similar terminology and organize the data.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Credibility

It is of utmost importance that this study accurately reflects the participant's responses to ensure quality and validity. According to Burkholder et al. (2020), there are several important factors to consider to ensure credibility or internal validity within a research study, such as applying accurate data collection methods, questioning, and participant selection and size to answer the research question(s) so that the study can be expanded in the future. For this current study, reaching saturation and gathering enough data to answer the research questions and encourage further research was essential. I conducted interviews with at least 15 correctional staff from different shifts, in which more than one staff member was interviewed from each shift and department to ensure saturation. Additionally, I followed up with participants after data analysis to ensure that I accurately understood their interview responses, also known as member checking. Finally, it is crucial to incorporate reflexivity, considering any biases that may influence data analysis. Therefore, I utilized note-taking during the interviews to document any actions or words that stood out from the participants' responses and looked back on the notes for further analysis and as a reminder to avoid biases or misinterpretations.

Transferability

Transferability or external validity is also crucial to research to ensure a thick description and maximum variation of participants. Burkholder et al. (2020) hold that a

thick description includes providing enough detail regarding the setting and participant selection of the study. In contrast, maximum variation is a sampling approach in which the researcher selects a group of diverse participants. By integrating thick descriptions and maximum variation, the researcher can ensure an adequate explanation of the study's settings and participants to replicate this study. Thus, I ensured that I include a thorough account of the setting, participation selection, and their characteristics so that readers and other researchers can fully understand the study.

Dependability

This study aimed to encourage the Indiana Department of Correction and the correctional administrators from each facility by focusing on organizational justice issues and how it may increase job satisfaction and organizational commitment. The goal was to ensure that organizational justice practices are ethical and fair to improve the correctional staff's job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Thus, this research topic must meet dependability or reliability requirements. Dependability or reliability refers to data collection and analysis consistency so that researchers obtain comparable results when the study is repeated (Burkholder et al., 2020). To ensure dependability, I used audit trails and triangulation. Audit trails include a detailed account of thought processes and decisions made through data collection and methods, which can include field notes (Burkholder et al., 2020). The audit trails consisted of referring to my field notes during the interviews as a refresher as to what my thought process was during the interviews. Additionally, I thoroughly explained how the interviews went, recorded all factors that stood out within the interviews, and included that data in the analysis stage. Triangulation

means applying various resources to confirm data accuracy (Burkholder et al., 2020). To accurately analyze and report data, I followed up with participants after the initial data analysis to ensure that I was analyzing and reporting their responses in a way that accurately reflects their lived experiences regarding the topic of this study.

Confirmability

A critical goal in exploratory qualitative inquiry is to record participants' responses accurately. In other words, it is essential to be objective in any research study. Objectivity or confirmability includes being unbiased during data collection, analysis, and reporting to avoid misinterpretation or distorted data representation (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). During the data collection stage, I asked the participants any follow-up questions (when necessary) to ensure I understood their responses. In the data analysis stage, I allowed the participants to review the transcripts of their interviews to determine whether their responses were recorded accurately and in a way that effectively describes their lived experiences. Additionally, I utilized research memos or notes that I made throughout data collection to write my thoughts and questions regarding participants' responses and worked with my committee members to ensure I was consistently focusing on the purpose of the study and being objective at all times.

Ethical Procedures

Protecting the character and integrity of each participant, the Indiana Department of Correction, and Walden University, this study followed strict guidelines set forth by the Institutional Review Board (IRB). First, I completed Form A, which describes the data sources and partner sites. Form A allowed the IRB to ensure I obtained the

documentation necessary for this study's data sources. Next, I worked on the documents in full detail and utilized the feedback offered by the IRB to consider any ethical challenges that may arise and how to address them to protect the rights of participants and the organization I would be studying. After proposal approval, I worked with my chair and the IRB to notify whether any changes had been made during the oral defense stage of the proposal. Finally, when it was confirmed that there were no new changes, the IRB went through a final approval process before I obtained permission to conduct the participant recruitment and data collection. Additionally, it is important to note that I have received preliminary approval from the Indiana Department of Corrections regarding my interest in conducting a study within the institutions. The spokesperson outlined the process and sent me the required form to obtain permission to conduct research within the Indiana Department of Corrections. All forms the IRB requires for this study will be included.

Potential barriers to collecting primary data included partner site agreement and access to participants to administer the interviews. As a former correctional employee in Indiana, ensuring a clear separation of my former role in the Indiana Department of Correction from my role as a researcher was challenging. I utilized IRB consultation to ask questions about these issues. However, it will be emphasized that the study strictly adhered to confidentiality rules so that participants' personally identifiable information is unknown. Additionally, informed consent forms were provided to the participants, including detailed yet understandable information regarding the study's purpose, data collection methods, length of the interviews, the possibility of follow-up, benefits of

participating, and emphasize that participation is voluntary. I allowed the participants to read over the informed consent once I set their interview time and day, so if they have any questions regarding the study and the research process, it would give me and the participant time to clarify any uncertainties. Moreover, I verbally went over the informed consent form once more when the participant decided to verify that the participant understood and was comfortable proceeding with the interviews.

Participant privacy is a critical factor to consider to protect participants' rights and well-being during data collection. Therefore, the interviews were conducted over Zoom so that participants had privacy and anonymity, as well as were free of distractions. Although the interviews were audio-recorded, I ensured that the audio recordings and transcripts were stored in a secured and protected USB, where a code or encryption would be required so that only I could access the data. Participants were not named in reporting results; other characteristics such as gender and number of years the participant has worked at the institution will be reported. The position of the employee are discreetly reported by two categories: custody staff (i.e., officers, sergeants, lieutenants, captains) and administrative staff (caseworkers, training officers, internal affairs officers). The reason for categorizing the participants into two groups is because there were far fewer staff in the departments, such as training staff, caseworkers, and internal affairs staff, where they can be more easily identifiable; thus, they were grouped into one category. Data will be destroyed after five years to ensure privacy and the reliability of future research on this topic.

Other ethical considerations included relationship risks and the use of incentives. As a former correctional staff member at the Indiana Department of Corrections, I met numerous staff members with whom I worked in different departments. It was crucial to explain the purpose and importance of the study and emphasize that participation is strictly voluntary so that the participants did not feel forced to participate. Moreover, incentives were offered due to the possibility of follow-up after the initial data analysis stage. Burkholder et al. (2020) suggest that compensation should be offered modestly in cases where researchers may need to conduct their research for an extended period. Therefore, I offered a $15 gift card at the primary interview. Additionally, I explained the incentive in the informed consent form to allow participants to understand that participation is still voluntary but will be beneficial to understand the purpose and goals of the study.

Summary

Job satisfaction and organizational commitment are two essential workplace outcomes that may influence the turnover intent of correctional officers—understanding what factors affect positive or negative levels of job satisfaction and organizational commitment. There may be numerous reasons why correctional staff may want to resign from their positions, influencing why they have low or high job satisfaction and organizational commitment. For example, past research shows that perceptions of fairness, otherwise known as organizational justice, significantly impact job satisfaction and organizational commitment for correctional staff. However, there is little to no information on how organizational justice may determine the two workplace outcomes of

staff in the Indiana Department of Correction. This study used a qualitative inquiry to conduct interviews to understand how correctional staff perceive fairness within their correctional institutions and whether distributive, procedural, and interactional justice impacts their job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Although past research utilized quantitative measures, this study used qualitative data collection and analysis due to the exploratory nature of this phenomenon and to determine if this matter is significant within the Indiana Department of Corrections. Several measures were taken to ensure the trustworthiness of this study, encourage future research, and promote reliable data to improve policy and administration in the field of corrections. Most importantly, ethical considerations were consistently followed throughout this study by emphasizing that participation is voluntary, protecting the rights and integrity of participants and data, offering incentives as gratitude for the time participants spent, and recognizing my role as a researcher. This study was designed to provide the Indiana Department of Correction with insight into the role of perceptions of fairness on job satisfaction and organizational commitment to reduce turnover intention. In the next chapter (chapter 4), I will cover in detail what occurred in data collection and analysis, describe the setting, demographics, and issues of trustworthiness, and report the results of the study.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The focus of this study was to explore the perceptions of organizational justice issues on job satisfaction and organizational commitment of state prison staff in a midwestern state. The theoretical framework of this study, organizational justice, was an essential factor that shaped the purpose of this study, as it is important to understand whether perceptions of fairness within the workplace play a role in positive or negative job satisfaction, organizational commitment, turnover intent, and other workplace outcomes. Therefore, the three overall research questions for this study were to find out what themes emerged based on the perceptions of organizational justice issues on job satisfaction and organizational commitment for correctional staff, how those perceptions impact correctional employees' turnover intention, and whether other workplace factors are influenced by perceptions of organizational justice issues. This chapter includes a description of the setting of the entire study, the demographics of participants, a detailed account of data collection and analysis, the strategies used to implement trustworthiness, and the overall results of the study. Altogether, this chapter focuses on what was found and how the results were processed and confirmed to ensure proper ethics that represent the participant's lived experiences.

Setting

A majority of the participants were former employees, who spent years working at the prisons, while also experiencing promotions. Some of the former employees are working in the field of corrections outside of the two prisons included in this study.

Moreover, most of the employees showed interest in this study to share their experiences to better help make the work environment at the prison a more satisfying, ethical, and fair place to work at because they believe staff job satisfaction is crucial to the safety and security of all aspects in the department of corrections. Additionally, traumatic events such as experiencing the deaths of two staff members at the prison may have influenced interpretations of the study's results as the employees wanted to share their personal feelings regarding that situation.

Demographics

The participant demographics varied in this study. Four out of the nine participants were male, and five were female. Other demographic aspects and characteristics were not gathered in this study because the aim was to explore and understand the lived experiences of correctional staff on how organizational justice may or may not influence their job satisfaction and organizational commitment and whether issues in organizational justice might play a role in other workplace outcomes and attitudes. Therefore, demographic data was not relevant to this qualitative study because the aim was to gain rich and descriptive data from each participant, rather than compare the backgrounds of each participant.

Data Collection

Four participants were employed at one Indiana correctional facility, three at a second facility, and two had experience working at both institutions. Of the nine participants, two are currently employed as correctional staff, two work in the broader field of corrections in different roles, and five are former employees. All participants

served as custody officers, with many promoted to higher positions within the department. There was an even split between day and night shift officers. Several participants held specialized roles during their careers: two worked in casework management, two served in internal affairs, and one was involved in special response teams, including the E-Squad, hostage negotiation, and as a firearms and personal protection instructor. Additionally, one participant served as a sergeant. The length of employment among participants ranged from three to eighteen years.

Interviews were conducted via Zoom and ranged from 20 minutes to one hour in length. Given the sensitive nature of the study, Zoom was chosen to ensure participants' privacy and comfort by allowing them to participate from their own homes. Interviews took place between April and May, with two to three sessions scheduled per week. Each interview was recorded with participants' consent, which was obtained after reading the informed consent form aloud. Zoom's transcription feature was utilized to generate detailed transcripts of each session.

Several unusual circumstances arose during data collection. Some interviews had to be rescheduled due to personal circumstances affecting both participants and the researcher. One participant was unable to respond to a particular question. Additionally, the final sample size was smaller than anticipated; however, saturation was reached early on as a majority of the participants shares similar experiences and no new information was found. Recruitment required repeated postings in various local community Facebook groups, and some potential participants expressed reluctance to take part due to concerns about violating institutional policies.

Data Analysis

The data analysis was thorough and comprehensive. For instance, I began coding data during the interview to capture phrases and rich descriptions that stood out. Next, I would listen to the audio-recording after the interview to ensure that the transcription was accurate and to gather additional codes. I then re-read the transcripts to ensure I captured sufficient codes to fully understand the data presented. I conducted first-cycle coding of each interview, which enabled me to understand and code significant and unique words, phrases, and sentences of the participants responses. After the first-cycle coding, I conducted second-cycle coding by comparing each interview to identify overarching categories and emerging themes, as many participants expressed similar experiences, language, and perspectives. This iterative and layered approach allowed for a deeper, more nuanced understanding of the data and ensured that the findings were grounded in participants' voices.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Credibility

The credibility strategies outlined in Chapter Three were consistently implemented throughout the study. Given the exploratory nature of this qualitative research, it was essential to ensure that data analysis accurately reflected the lived experiences of each participant. To enhance credibility, I utilized member checking by emailing each participant a copy of their interview transcript along with a detailed summary and interpretation of their responses. Participants were encouraged to review the materials and provide any corrections or additional input. All participants responded

and confirmed the accuracy of the transcripts and summaries, with no requested changes. Additionally, I took notes during the interviews and while reassessing the audio recordings. This method allowed me to capture non-verbal cues and significant remarks that may not have been immediately apparent, and also helped to minimize potential bias or misinterpretation during the analysis process.

Transferability

As described in previous sections, I provided a thorough account of the interview setting, participant selection process, and participant characteristics. Although a full demographic profile was not included, the sample included both male and female participants of varying ages, as well as a mix of current and former employees. Participants also represented a range of employment lengths within the correctional system, contributing diverse perspectives based on their tenure and experiences. This diversity supports the richness of the data and allows readers to consider how the findings may be relevant to similar correctional environments. Furthermore, the transparency in describing data collection and analysis procedures enhances the potential for the study to be replicated or adapted in other contexts.

Dependability

The dependability strategies outlined in Chapter 3 were consistently applied throughout the study. I maintained an audit trail by documenting the notes taken during and after each interview, which helped preserve the context of participants' responses and highlighted key moments that stood out during data collection. Additionally, I employed triangulation through member checking by sending participants both their interview

transcripts and a detailed summary of my interpretations. This process ensured that their experiences were accurately represented and provided an opportunity for clarification or correction. Together, the use of audit trails and member checking supported a dependable and transparent analysis process, reinforcing the consistency and credibility of the study's findings.

Confirmability

Confirmability was established as outlined in Chapter Three, particularly during the data collection and analysis phases, with a few additional measures. During data collection, I encouraged participants to communicate any confusion about the interview questions so that I could provide clarification. I also asked follow-up questions when participants' responses were unclear to ensure accurate interpretation of their intended meaning. This approach helped minimize researcher bias and supported the authenticity of the data. Additionally, note-taking throughout the interviews and during transcript review served as a tool to document my thought processes and highlight critical or noteworthy responses. These strategies contributed to a transparent audit trail, reinforcing that the findings were grounded in the participants' perspectives rather than researcher assumptions.

Results

The first research question asked: For Indiana correctional staff, what themes emerged based on the perceptions of organizational justice issues on job satisfaction and organizational commitment? The data revealed a wide range of perceptions that aligned with the three dimensions of organizational justice: distributive, procedural, and

interactional justice. Specifically, five themes were identified within distributive justice, six within procedural justice, and five within interactional justice. These themes captured patterns in how staff perceived fairness in resource distribution, decision-making processes, and interpersonal treatment by supervisors and administrators. To maintain clarity and organization, each set of themes is discussed in its corresponding section below, with supporting participant quotes and analysis provided. Collectively, these themes highlight the complex and often overlapping ways correctional staff experience justice within the workplace, and how these perceptions shape both their job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

Each participant provided rich, descriptive data that informed the general research questions, especially in distributive justice. Two key themes emerged: Favoritism and internal politics heavily influenced perceptions of fairness in reward distribution, and 'Lack of recognition led to dissatisfaction; staff yearned for acknowledgment and constructive feedback.' The majority of participants perceived favoritism and internal politics as influencing shift assignments, noting that those with closer relationships to supervisors often received more favorable opportunities. Additionally, two participants who had experience working the night shift noted inequities due to limited visibility from leadership and reduced access to advancement training opportunities, which contributed to feelings of unfairness and being overlooked. In contrast, recognition of one's efforts was largely viewed as a fair and meaningful form of reward, contributing positively to perceptions of distributive justice.

While there was little to no concern expressed about pay and healthcare benefits, acknowledged as standardized statewide initiatives—one participant remarked that the pay was not sustainable if you have life goals such as getting married and raising children. This highlights how personal circumstances can influence perceptions of distributive fairness, even when policies are externally controlled.

Another theme that surfaced was that distributive justice significantly influenced job satisfaction, particularly when fairness was lacking, with multiple participants linking feelings of inequity to increased frustration and disengagement. Several participants also highlighted the need for accessible mental health resources to address and mitigate burnout, depression, and negative workplace attitudes—pointing to how unfair treatment can exacerbate emotional strain.

Interestingly, organizational commitment was often maintained despite perceived injustices, as many participants expressed a deep passion for their work and a sense of duty to the incarcerated population. Most of the participants expressed that they did their jobs because they loved what they do and will work above and beyond despite some of the unfairness in the distribution of rewards. However, burnout still occurred in some cases, suggesting that sustained commitment does not necessarily shield staff from the emotional toll of perceived unfairness.

The categories, codes, and themes are outlined in Table One below.

Table 1
Codes, Categories, and Themes Related to Distributive Justice

Category	Codes	Themes
Favoritism and Politics	Favoritism in promotion, Punitive assignment, Shift Inequities, Politics in job assignment, Unfair advancement	Favoritism and internal politics heavily influenced perceptions of fairness in reward distribution.
Recognition and Appreciation from Supervisors	Recognition discrepancy, Valued feedback, Token recognition	Lack of recognition led to dissatisfaction; staff yearned for acknowledgment and constructive feedback.
Compensation and Benefits Satisfaction	Acceptable benefits, Statewide fairness	Views on pay and benefits varied; some found them satisfactory, while others felt they did not meet life goals.
Distributive Justice and Job Satisfaction	Distributive justice dissatisfaction, Internal motivation, Recognition-linked morale	Distributive justice significantly influenced job satisfaction, particularly when fairness was lacking.
Distributive Justice and Organizational Commitment	Commitment despite injustice, Values-based commitment, Emotional exhaustion, Unsupported trauma, Burnout	Organizational commitment was often maintained despite perceived injustices, though burnout occurred in some cases.

Procedural justice significantly influenced both job satisfaction and organizational commitment among most participants. The first theme that emerged in procedural justice was, “Perceptions of fairness in promotions were shaped by favoritism, transparency, and inconsistency.” Many participants viewed the promotion process as influenced by favoritism and bias, with one describing it as involving “drama.” Getting promoted was often seen as dependent on 'who you know' rather than solely on merit, though being competent and reliable was still viewed as a necessity.

Another theme that emerged from the procedural dimension was “Consistency in evaluations enhanced trust, while perceived bias eroded morale.” There was an inconsistency in the evaluation of job performance, some being negative perceptions, while other participants viewed it as fair. For example, some participants mentioned that supervisors would get assigned certain officers to evaluate; however, these were officers whom the supervisor never met before, which was seen as unethical. Another participant mentioned that because of the state budget, only certain staff were able to obtain the “exceeds expectations" rating on their job performance, which leads to higher raises. This was observed as unfair because there could have been more staff who deserved higher ratings, but because of budgeting, they were deprived of getting a fair performance evaluation.

A majority of participants noted that regular custody staff had little to no opportunity to participate in organizational decision-making, while administrative staff—such as caseworkers and internal affairs officers—had more opportunity to be involved. Building on this, the next theme was that “Lack of participation in decision-making was linked to feeling undervalued, though some had more voice depending on role.” Lower level officers and supervisors felt that even if they did bring up a concern or suggestion, it was not taken seriously. For instance, one participant noted that they felt like they were “a leaf in the wind.” Contrastingly, case workers and internal affairs officers had the ability to provide input into organizational decisions because of the nature of their job, specifically caseworkers having a lot to do with the classification of offenders and internal affairs officers having to investigate policy violations.

Moreover, another major theme was “Unequal enforcement of rules was a recurring concern affecting trust and satisfaction.” Some participants appreciated the structure and policies of the prison, citing them as important for maintaining safety. However, others expressed frustration when supervisors failed to enforce procedures, which led to confusion and burnout. For instance, two participants described poor communication between supervisors during high-risk situations involving offenders. One shared that she felt burned out and helpless after a supervisor dismissed her report of an offender swallowing a razor, only to find out that the next shift had to take the individual to medical. Another considered resigning after witnessing an offender set himself on fire following a conflict with leadership. These emotionally taxing experiences underscore inconsistencies in procedural justice and reflect broader concerns related to both procedural and interactional fairness, including lack of clarity, support, and consistency from leadership.

Altogether, procedural justice had both shaped the job satisfaction and organizational commitment of the correctional staff. Procedural justice contributed positively to job satisfaction, while injustice led to emotional distress and dissatisfaction. One participant stated the procedures and processes that he had learned throughout his training and while working at the prison helps him “leave work the way he came in,” meaning that his training helped bring him a sense of safety and security. However, when policies and procedures were not fully implemented or fair, staff felt discouraged. In terms of organizational commitment, fairness strengthened commitment because the staff who truly were passionate about their positions would go above and beyond in their daily

job duties; thus, procedural fairness increased motivation. In comparison, injustice often led to withdrawal. For instance, favoritism, unaddressed concerns, or unsafe and inconsistent processes decreased motivation and resulted in adverse work attitudes.

Table 2
Codes, Categories, and Themes Related to Procedural Justice

Category	Codes	Themes
Favoritism and Bias in Promotions	Perceived as fair, Perceived as unfair, Mixed feelings about fairness, "who you knew, not what you know," Unqualified individuals promoted, Gender-based disadvantages	Perceptions of fairness in promotions were shaped by favoritism, transparency, and inconsistency.
Job Performance Evaluations	Fair and constructive evaluations, Inconsistent or unfair evaluations, not based on merit	Consistency in evaluations enhanced trust, while perceived bias eroded morale.
Voice and Participation in Decision-Making	Limited voice or influence, Some opportunity to voice concerns, Role-based differences, lack of consideration, "leaf in the wind," Superficial input mechanisms, Lack of influence	Lack of participation in decision-making was linked to feeling undervalued, though some had more voice depending on role.
Consistency in Policy Enforcement	Selective rule enforcement, Unequal evaluations and expectations, Stability through routine, Frustration over irrational enforcement	Unequal enforcement of rules was a recurring concern affecting trust and satisfaction.
Procedural Justice and Job Satisfaction	Sense of safety, Burnout and frustration, Emotional detachment, Confidence in fairness	Procedural justice contributed positively to job satisfaction, while injustice led to emotional distress and dissatisfaction.
Procedural Justice and Organizational Commitment	Loyalty to fair systems, Mental health decline, Reduced effort, Commitment despite injustice	Fairness strengthened commitment; injustice often led to withdrawal, though some remained committed out of duty.

Interactional justice also had a significant influence on job satisfaction and organizational commitment. One major theme found in this dimension was that "honest and respectful communication from supervisors improves job satisfaction by creating a supportive and motivating environment." Supervisor communication and the timeliness of information were generally described as fair and delivered in a respectful manner. However, inconsistencies in supervisory behavior negatively impacted staff morale. Participants reported that supervisor inconsistency and favoritism led to disengagement, distrust, and reduced motivation. While some supervisors were described as effective communicators who offered support and transparency, others were perceived as unsupportive and lacking honesty, prompting staff to avoid interacting with them.

In some cases, the need for meaningful communication extended beyond work-related matters. One participant expressed a desire for more personal connection and relational support from supervisors. This desire was partly driven by efforts to mitigate depression or more severe emotional outcomes among staff who felt unheard or unsupported. Thus, another theme was that "Emotional support from supervisors is critical to prevent mental health issues and burnout, highlighting a need for institutional advocacy." For instance, one participant shared the desire for the prison to implement mental health services for staff to avoid negative consequences as a result of emotional turmoil and job stress. Additionally, the need for advocacy extended to staff with diverse cognitive and emotional needs. One participant underscored the importance of advocating for neurodiverse employees, suggesting that a more inclusive approach to mental

wellness and communication could contribute to a healthier, more supportive work environment.

Conversely, many participants shared positive experiences with their supervisors and coworkers. They described meaningful connections that fostered a sense of belonging, excitement about coming to work, and a commitment to teamwork and job performance. One participant even expressed that they felt like a “family” with their coworkers, while a few other participants said they still remain in contact with former colleagues despite not working together at the present time.

Altogether, interactional justice has a varied impact: for some, satisfaction is tied to resilience or job commitment; for others, poor interactions result in burnout. Organizational commitment is often rooted in belief in the mission, though mistreatment by supervisors can push some to leave. These findings (as outlined in Table 3) highlight the importance of respectful, supportive communication and interpersonal relationships in the workplace. Ultimately, they underscore interactional justice as a key contributor to both job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

Table 3
Codes, Categories, and Themes Related to Interactional Justice

Category	Codes	Themes
Supervisor Communication and Timeliness	Respectful reprimands, Honest dialogue, Policy-bound honesty, Roll call is beneficial, Supportive coworkers, Workplace family, Peer-driven satisfaction	Honest and respectful communication from supervisors improves job satisfaction by creating a supportive and motivating environment.
Supervisor Inconsistency	Inconsistent treatment, Favoritism, Dehumanizing leadership, "Just a number," "Grind my teeth," "Had my back,"	Supervisor inconsistency and favoritism lead to disengagement, distrust, and reduced motivation among staff, while good supervisors increased motivation.
Impact of Interactional Justice on Satisfaction	Resilient satisfaction, Burnout from poor interaction, Limited influence on job satisfaction	Interactional justice has a varied impact: for some, satisfaction is tied to resilience or job commitment; for others, poor interactions result in burnout.
Impact of Interactional Justice on Organizational Commitment	Commitment to mission, Turnover due to mistreatment, Disconnected from supervisor support, Love for job	Organizational commitment is often rooted in belief in the mission, though mistreatment by supervisors can push some to leave.
Mental Health and Emotional Support	Need for emotional support, Burnout prevention, Mental health advocacy	Emotional support from supervisors is critical to prevent mental health issues and burnout, highlighting a need for institutional advocacy.

The second research question was: How do the perceptions of organizational justice issues impact correctional employees' turnover intention? All three dimensions of organizational justice had some type of influence on the turnover intentions of

correctional staff. In the distributive justice realm, the data suggest that correctional staff's perceptions of organizational justice issues significantly influence their intentions to stay or leave their positions during the course of their employment. Across interviews, themes of favoritism, lack of recognition, unfair advancement, and imbalanced job assignments consistently contributed to emotional fatigue, burnout, and thoughts of leaving the organization. Distributive justice issues, especially perceived favoritism and politically influenced job assignments, eroded staff morale and trust in leadership. When promotions and assignments were seen as based on "who you know" rather than merit, participants reported feeling demotivated and undervalued, which heightened their likelihood of considering resigning from their positions. This discrepancy further increased the desire to leave, particularly when paired with unfair reassignments of job posts. However, turnover intention was not solely driven by injustice. Several participants described remaining in their roles due to having a strong connection and love for their job, as well as having meaningful connections with their peers. These factors often supersede the negative effects of unfairness. In summary, while some correctional employees remain committed despite perceived injustices, ongoing violations of fairness—especially related to recognition and emotional or psychological support—play a substantial role in shaping turnover intention, particularly when compounded by stress and lack of institutional support.

Perceptions of organizational justice—particularly procedural justice—had a significant impact on correctional employees' turnover intentions. When staff perceived fairness in promotions, evaluations, and decision-making processes, they expressed

stronger organizational commitment and a greater willingness to remain in their roles. Clear structures, personal commitment to the mission, and opportunities for voice contributed to job satisfaction and reduced desire to leave. Conversely, when participants experienced procedural injustices such as favoritism in promotions, inconsistent or unjust evaluations, and unethical procedures, they often reported emotional exhaustion, frustration, and increased contemplation of resignation. The impact of these injustices was intensified when paired with a lack of support, leading some employees to withdraw effort, consider leaving the profession, or experience burnout. While some staff remained committed despite perceived unfairness—due to personal work ethics, financial goals, or alignment with the organizational mission, these individuals frequently noted a decline in morale or long-term plans to exit the system. Ultimately, the findings suggest that consistent and transparent organizational practices play a crucial role in shaping correctional employees' decisions to stay or leave.

In addition to distributive and procedural dimensions, perceptions of interactional justice—particularly regarding supervisor communication and support—also shaped correctional employees' turnover intentions. Honest and respectful communication from supervisors enhanced job satisfaction and created a sense of safety and motivation, while inconsistent treatment and perceived favoritism by leadership led to disengagement, distrust, and emotional withdrawal. Although some participants remained committed to the organization due to personal resilience or belief in the mission, others described how poor treatment, dehumanizing experiences, and lack of emotional support contributed to burnout and increased their desire to leave. Notably, participants emphasized that

emotional support from supervisors was critical not only to job satisfaction but also to mental health, with some expressing a desire for supervisors to provide verbal support beyond what is needed in the workplace. For certain individuals, peer relationships helped offset the negative effects of poor leadership, offering a sense of camaraderie and belonging that encouraged them to stay. Ultimately, while interactional justice did not influence all employees equally, its absence ultimately played some role when staff made the decision to resign from their positions.

The third research question was: What other workplace factors are affected by perceptions of organizational justice issues? Perceptions of organizational justice significantly impacted several key workplace factors beyond job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Mental health and emotional well-being emerged as critical areas affected by unfair and inconsistent treatment, with some participants reporting burnout and emotional exhaustion, with one noting that it is crucial that supervisors have a rapport with their employees to avoid depression or suicidal ideations of their staff. Trust in leadership was also heavily influenced by justice perceptions; when policies and evaluations were applied inconsistently or appeared biased, staff confidence in the organization deteriorated. In contrast, consistent and transparent practices helped foster a stronger sense of trust and love for the job. Additionally, while some participants were not concerned about pay or healthcare benefits—acknowledging these as statewide initiatives—others expressed dissatisfaction. One participant noted that the pay is inadequate for those whose life goals include marriage and raising children, while another emphasized that the compensation is too low given the dangerous nature of the

job. These findings highlight how organizational justice issues extend beyond satisfaction and commitment to affect the broader psychological and relational health of the workplace.

Each participant shared rich and useful data to incorporate into this study; however, one participant provided some short or brief responses, which posed some challenges to data analysis. Nonetheless, the interview was still incorporated into this study's data analysis, as he shared his personal experiences in most of his responses in a way that still helps to answer the research questions. Incorporating this interview allowed unique data and ensured that each voice and personal experience was analyzed to enhance the richness of data.

Summary

Overall, the results of this study showcase the importance of the perceptions of organizational justice issues on job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and other workplace factors of state correctional staff. More specifically, these findings show that the three dimensions of organizational justice—distributive, procedural, and interactional—have a substantial influence on the way that prison staff perceive fairness within the workplace and how it affects their decision to continue work or to resign. Participants described varying degrees of fairness related to distribution of rewards and resources, decision-making processes, and interpersonal treatment by supervisors. These justice perceptions significantly shaped job satisfaction and organizational commitment, with consistent and fair practices promoting loyalty and assurance, while perceived favoritism, varying evaluations, and lack of recognition often led to emotional exhaustion

and disengagement. Turnover intention was particularly influenced by distributive and procedural injustices, especially when linked to unsafe job conditions, political favoritism, and a lack of leadership support. Interactional justice also played a key role, as respectful communication and emotional support from supervisors were found to directly impact mental well-being and retention. Beyond these primary outcomes, organizational justice issues were shown to affect broader workplace dynamics, including employee mental health, trust in leadership, and overall morale. Together, these results underline the complex yet critical importance of justice perceptions on job satisfaction and organizational commitment, and overall well-being of state correctional staff.

Chapter Five provides an in-depth account of the interpretation of the study's findings, discusses the study's limitations, and outlines key recommendations and implications that emerged during the course of this research.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion

Introduction

The aim of this study was to gain deeper insight into the experiences of organizational justice issues on job satisfaction and organizational of state correctional staff in Indiana. With a high turnover rate nationwide of correctional staff, it is important to determine what leads to turnover intentions of correctional staff. Therefore, this study was conducted to allow current and former correctional staff the opportunity to voice their lived experiences during employment at the Indiana Department of Corrections so that perceptions of organizational justice can be improved and increase morale and overall well-being of state correctional staff. This study was conducted using an exploratory qualitative design, as there is little to no existing data on correctional staff's perceptions of fairness in the workplace or their reasons for turnover intentions in the state of Indiana. The results of this study show that all three dimensions of organizational justice: distributive, procedural, and interactional justice play a key role in job satisfaction and organizational commitment of state correctional staff. Although correctional staff may enter the profession for various personal reasons, this study found that factors such as recognition, ethical leadership, personal commitment, and meaningful supervisor relationships contribute to increased higher morale, while organizational injustices often lead to burnout and intentions to leave the profession.

Interpretation of the Findings

The results of this study has many similarities when compared to past research on organizational justice and its role in job satisfaction and organizational commitment of

correctional staff, with some minor differences. This study found that both distributive and procedural justice had strong influences on job satisfaction and organizational commitment. In contrast, Lambert et al. (2018) reported that distributive and procedural justice significantly influenced organizational commitment, with less emphasis on their impact on job satisfaction. Similarly, Boateng and Hsieh (2019) found that procedural justice significantly affected both job satisfaction and organizational commitment, whereas distributive justice was linked only to job satisfaction. Additionally, Mashi (2018) concluded that all three types of organizational justice—distributive, procedural, and interactional—influence job satisfaction and turnover intent. Notably, Lambert (2003) found that only procedural justice had a positive influence on organizational commitment, while the current study revealed both positive and negative influences of procedural justice on organizational commitment. Additionally, this study revealed that most participants were not negatively affected by the pay, which is consistent with the results found in May et al. (2020).

Moreover, participants in this study expressed a strong desire for recognition from supervisors and reported increased motivation when they experienced effective support and positive working relationships. These findings align with Musdalifah et al. (2022), who found that positive perceptions of distributive, procedural, and interpersonal justice contribute to greater job satisfaction and stronger organizational commitment. However, this study also revealed that unethical and unfair procedural practices were linked to job burnout and turnover intentions—findings consistent with those of Murtaza et al. (2023). Therefore, when there was a fair recognition and reward system, ethical procedural

practices, and positive interactions, correctional staff had an increased job satisfaction and committed to their work; however, when there was a lack of support from leadership, correctional staff had an increase of emotional exhaustion, which ultimately led to their turnover intention.

The findings of this study closely align with those of Lambert et al. (2023). Specifically, procedural justice was found to have a stronger impact on turnover intent than distributive justice, while perceptions of distributive justice—such as fairness in pay—were not significantly associated with turnover intent (in most of the participants). Although age was not a variable directly explored in this study, one older retired correctional staff member shared that he remained in his position until retirement out of a personal commitment he had made to himself and the organization, rather than due to job satisfaction or organizational factors. This narrative provides some support for Lambert et al.'s (2023) finding that older employees tend to have lower intent to leave.

For the past 70 years, organizational justice has remained a dynamic and evolving framework applied across various fields of study. Initially centered on distributive justice, the theory later expanded to include procedural and, subsequently, interactional justice. This study demonstrates that organizational justice significantly influences both job satisfaction and organizational commitment among correctional staff. For example, participants noted that performance evaluations were often perceived as unfair—particularly when supervisors who had never directly interacted with officers were assigned to conduct their evaluations. Additionally, fairness concerns arose when budget limitations allowed only a select few to receive an "exceeds expectations" rating, which

was tied to higher pay raises. As Greenberg (1986) noted, perceptions of procedural justice are closely linked to the perceived fairness of performance appraisals.

Furthermore, there has been little research on the theory of interactional justice; however, this study incorporated interactional justice, which was found to have some significant influence on job satisfaction and organizational commitment of the state correctional staff. Bies and Moag (1986) first introduced interactional justice, stating that there are four key principles: truthfulness, respect, propriety of questions, and justification. Participants in this study expressed that they felt that some of their supervisors were dishonest, which would cause some frustration in the staff. Moreover, the staff revealed that respect and professionalism increased their job satisfaction and organizational commitment, especially when they felt that they were supported and were given information in a timely manner. Two participants emphasized that they especially appreciated when supervisors took the time to explain the reasoning behind decisions and policies, as it helped them better understand the rationale behind workplace practices. Notably, interactional justice was found to enhance job satisfaction, as positive rapport between staff and supervisors contributed to a more enjoyable work environment and fostered close interpersonal bonds.

Limitations of the Study

This study was not without its limitations. Initially, the plan was to conduct interviews with staff at three correctional facilities in Indiana. However, due to difficulties establishing contact with one of the facilities, data collection was ultimately limited to staff at only two prisons. Additionally, the initial plan was to interview 15 staff

across both prisons; however, there was a lack of response after multiple attempts to recruit staff via social media posts such as on local community Facebook groups and on LinkedIn. As a result, only nine participants were interviewed; however, data saturation was still achieved.

Another limitation was that the study was unable to recruit training staff, who were originally intended to be part of the sample. Their absence limited the scope of perspectives, particularly regarding onboarding, policy communication, training and promotional opportunities, and institutional values.

Another limitation was that out of the nine participants, only two of them were current employees. While the majority of participants reported similar experiences, a more balanced sample of current and former employees could have provided a broader range of perspectives. Additionally, because this study recruited individuals using social media outlets, individuals who showed interest in participating in this study may have had stronger opinions to share their experiences, which ultimately may have increased motivation to participate in this study. With this in mind, several of the former employees had left their positions a few years prior to the interviews. Thus, their perspectives may reflect past conditions that may have more recently changed. This time gap presents a limitation in portraying the most up-to-date experiences of correctional staff.

Another limitation is lack of triangulation. The main instrument for this study was the use of interviews; therefore, there were no documents, observations, or other forms of data collection to confirm findings. Additionally, past literature applied quantitative research methods on this specific topic, whereas this study was an exploratory qualitative

study. Accordingly, the results of this study may not be directly comparable to the literature as this study employed in-depth and personal lived experiences of the participants, rather than broad generalizations.

Recommendations

Correctional staff face challenging situations due to the nature of their job. Therefore, it is important that correctional research continue to better understand what correctional employees desire or need to improve their job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and other workplace outcomes. One recommendation is to conduct more qualitative research and expand to other correctional facilities, especially within the state of Indiana. Additionally, a larger sample size would allow more unique perspectives to emerge and reveal themes or categories that may not have been revealed in smaller sample populations. This could provide insight into how different correctional facilities in the state of Indiana are and what their staff yearn for when it comes to increasing positive job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

Future studies could benefit from conducting qualitative research that focuses on specific roles within correctional facilities, such as custody staff, training officers, supervisors, case managers, and internal affairs personnel. Focusing on individual departments would allow researchers to explore the unique challenges, perceptions, and needs associated with each role. This level of specificity can provide more targeted insights into how organizational justice and workplace conditions are experienced across different functional areas, ultimately informing more tailored and effective interventions.

Another recommendation is that this study may benefit from employing a mixed-methods design. For example, data collection can incorporate in-depth interviews with open-ended questions, as well as utilizing statistics to compare variables such as age, gender, educational background etc., to test relationships such as turnover intent, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment. A mixed-methods design can help provide greater detail and strengthen the results of the study as interviewees will be able to express their lived experiences, while the researcher can statistically examine relationships among variables as appropriate for the study.

Implications

The results of this study can allow for a great impact on positive social change for individual correctional staff, correctional administrators, and the organization as a whole. Correctional staff can benefit from this study because it raises awareness on the importance of how distributive, procedural, and interactional justice can impact their job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Correctional staff are the backbone of the prison system and its operations, so improvement in organizational justice in the workplace is necessary to provide more positive distribution of rewards, ethical and fair procedures and processes, and increased morale and support from leadership to line staff. Correctional administrators may be impacted by this study because it provides insight on what correctional staff desire and expect when they work along the walls of the prison. Additionally, the results of this study can help leadership provide and offer services to ensure the safety and well-being of staff. Finally, this study can provide positive social change for the organization as a whole because making improvements in organizational

justice will allow the workplace to be a more attractive and safer place to work in. Providing more staff resources and rewards, enhancing ethical procedures and processes, and improving communication may lead to increased positive job satisfaction and organizational commitment, as well as reducing negative workplace outcomes.

Furthermore, the results of this study emphasize the magnitude which interactional justice has on job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Correctional staff find that working on a team that is supportive and effective communication has greatly influenced their mood and, in turn, enhanced their overall job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Additionally, negative impacts of interactional justice may lead to burnout, emotional exhaustion, turnover intention, and a possible decline in mental health. These findings highlight that positive and timely interactions, supportive supervisors, and respect help shape the overall well-being and motivation of correctional staff, while also increasing the retention of staff.

To provide positive organizational justice practices in the correctional setting, correctional administrators can focus on the three dimensions of organizational justice and implement strategies that enhance job satisfaction and organizational commitment among correctional staff. During the course of this study, a common theme that emerged across all three dimensions was the prevalence of favoritism, which appeared to influence decisions, promotions, and daily operations within the prison system. Therefore, one recommendation for practice is to establish transparent policies and standardized procedures that reduce bias and ensure all staff are treated equitably. This may include regular training on equitable leadership, training on effective listening skills and

constructive feedback, anonymous reporting systems for perceived unfairness, and routine audits of supervisory decisions to promote accountability and fairness across the institution.

Conclusion

This study highlights the critical factors that shape the overall job satisfaction and organizational commitment of state correctional staff. Organizational justice, specifically distributive, procedural, and interactional justice, play a vital role in the way that correctional staff perceive fairness in the workplace. These perceptions can, in turn, impact other workplace dynamics, potentially leading to either negative or positive outcomes. Past studies and statistics clearly indicate that correctional facilities face a high turnover rate; thus, the importance of this study was to further explore how organizational justice issues influence the perceptions of fairness in the distribution of rewards, procedure and processes, and communication. Correctional staff work in a potentially hazardous and volatile environment, making daily operations a challenge or lead to burnout and emotional exhaustion, among many other critical factors. Therefore, it is essential to consider the circumstances that may influence negative workplace outcomes and attitudes and find solutions that will provide a safer and more gratifying place to work at. The results demonstrate that correctional staff value recognition for good work, fairness and ethical procedures, and supportive, caring leadership. These factors contribute to greater job satisfaction and organizational commitment, while also enhancing motivation and reducing the risk of negative outcomes such as burnout, emotional exhaustion, and other adverse effects. The findings of this study aim to

enhance perceptions of organizational justice within state correctional facilities, improve job satisfaction and organizational commitment among correctional staff, and ultimately contribute to creating a safer, more supportive, and appealing work environment for both current employees and those seeking a career in the Department of Corrections.

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