

2018

# The Relationship Between Big Five Personality Traits and Burnout: A Study Among Correctional Personnel

Sharon Maylor  
*Walden University*

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# Walden University

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

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Sharon Maylor

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2017

Abstract

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Correctional Personnel

by

Sharon A. Maylor

M.S., Springfield College 2008

B.S., Springfield College 2007

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Psychology

Walden University

August 2017

## Abstract

Burnout is a serious work related syndrome that is a result of exposure to chronic work stress. In addition to the consequences of burnout on the individual, the symptoms of burnout can adversely affect the organization, the clients the individual works with and the individual's close family and friends. The literature has focused on the history of burnout and the level of burnout experienced by various high stress occupations; however there has not been extensive research into the role personality traits play in burnout. The main research question of this study was to identify personality traits that are more susceptible to burnout among correctional workers. This research utilized the survey research method by having participants voluntarily complete a demographics form, the Maslach Burnout Inventory for Human Service Workers, and the Big Five Inventory.

Data was collected through an online questionnaire (N=169). Data was analyzed by correlation analysis and two step multiple regression using demographics and the individual components of burnout. The results suggested that individuals possessing the personality trait Neuroticism experienced high levels of Emotional Exhaustion and Depersonalization. The results also suggested that the length of years employed had no relationship to burnout. The study found that years worked, type of work and marital status on their own did not have any relationship with burnout; however when coupled with personality traits. The findings also showed that Neuroticism was the only personality trait that was associated with all three dimensions of burnout. These findings can assist organizations with identifying individuals in the field of corrections who may be predisposed to burnout and allow for early intervention. As a result, the interventions can lead to social change where individuals can be healthier, happier, more fulfilled and better able to protect and service the clients, the organization and the public.

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## Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my mother and father Monica Adella and Sebert John Maylor. It is because of your indefatigable pursuit of a better life for your children, your unwavering faith in Jesus Christ, your indomitable spirit and of course your financial support why I am able to believe that all things are possible. Thank you Daddy for being a father who had a vision of great things for his family. Thank you Mommy for being a mother and a friend who continues to inspire me to make the dream a reality. I love you both!

To my brothers and sisters: David, Samuel, Joan, Carolyn and Peter thank you for making me think that I'm the smartest cookie in the bunch...lol.

To my brilliant next generation: Kayla, Jahnya, Trevon, Rosie and Zyion thank you for inspiring me to lead by example. Have a vision, make a plan, support each other. You can do it.

## Acknowledgements

Over the course of the years spent pursuing this degree, I have been blessed with a number of individuals who have inspired, encouraged, motivated and supported me. A special thanks to Dr. Richard Thompson, my committee chair person for the countless hours and emails spent reflecting, reviewing, reading, encouraging and most of all your firm patience throughout the entire process. Thank you Dr. Matthew Fearington for agreeing to serve on my committee.

I would like to thank everyone who ever asked me “Are you finished yet?” Your question of encouragement helped me to stay the course and now I can finally say “Yes I am.”

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## Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

### **Introduction**

In the United States, billions of dollars have been spent to incarcerate over 1.5 million federal and state prisoners (Lambert, Hogan, & Altheimer, 2010; Lambert, Hogan, Jiang, Elechi, Benjamin, Morris, Laux, & Dupuy, 2010). The enormous task of coordinating safety, institutional policies and procedures, and implementing inmate rehabilitation strategies rests with over 400,000 correctional personnel working in more than 1,200 federal, state, and local correctional institutions throughout the United States (Lambert et. al, 2010; Senter, Morgan, Serna-McDonald, & Bewley, 2010). Unlike many other human services professions, correctional personnel have the unique charge of serving and protecting a population that is mostly unwilling, potentially violent and often times desirous of accommodations that would not restrict their freedoms (Lambert et. al, 2010). Custodial and non-custodial prison staff is subjected to a tough and demanding work environment that can cause stress which in turn, can lead to burnout (Morgan, Haveren, & Pearson, 2002). Burnout is a negative emotional reaction to one's job that consists of three components: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment (Alarcon, Eschleman, & Bowling, 2009; Lambert, Hogan, & Altheimer, 2010. Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001)

While inmates have a variety of programs designed to help them cope with the adverse effects of their restricted living environment (i.e. stress management programs, recreational therapy, psychotherapy and addiction services counseling), correctional staff have limited programs at their disposal for coping with job related stress and burnout (Morgan, Haveren & Pearson, 2002). Burnout can lead to a number of conditions that adversely affects workers and

organizations such as: decreased work performance, increased absenteeism, high turnover, and substance abuse (Burke & Mikkelsen, 2004; Lambert, Hogan, Jiang, & Jenkins, 2009). Even though burnout in helping professions has been widely explored, burnout research among correctional personnel has not received as much attention (Alacron, Eshlemann & Bowling, 2009; Lambert et al.; Schaufeli, Leiter, & Maslach, 2008). Therefore further study of correctional personnel may lead to an increased understanding of burnout, burnout prevention, and burnout coping strategies.

The majority of burnout research has focused on environmental factors such as supervisory and administrative support, role ambiguity and conflict, and input in decision-making, (Lambert, Altheimer, & Hogan, 2010; Lambert, Hogan, & Altheimer, 2010). Researchers have found that the beneficial effects of coping strategies and social support may be influenced by personality; therefore personality should be examined as a factor for predicting burnout (Cieslak, Korczynska, Strelau, & Kaczmarek, 2008; Shimizutani, Odagiri, Ohya, Shimomitsu, Kristensen, Maruta, & Iimori, 2008). Morgan, Van Haveren and Pearson (2002) posit that further research is needed to identify personal and institutional factors that lead to job-related burnout. The purpose of this research is to identify the role personality traits have in the burnout process among correctional personnel.

According to Morgan, Van Haveren, and Pearson (2002) there has been no consistent indication from research findings in regards to any correlation between length of tenure, age, gender, and burnout among correctional personnel. For example, the research conducted by Morgan et al. found that less experienced or newer officers reported higher levels of personal accomplishment and lower levels of depersonalization which would indicate that newer

correctional personnel were not experiencing burnout. While Morgan et al. also cites research conducted by Lindquist and Whitehead which found that newer correctional staff experienced greater levels of burnout. Research findings from Lambert, Hogan, Jiang and Jenkins (2009) also indicate inconsistent findings in regards to a correlation between sex, age, tenure, position and burnout. The inconsistency of findings among correctional personnel as it relates to sex, age, position and tenure and burnout shows a need for further study of the aforementioned variables.

Personality can be described in terms of five traits often labeled as the big five: neuroticism, extraversion, openness, agreeableness and conscientiousness (Bakker, Van Der Zee, Lewig, & Dollard, 2006; McCrae & Costa, 1999; Morgan & de Bruin, 2010). The impact between personality and burnout is the main focus of this research. By examining the correlation between the personality traits – neuroticism, extraversion, openness, agreeableness and conscientiousness – and the components of burnout – emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and reduced personal accomplishment among correctional personnel, it may potentially lead to a better understanding of individuals who are more prone to burnout and help develop more effective coping and prevention strategies.

This chapter will explore the background of burnout within the field of human services and more specifically the field of corrections. It will describe the problem and state the purpose of the study along with the implications for social change. This chapter will conclude with research questions, null and alternative hypotheses, and a brief overview of chapter two.

### **Background of Problem**

As a major aspect of the criminal justice system in the U.S., the department of corrections receives a vast amount of money each year for personnel and related expenditures. Correctional

organizations rely heavily on employees to effectively execute the mission of the department in order to ensure inmate, staff and public safety; therefore correctional personnel are vital to the success or failure of correctional organizations (Lambert, Hogan, Jiang, Elechi, Benjamin, Morris, Laux, & Dupuy, 2009). Positive employee behaviors can benefit the organization and the public, while negative employee behaviors can have an increasingly adverse effect on inmates, other employees, and the organization overall. For example, the Zimbardo Prison Experiment showed how the prison environment can lead to authoritarianism, Machiavellianism, aggressive, rigid and power motivated behaviors (Morgan, Van Haveren & Pearson, 2002). The Zimbardo Prison Experiment was conducted in order to understand the effects of roles, labels and expectations in a simulated prison environment. The study had to be shut down six days into the two week experiment because the guards became extremely abusive and the prisoners suffered severe emotional and cognitive reactions (Haney, Banks & Zimbardo, 1973). Carlson and Thomas (2006) reported that in addition to high absenteeism, correctional officers' annual turnover rate ranges from 16.2% to 40%. Since burnout can lead to decreased work performance, lack of empathy, reduced quality of work, high turnover, increased absenteeism, substance abuse, and other negative behaviors, burnout among correctional personnel is harmful and costly to the employee, the employee's family, and the entire prison organization (Burke & Mikkelsen, 2004; Lambery, Hogan, Jiang & Jenkins, 2009; Morgan et al.). Understanding how personality impacts an individual's response to prolonged stressful situations that can lead to burnout, can aid organizations in identifying individuals who may be at risk for burnout and aid in establishing preventive programs to reduce the harmful impact of burnout.



### **Problem Statement**

Personality has been identified as an area for increased research in relation to burnout (Morgan & de Bruin, 2010). Cognitive-affective personality system (CAPS) states that an individual's personality affects the encoding and evaluation of information (Mischel & Shoda, 1995; Swider & Zimmerman, 2010). The encodings are indicators for explaining the personality-behavior relationship. For example a person with neurotic personality traits may encode a change in work environment differently than a non-neurotic individual in the same situation. The person with the neurotic personality trait is more likely to respond to the change in a way that would make them emotionally drained or would cause them to feel distanced from their job. The markers of neuroticism – anxious, insecure, depressed, fearful, nervous, etc – align with the components of job burnout – emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and decreased personal accomplishments; therefore further exploration of the potential relationship between personality and burnout may prove beneficial (Swider & Zimmerman; Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001). This current research focus is on the possible correlation between personality traits and burnout syndrome among correctional personnel.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to determine which personality traits among correctional employees are more susceptible to burnout. This study used correlational and multiple regression analysis to identify relationships between the personality traits identified as neuroticism, extraversion, openness, agreeableness, and conscientiousness, the three components of burnout: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and reduced personal accomplishment among correctional personnel and demographic characteristics Results from this study will add

to the body of research surrounding burnout because the results may help to identify personality traits in correctional personnel that are predisposed to experiencing burnout.

Research exists that examines the relationship between burnout and such factors as depleted resources, lack of support, and distributive and procedural justice; but there is little research discovered by this researcher that examines the relationship between personality and burnout among correctional personnel (Lambert, Hoggan, Jiang, Elechi, Benjamin, Morris, Laux & Dupuy, 2010; Neveu, 2007). Examining the relationship between personality and burnout may indicate whether a particular personality trait has a positive or negative impact on an individual's resilience to burnout in the field of corrections. While this research was focused specifically on correctional personnel the information gleaned from this research may be generalized to other human service fields and may assist with the early identification of individuals who are predisposed to burnout syndrome. The early identification of individuals who are predisposed to burnout may enable the individual and the organization to seek additional support systems, skills, and programs that will help to prevent or minimize the impact of burnout.

### **Research Questions**

Research has shown that correctional work is a stressful occupation (Carlson & Thomas, 2006; Lambert, Altheimer, & Hogan, 2010; Lambert, Hogan, Jiang, & Jenkins; 2009; Morgan, Van Haveren & Pearson, 2002). Additional research has found a correlation between burnout and extended exposure job stress (Carlson & Thomas). The following research questions are a result of the review of the existing literature on personality and burnout. Chapter 3 has a more detailed discussion of the study.

*Research Question 1*

Is there a significant relationship between correctional employees' personality traits as measured by the Big Five Inventory (BFI) (John & Srivastava, 1999). and the level of burnout, as measured by the Maslach Burnout Inventory-Human Services Survey (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996)? The correlation between personality and burnout would indicate that an individual's personality may increase or decrease their experience of burnout.

*Null Hypothesis 1* There is no significant relationship between the personality trait Openness (O) and Depersonalization (DP).

*Alternate Hypothesis 1* There is an expected significant relationship between Openness (O) and Depersonalization (DP)

*Null Hypothesis 2* There is no significant relationship between the personality trait Neuroticism (N) and Emotional Exhaustion (EE).

*Alternate Hypothesis 2* There is an expected significant relationship between Neuroticism (N) and Emotional Exhaustion (EE)

*Null Hypothesis 3* There is no significant relationship between the personality trait Neuroticism (N) and Depersonalization (DP).

*Alternate Hypothesis 3* There is an expected significant relationship between Neuroticism (N) and Depersonalization (DP).

*Null Hypothesis 4* There is no significant relationship between the personality trait Extraversion (E) and Personal Accomplishment (PA).

*Alternate Hypothesis 4* There is an expected significant relationship between Extraversion (E) and Personal Accomplishment (PA).

*Null Hypothesis 5* There is no significant relationship between the personality trait Conscientiousness (C) and Depersonalization (PA).

*Alternate Hypothesis 5* There is an expected significant relationship between Conscientiousness (C) and Personal Accomplishment (PA).

*Null Hypothesis 6* There is no significant relationship between the personality trait Agreeableness (A) and Emotional Exhaustion (EE).

*Alternate Hypothesis 6* There is an expected significant relationship between Agreeableness (A) and Emotional Exhaustion (EE).

#### *Research Question 2*

Is there a significant relationship between the years of experience working in a correctional institution and the level of burnout that is experienced?

*Null Hypothesis* There is a no correlation between years of experience working in a correctional institution and the level of burnout.

*Alternate Hypothesis* There is a correlation between years of experience working in a correctional institution and the level of burnout.

### **Theoretical Basis**

While burnout does not have a standard definition, the general consensus among researchers of burnout is that burnout syndrome is an individual's response to chronic emotional and interpersonal stressors (Freudenberger, 1977; Leiter & Maslach, 2001; Malach Pines &

Keinan, 2005; Maslach & Jackson, 1981; Montero-Marin & Garcia-Campayo, 2010). Burnout and job stress have been linked as interchangeable terms; but the two are very distinct constructs having unique causes and effects (Lambert, Hogan, & Altheimer, 2010). Burnout syndrome is a negative internal experience which produces distress, discomfort, and cynicism with an emotional aspect that involves attitudes, feelings, motives, and expectations (Montero-Maarin & Garcia-Campayo, 2010; Leiter & Maslach, 2001; Richardsen & Martinussen, 2004; Shirom, 2009).

Similar to the definition of burnout, the definition of stress varies among researchers. The general concept is that job stress is a negative physical and psychological response to job conditions. Job stress can occur when there is unbalance between job demands and worker capabilities and resources (Burke & Mikkelsen, 2004; Malach Pines & Keinan, 2005). Of the three components of burnout - emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and reduced personal accomplishment, emotional exhaustion is the initial and critical indicator of potential burnout. Researchers have found a correlation between prolonged exposure to job stress and burnout; therefore an individual's interpretation of a situation may cause them to perceive it as stressful which in turn can lead to emotional exhaustion (Carlson & Thomas, 2006).

#### *Cognitive-Affective System Theory of Personality*

The cognitive-affective system theory of personality states that an individual's behavior is best predicted based on an understanding of the person, situation, and the interaction between the person and the situation (Mischel, 2004; Mischel & Shoda, 1995). Cognitive-affective personality systems model (CAPS) defines personality as a network of connected cognitions and affects that responds to specific situations that characterizes the individual (Mischel & Ayduk,

2002). Mischel and Shoda posit that behavior is a result of the individual's perception of themselves in a situation. This perception is based on a system of cognitive-affective units (CAUs). CAUs are the mediating system of the personality structure and are characterized by five components: (a) encodings which are constructs for self, people, events and internal external situations; (b) expectancies and beliefs about the world, self-efficacy and outcomes for behavior; (c) affects or feelings and emotions; (d) goals and values – desired outcomes; competencies and (e) self regulatory plans – potential behaviors that one can exhibit and scripts one can do (Mischel & Ayduk; Mischel & Shoda).

An individual's perception of a situation determines the intensity of their emotional response. The system of cognitive-affective units is what makes an individual's subjective interpretation of an event as stressful or unstressful, pleasant or unpleasant, changeable or unchangeable; therefore personality is the external manifestation of the internal cognitive-affective system. Exploring interpretation of a situation is important in understanding burnout, because it indicates that the individual's perception and reaction to chronic stressful environments should be considered.

While the correlation between personality and burnout is receiving increased attention in the human services field, the research into personality and burnout among correctional employees is limited (Burke & Mikkelsen, 2004; Carlson & Thomas, 2006; Kokkinos, 2007; Lambert, Hogan, Jiang & Jenkins, 2009; Morgan & de Bruin; 2010). The most common model of personality traits are referred to as the "Big Five." The Big Five is a comprehensive system of the most basic personality attributes comprised from an array of factor-analytical studies. The five personality factors in the model are characterized as: openness to experience,

conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism (OCEAN), (Smits, Dolan, Vorst, Wicherts & Timmerman, 2011; Thalmayer, Saucier, & Eigenhuis; 2011). The aforementioned five traits are considered a broad dimension that provides a general synopsis of how a person's behaviors, thoughts and feelings are displayed in a situation (Costa & McCrae, 2000; Mischel, 2004; Mischel & Shoda, 1998). Personality impacts the type of coping choice that an individual may resort to when under stress; therefore personality can be a factor in decreasing or increasing burnout (Carlson & Thomas, 2006; Mischel & Ayudak, 2002; Morgan & de Bruin, 2010).

### **Significance of the Study**

In addition to safeguarding a population that is most often desirous of alternate accommodations, correctional personnel are also responsible for protecting the community and fellow co-workers. Correctional employees that are exposed to prolonged stress because of their work environment are subject to decreased work performance, lack of empathy, increased absenteeism, substance abuse, and other negative behaviors (Burke & Mikkelsen, 2004; Lambery, Hogan, Jiang & Jenkins, 2009; Morgan & de Bruin, 2010; Roy, Novak & Miksaj-Todorovic, 2010). Burnout among correctional personnel is harmful to the organization as well, because it can adversely affect co-workers and inmates, lead to increased costly employee turnover and decreased organizational morale. Identifying a correlation between burnout and personality among correctional workers can be a point for further in depth research. If certain personality traits are more susceptible to burnout then the individual can seek preventive measures that will help to reduce conditions that can lead to burnout. The organization can also create systems and programs that can help reduce the level of burnout with employees that have personality traits that are more inclined to burnout.

### **Nature of the Study**

This research is a correlational analysis coupled with multiple regression. Correlational analysis allowed the researcher to examine any correlations between personality traits and the three dimensions of burnout, while multiple regression allowed the researcher to test the statistical significance between the independent variables of personality and the three dimensions of the dependent variable burnout along with tenure. An online survey was conducted using the Maslach Burnout Inventory for Human Services (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996) and the Big Five Inventory (John, Naumann, & Soto, 2008.) as test instruments.

### **Social Change**

This research examined the connection between the personality traits: neuroticism, extraversion, openness, agreeableness and conscientiousness with the three components of burnout: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment (Bakker, Van Der Zee, Lewig, & Dollard, 2006; Maslach, Schaeferli, & Leiter, 2001). Identifying individuals who are at risk for burnout can help to reduce the level of burnout in the individual and the effects it may have on the individual, co-workers, inmates, and the organization on a whole. The field of correctional work can benefit from early identification of individual's susceptibility to burnout because it would allow the organization to take proactive steps to minimize and prevent burnout syndrome within the institution.

### **Definition of Terms**

*Agreeableness (A)*: one of the five categories of personality that is characterized by altruism, nurturance and caring. This individual is sympathetic and willing to help others (Bakker, Van Der Zee, Lewig, & Dollard, 2006).



*Burnout*: a negative internal experience that produces feelings of distress, discomfort, and cynicism with an emotional aspect that involves attitudes, feelings, motives, and expectations. Burnout syndrome is characterized by three components: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and reduced personal accomplishment (Maslach, Schaefer, & Leiter, 2001).

*Cognitive-affective personality system (CAPS)*: a theory of personality that proposes to explain the invariance of personality and the variability of behavior across situations. The theory states that an individual's behavior is best predicated based on an understanding of the person, situation, and the interaction between the person and the situation (Mischel, 2004; Mischel & Shoda, 1995).

*Cognitive-affective units (CAUs)*: the mediating system of CAPS characterized by five components: encodings, expectancies and beliefs, affects, goals and values and competencies and self regulatory plans (Mischel & Ayduk; Mischel & Shoda).

*Conscientiousness (C)*: one of the five domains of personality that is characterized by problem-solving, self-discipline, achievement striving, dutifulness, reliable and competence (Bakker, Van Der Zee, Lewig, & Dollard, 2006).

*Correctional personnel*: individuals employed by a correctional institution. Correctional personnel can work in a wide range of position within the correctional facility such as: administrative staff, custodial staff, treatment staff, health care staff, and staff involved in vocational, educational training, and occupational activities.

*Depersonalization (D)*: one of the three components of burnout characterized by an individual's attempt to put distance oneself and the client resulting in a negative and pessimistic view towards the client (Maslach, Schaefer, & Leiter, 2001)

*Emotional exhaustion (EE)*: a reflection of the stress component of burnout identified by the depletion of emotional resources and the emotional and cognitive distancing of the individual from their work (Maslach, Schaeferli, & Leiter, 2001).

*Extraversion (E)*: one of the five categories of personality characterized by self-confidence, positive emotions, high frequency and intensity of personal interactions, assertive, talkative, sociable and excitement seeking (Bakker, Van Der Zee, Lewig, & Dollard, 2006).

*Neuroticism (N)*: one of the five domains of personality that is identified by fearfulness, irritability low self-esteem, social anxiety, helplessness, and poor inhibition of impulses. Individuals with neurotic traits generally tend to experience negative emotions (Bakker, Van Der Zee, Lewig, & Dollard, 2006).

*Openness (O)*: one of the five categories of personality identified by active imagination, intellectual curiosity, attuned to inner feelings and a preference for variety (Bakker, Van Der Zee, Lewig, & Dollard, 2006).

*Personal accomplishment (PA)*: as one of the three components of burnout, PA is in some ways a function of exhaustion and cynicism. PA is characterized by the individual's view of their work and effectiveness with clients. The individual adopts a negative attitude towards work and the individuals they work with (Maslach, Schaeferli, & Leiter, 2001).

### **Assumptions**

The sample population was selected from correctional personnel who are current members on an online correctional networking group. All members of the networking group have an equal chance to be selected for participation. It is assumed that the sample population would be representative of all races, ages, genders, and staff positions within a correctional

institution. It is assumed that participants would be truthful in their responses and would complete the study in its entirety. It is assumed that individuals experiencing burnout would not refrain from participating in the study. It is also assumed that Maslach Burnout Inventory for Human Services (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996) and the Big Five Inventory (John, Naumann, & Soto, 2008.) are appropriate measuring instruments for this study.

### **Limitations**

This study used two self-reporting measuring instruments: the Maslach Burnout Inventory for Human Services (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996) and the Big Five Inventory (John, Naumann, & Soto, 2008.). Self-report measures rely on the respondent being truthful and open in their responses. Respondents to self-report measures are subject to bias. This respondent bias was a limitation because the respondent may minimize or overestimate the amount of burnout they are experiencing on the burnout inventory. Another limitation of this study is that it was conducted online with a corrections networking group. Using this group will exclude correctional personnel who may not be a part of the online group.

A delimitation of this study was that it utilizes online correctional personnel networking groups and the results may not be fully generalized to other states or other countries. Another delimitation was that this study focuses on the specific field of correctional, which may not allow the results to be completely generalized to other occupations and geographic regions. Using volunteers may have an influence on the overall research findings because individuals who are suffering from severe burnout may not be inclined to take part in the study.

## Summary

Burnout syndrome is a negative physical and psychological response to chronic job stress. Burnout has been defined by three components: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment (Maslach, Schaeferli, & Leiter, 2001). Burnout has been highly studied in the human services field and exists wherever there is a dysfunctional relationship between worker and work environment (Maslach, Schaeferli, & Leiter, 2001; Montero-Maarin & Garcia-Campayo, 2010; Richardsen & Martinussen, 2004; Shirom, 2009). Individuals who work in human service fields where interaction between worker and client are a regular part of the daily practice may be at risk for a higher rate of burnout than other professions (Alacron, Eshlemann & Bowling, 2009; Burke & Mikkelsen, 2004).

A literature review on burnout and the big five personality model will be introduced in Chapter 2 and research design, methodologies, and review of Maslach Burnout Inventory for Human Services (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996; Maslach, Jackson, Leiter, Schaufeli, & Schwab, 1986) and the Big Five Inventory (John, Naumann, & Soto, 2008) will be introduced in Chapter 3. Chapter 3 reviewed a description of the sample population, correctional institution and union, data collection techniques, means of analyzing the collected data and means of participant selection. The summary of the results of this study are found in Chapter 4 and finally Chapter 5 summarizes the research findings, conclusion, recommendations for future study based on the findings, and implications for social change.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### **Restatement of Problem**

Burnout has been identified as a serious symptom that is hazardous to the individual, the organization and the people who are entrusted to the individual's care both at home and at work (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001). The fields of human services and the health profession have been identified as occupations where the individual is at a greater exposure to stress and burnout (Antoniou, Polychroni, & Vlachakis, 2005; Barford & Whelton, 2010; Hamama, 2012). More specifically, correctional personnel who are suffering from stress or are experiencing burnout are more likely to be delinquent with their job responsibilities, thereby endangering themselves, their colleagues, prisoners, and the general public (Burke & Mikkelsen 2004, Lambert, Hogan & Altheimer, 2010; Senter, Morgan, Serna-McDonald, & Bewley, 2010).

In addition, concepts of personality have continued to evolve, with general support being found for the five factor model of personality as a general model of personality. The five factor model of personality is a hierarchal model of personality traits that categorizes along the dimensions of Openness to experience, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, Neuroticism (Costa & McCrae, 2010). –This chapter outlines and explores stress, chronic stress, negative aspect of stress, person-environment fit theory, the history and three dimensions of burnout, human service workers, law enforcement and correctional personnel in relation to burnout.

### **Restatement of Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to determine which personality traits among correctional employees are more susceptible to burnout. This study identified if there are any correlations

between the personality traits identified as neuroticism, extraversion, openness, agreeableness, and conscientiousness and the three components of burnout: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and reduced personal accomplishment among correctional personnel. Results from this study added to the body of research surrounding burnout because the results may help to identify personality traits that are predisposed to experience burnout. The early identification of individuals who are predisposed to burnout may enable the individual and the organization to seek additional support systems, skills, and programs that will help to prevent or minimize the impact of burnout.

This literature review presented the historical background on burnout, current research on burnout, and further exploring the effects of burnout on correctional personnel. In addition this literature review examined the five domains of personality and highlight the current research on the correlation between personality and burnout. Personality has been identified as an area for increased research in relation to burnout (Morgan & de Bruin, 2010). The current research focused on the possible correlation between personality traits and burnout syndrome among correctional personnel.

Burnout among employees in human service fields has been receiving increased attention since 1970 with work as a correctional employee being identified as one of those occupations (Bakker, Van Der Zee, Lewig, & Dollard, 2006; Carlson & Thomas; 2006; Lambert, Altheimer, & Hogan, 2010; Lambert, Hogan, Juang & Jenkins, 2009; Morgan & de Bruin, 2010; Morgan, Van Haveren, Pearson, 2002; Roy, Novak, & Miksaj-Todorovic, 2010). As the prison population in the United States continues to grow, research focused on burnout and burnout prevention is increasingly recognized as core issues in the field of corrections (Roy et al; Morgan

et al.) This literature review will discuss the history and background of burnout along with a discussion of the research on the three components of burnout. The review identified areas that need further research to help identify individuals who are at risk for burnout syndrome. Finally, the big five model of personality was reviewed and summarized in order to justify the use of this specific model for this research.

### **Finding Research on Burnout**

A literature search was conducted through electronic psychology, medical and criminal justice databases such as: Google Scholar, PsycINFO, SAGE Premier, and Criminal Justice Periodicals as well as through the Walden University library databases. Literature searches were conducted using the search terms burnout, emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, personal accomplishment, personality, big five, openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, neuroticism, correctional personnel, prison staff, and correctional institutions. Printed as well as digital versions of relevant articles were retained for this research.

Individual searches on the keyword burnout and the keyword personality produced extensive lists of possible articles while combining the keywords of burnout, personality and correctional staff/workers/personnel narrowed the search to a more manageable number of sources. A search on the keyword burnout in the Walden University Academic Search Premier search engine produced 3071 articles. A combined search on the keywords burnout and personality resulted in 221 articles. When the search was narrowed only using the terms personality and correctional personnel, four articles were found. A further narrowing of a combined search on burnout, personality, and prison staff produced only one result. Books used in this research were either purchased by the researcher or obtained through the library system.

## Stress

Since the late 1970's research on stress and burnout has received considerable attention (Antoniou, Polychroni, & Vlachakis, 2005; Lambert, Hogan, Jiang, & Jenkins, 2009; Oginska-Bulik, 2006). Stress, which is the precursor to burnout, has been broadly defined as an individual's response to threatening situations. The response to a stressor can be either singular or a combination of a physiological, psychological and behavioral reactions (Antoniou et al.; Burke & Mikkelsen, 2004; Oginska-Bulik). The World Health Organization has identified stress related disorders as one of the leading causes of premature death and prolonged exposure to stress can lead to burnout (Oginska-Bulik; Wu, Zhu, Li, Wang, & Wang, 2008). Burnout is a response to extended stress and defined by three components: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal achievement (Alarcon, Eschleman, & Bowling, 2009; Lambert, Hogan & Altheimer, 2010; Maslach, Schaufeli & Leiter, 2001). This literature review discusses the development of stress and burnout syndrome. The review showed that continued research on burnout among correctional personnel is needed in order to better identify individuals who are at risk and to identify possible intervention strategies.

### *Stress Response*

Stress response is the normal way for the body to react to perceived threats and danger because it activates the high gear instinctive survival response of an individual (Kendall, Murphy, O'Neill, & Bursnall, 2000). For example, eustress or desirable stress is similar to an individual's immediate response of stepping on the brakes or slightly swerving to avoid an accident. In addition when functioning properly an individual's response to job stress can help an individual rise to meet a challenge (i.e. meeting extremely tight deadlines). Distress or



undesirable stress is the individual's negative response to situations and will most likely result in a loss of productivity and a decline in an individual's overall well-being (Kendall et al.). For example, extended exposure to work stress may lead to increased work absences, decreased quality of work and loss of morale (Oginska-Bulik).

### *Person-Environment Fit Theory*

Person Environment Fit (PE) theory pertains to the degree that an individual's characteristics harmonizes with their environment (Salami, 2010). PE fit theory is instrumental to stress and burnout research because it focuses on individual adjustment to work environment in addition to reaction to stressors. PE theory posits that a person and the environment work together to determine an employee's well-being. If there is disharmony between person and environment then it increases the possibility of stress and strain (Yang, Che, & Spector, 2008). Person characteristics may include areas such as values, goals, personality, and other biological and psychological characteristics (Hinkol & Choi, 2009; Salami). Environment characteristics include areas such as job and family demands, cultural values, work expectations, benefits and rewards, and environmental conditions such as heat and cold (Hinkol & Choi; Salami; Yang et al.) In the context of the workplace, the degree of harmony between the person and the work environment determines whether or not a situation is interpreted as stressful for a person.

### *Negative Consequences of Stress*

Research has shown that stress can result in negative consequences for individuals, their families, and organizations (Vladut & Kallay, 2010; Wu, Zhu, Li, Wang, & Wang 2008). The Center for Diseases Control (1999) reported that one-fourth of employees viewed their jobs as the major cause of stress in their lives. Work stress pertains to the psychological, psychological,

and behavioral responses to pressures directly related to work. The American Psychological Association (2009) reported that sixty-nine percent of employees identified that work is a significant source of stress. In addition, forty-one percent reported that their work productivity was reduced as a result of stress. Work stress not only affects the individuals' psychological and physical health, but work stress can have a detrimental impact on an organization's overall effectiveness. For example, thirty-nine percent of employees experiencing high levels of overwork, say they feel very angry towards their employer (APA, 2009). This feeling of anger can lead to a loss in morale and a lower level of organizational commitment.

### *Work Stressors*

Work stressors can be categorized as exogenous or endogenous (Antoniou; Keinan, Malach-Pines; 2007). Exogenous stressors are things such as problematic relationship with superiors, inadequate pay, excessive workload, and unfavorable working conditions; while endogenous stressors are more internal such as individual personality characteristics, disappointment and frustration, and negative attitudes (Antoniou; Burke & Mikkelsen; Keinan & Malach-Pines). Exogenous and endogenous stressors can be further identified as task related stressors, such as physical danger, workload, and role problems, organizational stressors, such as shift work, insufficient work space and inadequate work materials, external stressors, such as home-work conflict and negative attitudes held by the community and the media (Keinan & Malach-Pines).

### *Chronic Stress*

Stress is a normal fact of everyday life, yet some people experience and react to stress more severely than others (Wu, Zhu, Li, Wang, & Wan, 2008; Xie, Wang & Chen, 2010).

Chronic stress affects the individual, their families and their organizations. The American Psychological Association (2010) reported that job stress has caused the U.S. labor force more than \$300 billion per year in absenteeism, turnover, decreased productivity, and medical, legal and insurance expenses. In addition 41% of employees reported feeling tensed or stressed out during their workday. Chronic stress can increase the wear and tear to our biological systems by disturbing sleep patterns, causing upset stomachs and headaches, and disturbing relationships with family and friends. Chronic stress has also been found to be associated with psychosomatic symptoms, musculoskeletal disorders, high blood pressure, recurrent coronary heart disease and burnout (Oginska-Bulik, 2006; Tsai & Chan, 2010; Xie, Wang, Chen, 2010).

### **Three Dimensions of Burnout**

#### *Stress*

Stress and burnout are often linked together because both symptoms are a response to prolonged conditions. Job stress is the result of a mismatch between the individual and their capabilities, resources, and work needs (CDC, 99). Burnout is an individual's negative response to work demands that is characterized by three components: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishments (Alarcon, Eschleman, & Bowling, 2009; Lambert, Hogan & Altheimer, 2010; Maslach, Schaufeli & Leiter, 2001).

#### *Emotional Exhaustion*

Most researchers agree that burnout encompasses three dimensions: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and decreased personal accomplishment (Alarcon, Eschleman, & Bowling, 2009; Lambert, Hogan & Altheimer, 2010; Maslach & Leiter, 2008; Maslach, Schaufeli & Leiter, 2001). Emotional exhaustion, which is the first dimension of burnout, refers

to feelings of being overextended and depleted of one's emotional and physical resources (Maslach & Leiter). Emotional exhaustion is further described as the feeling of not being able to offer of one's self emotionally, being emotionally drained (Montero-Marin & Garcia-Campayo, 2010; Richarsen & Martinussen, 2004). Interpersonal conflict, excessive work load, and prolonged use of emotional and physical resources of the individual are some of the major causes of emotional exhaustion (Vladut & Kallay, 2010). Of the three dimensions emotional exhaustion is the most widely researched and is usually the first indicating of pending burnout (Maslach & Jackson, 1981; Maslach et al, 2001).

### *Depersonalization*

As the second dimension of burnout, depersonalization occurs when the individual distances themselves and their services from those around them (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001; Senter, Morgan, Serna-Mcdonald, & Bewley, 2010). Depersonalization first begins when a person becomes frustrated with their job, less concerned about their clients and an increase in negative attitudes towards their job (Roy, Novak, & Miksay-Todorovic, 2010). Research conducted by Bakker, Van Der Zee, Lewing, and Dollard (2006) on volunteer counselors indicated that the depersonalization dimension could be predicted by personality constructs of emotional stability, extraversion, and intellect/autonomy. Further analysis of this dimension indicated that depersonalization can lead the individual to develop negative cynical attitudes towards the person in need of their services; which in turn may cause them to treat their clients as objects rather than individuals (Bakker et al.).

A meta-analysis conducted by Alarcon, Eschleman and Bowling (2009) found a positive association between negative affectivity and depersonalization. Negative Affectivity is

associated with anxiety/neuroticism on the personality factor scale (Alarcon et al.; Smits, Dolan, Vorst, Wicherts, & Timmerman, 2011). The findings were consistent with the researchers' hypothesis that individuals who were predisposed to negative attitudes about their work environment would be more susceptible to stress and burnout. The researchers indicated that additional research is needed that examines the correlation between personality and burnout (Smits et al.).

#### *Reduced Personal Accomplishment*

Vladut and Kallay characterized exhaustion as the hallmark syndrome, depersonalization as the contextual dimension and reduced personal accomplishment as the evaluative dimension of burnout. Reduced personal accomplishment (inefficacy) is characterized by a decrease in one's perceived professional efficacy (Alarcon, Eschleman, & Bowling, 2009). The relationship between inefficacy and burnout is slightly more complex than the other two dimensions. Some researchers view inefficacy as a function or a combination of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization (Alarcon et al.; Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001; Vladut & Kallay). Inefficacy is usually coupled with feelings of incompetence that is generated from a perceived or actual lack of resources and opportunities in the workplace, and perceived or actual lack of social support, the fit between the individual and organizational values about work (Burke & Mikkelsen, 2004; Maslach et al.; Vladut et al.).

#### *Law Enforcement and Burnout*

The field of law enforcement encompasses any job that operates in an organized manner to promote adherence to a set of rules governing a society. Law enforcement includes identifying and punishing individuals who break the law of the land. Law enforcement also

includes protecting those who adhere to the law and remanding those who have been found guilty of breaking the law. Judges, police officers, correctional officers, and state troopers are just a few of the types of occupations that have been authorized to uphold and promote justice. Specifically correctional personnel must preside over a population that is for the most part unwilling and uncooperative. The weight of responsibility associated with safely guarding the guilty while incarcerated may cause stress and lead to burnout (Lambert, Hogan, & Altheimer, 2010). Stress and burnout for correctional personnel may result from things such as: uncooperative prisoners, poor relationships with supervisors and co-workers, bullying and harassment from both prisoners and coworkers, and inadequate, inconsiderate or unsupportive supervision (Burke & Mikkelsen, 2004; Roy, Novak, & Miksaj-Todorovic, 2010; WHO, 2004).

### **History of Burnout**

The term “job burnout,” which is credited to Freudenberg, was first brought to public awareness in 1973 (Freudenberg, 1977; Lambert, Altheimer, & Hogan; 2010). Freudenberg’s (1977) initial definition of burnout was characterized by an individual becoming psychologically worn out and exhausted because of excessive work demands. As a psychoanalyst Freudenberg observed men and women in a variety of positions who had become fatigued, depressed, irritable, stressed and overworked. Freudenberg observed that nothing drastic had happened in their lives or their occupations; yet there was a significant change in attitude, mood and motivation. These observations were the basis of Freudenberg’s initial research into job burnout.

Although burnout has been studied for the past four decades, there is no single standard definition for burnout syndrome (Swider & Zimmerman, 2010). For example, some have characterized stress, strain or depression as burnout (Malach Pines & Keinan, 2005; Swider et

al.) While stress is a result of demands that exceeds an individual's abilities to perform at work, burnout is the individual's pattern of response to chronic work stress (Malach Pines et al. & Swider et al.) Burnout is usually psychological in nature, involves feelings, attitudes, motives, expectations resulting in negative consequences for the individual, the population the individual serves and the organization (Lambert, Altheimer, & Hogan; 2010). Maslach, Schaufeli, and Leiter (2001) have stated that burnout is not a unitary construct but manifests itself through three dimensions: exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment. Unlike stress which is the result of a mismatch between worker and work demands, burnout is a much more internalized process that may cause the individual to feel detached and displaced from those around them (Maslach, Schaufeli & Leiter, 2001). Burnout may also influences attitudes, behaviors, physical and mental health result in weak performance in the workplace and erosion of relationships both in and out of the workplace (Anvari, Kalali & Gholipour, 2011). Further exploration of the three dimensional construct of burnout will be in this chapter.

#### *Burnout and work*

Burnout has been attributed to the relationship between people and their work. The interaction that results in burnout is usually fueled by a myriad of factors that fall into two categories: situational and personal characteristics (Keinan & Malach Pines, 2007; Maslach, Schaufeli & Leiter, 2001; Vladut & Kallay, 2010). Situational characteristics can be related to work demands such as lack of adequate information or resources to do the job well, role conflict and ambiguity, and severity of client needs. Personal characteristics encompasses areas that are specific to the individual, such as marital status, health, and personality (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001). In an attempt to understand the nature of burnout various researchers have

examined different aspects that might contribute to burnout syndrome. For example some researchers have explored the lack of social support as a catalyst for workers feeling isolated and succumbing to workplace stressors (Lambert, Altheimer, & Hogan; 2010). Another researcher examined how organizational stressors such as inadequate pay, workforce shortage, problematic relationships with superiors, shift work, and excessive workload could lead to job burnout (Keinan & Malach Pines, 2007). Another study examined the relationship between two dimensions of organizational justice, distributive and procedural justice, and its impact on burnout (Lambert et al., 2009).

Much of the literature on burnout deals with the interaction between the individual and the organizational and interpersonal dimensions of the job (Alarcon, Eschleman & Bowling, 2009). Bakker, Van Der Zee, Lewig and Dollard's (2006) study of volunteer counselors found a correlation between basic personality factors and burnout. The researchers' findings indicated that the three dimensions of burnout were predicated by emotional stability. In addition Alarcon et al. meta-analysis of the relationship between personality traits and burnout found that individual-level predictors of personality traits were strong predictors of burnout. Their findings suggest that personality may help to not only predict but to protect against situations that can lead to burnout. More specifically their research found that personality traits such as self-esteem, self-efficacy, locus of control, emotional stability, extraversion, positive and negative affectivity, optimism and hardiness each showed a significant relationship with burnout. In addition the researchers performed a regression analysis and found that significant variance in each of the burnout dimensions of emotional exhaustion, reduced personal achievement, and



depersonalization could be explained by positive and negative affectivity. Additional information on personality will be discussed further in this chapter.

### **Research on Burnout**

A study on doctoral-level psychologists employed full-time and who were members of the American Psychological Association (N=203) explored the relationship between job satisfaction, life satisfaction and burnout (Senter, Morgan, Serna-McDonald, & Bewley, 2010). More specifically the research analyzed if correctional psychologists experienced greater levels of occupational burnout than other public sector and nonpublic sector psychologists. Of the sample population 22% were employed in correction facilities, 28% in Veteran's Affairs, 24% in Counseling Center settings, and 26% in Public Psychiatric Hospital settings. The study reported that correctional psychologists experienced significantly more job burnout compared to their occupational cohorts who worked in Counseling Center settings and Veteran's Affairs settings (Senter et al.). Having a greater understanding of burnout and how it relates to others within the human service field, such as correctional personnel, may help in reducing burnout syndrome in the field of corrections.

#### *Prison caseworkers and correctional officers*

In an effort to understand the high turnover rate of prison caseworkers, Carlson and Thomas (2006) conducted a study comparing burnout between prison caseworkers and correctional officers. The study was conducted at a men's prison and a women's prison located in the Midwest. Since the responsibilities of caseworker varies from institution to institution, for this study caseworker responsibilities covered areas such as: develops and maintains files on assigned caseload, develops a treatment plan for each client, monitors each client's performance,

makes recommendations for treatment, security and other matters (Carlson & Thomas, 2006). The Maslach Burnout Inventory was used for this study and workers were encouraged to participate by the state's Department of Corrections. Using a one-way ANOVA, the researchers found that there was a statistically significant level of burnout among prison caseworkers at both prisons. In comparison to correctional officers, correctional caseworkers reported higher levels on all three dimensions of burnout, emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and decreased personal achievement (Carlson & Thomas, 2006). Turnover of prison workers costs time, money and the loss of experienced workers' citation. This understanding of correctional caseworkers and officers can be a benefit to the field of corrections. The researchers found that only one in three caseworkers had received stress reduction training. With the information gleaned organizations and individuals would benefit from increased programs or systems geared towards stress management for caseworkers.

#### *Police officers*

A study of police officers in Norway found that certain organizational aspects of police work contributed to an individual's potential for burnout (Burke & Mikkelsen, 2004). Organizational aspects such as poor management, inflexible hierarchical structures, lack of communication, organizational changes, clarity of roles, and career plateau were some of the factors examined in this study. A finding from this study was that both emotional exhaustion and inefficacy were positively related to higher use of force among the police officers. This finding suggests that there is a relationship between burnout components and use of force (Burke et al). Additional research in this area is a potential benefit to the field of law enforcement.

#### *Work stressors and coping style as burnout predictors*

Research using a between-group comparison was conducted on prison officers by Cieslak, Korcznika, Strelau, and Kaczmarek (2008). The purpose of the study was to determine whether work stressors, coping styles, and work-related social support would predict an individual's susceptibility to burnout. This study found that security officers and treatment officers differed in intensity of work stressors; but across all positions individuals with strong endurance reported less work stressors. Endurance is described as the ability to continue work in spite of such things as pain, tiredness and adverse conditions (Cieslak et al.) For this study work stressors were selected from a list of sixteen possible stressful events such as exposure to aggression acts, role conflict, role ambiguity, and use of physical force to overpower inmates. Results also indicated that individuals with strong endurance reported lower levels of burnout (Cieslak et al.). Individuals who had weak endurance experienced higher levels of work stressors and perceived less social support from co-workers, reported higher scores of emotional exhaustion, and depersonalization and lower scores in personal accomplishment. These results mean that individuals with weak endurance are more susceptible to burnout syndrome and suggest that it may be fruitful to better understand how individual differences contribute to burnout. It may be especially important in occupations where burnout occurs more frequently, such as corrections.

### **Burnout and Correctional Personnel**

Research has shown that burnout affects correctional staff (Cieslak, Korczynska, Strelau, & Kaczmarek, 2008; Lambert, Hogan, Jiang, & Jenkins, 2009; Morgan, Van Haveren, & Pearson, 2002; Roy, Novak, & Miksaj-Todorovic, 2010; Senter, Morgan, Serna-McDonald, & Bewley, 2010). Research by Morgan, Van Haveren, and Pearson (2002) on correctional officers

(N=250) from a Southwestern state department of corrections examined the effect of several variable (age, gender, race, education, tenure, security level, etc.) in relationship to correctional officer burnout. Using the Maslach Burnout Inventory-Human Services Survey (MBI-HSS), some of their findings were: racial differences did not lead to differing levels of correctional burnout, officers with expanding job responsibilities experienced increased levels of burnout, cadets and older officers with more education were more likely to experience an increase of personal accomplishment but did not report an increase of depersonalization and emotional exhaustion, and that racial differences did not result in differing levels of correctional officer burnout (Morgan et al.). Although there has been conflicting research as to the correlation between gender and burnout, Morgan et al.'s research found that female correctional officers were less likely than male correctional officers to demonstrate a lack of concern and respond in an impersonal manner to clients. Shift work and level of security of the facility yielded non-significant findings for this study. This study examined burnout that resulted from correctional officer work as opposed to examining how the individual copes with job related stressors and the effectiveness of burnout reduction techniques. Further research on individual coping strategies and burnout reduction techniques may benefit the organization.

Roy, Novak, and Kiksaj-Todorovic (2010) did a comparative study of burnout among prison staff from the United States (N=480) and Croatia (N=442). The researchers identified lack of job security and lack of opportunities for promotion as one type of insecurity among prison staff that could possibly lead to job stressor. In some European countries the risk of those two areas are minimized because employees are protected from the possibility of being laid off or losing their jobs. The Maslach Burnout Inventory was used to collect data from all respondents,

with demographic data collected for age and gender. The purpose of the study was to check if the three factorial structure of burnout was consistent for both countries and to determine if there was a difference between the two countries in their experience related to burnout. The researchers reported that negative reaction to stress was more frequent among prison staff in European countries. The researchers found that the three factor structure for burnout was statistically consistent for both countries. The study also showed that the American respondents experience significantly more depersonalization than the Croatian counterparts, while the Croatian respondent reported more perceived lack of personal achievement and emotional exhaustion (Roy et al.). In addition, the findings showed that of the three dimensions, depersonalization showed the biggest difference between the groups.

Research conducted by Senter, Morgan, Serna-McDonald, and Bewley (2010) concentrated on burnout, job satisfaction and life satisfaction among doctoral level correctional psychologist and psychologists working in other settings (N=203). The study utilized three survey instruments: the MBI-HSS to assess burnout, the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire-Short Form to assess job satisfaction and the Satisfaction with Life Scale to assess overall life satisfaction. The study found that correctional psychologists experienced significantly more occupational burnout than their colleagues in other settings.

Burnout has been identified as an issue for correctional personnel (Lambert, Hogan, Jiang & Jenkins, 2009). A greater understanding of how burnout affects individuals working in corrections and why one individual is more prone to burnout would be beneficial to the field of corrections. Certain personality types described as impulsive, competitive, impatient and aggressive have been identified as being more susceptible to developing symptoms of coronary

disease (Khan, 2011). More specifically, they found that certain personality types had behavioral patterns that would cause them to assume increased workloads, feelings of work tension and increased depersonalization. Reza, Anvari, Kalali, And Gholipour (2011) found that the level of burnout an individual experiences was dependent on their level of extraversion, neuroticism, agreeableness, openness to experience, and conscientiousness. For example their study found that increased neuroticism leads to increased exposure to job burnout and individuals who had increased agreeableness and openness to experiences experienced less susceptibility to job burnout.

Personality traits can predict how a person will respond in a given situation (Zhao & Seibert, 2006). Personality traits provide a broad view and rough outline for human behavior and individuality. For example, Zhao and Seibert's research found that there were significant differences in personality traits between managers and entrepreneurs. Swider and Zimmerman's (2010) meta-analytic research stated that individuals mentally encode their expectancies, beliefs, reactions to events, frustrations, fears, and behavior tendencies. It is this encoding that mediates between personality and behavior. Their research posited that certain personality traits such as neuroticism, were predisposed to encoding change in a negative and emotional draining manner. Bakker, Van Der Zee, Lewig, and Dollard (2006) also found that there was a positive relationship between neuroticism and burnout and that extraversion and agreeableness correlated positively with personal accomplishment which in turn showed a negative correlation with burnout. These findings demonstrate that personality traits are an important factor in assessing susceptibility to burnout.

The literature review showed that individual differences, gender, and occupational types may influence susceptibility to burnout and further exploration of the relationship between personality and job burnout is worth exploring.

### **Personality's Role in Burnout**

Personality assessment is based on the premise that individuals can be identified by distinctive qualities that are consistent across situations and over time (Mischel & Shoda, 1995). Mischel and Shoda's (1995, 1998) cognitive-affective personality system posited that individual's mental encoding of expectancies and beliefs affects their behavioral tendencies, frustrations and fears. It is possible that job burnout may be a set of mental encodings that individuals have in response to ongoing stress at work (Swider & Zimmerman, 2010). Negative reactions due to ongoing job stress have been observed in both white-collar and blue-collar workers (Leiter & Maslach, 2001; Vladut & Kallay, 2010). Researchers have found that individuals who display high levels of burnout are characterized by low levels of self-esteem, low levels of sense of coherence and high levels of neuroticism (Storm & Rothman, 2003; Vladut & Kallay). Vladut & Kallay's research would suggest that a person's personality can be an indicator of their response to ongoing stress.

Researchers have found that character traits such as optimism, self-esteem, self-efficacy, self-control, emotional stability, and positive and negative affective impact response to burnout (Anvari, Kalali, & Gholipour, 2011; Shimizutani, Odagiri, Ohya, Shimomitsu, Kristensen, Maruta, & Iimori, 2008; Zopiatis, Constanti, & Pavlou, 2010). Cano-Garcia, Padilla-Munoz, & Carrasco-Ortiz (2004) conducted a study among teachers to analyze the importance of personality structure in relation to burnout. The researchers found that teachers who tested high

for emotional exhaustion and depersonalization and low for personal accomplishment were most likely to report a high degree of neuroticism and introversion. Cano-Garcia et al. posited that neurotic people display more negative emotions, stress reaction and emotional instability which make them more susceptible to the dimensions of burnout.

Zopiatis, Constanti, and Pavlou (2010) research on hotel managers hypothesized that extraversion and agreeableness would be negatively related to burnout and neuroticism would be positively related to burnout. Their research utilized the NEO Five-Factor Inventory to assess personality and Maslach's Burnout Inventory to measure burnout level. The findings of their study supported their original hypothesis for there was a significant positive association between neuroticism and the dimensions of burnout and a significant negative association between extraversion and agreeableness and the dimensions of burnout.

A self-administered questionnaire regarding burnout, work-related stressors and personality characteristics were used to gather data from nurses (N=707) at a university hospital (Shimizutani, Odagiri, Ohya, Shimoitsu, Kristensen, Maruta & Iimori, 2008). The purpose of the study was to evaluate the relationship between personality, coping behaviors, and burnout among nurses. The findings indicated that neuroticism was strongly related with the dimensions of burnout. The researchers also found that respondents with high neuroticism and low extraversion positive coping behaviors helped to reduce their vulnerability to burnout. The aforementioned finding would suggest that if an individual with certain personality traits that are more susceptible to burnout can be identified then interventions such as positive coping behavior patterns can be introduced to help reduce or eliminate the effects of burnout.

### **The Five Domains of Personality**



The five factor model of personality consists of the following traits: Openness to experience (O), Conscientiousness (C), Extraversion (E), Agreeableness (A), and Neuroticism (N) (McCrae & Costa, 2007). A helpful acronym for remembering the five factors is OCEAN. Several researchers have posited that individuals high in openness show little or no relationship to burnout (Alarcon et al.; Storm et al.; Swider & Zimmerman, 2010). The five dimensions of personality are viewed as broad aspects of individual differences between people. The personality traits account for individual consistency and continuity of behavior, thoughts, and feelings pertaining to situations and experiences over time (Zhao & Seibert, 2006). Based on these personality traits a rough outline of the individual and the way in which they express themselves or respond to situations can be determined. The five factor model allows for the organization of personality traits into a coherent story that can assist in the search for meaningful relationships (McCrae & Costa, 2007).

There is overwhelming support that the five factor model of Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism, (OCEAN) provides a comprehensive taxonomy of personality (Costa & McCrae, 2000; Thalmayer, Saucier & Eigenhuis, 2011; Smits, Dolan, Vorst, Wicherts, & Timmerman, 2011; Zhao & Seibert, 2006). Storm and Rothmann (2003) stated that findings from McCrae and Costa (1986) and Bishop et al. (2001) indicated that personality traits and coping styles were associated. The five factor model has reignited the study of trait psychology and contributed towards the steady progress of individual similarities and differences. McCrae and Costa (2007) reference the metaphor by Carlson (1984) where Carlson compares the five factor model to a Christmas tree hung with

ornaments of stability, heritability, consensual validation, cross-cultural invariance and predictive utility.

### *Openness*

Openness to experience reflects the inclination of the individual to be curious, imaginative, creative, artistic, tolerant of ambiguity and able to adjust to new experiences and ideas (Alarcon, Eschleman & Bowling, 2009; McCrae & Costa, 2007; Storm & Rothman, 2003). Individuals who display high levels of openness are intellectually curious and open-minded about their situations. They are less likely to become frustrated with work situations.

### *Conscientiousness*

The personality dimension of conscientiousness is the level to which the individual is dependable, organized, responsible, and achievement oriented (Alarcon, Eschlemn & Bowling, 2009). Conscientiousness has been associated with problem solving coping, self-discipline, achievement striving, dutifulness and competence (Bakker, Van Der Zee, Lewig, & Dollard, 2006). Individuals who are high in conscientiousness tend to be reliable, hardworking, purposeful and careful (Storm & Rothman, 2003). A conscientious individual dedication to self-discipline and persistence will most likely result in their commitment to finishing tasks and accomplishing things. Some researchers have posited that individuals displaying this trait are less likely to succumb to depersonalization, are less likely to perceive their work as unproductive, and are less likely to have feelings of decreased personal accomplishment (Bakker, Van Der Zee, Lewig, & Dollard; 2006; Swider & Zimmerman, 2010; Zhao & Seibert, 2006).

### *Extraversion*

Extraversion is the third personality dimension of the openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness and neuroticism or OCEAN personality traits (McCrae & Costa, 2006; Smits, Timmerman, Dolan, Vorst, & Wicherts, 2011). Extraversion is characterized as gregarious, fun-loving, assertive, sociable, warm, and enthusiastic (Alarcon, Eschleman & Bowling, 2009; Bakker, Van Der Zee, Lewig, & Dollard, 2006; Storm & Rothman, 2003). Research conducted by Morgan and de Bruin (2010) on South African university students (N=297) indicated that individuals with high levels of extraversion are more ready to engage in social activities, have higher levels of energy, excitement, positivity, and are more ready to seek assistance if needed. Because extraverts are more likely to experience optimism and hopefulness about future work performance, they are less likely to succumb to emotional exhaustion. According to Zhao and Seibert (2006) this trait relates positively to interest in enterprising occupations such as entrepreneurs, venture capitalist, and salesperson.

#### *Agreeableness*

Individuals high in agreeableness are seen as warm, supportive and good-natured. They can be characterized as trusting, forgiving, caring, soft-hearted, and gullible. They value positive interpersonal relationships and cooperative work environments (Swider & Zimmerman, 2010; Zhao & Seibert, 2006). Agreeableness is the level to which one is caring, trusting, cooperative and sympathetic to others. Individuals who display high levels of agreeableness may be viewed as a pushover by their colleagues (Alarcon, Eschlemann & Bowling, 2009; Swider et al.). Some researchers have found that individuals who display high levels of agreeableness are less likely to suffer from the effects of burnout (Alarcon et al; Storm & Rothman, 2003; Zhao & Seibert).

#### *Neuroticism*

The neuroticism personality trait is characterized in relation to negative emotions such as pessimistic attitudes, low self-esteem, extreme self-consciousness, anxiety and depression. Neurotics experience negative affectivity and have a fatalistic view of situations (Morgan & de Bruin, 2010; Storm & Rothman, 2003). Morgan and de Bruin's study of South African University students (N=297) found a positive correlation between emotional exhaustion. Emotional exhaustion is usually the first noticeable indicator of the three dimensions of burnout (Bakker, Van Der Zee, Lewign, & Dollard, 2006; Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001). Of the five personality traits, neuroticism has been the trait most closely associated with burnout (Bakker et al.; Morgan & de Bruin; Storm & Rothmann). Cano-Garcia, Padilla-Munoz and Carrasco-Ortiz (2005) study among teachers found that the highest scores in burnout were associated with people who exhibited traits of neuroticism such as negative emotions, emotional instability and stress reaction.

### **Personality Assessment Tests**

One key individual difference variable that may be related to burnout is personality. For centuries philosophers, scientists and thinkers have grouped individuals along different dimensions related to personality (Gibby & Zickar, 2008). Personality is the combination of traits and characteristics of an individual that contributes to behavioral difference (Gregory, 2005). For example, Sir Francis Galton sought to categorize scholars based on their temperament of nervous, sanguine, bilious or lymphatic, while Franz Joseph Gall sought to categorize based on the shape of an individual's skull (Gibby & Zickar). Even centuries before Galton and Gall, Galen felt there was a direct correlation between temperament and the presence of bodily fluids. Bloom (2008) posits that each individual consists of a multiplicity of selves

instead of one singular self, similar to the individual straws of hay that comprise a stack of hay. Sigmund Freud, the originator of psychoanalysis, ascertained that the unconscious mind was what manipulated human behavior and therefore sought to analyze the unconscious mind (Schultz & Schultz, 2008). Vaillant expanded on Freud's theory by developing a hierarchy of ego adaptive defense mechanisms consisting of psychotic, immature, neurotic, and mature (Gregory, 2005). Hippocrates (as cited in Gregory, 2005) identified four personality types of sanguine, choleric, melancholic, and phlegmatic while Goldberg developed the five factor model of personality: neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience, agreeableness and conscientiousness.

This present research utilized the dimensions of the five-factor model. The five-factor model of personality has a vast amount of empirical support for its construct validity (Costa & McCrae, 2006; Hess, 2006). Hess's review further stated that the five-factor model includes consensual and discriminate validation across self and spouse and self and peer ratings. In addition the five-factor model has been translated into German and other languages for cross-cultural use, it can be machine or hand scored and is based on a broad network of theory and research (Hess).

Personality tests are used by psychologists to evaluate traits and characteristics of an individual in order to explain behavioral differences (Gregory, 2005). Researchers from early Greek physicians to present day psychologists have attempted to categorize personalities. In order to evaluate these personality traits researchers needed reliable and valid personality tests. Two types of tests evolved that would measure personality: projective measures and objective measures (Gregory, 2007). Projective tests such as Rorschach's inkblots were developed on the

assumption that personal interpretations of ambiguous stimuli represent the desires and needs of the unconscious mind (Braude, 2008). Projectives are classified into five categories: association to inkblots or words, story or sequence construction, story or sentence completion, arrangement/selection of pictures or verbal choices and expressions with drawings or play (Gregory, 2007). Rorschach tests are most commonly used with adults and are administered in two phases. The free association phase is when the test subject talks about what they believe the inkblots might represent. The second phase is when the test examiner asks clarifying questions in order to see what part of the blot the test subject focused on for formulating a response (Gregory, 2007).

Both projective and objective tests have their proponents in the research world. While projective tests were more commonly used in the early part of the century objective tests are now more widely used. Based on psychometric criteria projective tests are less reliable and valid than objective tests (Gregory). While both projective and objective tests can be used to measure adults and children, projective tests are most often used on adults. Objective tests are easier to evaluate than projective tests because objective tests use a forced choice format and measure against pre-determined criterion. Projective tests require extensive training on the part of the test administrator in order to decipher the underlying personality process. While there are a large number of both projective and objective personality tests, in recent years, one particular approach to personality has become very widely used (McCrae & Costa, 1991; McCrae & John, 1991; Zhao & Seibert, 2006)

*The Big Five Model of Personality*

Personality theorists posit that the basic dimensions of personality help to identify the different ways that individuals approach situations (McCrae & John, 1991). The five factor model of personality identified as openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness and neuroticism, is one version of trait theory that relates the core of human nature to individual differences (McCrae & John). Knowing and understanding personality aids in predicting what a person will do in a particular situation which in turn can assist with identifying ways to counter potential negative or harmful reactions to situations (McCrae & Costa, 1991; McCrae & John, 1991; Zao & Seibert, 2006). Using the five factor model gives a comprehensive measure of adult personality features (Gosling, Rentfrow, and Swann, 2003). The five factor model of personality traits are used as a broad classification of individual differences which accounts for between individual consistency and continuity of behavior, thought, reaction, and feeling across situations over time.

Research has shown that there is a positive relationship between the personality trait neuroticism and two dimensions of burnout: emotional exhaustion and depersonalization and a negative relationship with personal accomplishment (Morgan & de Bruin, 2010). Extant research indicates a positive relationship between the personality trait extraversion and personal accomplishment and negative relationship to emotional exhaustion and depersonalization (Alarcon, Eschleman, & Bowling, 2009; Khan, 2011; Morgan & de Bruin). Agreeableness was found to have negative relationship with depersonalization and a positive relationship with personal accomplishment.

The big five is a model of personality structure that is based on the lexical hypothesis that temperament and personality are encoded with language (Thalmayer, Saucier, & Eigenhuis,

2011). In the last half of the twentieth century lexical hypothesis using adjectives from dictionaries coupled with factor analysis has been used to identify underlying dimensions of personality. The most current model of personality assessment is due in part to the development of NEO personality inventory (NEO-PI-R) and lexical studies conducted in half a dozen languages (Costa & McCrae, 2000; Thalmayer et al.).

#### *NEO Five Factor Inventory*

The NEO Five-Factor Inventory (NEO-FFI) is a shortened version of the NEO-PI-R. Both versions were developed by Costa and McCrae (Thalmayer, Saucier, & Eigenuis, 2011 and include scales to measure Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness, Agreeableness, and Conscientiousness (Costa & McCrae, 2000; Gosling, Rentfrow & Swann, 2003; Thalmayer et al.). The NEO-PI-R uses 240 items to assess thirty traits and can be completed in approximately thirty minutes; while the NEO-FFI uses five 12-item scales. Some researchers have criticized the NEO-FFI for using items based on the earliest version of the NEO-PI (Costa & McCrae; McCrae & Costa, 2007; Thalmayer et al.). In response to the criticisms, McCrae and Costa replaced fourteen items to improve the psychometrics and readability of the test resulting in the NEO-FFI-R. Similar to the NEO-FFI-R, the Big Five Inventory (BFI) (John & Srivastava, 1999) is an abbreviated research measure developed in response to researchers need for a less time consuming measurement tool (Gosling, Rentfrow, & Swann, 2003).

The BFI (John & Srivastava, 1999) is a forty-four item assessment tool that uses short phrases based on adjectives relating to the five dimensions of personality and factor analytic studies (Thalmayer, Saucier & Eigenhuis, 2011). A number of maladies that have plagued short forms of tests have been avoided with the development of the shortened NEO-FFI. For example,



the NEO-FFI was based on original instruments that were well-validated, the original factor structure has been retained, cross-observer correlations were demonstrated in independent samples and information is provided so that test users can evaluate any loss of validity in comparison with time saved (Costa et al. Hess, 2010; McCrae et al. Storm & Rothmann, 2003). The Big Five Inventory will be used for this research because it can be completed in approximately five minutes, falls within the fiscal constraints of this study and retains a level of reliability and validity similar to the NEO-FFI (John & Srivastava, 1999; Rammstedt & John, 2007).

### **Summary**

Burnout has been classified as a function of three dimensions: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and loss of personal achievement (Lambert, Hogan, Jiang & Jenkins, 2009; Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001; Malach-Pines & Keinan, 2005). The review of the literature on burnout and the five-factor model of personality shows that there is a need for more understanding of the effects or personality traits with burnout (Carlson, & Thomas, 2006; Lambert, Altheimer & Hogan, 2010; Lambert, Hogan, Jiang, & Jenkins, 2009; Zopiatis et al.).

Burnout can have serious effects of correctional personnel leading to detrimental outcomes for the individual, the population they serve, the organization and in some cases their family (Burke & Mikkelsen, 2004; Morgan, Van Haveren & Pearson, 2002; Roy, Novak, & Miksaj-Todorovic, 2010; Senter, Morgan, Serna-McDonald, & Bewley, 2010; Zopiatis, Constanti & Pavlou, 2010). Having a better understanding of burnout by being able to reasonable predict which individuals are more vulnerable to burnout can help to reduce or eliminate the harmful effects of burnout in the field of corrections. This current research is focused on the

personality traits of the five factor model: openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism, and the role that they play in the burnout syndrome among correctional personnel.

Chapter three defines the methodology and design of this study which includes the sample population, research questions, and designs, procedures for implementation and description of the measurement instruments.

## Chapter 3: Methodology

### **Introduction**

The central purpose of this research was to evaluate the relationship between the personality traits of correctional personnel and the dimensions of burnout: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment. This chapter presents the population characteristics, measures, instruments used for assessment, sample size and characteristics, and the data collection process and analysis. In addition, this chapter addressed ethical concerns and the protection of the participants' rights.

The earliest research on burnout has identified individuals who work in occupations that provide services to others are susceptible to burnout (Freudenberger, 1977; Maslach & Schaufeli, 1993; Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001). Correctional personnel have been identified as one of those service occupations that are susceptible to burnout (Carlson & Thomas, 2006; Lambert, Hogan, Jiang, & Jenkins, 2009; Roy, Novak, & Miksaj-Todorovic, 2010). With 68% of correctional officers experiencing some form of stress and 33% experiencing burnout (Lindquist & Whitehead as cited in Morgan, Van Haveren, & Christy, 2002) it would be beneficial to have a better understanding of burnout and the population that is most susceptible to experience the symptoms. Understanding the relationship between personality traits and burnout may provide additionally information that can help with identifying individuals that are most at risk in order. Identification of individuals most susceptible to burnout is significant because an organization can provide early intervention strategies that will help to prevent or lessen the negative impact of burnout (Lambert et al.; Storm & Rothman, 2003; Swider & Zimmerman, 2010).

### **Restatement of the Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to determine which personality traits among correctional employees were more susceptible to burnout. This study examined the relationship between the Big Five Factor personality traits and burnout.

*Research Question 1*

Is there a significant relationship between correctional employees' personality traits as measured by the Big Five Inventory (BFI) ((John, Naumann, & Soto, 2008.) and the level of burnout, as measured by the Maslach Burnout Inventory-Human Services Survey (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996)? The correlation between personality and burnout would indicate that an individual's personality may increase or decrease their experience of burnout.

*Null Hypothesis 1* There is no significant relationship between the personality trait Openness (O) and Depersonalization (DP).

*Alternate Hypothesis 1* There is an expected significant relationship between Openness (O) and Depersonalization (DP)

*Null Hypothesis 2* There is no significant relationship between the personality trait Neuroticism (N) and Emotional Exhaustion (EE).

*Alternate Hypothesis 2* There is an expected significant relationship between Neuroticism (N) and Emotional Exhaustion (EE)

*Null Hypothesis 3* There is no significant relationship between the personality trait Neuroticism (N) and Depersonalization (DP).

*Alternate Hypothesis 3* There is an expected significant relationship between Neuroticism (N) and Depersonalization (DP).

*Null Hypothesis 4* There is no significant relationship between the personality trait Extraversion (E) and Personal Accomplishment (PA).

*Alternate Hypothesis 4* There is an expected significant relationship between Extraversion (E) and Personal Accomplishment (PA).

*Null Hypothesis 5* There is no significant relationship between the personality trait Conscientiousness (C) and Depersonalization (PA).

*Alternate Hypothesis 5* There is an expected significant relationship between Conscientiousness (C) and Personal Accomplishment (PA).

*Null Hypothesis 6* There is no significant relationship between the personality trait Agreeableness (A) and Emotional Exhaustion (EE).

*Alternate Hypothesis 6* There is an expected significant relationship between Agreeableness (A) and Emotional Exhaustion (EE).

#### *Research Question 2*

Is there a significant relationship between the years of experience working in a correctional institution and the level of burnout that is experienced?

#### *Null Hypothesis*

There is a no correlation between years of experience working in a correctional institution and the level of burnout.

#### *Alternate Hypothesis*

There is a correlation between years of experience working in a correctional institution and the level of burnout.

## **Research Design and Data Collection**

This study examined the potential relationships between personality traits of correctional personnel and the three dimensions of burnout. Correctional personnel groups found on the professional network LinkedIn were used for identifying and selecting participants. This study utilized the Maslach Burnout Inventory - Human Services Survey (MBI-HSS) (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996) and the Big Five Inventory (BFI) (John & Srivastava, 1999). The MBI-HSS was selected for this study because it is specifically designed to assess the three components of burnout with individuals working in the field of human services. The BFI was selected because it can be completed in a relatively short period of time and for its ability to assess a global measure of personality based on the five-factor model.

## **Setting and Sample**

### *Participants*

Correctional personnel that are primarily members of the Corrections Connection and/or the American Correctional Association in addition to other correction personnel groups on the professional networking site LinkedIn will be the focus for this study. This researcher is a member of both groups and has obtained permission from the group managers to contact group members. The Corrections Connection group was started in 2008 and consists of 8,865 members. The Corrections Connection group members hold positions such as administrators, wardens, and directors. The purpose of the group is to connect and exchange ideas, information, resources, and best practices that enable criminal justice personnel to develop and grow professionally. The American Correctional Association (ACA) group was formed in 2008 and consists of 5,065 members. The group is an online community of personnel affiliated with the American

Correctional Association. The ACA has been in existence for over 125 years consisting of over 20,000 active members and has continuously advanced the cause of corrections and correctional effectiveness. All fulltime employees who have worked for at least a year within the department of corrections are eligible to participate. Participants were selected because they are of age to give consent, were of an accessible population and were adequately able to read and comprehend in order to complete the self-report measures.

### *Power Analysis*

As a method for determining the size of the sample, similar studies were reviewed to determine the effect size to be used in this study. Bakker, Van Der Zee, Lewig and Dollard (2006) studied the relationship between the personality and burnout among volunteer counselors and reported using a hierarchical regression analyses where positive experience reached significance (with a  $r = .23$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Swider and Zimmerman's research on personality, job burnout and work outcomes reported using confidence intervals of 95% with  $p < .05$ . Querios, Carlotto, Kaiser, Dias, and Pereira (2013) research on burnout predictors among nurses reported Cronback's alpha ranging from .70 to .93 and reached significance with low ( $r = .059$ ) to moderate ( $r = .531$ ) correlations. Miner (2007) researched burnout among ministers in order to identify stressors in early ministry and examine whether there is an internal ministry orientation correlated with burnout over the first year of ministry. Miner's research of theological students ( $n = 41$ ) found that ministry graduates experienced moderate levels of burnout during their first year of ministry ( $r = .69$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ).

The sample size was determined based on statistical power of .80, and the standard alpha level for psychological research of .05. G\*Power 3.1 was used to calculate a sample size of

n=111 using a medium effect size of  $r = .30$ . Research by Bakker, Van Der Zee, Lewig and Dollard's (2006) study of burnout and volunteer counselors used a sample size of 80 with  $r = .23$ ,  $p < .05$ . Miner (2007) conducted a year-long research with ministers of changes in burnout over the first twelve months of ministry. Miner's research had a sample size of 103. Lang, Patrician, and Steele (2012) conducted research comparing burnout among nurses in an army hospital practice with a sample size of 152. The calculated sample size of  $n=111$  falls within the range of sample sizes from previous research on burnout.

#### *Data Collection Procedure*

The main method used by this researcher to recruit correctional employees for participation in this research is the online professional network LinkedIn. With the permission of the group managers, the researcher posted a link to the survey along with a brief explanation pertaining to the study. Upon clicking the link potential participants were redirected to a survey powered by SurveyMonkey.com. The first page that the participants encountered was an informed consent page that describes the nature of the study and explains the voluntary and confidential nature of the study. Participants were instructed to click the next button to move forward in the survey if they agreed to participate. Clicking the button indicated a willingness to be a part of the study. Once the participant consented to the study they were asked to complete a demographic questionnaire, the MBI-HSS (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996) and the BFI. The entire online survey required about 10 – 15 minutes to complete.

### **Instrumentation and Materials**

#### *Measurements*



The Maslach Burnout Inventory-Human Services Survey (MBI-HSS) (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996) was used to measure burnout. MBI-HSS is a self-report measure that will yield scores for the three dimensions of burnout: emotional exhaustion reduced personal accomplishment and depersonalization. The Big Five Inventory (BFI) (John & Srivastava, 1999) was used to measure the personality constructs Openness to experience, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism. Demographical data was collected using a basic researcher derived demographic questionnaire.

#### *The Maslach Burnout Inventory – Human Service Survey*

The Maslach Burnout Inventory Human Service Survey (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996) was the most widely used tool for measuring burnout in research (Alarcon, Eshleman, & Bowling, 2009; Cano-Garcia, Padilla-Munoz, & Carrasco-Ortiz, 2004). The MBI-HSS (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996) was selected for this research because it is widely used for measuring burnout among human service professionals (Worley, Vassar, Wheeler & Barnes, 2008). The MBI-HSS is a 22-item seven point Likert scale that can be completed in 10-15 minutes. The MBI-HSS is designed to assess the different aspects of burnout on three subscales: Emotional Exhaustion (EE), Depersonalization (D) and Personal Accomplishment (PA) (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1997). The respondent was asked to respond to a series of questions about personal feelings and attributes. A 7-point Likert scale will be used to measure the response ranging from 0-“never” to 6-“every day” (Maslach et al.).

According to the MBI-HSS manual, high scores on the Emotional Exhaustion and Depersonalization subscales and low scores on the reduced Personal Accomplishment subscale indicates a high degree of burnout (Maslach, Jackson & Leiter, 1997). A low degree of burnout

is reflected when the results show a low score on Emotional Exhaustion and Depersonalization and a high score on Personal Accomplishment.

#### *Reliability and Validity of the MBI-HSS*

Since its inception the MBI-HSS (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996) has been widely used to measure burnout; and is considered a valid and reliable instrument for measuring burnout (Alarcon, Eshleman & Bowling, 2009; Maslach & Jackson, 1981; Maslach & Leiter, 2008; Worley, Vassar, Wheeler, & Barnes, 2008). In addition to the MBI-HSS, the MBI has been developed to be used with teachers, (MBI-Educators' Survey) and other occupations outside of human services (MBI-General Survey). Internal consistency coefficients across the three versions have been reported as EE ( $\alpha = .89$ ), DP ( $\alpha = .77$ ), and PA ( $\alpha = .74$ ) and reliability coefficients .90 for EE, .79 for DP and .71 for PA (Alarcon et al.; Carlson & Thomas, 2006; Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1997; Morgan, Van Haveren, & Pearson, 2002; Worley et al.). Maslach et al. reported the test-retest reliability of the MBI as .54 for EE, .57 for DP and .57 for PA. The test-retest was conducted on a sample of 248 teachers with an interval of one year between the two tests. The MBI (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996) demonstrated convergent validity in several ways such as the scores correlated between a person who knew the participant well and the individual's test scores and the participant's scores were consistent with certain job characteristics that were known to contribute to burnout (Maslach et al).

The Maslach Burnout Inventory Human Services Survey (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996) is a tool to measure the three variables of burnout (Alarcon, Eschleman, & Bowling, 2009; Carlson & Thomas, 2006; Maslach & Jackson, 1981; Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1997; Morgan, Van Haveren, & Pearson, 2002; Worley, Vassar, Wheeler, & Barnes, 2008). The MBI-HSS is an

adequate measure for this study of correctional personnel as part of the human services profession.

### *The Big Five Inventory*

The Big Five Inventory (BFI) (John & Srivastava, 1999) is an instrument used to assess personality as it relates to the big five model of personality. The Big Five Inventory (BFI) (John & Srivastava, 1999) was developed in the 1980's as a forty-four item instrument for measuring Openness to Experience, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism (Rammstedt & John, 2007). The test measures each trait along its facets such as: anxiety, hostility, warmth, assertiveness, actions, ideas, and positive emotions. A five point Likert scale is used (Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree) for each item.

### *Reliability and Validity of the BFI*

John and Srivastava (1999) compared the reliability of the BFI to the NEO-Five Factor Inventory and found the coefficient alpha reliabilities to be BFI (.83) and the NEO-FFI (.79). In U.S. and Canadian samples, the alpha reliabilities of the BFI average above .80, with the three month test retest reliabilities having a mean of .85 (John & Srivastava, 1999). Soto and John (2008) conducted a convergence study with the Big Five Inventory and the NEO Personality Inventory. The researchers found a strong convergence between each facet of the BFI scale and the corresponding facet in the NEO PI-R. The tests were administered four years apart with correlations averaging .82, raw convergent correlations averaging .69, and corrected correlations averaging .93. The test-retest stability of the BFI (John & Srivastava, 1999) had a 71% stable variance and mean retest stability coefficients of .75 overall over an eight week period (Rammstedt & John, 2007). External validation is a method for establishing construct validity is

to measure ratings by knowledgeable informants. Convergent validity correlations between self-report and peer-report averaged .56 for the BFI (Rammstedt & John). The researchers stated that the studies conducted using the BFI are easily synthesized with other big five facet models; therefore the BFI is a useful tool for studies that require a brief measure.

### **Data Analysis**

The key research question of this study was to identify personality traits that are susceptible to burnout among correctional personnel. Using an online survey method participants were asked to complete a demographics questionnaire, the Big Five Inventory (John & Srivastava, 1999), and the Maslach Burnout Inventory (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996). An online survey method was chosen to provide participants with an easy and quick way to complete the questions. In addition an online survey allowed the researcher to connect with correctional personnel who otherwise would not have been accessible to the researcher. The researcher was aware that by using an online survey method it narrows the pool of respondents to individuals who are comfortable using the computer to complete a survey. This pool may not be a true representation of individuals who are susceptible to burnout but are less likely to use the computer. Additional threats to validity are that a respondent could potentially complete the survey more than once, resulting in the survey being skewed in the direction of their responses, respondent bias and that individuals complete the survey who are not currently working in the field of corrections. Completed surveys were analyzed using SPSS. A completed survey was a survey that is completed in its entirety without skipping any questions and the respondent is currently employed in the field of corrections. This research posits that the level of burnout would be dependent on the personality of the participant. Demographics data allowed the

researcher to collect information such as: age, gender, amount of years in the field, marital status and job title or position. A correlational analysis and two step multiple regression analysis was used to answer the research questions. Each personality variable was looked at in relation to the three dimensions of burnout. In addition tenure, marital status and type of work were entered in a stepwise multiple regression along with the three dimensions of burnout.

### **Demographics**

The study gathered demographical information consisting of age, gender, race, marital status, position, and years employed. Age and years of employment were categorized by range. Position were identified by three categories: custodial staff, non-custodial staff, and office administration. Members of the sample population consisted of custodial staff, non-custodial staff and office administrations. Members of the sample population ranged in years of employment from one year to over twenty-five years. The group consisted of employees from different types of correctional facilities such as jails, prisons, and youth detention centers.

### **Ethical Considerations**

In order to alleviate the risk of ethical issues, participation was voluntary and participants remained anonymous if they chose to take part in the study. Individuals who chose to participate would indicate consent by completing the online survey. In addition a screen was provided with contact information for the researcher that the participant was able to print and retain. There was no penalties or repercussions for participation in this research, also there was no interventions placed on the participants. The data from the online survey was retained by the online survey company until deleted by the researcher. The researcher setup an account with a secured password that will not be shared with anyone outside of the researcher's committee if necessary.

After the online data was collected the researcher retained a hardcopy of the entire study and will keep it in a sealed box for the required number of years.

### **Summary**

Chapter three explored the research questions and hypotheses of this research study. The research design, data collection, setting, sample size, ethical considerations and survey instruments were reviewed. Chapter four presents the results and tables of this research study and chapter five will provide an interpretation of the findings. Chapter five will also provide a foundation based on this research study for social change along with recommendations for further study.

## Chapter 4: Results

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this study is to identify personality traits that may or may not be related to burnout among individuals working in the field of corrections. Eligible participants must be currently employed in the field of corrections and can be either custodial or non-custodial personnel. This study was administered online through the professional networking site LinkedIn; therefore it is necessary that in addition to being currently employed in the field of corrections participants would need to have a LinkedIn profile. Survey Monkey was the online cloud based survey tool used to gather and store the online data. This study utilized the survey instruments Big Five Inventory (John & Srivastava, 1999) for personality assessment and Maslach Burnout Inventory (Maslach et al., 1996) for burnout assessment.

This chapter provides a description of the sample, describes the analysis of the data, and summarizes the results.

### **Sample Demographics**

Data was collected over a six-week period using the online survey software Survey Monkey. The survey was open to custodial and non-custodial correctional personnel who are currently employed in the field of corrections and who have a LinkedIn profile. A link was created through Survey Monkey that was used to post the study to the LinkedIn groups American Correctional Association and the Corrections Connections. The online study materials consisted of a cover letter explaining the study, participant consent and a survey comprised of the Maslach Burnout Inventory (Maslach et al., 1996), the Big Five Inventory (John & Srivastava, 1999) and a demographics questionnaire designed by this researcher. At the two, four, and five week mark

a posting was made to LinkedIn encouraging people to participate in the research. A total of 169 surveys were attempted with 112 completed. In order for this study to have sufficient statistical power it was determined a priori that a sample of 111 was needed; therefore 112 completed surveys was sufficient for this research.

The demographic profile of the sample is summarized in Tables 1 through 3 and also are described here. Of the 112 participants 1 (.89%) preferred not to disclose their gender, 45 (40.18%) were female, and 66 (58.93%) were male (see Table 1). Participant ages ranged from 18 – 64, with 79 (70.53%) of the respondents being 35 – 54, 21 (18.75%) respondents being 18 – 34, and 12 (10.71%) respondents being 55-64 (Table 1). The highest level of education was 31 (27.68%) of respondents having some graduate school, 70 (62.5) respondents having some or completed college and 11 (9.83%) of respondents have some or completed high school. Ninety-four (83.93%) of respondents identified as white, 7 (6.25%) as Black or African American, 6 (5.36%) as Mixed Race, 2 (1.79%) as American Indian or Alaskan Native, 1 (.89%) as Asian, and 2 (1.79%) declined to answer. Marital status was the last demographic question for this study with 74 (66.07%) participants indicating they were married, 16 (14.29%) indicating they were divorced/separated/widowed, 13 (11.61%) indicating they were single never married, 8 (7.14%) indicating they were domestic/common law and 1 (.89%) declined to answer (Table 2). Of the 112 completed surveys about 52% worked fifteen years or less and 48% worked over fifteen years. The distribution of respondents for years of work were similar across the range of tenure, with the fewest respondents working less than five years and the majority of the respondents worked ten years or more.

Table 1



Custodial/Non-Custodial/Not Employed and Years of Employment by Gender

	Female	Male	Prefer not to disclose
Custodial	22	57	1
Non-Custodial	23	9	0
0 – less than 5 years	5	11	0
5 years – less than 10 years	9	10	0
15 years to less than 20 years	8	15	0
20 years or more	11	16	0

Table 2

Demographics

	Count	Column N %
Age		
18 – 34	21	12.4%
35 – 44	47	27.8%
45 – 54	32	18.9%
55 – 64	12	7.1%
Education		
Completed College	25	14.8%
Completed high school	9	5.3%
Graduate School	31	18.3%
Some college	45	26.6%
Some high school	2	1.2%
Race/ Ethnicity		
American Indian or Alaska Native	2	1.2%
Asian	1	0.6%

	Black or African American	7	4.1%
	Decline to answer	2	1.2%
	Mixed Race	6	3.6%
	White	94	55.6%
Marital status	Declined to answer	1	0.6%
	Divorced/Separated/ Widowed	16	9.5%
	Domestic/Common law partner	8	4.7%
	Married	74	43.8%
	Single never married	13	7.7%

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### **Analysis of the data**

Personality traits can be seen as the external manifestation of the internal cognitive-affective system; therefore this research explored the potential relationship between personality and burnout. In addition this study examined the impact of tenure on burnout. Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to analyze the data. Correlational analysis was ran on each research question along with a two step multiple regression.. The following research questions and hypotheses were tested as part of this study.

#### *Research Question 1*

Is there a significant relationship between correctional employees' personality traits of Openness, Conscientiousness, Agreeableness, Extraversion, and Neuroticism as measured by the Big Five Inventory (BFI) (John & Srivastava, 1999) and the level of burnout Emotional Exhaustion, Depersonalization and Reduced Personal Accomplishment, as measured by the

Maslach Burnout Inventory-Human Services Survey (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996)? Each of these analyses are addressed in turn.

*Null Hypothesis 1* There is no significant relationship between the personality trait Openness (O) and Depersonalization (DP).

*Alternate Hypothesis 1* There is an expected significant relationship between Openness (O) and Depersonalization (DP)

The relationship between the Openness (O) scale of the BFI and the Depersonalization (DP) scale of the MBI-HSS was examined with a Pearson correlation analysis. Based on this analysis, the null hypothesis was not rejected because the data shows that there was not a statistically significant correlation ( $r = -.21, p < .05$ ) between Openness and Depersonalization (Table 3).

Is there a significant relationship between correctional employees' personality traits of Openness, Conscientiousness, Agreeableness, Extraversion, and Neuroticism as measured by the Big Five Inventory (BFI) (John & Srivastava, 1999) and the level of burnout Emotional Exhaustion, Depersonalization and Reduced Personal Accomplishment, as measured by the Maslach Burnout Inventory-Human Services Survey (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996)?

*Null Hypothesis 2* There is no significant relationship between the personality trait Neuroticism (N) and Emotional Exhaustion (EE).

*Alternate Hypothesis 2* There is an expected significant relationship between Neuroticism (N) and Emotional Exhaustion (EE).

The personality trait of Neuroticism (N) was correlated with the burnout dimension of Emotional Exhaustion (EE) to determine if there was a significant relationship. The null hypothesis was

rejected given a significant relationship ( $r = .533, p < .001$ ) between Neuroticism (N) and Emotional Exhaustion (EE) (Table 3).

Is there a significant relationship between correctional employees' personality traits of Openness, Conscientiousness, Agreeableness, Extraversion, and Neuroticism as measured by the Big Five Inventory (BFI) (John & Srivastava, 1999) and the level of burnout Emotional Exhaustion, Depersonalization and Reduced Personal Accomplishment, as measured by the Maslach Burnout Inventory-Human Services Survey (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996)?

*Null Hypothesis 3* There is no significant relationship between the personality trait Neuroticism (N) and Depersonalization (DP).

*Alternate Hypothesis 3* There is an expected significant relationship between Neuroticism (N) and Depersonalization (DP).

The Neuroticism (N) scale was correlated to the Depersonalization (DP) dimension in order to identify any significant relationship between the two scales. The data showed a statistically significant relationship ( $r = .383, p < .001$ ) between the personality trait Neuroticism (N) and Depersonalization (DP) therefore null hypothesis 3 was rejected (Table 3).

Is there a significant relationship between correctional employees' personality traits of Openness, Conscientiousness, Agreeableness, Extraversion, and Neuroticism as measured by the Big Five Inventory (BFI) (John & Srivastava, 1999) and the level of burnout Emotional Exhaustion, Depersonalization and Reduced Personal Accomplishment, as measured by the Maslach Burnout Inventory-Human Services Survey (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996)?

*Null Hypothesis 4* There is no significant relationship between the personality trait Extraversion (E) and Personal Accomplishment (PA).

*Alternate Hypothesis 4* There is an expected significant relationship between Extraversion (E) and Personal Accomplishment (PA).

The personality trait of Extraversion (E) was correlated to the burnout dimension of Personal Accomplishment (PA) to identify if there was a significant relationship. The data indicated that there was a significant correlation ( $r = .325, p < .001$ ) between personality trait Extraversion (E) and Personal Accomplishment (PA) rejecting the null hypothesis

*Null Hypothesis 5* There is no significant relationship between the personality trait Conscientiousness (C) and Personal Accomplishment (PA).

*Alternate Hypothesis 5* There is an expected significant relationship between Conscientiousness (C) and Personal Accomplishment (PA).

The personality trait of Conscientiousness (C) and the burnout dimension of Personal Accomplishment (PA) were correlated to determine if there was a significant relationship the results showed a positive significant relationship ( $r = .22, p < .02$  rejecting null hypothesis 5).

*Null Hypothesis 6* There is no significant relationship between the personality trait Agreeableness (A) and Emotional Exhaustion (EE).

*Alternate Hypothesis 6* There is an expected significant relationship between Agreeableness (A) and Emotional Exhaustion (EE).

The personality trait of Agreeableness (A) and the burnout dimension of Emotional Exhaustion (EE) were correlated to determine if there was a significant relationship between scales. The analysis resulted in a significant correlations rejecting null hypothesis 6 ( $r = -.321, p < .001$ )

*Research Question 2*

Is there a significant relationship between the years of experience working in a correctional institution and the level of burnout that is experienced?

*Null Hypothesis*

There is a no correlation between years of experience working in a correctional institution and the level of burnout.

*Alternate Hypothesis*

There is a correlation between years of experience working in a correctional institution and the level of burnout.

Tenure was examined alongside the three dimensions of burnout Emotional Exhaustion (EE), Depersonalization (DP) and reduced Personal Accomplishment (PA) to identify if there is a statistically significant relationship between scales Emotional Exhaustion (EE) and Depersonalization did not indicate a significant relationship with tenure (EE,  $r = .06, p < .95$ ; and DP,  $r = -.083, p < .38$ ) (Table 3). The third dimension of Personal Accomplishment (PA) did not indicate a significant relationship with years worked (PA,  $r = .05, p < .60$ ) (Table 3). The analysis failed to reject the null hypothesis because it does not indicate a statistically significant relationship between the years worked and any of the three dimensions of burnout.

Table 3

*Correlations – Personality Traits (BFI), Burnout Dimensions (MBI) and Years Worked*

	Openness	Conscientiousness	Extraversion	Agreeableness	Neuroticism	Years Worked
Emotional Exhaustion	-.191*	-.113	-.086	-.321**	.533**	-.006
	.047	.243	.373	.001	.000	.951

Depersonalization	-.214*	-.089	.018	-.537**	.383**	-.083
n	.025	.357	.849	.000	.000	.383
Personal Accomplishment	.396**	.223*	.325**	.357**	-.306**	.050
	.000	.020	.000	.000	.001	.601

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

To further examine the research questions a multiple regression was conducted to assess if the independent variables of personality, years worked and marital status were predictors of the dependent variable of burnout (Table 4). A standard multiple linear regression with the enter method was used. This approach enters all the independent variables simultaneously into the model. The overall model was significant  $F(8,97) = 4.316, p < .001$  and accounted for 26% of variance. An examination of the predictors indicated that the personality trait neuroticism was the sole significant predictor of burnout (Table 4). Years worked, marital status, and type of work were not significant predictors of burnout.

Table 4.

*Coefficients<sup>a</sup> - Simple Regression Analyses for Variables Predicting Burnout*

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Coefficients Beta		
1	(Constant)	57.679	13.285		4.342	.000
	Extraversion	.922	.375	.246	2.461	.016
	Agreeableness	-.389	.314	-.132	-1.239	.218
	Conscientiousness	.548	.365	.149	1.499	.137
	Neuroticism	1.534	.336	.502	4.567	.000

Openness	-.011	.295	-.004	-.038	.969
Years Worked	-.598	1.195	-.046	-.500	.618
Custodial, Non- Custodial, Currently not employed	3.720	3.758	.097	.990	.325
Marital Status	.741	1.854	.037	.399	.690

a. Dependent Variable: Burnout

b.  $F(8,97) = 4.316, p < .001, R^2 = .202$

Standard multiple linear regressions with the stepwise method were conducted using participant demographics (job type, education, marital status and gender) along with personality traits (openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness and neuroticism) to determine relationship with each of the three components of burnout (emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and personal achievement) in three separate analyses. For each analyses the demographic variables were entered first and personality traits second. This approach resulted in three analyses for each burnout measure; emotional exhaustion (Table 5), depersonalization (Table 6) and personal accomplishment (Table 7).

The analysis of participant demographics (custodial/non-custodial, marital status, education, age, and gender) and personality traits (openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness and neuroticism) as predictors of emotional exhaustion is summarized in Table 5. Demographics were entered into step one of the model and in step two demographics and personality were entered. The overall model for both steps in Table 5 was significant  $F(5, 100) = .933, p < .001, R^2 = -.003, F(10, 95) = 4.906, p < .001, R^2 = .271$  and accounted for 34% of the variance. In the first step (Model 1 Table 5) there was no significant relationship with demographics and emotional exhaustion. In the second step (Model 2 Table 5) when



demographics and personality was examined together the personality trait of neuroticism was found to have a significant relationship with emotional exhaustion.

Table 5

*Multiple Regression of Demographics and Personality as Predictors of Burnout Dimension Emotional Exhaustion*

Model		Unstandardized		Standardized		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	30.926	11.894		2.600	.011
	Custodial, Non-Custodial, Currently not employed	-4.998	3.136	-.186	-1.594	.114
	Marital Status	2.489	1.479	.179	1.683	.096
	Age	.987	1.422	.073	.695	.489
	Education	-.977	1.039	-.095	-.941	.349
	Gender	-2.612	2.665	-.108	-.980	.329
	2	(Constant)	21.472	11.896		1.805
Custodial, Non-Custodial, Currently not employed		-.470	2.833	-.017	-.166	.869
Marital Status		1.215	1.315	.087	.924	.358
Age		.900	1.223	.067	.736	.464
Education		-.427	.901	-.041	-.474	.637
Gender		-.665	2.305	-.028	-.288	.774
Openness		-.226	.198	-.106	-1.140	.257
Conscientiousness		.278	.244	.108	1.137	.258
Extraversion		.331	.248	.127	1.335	.185
Agreeableness		-.060	.209	-.029	-.289	.773
Neuroticism	1.256	.227	.588	5.527	.000	

a. Dependent Variable: Emotional Exhaustion

b.  $F(5, 100) = .933, p < .001, R^2 = .003$ .

c.  $F(10, 95) = 4.906, p < .001, R^2 = .271$ .

The analysis of participant demographics (custodial/non-custodial, marital status, education, age, and gender) and personality traits (openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness and neuroticism) as predictors of depersonalization is found in Table 6. Again, model 1 shows the entry of the demographic items and model 2 demographic items and personality measures. The overall model for both steps was significant  $F(5, 100) = 2.882, p < .001, R^2 = .082, F(10, 95) = 6.762, p < .001, R^2 = .354$  and accounted for 41% of the variance. Table 6 Model 1 found a slightly significant relationship with demographics and depersonalization specifically type of work (custodial or non-custodial). When demographics and personality trait were examined together results showed a significant relationship with agreeableness and neuroticism in the prediction of depersonalization. Agreeableness was negatively correlated with depersonalization ( $B = -.540$ ). The negative correlation would indicate an inverse relationship where an absence of agreeableness correlates with depersonalization. In addition the results showed that when demographics and personality were examined together there was no significant relationship between type of work (custodial or non-custodial) and depersonalization.

Table 6

*Multiple Regression of Demographics and Personality as Predictors of  
Burnout Dimension Depersonalization*

Model	Unstandardized		Standardize		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1 (Constant)	14.011	6.778		2.067	.041

	Custodial, Non-Custodial, Currently not employed	-3.712	1.787	-.231	-2.077	.040
	Marital Status	1.268	.843	.153	1.505	.136
	Age	-.543	.810	-.068	-.671	.504
	Education	-.405	.592	-.066	-.684	.495
	Gender	1.726	1.518	.120	1.137	.258
2	(Constant)	14.576	6.670		2.185	.031
	Custodial, Non-Custodial, Currently not employed	-.326	1.589	-.020	-.205	.838
	Marital Status	.525	.737	.063	.711	.479
	Age	-.890	.686	-.111	-1.298	.198
	Education	-.242	.505	-.039	-.480	.633
	Gender	2.171	1.292	.151	1.680	.096
	Openness	-.041	.111	-.032	-.367	.714
	Conscientiousness	.099	.137	.064	.719	.474
	Extraversion	.187	.139	.120	1.345	.182
	Agreeableness	-.540	.117	-.440	-4.604	.000
	Neuroticism	.301	.127	.237	2.362	.020

a. Dependent Variable: Depersonalization

b.  $F(5, 100) = 2.882, p < .001, R^2 = .082$ .

c.  $F(10, 95) = 6.762, p < .001, R^2 = .354$ .

Finally, Table 7 summarizes the analysis of participant demographics (custodial/non-custodial, marital status, education, age, and gender) and personality traits (openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness and neuroticism) as predictors of personal accomplishment. In Table 7 Model 1 shows the entry of the demographic items and Model 2 shows the entry of demographics items and personality traits. The overall model 1 in the analysis was significant  $F(5, 100) = 3.556, p < .001, R^2 = .109$ , as it is for model 2  $F(10, 95) = 5.455, p <$

.001,  $R^2 = .298$ . Model 1, summarized in Table 7, indicated a significant relationship with the demographic items of work (custodial/non-custodial) and marital status. When demographics were coupled with personality traits in Model 2, there was no significant relationship with marital status, however a significant relationship was still found with type of work (custodial/non-custodial). For the personality measures, significant relationships were found for openness to experience and extraversion. Neuroticism was negatively correlated with personal accomplishment ( $B = -.004$ ). The negative correlation would indicate that a decrease in neuroticism would result in an increase in personal accomplishment.

Table 7

*Multiple Regression of Demographics and Personality as Predictors of Burnout Dimension Personal Accomplishment*

Model		Unstandardized		Standardized		Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	
1	(Constant)	29.988	6.966		4.305	.000
	Custodial, Non-Custodial, Currently not employed	6.250	1.836	.374	3.404	.001
	Marital Status	-2.102	.866	-.244	-2.426	.017
	Age	-.295	.833	-.035	-.354	.724
	Education	.490	.608	.076	.805	.423
	Gender	.288	1.561	.019	.184	.854
	2	(Constant)	17.615	7.253		2.429
Custodial, Non-Custodial, Currently not employed		4.374	1.728	.262	2.532	.013
Marital Status		-1.021	.802	-.118	-1.273	.206
Age		.019	.745	.002	.025	.980

Education	.055	.550	.009	.100	.921
Gender	.069	1.405	.005	.049	.961
Openness	.297	.121	.224	2.453	.016
Conscientiousness	.201	.149	.126	1.349	.181
Extraversion	.374	.151	.230	2.472	.015
Agreeableness	.235	.128	.184	1.845	.068
Neuroticism	-.004	.139	-.003	-.025	.980

a. Dependent Variable: Personal Accomplishment

b.  $F(5, 100) = 3.556, p < .001, R^2 = .109.$

c.  $F(10, 95) = 5.455, p < .001, R^2 = .298.$

### Summary

Based on the statistical analysis of the data this study found partial support for the hypotheses presented. Four of the six alternate hypotheses for question 1 were supported. Alternate hypothesis 2 and 3 indicated that individuals who were characterized by the personality trait Neuroticism experienced high levels of Emotional Exhaustion and Depersonalization. This was an important finding because of the three dimensions of burnout. Emotional Exhaustion is an initial and critical indicator of burnout (Carlson & Thomas, 2006). Correctional facilities can implement programs that can help to alleviate the symptoms of emotional exhaustion in order to prevent the individual from progressing further into burnout. In addition the ability to identify individuals most susceptible to burnout because of the level of the personality trait Neuroticism would be highly beneficial to the field of corrections.

Alternate hypotheses 4 and 5 were supported by this research indicating a significant relationship Personal Accomplishment and the personality traits of Extraversion and Conscientiousness. Individuals who display personality traits of extraversion are more ready to engage in social activities, have higher levels of energy, positive affectivity and are more ready

to seek assistance if needed therefore it follows that they would be less likely to experience reduced personal accomplishment (Swider & Zimmerman, 2010). Individuals who are characterized by the personality trait of conscientiousness are most often found to be dependable, organized, responsible, and achievement oriented (Alarcon, Eschlehn & Bowling, 2009). Conscientious individuals are disciplined and committed to seeing a task through to completion therefore they are less likely to be susceptible to reduced personal accomplishment.

Research question two examined the potential relationship between years worked and the dimensions of burnout: Emotional Exhaustion (EE), Depersonalization (DP) and reduced Personal Accomplishment (PA). The data did not indicate that length of years employed had a relationship to burnout. A multiple regression was also conducted with years of work, marital status, type of work (custodial/non-custodial) and personality as the independent variables and burnout as the dependent variable. The data indicated that the personality trait neuroticism was the only significant predictor of burnout. The results show that length of years, marital status, and type of work did not have a significant relationship to burnout.

Multiple regressions were ran on the three individual components of burnout (emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and personal accomplishment) with demographics and personality traits as the independent variables. The data indicated neuroticism was the only personality trait that had a significant relationship with the three individual dimensions. Agreeableness was negatively correlated with depersonalization with extraversion and openness to experience also having a significant relationship with personal accomplishment. In Model 2 of Tables 5-7 when demographics and personality were examined for relationships with individual components of burnout, type of work (custodial/non-custodial) was the sole demographic item that showed a

significant relationship with personal accomplishment. Chapter five summarizes the entire study, offer conclusions on the findings and provide suggestions for further research. In addition chapter five identifies the social change implications of this study along with the limitations and recommendations for future research in the area of burnout and the field of corrections.

## Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this study was to identify individuals with personality traits that may be susceptible to burnout among individuals working in corrections. Past researchers have found that individuals employed in human services occupations tend to be more susceptible to burnout than those in other occupations (Alacron, Eshlemann & Bowling, 2009; Lambert et al.; Schaufeli, Leiter, & Maslach, 2008). This study focused on people who are currently employed in the field of corrections as either custodial or non-custodial personnel. This research examined the relationship between the three dimensions of burnout: Emotional Exhaustion, Depersonalization, and Reduced Personal Accomplishment (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996) and the big five personality traits: Openness to experience, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism (John & Srivastava, 1999). This chapter summarizes the results, renders an analysis of the data and a description of the sample population and study participants.

### **Summary and Interpretation of Findings**

This research examined the relationship between personality traits and burnout among correctional personnel. The results showed a relationship between some personality traits and the dimensions of burnout. More specifically, this study indicated that the personality trait of Neuroticism may be correlated with Emotional Exhaustion and Depersonalization. Alternate hypotheses two and three were supported by this research showing a positive correlation that individuals higher in Neuroticism tended to be higher in Emotional Exhaustion and Depersonalization. This study also showed a negative correlation between Neuroticism and Personal Accomplishment. This was an indication that individuals with the trait of Neuroticism



experienced less or reduced feelings of personal accomplishment. Of the five personality traits examined in this study found that Neuroticism was the only trait that showed a correlation with all three dimensions of burnout.

This study found a significant negative correlation Agreeableness and Depersonalization. The results failed to reject null hypothesis six which indicates that when Agreeableness was high Emotional Exhaustion would be. This study also found a significant relationship with Openness to Experience and Extraversion having a significant relationship with personal accomplishment. There were no other significant correlations between the big five personality traits and the three dimensions of burnout. Of the three burnout dimensions, overall participants in this study experienced moderate to high Emotional Exhaustion. Previous research has shown that emotional exhaustion is an initial and critical indicator of potential for burnout (Carlson & Thomas, 2006).

The findings for research question two did not indicate a significant relationship between Years Worked and any of the three dimensions of burnout; therefore the null hypothesis for research question two was not rejected. The lack of correlation between Years Worked and the three dimensions of burnout could be explained by looking at who stays in the field of corrections for a long period of time. It could be that individuals who experience a lack of personal achievement may opt to leave the field of correction for a profession where they would feel a greater level of personal satisfaction. Also it is possible that individuals who experience a lack of personal achievement were not inclined to participate in this study.

Of special interest is the finding that length of years, marital status and work setting (custodial/non-custodial) on their own did not indicate any relationship with burnout. But when demographics and personality traits were entered to determine relationship with the individual components of burnout type of work (custodial/non-custodial) was found to have a significant relationship with depersonalization and personal accomplishment while marital status was found to have a significant relationship with personal accomplishment. This finding supported in part Lent and Schwartz's (2012) research that found the degrees of burnout significantly differed depending on work setting. The findings were consistent with McDermott's (1984) research that found that demographic characteristics such as marital status and job tenure did not show a relationship with burnout. The findings were also consistent with Morgan, Van Haveren and Pearsen's (2002) research which found there to be no correlation between length of tenure, type of work and burnout. Research findings have been inconsistent in terms of some variables such as tenure, gender, educational level, type of work etc being related to burnout (Morgan et al.). The results showed that neuroticism was the only trait related to all individual components of burnout (emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and reduced personal accomplishment). This result was consistent with previous research that found the personality trait neuroticism to be a predictor of burnout (Swider and Zimmerman, 2010). The results of this study do not explain the reason for the inconsistent findings with regard to tenure, job type and marital status and burnout. Further testing will need to be conducted in this area.

This current research supported the findings of Eschleman and Bowling (2009) that found a positive association between negative affectivity and depersonalization and reduced personal accomplishment. This study also supports research conducted by Bakker, Van Der Zee, Lewing,

and Dollard (2006) on volunteer counselors. Both of the results for the aforementioned studies indicated that negativity affectivity with is associated with neuroticism impacts the individual's attitude towards their workplace.

This present study supported research conducted by Morgan, Van Haveren, and Pearson (2002). Their findings indicated that cadets and older correctional personnel did not experience reduced personal accomplishment and did not report depersonalization and emotional exhaustion. This may indicate that cadets were not as yet exposed to the potential job stressors of the field and that older correctional personnel had developed realistic expectations of their role and were able to adjust their levels of stress and frustration.

### **Implications for Social Change**

The nature of human service work such as the field of corrections where the employee is providing services to mostly unwilling, uncooperative and sometimes violent individuals is a potential stage for chronic stress which may lead to burnout (Burke & Mikkelsen, 2004; Carlson & Thomas, 2006; Kokkinos, 2007). Burnout is especially a concern for the field of corrections where the employee is responsible for the safety of those who are incarcerated, their fellow worker and the safety of the surrounding community.

Early identification of individuals who may be more susceptible to burnout can help an organization implement appropriate support systems and intervention strategies for their employees. The data gathered and analyzed from this research may be generalized to other direct human service positions. Individuals who experience burnout may become less committed and dedicated to their job; thereby becoming negligent in the procedures of their position. In the

field of corrections on the job adherence to procedures and careful attention to detail is the difference between a safe, secure and respectful environment and one where the inmates are running the prison. Data generated from this study is beneficial to the individual, their families, their co-workers and the organization as a whole because individuals who are identified early and provided with services are less likely to experience the full effects of burnout. Early identification of individuals more susceptible to burnout out coupled with appropriate intervention strategies may help to reduce costly employee turnover, increase organizational morale, and contribute towards a more positive work environment.

### **Recommendations for Action**

The findings from this research can be used by correctional personnel and correctional facilities to better understand which personality traits are more susceptible to burnout. The findings in this research should be made available to individuals employed in the field of corrections, students of law enforcement and administrators of jails, prisons, and other correctional facilities. Generalizations from this study can be also be made to other human service professions especially those where there is a high level of personal interaction with others. In addition the results of this research will be shared with the participant pools on LinkedIn: American Correctional Association and the Corrections Connection as well as all participants who stated that they were interested in the research results.

### **Limitations of the Study**

This researched used an online self-report assessment to gather data. Self report measures can be subject to participant bias and individual interpretation thereby limiting the study's

validity. Both Maslach Burnout Inventory - Human Services Survey (MBI-HSS) (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996) and the Big Five Inventory (BFI) (John & Srivastava, 1999) relied on the participant being truthful and honest in their responses. In reporting, some individuals may have over-emphasized or minimized the amount of burnout they experienced. Individuals who may already be suffering from burnout may not have been inclined to participate.

Another limitation of this study was using an online format. By using LinkedIn as the primary source for participants, this study was limited to individuals who had an active LinkedIn profile. This study also required that the individual be currently employed in the field of corrections. The current employment requirement eliminated individuals who may have recently retired or left the field of corrections because they were experiencing stress or feelings of burnout.

### **Recommendations for Further Study**

Future researchers studying personality and burnout among correctional personnel should consider using a participant pool that expands beyond the professional networking pool of LinkedIn. Future researchers should also consider looking into the work environment and the current policies in place that may have an impact on the individual, the type of activities the individual participates in and outside of work and the security levels of the facility the individual works in. A longitudinal study may be useful in exploring the responses to burnout in the individual over the course of their career. The longitudinal study could also look at the demographic information over time to understand the impact of certain life changes such as

change in marital status, change in educational background, change in household growth or decline, on personality and burnout.

This current research was an online study with participants from across the continental United States. Another area for future research could be to study the geographic regions of respondents. Different regions across the U.S experience various levels of job loss, loss and gain in economy, various approaches and methods for dealing with law enforcement and inmate retention. Exploring whether regional and geographical conditions has an impact on respondents in the area of burnout could allow for practices to be identified that could be helpful to other regions.

### **Summary**

Identifying individuals who are more susceptible to experience burnout is beneficial to the field of corrections. Stress and burnout has adverse effects for the field of corrections in that correctional personnel, the families of correctional personnel, inmates, public safety and the facility as a whole can be at great risk for harm (Lambert, Hogan, Jiang, Elechi, Benjamin, Morris, Laux, & Dupuy, 2009). The results of this study can help correctional personnel become more aware of their own potential for burnout based on their personality. Being more aware may help the individual as well as the organization in that intervention strategies and support systems can be provided before the individual succumbs to the full effects of burnout. Burnout will continue to be an ongoing subject for research as long as people continue to work with people. This research attempts to bring a greater awareness of the impact of personality on burnout in the field of corrections.

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## **Appendix A – Informed Consent**

This study is being conducted by Sharon A. Maylor, an organizational psychology doctoral student at Walden University. The study is a requirement to fulfil the researcher's degree as part of a dissertation and will not be used by any organization in a decision making process. The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between the personality traits and burnout among correctional personnel. If you agree to participate, you will be asked to provide general demographic information to help describe you and then you will be asked to complete a questionnaire pertaining to burnout and personality. The entire survey should take approximately 15 – 20 minutes to complete. As a voluntary participant, you will not receive compensation or direct benefits for this study, however your participation will add to the body of knowledge related to factors that impact burnout and personality among correctional personnel. Data for this study will be kept on a password protected computer and all completed and uncompleted surveys will be stored on a secure website.

You are free to withdraw or terminate your participation in this study at any time without negative consequences or reprisal. There are no known risks associated with completing this survey, however if you should feel any discomfort or distress please contact the National Hopeline 1.800.273.8255 or consult with a mental health professional. All information will remain anonymous and no identifying data will be collected. Clicking "I agree," on this study will indicate your agreement with the information in this consent document and your willingness to participate in the study. You may print a copy of the informed consent for your records.



Questions or comments about this student should be emailed to Sharon Maylor at [Sharon.maylor@waldenu.edu](mailto:Sharon.maylor@waldenu.edu). You may also contact Dr. Richard Thompson, Ph.D, Dissertation Chair at Walden University, [Richard.thompson@waldenu.edu](mailto:Richard.thompson@waldenu.edu).

## Appendix B Demographics Questionnaire

Please indicate your position within the department of corrections:

- Custodial staff
- Non-custodial Staff

Please indicate how many years you have worked within the department of corrections:

- 0 – less than 5 years
- 5 years – less than 10 years
- 10 years – less than 15 years
- 15 years to less than 20 years
- 20 years or more

Gender

- Female
- Male

Age

- 18 – 34
- 35 – 44
- 45 – 54
- 55 – 64
- 65 and older

Educational level

- Some high school

- Completed high school
- Some college
- Completed College
- Graduate School

#### Race

- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian
- Black or African American
- White
- Other Mixed
- Decline to answer

#### Marital Status

- Single never married
- Married/Domestic partner
- Divorced/Separated/Widowed

### Appendix C - Big Five Inventory

Here are a number of characteristics that may or may not apply to you. For example, do you agree that you are someone who *likes to spend time with others*? Please write a number next to each statement to indicate the extent to which **you agree or disagree with that statement.**

<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
Disagree Strongly	Disagree a little	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree a little	Agree strongly

#### I am someone who...

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <p>1. _____ Is talkative</p> <p>2. _____ Tends to find fault with others</p> <p>3. _____ Does a thorough job</p> <p>4. _____ Is depressed, blue</p> <p>5. _____ Is original, comes up with new ideas</p> <p>6. _____ Is reserved</p> <p>7. _____ Is helpful and unselfish with others</p> <p>8. _____ Can be somewhat careless</p> <p>9. _____ Is relaxed, handles stress well.</p> <p>10. _____ Is curious about many different things</p> <p>11. _____ Is full of energy</p> <p>12. _____ Starts quarrels with others</p> <p>13. _____ Is a reliable worker</p> <p>14. _____ Can be tense</p> | <p>15. _____ Is ingenious, a deep thinker</p> <p>16. _____ Generates a lot of enthusiasm</p> <p>17. _____ Has a forgiving nature</p> <p>18. _____ Tends to be disorganized</p> <p>19. _____ Worries a lot</p> <p>20. _____ Has an active imagination</p> <p>21. _____ Tends to be quiet</p> <p>22. _____ Is generally trusting</p> <p>23. _____ Tends to be lazy</p> <p>24. _____ Is emotionally stable, not easily upset</p> <p>25. _____ Is inventive</p> <p>26. _____ Has an assertive personality</p> <p>27. _____ Can be cold and aloof</p> |
|---|--|

28. \_\_\_\_\_ Perseveres until the task is finished
29. \_\_\_\_\_ Can be moody
30. \_\_\_\_\_ Values artistic, aesthetic experiences
31. \_\_\_\_\_ Is sometimes shy, inhibited
32. \_\_\_\_\_ Is considerate and kind to almost everyone
33. \_\_\_\_\_ Does things efficiently
34. \_\_\_\_\_ Remains calm in tense situations
35. \_\_\_\_\_ Prefers work that is routine
36. \_\_\_\_\_ Is outgoing, sociable
37. \_\_\_\_\_ Is sometimes rude to others
38. \_\_\_\_\_ Makes plans and follows through with them
39. \_\_\_\_\_ Gets nervous easily
40. \_\_\_\_\_ Likes to reflect, play with ideas
41. \_\_\_\_\_ Has few artistic interests
42. \_\_\_\_\_ Likes to cooperate with others
43. \_\_\_\_\_ Is easily distracted
44. \_\_\_\_\_ Is sophisticated in art, music, or literature

## **Appendix D – Maslach Burnout Inventory**

Due to copyright laws the reader is asked to contact:

Mind Garden

[info@mindgarden.com](mailto:info@mindgarden.com)

[www.mindgarden.com](http://www.mindgarden.com)

To examine the Maslach Burnout Inventory Human Services Questionnaire