WELL-BEING IN FRONTLINE CORRECTIONAL OFFICERS

A Mixed-Method Systematic Review

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Correctional officers (COs) work in high-stress environments, frequently experience critical incidents and have shown high levels of burnout. The current review synthesizes and evaluates literature on determinants of CO well-being. The review followed the Joanna Briggs Institute approach for mixed-method systematic reviews. Eligible studies measured subjective or psychological well-being in frontline COs. Studies of disorder absence or nonfrontline COs or associated professions were excluded. Searches of psychology and criminal justice databases including PsycINFO (EBSCOhost) and Criminal Justice (ProQuest) were completed in June 2021, and data were synthesized using a convergent segregated approach. A total of 29 studies were included and explored individual, interpersonal, and organizational determinants of well-being. Key themes identified by thematic synthesis of qualitative research included job satisfaction, personal growth, and coping. COs can experience well-being, however, further research into determinants of CO well-being is required.

Keywords: correctional officers; systematic review; well-being; life satisfaction

Frontline correctional officers (COs) work in correctional facilities and maintain security, prison resident safety, and promote resident rehabilitation (Liebling et al., 2011). This can be a highly challenging and dangerous work environment where COs are exposed to occupational stressors (e.g., limited autonomy) and critical incidents such as riots, suicide attempts, and abuse (Kunst, 2011; Spinaris et al., 2012). These working conditions can negatively affect CO health (Harvey, 2014) and may also affect well-being.

CO WELL-BEING

There is no widely accepted definition of well-being (Dodge et al., 2012). Early well-being research consisted of two perspectives: hedonism and eudemonism. The hedonic

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perspective viewed well-being as positive emotions, while the eudemonic perspective viewed well-being as positive functioning (Dodge et al., 2012). Diener’s (1984) hedonic model of subjective well-being (SWB) comprises the presence of positive affect, the absence of negative affect, and the presence of life satisfaction. Overall, SWB refers to the experience of positive emotions, satisfaction with different domains of life (e.g., work, family, self), and minimal negative emotion or mental illness. Ryff’s (1989) eudemonic psychological well-being (PWB) comprises six components of optimal functioning including self-acceptance, positive relationships, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, and personal growth. A person with PWB is self-aware and accepting of themselves (self-acceptance), connected with significant others (positive relationships), living in line with their convictions (autonomy), competent in managing their life (environmental mastery), living with direction and purpose (purpose), and improving themselves (personal growth; Ryff, 2014). Both SWB and PWB were included in the current review.

Despite debate around the definition of well-being, it is widely accepted that well-being is more than disorder absence (Dodge et al., 2012). Well-being cannot be established by the absence of pathology alone and should include markers of health and positive functioning (Keyes, 2005). This aligns with the salutogenic model of health (Antonovsky, 1996), which considers well-being, or more broadly health, to be on a continuum ranging from dis-ease to health-ease. The salutogenic model stipulates that an understanding of both disease and health-ease is necessary to adequately promote health. Salutogenesis is the theoretical foundation of the current review and provides a rationale for the need to understand CO well-being.

Limited research has explored the presence of CO well-being. CO well-being has been predominantly operationalized as disorder absence (e.g., Bierie, 2012). The few studies that have measured well-being have combined frontline COs with other prison staff without controlling for position (Aube et al., 2009; Rousseau et al., 2008). Despite high levels of pathology, prison staff more broadly have reported experiences of well-being and related concepts such as job satisfaction (Butler et al., 2019) and resilience (Klinoff et al., 2018). There is currently limited understanding of the determinants of CO well-being.

SOcioECOLOGICAL DETERMINANTS OF CO PATHOLOGY

COs are at risk of mental and physical health problems including symptoms of burnout, posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, anxiety, suicide, poor physical health, sleep problems, and chronic pain (Carleton et al., 2019; Harvey, 2014; James et al., 2017; Lambert, Hogan et al., 2015; Milner et al., 2017; Spinaris et al., 2012). These health problems have been associated with poor workplace outcomes like reduced performance, turnover, absenteeism, and poor treatment of prison residents (Dowden & Tellier, 2004; Lambert, Hogan et al., 2015; Spinaris et al., 2012). Various risk factors influence CO experiences of such health problems. As displayed in Figure 1, a socioecological approach can be used to organize these risk factors into three groups: individual, interpersonal, and organizational determinants of health (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; McLeroy et al., 1988).

Prior pathogenic research (excluded from the current review) has explored individual, interpersonal, and organizational determinants of CO ill-health. Individual demographic determinants such as age, sex, race, or education have shown weak or inconsistent effects on CO psychopathology (Butler et al., 2019; Dowden & Tellier, 2004). Other individual
determinants such as job experience, attitudes toward rehabilitation, organizational commitment, and job satisfaction have shown stronger effects (Butler et al., 2019; Dowden & Tellier, 2004). Interpersonal determinants of supervisor and peer support are strong and significant predictors of CO job stress (Butler et al., 2019). Dowden and Tellier’s (2004) meta-analysis explored organizational determinants and found that “specific correctional officer problems” like perceived danger and role conflict had strong significant impacts on CO stress, while “job characteristics” such as security level and shift had limited effect. Workplace critical incident exposure is an organizational determinant that has been found to have a strong impact on pathology (Carleton et al., 2019; Spinaris et al., 2012).

**PRIOR REVIEWS ON THE CO POPULATION**

To date, four meta-analyses (Butler et al., 2019; Dowden & Tellier, 2004; Evers et al., 2020; Maahs & Pratt, 2001), two systematic reviews (Finney et al., 2013; Lambert et al., 2020), 13 literature reviews (Bezerra & Constantino, 2016; Brower, 2013; Ferdik & Smith, 2017; Finn, 1998; Huckabee, 1992; Kunst, 2011; Lambert, 2001a, 2001b; Lambert et al., 2002; Lambert, Hogan et al., 2015; W. Morgan, 2009; Philliber, 1987; Schaufeli & Peeters, 2000), and one scoping review (Johnson et al., 2021) on COs have been published. The most recent reviews examined CO well-being programs (Evers et al., 2020), predictors of CO job stress, satisfaction, and commitment (Butler et al., 2019), CO organizational commitment (Lambert et al., 2020), and prison staff and resident responses to coronavirus.
These reviews typically reflect a pathogenic focus. For example, the CO well-being programs meta-analyzed by Evers et al. (2020) primarily aimed to reduce psychiatric symptoms; Johnson et al. (2021) primarily focused on prison resident rather than CO mental health (operationalized as distress); and Brower (2013), and Ferdik and Smith (2017) reviewed CO stressors, depression, job dissatisfaction, and burnout. These prior reviews have largely focused on pathology and so have not systematically reviewed the literature on CO well-being. The current review aims to address this gap and extend prior reviews by focusing on well-being rather than pathology, and by including qualitative research to develop a richer understanding of CO well-being.

AIMS

COs work under challenging conditions that may hinder well-being while conducting work integral to the safety of the community and prison residents. Understanding determinants of CO well-being is important to assist COs to experience well-being and promote better workplace outcomes. Therefore, the current review aimed to systematically synthesize and evaluate quantitative and qualitative research on CO well-being. In doing so, the following research question was addressed:

**Research Question 1 (RQ1):** What socioecological determinants (individual, interpersonal, and organizational) impact well-being in frontline COs?

The current review will contribute to understanding the health-ease end of the health continuum and the findings may be used to develop strategies to promote CO well-being.

METHOD

**DESIGN**

A mixed-method systematic review was conducted in accordance with the Joanna Briggs Institute (JBI) methodology for mixed-method systematic reviews (Lizarondo et al., 2020). A review protocol was registered with PROSPERO (CRD42020192354).

**SEARCH STRATEGY**

An initial exploratory PsycINFO search was conducted to identify relevant key words, subject headings, and thesaurus terms. Preliminary search terms and keywords included: well-being, well-being, mental health, correction* officer, and prison guard. Keywords, subject headings, and thesaurus terms were developed into a search strategy in consultation with a Health Librarian (see Supplementary Material for complete search strategy, available in the online version of this article). The search strategy was used across 12 databases: PsycINFO (EBSCOhost), Social Work Abstracts (EBSCOhost), Embase, Web of Science, CINCH Australian Criminology database (Informit), CINCH Health Issues in Criminal Justice (Informit), Social Service Abstracts (ProQuest), Sociological Abstracts (ProQuest), Criminal Justice (ProQuest), Social Science (ProQuest), Sociology (ProQuest), and ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global. Searches were conducted on June 17, 2020, and again prior to submission for publication on June 2, 2021. Reference lists of included studies were also screened.
Eligibility Criteria

Eligibility criteria were developed a priori using the Population, Phenomenon of Interest, and Context (PICo)$^2$ tool (Lockwood et al., 2020). The population of interest was frontline COs, and excluded nonfrontline COs (e.g., treatment staff), probation officers, associated frontline roles (e.g., police), and prison residents. Studies that assessed well-being in frontline COs and other prison staff or associated professions were included where position was controlled for in analyses or data could be extracted separately. The phenomenon of interest was well-being (SWB or PWB). Studies measuring or describing SWB or PWB or any of their individual components (e.g., life satisfaction, positive affect, personal growth) were included. This excluded well-being defined as disorder or symptom absence, symptoms of psychopathology, physical health, and related concepts. Related concepts were conceptualized as variables that had a positive (rather than pathogenic) focus but were not components of SWB or PWB (e.g., resilience, job satisfaction). Qualitative studies were not required to explicitly explore well-being (i.e., aim to explore well-being), and were included if their results (implicitly or explicitly) reflected components of well-being. The context was prisons and jails, excluding community corrections. No limits were placed on study design or quality. Gray literature was included in the form of dissertations.

Study Selection

Studies identified by the search were imported into EndNote and duplicates were removed. The first two authors independently screened titles and abstracts to determine eligibility and articles were identified as “include” or “exclude.” Those studies included in the initial screening phase were screened again using the full text. Full-text articles that did not meet inclusion criteria were excluded, and reasons for exclusion were recorded. Any disagreements were resolved through discussion with the third author.

Assessment of Methodological Quality

Methodological quality of quantitative studies was assessed by the first two authors and qualitative studies were assessed by all three authors using JBI critical appraisal tools (CATs). Discrepancies were resolved through discussion with all authors. Each CAT assessed a set of criteria that could be met (one point), or unmet/unclear (zero points). The CAT for analytical cross-sectional studies (Moola et al., 2020) assesses criteria around the description of the sample and setting, valid and reliable measurement of variables, appropriate strategies for dealing with confounding variables, and appropriate statistical analyses. The CAT for qualitative studies (Lockwood et al., 2015) assesses criteria on congruency between philosophical perspectives, methodology, research questions, and data collection methods.

Data Extraction

Data were extracted into standardized Excel tables. The data extracted were guided by JBI suggestions and included: citation, study design, participant characteristics, setting/context (e.g., prison, geographical location), socioecological determinants (individual, interpersonal, and organizational), well-being measurement, data analysis, results (including effect sizes for quantitative studies), methodological quality score, and comments. The first author extracted the data, and the data were checked by the second author.
DATA SYNTHESIS

A convergent segregated approach was used whereby quantitative and qualitative data were synthesized separately. The data were synthesized by the first author and this was checked by the other authors. Re-sampling, differences in the measurement of well-being, and limited exploration (i.e., measured in three or less samples) of many socioecological determinants made a meta-analysis imprudent (Borenstein et al., 2011). Therefore, quantitative data were systematically synthesized using a narrative approach.

Qualitative data (results sections of included qualitative studies) were imported into NVivo for thematic synthesis over three iterative stages: (a) line-by-line coding, (b) development of descriptive themes, and (c) development of analytical themes (Thomas & Harden, 2008). During line-by-line coding, each line of text was read carefully and coded freely (without reference to the research question). Codes were developed freely because most qualitative studies did not directly aim to examine well-being, and free coding assists in translation of concepts across studies. The coded data were then examined, and similar codes were clustered together to create descriptive themes (these typically mirrored findings of original studies). In developing analytical themes, the descriptive themes were examined in the context of the research question. This process was iterative, and codes and themes were revised and reclassified.

RESULTS

STUDY INCLUSION

The search generated a total of 2,537 articles after duplicates were removed. Of these, 2,340 were excluded because reading of their abstracts showed that they clearly did not meet eligibility criteria. The remaining 197 articles were screened by full-text, and 29 (over 22 independent samples) were deemed eligible for inclusion. This screening process including reasons for exclusion at the full-text screening phase is depicted in Figure 2. Four included works were doctoral dissertations and the remainder were published in academic journals.

METHODOLOGICAL QUALITY

Based on the JBI CAT scores, studies were of average to high quality. Common issues in quantitative studies included inadequate measurement of predictor and outcome variables, limited descriptions of the prison setting, and not controlling for demographic or potentially confounding variables. Re-sampling across publications without adjusting for multiple testing was an issue not assessed in JBI CATs. Qualitative studies were hindered by limited description of the methodology or discussion of the cultural and theoretical position of the researchers. Quality appraisals were based solely on the published data, and therefore may not be representative of the broader research practices used.

CHARACTERISTICS OF INCLUDED STUDIES

Twenty studies were quantitative and nine were qualitative. Frontline COs were examined in half \((n = 14)\) of the studies, and the other half \((n = 15)\) combined frontline COs with other prison staff while controlling for position. Primarily, COs worked in prisons \((n = 23)\) or jails \((n = 1)\). Other studies used different terminology (e.g., correctional
facilities, detention centers, or penitentiaries; \( n = 5 \). Twelve studies examined COs working in maximum security (or equivalent) facilities, two examined medium security (or equivalent) facilities, and six examined several facilities with a combination of security levels. Nine studies did not report facility security level.

Figure 2: Selection Process for Studies Included in the Current Review
Note. Concepts related to well-being were variables that had a positive focus but were not components of SWB or PWB (e.g., resilience, job satisfaction, quality of life, empowerment). PWB = psychological well-being; SWB = subjective well-being.
Most studies did not report the sex or age of prison residents \((n = 20)\). Of those that did, most were adult male facilities \((n = 11)\); adult female facilities \((n = 1)\); or studies of multiple facilities including adult male, adult female, and/or youth facilities \((n = 2)\). Samples included COs from the United States \((n = 15)\), the United Kingdom \((n = 3)\), Nigeria \((n = 3)\), Turkey \((n = 2)\), Australia \((n = 1)\), Brazil \((n = 1)\), Canada \((n = 1)\), and China \((n = 1)\). Two studies examined COs from more than one country \((Piotrowski et al., 2020; Trounson et al., 2019)\). Studies included samples of predominantly male \((>50\%; n = 22)\), predominantly female \((>50\%; n = 2)\), male-only \((n = 1)\), or female-only \((n = 1)\) COs, and three studies did not report participant sex. Further demographics are displayed in the Supplementary Material.

**QUANTITATIVE FINDINGS**

Both SWB \((n = 18; Table 1)\) and PWB \((n = 2; Table 2)\) were examined in COs. There was variation in study quality and measurement of SWB and PWB. The descriptive data suggested COs showed low to moderate life satisfaction, moderate thriving \((Trounson et al., 2019)\), moderate positive affect \((Durak et al., 2010; Senol-Durak et al., 2021)\), and low PWB \((Ojedokun & Idemudia, 2014)\). To answer RQ1, the results are discussed below in terms of individual, interpersonal, and organizational determinants of CO well-being.

**Individual Determinants**

Individual demographic determinants were inconsistent predictors of well-being. For example, age, tenure, marital status, and education were nonsignificant in most studies, and significant in others. Even when the same dataset was utilized across studies, the significance of demographic variables was inconsistent. For example, Lambert, Barton-Bellessa and Hogan \((2015)\) and Lambert \((2008)\) differed in the significance of age as a predictor of life satisfaction despite using the same sample. Where demographic determinants were significant, they tended to be weak and inconsistent in the direction of their effect. For example, tenure was a significant positive predictor of SWB in some studies \((\beta = .15, Lambert et al., 2013)\) and a significant negative predictor of SWB in others \((\beta = -.18, Lambert, 2010)\). Such inconsistencies in the direction and significance of demographic predictors of SWB may be attributable to prison management (public vs. private) and other predictor variables included in analyses. There were significant differences in PWB by sex and position (CO vs. non-CO). However, this must be interpreted tentatively due to limited investigation of CO PWB.

Other individual determinants had more consistent effects on CO well-being. Symptoms of burnout \((r = -.39, Durak et al., 2010; \beta = -.49, Lambert, Hogan and Altheimer, 2010; \beta = -.33, Lambert, Barton-Bellessa and Hogan, 2015; r = -.39, Senol-Durak et al., 2021)\) and stress \((r = -.34, Durak et al., 2010; \beta = -.21, Lambert et al., 2005; \beta = -.10, Lambert et al., 2018; \beta = -.17, Lambert et al., 2019)\) were significantly negatively associated with SWB across four distinct samples. However, effects were weak to moderate, and stress was at times positively associated with well-being \((e.g., Lambert et al., 2005; Senol-Durak et al., 2021)\). Symptoms of depression/distress and negative affect had weak to moderate significant negative relationships with SWB over four distinct samples \((r = -.30, Durak et al., 2010; \beta = -.43, Hughes, 1990; r = -.19, Senol-Durak et al., 2021;
| Reference | Quality | Sample | Well-being measure | Well-being | Positive relationship with well-being | Negative relationship with well-being |
|-----------|---------|--------|--------------------|------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Durak et al. (2010) | 4/7 | Turkish COs ($N = 166$) working in various prisons. 100% frontline; 83% male | SWLS, PANAS | $M=(PR)$: $15.68 (5-35)$, $PA: 32.14 (10-50)$, $NA: 20.74 (10-50)$ | LS: PA ($r = .26^*$), income ($r = .23^*$), burnout ($r = .30^*$), depression ($r = .39^*$) | LS: NA ($r = -.29^*$), work stress ($r = -.34^*$), burnout ($r = -.39^*$), depression ($r = -.30^*$), PA: NA ($r = -.23^*$), work stress ($r = -.15$), burnout ($r = -.52^*$), depression ($r = -.33^*$), NA: income ($r = -.17^*$) |
| Hughes (1990) | 4/7 | Canadian COs ($N = 108$) working across 3 high-security penitentiaries. 100% frontline; 100% male | LSS | — | Sense of coherence ($\beta = .43^*$), coping efficacy ($\beta = .26^*$), sleep ($\beta = .02$). | NA ($\beta = -.43^*$), problems ($\beta = -.29^*$), avoidance ($\beta = -.21^*$). |
| Lambert (2008); Lambert and Hogan (2011); Lambert, Barbon-Bellesse and Hogan (2015); Lambert et al. (2005, 2011) | 6/7 | U.S. Midwest correctional staff ($N = 272$) working in a public high-security male prison. 53% frontline; 76% male | LS—two-items from QES | $M (2-6) = 4.11 (2-6)$ | JS ($\beta = .30^*$), perceived procedural justice ($\beta = .18^*$), educational level ($\beta = .16^*$), dangerousness ($\beta = .16^*$), perceived distributive justice ($\beta = .14^*$), contact with residents ($\beta = .14^*$), role stress ($\beta = .12^*$), tenure ($\beta = .10^*$). | Burnout ($\beta = -.33^*$), WFC ($\beta = -.28^*$), support for punishment ($\beta = -.23^*$), job stress ($\beta = -.21^*$), FWC ($\beta = -.15^*$), gender ($\beta = -.11$), age ($\beta = -.11$), race ($\beta = -.09$), job involvement ($\beta = -.08$), support for treatment ($\beta = -.08$), CO position ($\beta = -.01$), supervisor position ($\beta = -.02$). |
| Lambert, Hogan and Altheimer (2010); Lambert et al. (2009); Lambert (2010); Lambert, Hogan et al. (2010) | 6/7 | Correctional staff ($N = 160$) working in a private maximum security male prison. 62% frontline; 59% male | LS—two-items from QES | $M (2-6) = 4.30 (2-6)$ | Organizational citizenship behavior ($\beta = .39^*$), JS ($\beta = .38^*$), procedural justice ($\beta = .37^*$), organizational commitment ($\beta = .12$), children at home ($\beta = .11$), distributive justice ($\beta = .10$), educational level ($\beta = .09$), marital status ($\beta = .03$). | Emotional exhaustion ($\beta = -49^*$), WFC ($\beta = -.23^*$), FWC ($\beta = -.20^*$), job involvement ($\beta = -.15^*$), gender (male; $\beta = -.10$), depersonalization ($\beta = -.09$), ineffectiveness ($\beta = -.08$), tenure ($\beta = -.07$), age ($\beta = -.07$), CO position ($\beta = -.05$), financial rewards ($\beta = -.04$), race ($\beta = -.01$), supervisory position ($\beta = -.01$), job stress ($\beta = -.01$). |
| Lambert et al. (2018) | 7/7 | Chinese prison staff ($N = 322$) working across two adult prisons. 100% frontline; 46% male | LS—three items from QES & SWLS | $M (3-18) = 11.78 (3-18)$ | JS ($\beta = .45^*$), job involvement ($\beta = .18^*$), age ($\beta = .05$), tenure ($\beta = .02$), supervisory position ($\beta = .02$). | Job stress ($\beta = -.10^*$), marital status ($\beta = -.04$), prison ($\beta = -.03$), gender ($\beta = -.03$). |
| Reference                  | Quality | Sample                                                                 | Well-being measure | $M$ (PR) | Positive relationship with well-being                                                                                                           | Negative relationship with well-being                                                                                          |
|----------------------------|---------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|----------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Lambert et al. (2013)      | 7/7     | Prison staff working in one public maximum-security prison (see above) and one private maximum-security prison (see above). | LS—two items from QES | 4.30 (2–6) | Private: Affective commitment ($β = .28^*$), educational level ($β = .08$), supervisory position ($β = .06$).                                   | Private: Continuance commitment ($β = −.26^*$), tenure ($β = −.13$), gender ($β = −.12$), age ($β = −.08$), CO position ($β = −.01$), race ($β = −.01$). |
|                            |         |                                                                        |                    | Public: 4.11 (2–6) | Job involvement ($β = .32^*$), JS ($β = .19^*$), marital status ($β = .17^*$), educational level ($β = .06$), age ($β = .05$), gender ($β = −.05$), tenure ($β = .01$). | Job stress ($β = −.17^*$), supervisory position ($β = −.16$).                                                                 |
| Lambert et al. (2019)      | 7/7     | Nigerian prison staff ($N = 120$) working in a medium security prison. 70% frontline; 68% male. | LS—three-items from SWLS | 12.96 (3–18) | Extraversion ($β = .28^*$), friend support ($β = .14^*$), family support ($β = .12^*$), conscientiousness ($β = .08^*$), agreeableness ($β = .07^*$), significant other support ($β = .07^*$), openness ($β = .02$). | Neuroticism ($β = −.35^*$).                                                                                                   |
| Onyishi et al. (2012)      | 2/7     | Nigerian prison officers ($N = 601$) 100% frontline; 80% male          | LIS-SF             | 36.4 (12–72) | Job involvement ($β = .32^*$), JS ($β = .19^*$), marital status ($β = .17^*$), educational level ($β = .06$), age ($β = .05$), gender ($β = −.05$), tenure ($β = .01$). | Job stress ($β = −.17^*$), supervisory position ($β = −.16$).                                                                 |
| Piotrowski et al. (2020)   | 5/7     | Polish ($n = 312$) and Indonesian ($n = 467$) prison officers working in penitentiary centers. 100% frontline; 82.3% male. | LS—Cantrill’s (1965) Ladder | 6.96 (1–10) | Polish: Active coping ($β = .21^*$), seeking social support/ emotion-focused coping ($β = .21^*$), penitentiary unit type ($β = .11^*$), shift work ($β = .04$). | Avoidant coping ($β = −.37^*$), age ($β = −.06$), occupational inheritance ($β = −.04$).                              |
|                            |         |                                                                        | Indonesian: 8.57 (1–10) |          | Asian (n = 1134) Black (n = 100) 100% frontline; 82.3% male. 82% frontline; 82.3% male. 62% frontline; 64% male. | Adversity ($r = −.20^*$; $RE = −.22^*$), EA ($r = −.36^*$), distress ($r = −.47^*$).                                      |
| Tounson et al. (2019)      | 7/7     | International sample of COs ($N = 174$) 72% frontline (non-supervisory position); 79% male. | SWB measured using 19 items. Two factors: distress and thriving. | 3.38 (1–7) | Thriving: $r = .20^*$, ISF ($r = .20^*$).                                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                 |
|                            |         |                                                                        |                    |          |                                                                                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                 |
| Senol-Durak et al. (2021)  | 5/7     | Turkish COs ($N = 588$) working across several prisons 100% frontline; 74% male. | PANAS              | PA: 32.29 (10–50) | PA: JS ($r = .31^*$; $RE = .19^*$), stress ($RE = .25^*$), NA: trait anger ($r = .45^*$), work stress ($r = .36^*$), burnout ($r = .56^*$; $RE = .45^*$). |                                                                                                                                 |

**Note.** Where resampling occurred, effect sizes for relationships that were examined across more than one study are included from the most recent publication. Resampling confirmed with authors via personal communication on 12/09/2020. PR = possible range; * = significant finding; $r = $ Pearson’s correlation coefficient; $β = $ standardized regression coefficient; $RE = $ regression estimate; SWLS = Satisfaction with Life Scale (Diener et al., 1985); PANAS = Positive and Negative Affect Scale (Watson et al., 1988); PA = positive affect; NA = negative affect; LSS = Life Satisfaction Scale (Warr et al., 1979); LS = life satisfaction; QES = Quality of Employment Survey (Quinn & Staines, 1979); JS = job satisfaction; WFC = work-family conflict; FWC = family-work conflict; LIS-SF = life satisfaction index-short form (Barrett & Murk, 2009); SO = significant other; SWB = subjective well-being; $r = $ regression estimate; ISF = interpersonal/solution-focused; EA = emotional/avoidant.
TABLE 2: Characteristics and Findings of Studies Assessing CO Psychological Well-Being

| Reference                  | Quality | Sample Description                                                                 | M well-being (PR) | Outcome Measurement                                                                 | Findings                                                                 |
|----------------------------|---------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Ojedokun and Idemudia (2014)| 4/7     | Nigerian correctional personnel (N = 222) working across three adult prisons. 100% frontline; 66% male. | —                 | PWBS: subscales of self-acceptance, positive relationships, autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose in life, and personal growth. | Males scored significantly higher than females on personal growth (d = 0.32). Females scored significantly higher than males on positive relationships (d = -0.28). |
| Tatebe et al. (2020)        | 5/7     | U.S. emergency responders (N = 258) including a subset of COs (n = 47). COs 100% frontline. | COs: 57.4 (0–105) | PTGI (considered similar to growth dimension of PWB).                                | COs showed significantly higher PTG compared with paramedics and police officers. |

Note. Effect sizes were not reported by Ojedokun and Idemudia (2014) but were calculated from reported statistics. Tatebe et al. (2020) did not report effect sizes and not enough data were reported to calculate effect sizes. PR = possible range; PWBS = Psychological Wellbeing Scale (Ryff, 1989); d = Cohen’s d; PTGI = Posttraumatic Growth Inventory (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1996); PWG = psychological well-being.

$r = -.47$, Trounson et al., 2019). Other variables significantly negatively related to SWB included continuance job commitment ($\beta = -.26$, Lambert et al., 2013), avoidant coping behaviors ($\beta = -.37$, Piotrowski et al., 2020), and attitudes supportive of punishment ($\beta = -.23$, Lambert et al., 2011); however, these relationships tended to be weak to moderate. Job satisfaction was a weak to moderate significant positive predictor of SWB across five distinct samples ($\beta = .30$, Lambert et al., 2005; $\beta = .38$, Lambert et al., 2009; $\beta = .45$, Lambert et al., 2018; $\beta = .19$, Lambert et al., 2019; $r = .31$, Senol-Durak et al., 2021). Other significant individual positive predictors included affective job commitment ($\beta = .28$, Lambert et al., 2013), active coping ($\beta = .21$, Piotrowski et al., 2020), and personality traits ($\beta = .07-.28$, Onyishi et al., 2012); however, these relationships tended to be weak.

**Interpersonal Determinants**

There was limited investigation of interpersonal determinants of CO well-being. Workplace social support was not measured in relation to well-being. However, support from friends ($\beta = .14$), family ($\beta = .12$), and significant others ($\beta = .12$; Onyishi et al., 2012), as well as coping styles focused on support-seeking behaviors ($\beta = .21$, Piotrowski et al., 2020; $r = .20$, Trounson et al., 2019), were significantly and positively associated with SWB. Work–family conflict (where work causes strain in familial relationships; $\beta = -.28$, $\beta = -.23$) and family-work conflict (where family life causes conflicts with work; $\beta = -.20$, $\beta = -.15$) significantly reduced life satisfaction across two separate samples (Lambert et al., 2009, 2005) However, these interpersonal determinants were weakly related to SWB.
Organizational Determinants

There was limited investigation of organizational determinants of CO well-being. Characteristics of workplace facilities such as shift work (Piotrowski et al., 2020) and prison (if across several facilities; Lambert et al., 2018) tended to be nonsignificant predictors of SWB. However, some studies did not measure or control for such variables making it difficult to elucidate their effect (if any) on CO well-being. For example, Hughes (1990) and Onyishi et al. (2012) sampled across more than one facility with potentially different security levels and/or different prison populations but did not control for prison type. Other organizational variables such as distributive ($\beta = .14$) and procedural justice ($\beta = .18$; Lambert & Hogan, 2011) were significant but weak positive predictors of SWB. Findings regarding perceived danger as a predictor of SWB were conflicting. Lambert et al. (2005) found that perceived danger was a significant positive predictor of life satisfaction ($\beta = .16$), while Trounson et al. (2019) found that perceived workplace adversity was negatively related to thriving ($r = -.20$).

THEMATIC SYNTHESIS OF QUALITATIVE STUDIES

Characteristics and findings of the qualitative studies are summarized in Table 3. There was variability in study quality, country, and participant ethnic and cultural backgrounds (see Supplementary Material). Note that two samples included COs working in specialized prison mental health clinics (Bond & Gemmell, 2014; Powers-Magro, 2015). Furthermore, one sample comprised Indigenous Australian COs, for whom factors related to cultural connection both supported and hindered well-being (Trounson et al., 2021). Thematic synthesis identified three key themes of job satisfaction, personal growth, and coping. Each theme is discussed below with representative quotes.

Job Satisfaction

SWB refers to a sense of satisfaction with various domains of life, including work (Diener, 1984). Therefore, job satisfaction or a sense of satisfaction and pleasure with one’s work is relevant. Organizational factors reported to improve satisfaction included stability, regular shifts, and adequate training. Interpersonal factors reported to improve satisfaction included positive interactions with staff and prison residents. Positive resident interactions where COs felt they were “making a difference” were a great source of satisfaction. Making a difference gave a difficult job meaning, and instilled COs with a sense of purpose (PWB purpose in life). For example,

I really like one to ones . . . get a lot more out of it . . . rewarding feeling you feel like you are doing something useful . . . feel like you’re doing some good and hopefully making a bit of a difference. (Bond & Gemmell, 2014, p. 88)

I want to be able to help and support them [Indigenous prison residents] because at the end of the day they’re my own people . . . If I help at least one of these blokes a year to not come back to jail, I’m happy. (Trounson et al., 2021, p. 9)

A sense of belongingness or camaraderie with other COs, reflective of PWB’s positive relationships component, was an interpersonal determinant that was a great source
| Reference                        | Quality score | Sample                                                                 | Data collection                      | Key findings                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|---------------------------------|---------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Bond and Gemmell (2014)          | 5/10          | COs ($N = 5$) working in Psychologically Informed Planned Environments (PIPEs) in a U.K. Lifr Prison | Semi-structured interview           | Four key themes identified: role conflict, growth, relationships, and impact.                                                                                                                                |
| Jaskowiak and Fontana (2015)    | 3/10          | Prison officers ($N = 26$) working in a Brazilian prison               | Semi-structured interview           | Three key themes discussed: motivation, joys, and sorrows; working conditions and risk exposure; and workplace supports.                                                                                       |
| Powers-Magro (2015)              | 7/10          | COs ($N = 11$) working in a U.S. jail psychiatric security unit (PSU)  | Semi-structured interview           | Main themes identified: motivators for working on the PSU; perceptions of mentally ill prison residents; factors decreasing job stress and increasing job satisfaction; and factors increasing job stress and decreasing job satisfaction. |
| Sweeney et al. (2018)            | 7/10          | Prison officers ($N = 9$) working in a U.K. male prison where prison residents have attempted suicide | Semi-structured interview           | Key themes identified: prison culture limiting support, feeling unqualified, under-resourced, minimizing negative emotions (PTSD symptoms, avoidance coping and trauma), and positivity. |
| Takla (2013)                     | 5/10          | COs ($N = 6$) working across U.S. correctional facilities.             | Semi-structured interview           | Eight key themes identified: job advancement, negative worldview, cynicism, detachment, systemic issues, burnout, coping, and positive outcomes.                                                             |
| Trounson et al. (2021)           | 9/10          | Indigenous Australian COs ($N = 15$) working in correctional centers in the Northern Territory. | Semi-structured interviews and focus groups | Indigenous social and emotional well-being was found to be affected by four higher order themes: cultural connection, morale, social functioning, and somatic health. There were several relevant subordinate themes that can be found in the full-text. |
| Walker et al. (2017)             | 5/10          | English custodial prison staff ($N = 14$), including COs ($n = 10$), working in female prisons where prison residents repetitively self-harm | Semi-structured interview           | Four main themes: coping “in” prisons, coping “on” the job, coping “away” from the job, and future training to cope ‘with’ the job.                                                                       |
| Williams (2018)                  | 5/10          | COs ($n = 6$) and correctional chaplains ($n = 6$) working in U.S. prisons | Semi-structured interview           | Five key themes identified: stress, burnout, resilience, spirituality, and CO culture                                                                                                                        |
| Wyant (2016)                     | 6/10          | Female COs ($N = 6$) working in an U.S. adult male correctional facility | Semi-structured interview (two per participant) | Four key themes identified: job satisfaction, communication skills, women as under-represented, and challenges.                                                                                       |

Note. PTSD = posttraumatic stress disorder; CO = correctional officers.
of satisfaction. It should be noted that workplace relationships were sometimes also a stressor. This belongingness was born from shared stressful work experiences that forged a bond of trust and respect considered crucial in a potentially dangerous environment. For example,

> Probably the friendships I have with my partners . . . knowing that I’m working with good people, they have similar interests and similar philosophies to me . . . I can rely on my partners and still get the job done but still have that friendship . . . (Powers-Magro, 2015, p. 74)

**Personal Growth**

Personal growth is a component of PWB whereby people believe in their capacity to develop and is characterized by improvements in self and behavior (Ryff, 2014). COs reported experiences of personal growth, including improvements in their understanding of human behavior, communication skills, and self-awareness. This personal growth was a result of navigating workplace stressors (e.g., interacting with residents living with complex mental illnesses), and was referred to as a “learning curve,” or a “journey.” These experiences of personal growth were reflected in the following quote:

> . . . makes me more . . . compassionate understanding . . . think about things a little bit more than I used to. It’s not black and white anymore there’s all this fluffy grey stuff around everything. (Bond & Gemmell, 2014, p. 87)

**Coping**

Coping is an individual determinant of health, and COs reported utilizing various coping strategies to combat stress and enhance well-being. These included faith or spirituality, hobbies (e.g., exercise, meditation, reading), “leaving work at work,” social support from friends and family, and informal time out at work after critical incidents. Coworker support was emphasized by officers as a coping strategy utilized both at work and outside of work. Given that camaraderie was a source of satisfaction, it follows that COs would turn to each other for support:

> All of the staff on the unit . . . we all met in the pub [after a critical incident] and a few of us went who were in uniform and we rang up the people that weren’t in work and they all came from home . . . And it’s having the support of those people who all came in from home. (Walker et al., 2017, p. 819)

COs reported using other coping strategies that had a transitory effect and were less helpful in the long term. These included the use of dark humor, detachment, alcohol consumption, smoking, and emotional eating. An organizational barrier for CO coping was the macho sub-culture, which asserts that stress is a part of the job and COs should “get over it.” Any sign of distress was considered a sign of weakness meaning COs were less likely to express emotion or accept formal support. For example, one CO said, “I think because we’re officers we’re like man up lad . . . you always have this perception of a prison officer you have to be roughty toughty, you’ve got no emotions” (Sweeney et al., 2018, p. 473).
DISCUSSION

Frontline COs are exposed to challenging conditions and critical incidents. This can lead to symptoms of psychopathology, and subsequently, negative outcomes like unsafe conditions, reduced performance, and high turnover (Dowden & Tellier, 2004; Lambert, Hogan et al., 2015; Spinaris et al., 2012). In contrast, workers who experience well-being are more likely to be productive, satisfied, committed, and remain in their job (Erdoğan et al., 2012; Gutiérrez et al., 2020). There are several groups that may benefit when COs experience well-being including COs and their families, the community, prison residents, and employers (Dewa et al., 2007; Finney et al., 2013). Therefore, it is important to understand the socioecological determinants related to CO well-being so that strategies to promote CO well-being can be implemented.

The current review systematically synthesized the available quantitative and qualitative research on CO well-being. Reflecting the dominant pathogenic focus of the literature, it was found that CO well-being remains relatively under-researched. To illustrate, the current review included 29 studies on CO well-being, compared with prior reviews and meta-analyses of CO stress and burnout which have included upward of 40 articles each (e.g., Butler et al., 2019; Lambert, Hogan et al., 2015; Schaufeli & Peeters, 2000). Furthermore, the research conducted on CO well-being is limited. For example, SWB was primarily operationalized as life satisfaction (largely ignoring other facets of SWB), and PWB was only examined in two studies. Nevertheless, the available literature provides much needed information about the socioecological determinants of CO well-being, allowing researchers to identify areas for further inquiry.

Individual demographic determinants like age, education, or marital status were inconsistently and/or weakly related to CO well-being. Similarly, prior meta-analyses found that individual demographic determinants had nonsignificant or weak effects on CO job stress and satisfaction (Butler et al., 2019; Dowden & Tellier, 2004). Other individual determinants of health had more consistent and strong effects on CO well-being. Symptoms of burnout, stress, and distress were significant negative predictors of CO SWB, and are also negatively related to CO job satisfaction (e.g., Senol-Durak et al., 2021). Conversely, symptoms of burnout and stress are related to CO psychopathology (e.g., Spinaris et al., 2012). This suggests that burnout and distress both reduce CO well-being and increase risk for psychopathology. Job satisfaction was a significant positive predictor of CO SWB, a relationship that has been widely recognized (Bowling et al., 2010). Interpersonal and organizational determinants of CO well-being were examined less frequently than individual determinants.

Prior pathogenic research found that the interpersonal determinants of peer and supervisor support were strongly and significantly related to CO job stress and satisfaction (Butler et al., 2019). Although limited, the research identified by the current review suggests that interpersonal determinants may also be important for CO well-being. For example, Onyishi et al. (2012) found that social support from friends, family, and significant others was related to CO life satisfaction. However, demographic and confounding variables were not controlled for in their analyses. The qualitative synthesis found that supervisor support, peer support, a sense of belongingness, and providing support to prison residents enhanced CO well-being. Research must further examine the effects of interpersonal determinants on CO well-being, including both the receipt and provision of social support.
Organizational determinants had varied effects on CO well-being. Workplace characteristics (e.g., shift work, prison) tended to be nonsignificant predictors of well-being. This is consistent with the findings of Dowden and Tellier’s (2004) meta-analysis, which found that “job characteristics” had limited effect on CO stress. Although measured infrequently, other organizational determinants like perceptions of workplace justice, perceived workplace adversity, and macho subculture appeared to reduce well-being. Prior research has found organizational determinants like perceived danger, role problems, organizational climate, and critical incident exposure to have strong effects on CO stress and psychopathology (Carleton et al., 2019; Dowden and Tellier, 2004; Finney et al., 2013; Spinaris et al., 2012). Although critical incident exposure can negatively impact mental health, it can also have positive impacts over time, for example, through the development of posttraumatic growth (PTG; Tedeschi et al., 2018). Thus, organizational determinants, including critical incident exposure, warrant further attention in relation to CO well-being.

Although the literature included in the current review was of average to high methodological quality, the conclusions that can be drawn are limited by several factors. First, studies were cross-sectional and therefore unable to demonstrate causality between socio-ecological determinants and well-being. Second, different (sometimes unvalidated) measures of SWB and PWB were employed making it difficult to discern patterns across studies. And third, many studies used the same dataset across publications without controlling for multiple testing. Therefore, future research should replicate and extend these findings. Longitudinal studies using validated measures could examine how individual, interpersonal, and organizational determinants are related to CO well-being.

Although the current review was conducted systematically, there are limitations that must be acknowledged. First, there were no exclusion criteria based on country. Therefore, findings may not generalize internationally and should be interpreted tentatively. This cautionary note has been echoed in previous reviews (Finney et al., 2013; Schaufeli & Peeters, 2000). And second, the definition of well-being adopted may be considered narrow in comparison to that adopted by others (e.g., Evers et al., 2020).

Nonetheless, the current review highlights the implications for enhancing CO well-being. Prior studies have suggested that COs be offered psychoeducation around symptoms of pathology and stress management (e.g., Morgan et al., 2002; Schaufeli & Peeters, 2000; Senol-Durak et al., 2021). The current review suggests that psychoeducation around well-being specifically targeted at COs would be a helpful addition to such training. Understanding that well-being is possible and how it can be achieved (e.g., coping strategies, social support) may provide COs with the skills and strategies to support their well-being. Such training could be regular (e.g., annual) and mandated to reduce the stigma associated with participating. It should be noted, however, that several CO mental health programs have been trialed with limited effect (Evers et al., 2020). Thus, programs must be informed by theory and be rigorously designed in collaboration with stakeholders to ensure that the CO context is adequately addressed (Evers et al., 2020). Social support from friends, family, and colleagues was highlighted as important for CO well-being in both the quantitative and qualitative data. Given that the reported macho sub-culture can make accessing formal workplace support daunting, correctional departments may direct resources toward mobilizing informal support networks. For example, correctional departments may benefit from providing resources (e.g., psychoeducation) to friends and families of staff on how to best support their loved one, and from providing staff with
opportunities to interact and develop trust with each other (e.g., social clubs, mentor programs, team-building exercises).

The current review is the first to synthesize literature on CO well-being beyond disorder absence, and it incorporated quantitative and qualitative data in a systematic way. The results indicate that COs can experience well-being despite working in a stressful environment. However, further research is required to develop a stronger understanding of the socioecological determinants that influence CO well-being. Understanding the determinants of CO well-being will help in designing appropriate and context-specific well-being programs to benefit COs, prison residents, and the wider community.

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**SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIAL**

Supplementary Material is available in the online version of this article at [http://journals.sagepub.com/home/cjb](http://journals.sagepub.com/home/cjb)

**NOTES**

1. This publication has tightened eligibility criteria compared with those registered with PROSPERO to enable publication in response to peer feedback. A brief report of the findings of the review using the broader eligibility criteria (in line with PROSPERO registration) can be provided upon request.

2. Note the difference between the PICo (Population, Phenomenon of Interest, and Context) and PICO (Patient/Problem, Intervention, Comparison, and Outcome) tools. PICo is recommended by the JBI manual for qualitative or mixed-method systematic reviews.

3. Job satisfaction was included in the qualitative thematic synthesis as there has been no prior qualitative review of CO job satisfaction (there has been a quantitative meta-analysis of CO job satisfaction; Butler et al., 2019). It is considered to reflect satisfaction with the work domain of life (SWB).

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