The Consequences of Emotional Burnout Among Correctional Staff

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Abstract
The vast majority of past correctional staff burnout studies have focused on the possible antecedents of job burnout. Far fewer studies have been published on the possible outcomes of burnout among correctional staff. This study examined the effects of the emotional exhaustion dimension of burnout on life satisfaction, support for treatment, support for punishment, absenteeism, views on use of sick leave, and turnover intent among 272 staff at a state-run Midwestern maximum security prison. Ordinary least squares (OLS) regression analysis of survey data indicated that emotional burnout had significant negative associations with life satisfaction and support for treatment and significant positive relationships with support for punishment, absenteeism, views on use of sick leave (i.e., a right to be used however the employee wishes), and turnover intent. The results indicate that job burnout has negative outcomes for both staff and correctional institutions.

Keywords
absenteeism, burnout, correctional orientation, correctional staff, life satisfaction, turnover intent

The correctional literature does not lack for studies that have attempted to identify the causes of correctional officer job burnout. Job dimensions such as organizational structural variables (Dollard & Winefield, 1998; Lambert, Hogan, & Jiang, 2010), lack of social support (Cieslak, Korczynska, Strelau, & Kaczmarek, 2008; Garland, 2004; Neveu, 2007; Savicki, Cooley, & Gjesvold, 2003), and job characteristics (Griffin, Hogan, & Lambert, 2012; Lambert, Hogan, Cheeseman Dial, Jiang, & Khondaker, 2012) have been shown to be negatively related to job burnout. Far fewer studies have been published on the possible outcomes of burnout among correctional staff. Both the causes and the consequences of job burnout are important.

The current study provides a replication and expansion of the three previous published studies. In a study of teachers working in Illinois correctional facilities, Belcastro, Gold, and Grant (1982) found that job burnout was linked to higher levels of turnover intent (i.e., desire to leave their jobs). Similarly, Carlson and Thomas (2006) reported burnout was associated with turnover intent among the correctional treatment staff at two Midwestern prisons. Lambert, Hogan, and Altheimer (2010) reported that burnout was negatively linked with life satisfaction and positively related to absenteeism and turnover intent among staff at a private correctional facility, which housed juvenile offenders. The current study examined the effects of emotional burnout among staff at a state maximum security prison housing adult inmates. In addition to the outcome areas of life satisfaction, absenteeism, turnover intent, support for treatment, and support for punishment examined in prior research, the current study examined how burnout was associated with views on use of sick leave. Exploring these potential consequences of burnout among correctional staff is important. Each of these outcome areas has effects on staff members and the employing correctional institutions. Simply, determining whether and how emotional job burnout is associated with these possible consequences is important.

Literature Review

Job Burnout
Freudenberger (1974) is often given credit for coining the term job burnout. Freudenberger (1975) viewed burnout as psychological exhaustion and fatigue due to excessive workplace demands. Specifically, he defined burnout as “to fail, wear out, or become exhausted by making excessive demands on energy, strength, or resources” (p. 73). He pointed out that burnout had psychological, behavioral, and physically negative outcomes.

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for employees suffering from burnout, such as withdrawing, anger, or weight loss. To Freudenberger (1974, 1975), burnout was the behavioral and physical psychological signs that resulted from excessive work demands. Later, Freudenberger (1980) refined his definition to refer to when a worker was “in a state of fatigue or frustration” (p. 13). At the same time as Freudenberger, but independently, Maslach (1976), who is viewed as another pioneer in the study of burnout, began her work on burnout among social workers. She saw burnout as emotional exhaustion resulting in loss of sympathy and respect toward their clients among human service workers. Maslach (1976, 1993) also found that the social workers she studied experienced a sense of a lack of professional competence in working with clients as a result of the emotional exhaustion. Maslach (1978) theorized that burnout occurred when employees experienced “the gradual loss of caring about the people they work with. Over time, they find that they simply cannot sustain the kind of personal care and commitment required in the personal encounters that are the essence of their job” (p. 56). Works demands are seen as a major contributor to emotional exhaustion (Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001). Kahn (1978) also conceptualized burnout as a state of psychological exhaustion and frustration resulting from work stressors. Pines and Kafry (1978) contended that burnout was tedium where the employee felt distress and discontent from the job resulting in emotional and physical depletion. Cherniss (1980a, 1980b) viewed job burnout as being psychologically strained from the job because of an imbalance of work demands and resources. In the end, this psychological strain resulted in emotional withdrawal from the job, treating coworkers and clients in a detached and callous manner, and becoming cynical and disengaged from work and others. Cherniss (1980a) argued that job burnout was complete “when the workers defensively cope with the job by psychologically detaching themselves from the job and becoming apathetic, cynical, and rigid” (p. 21).

Later, Maslach and Jackson (1981) defined burnout as “a syndrome of emotional exhaustion and cynicism that occurs frequently among individuals who do ‘people work’ of some kind” (p. 99). They postulated that burnout had three dimensions: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and a reduced sense of personal accomplishment (Maslach & Jackson, 1981, 1984). The emotional exhaustion dimension refers to the feeling of being drained and fatigued emotionally and psychologically from work. The depersonalization dimension refers to the treatment of clients and coworkers in an impersonal, uncaring, cynical, and callous manner. The last dimension refers to the feeling of being ineffective at work and not making a difference (Maslach, 1982; Maslach et al., 2001). According to Maslach and Leiter (1997), burnout starts when job engagement (i.e., a positive state of mind concerning work) breaks down from workplace demands, resulting in replacing workplace energy into emotional exhaustion, workplace involvement into cynicism, and work efficacy into ineffectiveness. Lin (2013) indicated emotional exhaustion referred to feelings of being emotionally depleted and being emotionally overextended.

While there are different views and dimensions of job burnout, emotional exhaustion is a critical element of burnout in the literature (Cherniss, 1980a, 1980b; Keinan & Maslach-Pines, 2007; Pines & Keinan, 2005). Indeed, Cordes and Dougherty (1993) and Maslach (1982) saw the emotional dimension of burnout at the core of burnout. Maslach and Leiter (2008) noted that “in the research literature on burnout, emotional exhaustion is the most widely reported and most thoroughly analyzed dimension of this [burnout] syndrome” (p. 499). According to Maslach et al. (2001), “when people describe themselves or others as experiencing burnout, they are most often referring to the experience of [emotional] exhaustion” (p. 402). Lin (2013) reported that hospital workers saw emotional exhaustion as the most important dimension of burnout and had the greatest effect on them. Finally, emotional exhaustion has been shown to lead to depersonalization and cynicism (Maslach et al., 2001).

The focus of the current study was emotional dimension of burnout and used the definition provided by Maslach and Jackson (1981, 1984) and Maslach and Leiter (2008), one that is commonly used in the research on the emotional exhaustion aspect of job burnout among correctional staff, as well as in other occupations. Maslach and associates are viewed as leading researchers in the overall field of job burnout. Job burnout is not limited to correctional staff or even those working in human service positions. Job burnout has been “extended from the intense requirements of client service to other work requiring creativity, problem solving, or mentoring” (Schaufeli, Leiter, & Maslach, 2009, p. 206). There are a wide array of occupations in which job burnout is a possibility, including blue-collar workers, coaches, factory workers, health care workers, hospital employees, lawyers, managers, mental health counselors, nurses, police officers, psychotherapists, restaurant managers, social service employees, social workers, teachers, therapeutic staff, and white-collar workers (Belcastro et al., 1982; Caccese & Mayerberg, 1984; Cherniss, 1995; Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, & Schaufeli, 2000; Freudenberger, 1975; Hayes & Weathington, 2007; Keinan & Maslach-Pines, 2007; Lin, 2013; Maslach, 1976; Maslach & Leiter, 2008; Maslach, Leiter, & Jackson, 2012; Pines & Kafry, 1978; Raquepaw & Miller, 1989; Schaufeli et al., 2009). Simply, burnout cuts across a wide array of occupations.

Job burnout is a process that occurs over time and results from workplace forces rather than personal characteristics (Leiter, Bakker, & Maslach, 2014). Maslach (2003) noted, Among the general public, the conventional wisdom about burnout is that the problem lies within the person. Some argue that the person who burns out is trying too hard and doing too much, whereas others believe that the weak and incompetent burn out; however, research results have not supported the argument that burnout is related to a person’s disposition . . . Research indicates that burnout results from forces in the work environment and it is the chronic strain that results from an incongruence, or misfit, between the worker and the job. (pp. 191, 198)
Emotional exhaustion resulting from work overload is harmful to the employee, clients, and the organization (Lin, 2013). As Maslach and Leiter (2008) pointed out, emotional “exhaustion is not something that is simply experienced—rather, it prompts actions to distance oneself emotionally and cognitively from one’s work, presumably as a way to cope” (p. 499). As previously indicated, job burnout has negative behavioral, psychological, and physical outcomes for workers (Lin, 2013), and as such has resulted in research on job burnout and its potential correlates, including among correctional staff.

**Correctional Staff and Burnout**

The literature indicates that burnout is a problem among correctional staff (Griffin et al., 2012; Hurst & Hurst, 1997; Whitehead, 1989). In fact, Keinan and Maslach-Pines (2007) reported in their study that correctional employees reported much higher levels of burnout than the level found in the general population, even higher than police officers. As burnout is a considerable problem, the body of literature on the topic has been growing. The vast majority of the two dozen published studies on correctional staff burnout have focused on workplace factors leading to burnout (Griffin et al., 2012; Neveu, 2007). Work stressors, such as role conflict, role ambiguity, role overload, harassment, and work–family conflict have been reported to lead to correctional staff job burnout (Lambert & Hogan, 2010; Lambert, Hogan, Jiang, & Jenkins, 2009; Savicki et al., 2003). Organizational structure variables, such as input into decision making, instrumental communication, administrative support, and organizational fairness have been found to lead to lower levels of burnout among correctional staff (Dollard & Winefield, 1998; Lambert, Hogan, & Jiang, 2010). A lack of social support, particularly in terms of supervisory support, management support, and coworker support, has been reported to lead to increased chances of burnout from the job (Cieslak et al., 2008; Garland, 2004; Lambert, Altheimer, & Hogan, 2010; Neveu, 2007; Savicki et al., 2003). Finally, job characteristics, such as supervisory consideration, job variety, job feedback, and job autonomy, have been found to be negatively related to correctional staff burnout (Griffin et al., 2012; Lambert et al., 2012). These studies add valuable information to the literature of how different correctional workplace factors may contribute to burnout. What is lacking is research on the possible consequences of correctional staff burnout.

As mentioned earlier, there are only a handful of studies that have explored the possible effects of job burnout among correctional staff. Carlson and Thomas (2006) found among staff in correctional treatment roles that emotional burnout was associated with higher turnover. Among correctional teachers, Belcastro et al. (1982) reported that burnout resulted in higher levels of turnover intent and increased health problems. Among staff at a private prison holding juveniles, Lambert, Hogan, and Altheimer (2010) observed that (a) emotional burnout was linked with decreased life satisfaction and increased absenteeism and turnover intent, (b) the depersonalization dimension of burnout was associated with increased absenteeism and turnover intent, and (c) the feeling of being ineffective dimension of burnout had nonsignificant effects on the three outcome areas. The limited research points to two fundamental conclusions. First, burnout, especially the emotional exhaustion dimension, can have significant negative consequences for both correctional staff and facilities. Second, there is a need for further research in this area, not only to confirm past findings but also to explore new potential organizational outcomes.

**Research Focus**

Schaufeli et al. (2009) estimated that there have been more than 6,000 studies on burnout. As previously indicated, burnout has been found to occur across a wide array of occupations, including corrections. Many of these studies have focused on the potential causes of burnout and to a lesser extent, the psychological and physiological harms done to those suffering from burnout (Maslach et al., 2012). As presented above, there has been a fair amount of research on exploring the possible causes of burnout among correctional staff. There has been far less research on the possible consequences of burnout among this occupational group. In other occupational fields, there is a growing body of research that has shown that job burnout has significant negative outcomes, including reduced job satisfaction, lower commitment, increased absenteeism, greater turnover intent, and reduced life satisfaction (Maslach et al., 2001). For example, among hospital employees, job burnout had negative effects on organizational commitment and turnover intent, and it played a mediating role in how workplace variables affected these outcomes (Lin, 2013). Among nurses, burnout was linked to lower life satisfaction (Demerouti, Bouwman, & Sanz-Vergel, 2011). The current study builds on past research, including research on other occupational fields, to explore how the emotional dimension of job burnout is associated with the life satisfaction, support for treatment, support for punishment, absenteeism, views on use of sick leave, and turnover intent among correctional staff working at a state-run maximum security prison in the U.S. Midwest. Security levels for correctional facilities range from minimum to super maximum, and commonplace experiences at one security level may be completely atypical at another (Fox, 1982). For example, it is not only the degree of inmate contact but the type of inmate contact that may be linked to burnout with correctional staff, with negative and more confrontational interactions resulting in greater emotional strain and burnout for staff (Lambert et al., 2009). Maximum security prisons are more likely to have confrontational and violent inmates than are lower level security-level correctional facilities, and they are more focused on security and control of inmates (Fox, 1982). As such, it is important to place the current
study in context in terms of the work environment in the field of corrections. Working in a maximum security prison is not representative of the work experiences and outcomes of all correctional settings.

**Life Satisfaction**

The Declaration of Independence includes the pursuit of happiness as one of unalienable rights by which men have been endowed by their Creator. Happiness with life is a goal for most people, and life satisfaction is often important for happiness (Erdogan, Bauer, Truxillo, & Mansfield, 2012). As noted by Diener (1984), life satisfaction is one of three components of subjective well-being, with positive affect and negative affect being the other two. Diener, Emmons, Larsen, and Griffin (1985) indicated that positive and negative affect “refer to the affective, emotional aspects” of subjective well-being and life satisfaction refers to the “cognitive-judgmental aspects” of subjective well-being (p. 71). Happiness is based on the positive and negative affects experienced by a person (Diener, 1984). Life satisfaction is a cognitive appraisal of the overall degree of satisfaction one has with one’s life (Demerouti et al., 2000; Diener, 1984; Quinn & Staines, 1979). It is a global judgment by a person on how satisfied he or she is with his or her overall life rather than specific facets of it (Vanaki & Vagharseyyedin, 2009). As noted by Diener et al. (1985), judgments of satisfaction are dependent on a comparison of one’s circumstances with what is thought to be an appropriate standard, and it is important to point out that the judgment of how satisfied people are with their present state of affairs is based upon a comparison with a standard which each individual sets for him or herself; it is not externally imposed. (p. 71)

Work is seen as playing a role in the life satisfaction of working adults (Demerouti et al., 2000; Rice, 1984). Life satisfaction is a salient outcome for both staff and organizations. Life satisfaction is associated with better emotional, mental, and physical health (Chida & Steptoe, 2008; Donovan & Halpern, 2002). People who are happy with life tend to treat others in a positive manner and are more willing to interact with others (Erdogan et al., 2012). Donovan and Halpern (2002) contended that “when people are happier, they tend to be more open-minded and creative in their thinking. In contrast, people who are unhappy, stressed or dissatisfied tend to exhibit ‘tunnel vision’ and rigid thinking” (p. 32). Those satisfied with life are also more productive and less likely to quit their jobs (Duckworth, Quinn, & Seligman, 2009; Erdogan et al., 2012). Jones (2006) reported that life satisfaction was a stronger predictor of job performance than job satisfaction. In the field of corrections, life satisfaction has been found to be linked with higher levels of involvement in organizational citizenship behaviors (i.e., going above and beyond what is expected at work) and lower turnover intent (Lambert, 2001; Lambert, Hogan, Paoline, & Baker, 2005).

Emotional burnout was predicted to be negatively associated with correctional staff life satisfaction. Emotional burnout is a significant psychological strain for people. It is an unpleasant experience, and it wears people down over time (Lambert, Hogan, & Altheimer, 2010). Being in a negative state about work, a domain that occupies a considerable proportion of the waking day for most adults, probably results in a lower level of happiness with life for most correctional staff. Demerouti et al. (2000) reported that burnout exhaustion was negatively related to life satisfaction among nurses. On the contrary, among restaurant managers, emotional burnout was not directly linked to decreased life satisfaction, but rather job stress and optimism were more important in predicting overall life satisfaction (Hayes & Weathersington, 2007). The lack of an association between emotional exhaustion dimension of burnout and life satisfaction may be limited to some occupations and not others. As such, there is a need to explore the association between burnout emotional exhaustion and life satisfaction among correctional staff.

**Support for Treatment and Support for Punishment**

The two main correctional staff professional views are support for treatment of inmates and support for punishment of inmates (Robinson, Porporino, & Simourd, 1993). Support for treatment is the degree that an individual supports rehabilitation efforts for inmates (Cullen, Link, Wolfe, & Frank, 1985). Support for punishment is the degree a person wishes inmates to be punished (Robinson et al., 1993). Exploring the professional views of correctional staff has both theoretical and practical implications. Understanding how different variables are related to support for treatment and punishment provides a more detailed picture of correctional staff and how the workplace affects them. In addition, this information is important for correctional administrators wishing to influence the professional views of correctional staff, individuals who interact with and can influence inmates (Van Voorhis, Cullen, Link, & Wolfe, 1991). As Farkas (1999) noted, the views held by correctional staff “set the tone for interactions between staff and inmates” (p. 496).

Emotional burnout was hypothesized to have a negative association with support for treatment and a positive relationship with support for punishment. Emotional burnout can take its toll psychologically on a person, which could result in a person developing unfavorable views toward inmates. Staff suffering from high levels of burnout may take their frustration out on inmates through reduced support for treatment and increased desire for punishment.

**Absenteeism**

Absenteeism is nonattendance from scheduled work and takes place in hours and days and not minutes, making it different from being late to work (Rhodes & Steers, 1990). Although the reasons for why people are absent from work
Vary widely, they can be grouped into the broad categories of involuntary and voluntary (Rhodes & Steers, 1990). Involuntary absenteeism typically involves reasons beyond the control of an individual, such as personal illness/injury, need to care for a family member, death in the family, and weather problems (Davey, Cummings, Newburn-Cook, & Lo, 2009). Voluntary absenteeism occurs for reasons that organizations would view as illegitimate, such as to have a day off from work to relax, to recover from a recent social event (e.g., a party the night before), or to hang out with friends (Lambert, 2001). It has been estimated that between 30% and 40% of absenteeism is the voluntary type (Lambert, Edwards, Camp, & Saylor, 2005).

Staff attendance is critical for correctional institutions, which rely heavily on people to carry out a myriad of tasks and duties necessary to run a safe, secure, and humane facility. The direct costs of absenteeism include lost productivity, overtime costs to replace the person, and overstaffing (i.e., overstaffing is scheduling additional staff in advance in case other staff are absent). Indirect costs include having staff who are not familiar with a particular work assignment/post fill in for an absent person, the time and efforts for supervisors and managers to arrange for coverage of the work assignments of absent staff, and the effects of mandatory overtime on staff (Lambert, 2001). Even if the position is left vacant, the absence means that there will be one less staff member able to monitor inmates and respond to emergencies (Farkas, 1990). Furthermore, absenteeism, particularly if it reaches high levels, can create a hardship for other staff members, which, in the long run, hurts the morale of the institution (Lambert, Edwards, et al., 2005). Exploring whether and how emotional burnout is related to correctional staff absenteeism is, therefore, important.

Emotional burnout was postulated to be positively related to absenteeism among correctional staff because it is probably linked to both forms of absenteeism. Long-term exposure to emotional burnout can lead to health problems (Lin, 2013; Maslach et al., 2001; Neveu, 2007). These health problems can result in increased illnesses resulting in higher levels of involuntary absences. In addition, emotional burnout can lead to a person wishing to be off of work to relax and to escape from the pressures of work. As noted by Demerouti et al. (2011), the motivation of the person is at the heart of avoidable absenteeism. A staff member may also be absent to get back at a correctional organization, which he or she may see in a negative light and blame for the burnout or he or she may just wish to escape a place causing him or her pain.

**Views on Use of Sick Leave**

The views of staff on the proper use of sick leave are related to, but distinct from, absenteeism. Vandenneuevel and Wooden (1995) theorized that people vary in their views on how sick leave should be used. Some employees may view sick leave as a privilege to only be used for involuntary forms of absenteeism. Other employees may view sick leave as a right to be used however they wish to use it (Rhodes & Steers, 1990). Views of sick leave can lead to proper or improper use of sick leave (Johns, 1994).

Emotional burnout was predicted to be linked with views that sick leave is a right to be used however the staff member wanted. Emotional burnout can lead to staff members forming an unfavorable view of the correctional organization and wishing to escape from it. This could result in a view that sick leave should be used however a person desires to use it. It may also reflect a desire to get back at the organization because the person is experiencing psychological strain and emotional exhaustion.

**Turnover Intent**

Turnover is the ending of the employment relationship between a person and the employing organization (Price & Mueller, 1986). Turnover can be grouped into two primary categories, involuntary and voluntary (Minor, Dawson-Edwards, Wells, Griffith, & Angel, 2009). Involuntary involves termination of employment that is not the elective choice of the individual, such as being fired, being laid off, medical disability, or death, and voluntary turnover is when a person voluntarily decides to end employment with an organization (i.e., he or she quits; Minor et al., 2009). Voluntary turnover is more preventable than involuntary turnover and accounts for the majority of turnover in the field of corrections (Lambert & Hogan, 2009). Moreover, many times voluntary turnover involves the better performing employees with higher skill sets as they have more employment opportunities (Wright, 1993). A significant predictor of voluntary turnover is turnover intent (Lambert & Hogan, 2009). In addition, organizations have the opportunity to intervene in turnover intent to convince a quality employee to remain. Convincing a person to return to the organization once he or she has already left is difficult. Garrison, Wakefield, Harvey, and Kim (2010) saw turnover intent as “the cognitive processes resulting in one’s desire/motivation to leave an organization” (p. 110). Basically, turnover intent is the cognitive process of thinking of quitting, planning on leaving a job, and the desire to leave the job (Mobley, Griffeth, Hand, & Meglino, 1979).

Voluntary turnover and turnover intent have direct and indirect costs for staff and correctional institutions. The person who leaves loses the social contacts and the financial benefits. The direct costs for the correctional facility include lost productivity, overtime costs, recruitment costs, and training of new staff (Lambert & Hogan, 2009; Patenaude, 2001; Stohr, Self, & Lovrich, 1992). The indirect costs include loss of expertise of the person who left, the learning curve of new hires before they become productive staff, the time supervisors and managers spend to deal with coverage of vacated positions and hiring of new staff, loss of social relationships, possible interruption of services to inmates,
understaffing, and decreased morale among the remaining personnel if turnover becomes high (Byrd, Cochran, Silverman, & Blount, 2000; Lambert & Hogan, 2009). Exploring how workplace variables may be linked with turnover intent among correctional staff is important.

Emotional burnout was hypothesized to be positively associated with correctional staff turnover intent. As previously stated, emotional burnout takes a toll on a person in the long run. The psychological strain associated with the emotional dimension of burnout can cause a person to wish to escape from the organization (Lin, 2013). Whereas absenteeism represents a temporary respite, turnover represents a permanent escape. In addition, emotional burnout can result in mental and physical problems that can lead to the desire to withdraw from the job.

Method

Participants

The research study followed the ethical standards indicated in the American Psychological Manual, sixth edition. Prior to conducting this research, human subjects’ approval was secured from an institutional review board. The survey was first pilot tested among a dozen correctional staff. After slightly modifying the survey, a packet was created. The packet contained a cover letter, the survey, and a return envelope. The cover letter contained an explanation of the nature of the study, and notifications that human subjects’ approval had been obtained, that completing the survey was voluntary, and that responses would be anonymous and confidential, including that no correctional administrator would see the individual responses. The packets were distributed with staff paychecks to all available staff who were working at a U.S. Midwestern, maximum security state-run prison during the week of the survey, except the Warden and Deputy Wardens were excluded. A locked box to which only one of the researchers had the key was placed in the entrance and exit central location where staff could place the completed survey. In addition, staff were also given the opportunity to mail the surveys in a self-addressed, stamped reply envelope, which was provided with each survey and addressed to one of the study researchers. A single follow-up was done to remind staff to complete the survey.

The selected prison housed approximately 1,100 male offenders who were serving long (i.e., 10 or more years on average) felony sentences. The prison was classified as a maximum security prison. The institution had been in operation for several decades. Although the facility employed about 450 staff at the time of the survey, only 400 individuals were available to receive the survey packet because of various types of leave (e.g., sick leave, annual leave, etc.). A total of 272 usable surveys were returned, which is a response rate of 68%. The participants represented all areas of the prison except for upper administration who were not provided the survey at the request of the correctional agency. According to the human resources office at the prison, among all 450 prison staff, 77% were male, 86% were White, and 53% were correctional officers. Among those who returned a usable survey, 76% were male, 81% were White, and 50% were correctional officers; therefore, participants appeared to be representative of the overall prison staff population.

Variables

Dependent variables. The dependent variables were life satisfaction, support for treatment, support for punishment, absenteeism, views of use of sick leave, and turnover intent. Except for absenteeism, the items for each variable were entered into a principal-axis factor analysis and, in all cases, loaded on a single factor. The responses for each of these variables were summed to form an additive index. Items used to form the indexes are presented in the appendix. Life satisfaction was measured using two items from Quinn and Staines (1979). The two items allowed a staff member to assess his or her overall life satisfaction and had a Cronbach’s alpha of .87. Support for treatment was measured using eight items from Cullen et al. (1985), and the items had a Cronbach’s alpha of .84. Support for punishment was measured using the nine items from Cullen et al. The responses to the nine items were added together to form an index of support for punishment, which had a Cronbach’s alpha of .84. In this study, self-reported absenteeism in terms of number of days of sick leave used in the 6 months prior to the survey (i.e., duration of absence in a given time period) was measured. It was measured in days and had response categories of 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, or 10 or more sick leave days. Views on use of sick leave were measured using three items from VandenHeuvel and Wooden (1995), and the items were coded to reflect a high absenteeism culture (i.e., that sick leave is an entitlement). The items had a Cronbach’s alpha of .70. According to Mobley et al. (1979), there are four cognitive parts of turnover intent: (a) thinking of quitting, (b) planning to stay or leave, (c) searching for alternative employment, and (d) a desire to leave current job. Each was measured using a single item adapted from Sager, Griffeth, and Hom (1998), and the turnover intent index had a Cronbach’s alpha of .61.

Independent variable. The independent variable of primary focus in the current study was the emotional exhaustion dimension of burnout. It was measured using three questions adapted from Camp (1994). The items measured staff’s level of feeling emotionally drained by their work demands during the 6 months prior to the survey. These items had a Cronbach’s alpha value of .76 and were entered into a factor analysis using principal-axis factoring, which extracted a single factor. The responses to the three items were summed to form an additive index measuring emotional burnout.

The personal characteristics of gender, age, position, tenure, educational level, and race were included in the analyses.
more as control than explanatory variables. Gender was a dichotomous variable where female respondents were coded as 0 and male respondents were coded as 1. Approximately 76% of the respondents were men. Age was measured in continuous years. The median age was 44 and ranged from 21 to 61. In terms of work position, 50% worked in custody (i.e., correctional officers), 6% worked in unit management (i.e., counselors, case managers, and unit managers), 3% worked in prison industries, 4% worked in the education and vocational department, 3% worked in the medical department, 5% worked in the business office, 3% worked in administration, and 26% worked in other areas. For the current study, position was recoded to represent whether a participant worked as a correctional officer (coded as 1) or worked in a noncustody position (coded as 0). For the recoded position variable, 50% of the participants held the position of correctional officer. Tenure at the prison was measured in continuous years. The median tenure was 9 years and ranged from 0 to 26 years. In terms of the highest educational level completed, 9% of the respondents had a high school diploma or general equivalency diploma, 50% had some college but no degree, 20% had an associate’s degree, 16% a bachelor’s degree, 4% a master’s degree, and 1% a professional or terminal degree. In the current study, educational level was measured as a dichotomous variable where no college degree was coded as 0 and having a college degree was coded as 1. For the dichotomous educational level variable, 41% had earned some type of college degree. In terms of race/ethnicity, approximately 81% of the respondents were White, non-Hispanic, 9% were Black, 2% were Hispanic, 3% were Native American, and 5% were Other. For the current study, race was collapsed into a dichotomous variable representing whether the respondent was White/non-Hispanic (coded as 1) or Nonwhite and/or Hispanic (coded as 0). Finally, average daily contact with inmates was included. It was measured using the following item: "On a typical day, about how much time do you spend in direct contact with inmates (e.g., supervising, talking with, counting, training, counseling, etc.)?" Approximately 15% of the participants indicated they spent less than an hour a day interacting with inmates on a typical day (coded 1), 11% 1 to 2 hr (coded 2), 16% 3 to 4 hr (coded 3), 20% 5 to 6 hr (coded 4), and 36% 7 or more hours (coded 5).

Results

Univariate statistics for the variables are presented in Table 1. There was significant variation in both the dependent and independent variables (i.e., none were constants). Based on the skewness and kurtosis statistics, there appeared to be no significant problem with skewness or kurtosis. Also, the mean and median values for each variable were similar to one another, suggesting the variables were normally distributed.

The correlation matrix for the variable is provided in Table 2. Emotional burnout had a statistically significant correlation with all the dependent variables. Increases in the emotional burnout index were associated with decreased levels of life satisfaction and support for treatment of inmates. Conversely, increased levels of emotional burnout were related to increased support for punishment, absenteeism, views that sick leave is an entitlement, and turnover intent.

Ordinary least squares (OLS) regression equations were estimated with life satisfaction, support for treatment, support for punishment, absenteeism, views on use of sick leave, and turnover intent as the dependent variables. The independent variables were emotional burnout, gender, age, position, tenure, educational level, race, and average daily contact with inmates. The OLS regression results are reported in Table 3. Based on the correlation matrix (see Table 2), the variance inflation factor scores (not reported), and the tolerance values (not reported), neither collinearity nor multicollinearity were issues in any of the OLS regression equations. In addition, the issues of outliers, influential cases, normality, linearity and homoscedasticity of residuals, and independence of errors in the regression analysis were tested for each of the six OLS regression equations.

The $R^2$ value for the life satisfaction equation was .16, which means that the independent variables explained about 16% of the observed variance of the life satisfaction variable. The only personal characteristic to have a statistically significant association was educational level. Staff with a college degree tended to report higher levels of satisfaction with life compared with staff who did not have a college degree. In addition, average daily contact with inmates had positive association, which means the more time staff spent interacting with inmates, the greater satisfaction with life they reported. Emotional burnout had a significant negative effect, which means increases in this form of burnout were associated with lower levels of reported life satisfaction.

The independent variables accounted for approximately 15% of the variance of the support for treatment variable. Position, educational level, and emotional burnout were each significant predictors. In general, staff holding a correctional officer position reported lower support for treatment of inmates. However, staff with a college degree tended to be more supportive of rehabilitation of offenders. Increases in emotional burnout were associated with lower support for treatment. For support for punishment, 18% of the variance was explained. Position, educational level, and emotional burnout were each significant predictors for support for punishment of inmates. Correctional officers were generally more in favor of punishment than were their noncustody counterparts. Staff without college degrees were more supportive of punishment of offenders. Emotional burnout had a positive relationship, which means that increases in this form of burnout tended to result in higher levels of support for punishment.

Emotional burnout was significantly associated with both absenteeism and views on use of sick leave. The independent variables accounted for about 8% of the variance observed in
Table 1. Univariate Statistics for Study Variables.

| Variables                  | Description                                                                 | Min. | Max. | Median | M    | SD   |
|----------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|------|--------|------|------|
| Gender                     | 0 = female, 1 = male                                                         | 0    | 0    | 1      | 0.76 | 0.43 |
| Age                        | Measured in years                                                           | 21   | 61   | 44     | 42.55| 8.32 |
| Position                   | 0 = noncustody, 1 = custody (CO)                                            | 0    | 1    | 0.50   | 0.50 | 0.50 |
| Tenure                     | Measured in years at the prison                                             | 0    | 26   | 9      | 9.94 | 6.82 |
| Educational level          | 0 = no college degree, 1 = college degree                                    | 0    | 1    | 0      | 0.41 | 0.49 |
| Race                       | 0 = non-White, 1 = White                                                    | 0    | 1    | 1      | 0.81 | 0.39 |
| Average daily contact with | 1 = less than 1 hr, 2 = 1 to 2 hr, 3 = 3 to 4 hr, 4 = 5 to 6 hr, 5 = 7 or more | 1    | 5    | 4      | 3.49 | 1.48 |
| inmates                    |                                                                             |      |      |        |      |      |
| Emotional burnout          | Three-item index, $\alpha = .76$                                            | 3    | 15   | 8      | 8.00 | 2.98 |
| Life satisfaction          | Two-item index, $\alpha = .87$                                             | 2    | 6    | 4      | 4.11 | 1.09 |
| Support for treatment      | Eight-item index, $\alpha = .84$                                           | 8    | 39   | 25     | 24.39| 5.64 |
| Support for punishment     | Nine-item index, $\alpha = .84$                                            | 10   | 45   | 27     | 27.28| 6.49 |
| Absenteeism                | Number of days absent from work truncated at 10 or more days                 | 0    | 10   | 2      | 2.71 | 2.80 |
| Views on use of sick leave | Three-item index, $\alpha = .70$                                           | 3    | 15   | 9      | 9.54 | 2.19 |
| Turnover intent            | Four-item index, $\alpha = .61$                                            | 2    | 11   | 3      | 3.80 | 2.03 |

Note. The number of staff participants was 272. Min. = minimum value; Max. = maximum value; CO = correctional officer.

Table 2. Correlation Matrix for Study Variables.

| Variable   | 1. Gender | 2. Age | 3. Position | 4. Tenure | 5. Educ. | 6. Race | 7. Avg. con. | 8. Emot. | 9. Life sat. | 10. Treat. | 11. Punish. | 12. Absent. | 13. Views | 14. Turn. int. |
|------------|-----------|--------|-------------|-----------|----------|--------|--------------|--------|-------------|-----------|-------------|------------|----------|----------------|
| 1. Gender  | 1.00      |        |             |           |          |        |              |        |             |           |             |            |          |                |
| 2. Age     | .09       | 1.00   |             |           |          |        |              |        |             |           |             |            |          |                |
| 3. Position| .23**     | -.19** | 1.00        |           |          |        |              |        |             |           |             |            |          |                |
| 4. Tenure  | .23**     | .06*** | .10**       | 1.00      |          |        |              |        |             |           |             |            |          |                |
| 5. Educ.   | -.10      | -.01   | -.20**      | -.25**    | 1.00     |        |              |        |             |           |             |            |          |                |
| 6. Race    | -.01      | .06    | .07         | .04       | -.06     | 1.00   |              |        |             |           |             |            |          |                |
| 7. Avg. con.| .21**    | -.19** | .24**       | -.07      | -.17**   | -.11   | 1.00        |        |             |           |             |            |          |                |
| 8. Emot.   | -.01      | .08    | -.06        | -.01      | -.07    | .11    | .10         |        |             |           |             |            |          |                |
| 9. Life sat.| -.07     | -.14*  | .00         | -.03      | .09      | -.06   | .08         | -.32** | 1.00        |           |             |            |          |                |
| 10. Treat. | .10       | .16**  | -.25**      | -.01      | .29**    | -.01   | -.20**      | -.24** | .06         | 1.00      |             |            |          |                |
| 11. Punish.| .12*      | -.31** | .01         | -.24**    | -.07     | .15*   | .16***      | -.14** | -.70**      | 1.00      |             |            |          |                |
| 12. Absent.| -.03      | .12    | -.04        | .10       | -.02     | -.02   | -.06        | .24*** | -.13*       | -.11      | -.05       | 1.00      |          |                |
| 13. Views  | .05       | -.24** | .25**       | -.10      | -.11     | -.12*  | .26**       | .14*   | -.10        | -.37**    | .44**      | .11       | 1.00     |                |
| 14. Turn. int.| -.12** | -.08   | -.03        | -.16**    | -.04     | .08    | .30**       | -.27** | .02         | .04       | .16**      | .06       | 1.00     |                |

Note. The number of staff participants was 272. See Table 1 for a description of the variables and how they were coded. Educ. = educational level; Avg. con. = average daily contact with inmates; Emot. burn. = emotional burnout; Life sat. = life satisfaction; Treat. = support for treatment; Punish. = support for punishment; Absent. = absenteeism; Views = views on use of sick leave; Turn. Int. = turnover intent.

the absenteeism measure. The only significant predictor of absenteeism was emotional burnout. Heightened emotional burnout was associated with a rise in use of sick leave. For the views of the use sick leave, 17% of the variance was explained. Among the personal characteristics, only age and position had significant relationships with the dependent variable. Age had a negative association, which means that older staff were less likely to feel that sick leave was an entitlement to be used however he or she felt it should be used. Conversely, staff holding a correctional officer position were more likely to agree that sick leave was the right of a person to use however and whenever he or she felt it should be used.

Staff who reported higher daily contact with inmates were more likely to feel that sick leave should be used however a person wished to use it. Average daily contact with inmates had significant positive association, which means that higher levels of inmate contact were linked to a view that sick leave should be used however the employee wished to use it. Emotional burnout had a significant positive relationship (i.e., increases in the emotional burnout variable were linked with greater agreement that sick leave was an entitlement).

Approximately 13% of the variance was accounted for in the OLS regression equation for turnover by the independent variables. Emotional burnout was the only variable to have a
significant relationship. Increases in emotional burnout were associated with increased turnover intent.

**Discussion and Conclusion**

Previous research has indicated that job burnout is a problem among correctional staff (Griffin et al., 2012; Hurst & Hurst, 1997; Whitehead, 1989). Although the literature supports the contention that workplace factors may lead to job burnout, there have been fewer studies looking at the potential consequences of burnout among correctional staff, even though research in other occupations indicates that burnout has negative consequences for both staff and the correctional organization. This study expands the literature by exploring the association of emotional burnout on the life satisfaction, support for treatment, support for punishment, absenteeism, views of sick leave, and turnover intent among staff at a maximum security state prison facility.

As hypothesized, the results indicated that emotional burnout had a significant negative effect on life satisfaction. One explanation for this finding may be the feelings of flexibility and “hope” for the future. Although most correctional facilities do not require a college degree, those with a degree may have greater promotional opportunities. Thus, for those without a degree, the limited ability to move away from a situation or position via promotion or transfer may be contributing to characteristics of emotional burnout such as “tunnel vision or rigid thinking” (Donovan & Halpern, 2002, p. 32). Conversely, those with college degrees may also be given opportunities to participate in input into decision making within the organization that has been previously shown to be negatively associated with burnout (Lambert et al., 2009; Savicki et al., 2003). Interestingly, higher contact with inmates was associated with greater life satisfaction. It is also important to note that contact with inmates can vary from negative and positive interactions. Working with inmates could result in a greater sense of accomplishment.

As mentioned, the results indicated that emotional burnout had an important negative effect on life satisfaction. Individuals who reported feeling less satisfied outside of the work environment were also more likely to indicate feelings of emotional burnout. These findings suggest that being emotionally dissatisfied with work translates directly to feelings of stress in the everyday life among correctional staff in this study and is consistent with results found in other occupations. The current findings support the contention that workplace factors, such as burnout, can affect the life satisfaction of employees, including those who work in a correctional facility (Demerouti et al., 2000; Rice, 1984). In addition, the only personal characteristic associated with life satisfaction was having earned a college degree. Staff holding a college degree reported higher levels of satisfaction.

**Table 3. Multivariate OLS Regression Results.**

| Variable       | Life satisfaction | Support for treatment | Support for punishment | Absenteeism | Views on use of sick leave | Turnover intent |
|----------------|-------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|-------------|---------------------------|-----------------|
|                | $B$                | $\beta$               | $B$                    | $\beta$     | $B$                       | $\beta$        |
| Gender         | $-0.29$            | $-0.11$               | $-0.51$                 | $-0.04$     | $1.12$                    | $0.07$          |
| Age            | $-0.02$            | $-0.11$               | $0.08$                  | $0.12$      | $-0.08$                   | $-0.10$         |
| Position       | $-0.20$            | $-0.01$               | $1.70$                  | $-1.5^*$    | $3.22$                    | $0.25^{**}$     |
| Tenure         | $0.02$             | $0.10$                | $0.01$                  | $0.01$      | $-0.02$                   | $-0.02$         |
| Educational level | $0.35$            | $0.16^*$              | $2.70$                  | $0.24^{**}$ | $-2.62$                   | $-2.00^{**}$    |
| Race           | $-0.27$            | $-0.09$               | $-0.04$                 | $-0.01$     | $1.21$                    | $-0.07$         |
| Avg. contact   | $0.11$             | $0.14^*$              | $-0.30$                 | $-0.08$     | $-1.11$                   | $-0.03$         |
| Emotional burnout | $-0.12$         | $-0.33^{**}$          | $-0.33$                 | $-0.17^{**}$ | $0.42$                    | $0.20^{**}$     |
| $R^2$          | 0.16               | 0.15                  | 0.18                    | 0.08        | 0.17                      | 0.13            |
| $F$ value      | 5.88^{**}          | 5.47^{**}             | 6.98^{**}               | 2.51^{**}   | 6.27^{**}                 | 4.68^{**}       |

Note. $B$ represents the unstandardized regression coefficient and $\beta$ represents the standardized regression coefficient. The number of staff participants was 272. For a description of the variables and how they were coded, see Table 1. OLS = ordinary least squares; Avg. contact = average daily contact with inmates.

*p ≤ .05. **p ≤ .01.
knowledge concerning treatment. Correctional officers were more supportive of punishment. Correctional officers tend to have the most contact with inmates on a daily basis, thus, their perceptions of the goal of treatment versus punishment may be directly influenced by the immediate circumstances of control rather than long-range goals of change. As Rothman (1980) contended, the reality of daily operations requires the control of movement and behavior of inmates (convenience) often circumvents the implementation of treatment goals of the facility (conscience). The extent to which this decision-making process occurs may influence the support of punishment versus treatment of inmates on a cognitive level. It is unknown if the finding that emotional burnout is linked to support for punishment and treatment is limited to correctional staff or would apply to other occupations. These concepts are rarely studied and the limited research to date has been with correctional staff. This finding is something that needs to be studied further.

The influence of emotional burnout was further predicted to be positively related to both absenteeism and views that sick leave is a right to be used by correctional staff however they wanted. The findings suggest that emotional burnout was the only significant predictor of use of sick leave of the variables included in the OLS regression equation. These findings are not surprising given the fact that individuals experiencing emotional burnout are less engaged in their work life (Rhodes & Steers, 1990). Interestingly, age had a negative effect on the perceptions of sick leave with older staff being less likely to perceive that sick leave was an entitlement to be used however the person wished to use it. This finding may be reflective of a generation gap or mentality toward work. Future research should seek to examine the factors that predict attitudes toward absenteeism and sick leave by age, as well as determine whether the relationship is limited to only correctional staff in this study or is found among staff at other correctional security levels as well as among employees in other occupations.

The final hypothesis predicted that emotional burnout would be positively associated with correctional staff turnover intent. Results indicated that emotional burnout was directly related to increases in turnover intent. These findings are consistent with previous studies among correctional staff (Belcastro et al., 1982; Carlson & Thomas, 2006; Lambert, Hogan, & Altheimer, 2010) that found that emotional burnout directly influences turnover intent. It makes sense that emotionally strained staff would express a desire to leave the place that is causing them psychological pain. Our findings are consistent from the overall burnout literature that indicates that burnout is positively linked to both turnover intent and turnover in a wide variety of job types (Maslach et al., 2001).

As with many studies, the current study has shortcomings. It was a single study based on a survey of staff at one state-run prison. A single study cannot provide definitive conclusions about the relationship between emotional burnout and various salient outcomes. Further research is needed to determine whether the results can be replicated. The relationships observed in this study could be situational and contextual, and as such, vary between different types of correctional facilities (e.g., jail, public, private, security level, adult, juvenile, etc.) and by location (e.g., by different regions of the United States or across different nations). For example, the level of burnout and burnout’s effects could differ by security level. The staff in the current study worked at a maximum security prison, which is not representative of all correctional settings. The results could differ for staff working at a minimum or medium security institution. Clearly, far more research at a wide variety of correctional facilities is needed to understand what the consequences are of the emotional part of burnout for correctional staff. In addition, future research in this area among correctional employees needs to explore whether the results found are similar or vary than those found in different occupations. Further studies are needed to establish a more complete picture.

The current study used a simple three-item measure of emotional exhaustion; future research should use a more detailed measure. In addition, only one dimension of burnout was measured (emotional exhaustion). As previously indicated, Maslach and Jackson (1981) and Maslach and Leiter (2008) contended that job burnout is a multidimensional concept, with the dimensions of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and a feeling of being ineffective at work. Studies are needed to determine what relationships depersonalization and feeling being ineffective have with the outcomes of life satisfaction, support for treatment, support for punishment, absenteeism, views of use of sick leave, and turnover intent among correctional staff. Future studies may wish to use the full Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI), which is frequently used to measure the three dimensions of job burnout (Demerouti et al., 2000; Maslach & Jackson, 1981; Maslach & Leiter, 2008). Moreover, only associations and relationships can be implied from the findings because the data are cross-sectional. The use of cross-sectional data collection does not allow for causality to be demonstrated. To demonstrate empirically that emotional burnout leads to the various outcomes, longitudinal studies are required.

Future research is required to identify other predictors of correctional staff life satisfaction, support for treatment, support for punishment, absenteeism, views on use of sick leave, and turnover intent. In the current study, the independent variables accounted for less than a fifth of the variance observed in the dependent variables. This does not mean emotional burnout is not important, but there are other variables that are important in shaping the outcome areas. Future research is needed to explore what other workplace variables play a role in influencing the life satisfaction, support treatment, support for punishment, absenteeism, views on use of sick leave, and turnover intent among correctional staff. Without this information, improving these outcome areas will be difficult, haphazard, and likely ineffective. In
addition, the consequences of emotional burnout on other outcome areas, such as work performance, productivity, and health, need to be studied (Maslach et al., 2001). For example, Lin (2013) noted that burnout could result in mistakes among medical providers because they are less focused on their work. Research is needed to determine whether burned out correctional staff are more prone to making mistakes on the job. Such mistakes could threaten the security and safety of the correctional facility. Only with more research will the issue and possible consequences of burnout in the field of institutional corrections be completely understood. In addition, additional variables should be included in the analyses to determine whether they play a role. For example, among restaurant managers, Hayes and Weathington (2007) reported that optimism and job stress play a role in shaping overall life satisfaction. Moreover, comprehensive models should be tested. In the past several decades, there has been a growth of models outside the field of criminal justice to test both the causes and the consequences of burnout (see Demerouti et al., 2000; Haynes & Weathington, 2007; Lin, 2013). For example, Demerouti et al. (2000) developed a model and found that job demands among nurses resulted in increased burnout exhaustion and job resources decreased burnout of disengagement, and both these dimensions of burnout reduced overall satisfaction with life. Both the causes and the consequences of correctional staff burnout are important and need increased study.

Furthermore, more detailed measures of absenteeism and views on use of sick leave are needed. The measurement of staff absenteeism can be divided into two primary categories, the absence metric and the area measured (Rhodes & Steers, 1990). Absence metric refers to how absenteeism is measured, with duration and frequency being the two most common types (Rhodes & Steers, 1990; Scott & Taylor, 1985). Duration refers to the total amount of time absent from work during given time period regardless of whether the absence was for one or more different times. Frequency measures focus on the number of specific separate absences from work in a given time frame, regardless of the length of each time absent (Rhodes & Steers, 1990; Scott & Taylor, 1985). Duration and frequency measures can differ from one another. For example, a person who uses 32 hr of sick leave in a year could have been absent 4 times for 8 hr each time and another individual could have been sick with the flu and absent 4 days in a row for the same 32 hr. For the first individual, the frequency would be 4 and the frequency for the second person would be 1. For both individuals, the duration would be 32 hr of sick leave. The results could change if a frequency measure of absenteeism was used. Moreover, the results may change by the area of absenteeism measured. The area measured refers why a person was absent (Lambert, 2001; Rhodes & Steers, 1990). There are different reasons of why a person is absent from work, including legitimate reasons (e.g., sick or caring for an ill family member) and unacceptable reasons (e.g., to have a day off to relax or used as a form of vacation). Emotional burnout could have a stronger relationship with unacceptable forms than legitimate forms of absenteeism because the person is trying to escape from work or is trying to get back to the organization. Emotional burnout could be linked more with personal illnesses and taking “mental health” days off from work than for taking off from the job to care of ill dependents (Lambert, Hogan, & Altheimer, 2010).

A limited three-item measure of views on use of sick leave was used in the current study. Future research should use a more detailed and in-depth measure. Finally, more in-depth measures of life satisfaction should be used. One possible scale would be the Satisfaction with Life Scale (Diener et al., 1985). This scale is comprised of five items and is designed to measure the life satisfaction as a cognitive-judgmental process by asking people their overall assessment of their satisfaction with their lives. It has been found to be a valid and reliable measure of satisfaction with life (Diener et al., 1985; Diener, Inglehart, & Tay, 2013). As it is an often-used scale in studies in other occupational fields, use of the Satisfaction with Life Scale among correctional staff would allow the results to be compared with employees working in other areas.

If the findings from this study are confirmed by additional research, there are implications for correctional organizations. Between 70% and 80% of the financial expenditures at a typical prison are for staff. Not only are staff an expensive resource, they are a valuable one. They are responsible for numerous tasks necessary to operate a safe, secure, and humane prison. Correctional organizations need to be aware that emotional job burnout has negative outcomes not only for the employee but also the organization. The current results suggest that there needs to be an effort to reduce burnout, which means looking at workplace factors. Previous research indicates that various negative workplace factors, such as role conflict, role ambiguity, role overload, harassment, and work–family conflict, can lead to burnout (Lambert & Hogan, 2010; Lambert et al., 2009; Savicki et al., 2003).

Positive workplace factors, such as input into the decision-making process, instrumental communication, administrative support, and organizational fairness, have been reported to reduce burnout (Dollard & Winefield, 1998; Lambert, Hogan, & Jiang, 2010). Strategies to implement these positive workplace factors should be put into effect at prisons. Managers and supervisors should seek to involve staff regardless of their position in informational meetings. Staff should have an input in advising management on the facility’s daily operations. Although not all decisions can be based on collective agreement between the levels, administrative support may provide a mechanism for employees to feel valued and minimize burnout.

In summary, based on this limited study and previous studies, reducing negative burnout consequences is a positive outcome for staff as well as administration. It is evident that more research is needed on emotional exhaustion and its
negative effects. The authors hope that the current study will spark renewed interest and research on job burnout among correctional staff. This information can save correctional administrators from wasting taxpayer dollars and assist them in the understanding how to avoid costly turnover and absenteeism among workers. Too much is at stake to not continue research in the area of correctional staff burnout.

Appendix

Emotional Burnout: (a) How often have you experienced a feeling of worry that the job is hardening you emotionally? (b) How often have you experienced a feeling of being emotionally drained at the end of the workday? and (c) How often have you experienced a feeling of being fatigued when you get up from sleep and have to face another day on the job. (Response options were 1 = never, 2 = very rarely, 3 = rarely, 4 = now and then, 5 = often, 6 = very often, and 7 = all of the time).

Life Satisfaction: (a) Taking all things together, how happy would you say you are with your life? (Response options: 1 = very happy, 2 = happy, 3 = not too happy); and (b) In general, how satisfying do you find the ways you’re spending your life these days? (Response options: 1 = very satisfying, 2 = satisfying, 3 = not too satisfying).

Support for Treatment: (a) Rehabilitating a criminal is just as important as making a criminal pay for his or her crime; (b) Inmates at this prison should receive treatment and rehabilitative services; (c) One of the reasons why rehabilitation programs often fail with prisoners is because they are underfunded; if enough money were available, these programs would work; (d) I would support expanding offender rehabilitation programs that are currently in place in our prisons; (e) Treatment programs for inmates are a good idea; (f) The way to get respect and cooperation from inmates is to take an interest in them; (g) We need more educational and vocational programs for inmates in prisons; and (h) It is important for prison staff to have compassion for inmates. (Response options: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = uncertain, 4 = agree, and 5 = strongly agree).

Support for Punishment: (a) A criminal will only go straight when he finds prison life is hard; (b) All rehabilitation programs have done is allow criminals who deserve to be punished to get off; (c) Improving the life for inmates generally makes it worse for staff; (d) Counseling inmates is a job for counselors, not for general prison staff; (e) My job isn’t to help rehabilitate inmates; it’s only to keep them orderly so that they don’t hurt anyone in here or tear this place apart; (f) Many people don’t realize it, but prisons today are too soft on inmates; (g) If a staff member is lenient with inmates, the inmates will take advantage of that staff member; (h) So long as the inmates I supervise stay quiet and don’t cause trouble, I really don’t care if they are getting rehabilitated while they are in here; and (i) We should stop viewing criminals as victims of society who deserve to be rehabilitated and start paying more attention to the victims of these criminals. (Response options: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = uncertain, 4 = agree, and 5 = strongly agree).

Views on Use of Sick Leave: (a) Sick leave is a right that should be taken regardless of whether a person is sick or not; (b) A worker needs time off when it suits him or her, not when it suits the organization; (c) Sick leave should be used when a person is actually sick (reverse coded). (Response options: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = uncertain, 4 = agree, and 5 = strongly agree).

Turnover Intent: (a) In the last 6 months, have you thought about quitting your current job? (Response options: 1 = no and 2 = yes); (b) How likely is it that you will be at this job in a year from now? (1 = very likely, 2 = likely, 3 = neither likely nor unlikely, 4 = unlikely; and 5 = very unlikely); (c) How actively have you searched for a job with other employers in the last year? (Response options: 1 = not at all, 2 = a little, 3 = somewhat actively, 4 = actively, and 5 = very actively); and (d) Do you desire to voluntarily leave/quit your job? (Response options 1 = no and 2 = yes).

Acknowledgments

The authors thank Janet Lambert for editing and proofreading the article. The authors also thank the editor and the anonymous reviewers for their comments and suggestions. These comments and suggestions improved the article.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author(s) received no financial support for the research and/or authorship of this article.

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