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Justice and strain-based conflict among Chinese prison staff

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ABSTRACT

Views of organizational justice among correctional staff (i.e. whether they perceive that their employing organization treats them fairly) impact both staff and prisons. The two major dimensions of organizational justice are distributive justice (fairness of outcomes) and procedural justice (fairness of processes and procedures). Limited research among correctional staff in the U.S. suggests that views of distributive and procedural justice spillover, which results in a strain-based form of work-family conflict. An ordinary least squares regression analysis of data collected from two prisons in southern China indicated that distributive justice had significant negative effects on the strain-based form of work-family conflict; however, contrary to findings among U.S. staff, procedural justice did not have a significant relationship with strain-based conflict. It appears that the connection between views of organizational justice and strain-based work-family conflict might vary by nation.

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Employees' views of organizational justice are a critically important factor that influences an organization's operations and staff performance. The strain that staff experience is of central importance, and it deserves scholarly attention. Correctional staff, in particular, due to their unique work environment, have a high chance of experiencing various strains that, in turn, bring about other consequences, such as low levels of job performance, satisfaction, organizational commitment, and life satisfaction, and high levels of job burnout, absenteeism, turnover intent, and actual turnover. The limited research indicates a link between organizational justice and work-family conflict strain is a negative relationship (Lambert & Hogan, 2006; May et al., 2020).

Views about organizational justice are an important workplace variable (Colquitt et al., 2005). Organizational justice also referred to as organizational fairness, is the view that the employing organization treats staff in a fair and just fashion (Boateng & Hsieh, 2019a, 2019b; Greenberg, 1990a, 1990b). Organizational justice has multiple dimensions, with the major ones being distributive justice and procedural justice (Greenberg, 1990b; Lambert, 2003; Lambert et al., 2020). Distributive justice is the view that salient organizational *outcomes*, such as promotions, assignments, and discipline, are fair and just

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(Greenberg, 1990a; 1990b; Lambert et al., 2020). Procedural justice is the view that the *processes* and *procedures* used to reach these outcomes are fair and just (Boateng & Hsieh, 2019a, 2019b; Lambert et al., 2011).

Most correctional staff desire organizational justice (Lambert, 2003). Organizational justice is negatively linked to job stress and positively to the work attitudes of job involvement, job satisfaction, and organization commitment (Boateng & Hsieh 2019a, 2019b; Lambert, 2003; Lambert et al., 2019; Lambert et al., 2020; Taxman & Gordon, 2009). There have been fewer studies on how correctional staff's views of distributive and procedural justice are associated with strain-based work-family conflict. Strain-based conflict occurs when work issues result in strain and stress at home for a staff member (Armstrong et al., 2015; Liu et al., 2017).

Past studies that involved correctional staff in the U.S. found an association between procedural and distributive justice and strain-based conflict (Lambert et al., 2013a; May et al., 2020). This current study examined how views of procedural and distributive justice affect work-family strain among prison staff in the People's Republic of China (henceforth, China), specifically among staff at two prisons in Southeast China.

There are several reasons why this study is needed and contributes to the literature. There is a need for replication studies in different settings. The two studies that have been conducted to date are far from conclusive. Further research is needed to provide correctional administrators and scholars with sufficient information on if and how the two dimensions of organizational justice may contribute to strain-based conflict for correctional staff, a valuable and often expensive resource for correctional organizations (Kincade, 2018). As noted by Lindsay and Ehrenberg (1993), 'Replication is little discussed in the statistical literature nor practiced widely by statistically minded researchers. It is needed not merely to validate one's findings, but more importantly, to establish the increasing range of radically different conditions under which the findings hold, and the predictable exceptions' (p. 217).

Additionally, cultural differences could affect how perceptions of distributive and procedural justice are related to correctional staff strain-based conflict. Correctional institutions exist around the world, but staff are not only affected by the correctional work environment; their views may be influenced by cultural forces (Hofstede, 2003). As Jowell (1998) noted, 'The importance and utility to the social science of rigorous cross-national measures is incontestable. They help to reveal not only intriguing differences between countries and cultures but also aspects of one's own country and culture that would be difficult or impossible to detect from domestic data alone' (p. 168). The U.S. is a capitalistic and individualistic culture, while China is a collective culture shaped by Confucianism (Lambert et al., 2018). Likewise, it is unknown whether the limited U.S. findings apply to correctional staff in other countries. Conducting research that involves correctional staff in different nations can help build a broader framework of how workplace variables affect correctional staff. Researching how variables are related across a wide array of nations allows both correctional administrators and scholars to understand whether the relationships between distributive and procedural justice and strain-based conflict are universal or contextual, varying across different correctional facilities. The best method to answer this critical question is to conduct studies across different correctional institutions, including those in various countries. This research can help narrow the gap between countries and build bridges so that findings and information can flow more

freely (Cao & Cullen, 2001). In the end, correctional staff and their employing organizations will benefit.

Literature review

Organizational justice

Organizational justice refers to employees' subjective feelings about how fairly they are treated by their employing organization (Folger & Cropanzano, 1998; Judge & Colquitt, 2004; Lambert et al., 2007). Furthermore, organizational justice can be divided into the dimensions of distributive and procedural justice (Colquitt, 2001; Greenberg, 1990a, 1990b; Lambert, 2003; Lambert et al., 2007).

Distributive justice refers to employees' perceptions of how fairly their employing organization treats them in terms of organizational outcomes, including but not limited to work assignments, wages, benefits, promotions, and discipline (Lambert et al., 2019). As Griffin and Hepburn (2005) noted, distributive justice emphasizes equity, which is different from equality. With equity, an outcome is determined by the contributions and efforts of an employee and is compared to the organizational outcomes of other employees; equality means that all employees are treated the same, regardless of their efforts and contributions (Greenberg, 1990a; Qureshi et al., 2017).

Procedural justice refers to perceptions that the processes and procedures used to reach an organization's employee outcomes are fair and just (Greenberg, 1990a, 1990b; Lambert et al., 2020). Most employees prefer fair and open organizational processes and procedures (Qureshi et al., 2017). The process can be just as important as the outcome (Greenberg, 1990a, 1990b). For example, Landy et al. (1980) found that the perceived fairness of worker evaluation procedures was very important for workers, regardless of whether their performance appraisals were negative or positive.

In summary, distributive justice and procedural justice are distinct concepts. The former refers to perceptions that outcomes are fair, while the latter refers to perceptions that the processes and procedures to reach organizational outcomes are fair (Greenberg, 1990a, 1990b; Lambert et al., 2019). Simply put, distributive justice deals with perceptions of the 'ends,' while procedural justice deals with perceptions of the 'means' (Lambert, 2003).

A brief overview of previous research on correctional staff organizational justice

There is a growing body of correctional staff organizational justice research on different areas. Studies have found that distributive and procedural justice both increase both job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Lambert et al., 2007; Lambert et al., 2019). Furthermore, research has reported that both dimensions of justice lead to higher correctional staff organizational commitment (Lambert, 2008; Lambert & Hogan, 2009; et al., 2002; Lambert et al., 2008). These two forms of justice are also positively associated with correctional staff life satisfaction (Lambert & Hogan, 2011) and are negatively associated with job burnout and turnover intent (Lambert et al., 2013b; Lambert et al., 2010).

Distributive justice and procedural justice also affect other outcomes. Lambert et al. (2013b) found that procedural justice led to higher job involvement and greater

engagement in organizational citizenship behaviors (i.e. prosocial behaviors of going beyond what is expected at work). Procedural justice is also associated with greater support for the rehabilitation of inmates and decreased support for the punishment of inmates (Lambert & Hogan, 2013; Lambert et al., 2011). Also, procedural justice (but not distributive justice) had a negative association of fear of being victimized at work (Taxman & Gordon, 2009), job satisfaction (Lambert et al., 2007), and affective commitment (Lambert, 2003; Lambert et al., 2020). Lambert et al. (2007) found that distributive justice negatively affects job stress, while procedural justice was not associated with job stress. Lambert, Hogan, and Allen (2006) found that distributive, but not procedural, was negatively related to job stress.

This limited research supports the contention that distributive and procedural justice are linked to various salient outcomes among correctional staff. Only two studies have examined how these dimensions of organizational justice are associated with strain-based conflict among the staff of correctional facilities. Lambert et al. (2013a) found that both distributive and procedural justice among U.S. staff are negatively associated with work-family strain. A more recent study (May et al., 2020) found that views of procedural justice, but not distributive justice, were negatively associated with strain-based conflict.

Although the amount of research on the effects of organizational justice is small, we can draw several conclusions from this research. First, additional research on correctional staff perceptions of organizational justice is warranted, particularly research that is broken down by distributive and procedural justice. Second, it appears that both distributive and procedural justice may increase some outcomes, such as satisfaction, commitment, and organizational citizenship, while decreasing other outcomes, such as job stress, burnout, and turnover intent. Third, distributive justice and procedural justice appear to have different effects, depending on the outcome being examined. Scholars need to continue examining the effects that distributive and procedural justice has on different outcomes, including the relationship between views of justice and strain-based work-family conflict. Fourth, little research has been done on how procedural and distributive justice affects correctional staff in countries other than the U.S. No study could be found of how views of organizational justice are linked to strain-based work-family conflict outside the U.S. Consequently, there is a need to explore the relationship between distributive and procedural justice on this form of work-family conflict among staff at prisons around the globe. In this study, we explore the effects of Chinese prison staffs perceptions of procedural and distributive justice on strain-based work-family conflict.

Work-Family conflict

Work-family balance and work-family conflict are at opposite ends of a continuum. Ideally, the two major life domains of work and home should be in balance with one another; however, when they are not, work-family conflict occurs (Hogan et al., 2006; O'Driscoll et al., 2006). According to Greenhaus and Beutell (1985), work-family conflict is 'a form of inter-role conflict in which the role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect. That is, participation in the work (family) role is made more difficult by participation in the family (work) role' (p. 77). Work and family conflict is bidirectional. When problems at home (e.g. divorce, death of loved ones,

illnesses, and arguments with loved ones) follow a person to work, causing distractions, conflicts, and problems on the job (Brough & O'Driscoll, 2005; Netemeyer et al., 1996), this creates family-on-work conflict in terms of family-based conflict. When problems from the job spill over and result in conflict at home, they create work-on-family conflict (Lambert, Hogan, Camp, et al., 2006).

The three major types of work-on-family conflict are time-based conflict, behavior-based conflict, and strain-based conflict (Lambert, Hogan, Camp, et al., 2006; Netemeyer et al., 1996). When the work schedule of an employee does not meet the family's needs, time-based conflict occurs. This type of conflict differs across occupations; however, it may occur more often among correctional staff. Correctional facilities operate 24 h per day/365 days per year. This type of work environment makes time-based conflicts more likely to occur (Armstrong et al., 2015). With correctional institutions, it is common to require staff to work varying shifts and on holidays. Thus, the work schedule for correctional staff does not always match families' schedules. Furthermore, due to absent staff or unexpected emergencies, such as an inmate's escape or death, correctional employees may unexpectedly be required to work, which, over time, creates greater opportunities for time-based conflict than with many other occupations (Lambert, Hogan, Camp, et al., 2006).

Behavior-based conflict occurs when work roles are not compatible with home roles (Armstrong et al., 2015; Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). Correctional staff's work roles often require them to be detached, in control, and suspicious. To ensure that institutional security and safety are maintained, they routinely question and search inmates (Lambert, Hogan, Camp, et al., 2006). Occupations such as school teachers and nurses have work roles that require being open, caring, and supportive. Although loving, supportive, and open roles are expected at home, the work roles of correctional staff are not easy to turn off at the end of a work shift, which can result in behavior-based conflict (Lambert et al., 2014).

Strain-based conflict occurs when work frustrations follow staff home, resulting in problems and conflict with family members (Brough & O'Driscoll, 2005). Correctional officers face many straining situations at work that are uncommon in many other occupations. These include but may not be limited to having an argument with an inmate, having to use force to ensure compliance, or witnessing an assault (Armstrong et al., 2015; Lambert, 2003). Correctional staff generally expect to be treated in a fair and just manner by the correctional organization, and when this does not occur, the resulting psychological strain can follow them home.

Correctional staff research on work-Family conflict

Current research supports the contention that work-family conflict has negative effects on correctional staff. Specifically, past studies have reported that domain spillover is associated with lower job satisfaction (Armstrong et al., 2015; Lambert, Hogan, & Barton, 2002a, 2002b; Lambert, Hogan, Camp, et al., 2006) and organizational commitment (Hogan et al., 2006; Lambert, Hogan, Camp, et al., 2006; Lambert et al., 2014). Work-family conflict appears to raise the level of job stress, job burnout, and psychological depression among correctional staff (Armstrong et al., 2015; Griffin, 2005; Lambert & Hogan, 2010; Lambert, Hogan, & Allen, 2006; Lambert et al., 2007; Obidoo et al., 2011; Triplett et al.,

1999). Work-family conflict has also been reported to lower the life satisfaction of correctional staff (Lambert et al., 2009; Lambert et al., 2005). These findings support the conclusion that work-family conflict has harmful effects on correctional staff and needs to be reduced.

There has been little research on workplace factors that may contribute to correctional staff's work-on-family conflict, particularly strain-based conflict. Only a handful of published studies in this area were found. Lambert and Hogan (2006) found that perceived dangerousness of the job and role conflict were positively associated with a composite measure of work-family conflict (i.e. a combination of time-and strain-based conflict), while organizational fairness (i.e. a combined measure of distributive and procedural justice) was negatively associated. Lambert et al. (2015) found that role conflict, perceived dangerousness of the job, and role overload were negatively associated with strain-based work-family conflict, while role ambiguity, job autonomy, supervision quality, job variety, instrumental communication, and integration were not statistically associated.

As noted earlier, both distributive and procedural justice were observed to have a negative relationship with strain-based conflict among U.S. prison staff (Lambert et al., 2013a). In a more recent study conducted in a facility in the southern U.S., May et al. (2020) reported that procedural justice, but not distributive justice, had a negative association with strain-based conflict. The very limited research to date suggests that some workplace variables contribute to strain-based conflict among correctional staff. More research is needed, particularly in nations other than the U.S.

The focus of this current study

This current study is based on organizational justice theory, which holds that when organizations treat people justly in terms of processes and outcomes, positive psychological phenomena result. This, in turn, can result in positive organizational and personal outcomes, such as greater job involvement, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment; additionally, this also lowers negative consequences, such as job burnout, job stress, turnover, and misconduct (Boateng & Hsieh, 2019a, 2019b; Lambert, 2003; Lambert et al., 2007; Lambert & Hogan, 2007; Taxman & Gordon, 2009). Views that the organizational procedures and outcomes are unjust can result in negative feelings, which can follow a staff member home, resulting in conflict and stress at home (Lambert et al., 2013a; May et al., 2020). Perceptions of workplace processes and outcomes being unfair may lead to negative feelings of frustration, resentment, and anger, which follow staff home and increase strain-based work-family conflict (Lambert et al., 2013a; May et al., 2020).

The feelings of frustration, resentment, and anger of feeling the organization is unfair to its staff are not likely to stay at work when a shift ends. These negative psychological feelings will follow the staff home, resulting in a conflict there. Conversely, organizational fairness practices and outcomes send a message to staff that they are respected and valued (Lambert, 2003). Perceptions of organizational fairness likely result in positive feelings for staff, which follow them home; this results in more positive interactions in the home domain and reduces the level of strain-based family-work conflict (Lambert et al., 2013a).

The focus of this study is to expand the literature by examining whether past findings could be replicated or if they vary among Chinese correctional staff. Based upon

organizational justice theory and the findings of the few published U.S. studies, perceptions of procedural justice and those of distributive justice were both predicted to have negative effects on work-family strain conflict among Chinese prison staff. The current study aims to explore whether the associations of the two dimensions of organizational justice with strain-based conflict are like past research among U.S. staff or whether they differ. This information will aid correctional scholars in determining whether the relationships are universal (i.e. are found among correctional staff in various nations) or contextual, possibly varying across different cultures.

Method

This study was reviewed and approved by the ethics committee of the Institute for Social Policy. Informed consent was obtained from all participants. Access to surveying staff in Chinese prisons is very limited. Two of the authors worked at a Chinese university and had permission to survey staff at two prisons in Guangdong province. One prison was located in this province's south, the other in the north. These prisons were not randomly selected but were rather purposefully selected to reflect this province's geographical diversity and because both prisons held similar inmate populations. Both prisons had similar prisoner populations of highly intensive/maximum custody (严管), intensive/medium custody (普管), and general custody (宽管).

The first prison employed 280 staff and housed 1,500 sentenced offenders, while the second employed 160 staff and housed 700 sentenced offenders. Unlike Western prisons, particularly in the U.S., Chinese prisons, to allow inmates to be nearer to family, house different levels of offenders in the same institution but with separate housing areas.

The staff at each prison were provided with a survey packet. This packet included material that explained about the study, that it is voluntary, and how to return the survey. Staff who had elected to be part of this study could skip any question on the provided paper questionnaire; responses were anonymous. The questionnaire was translated into Chinese and then translated back to English by separate bilingual scholars. Specifically, the back method of translation was used, wherein survey materials (e.g. cover letter and questionnaire) were translated into Chinese, and a second scholar translated the materials back into English to determine whether there were any translation discrepancies. This survey was also pilot tested among Chinese graduate students who were fluent in both Chinese and English, and the research team determined whether if there were any comprehension issues and revised accordingly.

About 73% of the prison staff from the two prisons completed and returned the survey, which resulted in 322 usable surveys. For the first prison, which employed 280 staff members, 205 completed surveys were returned, which is a response rate of 73%. For the second prison, which employed 160 staff members, 117 completed surveys were returned, which is a response rate of 73%. Approximately 46% of the participants were men, and 54% were women. The respondents' ages ranged from 24 to 58 years, with a median age of 45. The median tenure in the current position was six years, ranging from half a year to 36 years. In terms of the highest educational level, 63% of the participants reported having less than a bachelor's degree, and 37% indicated that they had earned a bachelor's or higher degree. About 87% indicated that they were currently

married, and 41% indicated that they had a child under 16 living at home. Approximately 63% indicated that they work at the first prison and 37% work at the second prison. According to both prisons' human resource offices, compared to overall staff's age, tenure, gender, and educational level, this study's participants appeared similar. The human resource offices were not able to provide information on marital status or having a child living at home.

Variables

Dependent variables

Strain-based work-family conflict was the dependent variable. Based on the work of Bohen and Viveros-Long (1981) and Higgins and Duxbury (1992), it was measured by using the following four items: (1) Sometimes when I come home, I am too stressed to do the things I enjoy; (2) Work makes me too tired or irritable to fully enjoy my family social life; (3) When I get home from work, I am often too stressed to participate with family or friends; and (4) I find that I frequently bring home problems from work. These items were answered using a six-point Likert scale of 'strongly disagree' (coded: 1), 'disagree' (coded: 2), 'somewhat disagree' (coded: 3), 'somewhat agree' (coded: 4), 'agree' (coded: 5), and 'strongly agree' (coded: 6). The Cronbach's alpha, a measure of internal reliability, for the four items was .93. In a factor analysis, using principal axis factoring, all the strain-based work-family conflict items loaded onto a single factor, indicating unidimensionality (Gorsuch, 1983).

Independent variables

The independent variables were perceptions of procedural justice and distributive justice among the surveyed staff. The responses for the organizational justice items were on a 5-point scale of 'very unfair' (coded: 1), 'unfair' (coded: 2), 'somewhat fair' (coded: 3), 'fair' (coded: 4), and 'very fair' (coded: 5). Distributive justice was measured using three items that were adapted from Lambert et al.'s (2007) study and had a Cronbach's alpha value of .92. The three items were: (1) How fair has the prison been in rewarding you when you consider the amount of effort that you have put forth; (2) How fair has the prison been outcomes for you when considering the responsibilities that you have at work; and (3) How fair has the prison been in rewarding you when you consider the work that you have done well?

Procedural justice was also measured using three items that were adapted from Lambert et al.'s (2007) study and had a Cronbach's alpha value of .89. The items were: (1) How fair is the promotion process here? (2) How fair is the process of the evaluation of your job performance at this prison? (3) How fair is the prison in explaining decisions that have a significant effect on you?

Factor analysis was conducted, and the items for each index were loaded on a single factor as predicted, indicating unidimensionality (Gorsuch, 1983). Variables for gender, age, tenure in current position, education level, prison assignment, marital status, having a minor child living at home, and supervisory status were included in the current study more as control than explanatory variables since they can influence perceptions and impact the level of work-family conflict that is experienced.

Results

The descriptive statistics and coding for the variables that were used in this study are reported in Table 1. There appear to be significant variations in the dependent and independent variables (i.e. none were constant). Statistical tests indicate that the variables were normally distributed. Likewise, the variables' median and mean values are similar, which also suggests a normal distribution. For the index variables, the Cronbach alpha values are .89 or higher; above .70 is viewed as being good (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Factor analysis results indicate the unidimensionality of the latent variables (Gorsuch, 1983).

This study's correlations are presented in Table 2. Gender, supervisory status, procedural justice, and distributive justice have statistically significant correlations with the dependent variable. Generally, male staff, compared to female staff, reported higher levels of strain-based conflict. Similarly, non-supervisory staff reported greater levels of conflict at home than did the supervisory staff. Both dimensions of organizational justice had negative correlations, which means that increases in either procedural or distributive justice were associated with less work-related conflict at home.

An ordinary least squares (OLS) regression equation was computed; strain-based conflict was the dependent variable, while personal characteristics and views about the two types of organizational justice were the independent variables. The results are reported in Table 3. Multicollinearity (i.e. when two or more variables share too large of an overlap in variance) is seen as a problem when Variance Inflation Factor scores (VIF) exceed five (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). Based on the VIF scores reported in Table 3, multicollinearity was not a problem. The highest VIF scores are 3.02 and 3.01 and are between procedural and distributive justice. Also, the issues of outliers, influential cases, normality,

Table 1. Descriptive statistics for study variables.

Variable	Description	Min	Max	Md	Mn	SD
<i>Personal Chars</i>						
Gender	54% female (coded 0) 46% male (coded 1)	0	1	0	0.46	0.50
Age	Age in continuous years	24	58	45	43.94	6.82
Tenure	Tenure in position in years	.5	36	6	6.56	5.38
Educ Level	63% less than Bachelor (coded 0) 37% Bachelor or higher (coded 1)	0	1	0	0.37	0.48
Prison	64% from prison 1 (coded 1) 36% from prison 2 (coded 0)	0	1	1	0.64	0.48
Marital Status	13% not married (coded 0) 87% married (coded 1)	0	1	1	0.87	0.33
Child at Home	59% no child at home (coded 0) 41% child under 16 at home (coded 1)	0	1	0	0.41	0.49
Nonsupervisor	38% Supervisor of staff (coded 0) 62% Nonsupervisor (coded 1)	0	1	1	0.62	0.49
<i>Org Justice Views</i>						
Proc Justice	3-item additive index $\alpha = .88$	3	15	9	9.03	2.77
Dist Justice	3-item additive index, $\alpha = .92$	3	15	9	8.82	2.91
<i>Dependent Var</i>						
Strain WFC	4-item additive index, $\alpha = .93$	4	24	16	15.14	4.85

Note. Min stands for minimum value, Max for maximum value, Md for median value, Mn for mean value, SD for standard deviation value, Personal Chars for personal characteristics, Educ Level for educational level, Tenure for tenure in position, Org Justice Views for organizational justice views, Proc Justice for procedural justice views, Dist Justice for distributive justice views, and Strain WFC for strain-based work-family conflict, and α for Cronbach's alpha value, a measure of internal reliability. The number of participants was 322.

Table 2. Correlation matrix for study variables.

Variable	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.
1. Gender	1.00										
2. Age	.12*	1.00									
3. Tenure	.10	.38**	1.00								
4. Educ Level	-.12*	-.35**	-.09	1.00							
5. Prison	.56**	.18**	-.01	-.10	1.00						
6. Marital	.18**	.24**	.01	-.12*	.05	1.00					
7. Child	.10	-.61**	-.22**	.13*	.08	-.02	1.00				
8. Nonsuper	.17**	.07	.12*	.01	-.05	.09	-.05	1.00			
9. Proc Just	-.08	-.06	.02	.00	-.16**	-.07	.04	-.06	1.00		
10. Dist Just	-.12**	.02	.07	.06	-.20**	-.10	-.05	-.05	.51**	1.00	
11. Strain WFC	.18**	.01	.05	-.04	-.03	.07	-.09	.25**	-.35**	-.38**	1.00

Note. Educ Level stands for educational level, Tenure for tenure in current position, Marital for marital status, Child for a minor child living at home, Nonsuper for being a nonsupervisory, Proc Just for procedural justice, Dist Just for distributive justice, and Strain WFC for strain-based work-family conflict. See Table 1 for how the variables were measured.

* $p \leq .05$.

** $p \leq .01$.

linearity and homoscedasticity of residuals, and independence of errors in the regression analysis were tested (Berry, 1993; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013).

Staff at the second prison, in general, had more strain-based conflict compared to the staff at the first prison. Having a minor child at home was associated with less strain-based conflict. Being a line staff member was related to the greater strain-based conflict. Distributive justice had a negative effect, which means that higher perceptions of this form of organizational fairness were linked to lower work-related conflict in the home domain. Finally, the magnitude of the effects can be ranked using the absolute values of the significant standardized regression coefficients (i.e. the values in Table 3's β column). Perceptions of distributive justice had the largest effect, followed by gender and then prison assignment. Supervisory status and having a minor child at home had the fourth and fifth largest-sized effects, less than half of this for distributive justice.

The R-squared value for the OLS regression equation is .29, which means that the independent variables as a group explained approximately 29% of the observed variable strain-based conflict. Age, tenure, educational level, marital status, and procedural justice had nonsignificant effects. Gender, prison assignment, having a minor child at home, supervisory status, and distributive justice had statistically significant effects. Male staff experienced greater work-related conflicts at home than female staff.

Discussion and conclusion

Overall, the results indicate that organizational justice has a negative relationship with strain-based conflict; however, the effects vary according to the type of justice views that are being examined. It makes sense that what happens at work affects the home domain. The current findings suggest that what happens at the job does not stay at work. It can follow a person home and raise or lower conflict in the home domain. The current findings support the contention of the spillover theory that work is related to the conflict in home life (Sok et al., 2014). Improving perceptions of organizational fairness

Table 3. Ordinary least squares (OLS) regression results with strain-based work-family conflict as the dependent variable.

Variable	B	SE	β	VIF
<i>Personal Characteristics</i>				
Gender	2.61	0.63	.27**	1.66
Age	−0.08	0.06	−.09	2.02
Tenure	0.02	0.05	.02	1.20
Educational Level	−0.40	0.55	−.04	1.13
Prison	−1.90	0.67	−.19**	1.68
Marital Status	0.29	1.06	.01	1.08
Child at Home	−1.49	0.66	−.15*	1.78
NonSupervisor	1.68	0.53	.16**	1.08
<i>Organizational Justice Views</i>				
Procedural Justice	−0.15	0.15	−.09	3.02
Distributive Justice	−0.56	0.15	−.34**	3.01
F Value (df)			11.11 (288)	
R-Squared			.29**	

Note. B represents the unstandardized regression coefficient, SE for the standard error, β the standardized regression coefficient, VIF the variance inflation factor score, and (df) as degrees of freedom. Please see Table 1 for more information on the variables and their descriptive statistics.

* $p \leq .05$.

** $p \leq .01$.

should not only make work life more pleasant for staff but also reduce strain-based conflict. The effects, however, differed depending on the dimension of organizational justice being studied.

In the current study, as predicted, distributive justice had significant negative effects on work-family conflict. Staff who felt that salient organizational outcomes were fair reported less conflict at home. The prediction that procedural justice would also have negative effects on work-family strain was not supported. This finding is contrary to what was reported by Lambert et al. (2013a) and May et al. (2020) about U.S. correctional staff. Specifically, Lambert et al. (2013a) reported that both distributive and procedural justice had negative effects on strain-based conflict among correctional staff in the mid-western U.S., while May et al. (2020) reported that only procedural justice had significant negative effects and not distributive justice among correction staff in the southern U.S. This suggests that cultural forces may play a role in the effects of workers' perceptions of justice.

Power distance is the deferment of decision-making to those above (Hofstede Insights, 2021). China is a collective culture where power distance is high, and the U.S., when compared to China, is an individualistic culture where power distance is lower. It could be that a voice in the process of decision-making and transparent procedures, which are salient parts of procedural justice, are not as important to Chinese prison staff (Greenberg, 1990a, 199b; Lambert, 2003). Additionally, China has a tradition of Confucianism that advocates fairness in outcomes but not the principle of procedural fairness (Lambert et al., 2018; Jiang & Wu, 2015; Jiang et al., 2016). Similarly, China is a developing nation, while the U.S. is a more developed nation with higher pay and benefits (Lambert et al., 2018; World Factbook, 2020). In China, outcomes are important because they aid staff in meeting economic challenges as this country continues to develop (Lambert et al., 2018). In the U.S., both fairness in outcomes and processes are valued (Frenkel et al., 2012; Jiang et al., 2010; Lambert, 2003).

In other studies, there is supportive evidence that distributive justice is valued more in China, and both dimensions of justice are valued in the U.S., including among correctional staff. Jiang et al. (2016) found an association between distributive justice and job satisfaction among Chinese correctional staff, but there is no correlation between job satisfaction and procedural justice. Likewise, among Chinese prison staff, distributive but not procedural justice had a significant association with job satisfaction, and distributive justice had a far larger effect on organizational commitment (Lambert et al., 2018). Among U.S. correctional staff, both dimensions of justice were significant predictors of both job satisfaction (Lambert, 2003) and organizational commitment (Lambert et al., 2007). In another study of Chinese corrections personnel, distributive justice, compared to procedural justice, had a larger correlation with commitment (Jiang et al., 2018).

In a study about university employees, among Chinese participants, distributive justice had slightly larger effects on organizational commitment than did procedural justice; among Australian participants, only procedural justice had a significant relationship with commitment (Jiang et al., 2017). In a study of Chinese factory workers, Frenkel et al. (2012) argued that distributive justice is, for economic reasons, more important than procedural justice in explaining job burnout. Chinese prison staff could feel that unfair outcomes hurt them and their loved ones economically and, as such, experience greater strain. Unlike China, U.S. staff work in a more structured workplace that is

governed by formalization and collective bargaining agreements, which often determine specific outcomes, and U.S. staff have a voice in the process to ensure procedural fairness (Lambert et al., 2018).

The current results suggest that the effects of organizational justice on strain-based conflict for correctional staff may be situational and contextual and vary by culture. It is important to note that there has been little research on the effects of perceptions of organizational justice on Chinese police or correctional staff, and more research is needed before a firmer conclusion can be made. Without additional research, it is unclear whether the influence of the effects of distributive and procedural justice differ among correctional staff by nation or whether both play a similar role across cultures.

Gender had a significant positive effect on strain-based conflict, which means that men generally reported greater conflict at home from work than did women. It could be that men place greater importance on distributive justice and other work outcomes than do women, and this follows them home, which results in psychological strain. Interestingly, having a child at home resulted in lower strain-based work-family conflict. Caring for a child could result in less focus on work problems and greater focus on home life. Being a line staff member was associated with great strain work-family conflict. Line staff tend to have less authority to deviate from rules and regulations in dealing with work demands, and this may result in a psychological strain that follows the person home. Another personal characteristic that had a significant association in the multivariate analysis was the prison assignment (i.e. assigned to prison 1 or prison 2). Staff at the first prison, compared to the staff at the second prison, tended to report lower levels of strain-based conflict. The second prison tends to hold offenders who have more conduct issues compared to the first prison.

As with many research studies, the current study has limitations. It was based on the two prisons in southeast China. Research is needed at prisons in other nations to further examine whether the effects of procedural and distributive justice with strain-based work-family conflict vary by nation. Moreover, procedural justice, distributive justice, and strain-based conflict should be measured with more items. This current study used a cross-sectional design, which does not allow for causality to be demonstrated. Longitudinal studies are needed to empirically demonstrate causal effects. The R-squared in the OLS regression equation was .29, which means that about 70% of the observed variance in the dependent variable is explained by independent variables other than those in the current study. Future research needs to identify these variables. Research is needed on the variables that influence perceptions of distributive and procedural justice.

Chinese correctional administrators need to be aware that views of distributive justice can follow staff home and raise the level of strain-based conflict. Administrators should undertake efforts to improve perceptions of distributive justice. Staff need to be asked about their perceptions of distributive justice and how it can be improved. Staff need to be asked about their honest perceptions and without fear of retribution. Staff need to be asked which outcome areas (e.g. assignments, evaluations, rewards, promotions) are most important to them and why. This information will help determine the outcomes that influence perceptions of distributive justice so that specific interventions can be undertaken. Administrators also need to provide information for

distributive outcomes. Administrators may have more information about why an outcome was made than may be the case for line staff (Lambert, 2003). This is engaging in informational justice, where decisions are discussed and explained (Cropanzano et al., 2007). Explaining things and enhancing communication about organizational justice issues and decisions can improve perceptions of the fairness of outcomes (Lambert et al., 2007). An analysis of outcomes, such as assignments, rewards, and promotions, should be undertaken to ensure it is fair and that there is no favoritism. Supervisors and managers need to be trained so that they are aware of the importance of views on justice and how to make changes to improve staff perceptions of distributive justice by making sure fair outcomes occur and are explained. Furthermore, supervisors and managers need to avoid favoritism and treat those they supervise in a professional and respectful manner, even when there are disagreements (Lambert et al., 2007). Supervisors and managers should be evaluated and rewarded for their efforts to improve views of distributive justice.

While this current study found procedural justice to be an insignificant predictor of strain-based conflict, this does not mean that the dimension of organizational justice should be ignored by administrators. Procedural justice can have positive effects. For example, procedural justice has been reported to raise the organizational commitment of Chinese correctional staff (Lambert et al., 2018). Enhancing an organizational climate of fairness in terms of distributive and procedural justice will, over time, benefit everyone in the organization (Roberson & Colquitt, 2005). Finally, administrators also need to be aware of work-family conflict and explore what is contributing to the work strain that follows staff home, resulting in conflict in the home domain.

In conclusion, staff are an important and valuable resource for prisons, including those in China. Work-family conflict is a real possibility for correctional staff. It is unrealistic to assume that work problems will remain at the prison's main gate when staff go home. Work issues can follow staff home, causing strain-based conflict. The current study explored how procedural and distributive justice views are associated with strain-based work-family conflict among staff at two southeast Chinese prisons. The results indicate that distributive justice, but not procedural justice, had a negative association with strain-based conflict. Research in other nations is needed to help answer whether the effects of distributive and procedural justice on correctional staff strain-based conflict are universal or contextual/situational. The two aforementioned U.S. studies found that procedural justice had negative effects on strain-based conflict, and the effects of distributive justice were mixed. The current results suggest that the effects of these forms of organizational justice are contextual/situational and vary according to cultural forces.

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