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Exploring the Relationship of Organizational Justice with Chinese Prison Staff Life Satisfaction

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Abstract

The bulk of the limited research on prison staff life satisfaction has been conducted in Western nations, particularly in the U.S., and only two studies have explored the relationship between organizational justice and life satisfaction, both of which only examined two of the four dimensions of justice. The current study investigated how all four dimensions of organizational justice (informational, interpersonal, distributive, and procedural) were related to life satisfaction among Chinese prison staff. The ordinary least squares (OLS) regression analysis indicated that informational, procedural, and distributive justice had significant positive effects on life satisfaction. Interpersonal justice had an insignificant effect.

Keywords

correctional staff, life satisfaction, organizational fairness, prison staff, China

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Introduction

Working in a prison can be demanding because it involves working with individuals held against their will. Staff are responsible for a myriad of tasks and duties to ensure a safe, secure, and humane facility. Staff are not only an important resource that affects the facility, but workplace factors also affect the staff (Boateng & Hsieh, 2019a). While previous research has explored the effects of workplace variables on various outcomes, such as job satisfaction and organizational commitment, there are workplace variables, such as organizational justice, related to other outcome areas, such as life satisfaction, including in non-Western nations. The aim of this study was to explore how the workplace variable of organizational justice is associated with the life satisfaction of Chinese prison staff.

Life satisfaction refers to how happy or satisfied a person is with their overall life and is a positive outcome (Erdogan et al., 2012). Donovan and Halpern (2002) noted 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). The vast majority of adults, including prison staff, spend a considerable amount of their waking time at work (i.e., work is a primary life domain), and as such, workplace variables can affect life satisfaction (Erdogan et al., 2012). One variable that could theoretically influence life satisfaction is organizational justice (Lambert & Hogan, 2011). Organizational justice (also called organizational fairness) refers to perceptions of how the organization treats staff in terms of fairness (Boateng & Hsieh, 2019a; Cropanzano et al., 2007). Organizational justice is a multidimensional workplace concept with distributive, procedural, informational, and interpersonal as salient dimensions (Colquitt, 2001; Colquitt et al., 2001). Only two correctional studies have examined the link between organizational justice and life satisfaction to date. Both included only distributive and procedural justice and involved U.S. prison staff. The current exploratory study examined the association between all four types of organizational justice on the life satisfaction of Chinese prison staff.

The current study contributes to the literature in several ways. First and importantly, it provides a replication of the two previous studies. 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). Second, it tests the effects of the four dimensions on correctional staff

life satisfaction, which was not assessed in the two previously published studies. Exploring the four justice dimensions provides correctional administrators and scholars with a clearer picture of whether and how each dimension is associated with overall life satisfaction. This information is critical in making changes and instituting interventions to increase staff's life satisfaction. Third, it explores the effects of organizational justice in a different nation than that of the limited previous research. The results from this study can be used to help answer the question of whether the effects of different types of organizational justice are universal (i.e., cut across institutions across the world) or contextual/situational (i.e., vary by nation). As Jowell (1998) contended, "the importance and utility to 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).

Literature Review

Life Satisfaction

Life satisfaction has been the focus of research for the past several decades, with psychologists and theologians" alike making the effort to understand the etiology of this concept. Yet, it has been understudied in the occupational field of corrections. Conceptually, life satisfaction refers to a person's global assessment of their life (Zhao et al., 2011). Life satisfaction deals with the overall happiness a person has with life (Diener, 1984; Erdogan et al., 2012). Happiness involves the experience of joy, contentment, and positive well-being and a sense that an individual's life is meaningful and worthwhile (Lyubomirsky, 2008). Satisfaction with life as a whole is part of the larger concept of subjective well-being (Diener, 1984; Pavot & Diener, 2008). The three aspects of subjective well-being are positive affect, negative affect, and life satisfaction (Diener, 1984; Erdogan et al., 2012). Diener et al. (1985) indicated that positive and negative affect "refer to the affective, emotional aspects" of subjective well-being and that life satisfaction refers to the "cognitive-judgmental aspects" of subjective well-being (p. 71). As one of the three components of subjective well-being, life satisfaction has numerous benefits to the individual as well as to the employing organization. Research has reported that life satisfaction is linked to better social interactions, good health, improved mental health, and a longer life span (Donovan & Halpern, 2002; Erdogan et al., 2012). The benefit to the organization includes enhanced performance, reduced absenteeism, lower psychological

withdrawal from the job, lower desire to retire early, reduced turnover intent, less voluntary quitting, and increased work motivation (Erdogan et al., 2012; Lambert et al., 2005; Rode, 2004). Generally, people work harder when they are satisfied with their lives. The two previous studies among U.S. prison staff suggest that life satisfaction is influenced by organizational justice (Lambert & Hogan, 2011; Lambert et al., 2010). These effects suggest that staff members who believe there is fairness and justice in the processes through which decisions are made tend to report increased life satisfaction. Additional research is needed, including research on the other justice dimensions of informational and interactional justice, among prison staff in other nations.

Organizational Justice

Organizational justice refers to perceptions by workers that the organization treats its members in a fair and just manner (Boateng & Hsieh, 2019a, 2019b; Greenberg, 1990a, 1990b). Most people want to be treated fairly (Lambert et al., 2020). Cropanzano et al. (2007) noted that organizational justice "is the glue that allows people to work together effectively" (p. 34). There are different dimensions of organizational justice: informational, interpersonal, distributive, and procedural being major ones (Colquitt & Greenberg, 2005; Cropanzano et al., 2007).

Informational and interpersonal justice were originally conceptualized as interactional justice, where salient organizational decisions are explained and workers are treated with respect and dignity (Cropanzano et al., 2007; Skarlicki & Folger, 1997). Interactional justice was later broken into the dimensions of informational and interpersonal justice (Colquitt, 2001; Colquitt et al., 2001). Informational justice is the perception that the organization provides clear, honest, and useful information about decisions (Colquitt, 2001; Cropanzano et al., 2007). Interpersonal justice refers to the perceptions that the organization treats workers with dignity and respect (Cropanzano et al., 2007; Lambert et al., 2007). Interpersonal justice often deals with how supervisors and administrators treat staff (Bies & Moag, 1986; Colquitt et al., 2001; Colquitt & Greenberg, 2005). Interpersonal justice does not mean that disagreements between workers and supervisors/administrators do not occur but that they are handled in a professional fashion (Krehbiel & Cropanzano, 2000).

Distributive justice refers to the perceptions that the organization is fair and just in salient outcomes that affect workers (Boateng & Hsieh, 2019b; Greenberg, 1990a, 1990b). Perceptions of this dimension of organizational justice are based on equity and not equality (Colquitt et al., 2001;

Greenberg, 1990a; Lambert, 2003). Under the equity exchange principle, workers evaluate how much they give to the organization compared to how much they receive from it; they also compare what others (with similar inputs and circumstances) give and receive to decide whether the particular outcome is fair and just (Colquitt, 2001; Lambert et al., 2007). Outcomes include, but are not limited to, pay, benefits, evaluations, promotions, assignments, and discipline (Colquitt & Greenberg, 2005; Lambert et al., 2007).

Procedural justice refers to perceptions that the organizational processes and procedures used to reach distributive outcomes are fair and just (Boateng & Hsieh, 2019a, 2019b; Greenberg, 1990a, 1990b). In fact, having fair procedures and processes is just as important as—if not more important than—fair outcomes (Cropanzano et al., 2007; Lambert, 2003). For example, Landy et al. (1980) found that the perceived fairness of employe evaluation procedures is important to workers regardless of whether the evaluations are positive or negative.

In sum, informational justice deals with honest explanations, interactional justice with how workers are treated, distributive justice with the ends, and procedural justice with the means to those ends (Colquitt et al., 2001; Colquitt & Greenberg, 2005; Lambert, 2003; Lambert et al., 2007). The four dimensions are important resources that can allow staff to feel confident and trust the organization. Organizational justice is at the core of organizational legitimacy (Colquitt & Greenberg, 2005). If it is perceived that one or more of the organizational fairness dimensions are low or missing, workers will likely feel some amount of psychological strain. Skarlicki and Folger (1997) contended that "if organizational decisions and managerial actions are deemed unfair or unjust, the affected employes experience feelings of anger, outrage, and resentment" (p. 434). Based on the spillover theory, what happens at work can spill over and impact the overall quality of life (Lambert et al., 2005; Steiner & Truxillo, 1989). The positive feelings of fair treatment at work are likely to spill over, increasing overall satisfaction with life. If fairness is perceived as missing, the resulting negative feelings increase the level of strain and conflict, ultimately lowering the level of life satisfaction (Lambert & Hogan, 2011).

Corrections in China – An Overview

To place the findings of the current study into context, a brief overview of Chinese institutional corrections is provided. China has a long history of the use of prison facilities dating back to the Xia dynasty (2029 - 1559 B.C.) (Jin, 1997). In 1949, China's prison system became more organized,

standardized, and more similar to prisons in Western nations. Chinese prisons, like Western prisons, hold convicted offenders to meet the goals of retribution, incapacitation, and rehabilitation (Jiang et al., 2018). Chinese prisons are part of the Ministry of Justice. Like many Western nations, China also has detention centers, which, like jails, hold individuals awaiting adjudication of their charges, and are under the Ministry of Public Security. Chinese prisons are closed institutions, and until recently, outsiders, including Chinese scholars, had no access to them (Wu, 2003). Unless there is a compelling reason (e.g., medical), offenders in Chinese prisons are required to work at least 8 h per day (Jiang et al., 2018; Wu, 2003). About 300,000 staff work in China's approximately 680 prisons that are all government-run (Jiang et al., 2018; World Prison Brief, 2020). In 2019, there were about 1.7 million inmates in Chinese prisons, with a majority of inmates that are male (92%), and an incarceration rate of 121 per 100,000 citizens (World Prison Brief, 2020). Similar to Western prisons, Chinese prisons house juvenile offenders separately from adult offenders (Hill, 2006; Jiang et al., 2018). Female and male inmates are also housed separately (Hill, 2006; Jiang et al., 2018).

Chinese correctional staff are government workers who earn a decent wage compared to the overall Chinese working population (Jiang et al., 2018). However, most Chinese government workers work 8 h per day, while prison staff generally work 12-h shifts. They may also be required to work overtime or to work on days off if the need arises (Xing, 2014). Compared to the general population in China, incarcerated offenders tend to be more antisocial, less educated, and have higher rates substance use and mental health problems (Jiang et al., 2018). Unlike many Western prisons, there are no specific position titles in Chinese prisons, such as correctional officer, food service, or prison counselor. Instead, the staff works as a team to ensure positive security and treatment efforts at the prison (Hill, 2006; Jiang et al., 2018). Unlike many Western prisons, which are based on security levels, Chinese prisons do not have a set security level but instead hold inmates with different custody levels and sentence lengths (Hill, 2006; Wu, 2003). As with prisons in most nations, working in a Chinese prison can be a rewarding but challenging occupation because it involves supervising incarcerated individuals. As corrections in any nation can be a demanding field, there is a need to increase the life satisfaction of prison staff, which necessitates empirical data exploring how organizational justice is related to life satisfaction. The current study explored how the four types of organizational justice views are related to life satisfaction among Chinese prison staff, an area not previously studied.

Focus of the Current Study

The aim of the current study was to provide a greater understanding of the link between organizational justice views and life satisfaction among staff at two Chinse prisons in Southeast China. Specifically, this study examined how distributive, procedural, interactional, and informational justice views are linked to life satisfaction. The following four hypotheses were developed.

Hypothesis 1: Informational justice is hypothesized to have a positive association with life satisfaction. Having work decisions and changes explained helps staff do their jobs and understand the reasons for the decision or change. Informational justice sends a message to staff members that they are valued and respected, which should increase their positive psychological state of mind. These positive feelings are likely to spill over to home life, increasing the level of satisfaction with life.
Hypothesis 2: Interpersonal justice is hypothesized to have a positive relationship with life satisfaction. Work interactions involving dignity and respect make the job more enjoyable and send a message to staff members that they are valued, which should result in a more positive psychological state. Positive workplace experiences likely will spill over to home and ultimately increase the level of enjoyment in life.

Hypothesis 3: Distributive justice is hypothesized to have positive effects on life satisfaction. Perceiving salient organizational outcomes as fair and just should result in positive psychological feelings that can buffer staff from the trying aspects of working in a prison. In addition, the feeling that outcomes are unfair is likely to result in unhappiness, resentment, and psychological strain. Psychological feelings resulting from distributive justice are unlikely to remain at work at the end of a shift, which should influence the overall life satisfaction of staff.

Hypothesis 4: Procedural justice is hypothesized to be a positive predictor of life satisfaction. Perceiving that organizational processes and procedures are fair should result in positive psychological feelings, which ultimately increase the level of life satisfaction. When staff perceive that procedural justice is low, the prison is likely to be viewed as unjust, which should result in negative feelings of frustration and anger. Further, the resulting psychological strain will likely follow staff home, ultimately lowering their level of life satisfaction.

Method

Procedure

Human subjects" approval was obtained and the study followed ethical principles. Staff members at two prisons located in Guangzhou, in southeast

China, were asked to be part of this study. The first prison had a staff of 280 to supervise the approximate 1,500 incarcerated convicted offenders. The second facility employed 160 staff and housed approximately 700 convicted offenders. Both institutions were considered typical prisons in China, holding adult offenders convicted for various types of offenses, including violent and property offenses, such as robbery or burglary, with the typical sentence of the inmates approximately 5 years.

The questionnaire items used in this study were originally developed in English, which was not the primary language of the prisons" staff. To ensure that there were no wording problems, the back method of translation was used, where the English-worded questionnaire items were translated into Chinese by one individual and then translated back into English by a second bilingual individual. The questionnaire was also pilot-tested among several Chinese prison staff members to obtain feedback and to correct any problems. After this pretesting, the 440 available staff members at the two prisons were informed of the purpose of the study, that participation was voluntary, and that all responses would be anonymous before they were given a study packet.

Participants

A total of 322 usable questionnaires were returned - a response rate of 73%, with 118 staff members declining study engagement. For the first prison, 205 of 280 questionnaires were returned - a response rate of 73%. For the second, there were 117 of 160 questionnaires returned, also a response rate of 73%. About 64% of those who responded were from the first prison, and 36% were from the second prison, which was expected because 64% of the 440 staff worked at the first prison. Among the participants, 46% were men; the mean age was 43.94, with a standard deviation of 6.82. Tenure in the current position was 6.56 years, with a standard deviation of 5.38. About 37% indicated that they had earned a college degree. About 62% reported that they were line staff. Approximately 87% indicated that they were currently married/partnered. About 59% noted that they had no minor children living with them at home. About 64% worked at the first prison. According to human resource sources, the responding staff at each prison appeared to be representative of the overall staff population at each facility based on gender, age, tenure, supervisory status, and educational level. No discernable pattern was indicated for those who declined to be part of the study. The human resource office could not provide information regarding the marital status or having a child at home for the overall staff population.

Variables

Dependent Variable. The dependent variable was life satisfaction, which was measured using three items adapted from Diener et al. (1985). The items and their response options are provided in the Appendix. The items had a Cronbach's alpha value of .93, and the responses to these items were summed together to form a *life satisfaction index*.

Independent Variables. Informational, interpersonal, distributive, and procedural justice were the independent variables of interest. The items and their response options are presented in the Appendix. Informational and interpersonal justice were each measured using a single item. The item for informational justice was adapted from Griffin et al. (2012) while the item for interpersonal justice was based on the work of Bies and Moag (1986). The items for procedural and distributive justice were adapted from Lambert et al. (2007). Procedural justice and distributive justice were each measured using three items and had Cronbach's alpha values of .89 and .92, respectively. The responses to these items were summed together to form the indexes. As they have been used in previous life satisfaction studies, the personal characteristics of gender, educational level, tenure, age, supervisory status, marital status, and having one or more minor children residing at home were included in the study. (For how these variables were coded, review Table 1). Finally, a dichotomous variable representing the participant's place of work in terms of first or second prison survyed was also included.

Results

The descriptive statistics for the study variables are presented in Table 1. There was a significant variation in the dependent and independent variables (i.e., none were constants). The data conformed approximately to a normal distribution based on statistics. As previously indicated, all the variables measuring latent concepts had Cronbach alpha values of .88 or higher, which is viewed as good. The principal axis factor analysis was conducted for the index items, and the index items were loaded on the predicted factor, indicating unidimensionality (Gorsuch, 1983).

A correlation matrix of the variables is presented in Table 2. Gender and the four dimensions of organizational justice had statistically significant correlations with life satisfaction, while educational level, tenure, age, supervisory status, marital status, having one or more children at home, and prison did not. In general, male staff reported lower satisfaction than female staff. The four justice indexes had positive correlations, indicating an increase in

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for Study Variables.

Variable	Description	Min	Max	Md	Mn	SD
Personal Chars						
Gender	54% female (coded 0) 46% male (coded 1)	0	1	0	0.46	0.50
Educ Level	63% less than Bachelor (coded 0) 37% Bachelor or higher (coded 1)	0	1	0	0.37	0.48
Tenure	Tenure in years in current position	.5	36	6	6.56	5.38
Age	Age in continuous years	24	58	45	43.94	6.82
Supervisor	62% non-supervisor (coded 0) 38% supervisor (coded 1)	0	1	0	0.32	0.49
Marital Status	13% not married (coded 0) 87% married (coded 1)	0	1	1	0.87	0.33
Child Under 16	59% no child at home (coded 0) 41% child at home (coded 1)	0	1	0	0.41	0.49
Prison	64% from prison 1 (coded 1) 36% from prison 2 (coded 0)	0	1	1	0.64	0.48
Org Justice						
Informational	1 item measure	1	6	4	4.03	1.10
Interpersonal	1 item measure	1	5	4	3.44	0.94
Distributive	3 item additive index, $\alpha = .92$	3	15	9	8.12	2.91
Procedural	4 item additive index, $\alpha = .89$	3	15	9	9.03	2.77
Dependent Var						
Life Sat	3 item additive index, $\alpha = .93$	3	18	12	11.78	3.19

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, Supervisor for supervisory status, Child Under 16 for having one or more child under 16 years of age at home, Org Justice for organizational justice, Informational for informational justice, Interpersonal for interpersonal justice, Distributive for distributive justice, Procedural for procedural justice, Dependent Var for dependent variable, Life Sat for life satisfaction, and α for Cronbach's alpha value, a measure of internal reliability. The number of participants was 322.

each was associated with greater life satisfaction. Distributive justice had the largest sized correlation, followed closely by procedural justice, interpersonal justice, and informational justice, and having correlations about half as large as procedural and distributive justice.

An ordinary least squares (OLS) regression equation was estimated with life satisfaction as the dependent variable and the personal characteristics and the

Table 2. Correlation Matrix of Study Variables.

Variable	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.	12.
1. Gender	1.00											
2. Educ	−.12*	1.00										
3. Tenure	.10	−.09	1.00									
4. Age	.12*	−.35**	.38**	1.00								
5. Super	.17**	.01	.12*	.07	1.00							
6. Marital	.18**	−.12*	.01	.24**	.09	1.00						
7. Child	.10	.14*	−.22**	−.61**	−.06	−.02	1.00					
8. Prison	.57**	−.10	−.01	.18**	−.05	.05	.08	1.00				
9. Inform	.00	.05	−.04	−.11	−.17**	−.10	.04	−.05	1.00			
10. Interper	−.03	.05	.01	−.06	−.05	−.02	−.03	−.12*	.24**	1.00		
11. Dist	−.12*	.06	.07	.02	−.05	−.10	−.05	−.20**	.16**	.60**		
12. Proc	−.08	.00	.02	−.06	−.06	−.07	.04	−.16**	.22**	.61**	1.00	
13. Life Sat	−.14*	−.01	.05	.11	.00	−.08	−.06	−.08	.16**	.19**	.39**	.36

*Note.*Educ stands for educational level, Super for supervisory status, Marital for marital status, Child for having one or more child under 16 years of age at home, Inform for informational justice, Interper for interpersonal justice, Dist for distributive justice, Proc for procedural justice, and Life Sat for life satisfaction. Review Table 1 for a description of the variables, how they were coded, and their descriptive statistics.
*$p \leq .05$; **$p \leq .01$

four dimensions of justice as the independent variables. The results are reported in Table 3. Multicollinearity was not an issue. Multicollinearity is viewed as a problem when Variance Inflation Factor scores (VIF) exceed 5 (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). As indicated in Table 3, none of the VIF scores were higher than 3.29. The issues of outliers, influential cases, normality, the linearity and homoscedasticity of residuals, and the independence of errors (all of which can affect the regression results) were tested and corrected (Berry, 1993; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013).

The R-squared value was .23, indicating that the independent variables as a group accounted for about 23% of the observed variance in the life satisfaction variable. Educational level, tenure, supervisory status, marital status, having one or more children at home, and prison had insignificant effects. Gender and age had significant effects. Female staff on average reported a higher satisfaction with life. Increases in age were associated with an increase in life satisfaction. Informational, distributive, and procedural justice each had

Table 3. Multivariate Regression Results with Life Satisfaction as the Dependent Variable.

Independent Variables	B	SE	β	VIF
Personal Characteristics				
Gender	−.97	.44	−.15*	
Educational Level	.19	.38	.03	
Tenure	−.01	.04	−.01	
Age	.09	.04	.17*	
Supervisory Status	.20	.38	.03	
Marital Status	−.98	.73	−.07	
Has Child Under 16	.36	.46	.05	
Prison	.12	.46	.02	
Organizational Justice				
Informational	.33	.16	.11*	
Interpersonal	−.28	.24	−.08	
Distributive	.29	.10	.26**	
Procedural	.21	.10	.18*	
F Value (df)		6.98 (288)**		
R-Squared		.23		

Note. OLS regression was used for the analysis. 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. Table 1 has information on the variables, how they were coded, and their descriptive statistics.
*$p \leq .05$; **$p \leq .01$.

significant positive effects. Interpersonal justice had an insignificant effect. The magnitude of effects can be ranked using the absolute values of the significant standardized regression coefficients (values in the β column in Table 3). Distributive justice had the largest sized effect, followed by procedural justice, age, and gender; informational justice had the smallest sized effects. The OLS regression results reported in Table 3 are based on a listwise deletion. A listwise deletion can be used when less than 10% of the data are missing (Bennett, 2001; Schafer, 1999), and the regression analysis included 288 cases (i.e., 8.9% of the cases dropped). Nevertheless, when using estimations (series mean) for missing data rather than listwise deletion, the results were the same in terms of statistical significance. Gender, age, informational justice, distributive justice, and procedural justice were still significant predictors of life satisfaction.

Discussion

Overall, the results support the postulation that organizational justice is linked to the life satisfaction of Chinese prison staff. This provides support for the contention that what happens at work affects staff in terms of happiness in life. As previously indicated, perceiving the organization as acting fairly likely results in lower stress and more positive feelings toward work, which ultimately increases the level of satisfaction with life. Conversely, viewing the organization as treating staff unjustly likely results in frustration, anger, and resentment for the person, and these negative feelings detract from the quality of a person's overall life (Lambert & Hogan, 2011). Organizational justice is at the core of most organizations (Taxman & Gordon, 2009). In fact, Lincoln and Kalleberg (1990) contended that organizational justice is at the center of the legitimacy of an organization. Unfair work treatment likely spills over, influencing other aspects of a person's life, ultimately decreasing the quality of life.

The effects of the four dimensions of justice did differ. Specifically, three of the four hypotheses were supported by the regression results. As predicted, informational, distributive, and procedural justice were positively associated with satisfaction with life. Providing information concerning changes likely results in fewer unexpected outcomes at work and allows staff to be better prepared to do their jobs. In addition, providing notifications sends a message that staff members are respected and valued, resulting in a more positive psychological state andultimately increasing life satisfaction. Similarly, fairness in the processes and procedures appear to be positively related to life satisfaction for prison staff. Transparent procedures give staff confidence that the processes used are fair. In the end, the positive feelings from procedural justice

follow staff home, raising their satisfaction with life overall. Likewise, distributive justice had significant positive effects, indicating fair outcomes likely play a role in the overall quality of a person's life. It makes sense that feeling fairly rewarded at work for efforts raises the overall satisfaction with life. Conversely, perceived unfair outcomes can be highly frustrating.

Contrary to *Hypothesis 2*, interpersonal justice did not have a significant effect on life satisfaction in the regression analysis. There are several possible explanations for this finding. First, this variable might have a significant positive effect, but it was not observed in the current study due to random chance. This is why replication studies are critical. Alternatively, interpersonal justice might not have a direct effect on life satisfaction. This does not mean that this dimension of organizational fairness is not important and does not affect staff; interpersonal justice could have indirect effects. Lambert et al. (2020) presented a path model in which interactional justice helped shape the views of procedural and distributive justice, which in turn lowered the job stress of U.S. prison staff. Interactions that involve dignity and respect likely influence a person's views of the fairness of the procedures and outcomes. In the current study, the variable for interpersonal justice had a small but significant correlation with life satisfaction ($r = .19$, $p \leq .01$). This association was no longer significant in the regression analysis once the shared effects of the independent variables were considered. That is, once the shared variance between distributive and procedural justice wereconsidered, interpersonal justice may not have a direct effect, although it may have an indirect effect through procedural and distributive justice. In other words, interpersonal justice could help shape the views of distributive and procedural justice.

As previously noted, two other studies examined the effects of distributive and procedural justice on the life satisfaction of U.S. staff. Our findings are consistent with those of Lambert and Hogan (2011), who found that distributive and procedural justice both had positive effects on life satisfaction; however, our findings are only partially consistent with those reported by Lambert et al. (2010), who observed that only procedural justice (but not distributive justice) was associated the life satisfaction of staff at a private prison. In addition, distributive justice had a slightly larger effect on life satisfaction, which was also reported by Lambert and Hogan (2011). Based on the very limited research, it appears that the effects of procedural and distributive justice on staff life satisfaction may be contextual and situational, varying across different types of correctional facilities and their locations, including nations. As no published studies on the effects of informational and interpersonal justice on correctional staff life satisfaction exist, it is unknown whether our findings are consistent. More research is needed on the effects of these dimensions of organizational justice on prison staff life satisfaction.

Gender and age were the only two significant personal characteristics. In general, female prison staff reported greater life satisfaction. Female staff in Chinese prisons could be more satisfied because they had to win the right to work in corrections, as was the case in many Western nations; however, without further research, no definite conclusions can be drawn regarding why gender was found to be a significant variable. Age had a positive effect, which means older staff were more satisfied with their lives. As people age, they often have a clearer path for their lives than younger individuals. Investments in life could pay off. The effect of age could also be due to a cohort effect, where the importance of life aspects, such as work, differ among generational cohorts. Similar to gender, without more research, nothing definite can be concluded regarding why age was found to be a significant variable. The other personal characteristics did not have significant effects, and as a group, personal characteristics explained far less of the variance of the life satisfaction variable than did the dimensions of organizational justice. This is good news for correctional organizations. It is not possible or ethical to change personal characteristics to increase life satisfaction, but it is ethical and preferable to improve the perceptions of organizational fairness among staff.

Assuming the current results are replicated, there are implications. Prison administrators should try to increase views of informational, procedural, and distributive justice. Staff members should be asked about their perceptions of the different dimensions of justice and how to improve them, as well as what they perceive as fair and what they perceive as unjust as well as why. Staff should be made aware of the organization's processes and procedures, and staff input should be sought. Thibaut and Walker (1975) contended that allowing staff a voice in the organization would improve perceptions of procedural and distributive justice. Information must be shared. Often, administrators have more information than line staff. Providing information sends a message that staff members are a valued resource. Martin and Bennett (1996) pointed out that "the economic costs of acting in a procedurally fair manner – treating individuals with respect, providing advance notice of and justification for actions – are minimal" (p. 100). Explaining that some distributive outcomes, such as pay and benefits, are beyond the direct control of the prison organization may improve perceptions of distributive justice. There should be an open dialogue concerning organizational justice in correctional settings. Supervisors and managers should be aware of the importance of fairness and its dimensions, including how to improve them. These administrators should be evaluated and rewarded for their efforts to build organizational justice. It will likely take time and efforts to improve justice views, but increasing views of organizational justice must be undertaken.

Limitations

As with many studies, the current research has limitations. It is a single study based on staff members at two prisons in located in Guangzhou, China. Staff at other institutions in China and in other nations need to be studied. Better and more detailed measures of organizational justice, especially informational and interpersonal justice, are needed. Life satisfaction should be measured using more items as well. While supported by theory and past research, a cross-sectional design was employed, which means that causality cannot be empirically shown. Longitudinal research is needed to show causality. Because perceptions of organizational justice should be increased, future studies should explore how to increase perceptions of organizational justice among prison staff. Future research should examine how each of the four dimensions of organizational justice are linked with other outcomes, such as work-family conflict, job burnout, absenteeism, turnover intent/turnover, job performance, and organizational citizenship behaviors (i.e., prosocial behaviors of going beyond what is expected at work). About 23% of the variance in life satisfaction was explained in the current study, which means that 77% of the remaining variance was caused by other variables. In future research, these other variables should be identified so that administrators can make additional changes to increase staff's life satisfaction. There is a need for far more research on organizational justice, not only among Chinese prison staff, but also correctional staff in other nations.

Conclusion

In closing, staff members are a valuable resource for prisons across the globe. The myriad of duties and tasks performed by staff are necessary for the operation of a prison. Not only do staff affect facilities, but the work environment of prisons also affects staff. There is a limited amount of research examining how organizational justice relates to staff life satisfaction. The previous two studies involving U.S. prison staff included procedural and distributive justice. The organizational justice informational and interpersonal dimensions have not been studied in any published correctional life satisfaction research. To contribute to the literature, this study was conducted to examine how the four dimensions of organizational justice are associated with Chinese prison staff's life satisfaction. Increasing staff's life satisfaction benefits both staff and the correctional organization. It also creates a more pleasant and human working experience (Erdogan et al., 2012). As pointed out by Erdogan et al. (2012), "life satisfaction is an important outcome to consider alongside other key management variables such as job attitudes and

behaviors. In addition, given that life satisfaction is related to important outcomes, comprehensive research should consider life satisfaction as an essential factor in organizational research" (p. 1070). Based on the current results, it appears that informational, procedural, and distributive justice have positive effects among the responding prison staff. There is a need for more research on both organizational justice and life satisfaction among prison staff across the world. At the very least, it is hoped that this study sparks interest in future studies in this area.

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Appendix

The life satisfaction and informational justice items were answered using a 6-point Likert Scale of strongly disagree (coded 1), disagree (2), somewhat disagree (3), somewhat agree (4), agree (5), and strongly agree (6).The responses for the interpersonal, distributive, and procedural justice items was a 5-point scale of very unfair (coded 1), unfair (2), somewhat fair (3), fair (4), and very fair (5).

Life Satisfaction: 1) I am satisfied with my life; 2) Taking all things together, I am very happy with my life; and 3) If asked, I would say I am satisfied with the quality of my overall life.

Informational Justice: 1) My supervisor gives me advance notice of changes.

Interpersonal Justice: How fair is the prison in treating you with respect and dignity?

Distributive Justice: (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 in you when you consider the responsibilities that you have at work; and (3) How fair has the prison been in rewarding you when you consider the work you have done well?

Procedural Justice: (1) How fair is the promotion process here; (2) How fair is the process of the evaluation of your job performance at this prison; and (3) How fair is the prison in explaining decisions that have a significant effect on you?