



# An Exploratory Study of Organizational Justice and Work Attitudes Among Chinese Prison Staff

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## Abstract

While both forms of organizational justice are important, the empirical literature indicates that procedural justice generally has wider and greater effects on job attitudes compared with distributive justice. Regression analysis of self-reported survey data from 322 staff at two Chinese prisons in Guangzhou suggests that, while both forms of organizational justice were important for Chinese correctional staff's organizational commitment, distributive (but not procedural) justice had significant positive associations with both job involvement and job satisfaction. This emphasis on distributive justice differs from what has been empirically found for U.S. correctional staff.

## Keywords

China, prison staff, organizational justice, procedural justice, distributive justice

Correctional facilities are labor-intensive organizations, and their staff, who carry out the myriad of tasks to help create a humane, safe, and secure

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correctional institution, are a valuable resource. Staff members not only have salient effects on correctional facilities, but correctional work environments shape the attitudes and behaviors of staff. Three vital work attitudes are job involvement, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment (Matz, Wells, Minor, & Angel, 2013). Job involvement is the degree to which employees identify psychologically with their jobs (Kanungo, 1982). Job satisfaction is the extent a person likes or dislikes his or her job (Griffin, 2001). Organizational commitment refers to a bond of loyalty between the person and the employing organization (Matz et al., 2013).

Work attitudes have significant effects on staff intentions and behaviors, which, in turn, influence their institutions. For example, job involvement, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment have been reported to be linked with greater support for rehabilitation, prosocial organizational behaviors, greater satisfaction with life, increased compliance with rules, lower job burnout, reduced absenteeism, lower desire to quit, and lower voluntary turnover (Camp, 1994; Culliver, Sigler, & McNeely, 1991; Lambert, Edwards, Camp, & Saylor, 2005; Lambert, Hogan, Paoline, & Baker, 2005; Leip & Stinchcomb, 2013; Matz et al., 2013; Moore & Sales, 2005; Whitehead & Lindquist, 1986). The research supports the contention that work attitudes are important and that improving them would be beneficial. It can be claimed that everyone and everything is affected by what happens in prisons, including correctional organizations themselves, correctional staff and their families, inmates and their loved ones, and society as a whole. Before recommendations can be made for ways to improve correctional staff work attitudes, research that examines factors associated with them is required.

Research suggests that perceptions of organizational justice may be linked with correctional staff work attitudes. Organizational justice can be defined as the perception that the employing organization treats employees in a fair and just manner (Stojkovic, Kalinich, & Klofas, 2012). Distributive justice and procedural justice are two salient dimensions of organizational justice. Distributive justice refers to the perception that organizational outcomes are fair (Griffin & Hepburn, 2005), while procedural justice indicates that organizational processes and procedures to reach salient outcomes are viewed as fair (Baker, Gordon, & Taxman, 2015; Greenberg, 1990). To date, limited research suggests that distributive and procedural justice may be important in helping shape correctional staff work attitudes, at least in the United States. Yet, there has been little research on the relationship between organizational justice and work attitudes among correctional staff in the People's Republic of China (henceforth China). This exploratory study was undertaken to fill the void and test whether the association between organizational justice and work attitudes found among U.S. correctional staff is also found among

Chinese prison staff. Conducting international research allows scholars to determine whether the effects of workplace variables are universal (i.e., cuts across nations) or contextual (i.e., varies between cultures). In addition, international studies can help narrow the gap between nations and build bridges so that information flows more freely (Cao & Cullen, 2001).

## **Literature Review**

### *Job Involvement*

Kanungo (1982) described job involvement as the cognitive identification with the job. Similarly, Tsai, Wang, Chen, and Chou (2015) defined job involvement as psychological identification with the job. Simply, job involvement is the degree of psychological identification an individual has with his or her job related to the job's importance in one's life. As noted by DeCarufel and Schaan (1990), "an individual with a high degree of job involvement would place the job at the center of his or her life's interests. The well-known phrase 'I live, eat, and breathe my job' would describe someone whose job involvement is very high" (p. 86). Job involvement is theorized to be influenced by work environment variables (Kanungo, 1982; Tsai et al., 2015).

### *Job Satisfaction*

Locke (1976) defined job satisfaction as "a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job or job experiences" (p. 1300). Basically, job satisfaction is "the extent to which people like their jobs" (Spector, 1996, p. 214). Work environment variables are theorized to play a role in shaping the job satisfaction of correctional staff (Griffin, 2001; Stinchcomb & Leip, 2013).

### *Organizational Commitment*

Organizational commitment is the bond to the overall organization. There are different types of commitment depending on how the bond is formed. The three major forms are continuance commitment, normative commitment, and affective commitment (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Matz et al., 2013). For continuance commitment, the bond is formed because of investments, such as pension, salary, and social connections, made by working for the organization—and leaving would be too costly. For normative commitment, the bond is formed because of socialization to connect and be supportive of the organization and is encompassed in the adage of "do not bite the hand that feeds you." For

affective commitment, a psychological bond is formed because of positive treatment by the organization and is based on the social exchange principle where people reciprocate because of being treated well (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Lambert, Hogan, & Keena, 2015). Using marriage as a metaphor, continuance commitment would represent a person staying married because of investments in the marriage and because ending the marriage would be too financially costly. Normative commitment would represent a person staying married because he or she felt morally obligated to remain married. Affective commitment would represent a person remaining married due to emotional bonds with his or her spouse (Lambert et al., 2015). To continue with this metaphor, both happily and unhappily married couples could have continuance and/or moral commitment, but affective commitment only applies to happily married couples.

Leaving the metaphor, affective commitment takes time to form and develops as the person experiences positive treatment by the organization (Matz et al., 2013; Mowday, Porter, & Steers, 1982). Affective commitment has been linked to a wide array of positive outcomes. It is the most common form of organizational commitment studied among correctional staff (Lambert et al., 2015), and it is the form analyzed in this study. Affective commitment is a psychological bond with the organization that includes identification with the organization (i.e., pride in the organization, internalization of its goals, and acceptance of its core values) and willingness to put forth effort to help the organization (Allen & Meyer, 1990). It represents worker/organization shared interests and values. With this form of commitment, employees bond with the organization because they voluntarily choose to do so and not because they feel required or obligated to do so (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Matz et al., 2013).

### *Organizational Justice*

Greenberg (1990) contended that perceptions of organizational justice are “a basic requirement for the effective functioning of organizations and the personal satisfaction of the individuals they employ” (p. 399). As previously indicated, organizational justice refers to the perception that the employing organization treats employees in a fair and just manner, with distributive and procedural justice as its two salient dimensions (Colquitt & Greenberg, 2005).

Distributive justice refers to perceptions that organizational outcomes affecting a person are equitable and fair (Greenberg, 1990; Griffin & Hepburn, 2005). Perceptions of distributive justice are based on the equity exchange principle, where a person evaluates organizational outputs based on inputs,

comparing them with what others in similar situations have received and what is seen as just (Baker et al., 2015; Rupp, Shao, Jones, & Liao, 2014). If a person views the outcome/rewards as fair, he or she tends to have high perceptions of organizational distributive justice, and, if he or she feels that the output/rewards are unfair, then the person is more likely to have lower perceptions of distributive justice (Baker et al., 2015).

Procedural justice involves perceptions that organizational processes and procedures to reach salient outcomes are fair (Greenberg, 1990; Rupp et al., 2014). Most individuals desire such processes and procedures to be consistent, open, and fair, regardless of the outcome (Taxman & Gordon, 2009). In fact, the process can be just as important as the outcome itself (Baker et al., 2015). For example, Landy, Barnes-Farrell, and Cleveland (1980) found that the perceived fairness of employee evaluation procedures was very important for employees, regardless of whether their performance appraisals were negative or positive. Basically, distributive justice deals with perceptions of the “ends” and procedural justice deals with perceptions of the “means,” and both forms of organizational justice go to the heart of the organizational legitimacy (Colquitt & Greenberg, 2005).

Higher levels of perceptions of distributive and procedural justice typically result in more positive views of the job and the organization while lower levels of perceived distributive and procedural justice can result in negative feelings, such as frustration, anger, and resentment. This, in turn, can lead to lower job involvement, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment (Baker et al., 2015). Both forms of organizational justice should have positive associations with the work attitudes of job involvement, job satisfaction, and affective organizational commitment among correctional staff.

Little empirical research has focused on the effects of organizational justice's on U.S. correctional staff job attitudes. In one study of U.S. prison staff, both forms of justice were significant predictors of job satisfaction, but only procedural justice was an important predictor of affective commitment (Lambert, 2003). Distributive justice had no significant effect on organizational affective commitment in a study of Arizona correctional officers (Griffin & Hepburn, 2005). Distributive justice was found to be less important than procedural justice for correctional staff. In another investigation at a U.S. private prison, procedural justice had a significant positive relationship with job satisfaction, while distributive justice had a nonsignificant association; both forms of justice were positively associated with affective commitment (Lambert, Hogan, & Griffin, 2007). Among U.S. prison staff, a composite measure of organizational justice (i.e., measured both distributive and procedural justice) had positive associations with affective and normative commitment but not with continuance commitment (Lambert, Hogan, &

Jiang, 2008). Finally, procedural but not distributive justice had a positive effect on job involvement in a study of two U.S. prisons (Lambert, Hogan, & Cheeseman, 2013).

Three conclusions can be gleaned from this review of past studies. First, there is a need for additional research on how organizational justice affects correctional staff, particularly their work attitudes. Second, procedural justice has wider and greater effects than does distributive justice. Third, as all studies focused on U.S. correctional staff, it is prudent to explore how distributive justice and procedural justice are associated with work attitudes for correctional staff in other nations, especially non-Western countries.

## **Institutional Corrections in China and the Focus of the Current Study**

Prisons in China can be traced back to Xia dynasty (2029-1559 B.C.E.) (Jin, 1997). Traditionally, China had two types of confinement. The first was similar to the U.S. jail system holding offenders awaiting trial or offenders who were sentenced and waiting for execution or transfer to another facility. The second type of confinement focused on punishing and reforming offenders through labor, similar to today's reform-through-labor correctional system in China. China's traditional prison system was heavily influenced by Confucianism, where moral education is a primary goal and punishment is a secondary goal (Jin, 1997). Contemporary Chinese prisons emphasize the integration of punishment, treatment, education, and labor (Hill, 2006).

According to Shao (2011), China has a total of 680 prisons (31 hold juvenile inmates and 35 hold female inmates). In 2016, China had about 1.65 million inmates, of which approximately 107,000 were female and 13,000 were juveniles; the incarceration rate was 118 per 100,000 (World Prison Brief, 2016a). Chinese prisons employ about 300,000 staff (Shao, 2011), compared with the United States where about 430,000 staff work in almost 1,700 correctional facilities holding about 1.47 million inmates (University at Albany, 2016; World Prison Brief, 2016b).

Similar to U.S. correctional officers, Chinese prison staff have challenging work environments and enforcing rules and regulations with inmates who are held against their will. Chinese correctional staff work three different shifts and are "on call" for emergencies that may occur at any time of day. Chinese prison staff work approximately 12 hours a day compared with other Chinese government employees who work an 8-hour day (Wang & Kong, 2006). Different from their U.S. counterparts, Chinese prison staff are also educators and factory managers (Jin, 1997). Therefore, Chinese prison employment

may be different from that of prisons in the United States and other nations, and findings regarding organizational justice may or may not apply to the Chinese prison work environment. This exploratory study, accordingly, examines how distributive and procedural justice are associated with the work attitudes of job involvement, job satisfaction, and affective organizational commitment among staff at two Chinese prisons near the city of Guangzhou (population 14 million) in southern China (World Population Review, 2016).

## Method

### *Participants*

Staff at two prisons located near the city of Guangzhou were surveyed. One prison employed 280 staff and housed approximately 1,500 male inmates. The second prison employed 160 staff and housed approximately 700 female inmates. The two prisons were considered typical in China, holding adult offenders convicted of various type of offenses, mostly violent and property offenses, such as robbery or fraud. The common sentence length was between 3 and 5 years, and both prisons were high security level.

The survey was written in Chinese and pilot-tested with several prison staff to eliminate issues of understanding and to obtain feedback. The survey was then administered to all staff ( $n = 440$ ). For both locations, the staff were organized into teams working in different sections of the prison; teams held both daily and weekly meetings. Surveys were distributed during the team meetings and returned in unmarked envelopes. Staff were informed of the study's purpose that participation was voluntary and that all responses would be anonymous.

With a total of 322 usable surveys returned, the response rate of 70% was similar for both prisons. The respondents' median age was 45, ranging from 24 to 58. Approximately 54% of the participants were women. Median tenure in the prison system was 20 years, and ranged from 1 to 40 years. About 37% indicated that they had earned a bachelor's or higher college degree. The sample was comprised of 64% who worked at the first prison and 36% from the second.

### *Variables*

*Dependent variables.* The items for these indices are presented in the appendix and were answered using a 6-point Likert-type 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 dependent variables were job involvement, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment. An additive index of job involvement was formed by summing three items based on Kanungo (1982). The Cronbach's alpha, a measure for internal reliability, for this index was .74. The job satisfaction index was formed by summing three items based on Brayfield and Rothe (1951), and had a Cronbach's alpha value of .92. The affective commitment index was formed by summing five items based on Mowday et al. (1982); it had a Cronbach's alpha of .85. Factor analysis was conducted on each of the indexes, and the items for each index loaded on a single factor as predicted.

**Independent variables.** The independent variables of interest were distributive and procedural justice. The items are presented in the appendix and were adapted from Lambert et al. (2007). The responses for the organizational justice items were obtained using a 5-point scale of *very unfair* (coded 1), *unfair* (coded 2), *somewhat fair* (coded 3), *fair* (coded 4), and *very fair* (coded 5). The responses were summed together to form additive indexes for distributive and procedural justice. Distributive justice was measured using three items and had a Cronbach's alpha value of .92. Procedural justice was measured using three items and had a Cronbach's alpha value of .85. Factor analysis was conducted, and the items for each index loaded on a single factor as predicted.

Variables for age, gender, correctional agency tenure, educational level, and a dichotomous measure representing the participant's prison were included more as control than explanatory variables. For how the variables were coded, see Table 1.

## Results

The descriptive statistics for the variables in the study are reported in Table 1. There appeared to be significant variation in the dependent and independent variables (i.e., none were constants). For the index variables, the Cronbach's alpha values were .74 or higher. The items for the latent concepts (i.e., indexes) loaded on the predicted factor based on factor analysis results.

A correlation matrix is presented in Table 2. Tenure, prison, distributive justice, and procedural justice each had statistically significant correlations with job involvement. Increases in tenure and both forms of justice were associated with higher levels of job involvement. Those working at the second prison generally reported higher job involvement than those who worked at the first prison.



**Table 1.** Descriptive Statistics.

Variable	Description	Minimum	Maximum	Median	M	SD
Age	Age in continuous years	24	58	45	43.94	6.82
Gender	54% female (coded 0)	0	1	0	0.46	0.50
	46% male (coded 1)					
Tenure	Tenure with agency in years	1	40	20	19.81	8.08
Educational level	63% less than bachelor's (coded 0)	0	1	0	0.37	0.48
	37% bachelor's or higher (coded 1)					
	36% from Prison 2 (coded 0)	0	1	1	0.64	0.48
Prison	64% from Prison 1 (coded 1)					
Distributive justice	3-item additive index, $\alpha = .92$	3	15	9	8.12	2.91
Procedural justice	4-item additive index, $\alpha = .89$	3	15	9	9.03	2.77
Job involvement	3-item additive index, $\alpha = .74$	3	18	12	11.31	3.04
Job satisfaction	3-item additive index, $\alpha = .92$	3	18	11	10.75	3.59
Organizational commitment	5-item additive index, $\alpha = .85$	5	30	18	18.13	5.07

Note. The number of participants was 322.

**Table 2.** Correlation Matrix for Variables.

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Age	1.00									
2. Gender	.12*	1.00								
3. Tenure	.66**	.02	1.00							
4. Educational level	-.35**	-.12*	-.34**	1.00						
5. Prison	.18**	.57**	.03	-.10	1.00					
6. Distributive Jus	.02	-.12*	-.04	.06	-.20**	1.00				
7. Procedural justice	-.06	-.08	-.07	.00	-.16**	.51**	1.00			
8. Job involvement	.10	-.07	.15**	.02	-.12*	.40**	.33**	1.00		
9. Job satisfaction	.11	-.16**	.10	-.01	-.05	.49**	.42**	.51**	1.00	
10. Organizational commitment	.12*	-.12*	.12*	-.02	-.08	.55**	.50**	.48**	.82**	1.00

Note. See Table 1 for how the variables were coded and their descriptive statistics.

\* $p \leq .05$ . \*\* $p \leq .01$ .

**Table 3.** Ordinary Least Squares Regression Results.

Variable	Job involvement			Job satisfaction			Organizational commitment		
	B	$\beta$	VIF	B	$\beta$	VIF	B	$\beta$	VIF
Age	-0.01	-.01	1.96	0.02	.03	1.96	0.04	.06	1.96
Gender	0.03	.01	1.49	-1.46	-.20**	1.49	-1.16	-.11*	1.49
Tenure	0.07	.20**	1.85	0.05	.10	1.85	0.07	.11	1.86
Educational level	0.32	.05	1.21	0.01	.01	1.21	0.05	.01	1.21
Prison	-0.25	-.04	1.57	1.18	.16**	1.57	0.80	.08	1.57
Distributive justice	0.39	.37**	3.04	0.51	.41**	3.04	0.67	.38**	3.04
Procedural justice	0.03	.03	2.97	0.14	.11	2.97	0.38	.21**	2.97
F value	10.73**			17.97**			23.01**		
R <sup>2</sup>	.19			.29			.34		

Note. B = unstandardized regression coefficient;  $\beta$  = standardized regression coefficient; VIF = variance inflation factor. See Table 1 for the coding and descriptive statistics of the variables.

\* $p \leq .05$ . \*\* $p \leq .01$ .

Gender and both forms of organizational justice had significant correlations with job satisfaction. In general, women reported higher job satisfaction than their male counterparts. Increases in both distributive and procedural justice were associated with heightened job satisfaction.

Age, gender, tenure, distributive justice, and procedural justice each had significant correlations with organizational commitment. In general, older staff, female staff, and staff with higher tenure reported a higher affective bond. Likewise, both forms of justice had positive correlations with commitment.

Ordinary least squares regression equations were estimated with job involvement, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment as the dependent variables. The results are reported in Table 3. Multicollinearity occurs when two or more variables share too large an overlap in variance, and it can affect regression results. Multicollinearity is seen as a problem when variance inflation factor (VIF) scores exceed 6 (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). Based on the VIF scores reported in Table 3, multicollinearity was not a problem. In addition, the issues of outliers, influential cases, normality, linearity and homoscedasticity of residuals, and independence of errors in the regression analysis were tested (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013).

The independent variables explained about 19% of the observed variance in the job involvement index (i.e.,  $R^2 = .19$ ). Tenure and distributive justice were the only two variables to have a statistically significant association with

job involvement. The longer a person worked in the prison system, the greater his or her job involvement. Increases in distributive justice were associated with greater job involvement. Based on the standardized regression coefficients, distributive justice had a far greater effect on the dependent variable as compared with tenure.

The independent variables account for approximately 29% of the variance found in the job satisfaction index. The variables for gender, prison, and distributive justice had significant relationships with the dependent variable. In general, female staff reported greater satisfaction than their male counterparts. Those working in the first prison reported, on average, greater job satisfaction. Distributive justice had a positive association and its effects more twice those of either gender or prison. Age, tenure, educational level, and procedural justice had nonsignificant relationships.

The independent variables accounted for about 34% of the variance of the commitment measure. Gender, distributive justice, and procedural justice had significant associations. Women generally reported higher commitment than men. Increases in both forms of organizational justice were associated with greater commitment. Based on the standard coefficients, distributive justice had the greatest sized effect, followed by procedural justice, and then gender.

## **Discussion and Conclusion**

Findings from the study support the contention that organizational justice is a salient dimension of the correctional work environment, shaping staff perceptions of job involvement, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment. The amount of variance explained for job involvement, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment was 19%, 29%, and 34%, respectively. While not reported, when age, gender, tenure, educational level, and prison were the only independent variables in the regression equations, 4%, 5%, and 4% of the variance of job involvement, job satisfaction, and affective commitment, respectively, were explained. This suggests that perceptions of organizational justice are important workplace factors in helping to shape the work attitudes of the surveyed Chinese prison staff. As such, Chinese correctional administrators need to be aware that distributive and/or procedural justice are important factors in helping to raise the levels of job involvement, job satisfaction, and affective commitment. Moreover, the amount of variance explained was the highest for commitment, followed by satisfaction, and the lowest for involvement. This suggests that distributive and procedural justice have a greater effect on commitment than they do on involvement. This makes sense as these forms of justice go to the heart of legitimacy

of an organization, and it is easier to bond with an organization that is perceived as fair and just. As such, it would be expected that justice views would explain a greater amount of variance for organizational commitment than job involvement. A higher level of perceptions of distributive justice is likely to be related to staff feeling more satisfied with their jobs.

The influence of different forms of organizational justice was not entirely consistent across the three work attitudes. Distributive but not procedural justice had a significant association with job involvement and job satisfaction. This suggests that the surveyed Chinese correctional staff experience increased involvement and satisfaction of the job when they perceive outcomes to be just and fair. That is, feeling that one is fairly rewarded for work efforts compared with others results in greater levels of these work attitudes. Similarly, it can be frustrating to see unfair outcomes. Without fair outcomes, it is less likely a Chinese staff member will assess his or her job in a favorable light.

Both forms of organizational justice had a significant positive association with affective commitment. As previously indicated, this type of commitment forms because the organization treats a person in a fair and just manner. As indicated by the principle of reciprocity, a person who feels shortchanged in what they expected is less likely to form desirable work attitudes, while a person who feels the outcomes are fair will reciprocate by forming more desirable work attitudes (Robbins, Summers, Miller, & Hendrix, 2000). Moreover, both forms of organizational justice go to the heart of organizational legitimacy (Colquitt & Greenberg, 2005). These research findings support the contention that correctional staff, including Chinese correctional staff, are likely more likely to commit to an organization that they view as legitimate.

While the finding that both forms of justice were positively associated with affective commitment is similar to the finding among U.S. correctional staff, there were also differences. The finding that distributive, but not procedural, justice had positive associations with job involvement and satisfaction is unusual. Past studies focusing on U.S. correctional staff have indicated that procedural justice is more important than distributive justice in forming job involvement and especially job satisfaction. Furthermore, while significant, the magnitude of the effect of procedural justice on commitment was smaller than that of distributive justice among the Chinese correctional staff. This seems to reflect the importance of the two forms of commitment with work attitudes may differ between Chinese and U.S. correctional staff.

In a study of Chinese factory workers, Frenkel, Li, and Restubog (2012) argued that distributive justice was more important than procedural justice because of economic reasons. China has developed rapidly from a rural

economy with low pay to a growing economy with increasing costs (World Factbook, 2015). Workers' seeking greater rewards for themselves and their families is one of the forces that has resulted from the changing Chinese economy (Frenkel et al., 2012). In the more developed U.S. economy, correctional staff are represented by unions and collective bargaining agreements, offering greater control over outcomes and procedures than is the case in China. In addition, China has a tradition of Confucianism, not a tradition of rule of law (Frenkel et al., 2012; Jiang & Wu, 2015). For Confucians, hierarchy-based interpersonal relationships (*guanxi*) are important in governing one's interactions and behaviors. This means that people are treated based on their status in the society or an organization. Individuals do not have equal rights, and procedural justice is not emphasized.

Furthermore, China is a collectivist culture, compared with the U.S. emphasis on individualism (Schilpzand, Martins, Kirkman, Lowe, & Chen, 2013). In a collectivist culture, deference is given to those in charge because authority is viewed as in the best interests of the collective group. As such, procedural justice may be less important (Frenkel et al., 2012). Part of procedural justice involves allowing people to have a "voice" in the process (Taxman & Gordon, 2009). Unlike the United States, which is a democratic nation, China is an oligarchy where respect is provided to those in power, and the concept of procedural justice does not take center stage (Frenkel et al., 2012). Expecting a voice in the process may be a more common desire in Western nations.

It could be that Chinese prison staff, who tend to have lower purchasing power compared with their U.S. counterparts, are seeking more economic fairness based on the work that they perform. In sum, the current study suggests that organizational justice is important among Chinese staff, but the salience of distributive and procedural justice differs between Chinese and U.S. correctional personnel. Perhaps U.S. prison staff, in general, have already largely achieved distributive justice in terms of pay, benefits, and so on, which is why procedural justice is so relatively important. Additional research is needed. Furthermore, it is unclear whether differences uncovered in the current investigation would be found among prison staff in other nations. Far too little international research on correctional staff has been conducted to answer this question. As Gibson, Maznevski, and Kirkman (2009) noted, research is needed to determine when culture matters and when it does not in terms of the impact of work environment variables on workers across nations.

## Limitations

As with many studies, the current study has limitations. As previously mentioned, it is a single exploration of staff at two prisons located in Guangzhou,

China. The results may be situational and contextual, varying across Chinese prisons as has been found in U.S. correctional staff research. As such, the findings may not be generalizable to all Chinese prison staff, and further research at other Chinese prisons is warranted to replicate the findings.

Here, the use of cross-sectional surveys only allowed for associations to be shown; longitudinal studies could demonstrate causal effects of distributive and procedural justice on work attitudes. The intent of future research should be to identify the factors which help shape procedural justice on work attitudes in prisons in comparative national study designs. Other investigations could study how organizational justice variables are related to other outcomes for Chinese correctional staff, such as life satisfaction, work–family conflict, job stress, absenteeism, turnover intent, job burnout, and organizational citizenship behaviors—further illuminating the effects of different dimensions of organizational justice aspects between China and U.S. prison work environments.

The variables used in this research explained about 19%, 29%, and 34% of the variance for job involvement, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment. While high, other variables also shape staff work attitudes. It would, therefore, be useful to explore how other workplace variables—such as instrumental communication, input into decision making, formalization, job variety, role conflict, and role ambiguity – are associated with Chinese correctional staff work attitudes.

In addition, more detailed measures for perceptions of distributive and procedural justice should be developed and tested. Measures that use more items should be used to measure job involvement and job satisfaction. Similarly, other dimensions of organizational justice—like transactional justice—need to be examined to determine what, if any, relationship they have with Chinese staff work attitudes (Frenkel et al., 2012; Wolfe & Piquero, 2011). Transactional justice focuses on staff perceptions of how they are treated by supervisors, managers, and administrators (Colquitt & Greenberg, 2005). Being treated with respect and dignity is likely to result in more favorable views of the job and organization, which ultimately should increase job involvement, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment. Again, this furthers the case for more research on organizational justice not only among Chinese correctional staff but staff working in facilities in other nations.

In closing, staff are an important resource for correctional facilities, including those in China. It is important to understand how perceptions of the work environment affect their work attitudes. The results of this research suggest that perceptions of organizational justice, especially distributive justice, may play a role in shaping work attitudes. Specifically, distributive justice had significant positive associations with job involvement, job satisfaction, and affective commitment, and procedural justice had a significant positive relationship with the

affective form of organizational commitment. Although it should be intuitive that treating people in a just and fair manner should have desired outcomes, this is not always the case in all correctional facilities. Correctional administrators need to be aware of organizational justice and work to improve it. It is hoped the current study will spur additional research on organizational justice among staff. Too much is at stake to ignore how work environment variables affect correctional staff.

## Appendix

**Job Involvement:** (a) I live, eat, and breathe my job (i.e., my job is very important to me); (b) The major satisfaction in my life comes from my job; and (c) The most important things that happen to me in my life usually occur at my job.

**Job Satisfaction:** (a) Most days I am happy about my job; (b) I find real satisfaction in my job; and (c) I feel satisfied with my job.

**Organizational Commitment:** (a) I am proud to tell people that I work for this prison; (b) I find that my values and the prison values are very similar; (c) I really care about the fate of this prison; (d) This prison really inspires the best in me in the way of job performance; and (e) I tell my friends that this is a great organization to work for.

**Distributive Justice:** (a) How fair has the prison been in rewarding you when you consider the amount of effort that you have put forth; (b) How fair has the prison been in you when you consider the responsibilities that you have at work; and (c) How fair has the prison been in rewarding you when you consider the work you have done well?

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

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