



# The Effect of Prison Security Level on Job Satisfaction and Job Burnout among Prison Staff in the USA: An Assessment

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## Abstract

*This study examines the effect of prison security level on job satisfaction and job burnout among prison employees. It also examines the effect of job satisfaction, as an independent variable, on job burnout. The data for this study were collected from all staff working in three prisons in the State of Indiana, USA – one maximum security prison (n = 176) and two medium security prisons (n = 146, and n = 158). The findings from this study showed that there was no difference in job satisfaction among prison employees who work in the maximum security prison compared to those who work in medium security prison. Additionally, this study showed that prison security level had a partial effect on job burnout among prison employees. Prison employees who work in medium level security reported having more control over work-related activities compared to those who work in maximum security prison. Prison security level did not have any significant effects on emotional exhaustion and personal accomplishment. Job satisfaction, on the other hand, was inversely related to job burnout. This study showed that an increase in job satisfaction is manifested with a decrease in job burnout.*

Keywords: Prison, Prison Security level, Job burnout, Job Satisfaction.

## Introduction

Correction institutions are a significant component of the criminal justice system with an inordinate amount of funding being provided every year. In the United States, billions of dollars are spent every year to house nearly two million prisoners. According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics (2010), at the end of 2009, the total number of prisoners under state or federal jurisdictions was 1,613,740 (p. 5). All the state and federal detention facilities across the country employ over 400,000 individuals (Lambert, Hogan, Jiang, Elechi, Benjamin, Morris, Laux, & Dupuy, 2010). Prison employees play a crucial role in

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the success or failure of prison facilities due to their responsibilities of running safe and secure correctional institutions. As Lambert (2001) mentioned, it is a fact that prison staff have a significant effect on how correctional institutions operate. At the same time, it is also a fact that correctional institutions have a significant effect on their staff, in terms of job-related affective well-being, job satisfaction, and job burnout. Since the 1980s, researchers have focused on these issues among prison staff or prison employees.

In general, the term prison staff includes several categories, namely administrative staff, custodial staff, treatment staff, health care staff, as well as staff involved in vocational, educational, and occupational activities. Some researchers have focused solely on custodial staff (Castle, 2008; Keinan & Malach-Pines, 2007; Morgan, Van Haveren, & Pearson, 2002), while others studied prison staff in general (Griffin, Hogan, Lambert, Tucker-Gail, & Baker, 2010; Garland & McCarty, 2009; Lambert & Paoline, 2005; Lambert, Hogan, & Allen, 2006; Schaufeli and Peeters, 2000; Lambert, Barton, and Hogan, 1999). All the previous researchers have reported that prison environment affects emotional well-being of the prison staff, brings about stress among them, affects their job satisfaction, and ultimately culminates into job burnout among many prison staff. However, scant attention has been paid by researchers on how the level of prison security (e.g., maximum security vs. medium/minimum security) impacts the prison staff in terms of job satisfaction and job burnout. Hence, in this study, we attempt to investigate that issue. The findings of this research study are based on the analysis of the data that we have collected from all the prison staff who worked in three medium and maximum security prisons in the State of Indiana in January 2010. The total sample for this study consisted of 480 prison employees (322 males and 157 females).

### **Review of Literature: Job Satisfaction and Job Burnout**

Job satisfaction and work-related issues continue to be intriguing topics of research (Castle, 2008). A great number of researchers have studied job satisfaction as a predicting variable of stress, job turnover, and job burnout (Garland & McCarty, 2009; Dowden & Tellier, 2004; Byrd, Cochran, Silverman, & Blount, 2000; Lambert, Barton, & Hogan, 1999). Castle and Martin (2006), for instance, reported “job satisfaction as the strongest predictor of job stress over any other variables” (p. 49). On the other hand, other researchers have examined job satisfaction as an outcome variable, and some of the predictors of job satisfaction were role problems (Hepburn & Knepper, 1993; Van Voorhis, Cullen, Link, & Wolfe, 1991; Whitehead & Lindquist, 1986), being a part of the decision-making process (Hepburn & Knepper, 1993; Whitehead and Lindquist, 1986), support from supervisors (Britton, 1997; Van Voorhis et al., 1991; Jurik & Winn, 1987), and notions on policies and the American Correctional Standards (Paoline, Lambert, & Hogan, 2006).

#### *Job Satisfaction*

Hoppock (1935) was one of the first scholars to provide a systematic measurement of job satisfaction. Afterward, a large number of scholars have measured job satisfaction covering a wide range of disciplines. By 1995, Spector, Jex, and Chen had estimated that the number of studies that were focused on job satisfaction in some fashion was over twelve thousand (Lambert, Barton, & Hogan, 1999). Hence, it is evident that job satisfaction has been of prodigious interest to an inordinate number of researchers from a

wide range of disciplines, including corrections. Nonetheless, the issue is how those researchers defined job satisfaction.

Several scholars have attempted to define job satisfaction. For instance, Hopkins (1983) defined job satisfaction as “the fulfillment or gratification of certain needs that were associated with one’s work” (p. 7). In 2003, Spector defined job satisfaction, in plain words, as “the extent to which people like their jobs” (p. 210). Job satisfaction has been defined as a positive orientation of an individual toward the work role which he or she is presently occupying (Griffin et al., 2010). A variety of factors can influence an individual’s level of job satisfaction. Some of those factors include pay grade, the process of promotion, working conditions, leadership, social relationships, and the job itself. Job satisfaction is defined as the pleasurable emotional state resulting from the appraisal of an individual’s job as achieving or facilitating the individual’s values. Both satisfaction or dissatisfaction are seen as a function of perceived relationship between what an individual wants from his or her job and what that individual perceive it as offering or entailing. Thus, “job satisfaction is an attitude which reflects the degree to which an individual is satisfied , gratified, or fulfilled in his or her work or job” (Sharma, Verma, Verma, & Malhotra, 2010, p. 349). Overall, job satisfaction is a multidimensional construct.

As for previous research on corrections, Lambert, Hogan, and Barton (2002) defined job satisfaction as “a subjective individual level feeling reflecting whether a person’s needs are or are not being met by a particular job” (p. 116-117). A number of researchers who have studied job satisfaction in correctional institutions maintain that low job satisfaction in prisons opens a gateway in reduction of both individual and organizational productivity. They also maintain that when job satisfaction diminishes, correctional staff tends to have more work absences (Lambert, Edwards, Camp, & Saylor, 2005) and higher rates of turnover (Dennis, 1998; Robinson, Porporino, & Simourd, 1997; Jurik & Winn, 1987). Previous researchers also contend that absenteeism and turnover resulting from low job satisfaction pose financial obstacles to prisons (Camp & Lambert, 2006; McShane, Williams, & McClain, 1991) and placed strain on prison staff who then have to fill-in the vacant roles (Camp & Lambert, 2006). Research shows that in situations where turnover has consistently been high, the overall morale of the prison staff tends to suffer (Lambert, 2001).

Apparently, there is a general consensus in the previous literature on corrections that job satisfaction is an effective response by a correctional staff concerning specific work duties in a correctional institution. This response culminates from an individual’s overall comparison of the actual outcomes in what is expected, needed, wanted, desired, or perceived to be fair or just under normal conditions (Cranny, Smith, & Stone, 1992; Heffron, 1989). That is, job satisfaction is a subjective, individual level sensitiveness that reflects whether a correctional staff’s needs are or are not being met by a specific job in the correction institution. Overall, the body of previous research on job satisfaction can be divided into several categories. Among those categories are: personal, social, and organizational satisfaction. These categories have been associated with size of the prison organization, individual demographics such as age, gender, marital status, and education (Jayaratne, Chess, & Kunkel, 1986; Jayaratne, Tripodi, & Chess, 1983; Glenn & Weaver, 1982), and social support at work place (Jayaratne et al., 1986; Jayaratne et al., 1983). It is noteworthy that a great amount of prior research on job satisfaction is similar to research that has been conducted on job burnout. That is to say, previous researchers maintain that

job satisfaction and job burnout go hand in hand. Given that context, the following section delineates job burnout among prison staff.

### *Job Burnout*

Freudenberger (1974) defined job burnout as a situation when an employee becomes psychologically and physically exhausted due to work place situations. Freudenberger's definition referred to a state of exhaustion which resulted from failure, fatigue, loss of energy, or unmet demands on an employee's inner resources (Arabaci, 2010). In other words, burnout is a depletion of an employee's physical and mental resources leading to personal and professional difficulties. Maslach and Jackson in 1981 defined burnout as "a syndrome of emotional exhaustion and cynicism that occurs frequently among individuals who work with people" (p. 99). Cherniss (1980a, 1980b) also perceived burnout as the emotional and psychological exhaustion of an employee. Both Cherniss (1980a, 1980b) and Maslach and Jackson (1981) maintained that factors in the work place were the primal causes for burnout among employees. In simple words, burnout is the emotional as well as physical exhaustion experienced by an employee due to stressful work environment. Burnout is generally defined as the end result of a prolonged exposure to stressful work environment (Lindquist and Whitehead, 1986; Maslach & Jackson, 1984; Maslach, 1982; Cherniss, 1980a, 1980b).

Although the explanations of burnout vary among researchers, Maslach (1982) has maintained that job burnout consists of three basic core dimensions, namely depersonalization, reduced personal accomplishments, and emotional exhaustion. According to Maslach (1982), depersonalization first takes place as employees become frustrated with their jobs, become less concerned about their clients, and culminates in increasingly negative work-related attitudes. The second stage of burnout is a reduction in personal accomplishment, which equates to a job-related sense of inadequacy and feelings of failure (Maslach, 1982). Emotional exhaustion is the final stage of burnout and occurs when employees feel overextended by their work (Maslach, 1982), resulting in decreased job productivity (Pearlman & Hartman, 1982).

In the field of corrections, several studies have been conducted on job burnout among correctional employees. In general, prior research shows that correctional employees suffer from burnout (see Lambert, Hogan, Jiang, et al., 2009; Keinan & Malach-Pines, 2007; Garland, 2004; Morgan, Van Haveren, & Pearson, 2002; Hurst & Hurst, 1997; Lindquist & Whitehead, 1986; for review). Some studies conducted in the United States provide approximate percentages of burnout among prison staff. Hurst and Hurst's (1997) study, for example, shows that about 64% of prison staff in Kentucky institutions, 33% of prison staff in Alabama, and 17% of educational instructors in Illinois prisons suffered from job burnout (Hurst & Hurst, 1997, see also Garland, 2004).

Research that has been focused on possible origins and consequences of stress leading to burnout among prison staff has revealed several contributing factors. The most frequently reported predictors of burnout among prison staff are role ambiguity (Morgan et al., 2002; Dignam, Barrera, & West, 1986; Shamir & Drory, 1982), role conflict (Whitehead & Lindquist 1986; Shamir & Drory, 1982), work load (Triplett, Mullings, & Scarborough, 1996; Long & Vogues, 1987; Dignam et al., 1986), understaffing (Rutter & Fielding, 1988; Lindquist & whitehead, 1986), lack of environmental control (Rutter & Fielding, 1988; Lombardo, 1981), lack of participation in decision-making process (Whitehead & Lindquist 1986; Lasky, Gordon, & Srebalus, 1986), inmate contact (Saylor

& Wright, 1992; Whitehead & Lindquist 1986), and confrontations with inmates as an issues that concerns with job safety in the prison environment (Triplett et al., 1996; Grossi & Berg, 1991; Long & Vogues, 1987). In addition, several researchers have reported that the physical layout of prisons is a significant predictor of job burnout among correctional employees (O'Donnell & Stephens, 2001; Launay & Fielding, 1989; Harenstam & Palm, 1988; Gerstein, Topp, & Correll, 1987; Dignam et al., 1986).

Previous research on the impact of institutional conditions, such as shift work (i.e., day shift, evening, and night shift) and prison security level, has revealed inconsistent findings. Van Voorhis, Cullen, Link, and Wolfe (1991) in their study reported that an officer's shift was not a significant predictor of stress leading to job burnout. In contrast, Whitehead and Lindquist (1986) found that officers who worked day shifts had greater level of stress, leading to burnout, compared to officers who worked evening and night shifts. Likewise, Hughes and Zamble (1993) reported shift work as a stressor that leads to job burnout.

As can be seen in the literature above, scant attention has been paid by previous researchers in evaluating the impact of prison security levels (e.g., maximum vs. medium security level) on job burnout among prison staff. In addition, the reported findings from prior research on this issue are not consistent. For instance, Van Voorhis et al. (1991) reported that prison employees who worked in maximum security settings were more inclined to experience greater level of job stress compared to the prison employees who worked in medium and minimum security prisons, a variable that leads to job burnout. In contrast, Morgan and his associates (2002) did not find support for the findings reported by Van Voorhis et al. (1991). Another study conducted by Lasky et al. (1986) reported that the prison employees who worked in different prison security levels did not vary in their reported burnout situations, although the staff in maximum security level did indicate a greater concern for their personal safety.

Overall, the discussion presented above indicates that only a handful of previous researchers have investigated job satisfaction and job burnout among the staff who work in maximum and medium security prisons. Most of those studies have indirectly measured these differences. Even those studies that have measured the difference in job satisfaction and job burnout in terms of prison security level, have reported mixed and contradicting findings, which warrant the need for further testing in this area.

## **The Present Study**

The purpose of this study is to investigate if there is a significant difference in job satisfaction among correctional employees who work in the medium security prisons compared to those who work in the maximum security prisons, using the security level as an independent variable. Second, we examine the effect of prison security level on job burnout among correctional employees. Third, we examine the effect of job satisfaction on job burnout among correctional employees, while controlling for the effects of selected demographic characteristics (e.g., age, gender, marital status, and education) and the years of service in the correctional institutions. In this paper, the examination of the independent effect of job satisfaction on job burnout is secondary in nature.

## **Method**

### *Participants*

The data for this study were collected by using survey instruments from all employees who worked in the three different prisons in Indiana during January 2010. The total

sample consisted of 480 (157 females and 322 males) prison employees from two medium security prisons ( $n_1 = 158$  or 32.9% and  $n_2 = 146$  or 30.4%) and one maximum security prison ( $n_3 = 176$  or 36.7%). All three prisons were located in the State of Indiana. The portion of male participants in the total sample was considerably higher than female participants (67.1% vs. 32.9%). The participants ranged in age from 18 to 68 ( $M = 44.17$ ,  $SD = 11.47$ ). The years of service in the correctional institutions for the participants in the total sample ranged from 1 to 38 ( $M = 11.99$ ,  $SD = 8.14$ ). In terms of the current work positions they held in the correctional institutions at the time when they were surveyed, 51.9% of them were correctional officers, 11.9% were treatment staff, 10.6% were managers, 7.1% were educational instructors, 4.6% were human resources staff, 2.1% were health staff, and 11.9% others. The power analysis, which is computed based on the number of variables included in the study, significance level, the effect size, and the desired statistical power, indicated that the sample size of 480 participants was sufficient enough to achieve a 90% power of detecting an R-Squared of .05, attributed to 15 variables using an F-Test with a significance level (Alpha) of .05.

### *Instruments*

The core dimensions of job burnout as a construct include emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and constraints of personal accomplishment (Maslach & Jackson, 1981; Spector and Jex, 1998; Spector and Fox, 2003). Emotional exhaustion (EX) is defined as an unremitting state of physical and emotional weakening that result from exposure to constant stress and excessive job demands (Zohar, 1997). To measure emotional exhaustion, in this study we adapted one of the three subscales or Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) from Maslach, Jackson and Leiter (1996), which is a three factor-solution inventory that was designed to measure three sub-dimensions of job burnout. The items of MBI subscale rated on a seven-point Likert-type scale ranging from 0 (*never*) to 6 (*every day*). The original subscale had 22 items. However, to increase the internal consistency of the scale, we reduced the number of items down to nineteen. The internal consistency estimates of the MBI subscale that measured emotional exhaustion reached an exceptionally high reliability level (Alpha = .861) and thus it was deemed adequate for research purposes.

Constraints of personal accomplishment (CPA) in this study represent the perception of an individual's inability to meet organizational goals, which results in frustration and disappointment, and ultimately leads to occupational burnout (Alarcon, Eschleman, & Bowling, 2009; Maslach & Leiter, 1997). To measure CPA, in this study we adopted an eleven-item Organizational Constraints Scale (OCS) from Spector and Jex (1998), which had an exceptionally high internal consistency with an alpha level of .852. Respondents are asked to indicate how often it is difficult or impossible to do their job because of the reasons listed on the scale (for each item). In this scale, the response choices ranged from 1 (*less than once per month or never*) to 5 (*several times per day*). A higher score on this scale represents an increased level of constraints of personal accomplishment, with a possible range of scores from 11 to 55.

Depersonalization is one the three core dimensions of job burnout (Maslach & Jackson, 1981), which is primarily characterized by the lack of control over ones job-related activities. To measure depersonalization, in this study we used ten Likert-type scale items adopted from Spector and Fox (2003). The internal consistency estimates for this scale, which measure the stability of the scale, was adequate (Alpha = .742). The items in this

scale asked respondents how often someone else has control over the decisions made about daily activities at work. The responses ranged from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*extremely often or always*). A higher score on this scale represents a decreased level of personal autonomy on the job, whereas a lower score represents an increased level of autonomy, which can be interpreted as more control and decision-making freedom over daily work activities.

Job satisfaction in this study refers to the attributes of job happiness among correctional employees. As a construct, job satisfaction includes four core dimensions: feelings, attitudes, beliefs, and emotional behaviors toward ones job (Weiss, 2002). To measure job satisfaction (JS), in this study we used a thirty-five Likert-type scale items adopted from Spector's (1994) Job Satisfaction Scale (JSS), which was initially designed to measure the job satisfaction of employees who work in non-profit organizations, primarily from human service perspective. The items of the JSS scale ranged from 1 (*disagree very much*) to 6 (*agree very much*). The internal consistency estimate of the job satisfaction scale was exceptionally high (Alpha = .878). A higher score on this scale represents a higher level of job satisfaction.

## Results

To explore the impact of prison security level (e.g., medium security vs. maximum security) on job satisfaction among correctional employees, we used a one-way between-groups analysis of variance. The independent variable, prison security level, included two levels: maximum security (one prison) and medium security (two prisons). The dependent variable was the change in job satisfaction among correctional employees. The analysis of variance shows that there was no significant difference in job satisfaction between those who worked in maximum security prison and those who worked in medium security prison,  $F(2, 477) = 2.191, p < .113$ . The Post-Hoc comparison using the Tukey HSD test (Tables 1 & 2) indicates that the mean score in job satisfaction for maximum security prison ( $M = 117.63, SD = 24.98$ ) was not significantly different compared to medium security prison 1 ( $M = 122.86, SD = 22.85, p < .108$ ) nor medium security prison 2, ( $M = 118.79, SD = 20.97, p < .891$ ).

**Table 1:**  
**Means and Standard Deviation for Job Satisfaction**  
**as a Function of Prison Security Level**

Prison Security Level	M	SD	N
Maximum Security	117.63	24.987	176
Medium Security 1	122.86	22.854	146
Medium Security 2	118.79	20.978	158
Total	119.60	23.137	480

**Table 2:**  
**Post-Hoc Comparisons Using the Tukey HSD Test Comparing Maximum Security Prison and Medium Security Prisons (n = 480)**

(I) PRISON	(J) PRISONS	Mean Difference	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Maximum	Medium	-5.23	2.584	.108	-11.30	.85
	1					
	Medium	-1.16	2.529	.891	-7.11	4.79
	2					
Medium 1	Maximum	5.23	2.584	.108	-.85	11.30
	Medium	4.07	2.650	.276	-2.16	10.29
	2					
Medium 2	Maximum	1.16	2.529	.891	-4.79	7.11
	Medium	-4.07	2.650	.276	-10.29	2.16
	1					

To examine the effect of prison security level on job burnout among correctional employees, we used a two-step hierarchical multiple regression equation. The results of regression analyses are presented in Table 3. The analysis for the first model (Step 1) evaluates how well job burnout is predicted by personal characteristics of correctional employees and years of service in the correctional institutions. The results show that, except for age and in partial for gender, personal characteristics (e.g., marital status and education), as well as years of service in the correctional institution did not have a significant effect on job burnout among correctional employees. In step two (Model 2), we entered prison security level, while controlling for the effects of personal characteristics and years of service in correctional institutions. After adding the prison security level, the prediction improved only for one of the three dimensions of job burnout, for depersonalization [ $\beta = -.127$ ,  $F(6, 473) = 3.772$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $R^2 = .046$ ]. However, as indicated by the  $R^2$ , the entire model explained less than 5% of the variance in job burnout. The data in Table 3 show that the beta weights for all three dimensions of the job burnout construct are negative. That is, in terms of the difference in job burnout between maximum security prison and medium security prisons, the data indicate that correctional employees who worked in medium security prison reported a lower score on the emotional exhaustion ( $\beta = -.065$ ), depersonalization ( $\beta = -.127$ ), and constraints of personal accomplishment ( $\beta = -.012$ ) scales compared to correctional employees who worked in maximum security prison. However, it is noteworthy that the effect of prison security level on job burnout was statistically significant only for depersonalization [ $\beta = -.127$ ,  $F(6, 473) = 3.772$ ,  $p < .01$ ]. Thus, it is safe to conclude that there is no substantial difference in job burnouts among correctional employees who work in maximum security prisons and those who work in medium security prisons.



**Table 3:**  
**Hierarchical Multiple Regressions Predicting Job Burnout by Prison Security Level**

Hierarchical Steps		Emotional Exhaustion		Depersonalization		Personal Accomplishment	
		$\beta$	t	$\beta$	t	$\beta$	t
Model 1	Age	-.121	-	-.076	-1.352	-.148	-2.637**
	Gender	.069	1.497		1.294	.099	2.132*
	Marital Status	.042	.906	.060		.059	1.281
	Education	-.042	-.904	.020		.060	1.289
	Years of Service	-.047	-.832	.080		.006	.109
Model 2	Security Level (Med.)		-1.363		-2.674**		-.440
				.127		.021	
		Emotional Exhaustion		Depersonalization		Personal Accomplishment	
		Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
R <sup>2</sup>		.031	.035	.031	.046	.031	.032
$\Delta R^2$		.031	.004	.031	.014	.031	.001
F Change		3.061**	1.859		7.153**		.194
				3.057**	3.138**		

Notes: \*p < .05; \*\*p < .01; \*\*\*p < .001

The third objective of this study was to determine the effect of the job satisfaction on the job burnout among correctional employees. To determine this effect, we used a two-step hierarchical multiple regression equation (Table 4), controlling for the effects of personal characteristics and years of service in the correctional institutions. The data in Table 4 show that all models were statistically significant in predicting the main dependent variable, the job burnout. The data in Table 4 show that the unique effect of job satisfaction on job burnout is substantial and statistically significant for all three core dimensions of job burnout. Additionally, there was a negative correlation between job satisfaction and job burnout. Those who reported a higher score on job satisfaction, reported a lower score on the emotional exhaustion ( $\beta = -.545$ ,  $F(6, 471) = 37.154$ ,  $p < .001$ ), depersonalization ( $\beta = -.151$ ,  $F(6, 473) = 4.440$ ,  $p < .001$ ), and constraints of personal accomplishment,  $\beta = -.442$ ,  $F(6, 473) = 22.566$ ,  $p < .001$ . In other words, an increase in job satisfaction is manifested with a decrease in job burnout.

**Table 4:**  
**Hierarchical Multiple Regressions Predicting Job Burnout by Job Satisfaction**

Hierarchical Steps		Emotional Exhaustion		Depersonalization		Personal Accomplishment	
		$\beta$	t	$\beta$	t	$\beta$	t
Model 1	Age	-.121	-2.150**	-.076	-1.352	-.148	-2.637**
	Gender		1.497		1.294	.099	2.132*
	Marital Status	.069		.060		.059	1.281
	Education	.042		.020		.060	1.289
	Years of Service	.042		.080		.006	.109
		.047		.071			
Model 2	Job Satisfaction	-.545	-14.182***	-.151	-3.322***	-.442	-10.766***
		Emotional Exhaustion		Depersonalization		Personal Accomplishment	
		Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
R <sup>2</sup>		.031	.321	.031	.053	.032	.223
$\Delta R^2$		.031	.290	.031	.041	.032	.191
F Change		3.061**	201.133**	3.057**	11.153***	3.138**	115.905*

Notes: \*p < .05; \*\*p < .01; \*\*\*p < .001

### Discussion and Conclusion

The present study has been promoted by the lack of empirical studies on correctional employees' job satisfaction and job burnout assessment in terms of prison security level. Given this context, the purpose of this study was three-fold. First, we investigated the difference in job satisfaction among prison employees who work in medium security prisons compared to those who work in maximum security prisons. Second, we examined the effect of prison security level on job burnout among the prison employees. Third, we examined the effect of job satisfaction, this time as an independent variable, on job burnout among prison employees, controlling for the effects of selected demographic factors (e.g., age, gender, marital status, and education) and the number of years of service at those prisons.

The results of this study indicate that the difference in job satisfaction between employees who worked in maximum security prison and those who worked in medium

security prison was statistically insignificant. This finding contradicts Morrison et al. (2010) research findings, where there was a significant difference in job satisfaction among employees who worked in medium security versus those who worked in maximum security prison. Simply, the current study suggests that the difference in job satisfaction cannot be explained by using the security level as a predictor. It is worthy to note, however, that we did not exercise statistical controls to measure this effect. We used ANOVA statistics to determine the difference in job satisfaction between prison security levels (see Tables 1 & 2), and this statistical technique has many inherent limitations when it comes to the options of adding explanatory variables to the model to control for other possible explanations. Thus, this particular research finding that has emerged in this study should be interpreted with caution.

In response to inconsistencies in prior research studies, in the current study we tested the effect of prison security level on job burnout among prison employees. As previously indicated, several contradictions exist in the literature regarding the impact of prison security levels (e.g., maximum vs. medium/minimum security level) on job burnout (see Morgan et al., 2002; Van Voorhis et al., 1991; Lasky et al., 1986, for reviews). The results of the current study indicate that there were no substantial differences in job burnouts among prison employees who work in maximum security prison compared to those who work in medium security prison. Even when controlling for the effects of demographic characteristics (e.g., age, gender, marital status, and education) and years of service in the correctional institutions, the prison security level had a statistically significant effect only on one of three core dimensions of job burnout, depersonalization, which is characterized by the lack of control over ones job-related activities. This tells us that prison employees who work in medium level security have more control over work-related activities compared to those who work in maximum security prison. Prison security level did not have any significant effects on emotional exhaustion and personal accomplishment, the remaining two core dimensions of job burnout as conceptually defined by Maslach and Jackson (1981).

In correctional literature, job satisfaction has been frequently treated as an outcome variable. In the current study, job satisfaction is treated as both dependent variable and independent variable. The third objective of this study was to examine the effect of job satisfaction, as an independent variable, on job burnout among correctional officers. Consistent with prior research (see Tsigilis, Zachopoulou, & Grammatikopoulos, 2006; Penn, Romano, & Foat, 1988; Koustelios & Tsigilis, 2005; see also Castle & Martin, 2006), the results of this study show that job satisfaction has a significant impact on all three core dimensions of job burnout. The findings show that there is a negative relationship between job satisfaction and job burnout. Thus, an increase in job satisfaction is manifested with a decrease in job burnout, regardless of prison security level.

While job satisfaction and job burnout have been studied by many researchers, the significance of the current study relies on the idiosyncratic objectives of this study, two of which have been distinctively focused on testing the effect of prison security level on job satisfaction and job burnout. Despite this strength, the empirical value of this study is limited to the test results that were carried out to meet the objectives of this study. Additionally, when interpreting the results, the readers should consider several other limitations. Our study relies strictly on self-reported data that were collected from three different prisons, it is purely quantitative in nature, and it examines the effects of a limited number of variables. Future research may expand on the number of variables that may be

used to explain job satisfaction and job burnout among prison employees in terms of prison security levels.

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