



The Effects of Justice Views on Turnover Intent, Sick Leave Views, and Sick Leave Use Among U.S. Staff at a State Prison

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Abstract: The literature abounds with examples of workplace variables shaping staff attitudes about their organizations. One such workplace variable is organizational justice. Organizational justice theory posits that employees desire organizational fairness, and when organizational justice is low, employees tend to develop negative attitudes, intentions, and behaviors. The current study examined the relationship of distributive justice (i.e., the view that employee outcomes are fair) and procedural justice (i.e., the view that the processes used to reach outcomes are fair) with the variables of searching for a new job, views on sick leave, and absenteeism among staff at a U.S. high-security state-run facility holding convicted male offenders. Ordinary Least Squares regression analysis on survey responses from 257 staff indicated that both procedural and distributive justice had statistically significant effects on searching for a new job and being absent from work. Procedural justice also had a significant negative relationship with sick leave views, but distributive justice had a nonsignificant association. The results suggest that interventions to improve organizational justice should benefit both staff and the prison.

Keywords: Prison Staff; Organizational Justice; Turnover Intent; Absenteeism; Sick Leave Use View

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Introduction

Staff are an important resource for the operation of a prison. Staff carry out numerous duties and tasks to ensure a humane, safe, and secure prison. In correctional facilities, staff are one of the most valuable resources as well as one of the most expensive. It has been argued that staff are the “heart and soul” of a prison because they are critical for the operation of the institution (Lambert, Solinas-Saunders, *et al.*, 2023). Between 70 to 80% of the operating costs of a typical prison are for staff (Vickovic *et al.*, 2022). Thus, investing in staff is important, and enhancing the workplace is one major way to invest in staff (Lambert, Hogan, *et al.*, 2023). Improving organizational justice within the workplace should benefit both the prison and the staff. Organizational justice refers to the view by staff that the organization treats them in a fair and just manner (Greenberg, 1987, 1990, 1993; Wolfe & Lawson, 2020). Employees view organizational procedures and outcomes on a continuum ranging from very unfair to very fair (Colquitt & Greenberg, 2005; Lambert *et al.*, 2007). As seen from prior research, positive outcomes are associated with higher organizational justice views that benefit both the employing organization and the employees. The negative outcomes associated with lower organizational justice views are detrimental to both the organization and employees. Increasing organizational justice views of prison staff should result in lower negative work outcomes.

Organizational justice can be further divided into two primary dimensions: distributive and procedural justice. Distributive justice deals with perceptions of the fairness of outcomes, while procedural justice deals with perceptions of the fairness of procedures and processes to reach these outcomes (Colquitt & Greenberg, 2005; Lambert *et al.*, 2020; Lambert, Solinas-Saunders, *et al.*, 2023).

The current study examined the association of perceptions of procedural and distributive justice on searching for a new job (a form of turnover intent), sick leave views, and absenteeism among staff at a U.S. state-operated, high-security prison. Turnover intent, sick leave views, and absenteeism represent different forms of staff withdrawal from work; all three are considered negative outcomes. Because prisons rely so heavily on staff, negative staff work behaviors are concerning. The current study builds upon the recent work of Lambert, Hogan, *et al.* (2023), who studied turnover intent, sick leave views, and actual absenteeism among staff at a private U.S. prison. As a single study does not provide conclusive results, replication studies are needed in order to determine how procedural and distributive justice views are related to the withdrawal of these three variables. As Lindsay and Ehrenberg (1993) noted, “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).

Literature Review

Organizational Justice

Organizational justice deals with employee perceptions that the organization treats them in a fair and just manner (Greenberg, 1987, 1990, 1993; Wolfe & Lawson, 2020). Organizational justice theory holds that improving perceptions of organizational justice generally results in positive outcomes, such as performance, organizational commitment, attendance, and retention. Conversely, when views of organizational justice are low, negative work outcomes generally increase, such as job stress, job burnout, increased desire to quit, workplace deviance, and being absent from work (Colquitt & Greenberg, 2005; Greenberg, 1990; Lambert *et al.*, 2007, 2020; Lambert, Hogan, *et al.*, 2023). While there are different dimensions of organizational justice, distributive and procedural justice are two major ones (Greenberg, 1990; Lambert, 2003; Lambert, Tewksbury, *et al.*, 2021; Wolfe & Lawson, 2020).

Distributive Justice

Distributive justice evolved from equity theory, which held that employees not only evaluate the fairness of outcomes based on their inputs but also evaluate the fairness of outcomes based on the inputs for fellow employees (Greenberg, 1990; Lambert, 2003; Lambert, Berthelot, *et al.*, 2021). In other words, distributive justice views are based on equity (outcomes are based inputs) and not equality (outcomes are the same for all employees) (Colquitt *et al.*, 2001; Colquitt & Greenberg, 2005; Lambert *et al.*, 2007; Lambert, Hogan, *et al.*, 2023; Lambert *et al.*, 2019; Wolfe & Lawson, 2020). There are different workplace outcomes that affect employees and are part of distributive justice, such as pay, benefits, evaluation, promotion, position assignment, shift assignment, and discipline (Greenberg, 1990; May *et al.*, 2020; Wolfe & Lawson, 2020).

Procedural Justice

Procedural justice contends that employees not only desire fair workplace outcomes but also desire fairness in the procedures and processes used to reach those outcomes (Greenberg, 1990; Lambert, 2003; Lambert, Lanterman, *et al.*, 2023; Wolfe & Lawson, 2020). Perceptions of the processes and procedures for reaching various outcomes are often just as important as the outcome itself (Greenberg, 1990; Lambert, 2003; Lambert, Hogan, *et al.*, 2023). For example, Landy *et al.* (1980) found that perceptions of the fairness of employee evaluation procedures were important, regardless of whether the evaluation was positive or negative. Thus, distributive justice is concerned with employee workplace “ends” and procedural justice is concerned with workplace “means” used to reach the “ends” (Lambert *et al.*, 2007). According to organizational justice theory,

perceptions of distributive and procedural justice fairness can influence the attitudes, intentions, and behaviors of employees, including influencing the withdrawal areas of searching for a new job (i.e., turnover intent), views on how sick leave should be used, and being absent from work (Colquitt & Greenberg, 2005; Lambert, Hogan, *et al.*, 2023).

Distributive and Procedural Justice Examined

Past correctional research has found an association of organizational justice views with various workplace outcomes (Lambert *et al.*, 2007, 2020). For example, distributive justice and/or procedural justice views have been reported to be positively related to job involvement, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment to the correctional facility (Boateng & Hsieh, 2019a; Lambert *et al.*, 2007, 2010, 2013, 2020; Lopez-Cabarcos *et al.*, 2016). Further, among prison staff, procedural justice was associated with greater engagement of organizational citizenship behaviors (i.e., going beyond what is expected at work) (Lambert & Hogan, 2013). Among correctional staff, distributive and/or procedural justice have also been observed to be linked to greater life satisfaction (Lambert & Hogan, 2011; Lambert *et al.*, 2010), lowered job stress and reduced levels of job burnout (Lambert *et al.*, 2007, 2010). Procedural justice was found to be inversely related to punitive views of inmates and fear of being victimized at work (Taxman & Gordon, 2009). Among prison staff, distributive justice had an association with lower levels of work misconduct (Boateng & Hsieh, 2019b). Finally, distributive and procedural justice views were reported to be negatively associated with turnover intent among staff at a U.S. private prison, and procedural justice views were inversely related to sick leave views (i.e., sick leave could be used for other reasons than its intended purpose) and actually being absent from work (Camp & Lambert, 2006; Lambert, Hogan, *et al.*, 2023).

Current Study

Both dimensions of organizational justice were predicted to be related to lower levels of turnover intent, absence views, and absenteeism. Working for an organization that a person sees as being unfair in terms of distributive and/or procedural justice can be frustrating. It can result in psychological strain, which can cause a person to withdraw from the organization or result in noncompliance with workplace rules (Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001; Lambert *et al.*, 2019). Low perceptions of distributive and particularly procedural justice are linked to “counterproductive work behaviors” such as staff intentions, views, and behaviors contrary to legitimate organizational interests (Gruys & Sackett, 2003; Lambert, Hogan, *et al.*, 2023). Conversely, high levels of perceived distributive and/or procedural justice generally result in positive psychological feelings, raising positive outcomes, such as retention (i.e., staying at the organization), viewing

sick leave to be used for its intended purpose, and attending work unless truly ill (Lambert, 2001; Lambert *et al.*, 2015).

Turnover intent refers to the desire to leave employment with an organization, including searching for a new job (Griffin *et al.*, 2014; Lambert *et al.*, 2015; Sager *et al.*, 1998). Turnover intent is often linked to actual voluntary turnover (Lambert, Hogan, *et al.*, 2023; Wells *et al.*, 2016). According to Fishbein and Ajzen (1975), intention to perform a behavior is the best predictor of that behavior. Turnover is costly to prisons. Prisons rely heavily on staff to operate a safe and well-functioning facility (Lambert, 2003; Vickovic *et al.*, 2022). When staff leave, it disrupts the facility's smooth operation, making it more disorganized as well as more costly. There are direct financial costs of covering the position vacated (which often results in overtime/mandatory overtime), recruitment, background checks, and training a replacement staff member (Lambert *et al.*, 2017; Lambert, Hogan, *et al.*, 2023; Wells *et al.*, 2016). There are also indirect costs, such as the loss of knowledge of the departed staff member, strain on the staff who remain, and lower morale at the correctional facility (Lambert, Hogan, *et al.*, 2023; Vickovic *et al.*, 2022; Wells *et al.*, 2016). Turnover intent, which is the best predictor of voluntary turnover, is a counterproductive work behavior that is harmful to prisons (Ferdik *et al.*, 2014; Lambert, Hogan, *et al.*, 2023). As Ferdik and Hills (2018) noted, "one could argue that correctional officers who are intending to leave their job and perhaps even exploring alternative employment avenues are no longer invested in the mission of their employing corrections institutions" (p. 1673). Higher views of distributive and procedural justice should result in positive feelings overall and towards the correctional organization, which, in turn, should enhance the intent to remain with the correctional organization (i.e., high levels of justice views tend to reduce turnover intent). As such, both distributive (*Hypothesis 1*) and procedural justice (*Hypothesis 2*) were hypothesized to be related to lower turnover intent of prison staff in the current study.

How staff interpret the use of sick leave can be another counterproductive work behavior linked to organizational justice views (Lambert, Hogan, *et al.*, 2023). Some staff may feel that sick leave should only be used when the staff member is ill or needs to take care of an ill family member. Other staff feel sick leave is their right to use however they wish, including using sick leave for the unsanctioned purpose of just taking a day off (Lambert *et al.*, 2015; VandenHeuvel & Wooden, 1995). High levels of viewing sick leave as a right to use whenever a person wants to for whatever reasons can result in a culture of absenteeism, which is harmful to the operation of a prison that relies on staff being present (Lambert *et al.*, 2011; Lambert, Hogan, *et al.*, 2023). Low levels of distributive and procedural justice often result in psychological strain, and this strain results in unfavorable views of the employing organization (Lambert *et al.*, 2007; Lambert, Tewksbury, *et al.*, 2021). Conversely, higher levels of organizational

justice result in a positive psychological mindset with more favorable views of the organization (Lambert, 2003; Lambert *et al.*, 2020). Viewing the organization in a more favorable light likely increases an employee's willingness to follow organizational rules and agree with the organization that sick leave should be used for the proscribed reasons set forth by the employing organization (Lambert, Hogan, *et al.*, 2023). In the current study, distributive justice (*Hypothesis 3*) and procedural justice (*Hypothesis 4*) were hypothesized to be related to views sick leave should be used as intended among prison staff.

Absenteeism is defined as the “nonattendance of employees for scheduled work when they are expected to attend” (Huczynski & Fitzpatrick, 1989, p. 3). There are different reasons for being absent from work, from sickness to just taking a day off (Lambert, 2001; Lambert *et al.*, 2005). Reasons for being absent can be classified into the two categories of unavoidable and avoidable (Lambert & Hogan, 2007; Lambert, Hogan, *et al.*, 2023). Unavoidable are absences where the person is absent for reasons such as being ill or caring for a sick family member. Avoidable involves being absent from work for unattended reasons, such as to have a day off (Lambert *et al.*, 2005; Lambert, Hogan, *et al.*, 2023). Approximately 40% of absences are estimated to be avoidable, where a person claims to be sick in order to have a day off from work (Doyle, 2020; Lambert, Hogan, *et al.*, 2023). Absent staff results in costs for a prison, such as lost performance and coverage for the position for the absent staff member, often covered by overtime (Lambert, 2001; Lambert & Hogan, 2007). High levels of distributive and procedural justice should result in positive feelings and views of the organization where staff should be less likely to be absent from work for legitimate and unavoidable reasons. On the other hand, low levels of organizational justice often result in psychological strain and resentment towards the employing organization, and as such, a staff member may engage in retaliatory avoidable absenteeism (Lambert & Hogan, 2007; Lambert, Hogan, *et al.*, 2023). Distributive justice (*Hypothesis 5*) and procedural justice (*Hypothesis 6*) were hypothesized to be associated with lower levels absenteeism among prison staff.

Method

Participants

A state-run prison in the U.S. Midwest was selected. The study followed ethical principles, had institutional review board human subjects' approval, and written informed consent was obtained from all staff who participated. The selected prison was a high-security facility that housed approximately 1,100 male, criminally-convicted offenders, who were overseen by 430 full-time staff. Except for top administrators (i.e., warden and deputy wardens), all available staff received a study packet that included

a cover letter, an informed consent form, a written survey, and a return envelope to return the consent form and the survey. The cover letter explained the focus of the study, that participation was voluntary, and how to return a completed survey. Only 400 study packets were distributed because approximately 30 staff were on leave (e.g., vacation) at the time. Of the 400 distributed study packets, 259 surveys were utilized for this study, a response rate of about 64%. Surveys were returned to the research team using the provided return envelope.

About 76% of the responding prison staff indicated they were male and 24% indicated female. The mean age was 42.55 years, with a standard deviation of 8.32. In terms of position, 50% held a custodial position at the prison (i.e., correctional officer) and 50% held a non-custodial position (e.g., teacher, food service, counselor, case manager, medical, or inmate work supervisor). The mean tenure at the job was 9.64 years, with a standard deviation of 6.82. In terms of highest educational level, 59% of those who responded marked a high school diploma or GED (which included taking college credits but not earning a degree), 20% an associate's degree, 16% a bachelor's degree, and 5% a graduate degree. In terms of race/ethnicity, 9% of the responding prison staff marked African American, 2% Hispanic American, 3% Native American, 81% Caucasian American, and 5% other. The participating prison staff appeared to be representative of the overall prison staff workforce in terms of gender, position, race/ethnicity, age, and tenure. Among those who participated by returning a completed survey, 76% were male, 50% held a custody position, 81% identified as White, the average age was 44, and average tenure was 9 years. Based on the statistics from the prison at the time of the study, the overall prison staff complement was about 75% male, 53% were custody officers, and 80% identified as White; the average age was mid-forties, and the average tenure at the job was about 10 years. No information for educational level for the overall workforce could be obtained from the human resource office at the prison.

Variables

Dependent Variables. The three dependent variables in this study were turnover intent, sick leave views, and absenteeism. Turnover intent was measured using one item adapted from Sager *et al.* (1998), asking if they had searched for a new job: "How actively have you searched for a job with other employers in the last year?" The response options were: not at all (coded 1), a little (coded 2), somewhat actively (coded 3), actively (coded 4), and very actively (coded 5).

Sick leave views were measured using the following two items from VandenHeuvel and Wooden (1995): 1) Sick leave is a right which should be taken regardless if sick; and 2) I have called in sick when I really was not sick so as to have a day off. The response options were: strongly disagree (coded 1), disagree (coded 2), neither disagree

or agree (coded 3), agree (coded 4), and strongly agree (coded 5). The Cronbach's alpha, a measure of internal reliability, for the sick leave views was 0.70, which is viewed as acceptable (Streiner, 2003). The responses to the items were summed together to form an index of sick leave views.

There are different methods of measuring absenteeism of staff members, including with the area being measured and an absence metric (Rhodes & Steers, 1990). The area deals with measuring the type of absence taken (e.g., scheduled vs. unscheduled, unpaid vs. paid, etc.) and why the person was absent (sick, caring for a family member, proper vs. improper use of sick leave, etc.) (Rhodes & Steers, 1990; Lambert, 2001; Lambert & Hogan, 2007). Absence metric deals with how absenteeism is measured, with duration, frequency, and magnitude being the three major forms of absence metrics (Lambert & Hogan, 2007; Lambert, Hogan, *et al.*, 2023; Rhodes & Steers, 1990). Duration is the total amount (e.g., days or hours) of sick leave taken in a given time frame (e.g., 6 months or a year). Frequency measures the total number episodes of being absent in a given time period, regardless of the length of time absence each episode. Magnitude is an aggregate measure of the average amount of absenteeism per employee of an organization in a given time period (Rhodes & Steers, 1990; Scott & Taylor, 1985). Of the three ways to measure absenteeism, duration and frequency are more common than magnitude (Lambert & Hogan, 2007; Lambert, Hogan, *et al.*, 2023; Scott & Taylor, 1985). For the current study, a self-reported duration measure of absenteeism was used by asking the number of sick leave hours used in the past six months. The number of hours was then changed to working days (8 hours = 1 working day) and was truncated at 10 workdays.

Independent Variables. Procedural and distributive justice views were the independent variables of interest for the current study. Distributive justice measured perceptions fairness of specific outcome areas using two items: "My last annual performance rating presented a fair and accurate picture of my actual job performance" and "The evaluation of my performance at this prison has been fair and objective". Perceptions of procedural justice were measured by three items dealing with procedures of promotion: "In this agency, promotions are seldom related to employee performance" (reverse coded), "There is a fair opportunity to be promoted at this agency," and "Promotions are more related to whom you know rather than the quality of work" (reverse coded). The response options for the organizational justice items were answered using a five-point Likert scale of strongly disagree (coded 1) to strongly agree (coded 5). The distributive justice items a Cronbach's alpha value of .73. The procedural justice items had a Cronbach's alpha value of .84, and both Cronbach's alpha values were viewed as acceptable (Streiner, 2003). The responses were summed to form additive indexes for distributive and procedural justice views.

The personal characteristics of gender, age, position, tenure, educational level, and race/ethnicity were included more as control than explanatory variables. Gender was coded female=0 and male=1. Age was measured in continuous years. Tenure at the job was also measured in continuous years. Educational level was coded as not having earned a college degree coded as 0 and earning a college degree coded as 1. Race/ethnicity represented whether the participant marked being Nonwhite or Hispanic (coded 0) or White/non-Hispanic (coded 1).

Results

The typical survey participant was a White male in his forties, with almost ten years working at the prison. About half of the participants worked in the position of correctional officer (i.e., worked in custody). Most of the participants had not earned a college degree. Descriptive statistics for the variables are shown in Table 1. There was variation in the variables (i.e., no variable was a constant). The variables had either a normal or near normal distribution. In addition, the mean and median values are similar to one another, which also suggests normal distribution.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>Max</i>	<i>Med</i>	<i>Mn</i>	<i>SD</i>
Gender	24% women (coded 0) 76% men (coded 1)	0	1	1	0.76	0.43
Age	Measured in continuous years	21	60	44	42.55	8.32
Position	50% noncustody (coded 0) 50% correctional officer (coded 1)	0	1	0.5	0.50	0.50
Tenure	Tenure in years at prison	0	26	9	9.64	6.82
Educ	59% no college degree (coded 0) 41% college degree (coded 1)	0	1	0	0.41	0.49
Race	19% Nonwhite (coded 0) 81% White (coded 1)	0	1	1	0.81	0.39
Dist Just	2-item additive index, $\alpha = .73$	2	10	8	7.22	1.73
Proc Just	3-item additive index, $\alpha = .84$	3	15	8	7.88	2.88
Turnover	1-item measure	1	5	1	1.60	0.90
Sick	2-item additive index, $\alpha = .70$	2	10	6	6.21	2.00
Absence	1-item measure	0	10	0.25	0.46	0.97

Note: Min stands for minimum value, Max for maximum value, Med for median value, Mn for mean value, SD for standard deviation values, Educ for educational level, Race for race/ethnicity, Dist Just for distributive justice, Proc Just for procedural justice, Turnover for turnover intent in terms of searched for a new job in past year, Sick for sick leave views, Absence for number of days of sick leave used in past six months, and α for the Cronbach's alpha value, a measure for internal reliability. The number of usable surveys was 259.

The bivariate Pearson correlations are shown in Table 2. For turnover intent (i.e., how active a prison staff member searched for a new job), tenure, educational level, distributive justice, and procedural justice had statistically significant correlations; gender, age, position, and race/ethnicity had nonsignificant correlations. Tenure had a negative correlation, which means the longer a person had worked at the prison, the less likely a person had searched for a new job. Educational level had a positive correlation, which means staff who had earned a college degree were more likely to have actively searched for a new job in the past year. Both distributive and procedural justice had significant inverse correlations, which means increases in either of these types of organizational justice were associated with less desire to leave among the responding correctional staff.

Age, position, race, distributive justice, and procedural justice each had significant correlations with sick leave views; gender, tenure, and educational level had non significant correlations. Age and race/ethnicity had significant negative correlations, which means White and older correctional staff were less likely to agree that sick leave should be used however the employee wishes to use it. Position had a positive correlation, meaning correctional officers were more likely to agree that sick leave is a right. Both distributive and procedural justice had significant negative correlations, which means that higher distributive and higher procedural justice views were associated with lower agreement with the view that sick leave could be used for whatever the person wants.

Table 2: Pearson Correlation Coefficients of Study Variables

Variable	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.
1. Gender	1.00										
2. Age	.09	1.00									
3. Position	.23**	-.19**	1.00								
4. Tenure	.23**	.40**	.06	1.00							
5. Educ	-.10	-.01	-.20**	-.25**	1.00						
6. Race	-.01	.06	.07	.04	-.06	1.00					
7. Dist Just	-.01	.03	-.22**	.03	-.02	.09	1.00				
8. Proc Just	-.06	-.10	-.13*	-.12*	.04	.07	.38**	1.00			
9. Turnover	-.06	-.11	-.04	-.18*	.20**	-.07	-.24**	-.19**	1.00		
10. Sick	.05	-.24**	.45**	-.01	-.11	-.12*	-.12*	-.32**	.09	1.00	
11. Absent	-.05	.03	-.04	.01	.01	-.12*	-.05	-.17**	.09	.05	1.00

Note: Educ stands for educational level, Race for race/ethnicity, Dist Just for distributive justice, Proc Just for procedural justice, turnover for turnover intent in terms of searched for a new job in past year, Sick for sick leave views, and Absent for number of hours of sick leave used in past six months. The number of usable surveys was 259. See Table 1 for how the variables were measured and their descriptive statistics.

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

Gender, age, position, tenure, educational level, and distributive justice had nonsignificant correlations with absenteeism among the studied prison staff. The variable for race/ethnicity had a significant negative correlation, which means White responding correctional staff reported used less sick leave in the six months prior to the survey. Unlike hypothesized, distributive justice had a nonsignificant correlation with absenteeism. Procedural justice, however, had a significant inverse correlation, which means staff who perceived higher levels of procedural fairness were less likely to have used sick leave in the six months prior to the survey.

Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression equations were estimated for turnover intent (i.e., seeking a new job), sick leave views, and absenteeism as the dependent variables, while personal characteristics (as control measures) and the two forms of organizational justice were the independent variables. The results are presented in Table 3. Multicollinearity occurs when the independent variables are highly correlated with one another and affects the estimate of the effects of independent variables on the dependent variable (Yu *et al.*, 2015). Multicollinearity is seen as a problem when the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) statistic value for an independent variable is above 5.0 (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). As indicated in Table 3, no VIF value was above 1.37 for any of the OLS multivariate regression equations, indicating no concern with

Table 3: Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) Regression Results of Effects of Justice Views with Turnover Intent

Variables	Turnover Intent (Searched for New Job)				Sick Leave Views				Absenteeism			
	B	SE	β	VIF	B	SE	β	VIF	B	SE	β	VIF
Gender	-.02	.13	-.01	1.13	-.02	.28	-.01	1.13	-.13	.15	-.06	1.13
Age	-.01	.01	-.08	1.30	-.06	.02	-.24**	1.30	.001	.01	.01	1.30
Position	-.14	.11	-.08	1.24	.67	.25	.17**	1.24	-.03	.14	-.01	1.24
Tenure	-.02	.01	-.13	1.37	.01	.02	.01	1.37	-.001	.01	-.01	1.37
Educ	.27	.11	.15**	1.23	-.33	.24	-.08	1.17	.01	.13	.01	1.13
Race	.07	.14	.03	1.02	-.48	.30	-.09	1.02	-.38	.16	-.14*	1.02
Distr Just	-.09	.03	-.19**	1.22	.06	.07	.05	1.22	-.08	-.04	-.15*	1.22
Proc Just	-.05	.02	-.16**	1.20	-.23	.04	-.33**	1.20	-.08	.02	-.23**	1.20
F-Value(df)	5.21 (258)**				8.72 (258)**				2.40 (259)*			
R-Squared	.24				.22				.07			

Note: See Table 1 for a description of the variables and how they are coded. B represents the unstandardized coefficient, SE the standard error of the coefficient, β the standardized coefficient, and VIF the Variance Inflation Factor Score, a measure of multicollinearity. Educ stands for educational level, Race for race/ethnicity, Distr Just for distributive justice, Proc Just for procedural justice, and (df) for degrees of freedom

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

multicollinearity. In addition, the issues of outliers, influential cases, normality, linearity and homoscedasticity of residuals, and independence of errors in the regression analysis were tested and addressed (Berry, 1993; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013).

The R-Squared value for the OLS regression equation with turnover intent as the dependent variable was 0.24, which means the independent variables as a group explained about 24% of the observed variance in the turnover intent variable. Among the personal characteristics, only educational level had a significant association. Prison staff who had earned a college degree were more likely to express turnover intent by more actively searching for a new job in the year before the study as compared to correctional staff who had not earned a college degree. As hypothesized, both distributive and procedural justice had significant negative relationships. In other words, prison staff with higher views of fairness or outcomes and/or fairness of procedures were less likely to search for a new job. The magnitude of effect can be determined by examining the absolute value of the significant standardized regression coefficients (i.e., values in the β column in Table 3). Procedural justice had the largest effect, followed closely by distributive justice which had the second largest effect. Educational level had the smallest sized effect.

The R-Squared for sick leave views was 0.22, which means the independent variables as a group accounted for approximately 22% of the variance for sick leave views. Gender, tenure, educational level, and race/ethnicity all had nonsignificant effects on sick leave views in the multivariate analysis. Conversely, age and position had significant relationships. Age had a significant negative association, which means older correctional staff members were less likely to feel sick leave should be used however a person wanted as compared to younger staff members. Position had a significant positive relationship, indicating that correctional officers were more likely to feel that sick leave could be used however a person wished to use it. Unlike Hypothesis 3, distributive justice had nonsignificant effects on sick leave views in the multivariate regression equation. As hypothesized, procedural justice had significant negative effects on sick leave views (i.e., staff with higher views of the fairness of procedures at the prison were more likely to feel that sick leave should be used as intended). Based on standardized regression coefficients, procedural justice had the largest sized effect, followed by age, which had the second largest sized effect. Position had the smallest sized effect.

The R-squared for absenteeism was .07, indicating that only approximately 7% of the observed variance in the absenteeism measure was explained by the independent variables as a group. Except for race/ethnicity, none of the other personal characteristics as control variables had a significant association with being absent. The variable for race/ethnicity had a significant negative relationship, which means that White responding staff on average reported lower levels of actual use of sick leave in the six months prior to the administration of the survey. As hypothesized, both distributive and procedural

justice had significant negative effects, indicating the higher the level of view of fairness of procedures and outcomes, the less sick leave used. Procedural justice had the largest sized effect, followed by distributive justice. The variable for race/ethnicity had the smallest sized effect.

Discussion

The results of the current study overall support the organizational justice theory among prison staff that justice views are negatively related to counterproductive workplace outcomes, at least in terms of turnover intent, views of sick leave, and absenteeism. The associations of distributive and procedural justice, however, did differ between the outcome being examined.

As hypothesized, both distributive and procedural justice had significant negative effects on turnover intent among the studied correctional staff. Working for an organization which is perceived as fair in both outcomes and the procedures for the outcomes likely results in favorable views of the organization, increasing the desire to remain with the organization. Conversely, organizations that are perceived as having low distributive and procedural justice tend to result in frustration and psychological strain for their staff. In order to escape this strain, it appears that the responding prison staff wish to leave the organization and are more active in their search for a new job. The current findings are in line with a negative association of both distributive and procedural justice with turnover intent among staff at a private U.S. prison (Lambert, Hogan, *et al.*, 2023).

For sick leave views, only procedural justice had a significant association in the multivariate OLS regression analysis. It could be that staff at the particular U.S. prison desire fairness of procedures more than fairness of outcomes. The selected prison had a union contract, which may have limited outcomes but not procedures. If this is the case, the responding prison staff may have been more strained by unfair procedures as compared to outcomes. In other words, in the unionized workplace, procedural justice represents the prison administration more than distributive justice does. Once both distributive and procedural justice are considered, it seems procedural justice matters more in shaping sick leave views. According to Lambert (2003) and Lambert *et al.* (2007), procedural justice goes to the heart of legitimacy of a prison. Staff see how the prison is engaging in perceived fairness of procedures, which are in their control, thus they are more likely to accept the proposition that sick leave should be used properly. Staff who view the prison as not engaging in procedural justice may result in them seeing sick leave as a right to be used however a person sees as fit in order to punish the prison. The current findings are supported by a past study of staff at a private prison, where procedural justice, but not distributive justice, had a statistically significant relationship with sick leave views (Lambert, Hogan, *et al.*, 2023).

As hypothesized, both procedural and distributive justice had statistically significant negative effects on being absent from work. Higher views of organizational justice tend to result in positive feelings and positive views of the organization. It appears that the positive feelings and a more favorable view of the prison result in a lower amount of time being absent from work. The current findings are supported by a past study of staff at a private prison, where procedural justice, but not distributive justice, had a statistically significant relationship with sick leave views (Lambert, Hogan, *et al.*, 2023). As previously noted, there are unavoidable absences (e.g., being ill) and avoidable absences (e.g., just taking a day off). The effects of both types of organizational justice probably are linked to avoidable absences. Feeling that the organization is fair in both procedures and outcomes results in less strain, lowering the chances of becoming sick and needing to be absent. In other words, low levels of perceived procedural and distributive justice result in psychological strain, which wears on a person over time, increasing the chances of becoming ill. Further, low views of distributive and procedural justice may also result in stress, and stress likely raises the level of unavoidable absences as well. Future research should examine why both types of organizational justice are linked to lower absenteeism among correctional staff. The finding for procedural justice is consistent with a past study but not the finding of distributive justice. Specifically, among staff at a private U.S. prison, Lambert, Hogan, *et al.* (2023) reported that procedural justice had a negative relationship with being absent from work, but distributive justice was a nonsignificant predictor of absenteeism. It may be that the effects of distributive justice on absenteeism are contextual, varying across different prisons. More research is needed involving staff at different prisons to determine how procedural and distributive justice are linked to being absent from work.

Among the three dependent variables, being absent had the lowest R-squared value. This means that the independent variables explained the least amount of variance in the OLS multivariate analysis for this dependent variable as compared to turnover intent and sick leaves views. This is likely due to how being absent was measured in the current study. Being absent was measured by asking how many hours of sick leave were used in the six months prior to the survey. The absenteeism measure used in the current study lumped both avoidable and unavoidable absences into a single measure. Procedural and distributive justice are more likely to influence avoidable absences (i.e., just taking a day off) rather than unavoidable absences (i.e., taking time off because illness or caring for an ill family member) (Lambert & Hogan, 2007; Lambert, Hogan, *et al.*, 2023). A greater amount of variance would likely be explained if only avoidable absenteeism was measured. This needs to be tested in future studies.

Educational level was the only personal characteristic used as a control variable that had a significant association with turnover intent in the multivariate analysis.

Prison staff who had earned a college degree were more likely to have searched for a new job in the year prior to the survey. This relationship could be due to two explanations. First, correctional staff with a college degree may experience status inconsistency of having more skills and knowledge than needed for the job and may seek a new job that meets their skills and knowledge (Jurik *et al.*, 1987; Lambert, Solinas-Saunders, *et al.*, 2023). Second, staff with a college degree may believe that they have more employment opportunities because they are more marketable and are seeking a “better” job than the one they currently have (Lambert, Solinas-Saunders, *et al.*, 2023). These are untested explanations that need to be explored by future research.

Age and position were the only two personal characteristics to have a significant relationship with sick leave views in the OLS regression equation. Age had a negative association, which means older staff were less likely to feel sick leave should be used however a person wishes. This association could be a generational occurrence where older staff were socialized to use sick leave as intended (Cheeseman & Downey, 2012). Position had a positive association in the multivariate OLS regression equation, meaning that custody staff (i.e., correctional officers) were more likely to agree that sick leave should be used however a person wants. This relationship could be the result of the balancing of high demands of the correctional officer position with little job latitude. Custody staff also may become frustrated and take out their frustration by supporting the counterproductive work view on sick leave use. These explanations, however, need to be examined by new research in this area.

Race/ethnicity was the only personal characteristic to have a significant association with absenteeism in the OLS regression equation. Nonwhite prison staff had higher use of sick leave in the six months prior to the survey. It is unknown why this relationship occurred. More studies are needed in order to understand whether and how race/ethnicity are linked to sick leave use among prison staff.

The findings from the current study indicate efforts should be undertaken to improve the justice views of correctional staff in order to lower turnover intent, sick leave views, and absenteeism. Prison administrators should seek the input from staff on their distributive and procedural justice views and how staff feel that efforts in fairness of procedures and outcomes can be improved. Prison staff should be allowed input in making changes to enhance distributive and procedural justice. Thibaut and Walker (1975) called this allowing staff a “voice” in the organization and having this “voice” generally results in higher levels of organizational justice. Often prison administrators have more information than line staff. Providing information sends a message that staff are a valued resource and also allows staff to have a clearer understanding of procedures and outcomes that affect them. Supervisors and managers need to be made aware of procedural and distributive justice and trained to make sure they are fair in their actions.

Further, supervisors and managers need to be evaluated on their efforts to be fair, as well as being rewarded for engaging in procedural and distributive justice. Overall, the findings indicate that procedural justice was the strongest predictor of three dependent variables in the current study. Having clear and transparent procedures in reaching distributive justice outcomes appears to influence the turnover intent, sick leave views, and being absent among prison staff, at least the responding staff in the current study. Efforts to improve views of procedural justice should be undertaken. As Martin and Bennett (1996) pointed out, “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). Reducing negative workplace outcomes, such as turnover intent, sick leave views, and absenteeism, is important and benefits staff and the prison.

As with many past research studies, the current study had limitations. It was a single study at one U.S. state-operated prison. Research is needed at other prisons and other types of correctional facilities to see if the findings can be replicated. Moreover, staff at prisons in other nations need to be studied. Additional research across different types of prisons in different areas can provide information to help answer whether the effects of procedural and distributive justice are universal across correctional institutions in different nations or whether the effects of the two types of organizational justice are contextual, varying by the type of correctional facility (e.g., jail vs. prison, juvenile vs. adult facility, female vs. male institution, etc.) and location of the correctional facility (e.g., do effects vary across nations). New research should use different measures of absenteeism and determine whether the findings change based on the absenteeism measure used. Future studies should use more items to measure the latent concepts of distributive justice, procedural justice, sick leave views, and turnover intent. Due to limitations on the length of the survey, the current study measured distributive justice, procedural justice, sick leave views, and turnover intent with 2, 3, 2, and 1 items, respectively. Other variables should be tested to determine whether the amount of the variance of turnover intent, sick leave views, and being absent can be increased. The R-squared for the dependent variables of turnover intent, sick leave views, and absenteeism were 0.24, 0.22, and 0.07, respectively. This means approximately 76%, 78%, and 93% of the variances of turnover intent, sick leave views, and absenteeism were accounted for by other variables. These other variables need to be identified and studied in order to provide information for prison administrators to reduce these three counterproductive work outcomes. The current study measured distributive justice views dealing with evaluation and procedural justice dealing with promotions. New research should measure views of fairness for other procedures and distributive outcomes, such as pay, position assignments, and discipline. The link between procedural and

distributive justice views with other outcomes, such as job performance, job burnout, work deviance, life satisfaction, and organizational citizenship behaviors (i.e., prosocial behaviors of going what is expected at work), should also be researched. There is a need for far more research.

In closing, prisons are labor intensive organizations, and counterproductive work outcomes harm the operation of prisons. Turnover/turnover intent, sick leave views, and absenteeism are types of counterproductive work outcomes. The organizational justice theory posits that employees desire their employing organization to treat them fairly. When employees feel they are treated fairly, they are less likely to engage in counterproductive work outcomes. If employees perceive that the employing organization treats them unjustly, counterproductive work outcomes are more likely. The current study used survey data from staff at a U.S. high-security government operated prison to examine how distributive and procedural justice views were related to turnover intent (i.e., how actively searching for a new job in the year before the study), sick leave views (i.e., views that sick leave should be used however a staff member wished to use it, even if not sick), and absenteeism (i.e., the amount of sick leave hours used in the six months prior to the study). In OLS multivariate regression analyses, distributive justice had significant negative relationships with turnover intent and being absent but had a nonsignificant relationship with sick leave views. In OLS multivariate regression analyses, Procedural justice had negative associations with all three studied counterproductive work outcomes, and also had the largest sized effect of any of the significant variables. Prison staff are a valuable and expensive resource, and counterproductive work outcomes are detrimental. It is important to invest in correctional staff. Raising views of organizational justice is one salient way to invest in staff. At the very least, it is hoped that the current study will increase interest and research dealing with distributive and procedural justice views among prison staff at different prisons across the world.

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