

I WANT TO LEAVE: A TEST OF A MODEL OF TURNOVER INTENT AMONG CORRECTIONAL STAFF

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Voluntary turnover is costly and disruptive to most correctional organizations. Turnover intent is the best predictor of voluntary turnover. This study examined the impact of personal characteristics (gender, age, position, tenure, educational level, and race), work environment factors (i.e., input into decision-making, instrumental communication, integration, organizational fairness, job variety, supervision, dangerousness of the job, role stress, work-related family conflict, and family-related work conflict), and work attitudes (i.e., job involvement, job stress, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment) on the turnover intent of Midwestern correctional staff. In multi-variate analysis, gender, tenure, educational level, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment had statistically significant effects on turnover intent, with job satisfaction having the greatest impact.

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The literature clearly demonstrates that turnover is a significant problem in the field of corrections. McShane and Williams (1993) conducted a nationwide survey of wardens and reported the typical concern regarding correctional officers was the problem of officer turnover. According to McShane, Williams, Schichor, and McClain (1991), the rate of correctional staff turnover ranges from 1 percent to 45 percent, with an average rate of 17 percent. Wright (1994) likewise reported that correctional staff turnover averages about 16 percent, with a nationwide high of 40 percent. There are two types of turnover, voluntary and involuntary (Price & Mueller, 1986). Of the two types, voluntary turnover (i.e., quitting) accounts for the majority of turnover and is usually more avoidable, costly, and disruptive to an organization (Price, 1977). Involuntary turnover, on the other hand, is usually less controllable, and in many cases, it is in the best interest of the organization and the employee that employment be terminated (McShane & Williams, 1993; Stohr, Self, & Lovrich, 1992).

Regardless of the type of organization, voluntary turnover is disruptive and harmful to the organization. It is also costly, both directly and indirectly (Cascio, 1991). Turnover is particularly costly for correctional organizations as they rely so heavily on the human factor (Stohr, et al., 1992). Recruitment, testing, selection, and training of new staff are expensive (Kiekbusch, Price, & Theis, 2003). In general, approximately ten to twenty thousand dollars is spent on recruiting, testing, hiring, and training each new correctional staff member (Gilbert, 1988; McShane, et al., 1991). Moreover, it is usually the most competent workers who quit, since it is relatively easy for them to obtain work elsewhere (Locke, 1976; Wright, 1993). Staff turnover also disrupts the social networks and contacts that staff members develop over time with inmates and other employees (Mitchell, MacKenzie, Styve, & Gover, 2000). Working with inmates and understanding the correctional environment are skills that take time to learn, and high turnover rates frequently result in new employees who have very little experience (Lambert, 2001; Stohr et al., 1992). Employee morale can be impacted by voluntary turnover (Byrd, Cochran, Silverman, & Blount, 2000; Stohr, et al., 1992). It can lead to a correctional facility being operated with insufficient staffing, which typically leads to overworking the staff who remain.

In an era when correctional agencies are being asked to do more with fewer resources, reducing turnover is paramount. Mitchell, et al. (2000) argued that “the constant fluctuation of correctional staff members in our country’s correctional institutions, in this era of increasing budgetary constraints, is more than a mere distraction; it is a serious threat to the safety and quality of service in correctional facilities (p. 335). Despite the importance of this issue, correctional staff turnover has only resulted in limited research to date.

Much of the research on correctional staff has focused on how the work environment impacts attitudes of job stress, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment. The consensus of this research is that it is imperative to examine these work attitudes because they help shape critical staff outcomes, especially in terms of negative outcomes such as turnover intent. However, there has been little research on correctional staff turnover intent, including whether these work attitudes are important in shaping the turnover intent of staff. This study attempted to enhance the literature by testing a model of turnover intent proposed in Lambert (2001). Specifically, the impact of personal characteristics, work environment forces, and work attitudes on turnover intent of correctional employees was explored.

Turnover intent is the cognitive process of thinking, planning, and desiring to leave a job (Mobley, Griffeth, Hand, & Meglino, 1979). It is easier to measure turnover intent than voluntary turnover because administrative records may be unavailable, incomplete, or inaccurate (Mitchell, et al., 2000). Additionally, it was not possible to match anonymous employee survey results with administrative records. Furthermore, it is generally agreed in the turnover literature that turnover intent is the final cognitive step in the decision making process of voluntary turnover, and turnover intent has consistently been linked to voluntary turnover (Cotton & Tuttle, 1986; Hom & Griffeth, 1995; Jurik & Winn, 1987; Steel & Ovalle, 1984). In their analysis of occupational turnover, Dalessio, Silverman, and Schuck (1986) stated:

more attention should be given to the direct and indirect influences of variables on intention to quit as opposed to the actual act of turnover. From the employer’s standpoint, intention to quit may be a more important variable than the actual act of

turnover. If the precursors to intention to quit are better understood, the employer could possibly institute changes to affect this intention. However, once an employee has quit, there is little the employer can do except assume the expense of hiring and training another employee (p. 261).

Literature Review

Personal characteristics, such as age, race, gender, tenure, and educational level, have been found to be linked with turnover intent and turnover among correctional workers. Some studies have found an inverse relationship for age (e.g., Byrd, et al., 2000; Camp, 1994; Mitchell, et al., 2000; Robinson, Porporino, & Simourd, 1997), while others have not (e.g., Ford, 1995; Jurik & Winn, 1987). Nonwhite correctional staff have generally been found to have higher levels of turnover intent and turnover as compared to their white counterparts (e.g., Ford, 1995; Jacobs & Gear, 1977; Jurik & Winn, 1987; Mitchell, et al., 2000), but not always (e.g., Byrd et al., 2000; Camp, 1994). Many studies have found no significant relationship between gender and correctional turnover (e.g., Byrd, et al., 2000; Ford, 1995; Jurik & Winn, 1987; Mitchell, et al., 2000; Robinson, et al., 1997), however, Camp (1994) found that female federal correctional employees were more likely to quit than were male staff. At least one study found no relationship between tenure and turnover (Jurik & Winn, 1987), but many other studies have observed a relationship (e.g., Byrd, et al., 2000; Camp, 1994; Robinson, et al., 1997). Most research has failed to find a direct link between educational level and correctional turnover (Camp, 1994; Ford, 1995; Jurik & Winn, 1987; Robinson et al., 1997), however one study of juvenile correctional officers found that those with higher educational levels were more likely to express a desire to quit as compared to those with lower educational levels (Mitchell, et al., 2000). Position has been linked to turnover intent, with line custody staff expressing a greater desire to leave (Byrd, et al., 2000). Finally, it is important to note that personal characteristics, while related to turnover intent and turnover, are less powerful predictors than are work environment factors and work attitudes (Mitchell, et al., 2000).

Work environment factors, including supervision, autonomy,

communication, support, authority, promotional opportunity, and input into decision-making, have also been found to be related to correctional staff turnover intent and turnover (Benton, Rosen, & Peters, 1982; Jurik & Winn, 1987; Kieckbusch, et al., 2003; McCann, no date, Mitchell, et al., 2000; Slate & Vogel, 1997). Other work environment variables have no significant effect on turnover. These include perceived dangerousness of the job, degree of control over inmates, and pay and benefits (Camp, 1994; Kieckbusch, et al., 2003; McCann, no date.; Mitchell, et al., 2000; Robinson, et al., 1997).

Work attitudes have been linked with turnover intent and turnover. Several studies have found that job stress is positively related to correctional staff turnover and turnover intent (Mitchell, et al., 2000; Slate & Vogel, 1997). Job satisfaction has been found to have a negative impact on both turnover intent (Byrd, et al., 2000; Jurik & Winn, 1987; Liou, 1998; Mitchell, et al., 2000) and turnover (Dennis, 1998; Jurik & Winn, 1987; Robinson, et al., 1997; Wright, 1993). Similarly, organizational commitment has been found to have a significant negative effect on both turnover intent (Kane, Saylor, & Nacci, no date; Robinson, Porporino, & Simourd, 1992) and turnover (Camp, 1994; Robinson, et al., 1997; Stohr, et al., 1992).

Based upon the preceding literature and noncriminal justice turnover literature, Lambert (2001) proposed a model of correctional staff voluntary turnover. He argued that turnover intent immediately preceded the actual event of voluntary turnover and, in turn, job satisfaction and organizational commitment helped shape the turnover intent of correctional employees. Additionally, the model postulated that work environment variables would have no direct effect on turnover intent once work attitudes were accounted for in the analysis. Instead, the work environment factors were believed to be important in shaping the work attitudes of job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Finally, it was theorized that personal characteristics would have little direct effect on turnover intent, far less than that of the work attitudes. A search of the published literature found no study which directly tested the postulations.

Research Questions

The current study proposes to test three fundamental premises put forward by Lambert (2001). First, it was predicted that personal

characteristics will help shape the turnover intent of correctional staff. In this study, the effects of gender, age, position, tenure, educational level, and race were studied. The correctional turnover literature is unclear on the relationship between gender and turnover. Lambert (2001), however, argued that gender would have no direct impact. Thus, it was assumed that gender would have a nonsignificant impact on turnover intent when controlling for the effects of other variables in a multi-variate analysis. Age was hypothesized to be inversely associated with turnover intent because older correctional staff may perceive fewer job opportunities for older workers. While not specifically discussed in the turnover model presented by Lambert (2001), position was believed to have a significant effect on turnover intent. Specifically, those who work in custody (i.e., correctional officers) were expected to express a greater desire to leave. Custody is a demanding job that often does not allow a person to reach his/her fullest potential. Tenure was postulated to have a negative relationship with turnover intent. Those with the most tenure may have too much vested in the organization (e.g., retirement benefits, social contacts, etc.), and these investments bind them to continued employment with the correctional organization (Becker, 1960). Additionally, those with high tenure may have found a position that they like. Educational level was hypothesized to have a positive effect on turnover intent, as those with more education generally have more available higher quality employment opportunities as compared to their counterparts with lower educational levels. While the correctional turnover empirical literature is unclear on the relationship between race and turnover/turnover intent, it was postulated that race will have no association with turnover intent. This is based upon the contention by Lambert (2001) that race would have no direct effects on correctional staff turnover intent.

The second premise of Lambert's (2001) model which was tested in this study was that work attitudes are very important in shaping correctional staff turnover intent. The model postulated that job satisfaction and organizational commitment would both have inverse relationships with turnover intent. Job satisfaction is an affective (i.e., emotional) response by a person concerning his or her particular job (Cranny, Smith, & Stone, 1992), and is generally

defined as “the extent to which people like their jobs” (Spector, 1996, p. 214). Most people wish to have enjoyable and rewarding jobs (Naisbitt & Aburdene, 1985). If correctional members find their work unpleasant, it is likely they will want to escape from the job. Conversely, if the job is satisfying, there is less incentive to leave. According to Locke (1976), the reaction to something that is satisfying is to embrace it, while the response to something that is dissatisfying is to withdraw from it. Thus, in this study, it was predicted that job satisfaction would have a significant negative effect on correctional staff turnover intent.

Another factor associated with turnover is organizational commitment, which is generally defined as having the core elements of loyalty to the organization, identification with the organization (i.e., pride in the organization and internalization of organizational goals), and involvement in the organization (i.e., personal effort made for the sake of the organization) (Mowday, Porter, & Steers, 1982). It makes intuitive sense that correctional workers who have low commitment will be less inclined to remain within the correctional organization. Conversely, those who feel bonded with the organization will have less desire to sever ties with the organization to which they take pride and wish to be a member. Therefore, it was conjectured that organizational commitment would have a significant inverse relationship with turnover intent.

While not included in the model (Lambert, 2001), two other work attitudes were included in this study: job stress and job involvement. In the literature, job stress has been treated as both a work environment factor and a work attitude. In this study, job stress is considered a work attitude. Job stress is generally defined in the correctional literature as an employee’s feelings of job-related hardness, tension, anxiety, frustration, worry, emotional exhaustion, and distress (Cullen, Link, Wolfe, & Frank, 1985; Grossi, Keil, & Vito, 1996). The literature strongly supports the contention that correctional work is stressful and has negative impacts on staff (Dowden & Tellier, 2004; Finn, 1999). Prolonged and intense stress has been found to have serious consequences, both physically and mentally (Cheek & Miller, 1983; Finn, 1999; Ivancevich & Matteson, 1980). Therefore, among correctional staff, job stress was hypothesized to be positively related to turnover intent. Job

involvement was included in the work attitudinal dimension because it is considered to be an “individual’s ego” involvement with their work (Parasuraman, 1982). Those who feel that their jobs are important should be less likely to express a desire to quit. Thus, it was predicted that job involvement would have an inverse impact on turnover intent among correctional workers. Finally, as postulated by Lambert (2001) and empirically found by Mitchell, et al. (2000), it was hypothesized that work attitudes would be stronger predictors of correctional staff turnover intent than personal characteristics.

The final major premise put forward by Lambert (2001) was that work environment variables would have no direct effects once the work attitudes of job satisfaction and organizational commitment were entered into the analysis. In this study, input into decision-making, instrumental communication, integration, organizational fairness, job variety, supervision, dangerousness, role stress, work-related family conflict, and family-related work conflict were used as measures of the work environment. Input into decision-making measured the degree employees perceive that they have a voice in organizational decisions and their jobs (Wright, Salyor, Gilman, & Camp, 1997). The variable instrumental communication is defined as the “degree to which information about the job is formally transmitted by an organization to its members” (Agho, Mueller, & Price, 1993, p. 1009). Integration in the work environment refers to the degree an organization creates group cohesion among employees, work groups, departments, and divisions (Lincoln & Kalleberg, 1990). Another aspect of the work environment is organizational fairness, also known as organizational justice, which refers to the degree of fairness found within an organization and is comprised of the dimensions of distributive and procedural justice (Greenberg, 1986, 1987). Job variety is the degree of variation in the job, with some jobs require performance that is highly repetitive, while other jobs have a significant degree of variety in the required tasks and how they are performed (Mueller, Boyer, Price, & Iverson, 1994; (Price & Mueller, 1986). In this study, supervision in the work environment dealt with perceptions of quality, open, and supportive supervision. Dangerousness concerns the degree to which a person perceives his/her job as being a dangerous one (Cullen, et al., 1985). The work environment variable role stress is the degree that work roles cause

problems for a worker, resulting in with the job, such as role ambiguity and role conflict (Hepburn & Knepper, 1993). The dimension of work-related family conflict refers to the spillover of work issues and problems to the home life of an employee, leading to conflict. Similarly, family-related work conflict refers to home issues and problems leading to problems/conflict at work (Lambert, Hogan, & Barton, 2003). This study included many more work environment variables than past studies of correctional officer turnover intent because they provides a better picture of employees' perceptions of their work environment and how these factors may impact turnover intent.

METHODOLOGY

A survey of all the correctional staff at a Midwestern correctional facility was conducted in the fall of 2000. The state-run high-security level facility had been in operation for several decades and at the time of the survey housed roughly 1000 incarcerated male inmates who were serving long prison sentences for drug and violent offenses. The facility employed about 450 staff, however, due to factors such as sick leave, temporary reassignment, and annual leave, approximately 400 employees were available at the time of the survey. In a cover letter, the importance of the survey was explained, along with the fact that participation was strictly voluntary and all responses would be anonymous. To encourage staff to participate in the study, several cash awards ranging from \$50 to \$100 were randomly awarded to those who turned in completed surveys, and a total of \$250 was awarded. In addition, there was a single follow-up of the survey for those who did not respond. A total of 272 useable surveys were returned (i.e., a response rate of 68%). The respondents represented all areas at the facility, such as correctional officers, case managers, medical staff, industry staff, food service workers, line staff, supervisors, and managers. Overall, the respondents appeared to be representative of the staff at the prison. Of the total prison staff, about 77% were male, 86% were white, and 53% were correctional officers. Among the respondents, about 76% were male, 82% were white, and 50% were correctional officers.

MEASURES

Dependent Variable

The dependent variable in this study was turnover intent. According to Mobley, et al. (1979), there are four cognitive parts of turnover intent: 1) thinking of quitting; 2) planning to stay or leave; 3) searching for alternative employment; and 4) a desire to leave current job. Each was measured using a single item: "In the last 6 months, have you thought about quitting your current job?" (yes/no); "How likely is that you will be at this job in a year from now?" (five-point Likert type scale ranging from very likely to very unlikely); "How actively have you searched for a job with other employers in the last year?" (five-point Likert-type scale ranging from not at all to very actively); and "Do you desire to voluntarily leave/quit your job?" (yes/no). The four items, adapted from Sager, Griffeth, and Hom (1998), were summed together to form an index.

Personal Characteristics

About 76% of the respondents were men. In terms of work position, 50% worked in custody (i.e., correctional officers), 26% worked in other areas, 6% worked in unit management (i.e., counselors, case managers, and unit managers), 5% worked in the business office, 4% worked in the education and vocational department, 3% worked in prison industries, 3% worked in the medical department, and 3% worked in administration. Thus, half of the surveyed staff were correctional officers, and the other half held other positions in the prison. The distribution of race was as follows: 82% of the respondents were White, 8% were Black, 3% were Native American, 2% were Hispanic, and 5% were other. For the highest educational level reported, 9% indicated that they had a high school diploma or GED, 50% had some college but no degree, 20% had an associates degree, 16% a bachelors degree, 4% a masters degree, and 1% a professional or terminal degree. Gender, position, race, and education were measured as a dichotomous variable (see Table 1 for the coding scheme). Age was measured in continuous years, and the mean age was about 43. Tenure at the correctional facility was measured in continuous years, and the typical employee had worked

about 9 years at the prison.

Work Environment Variables

Ten dimensions of the work environment were measured. All the items used to create the work environment indexes, except for instrumental communication, used a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from strongly disagree to agree. Input into decision-making was measured using seven items from Curry, Wakefield, Price, and Mueller (1986) (e.g., “At this prison, suggestions from workers are welcomed” and “I have input into matters that effect me at my job”). The seven items reflected both input into decision-making at the organizational level and input into job related matters (i.e., job autonomy). Instrumental communication also utilized five items from Curry, et al. (1986) (e.g., “On a scale 1 to 5, where 1 = not informed at all and 5 = very well informed, how well informed are you by prison management about the following aspects of your job: 1) What is to be done?; 2) What is most important about the job?”). The integration variable was measured by five items adapted from Miller and Droge (1986) (e.g., “At this prison, interdepartmental committees are frequently set up to allow for joint decision making” and “At this prison, task forces are frequently set up to help interdepartmental collaboration on specific projects”). Organizational fairness was measured using three items, two of which were from Wright and Saylor (1992) and one that was created for the survey (e.g., “There is a fair opportunity to be promoted in the Department of Corrections”). To measure job variety/routinization, five items were adapted from other studies (e.g., “My job requires that I constantly must learn new things” and “My job has a lot of variety in it”) (Curry et al., 1986; Finlay, Martin, Roman, & Blum, 1995; Mueller et al., 1994). The supervision variable was assessed by using three items from Wright and Saylor (1992) that measured a person’s perception of accessibility, fairness, and candidness of the relationship with his or her supervisor (e.g., “My supervisor encourages me in doing my job”). Perceived dangerousness of the job was measured using four items from Cullen, et al., (1985) (e.g., “I work in a dangerous job” and “In my job, a person stands a good chance of getting hurt”). Role stress was investigated through the use of nine items from Ivancevich and Matteson (1980), Rizzo, House, and Lirtzman (1970), and

Triplett, Mullings, and Scarborough (1996) (e.g., “I am unclear to whom I report to or who reports to me” and “I receive conflicting requests at work from two or more people”). Both work-related family conflict and family-related work conflict were assessed from adaptations of surveys used outside the field of corrections (e.g., Bacharach, Bamberger, & Conley, 1991; Bohlen & Viveros-Long, 1981; Higgins & Duxbury, 1992) and were reworded to reflect that the respondent was working in a correctional facility. Work-related family conflict was measured using twelve items (e.g., “My job keeps me away from my family too much” and “Work makes me too tired or irritable to fully enjoy my family or social life”). Family-related work conflict was measured by two questions (i.e., “My family life interferes with work” and “My social life interferes with my job”).

Work Attitude

The four work attitudes of job involvement, job stress, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment, were also used as independent variables in this study. All the work attitude items were answered using a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from strongly disagree to agree. Job involvement was measured using three items from Lawler and Hall (1970) (e.g., “I live, eat, and breathe my job”). A job stress index was created using four items from Crank, Regoli, Hewitt, and Culbertson (1995) (e.g., “When I’m at work, I often feel tense or uptight” and “A lot of time my job makes me very frustrated or angry”). Five items from Brayfield and Rothe (1951) were used to measure job satisfaction (e.g., “Most days I am enthusiastic about my job” and “I find real enjoyment in my job”). Nine items from Mowday, et al. (1982) were used to measure organizational commitment (e.g., “I really care about the fate of this prison,” “I feel little loyalty to this prison” (reverse coded), and “I find that my values and the prison’s values are very similar”).

RESULTS

Descriptive statistics for the measures used in this study are presented in Table 1. There appeared to be significant variation in the measures, and all the indexes had a Cronbach’s alpha value higher

than .60, a level which is generally viewed as acceptable (Gronlund, 1981).

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Description	Mean	SD	Md.	Min	Max
Gender	0 = female 1 = male	0.76	0.43	1	0	1
Age	Age in continuous yrs	42.55	8.32	44	20	61
Position	0 = non custody, 1 = custody	0.50	0.50	0.50	0	1
Tenure	Years at the prison	9.64	6.82	9	0	26
Education	0 = no college degree 1 = college degree	0.41	0.49	0	0	1
Race	0 = Nonwhite 1 = White	0.81	0.39	1	0	1
Input into Decision	7 item index ($\alpha = .84$)	20.57	5.39	21	7	35
Instrumental Communication	5 item index ($\alpha = .85$)	17.65	3.69	18	5	25
Integration	5 item index ($\alpha = .73$)	13.44	3.04	14	5	22
Organizational Fairness	3 item index ($\alpha = .68$)	9.59	2.54	10	3	15
Job Variety	5 item index ($\alpha = .76$)	15.74	3.91	16	5	24
Supervision	3 item index ($\alpha = .77$)	9.51	2.79	10	3	15
Dangerousness	4 item index ($\alpha = .82$)	13.58	3.54	14	4	20
Role Stress	9 item index ($\alpha = .79$)	22.92	5.00	22	9	40
Work-Related Family Conflict	12 item index ($\alpha = .81$)	30.47	6.63	30	14	49
Family-Related Work Conflict	2 item index ($\alpha = .77$)	3.66	1.37	4	2	10
Job Involvement	3 item index ($\alpha = .74$)	4.75	1.70	4	3	12
Job Stress	4 item index ($\alpha = .78$)	10.51	3.26	10	4	20
Job Satisfaction	5 item index ($\alpha = .89$)	17.50	4.29	18	5	25
Organizational Commitment	9 item index ($\alpha = .88$)	29.75	6.64	31	9	45
Turnover Intentions	4 item index ($\alpha = .61$)	3.80	2.03	3	2	11

Note. SD = standard deviation, Md = median value, Min = minimum value, and Max = maximum value. α represents the value of Cronbach's alpha, a measure of internal consistency. Input into decision = Input into Decision-Making. Comm. = communication, Fair. = fairness, Con. = Conflict, and Org. = organizational.

A matrix of Pearson's correlations is presented in Table 2. Of the six personal characteristics, gender, tenure, and education had statistically significant correlations with turnover intent. The findings show that women were more likely than men to express turnover intent. Furthermore, as tenure increased, the desire to leave decreased. In regards to education, those with a college degree were more likely to express turnover intent as compared to staff without a college degree.

Seven of the ten work environment variables had a significant correlation with the turnover intent index. Input into decision-making, instrumental communication, organizational fairness, job variety, and supervision all had significant negative correlations with turnover intent; as each of these work environment variables increased, turnover intent dropped. Conversely, role stress and work-related family conflict had significant positive correlations with turnover intent; as they increased, intention to leave also increased. Integration, dangerousness, and family-related work conflict had non-significant correlations. Job stress had a significant positive correlation, while job satisfaction and organizational commitment had significant negative correlations.

Three of the four work attitudes had statistically significant correlations with turnover intent. Job involvement did not show a significant association. Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression was computed with turnover intent as the dependent variable. The personal characteristics, work environment, and work attitudes were entered as independent variables. OLS regression allows for the effects of an independent variable to be estimated while controlling for the shared effects with the other independent variables. The OLS regression results are presented in Table 3. Based upon the R-Squared statistics, the personal and work variables accounted for about 25% of the variance in the turnover intent measure. The work variables accounted for a far greater proportion of the variance than the personal characteristics. When only the six personal characteristics variables were entered into an OLS regression model with turnover intent as the dependent variable, R-Squared was only .05. Of the six personal characteristics, gender, tenure, and education had statistically significant relationships with turnover intent. Women

were still more likely than their male counterparts to express a desire to leave. As predicted, as tenure increased, turnover intent decreased. Additionally, those with a college degree were generally more likely to intend to leave as compared to staff without a college degree.

None of the work environment variables had statistically significant effects on turnover intent. Likewise, neither job involvement nor job stress had significant effects. On the other hand, both job satisfaction and organizational commitment had highly significant negative impacts on turnover intent; that is, as job satisfaction and organizational commitment went up, the intent to leave went down. In terms of size of effects (i.e., the β column in Table 3), job satisfaction had the largest impact followed by organizational commitment. Gender, tenure, and educational level had less than a third the size of effect as compared to job satisfaction.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Some hypotheses were supported, while others were not. It was hypothesized that gender would have no relationship with turnover intent, yet it did in the multi-variate analysis. Women were more likely to express a desire to leave than men. The same relationship was observed by Camp (1994). This is an unexpected finding considering that female employees, on average, expressed higher levels of job satisfaction than did male workers (see Table 2). Neither age nor position had a significant relationship on turnover intent in the regression model. Neither older workers nor correctional officers were more likely to express a desire to leave than were younger workers or non-custody staff. Thus, for three of the personal characteristics of gender, age, and position, the predicted relationships were not observed in the multi-variate analysis.

Hypothesized relationships were observed for tenure, education, and race. Tenure likely had a negative association with turnover intent because of “sunken costs” (Becker, 1960). As a person spends more time within an organization, he/she has invested more and more in the organization, and these “sunken costs” bind the person to continued employment. In this study, the staff was covered by a state retirement system. People who have a

Table 2
Correlation Matrix

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Gender	1.00									
2. Age	.09	1.00								
3. Position	.23*	-.19*	1.00							
4. Tenure	-.16*	.40*	.06	1.00						
5. Education	-.10	-.01	-.20*	-.25*	1.00					
6. Race	-.01	.06	.07	.04	-.06	1.00				
7. Input	-.14 [†]	-.10	-.36*	-.16 [†]	.18*	.06	1.00			
8. Inst Com	-.12	-.08	-.11	-.13	.07	.07	.42*	1.00		
9. Integration	-.12	-.03	-.16*	-.15 [†]	.17*	.05	.61*	.36*	1.00	
10. Fairness	-.06	-.10	-.17*	-.12	.04	.07	.66*	.44*	.53*	1.00
11. Job Var	-.09	-.02	-.23*	-.24*	.19*	.00	.51*	.24*	.23*	.38*
12. Superv	-.14 [†]	.02	-.42*	.02	.08	.12 [†]	.75*	.41*	.43*	.62*
13. Danger	.24*	-.10	.35*	.04	-.17*	-.13 [†]	-.34*	-.13 [†]	-.25*	-.19*
14. Role Str	.13*	.10	.10	.17*	-.07	-.16*	-.62*	-.50*	-.59*	-.64*
15. W on FC	.10	-.12	.29*	-.06	-.09	-.09	-.37*	-.22*	-.32*	-.36*
16. F on WC	.02	-.01	.05	.04	.02	.07	-.03	.06	.04	-.01
17. Job Invol	.00	.03	-.12	-.08	.03	.01	.22*	.12*	.20*	.24*
18. Job Stress	-.02	.14 [†]	-.01	.03	.02	-.11	-.42*	-.26*	-.27*	-.42*
19. Job Sat	-.16 [†]	-.02	-.21*	-.14 [†]	.10	.04	.64*	.30*	.44*	.62*
20. Org Com	-.09	-.06	-.17*	-.16*	.11	.10	.66*	.40*	.47*	.69*
21. Turn Int	-.12 [†]	-.08	-.03	-.16*	.16*	-.04	-.22*	-.14*	-.12	-.27*

Table 2
Correlation Matrix
(continued)

Variable	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
1. Gender										
2. Age										
3. Position										
4. Tenure										
5. Education										
6. Race										
7. Input										
8. Inst Com										
9. Integration										
10. Fairness										
11. Job Var	1.00									
12. Superv	.39*	1.00								
13. Danger	-.04	-.28*	1.00							
14. Role Str	-.28*	-.56*	.25*	1.00						
15. W on FC	-.16 [†]	-.42*	.29*	.42*	1.00					
16. F on WC	-.04	-.07	.00	.09	.35*	1.00				
17. Job Invol	.23*	.10	-.12	-.16*	.08	.22*	1.00			
18. Job Stress	-.13 [†]	-.37*	.28*	.45*	.43*	.09	.01	1.00		
19. Job Sat	.52*	.59*	-.25*	-.53*	-.42*	-.08	.25*	-.18*	1.00	
20. Org Com	.43*	.55*	-.26*	-.63*	.40*	-.05	.26*	-.48*	.75*	1.00
21. Turn Int	-.13 [†]	-.23*	.05	.19*	.19*	.03	-.05	.26*	-.35*	-.22*

Table 3
OLS Regression Results for Turnover Intentions

Variable	B	β
Gender	-.67	-.14*
Age	-.01	-.05
Position	-.41	-.10
Tenure	-.04	-.14*
Education	.51	.12*
Race	.28	.05
Input into Decision-Making	-.06	-.16
Instrumental Communication	-.03	-.06
Integration	.05	.07
Organizational Fairness	-.12	-.14
Job Variety	.01	.03
Supervision	.04	.05
Dangerousness	.001	.001
Role Stress	-.005	-.001
Work-Related Family Conflict	.02	.06
Family-Related Work Conflict	-.03	-.02
Job Involvement	.04	.04
Job Stress	-.01	-.01
Job Satisfaction	-.23	-.49**
Organizational Commitment	.08	-.26**
R-Squared		.25**

Note. For how variables were measured, see Table 1. B represents the unstandardized regression coefficient and β represents the standardized regression coefficient.

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

great deal vested in this system are much less likely to sacrifice it by quitting. A relationship between education and turnover intent was found, with those with a college degree more likely to express turnover intent. More educated persons may feel that they have greater job opportunities than those without a degree. Furthermore, higher education can broaden one's horizons, creating new ways of thinking and feelings of entitlement. This raises a person's expectations, which are not likely to be met in a prison organization

(Hepburn, 1989; Jurik & Musheno, 1986). As hypothesized, race had no significant association with turnover intent. Past studies have found that nonwhite correctional workers were more likely to leave with the reason most often provided being a strained work relationship between staff of different races (Ford, 1995; Jacobs & Grear, 1977; Jurik & Winn, 1987; Mitchell, et al., 2000). According to the warden of the facility used in this study, there was no known racial tension between staff. This is further supported by the correlations for the race variable in Table 2. There were no significant differences between nonwhite and white staff in terms of their level of job involvement, job stress, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment. Finally, as hypothesized, the personal characteristics had a smaller size impact than did the work environment and work attitudes variables. This is a positive finding from the perspective of correctional administrators, as the work environment and work attitudes are both aspects that can be improved.

As predicted, job satisfaction and organizational commitment had significant effects on turnover intent. As job satisfaction increased, turnover intent dropped. According to Terkel (1974), work provides most of us with “daily meaning as well as daily bread” (p. XI). More importantly, it is not just financial rewards that are important to people. Many people desire rewarding, enjoyable, and enriching jobs (Naisbitt & Aburdene, 1985). If the person is highly dissatisfied with his or her job, they will likely to want to leave the job that is causing so much pain and discomfort and will be more likely to voice intentions to leave in order to alleviate the negative feelings (Roseman, 1981). According to Baron (1985), individuals who consistently experience unpleasant or dissatisfying environments or situations develop a state that is referred to as dissonance, and then attempt to reduce or eliminate dissonance. Workers who are happy with their overall jobs have far less reason to leave. Similarly, as organizational commitment increased, the desire to leave decreased. It appears that those with higher commitment have stronger bonds with the organization, and these bonds generally ensure that they will remain members in the organization. People who are highly attached or bonded to something are generally not likely to sever that attachment (Mueller, et al., 1994).

While the two forms of work attitudes that Lambert (2001) speculated to be linked to turnover intent were found to be associated in this study, the two additional forms of work attitudes which were added did not. Specifically, neither job involvement nor job stress were related to turnover intent in the regression equation. It is possible that job involvement is related to correctional staff turnover intent, but this study failed to observe such an association. As previously indicated, job involvement is the psychological identification with a particular line of work (e.g., working in corrections is important). It is not a psychological identification with a specific job or an organization. Thus, a person may dislike his/her particular job or employer but does not wish to leave that line of work. It would be interesting to see if those with high levels of job involvement who leave a particular correctional job seek another job in corrections. Of further interest is the finding that job stress did not have a significant direct effect on correctional staff turnover intent. It could be that there is a direct association that was not found in the current study. In two other studies (Mitchell, et al., 2000; Slate & Vogel, 1997), job stress was found to have a positive impact on correctional staff turnover intent, while only one study found no effect of job stress on voluntary turnover (Camp, 1994). It is interesting to note the two studies that failed to find an association between job stress and turnover (i.e., Camp and the current study) included measures for both job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Mitchell, et al. (2000) included only a measure for job satisfaction but not for organizational commitment. Slate and Vogel (1997) included neither job satisfaction nor organizational commitment in their study. It could be that job stress is an antecedent of job satisfaction and organizational commitment. In this study, job stress had significant correlations with both job satisfaction and especially with organizational commitment (see Table 2). As previously indicated, the literature is unclear whether job stress is a work environment factor, a job attitude, or both. It could be that once measures of job satisfaction and organizational commitment are introduced into the equation, job stress no longer has significant effects. This would mean that job stress has indirect effects on correctional staff turnover intent through job satisfaction and organizational commitment. This is an area which needs further

exploration before the type of relationship between job stress and correctional staff turnover intent is fully understood.

In the bi-variate analysis, all but three of the work environment variables had significant correlations with turnover intent. As hypothesized, when work attitudes were included in the model, the impact of the ten work environment variables disappeared. This does not mean that work environment factors are unimportant, it simply means that they just do not necessarily have a direct effect on the desire to stay or leave. The work environment variables are important in shaping the level of job satisfaction and organizational commitment among correctional employees. Except for family-related work conflict, the work environment variables had significant correlations with both job satisfaction and organizational commitment (see Table 2). In addition, the correctional staff literature is replete with studies that have found various dimensions of the work environment to have influence on job satisfaction and organizational commitment of workers. Thus, the results of this study suggest that work attitudes in the form of job satisfaction and organizational commitment moderate the effects of work environment variables on turnover intent among correctional workers.

If confirmed in future studies, the findings of this study have important administrative implications. The major implication is that to reduce turnover intent among employees, correctional administrators should focus on improving job satisfaction and organizational commitment of staff. Administrators need to identify and understand the work environment factors which impact job satisfaction and organizational commitment. While not directly tied to turnover intent, the work environment is a major force in shaping the job satisfaction and organizational commitment of correctional workers. With the exception of work-related family conflict, all other work environment variables were found to have significant effects on job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Specifically, input into decision-making, instrumental communication, integration, organizational fairness, job variety, supervision, dangerousness, role stress, and work-related family conflict are important antecedents of correctional staff job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Brief, Munro, & Aldag, 1976; Cullen, et al., 1985; Dennis, 1998; Griffin, 2001; Grossi & Berg, 1991; Hepburn, 1987; Hepburn &

Albonetti, 1980; Hepburn & Knepper, 1993; Jurik & Halemba, 1984; Jurik & Winn, 1987; Lambert, 2003, 2004; Lambert, Barton, Hogan, & Clarke, 2002; Lambert, Hogan & Barton, 2002a, 2002b, 2003; Lambert, Reynolds, Paoline, & Watkins, 2004; Lindquist & Whitehead, 1986; Lombardo, 1981; Moon & Maxwell, 2004; Stohr, Lovrich, Monke, & Zupan, 1994; Van Voorhis, Cullen, Link, & Wolfe, 1991; Whitehead & Lindquist, 1986; Wright, et al, 1997). Correctional administrators must not only work on improving the work environment for their employees, they must also take the time to ensure that the changes they have made to the work environment have resulted in increased job satisfaction and organizational commitment. This should ultimately lead to a reduction in turnover intent, a phenomenon that has been strongly linked to voluntary turnover. In sum, correctional administrators have the ability to reduce turnover intent and voluntary turnover in their correctional facilities by concentrating on improving job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

While the current study provides some important insights, it is not without some limitations. First, this study included only one Midwestern correctional staff. Staff at other prisons in other parts of the country and in other nations need to be studied to allow for greater generalization of the results found here. Future research may also wish to include other and more dimensions of the work environment in the analysis. In addition, future investigations may wish to examine voluntary turnover to verify the immediate and best predictor of voluntary turnover is indeed turnover intent. Future research is needed to better understand the relationship between job stress and turnover intent, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment. As previously indicated, additional research is required to determine how job involvement shapes the attitudes, intentions, and behaviors of correctional employees. There is a definite need for much more extensive research on correctional staff turnover. According to the literature, it is a problem, yet there has been very limited research on the turnover intent and turnover of correctional workers. It is hoped that this study will spark such research. Further research will benefit all involved, including correctional employees, correctional administrators, inmates, the friends and families of staff, and society in general.

In closing, in an era of increasing inmate populations, rising costs, shrinking budgets, and personnel shortages, correctional organizations should be interested in retaining and improving their most valuable resource - employees. Correctional facilities rely heavily on human beings to accomplish the myriad of tasks and responsibilities with which they have been charged by society. If staff voluntarily leave, it is a great loss to correctional organizations. It is expensive to hire, train, and “bring up to speed” new replacements. The literature suggests that the immediate stage before actually leaving employment is turnover intent; therefore, It is important to understand the antecedents of turnover intent.

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