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**Satisfied and Committed Prison Officers? A Qualitative Exploration of Job Satisfaction
and Organisational Commitment among Prison Officers in Ghana**

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ABSTRACT

This chapter aims to contribute to the limited literature on prison officer job satisfaction and organisational commitment in Sub-saharan Africa - predominantly collectivist societies. Drawing on interviews with 78 frontline prison officers in Ghana, this study documents the sources of job satisfaction and organisational commitment and their impact on prison officers. While intrinsic aspects of prison work involving opportunities for inmate rehabilitation, benefit-finding, recognition and praise for work conducted towards job satisfaction, extrinsic motivators such as salaries and environmental working conditions engendered job dissatisfaction. On organisational commitment, it emerged that all three dimensions of commitment – affective, normative and continuance were important components of organisational commitment. However, while affective commitment engendered high commitment, normative and continuance dimensions of prison work contributed to low organisational commitment.

Keywords: Job satisfaction; organizational commitment; cross-cultural research; quality of life; prison officers; Africa; Ghana.

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INTRODUCTION

Prisons represent an important institution in the criminal justice system and as with many organisations, are confronted with the task of ensuring that staff are satisfied with their work and sufficiently committed to the ideals of the institution. While Locke (1976, p. 1304) defined job satisfaction as “a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one’s job or job experiences”, Spector (1996, p. 214) defined job satisfaction as the extent to which an employee likes his or her job. Despite these differences, ‘affect’ i.e. emotion is an underlying theme of job satisfaction, although a critical assessment of Locke’s (1976) definition adds a further cognitive dimension involving an interaction between cognition and affect. Job satisfaction is thus a subjective feeling resulting from the individual’s assessment of whether his needs and wants are being met in the job or not. Organisational commitment, another crucial employee attitude, transcends attachment to the employees’ job, work group, or belief in the importance of work itself, encompassing the employees’ bond to the organization as a whole. Meyer and Allen (1991, p. 1997) have conceptualized organisational commitment as constituting three main components: affective commitment (based on a desire to belong to the organization); normative commitment (based on a sense of obligation to the organization) and calculative commitment (based on the belief that leaving the organization will be costly to the employee in terms of sunk costs such as pension and benefits).

General academic and industry interest in job satisfaction and organisation commitment is not without reason. These vital attitudes have been linked to impact staff behaviours, and other

important organisational efficiency and effectiveness indices such as productivity, turnover intent and voluntary turnover. In a meta-analysis, Dowden and Tellier (2004) found these attitudes to be robust predictors of job stress. Research from private and public-sector prisons in the UK has shown that staff attitudes influence behaviour and, consequently, the prison ethos (Crewe, 2011; Crewe, Hulley and Liebling, 2011). Given the importance of attitudes in shaping the prison ethos and the implementation of prison policy reforms (Liebling, 2008), it is vital to explore the determinants of officer attitudes, especially job satisfaction and organisational commitment.

Despite efforts to explore the nature and determinants of prison staff job satisfaction and organisational commitment, the extant research suffers some limitations. First, research on these attitudes, although mainly Anglo-Saxon, is regarded as generalizable to other cultures and thus sparsely examined in contexts such as Ghana, yet cross-cultural research has shown that culture plays a pivotal role in the development of satisfaction and commitment (Clugston, Howell & Dorfman, 2000; Kirkman & Shapiro, 2001). Despite attempts at addressing cross-cultural prison dynamics (e.g. Boateng & Hsieh, 2019), still much exploration remains on satisfaction and commitment among prison officers. Second, research on both job satisfaction and organisational commitment has been mainly quantitative in orientation, involving the use of standardized scales whose contents are mainly imposed by the researchers rather than being derived from the informants. This approach tends to mask differential effects and ignore individual differences caused by the 'interactions between the person and the environment' (Van Ginneken, 2016: p. 219). Finally, research into the antecedents of job satisfaction and organisational commitment has been compromised by the aggregation of correctional staff and treatment staff, thus limiting our understanding of the attitudes of prison or correctional officers, even though they represent a distinct and unique set of prison employees with considerable influence in shaping the prison

environment for good or ill. The aim of this study is to explore empirically via the lived experiences of Ghanaian prison officers, the factors that shape job satisfaction and organisational commitment.

Previous Research on Job Satisfaction and Organisational Commitment

Job satisfaction is acknowledged as one of the most important and widely-researched constructs in the literature of industrial and organisational psychology and management. Low job satisfaction impacts negatively on prison staff. While Lombardo (1981) found that low job satisfaction increased absenteeism, Lambert, Edward, Camp and Saylor (2005) found that decreased job satisfaction resulted in increased use of sick leave. Turnover is another costly consequence of low job satisfaction, because of the expense of recruiting, selecting, training and placing of new staff (McShane, Williams, Schichor, & McClain, 1991). Notably, most prisons rely on human beings for the management of other human beings, and technology cannot replace staff in the running of prisons. Thus, the direct costs (e.g. recruitment and training) and indirect costs (e.g. loss of productivity and anxiety among existing staff as well as tension between new and existing staff) of prison staff turnover are considerable (Archambeault & Fenwick, 1988).

The effects of job satisfaction are not confined to staff but also affect prisoners' wellbeing and the wider prison environment. Research among prison officers supports a strong positive relationship between job satisfaction and support for offender rehabilitation (Hepburn & Knepper, 1993). Similarly, Nacci and Kane (1984, p. 49) concluded in their study of sex and sexual aggression among federal prison prisoners that "[w]hen officers indicated greater job satisfaction, prisoners were likely to say that their environment was more free from the danger of sexual assault". Aside from its relationship with a safe environment, job satisfaction among officers enhanced favourable staff-prisoner relationships and increased officers' maintenance of correctional standards and conditions (Farkas, 1999; Lambert, Barton and Hogan, 1999; Styles,

1991). Nevertheless, Farkas (1999) found that when officers reported high job satisfaction, there was increased social distance between prisoners and officers, but officers' abuse of authority was significantly reduced. This was mainly because officers attributed their high job satisfaction to extrinsic aspects of the job such as pay and benefits. It can be safely argued from the literature that the impact of officer job satisfaction on prisoner outcomes is contingent upon the source of satisfaction, where intrinsic sources are more important for favourable prisoner outcomes.

Organisational commitment has become synonymous with affective commitment because of its strong predictive validity, positive association with job satisfaction, and strong negative correlation with turnover and stress (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Brunetto & Farr-Wharton, 2003). Commitment comprises three major elements: loyalty (belief in the goals of the organization), identification (pride and internalization of organisational goals) and involvement (making personal sacrifices for the sake of the organization) (Mowday, Porter, & Steers, 1982).

Despite theoretical problems such as the high correlation between affective and normative commitments (Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, & Toponilsky, 2002), the works of Meyer and Allen (1991, 1997) have gained wide endorsement and validation. Of the three organisational commitment components, the affective and normative dimensions, which are attitudinal in nature, have received much research attention and have been found to be more strongly aligned with organisational outcomes than the behavioural dimension (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Randall, 1990; Somers, 1995).

Culliver, Sigler and McNeely (1991) report a strong relationship between officer commitment and job performance. They established that officers who were rated at a minimum of job performance by their supervisors reported lower levels of organisational commitment. However, officers rated as delivering desirable and acceptable levels of job performance were

found to report favourable organisational commitment. The researchers consequently established a link between organisational commitment and pro-social job efforts or behaviours such as organisational achievement, empathy and help towards prisoners, and facilitating the flow of work in the prison. They concluded that, “it is probable that these correctional officers are motivated in their work behavior by what they perceive to be the best for the organization” (Ibid: 283). Similarly, Lambert, Hogan and Griffin (2008) reported that organisational commitment was linked to organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB).

On the antecedents of job satisfaction and commitment among prison staff, it has been found that officers cite intrinsic reasons for work in corrections, supervisory support, opportunities to make contributions to decision making, promotional opportunities, pay and incentive programs, procedural justice and distributive justice in enhancing both job satisfaction and commitment (Hepburn & Knepper, 1993; Lambert et al. 2008; Lambert & Paoline 2008). Conflict between work and family roles, perceptions of the job being dangerous, job stress and role strain have also been found to reduce job satisfaction and organisational commitment (Hepburn & Knepper, 1993; Hogan, 2006; Lambert & Paoline, 2008).

SITUATING THE GHANA PENAL SYSTEM

Ghana's prisons like most other African nations are a colonial legacy. Upon political independence from British colonial rule in 1957, Ghana inherited 33 prisons, a prison population of 52 per 100,000 of the population, with an overcrowding rate in excess of 48% and a paramilitary management structure. Currently, there are 43 prisons in Ghana with an average daily custody population of 15, 203 (or 50 per 100,000 of the population), an overcrowding rate in excess of 52.87% above full capacity of 9,945 places, and a staff population of almost 6,000 (Ghana Prisons Service [GPS], 2016, 2020). The paramilitary organizational structure and most of the prisons

inherited are in full use today. The Prisons Decree (1972) which specifies the safe custody and welfare of prisoners guides prison work in Ghana and relegates offender rehabilitation and reformation as secondary and optional goal.

The poor working conditions of prison officers - office space facilities, conditions of incarceration, overcrowding, staff shortages, working equipment, officers' accommodation as well as low pay and limited promotional and career development opportunities engender officers stress (Akoensi, 2014). High youth unemployment and job security, however, makes state security or uniform roles like prison officers an attractive option despite poor work conditions. Rising incidents of prison officers misconduct involving corruption, dealings in narcotics, officer brutalities of civilians and prisoners reported mainly in the print and electronic media have brought discussions of officers' job satisfaction and organizational commitment in public and academic circles.¹ Recently, Boateng and Hsieh (2019) found in their cross-sectional survey of 169 officers located in 5 prison establishments that organizational justice and income of prison officers were important determinants of officers' satisfaction and organizational commitment. They found that whilst procedural justice predicted officers' commitment, both procedural and distributive justice predicted job satisfaction. Officers low pay largely undermined both job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Although this study provides important insight, what remains is the lived experiences of prison officers and how this affects their job satisfaction and organizational commitment in officers' own voices.

METHODOLOGY

¹ There has been reported cases of prison officers smuggling cell phones into prisons (<https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Officers-Smuggling-Mobile-Phones-Into-Prisons-227889>), officers assaulting members of the public (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/sport/football/47870661>), and an officer dealing in narcotics being arrested and sentenced for his crimes (<https://www.peacefmonline.com/pages/local/news/201805/351208.php>).

Bergman (2006) asserts that paramilitary organizations show high organisational commitment due to high norms of obligations, internalizations and identification. Among prison officers in Ghana, commitment is further reflected in the officers' oath of loyalty to the Ghana Prisons Service (GPS). Research has shown that employees in collectivist societies (who are characterized by their intense emotional attachments to the in-group) exhibit high social identification with their organizations (Chew & Putti, 1995; Markovits, Davis & Dick, 2007).

The exceptional low turnover rate as reflected in the resignations and desertions of the GPS by officers despite reflecting limited job alternatives and avenues, could also indicate strong prison officers' organisational commitment. For example, in 2009, only 19 (of 4,753) and in 2010 only 16 (of 4,593) officers resigned from the service [GPS Annual Reports, 2009, 2010]. It was therefore necessary in the fieldwork not to refer to the term 'commitment' or attempt to define it while pursuing a line of questioning reflecting commitment.

Seventy-eight (78) in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with a purposive sample of frontline officers in 20 of the 43 prison establishments in Ghana. Interviews were conducted in offices, prison workshops, kitchens, visit areas, etc. The interviews were tape-recorded with the expressed permission of the respondents, and with standard assurances of confidentiality. These were transcribed *verbatim*. In addition to the interviews, extensive observations of prison officers as they discharged their daily routines were also undertaken. The sample reflects the typical frontline staffing levels of prisons, including senior and subordinate officers, male and female officers, officers with long service, and those who had served very few years at the various prison establishments. (see Table 1.0). After creating an abstract of narratives, thematic analysis was then employed to identify categories and themes emerging from the data. This method facilitated an objective and inductive approach in the identification of the relevant

categories and thematic patterns embedded in the materials in a systematic manner. The various categories were then grouped into four broad non-mutually exclusive themes reflecting negative or positive attributes towards job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

FINDINGS

Job Satisfaction

Fifty-one prison officers spoke about their job satisfaction and its determinants. When officers were asked which aspects of their work they derived satisfaction or fulfilment from, the question surprised many of the participants as they admitted that they had never thought about positive aspects of their jobs. Nevertheless, they provided responses that were varied and interesting.

Reformation

A recurrent theme in officers' narratives was that professional elements of the role such as the counselling that assists offender reform was a key element of job satisfaction. Satisfaction was derived from teaching skills to prisoners, religious counselling, helping prisoners to find meaning in their lives, and observing change in prisoners' attitudes and behaviour. Seventeen officers perceived their role in reform as an integral part of their work, as prisons were under-resourced and had no staff specialising in offender rehabilitation.

The most rewarding and satisfying aspect of my job is to be able to train an inmate and realizing that he has picked up the skills. When such an inmate is discharged and he manages to come and visit, you realize that the person is doing well. Sometimes some of them are able to establish their own shop or are working with someone and leading a good life. When you realize that the person is not in a position to return to prison again, it is very satisfying. (Female, Sergeant)

For some officers, the mere fact that prisoners were going on discharge was enough to trigger satisfaction. Prison conditions were poor, and officers acknowledged it, so a discharge was an opportunity for prisoners to make progress in their lives. This was usually the case when a prisoner successfully appealed against his/her conviction and was set free:

The happy and satisfying moments are any time I see that a prisoner had filed an appeal and later on becomes a victor. I remember one of them filed an appeal [against his conviction] and was discharged at the court. I was so excited with my colleagues. (Female, Sergeant)

Such officers derived satisfaction from helping prisoners but not from the organisational routines. This could potentially be a source of conflict between job satisfaction and organisational commitment: officers feel they are doing 'right' and their actions benefit others, but they do not see the prison service as moral and 'right', and so they lack commitment. This could also explain why some officers stay in the job even though they lack commitment to the organization.

Benefit-finding or personal growth

Nine officers reported deriving satisfaction from the benefits inherent in prison work. Officers argued that there were many lessons to be learned from their interactions with prisoners. Their recognition of positive aspects of prison work was evidence of the fulfilment motivating them to continue in the job.

For me, being an officer has helped me because when I was enlisted into the prison service, there were a lot of things I was doing formerly that I didn't know were unlawful. So in my interactions with the prisoners, I realized that those things I was doing that I got away with, prisoners were serving sentences for doing same. I have since abstained from such acts. **[What are some of those acts you were doing?]**

Yes. I am a warrior. This cut [he shows me cut marks on his wrists and other parts of his body]. If you hold a knife in an attempt to stab me, I will hold the knife. Every punch of mine will cut you. True. Honestly, if you like ask my wife [standing from a distance of about 2 meters from interview point] and my children. They will all tell you. [...] So I stopped after becoming an officer. [...] So I have learnt a lot since becoming a prison officer. (Male, Chief Officer)

The above extract indicates that the informant had learned self-control and patience since becoming a prison officer. Officer narratives on benefit-findings contrast with the prevailing assumptions that prison work impacts only negatively on prison officers in the form of stress, burnout, a constant threat of danger, post-traumatic stress disorder, the monotony and the emotional labour involved (e.g. Lombardo, 1981; Crawley, 2004). It is striking that officers locate benefits or inherent meaning in a work environment that is often characterized as negative and hostile. Benefit-finding is an interpretive process involving the location of positive changes in the negative or traumatic environment of the prison. These benefits may not be concrete or objective but their recognition helps to modify behaviour. “[I]f men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences” (Thomas & Thomas, 1928, p. 572), and this depicts the interpretive nature and potential impact of benefit-finding on officers.

Helping Prisoners

The opportunity to help prisoners was an initial motivating factor for some applicants seeking employment with the GPS. That aside, the possibility of helping prisoners was a source of job satisfaction for some informants. These officers derived fulfilment in offering material and emotional support to prisoners:

When I see prisoners happy, I feel satisfied and motivated. I like listening to their problems and helping them solve it. When it is solved, I'm happy. There is no day I come to work without a prisoner approaching me with a problem. That is what keeps me coming. (Male, Assistant Superintendent)

Offering help to prisoners was not confined to junior officers who had more daily interactions with prisoners. High-ranking officers including prison governors also offered direct assistance to prisoners:

I get satisfaction when I'm able to help solve the myriad of problems facing prisoners. [...] Sometimes, I use my personal cell phone to invite police officers and relatives of prisoners to help solve prisoners' problems. For example, I just got answers as to why an inmate on remand's warrant has expired but still in prison. (Male, Assistant Director)

This finding replicates Liebling et al. (2011), who found that helping prisoners was an important antecedent of job satisfaction among prison staff in England. The desire to help prisoners was important for officers as it indicated their readiness to make the prison community a better place despite the inadequate material conditions.

A Good Day

Prison officers felt satisfied if at the end of the day there were no major disturbances and prisoners were happy. Officers referred to this success as having a 'good day':

At the end of the day if everything has been done well, there is no problem especially with our main mandate of safe custody. So at the end of the day if everyone is safe, no prisoner has escaped, nothing has happened to any officer, then

you feel satisfied that at least you have performed your duties well. (Female, Deputy Director)

The most rewarding and satisfying aspect of the job is when you come to work and at the end of the shift, you were able to discharge your duties peacefully and successfully. If prisoners have had their food and there were no complaints and they are happy, the day becomes a successful and peaceful one. You feel really satisfied.

(Female, Second Class Officer)

Ghanaian officers' descriptions of a 'good day' echo those of officers in England and Wales (Liebling et al., 2011).

Recognition and Praise for Work

Two officers said that praise from their supervisors gave them satisfaction. Praise and recognition were quite rare and so praise for a job well done went a long way towards making the job fulfilling. It also communicated to these officers that their work was important and sustained officers' enthusiasm for their work:

When my boss appreciates everything that I do, I really like it; I feel satisfied and motivated to do more and to work harder. [...] Anytime I make a mistake, he calls me into the office and informs me. He adds that next time, do it this way. So it gives me much satisfaction. (Female, Second Class Officer)

Pay and Benefits

The aforementioned themes may be termed intrinsic job factors, since they are linked directly to officers' role. Prison officers also mentioned extrinsic factors. Salary and benefits such as free housing were extrinsic factors for some officers. Yet the relevance of salary and benefits is not so much related to fiscal value or to the amount of compensation *per se* but to the extent to

which officers believed salaries and benefits were commensurate with their merit. Four male officers emphasised satisfaction from their pay and benefits, not from their work:

The satisfaction comes from the salary because we all work for [money]. That is the first thing everybody has in mind when going to work. So when I get my salary, I'm happy and nothing else. (Male, Sergeant)

Job Dissatisfaction

Pay and benefits are uncertain sources of job satisfaction, as officers who cited that they were dissatisfied with their work were also quick to refer to their meagre salaries, and to job stress and poor working conditions. Five officers; all male, professed job dissatisfaction:

I do not find anything rewarding or satisfying about this job as a prison officer. This is because of the low remuneration including the salaries and also because there is tension in this job. (Male, Sergeant)

I will say that the reward of the prison officer is in heaven. Because when it comes to our salaries, nil! The motivation and satisfaction is not there. Look at the conditions under which we are working. Very poor. Even the feeding rate for the inmates is meagre and at times, we the officers have to sacrifice and then support the prisoners. So when we talk about job satisfaction, the salary is meagre and there is nothing to write home about. (Male, Chief Superintendent)

The extracts above point to the importance of adequate remuneration in addressing issues of officers' job dissatisfaction as implicated in the work of Boateng and Hsieh (2019).

Organisational Commitment

Fifty-four officers responded directly to questions and prompts about organisational commitment. Their narratives demonstrated a mixed relationship with the GPS: while 26 prison

officers professed high organisational commitment, 28 officers indicated poor organisational commitment. Themes underlying high and low organisational commitment are presented.

High Organisational Commitment

Prison officers professing high organisational commitment described their experiences, which featured all organisational commitment components found in the literature, namely affective, continuance and normative commitments. Regarding affective commitment, officers mainly instanced benefit-finding or personal growth as their main motivation. Thirteen officers expressed the belief that, given the level of wisdom, vigilance, and the various forms of education that working in prison had taught them, they were proud of the prison service.

I have told you previously that I have learned a lot which has shaped and moulded my life in such a way that certain misbehaviours I engaged in, had I not joined the service I would have still be engaging in them. So joining the service alone had made me change. (Male, Assistant Superintendent)

Prison work and the experiences garnered shaped officers' character overtime. One officer's account of benefit-finding was particularly revealing:

I was married before I joined the service and then, on 30th June 1980, I went to work. I was for afternoon shift. I went home after work but my wife was not home. I went to check with a friend if my wife was at theirs but she wasn't there. After I returned home, I came to meet my wife with another man. Because of this work, I have met some people who have been condemned to death, and those who were killed right in front of me through executions. It made me think. It reminded me and because of that, I kept my cool and left the scene. I went and reported the matter to the police. The police inspector was particularly full of praises for my efforts.

And this always teaches me a lesson. You see, if not because of this work, I don't know what would have happened. I met my wife with another man on my matrimonial bed. It was June 30th 1980. I will never forget and will never forget.

(Male, Chief Officer).

This officer's exercise of self-control was remarkable and hence, the immediate praise from police officers. The virtue of self-control developed from his interactions with prisoners in general and those who have found themselves in similar situations in particular helped him considerably to steer off violence that could have landed him in prison. Due to the predominant adherence to patriarchal values in Ghana, strong cultural abhorrence is attached to female infidelity and to the extent that adultery was committed in the officer's matrimonial bed engendered deep sentiments and moral outrage. Frequently, even cases of intense suspicion of female spouse or intimate partner involved in a sexual affair with another man end up with the man committing lethal violence or homicide of both female victim and male assailant (Adinkrah, 2014).

Continuance/Calculative Commitment

Eight officers expressed continuance commitment. They said that benefits in terms of pay, educational opportunities, and prestige would be lost should they decide not to return to the service if they had the opportunity again in life. These opinions reflect a cost-benefit analysis on their part, or what Becker (1960) refers to as 'side-bets'. Becker (1960) suggested that where benefits far outweighed the costs of leaving the organization, employees were likely to remain committed. These employees were committed to the GPS because of the perceived costs of leaving it:

My life depends on the prison service; it is a good occupation. I earn a salary, which has made my family and I prosperous. I have enrolled my kids in secondary schools.

(Male, Assistant Chief Officer)

I haven't regretted joining it [Prison Service]. I came here with a Masters degree and through the help of the service, I now [have higher qualifications]. [...] I like the job because it has made me who I am now. I am enjoying every bit of the facilities that the service has given me. I am enjoying a three-bedroom house; I don't pay rent, water, electricity and telephone bills. So even though I was a teacher and left that profession to join the service, I didn't go back to teaching. Why am I still here? It is because I like the job and the benefits. (Male, Superintendent)

These findings speak to the work of Boateng and Hsieh (2019) about the role of low pay in shaping officers' commitment.

Normative Commitment

Five officers said that their commitment to the GPS rest solely on their wish to help prisoners. They were therefore expressing their normative commitment to remain in the GPS for its own sake:

I always want to see the prisoners. [...] Some of them see me and share their stories and make up stories to share with me. They make me laugh all the time and sometimes, I even forget I have problems. Their happiness makes the shift and the work easy and smooth. [...] I like to see the prisoners and to be there for them. (Female, Lance Corporal)

These prisoners are needy and people must take care of them. You go to hospital and there are people to take care of patients. Though they might not be happy working there, yet they do. So people must sacrifice for others and I will come back to this work. (Male, Assistant Director/ OIC)

As these extracts show, officers' commitment was not based on any rewards or benefit-findings, but on the moral obligation of helping prisoners who are required by law only to be detained. To remain an employee of the GPS then was to continue to help prisoners.

Low Organisational Commitment

Low commitment was enmeshed in a variety of factors relating to the lack of affective, continuance and normative commitment to the prison service. Often poor experiences at the hands of the GPS were the main reason for poor commitment to an organization whose norms and values they could not internalise. Since officers' accounts of low commitment involved all three aspects of commitment, themes emerging from their narratives are described under the appropriate stressors.

Organisational Injustice

The lack of organisational justice was a recurrent reason given by some officers for their lack of commitment to the GPS. Specifically, they mentioned deficient interpersonal treatment at the hands of the service, as well as arbitrary allocation of incentives and punishments.

The discipline and punishment is too much and people tend to infringe on your rights a lot. (Male, Assistant Director)

Not that I have regretted joining the service, but with the bad experiences in the service I won't. [Can you share some of these experiences?] I have seen colleagues who have been dismissed from the service for very trivial violations simply because they don't have a say in the affairs of GPS. One afternoon, a colleague was dismissed and at the same time, his family was asked to vacate the accommodation. The service vehicle was at their house to convey them. Where were they going without an alternative place of abode? [...] Another officer was also dismissed for

a very minor incident too after spending 22 good years in the service. So this job is not worth dying for. (Male, Chief Officer)

These extracts indicate that unfair treatment (procedural injustice) and harsh punishments for minor violations of the prison rules (distributive injustice) were important in shaping organisational commitment. This aligns with findings from Boateng and Hsieh (2019) about the importance of organizational justice in shaping officers' commitment.

Pay and Benefits

Pay and conditions of service were the next most frequently-cited theme. Officers argued that the poor state of their residential accommodation, their meagre salaries, harsh environmental working conditions and the lack of career development opportunities was responsible for their poor dedication to the Ghana Prison Service.

I don't think there is any prison officer who goes home happy. It's all got to do with remuneration and motivation. I have been in this service for 37 years. [...] Is it not pathetic, sad, melancholic that to date, I can't even boast of a fowl coop? Every Prison officer relies on the end of service benefit, which is nothing to write home about. That means, as I am here, I have nothing at the bank. I have three children. One just completed the university, the other polytechnic and the last is in secondary school. With this burden, how can I put up a house? I am a debtor. [Officer beats his chest] There is no officer in this facility that is not a debtor. We are all debtors. I surely won't return to this service. (Male, Superintendent)

Concerns about benefits extended to limited career development opportunities:

I have missed a lot of opportunities. There are limited opportunities to study both locally and internationally in the service. If I get a second chance in life, I would

like to join another organization and not the prison service. (Male, Assistant Director)

For other officers, their motive in joining the service was a decisive factor in their low organisational commitment. They argued that enlisting in the GPS was a last resort. Thus, they were not motivated to internalise GPS' values in the first place, let alone build on them:

[Officer sucks teeth] Nothing inspired me to join the service in the first place. I only joined because I just needed a job and that was the only opportunity that came my way. (Female, Corporal)

Lack of Job Autonomy or Powerlessness

The lack of job autonomy was the third most frequently-cited reason for low organisational commitment. Officers cited the lack of discretion at work and their lack of voice in decision-making:

Progressing in the service is a problem. You can't have your way to do things the way you would want to. You always have to work by the rules. Even though it may not be the best, you are compelled to work by the book. [...] I would like to be in an organization where I can use my discretion to do things that will benefit the work and the organization rather than coming back to the prison service. Here, you can even go to meetings, and they will admonish you to feel free to talk; woe betide you if you say something that is in bad taste to the superiors. They will not punish you directly but you will suffer for speaking at that [meeting] that you were asked to speak. So, I will not return to such an organization. (Female, Sergeant)

Job Characteristics (Perceived Job Dangerousness, Work-Family Conflict and Public Image of Prison Service)

Four officers described job and organisational characteristics as mainly impacting on their affective commitment. Two officers cited the danger and threat of assault inherent in their work. As one male officer said, “Why should I return to this job and continue to risk my life in the course of duty? I won’t”.

Another officer cited his inability to make time for his family as the source of his low commitment:

You cannot express your feelings in this job. You cannot also socialize with your family. As I’m sitting here, I have lost my mother-in-law and I won’t be allowed to go and pay my respects because I have already enjoyed my annual leave. I can’t also attend my village festival, which I enjoy so much. [...] My extended family relationship has deteriorated due to this job. My father called me from Accra to relate some sad issues with me about my behaviour: he says whenever there were funerals I did not attend. He was angry. [...] (Male, Assistant Chief Officer)

Another officer cited the poor public image of the prison service as contributing to his poor commitment:

It appears that no matter how much effort the prison officer puts in his job, he is not given the recognition. Compared to other security agencies, we are not regarded. It appears that the public hatred for the prisoner has been transferred to us officers. Because of this, members of society don’t want to feed prisoners three times a day, clothe them properly, provide them with proper bedding, house them in well ventilated structures, etcetera. This hatred for prisoners has greatly affected the image of the prison officer. Since society thinks prisoners are nothing, how can

they attach any importance to the prison officer? This is why I won't return to this job. (Male, Deputy Superintendent)

CONCLUSION

Discussions of job satisfaction and organisational commitment have hitherto been based almost exclusively on quantitative empirical evidence from studies in Europe and North America, with sparse research from sub-Saharan Africa. The present study therefore sought to examine job satisfaction and organisational commitment and what shaped them among prison officers, in the predominantly collectivist culture of Ghana. The findings indicate that while officers were generally satisfied with their jobs, their relationship to the organization via organisational commitment was mixed. Nevertheless, satisfaction and commitment cannot be regarded as a fixed or static state. While satisfaction implies a transient emotion based on retroactive information (i.e. how they have been treated, the personal rewards achieved), commitment is the concept of an individual's current and future involvement with the organization. Satisfaction can change from day to day, but commitment is a long-term and stable trait.

Despite officers' expressions of job satisfaction, officers' level of commitment (expressed through pride, involvement and internalization of norms and values of the prison service) was heterogeneous. Similar proportions of officers professed favourable and negative organisational commitment. Whilst intrinsic rewards, including benefit-finding and helping prisoners in accord with their values, was associated with high commitment, extrinsic rewards, including pay and benefits career development opportunities, were important drivers of poor organisational commitment. Regarding the components of organisational commitment, it was established that all three components identified by Meyer and Allen (1992, 1997) are important in this African penal context. While affective commitment was vital in enhancing organisational commitment,

normative and calculative/continuance commitment were important components associated with poor commitment.

Negative organisational commitment was predicated on several factors, which had a telling effect mainly via behavioural considerations. Although quantitative studies endorse affective commitment as an important determinant of organisational commitment, normative and calculative commitment are equally important in determining commitment. Following suggestions by Reiner (2000) and Kleinig (1996) about commitment among police officers in the West, it is plausible that officers join the GPS with pre-existing ideals. Their commitment either increases or decreases, depending on their job experiences and the internal climate or organisational dynamics. The paramilitary organisational structure connotes military discipline, as well as the fear and respect for the hierarchy and the ideals of prison work instilled into new recruits and officer cadets. Officers' accounts further depict an interplay of interactions among affective, normative and calculative/continuance considerations in determining organisational commitment.

This study is not without limitations. Similar to qualitative studies employing purposeful samples, it is important that these findings are interpreted with caution. The nature of the sampling indicates that the findings cannot be generalized beyond the sample for this study. This limitation notwithstanding, some findings about job satisfaction and organizational commitment among prison officers in Ghana are noteworthy. First, intrinsic elements of prison work were important in shaping both officer satisfaction and commitment. Most importantly, benefit-finding (or personal growth) was remarkable in this respect, and so was helping prisoners. Social altruism is an important aspect of the Ghanaian cultural fabric. It is traditionally believed that providing and sharing material and non-material items with the less fortunate in society accrues spiritual blessings and life satisfaction for the benefactors, irrespective of their religious orientation. Social

altruism does not only promote societal inclusiveness and integration but also preserves the spiritual continuity of communities and their ancestors. Secondly, job stressors, including pay and benefits in particular, were important determinants of both job dissatisfaction and low commitment. Motivation for enlisting in the Ghana Prisons Service also appeared to be a crucial factor as it determined states of satisfaction and commitment at the outset, which might then increase or decrease, depending on job conditions. Satisfaction and commitment are contingent states and uncompleted performances that change and are influenced by a variety of factors and probably play off each other in given situations, depending on individual and institutional characteristics.

Overall, there appears to be congruence between cultural values and social practices on the one hand, and job satisfaction and organisational commitment on the other. This might account for the positive levels of intrinsic satisfaction and work commitment found among Ghanaian prison officers. Thus, in helping to improve satisfaction and commitment, opportunities for officers to exhibit qualities that would encourage a stronger emotional and moral attachment to their jobs would be more important than improving pay and conditions. Officers' personal values would therefore be congruent with those of the GPS, resulting in increased productivity expressed in increased satisfaction and commitment. The Ghanaian prison officer culture is shaped such that while officers derive satisfaction from and are committed to their work with prisoners in line with local culture and values, officers lack commitment to the prison service.

Benefit-finding shows the extent to which prisons can positively impact their inhabitants especially officers in the development of virtues. Benefit-finding had meaning for officers, and impacted officers' overall quality of life and well-being positively. Benefit-finding is applicable in other contexts but this has not been found and given the research attention and profile it deserves.

The benefit-findings identified here are transferable to the West, but they may not have been found if this study had commenced in the West and if a quantitative research approach had been adopted. Thus, the incorporation of cultural and societal influences via interviews enhanced the value of this study and brought to light, themes that have previously not been found in the literature (e.g. benefit-finding). The findings from this research illustrates the importance of context-specific and participant-led research for understanding not just issues of job satisfaction and organizational commitment, but also informing future research (both qualitative and quantitative) among prison officers in Ghana particularly and in countries with similar prison characteristics globally.

Future studies on job satisfaction and organizational commitment among prison officers will benefit from including specialist staff in their samples. For example, we have very limited knowledge about how prison officers who primarily work in sentry positions feel about their jobs. Owing to the very demanding nature of their job requiring constant attention, concentration and the use of an assault rifle, and their location, sitting high above prison fence walls, assessing them for interviews can be quite daunting. Future researchers might also consider concentrating on frontline senior prison officers in governor grades in order to illuminate our understanding of their feelings towards their demanding jobs of making decisions that affect not just prisoners, but prison officers as well.

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