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Cynicism Toward Change and Career Stage: An Exploration of Work Environment and Organizational Based Characteristics Among Prison Officers in Ghana

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Abstract

Prison officer cynicism toward change (CTC) has received limited attention in the penal literature. In the global south, there has been very limited research on CTC among prison officers. In addressing this research gap, we utilized data from prison officers based in low- and medium- security prisons in Ghana to assess the level of CTC and whether the levels of reported CTC differed across different career stages. We also examine the impact of individual, work-environment, and organizational predictors on CTC across career stages. Our results reveal similar levels of moderate CTC among prison officers at all career stages. Organizational-based factors were stronger predictors of CTC than work-environment variables. Input into decision making was the only predictor of CTC across all career stages. We identify and examine a number of vital contributions to theory and practice.

Keywords Africa · Cynicism toward change · Organizational change · Decision-making · Prisons

Introductions

For more than three decades, there has been a growing body of research on reforms of criminal justice systems not only in the developing world, but also in advanced economies (see The Institute for Government, 2020; Useem & Goldstone, 2002). Poor conditions in African prisons including overcrowding attributed mainly to overuse of pre-trial detention, excessive incarceration stemming from lengthy prison sentence for minor offences, and lack of emphasis on rehabilitation has made African prisons targets for reform (Khan et al., 2016). Such reforms are aimed at raising African prisons to internationally comparable standards by making them more compliant with the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners updated to include the Nelson Mandela Rules (hereafter, the Nelson Mandela Rules).[1] Such targeted reform include developing community sentencing to reduce overcrowding, establishing and implementation of evidenced-based prison classification and risk assessment systems that takes into account prisoners dynamic risks and criminogenic needs, instituting and deploying empirically supported rehabilitation programs, and training of prison officers in effectively implementing the Nelson Mandela Rules to create safe spaces for prisoners (Boakye et al., 2022; Khan et al., 2016; Nelson Mandela Rules, 2015; UNODC, 2022). In the face of these demands for change, maintaining the status quo appears unsustainable and organizations especially prisons in Ghana which are replete with poor conditions and outdated systems of classifications and rehabilitation need to review their policies, processes, routines, and rituals to meet international and acceptable standards of incarceration enshrined in the Nelson Mandela Rules (2015).

In the light of growing body of research on drivers for change and change in organizations (Langley et al., 2013), there has been limited research exploring cynicism toward change (CTC) in African prisons. Cynicism toward change,

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[1] The Nelson Mandela Rules (2015) are guidelines that emphasize generally accepted good principles and practices in the treatment of prisoners (e.g., absence of torture, treatment of prisoners with respect and dignity, etc.) and prison management. It further serves as an important international standard for assessing prisons for monitoring and inspection purposes globally.

also referred to as resistance to change, refers to the degree of hostility, suspiciousness, and disparaging attitudes toward management (Bommer et al., 2005; Regoli et al., 1979). Although there have been studies shedding light on the importance of stakeholder consultation including practitioners and general public in achieving desirable prison reform results (Khan et al., 2016), lacking in the current literature is a deeper understanding of the drivers and impediments for change in correctional organizations and correctional environments. There are very few notable exceptions that have offered insights on CTC in correctional organizations (e.g., Farmer, 1977). Accordingly, there is the need to examine prisons in Africa and how prison conditions, individual and contextual factors (organizational and prison-specific characteristics) affect perceptions or attitudes toward change or reform in the sector. Anchored in the staff–prisoner relationship is preserving order and control (Tait, 2011), yet it remains unclear how such prison-based characteristics can create conditions that facilitate or impede change in a traditional prison officer culture characterized by officer cohesion and progressive rehabilitative attitudes but located in dire conditions resulting in poor prisoner wellbeing and negative quality of life (Akoensi, 2014). Although we know a great deal about cynicism from various contexts, our knowledge of cynicism among prison officers in Africa is limited. More so, we have limited knowledge on the extent to which cynicism might vary across different career stages of officers.

Against this backdrop, the principal objective of this study is to address three research questions. First, to assess the extent of cynicism among frontline prison officers who are typically not involved in the decision-making process of the organization. Second, to assess the extent to which cynicism vary according to officers' career stage; and finally, identifying the predictors of cynicism, and the extent to which the predictors vary according to officers' career stage.

In addressing these research questions, we examine the influence of individual characteristics and contextual factors (organizational or prison-specific characteristics) on cynicism to change. This context is particularly unique given that prison officers and prison settings are typified by traditional occupational culture focused mainly on maintaining security and safety of prisoners and the public. Although officers and leaders in prisons are guided by stringent code of conduct and direct line of authority (Akoensi, 2014), yet they could become resistant to change. We utilized data from frontline prison officers based in low-security and medium-security prisons in Ghana to examine the issue.

Our study also contributes to criminology and management literature in several ways. First, we contribute to the literature on change in public organizations and the discourse on prison reforms by examining the role played by prison-based characteristics in influencing cynicism to change (Carnall, 2007; Kuipers et al., 2014; Slade, 2016). Given that prison legitimacy is partly predicated on power bestowed on

prison officers and how this power is subsequently utilized in enhancing prisoners wellbeing and rehabilitation (Akoensi & Tankebe, 2020), we assess a model which sheds light on how personal factors impact on cynicism to change, which can undermine the productivity and the legitimacy of prison officers. In addition, despite studies on change management and change in organizations (see Hon et al., 2014; Wanous et al., 2000), we lack a solid understanding of how individual characteristics of prison officers and organization-based characteristics influence cynicism to change. We capitalize on data from a developing country-Ghana, to address this gap in our current insights on the subject.

The paper is organized along the following lines. First, we present a review on prison context and change. Next, we outline the research context, data sources and measures employed. We then present our findings followed by discussions of the theoretical and practical implications.

Literature Review

Organizational change can be defined as sets of actions designed to reform organizational processes, routines, and norms to ensure effective alignments between the internal process and changing external environmental conditions (Carnall, 2007; De Bettignies & Boddewyn, 1971). Thus, it seeks to move the organization from the current state to new ways of doing things. In the face of limited productivity, inability to achieve organizational goals and underperformance, change becomes inevitable as quest to address the root causes of the organizational shortcomings (By, 2005; Carnall, 2007). Although several studies indicate that most change initiatives fail to achieve the initial objectives (Brown et al., 2017), our understanding of individuals, organizations, and contextual influences on cynicism to change remains largely a black box especially in the context of prisons.

According to Poole and Regoli (1980), cynicism is inherent in the work of prison officers as it is an adaptive response to the frustrations, strain, and conflict embedded in prison work. Prisons are synonymous to total institutions as "a place of residence and work where a large number of like-situated individuals cut off from the wider society for an appreciable period of time together lead an enclosed formally administered round of life" (Goffman, 1968, p. 11). Cynicism can have adverse consequences for prisons. Widespread cynicism can lead to the undermining and circumvention of institutional goals and policies. Woolf (1991) reports that widespread belligerence and cynical attitudes among prison staff in HMP Dartmoor about liberalizing the prison regime led to a deficient regime resulting in a riot in April 1990 in England. He also reports that in most prisons where the riots occurred, prison officers were cynical and disillusioned about the success of the Fresh Start policy aimed at streamlining the work

of staff and management. Similar cynical attitudes were also reported among correctional officers who implemented prison rules in direct violation of management directives that led to the 1982 Michigan prison riots in the US (Trojanowicz, 1982). Career stage theory postulates that employees' attitudes and behaviors vary as they progress through their careers (Super, 1957). Previous research among correctional—and police-officers has established a relationship between career stage and officers' attitudes and work behaviors. A curvilinear relationship between police officers' career stage and productivity relating to traffic violations, driving under the influence (DUI) arrests and drug arrests was found. While productivity across all three spheres started high in the first career stage and increased further in the second career stage, productivity declined in the last two stages (Johnson & Lafrance, 2016). Griffin et al. (2014) found a similar relationship between correctional officers' career stage and their turnover intentions. Correctional officers in their first career stage reported significantly less intentions to leave compared to those in their second, third and fourth career stages.

Cynicism, Organization- and Context-Based Characteristics

Cynicism in organizations denotes "a negative attitude toward one's employing organization, comprising three dimensions: (1) a belief that the organization lacks integrity; (2) negative affect toward the organization; and (3) tendencies to disparaging and critical behavior toward the organization that are consistent with these beliefs and affect" (Dean et al., 1998, p. 345). According to Andersson and Bateman (1997, p. 450), encompassing cynicism is the attitude of pessimism rooted in the expectations that "future organizational change" might be mismanaged to their detriment. Some studies indicate that cynicism toward organizations may stem from unrealistic expectations and employees' disillusionment (Andersson & Bateman, 1997; Mirvis & Kanter, 1992) and thereby creating conditions underpinning cynicism toward change (CTC) initiated by the organizations.

Perceptions of Fairness/Lack of Trust in Leadership

CTC may stem from employees' perception that the focal organization has failed to adhere to principle of fairness, integrity, and honesty, and/or have been supplemented by self-interest and unreliable behaviors as well as lack of job security, stagnant pay, and wage disparities between management and workers (Atwater et al., 2000; Dean et al., 1998; Jiang et al., 2019; Scott, & Zweig, 2016; Wang, & Jiang,). Within the realms of police and prisons research, cynicism can be taken to infer hostility and suspicion toward the proposed change agenda (see Ulmer, 1992). When employees' have a brighter outlook in terms of career development, they

would be inclined to resist change, if it alters their promotion or progression chances. Indeed, negative employee attitudes toward change can also ignite a sense of insecurity and increase job stress (Kocoglu, 2014). This is important in the light of observations by previous studies that lack of, or low participation of employees in decision-making can lead to stress, work alienation, and decreased organizational commitment (Kocoglu, 2014; Sulu et al., 2010). On the other hand, changes that allow greater employees' input into the decision process and enhance their career prospects are likely to foster trust and commitment toward change and even neutralize the risk that they would resist change.

Besides being seen to possess little trustworthiness, change advocates might be seen as championing an agenda in which they lack the communication and leadership skills that lead to fruitful outcomes (Johnson et al., 2009). Regarding the repercussions of organizational cynicism, a promising number of studies have demonstrated that organizational cynicism has negative effects on job satisfaction (e.g., Chiaburu et al., 2013). Another line of research suggests that cynicism relates to employees' working conditions and managerial/leadership skills (Polatcan & Titrek, 2014).

Decision Making Contributions and Cynicism Opportunity to express opinions is important as it satisfies a fundamental need and desire to have one's opinion heard (Korsgaard & Robertson, 1995). Great commitment and acceptance of the final decision can result due to consultation. This can enhance employees' perceptions of fairness (Korsgaard & Robertson, 1995). According to Wanous et al. (2000) employees unable to contribute to decision making often blame managers for adverse outcomes which is integral in fostering further cynicism. Sagie and Koslowsky (1994) have identified that during periods of organizational change, employees present the need that their opinions and views are considered. Similarly, Reicher et al., (1997, p. 52) emphasize that the lack of "meaningful opportunities to participate in decision making" was associated with increased organizational change cynicism (see also Wanous et al., 2000). Brown and Cregan (2008) also report in a survey of public sector employees in Melbourne, Australia that an information sharing climate in public sector organizations by management "appears to be associated with greater employee understanding of management decisions and hence, lower levels of organizational change cynicism" (pg. 680). Thus, our understanding from the non-correctional literature indicates that by empowering followers to contribute to change efforts, employees would feel a sense of embrace of their view and become less resistant to the change. However, penal institutions often characterized by hierarchical management structure do not usually seek the opinions of frontline prison staff in arriving at important decisions or policies. Where

opinions are sought, they are limited to high-ranking officers or staff. This situation has created a traditional officer culture that espouse loyalty to colleagues, high suspicion, and distrust of superior or senior officers, and an "us" and "them" relationship between frontline prison officers and prison managers (Arnold et al., 2007). This traditional culture that is inimical to sharing opinions and building consensus on proposed policies and changes is deeply entrenched in the Ghana Prisons Service (Akoensi, 2014). Accordingly, we examine the influence of organizational based variables on CTC. In this context, we use the term organization-based variables as a catchall term to describe organizational processes and employee relationships with the organization including decision making input, career development opportunities, organizational commitment, and autonomy.

Prison-Based Characteristics: Quality of Staff Relationships, Job Stress, and Perceived Dangerousness of Prison Work Another set of factors exerting pressure on CTC are quality of relationships within the prison. These qualities of interactions include those between prison officers and prisoners, among prison officers themselves as peers, and between prison officers and their superiors. Poole and Regoli (1980) tested the extent to which correctional officer cynicism was the product of interaction with others in the prison organization. They examined the role of prison officer relationship with inmates, their colleagues and superiors in shaping cynicism with a survey of 144 officers and interviews with 35 officers. They found that officers with deteriorating relationships with inmates, their colleagues and superiors reported higher levels of cynicism compared to officers who had cordial working relationships. They found that each type of relationship had an independent effect on cynicism. Ulmer (1992) found that officers who had good relationships and greater influence on their superiors tended to be less cynical.

Job stress and perceived job dangerousness are endemic characteristics of prison work globally (Akoensi, 2014; Lambert et al., 2007). Psychological stress has been identified as a moderate predictor of cynicism among employees (Chiaburu et al., 2013). Skolnick (1966) draws on the dangers of police work and how this work characteristic promotes the development of cynical attitudes. Since prison officers are exposed to violence on a daily basis similar to police officers and frequently report job stress, we explore the extent to which these job characteristics (i.e., dangerousness and job stress) predict their CTC. Overall, we examine the influence of prison-based characteristics—a catchall term in this context to denote prison-based culture and individual work relationships including relationship with superiors, peers and prisoners, job dangerousness and job stress—on prison officers CTC.

Career Progress and Cynicism

Another relevant line of research is on career progress. Career progress is often equated with upward mobility in an organization i.e., when individuals move up the hierarchy of an organization to assume increasing responsibilities (Burke, 1989). Career stage theory which examines the evolutionary phases of working life posits that people's view of their work changes as time progresses. Thus, people's work values and aspirations including work outcomes will change across their career stage (Super, 1957; Cohen, 1991). Career progress is vital to employees' growth and the lack of career progress is often associated with unfavorable work outcomes including increased cynicism (Burke & Mikkelsen, 2006). Career progress often experienced via promotions in the Ghana Prisons Service is based on merit (passing required courses and interviews) and seniority (years served). Over the years, however, this promotional policy has been fraught with inconsistent implementation and nepotism across both superior (senior) and subordinate (low) officer ranks and a source of immense frustration and anxiety (Ghana Prisons Service, 2015). We therefore contend that officers who perceive and experience upward career progress would be less likely to be cynical to organizational changes. Following the work of Cordes and Doherty (1993), we advance three reasons. First, upward career development is usually associated with less contact with prisoners which constitutes the core and most stressful aspect of prison work. Second, upward career progress relative to one's peers or colleagues signifies to such individuals that they are making a positive contribution to the organization. Finally, individuals who experience upward and reasonable career progress are more likely to feel that the organization has appropriate and fair policies and procedures about promotions and other elements of the organizations. We test this proposition that individuals who perceive and experience an atmosphere of upward career development would be more embracing of proposed organizational changes and report less cynicism. Previous research has found that correctional officers' turnover intent, cynicism, and job satisfaction is moderated by career stage (Griffin et al., 2014; Hogan et al., 2017; Ulmer, 1992).

Four main career stages have been documented—initiation or entry, transitional, midcareer, and later career stages (Greenhaus, 1987; Greenhaus et al., 2000). The first stage—*entry* (up to about 6 years in employment) involves employees exploring their compatibility with the jobs through their interests and capabilities, learning about the organization while open to alternative employment. The second stage—*transitional or early career phase* (7–10 years in employment)—involves individuals acquiring the skills and knowledge vital to their job success, advancing and growing in their careers. Stability in work and personal life becomes key considerations. The third stage also known as the *mid-career*

stage (11–19 years into employment)—is where individuals create and maintain their self-identities and also accept their positions in the organization. During the final phase—*later career stage* (over 20 years into employment)—individuals become settled and begin to transition beyond the organization. Family and friends become very important and they develop a self-image and future beyond the organization. (Cohen, 1991; Greenhaus, 1987; Greenhaus et al., 2000; Super, 1984). The time frame associated with the various career stages although conceptualized at 5-year intervals is not fixed. According to Super (1984, p. 200), "not only are the ages of the transition very flexible, each transition involves a recycling through the stages of a "minicycle".

In one of the earliest examinations of the relationship between career-stage and cynicism among correctional officers, Regoli et al. (1979) found that officers cynicism increases throughout until mid-career and only declines when approaching retirement in the later career stage. Later, Ulmer (1992) found high levels of cynicism among officers with only one month's experience (early stage) and less cynicism among experienced officers who had a rehabilitative orientation to prison work. He attributed high cynicism among inexperienced officers to the reality shock associated with the gap in training ideals and the real conditions of prison work. Besides the work of Regoli et al. (1979) and Ulmer (1992), there is no evidence of a test of the direct relationship between career stage and cynicism in the correctional literature, and it is our aim to address this gap.

Individual Characteristics

Current research on the influence of personal characteristics and cynicism is inconclusive. Individual characteristics such as age, tenure, gender, military service, and education has received attention in the literature (Brown & Cregan, 2008; Brown et al., 2017; Ulmer, 1992). Although Ulmer (1992) found age and military service to be significantly related to cynicism, education, and age were not. When the data was further disaggregated, only tenure was significantly related to cynicism among rehabilitation-oriented officers and none of the predicted individual variables were related to cynicism among non-rehabilitation-oriented officers. In the noncorrectional literature, individual characteristics including age, education, employment status, tenure, being a member of the union but not gender are related to cynicism (Brown & Cregan, 2008; Brown et al., 2017).

Deep-rooted cynicism among individuals with long tenures can ultimately derail organizational attempts to bring about changes. Indeed, changes such as a new performance evaluation scheme and proposed layoffs are likely to ignite strong resentment against change (Andersson & Bateman, 1997). In addition, older workers are likely to be suspicious of change and often prefer maintaining the status quo. In

the vacuum of lack of trust between the management and frontline workers, employees' level of cynicism increases creating and fortifying barriers to change (see Kanter & Mirvis, 1989). In the same way, employees with a negative attitude to their roles and duties are also likely to possess negative job intentions as well as engage in job search behavior (Abubakar et al., 2018). As suggested by past studies, cynicism undermines the social connections that underpin productive and collaborative work environments (Sievers, 2007). As demonstrated in Fig. 1, we expect individual characteristics such as gender, age, education, enlistment motivation, and nature of contact with prisoners to all relate to cynicism to change. In doing so, we help to better understand the nature and the role of individual characteristics on cynicism.

Research Method

Study Setting

Ghana is located in West Africa with a population of 30 million. Growing economic development activities coupled with various market and social reforms represents a fertile ground for investigating the issue of cynicism to change. Prisons are not indigenous to Ghana like the rest of Africa but a legacy of colonialism. Upon political independence from Britain in 1957, Ghana inherited a prison system consisting of 33 prisons with a population of 52 per 100,000 of the national population, an overcrowding rate of in excess of 48% and a military styled bureaucratic management structure alongside commissioned (superior) and non-commissioned (subordinate) officers. This management structure concentrates significant decision-making power and authority among superior officer ranks. Currently there are 43 prisons, average daily population of 15,203, and an overcrowding rate in excess of 52.7% which is a major problem and a hotbed for infectious diseases (Ghana Prisons Service, 2021). As of December 2018, the Ghana Prisons Service had 6025 prison officers at post: 5331 subordinate (junior) officers and 694 superior (senior) (Ghana Prisons Service, 2018).

Despite the job of a prison officer enjoying low prestige owing mainly to low pay and poor working conditions, high youth unemployment in Ghana implies that recruitment attracts a very large number of people. At the end of 2018, the GPS had embarked on a recruitment drive and had a total of one thousand personnel (860 junior recruits and 140 senior cadets) undergoing training at the Prison Officer Training School (POTS) located in Accra (Ghana Prisons Service, 2018). This initiative is to increase the poor prison officer to inmates' ratio (resulting in instances where prisoners have been informally entrusted roles of prison officers such as supervising other inmates and escorting inmates despite its

Fig. 1 Results of hypothesized model
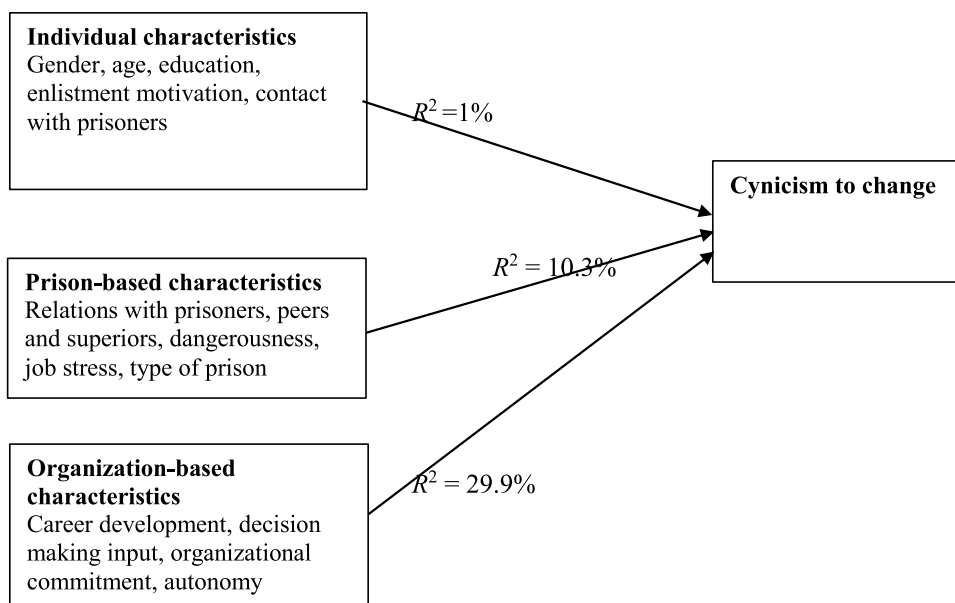
attendant risks), improve prison security, and enhance prisoners' rehabilitation and reform.

While prison officers work in difficult circumstances (e.g., poor facilities and equipment, dilapidated structures, low pay, risks of infections, and low autonomy), prisoners are also held in dire circumstances in overcrowded conditions, poor healthcare provision, poor feeding facilities and feeding allowance of 1.80 Ghana cedis (equivalent to 0.31 US dollars or 0.25 British pounds), inadequate bedding and supplies among others. There is no doubt that the Ghana Prison system is ripe for reforms of all sorts. It is therefore expedient that we assess the extent to which the main custodians of prison authority who embody the prison regime—prison officers—are ready to embrace changes promulgated by either the government of Ghana or under the auspices of international prison reform of organizations.

Data

Prison officers based in low- and medium- security prisons were recruited for this study. Being a state security organization, the management of the prison service for security reasons, refused us access to a register of prison officers at the various prisons that would have enabled us to draw a random sample of prison officers. Convenience sampling was the best approach we could adopt in these circumstances. The surveys were distributed mainly at open meetings called "durbars". The first author introduced the study to prison officers, explained the rationale for the study, their rights as participants (e.g., anonymity, refusal, and rights of withdrawal from study at any time) were explained to them and then invited them to participate by completing the surveys which were in English—the official language of Ghana.

While some were able to complete on the spot, others took them to their offices and work posts for completion where they were later, retrieved by the first author. For security reasons, not all prison officers were present at the meetings. Efforts were made to reach out to such officers who successfully completed their surveys. Since our sample was not randomly selected, we would like to caution about the generalizability of our findings beyond our study's sample.

In total, 1,490 surveys were distributed to prison officers in 31 prisons between 2012 and 2014 in all but one of the then 10 regional administrations of Ghana. Although 1,117 surveys were returned representing a response rate of 74.9%, only 1,062 surveys were usable due to incomplete responses. The high response rate is mainly attributable to the meetings held for this research study in 26 of the 31 prisons, which generated an average response rate of 81.2%. Of the total sample of officers, the majority worked in medium-security prisons (76.8%) and had daily contact with prisoners (81.5%) and 66% were male. Officers work experience ranged between 1 and 39 years with an average of 15.6 years (see Table 1).

Constructs and Measures

We measured ten key variables for this study: cynicism to change (1), relations with prisoners (2) and prisoners (3), fair treatment by supervisors (4), dangerousness (5), career development (6), decision making input (7), organizational commitment (8), job autonomy (9), and job stress (10). All had response categories ranging from 1 (strongly disagree; 2 = disagree, 3 = Uncertain, 4 = agree) to 5 (strongly agree). The items used to measure these variables were sourced from the expanse literature and later validated in a pilot

Table 1 Descriptive statistics

Variables	Mean/Percent	SD	Minimum	Maximum
Gender			0	1
Female	34.1			
Male	65.9			
Experience	15.6		0.70	38.9
Education			1	3
Secondary	70.9%			
Post-secondary	19.9%			
University	9.2%			
Motivation			1	3
Instrumental	49.5%			
Help prisoners	36.6%			
Admiration	13.9%			
Type of prison			1	2
Low security	23.2%			
Medium security	76.8%			
Contact with prisoners			0	1
None or rarely	18.5%			
Daily	81.5%			
Relations with prisoners	3.77	.72	1	5
Treatment by superiors	3.93	.59	1	5
Relations with peers	3.67	.65	1	5
Decision making input	2.69	.92	1	5
Cynicism to change	3.23	.79	1	5
Career development	2.89	.97	1	5
Organizational commitment	3.70	.71	1	5
Autonomy	2.85	.85	1	5
Dangerousness	3.81	.83	1	5
Job stress	3.72	.94	1	5

study. Please see the Appendix for a full list of the items and a display of their factor loadings, mean scores and standard deviations.

Dependent Variable

The dependent variable, cynicism to change was operationalized using 5 items adapted from Tesluk et al. (1995). The items included "Efforts to make improvements in the Prison Service usually fail" and were combined to create a Cynicism to change scale. A higher score indicates greater assessment of cynicism (Cronbach alpha = 0.73; $M = 3.23$, SD = 0.73).

Independent Variables

We measured 9 independent variables: relations with prisoners, relations with peers, fair treatment by supervisors and job stress instruments were adapted from Liebling et al.

(2011); dangerousness perceptions items were adapted from Cullen et al. (1985); career development items were adapted from Tripplet et al. (1999); organizational commitment items were adapted from Mowday et al. (1982); and job autonomy was operationalized with items adapted from House (1981). Decision making input was operationalized with items adapted from Akoensi (2014). Relations with prisoners were measured with five items including "I am trusted by prisoners in this prison". The items were combined to form a Relations with prisoners' scale with higher scores indicating positive assessment of officers relationship (Cronbach alpha = 0.74; $M = 3.77$, SD = 0.72). Fair treatment by supervisors was operationalized with five items. The items include "I am treated fairly by superior officers in this prison facility". The items were combined to form a Fair Treatment by Supervisors scale with higher scores denoting positive assessment of their treatment by supervisors (Cronbach alpha 0.75; $M = 3.93$, SD = 0.95). Job stress was operationalized with only one item "The stress in my job causes me concern". A higher score indicates greater job stress ($M = 3.72$, SD = 0.94). Dangerousness was measured with five items including "I work in a dangerous job". The items were combined to form a Dangerousness scale with higher scores indicating greater perceptions of job danger (Cronbach alpha = 0.74; $M = 3.81$, SD = 0.83). Career Development was operationalized with three items including "I feel that I am at a standstill in my career". Items were then combined to form a Career Development scale with high scores indicating positive assessments of career development (Cronbach alpha = 0.73; $M = 2.89$, SD = 0.97). Organizational Commitment was measured with five items. They included "I tell my friends that this is a great organization to work for". The items were combined to create an Organizational Commitment scale with high scores indicating positive assessment of officers' commitment (Cronbach alpha = 0.71; $M = 3.70$, SD = 0.71). Job Autonomy was operationalized with five items including "I have little say in the decisions that affect my work". The items were combined to create a measure of Job Autonomy with higher scores indicating positive assessment of officers' autonomy (Cronbach alpha = 0.74; $M = 2.85$, SD = 0.85). Finally, Decision Making Input was measured with three items including for example "Opportunities for participation in decision making is limited in this prison". These items were combined to create a Decision-Making Input scale with high scores denoting positive evaluation of officers' contribution to decision making (Cronbach alpha = 0.68; $M = 2.69$, SD = 0.92).

Control Variables

In order to control for potential confounds, we included a handful of variables: gender (0 = female, 1 = male), educational qualification (1 = secondary, 2 = post-secondary,

Table 2 Correlations among study variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Cynicism (1)	–									
Relations with prisoners (2)	.02	–								
Relations with superiors (3)	−.10**	.35**	-							
Relations with peers (4)	−.09**	.41**	.46**	-						
Dangerousness (5)	.24**	.02	−.04	−.01	–					
Stress (6)	.23**	.04	.05	.06*	.23**	–				
Career development (7)	−.41**	−.01	.19**	.15**	−.25**	−.15**	–			
Decision making input (8)	−.43**	−.05	.15**	.12**	−.21**	−.27**	.37**	–		
Organizational commitment (9)	−.27**	.01	.20**	.18**	−.04	−.05	.24**	.24**	–	
Autonomy (10)	−.39**	.05	.23**	.18**	−.24**	−.23**	.44**	.39**	.21**	–

$N = 1062$

$*p < .05; **p < .01$

3 = University education), years of service or experience, enlistment movitation (1 = instrumental, 2 = to help those in custody, 3 = admiration for the job), type of prison (0 = low security prison, 1 = medium security prison), and officers contact with prisoners (0 = none or sometimes; 1 = daily). See Table 1 for the means and standard deviations of these variables.

Analytic Strategy

A three-stage analytical strategy was employed. The first stage involved testing the mean differences in cynicism across officers' career stages. Second, we run a correlation analysis between the dependent (cynicism to change) and independent variables. Finally, to ensure that the links established are robust, we generate ordinary least square regression models between the variables.

Results

We initially conducted a one-way ANOVA to test for the mean differences in cynicism across the various career stages. We found no significant differences in the mean levels of cynicism, $F (3, 1058) = 0.55$, $p > 0.05$. Thus, the level of cynicism developed by officers at the early stage of their career is no different from officers at subsequent career stages. We continue our analyses with the Pearson product-moment correlations among the substantive variables which are presented in Table 2. We find that all of our hypothesized variables have a statistically significant relationship with CTC: Relations with superiors ($r = −0.10$), Relations with peers ($r = −0.09$), Dangerousness ($r = 0.24$), Stress ($r = 0.23$), Career development ($r = −0.41$), Decision making input ($r = −0.43$), Organizational commitment ($r = −0.27$), and Autonomy ($r = −0.39$) except Relationship

with prisoners ($r = 0.01$, $p > 0.05$). These correlation coefficients between the substantive variables were not high to raise issues about collinearity. Additional checks also confirm this.

Next, we conduct two sets of multivariate analyses to estimate the effect of our predictors on the dependent variable—Cynicism to change. The first of our analyses was to estimate one ordinary least square (OLS) regression to investigate the influence of our hypothesized correlates. The findings displayed in Table 3, Model 1 show that gender, age, enlistment motivation, and prison type had no statistically significant associations with Cynicism to change. However, compared with those who enlisted with secondary school qualifications, those who joined the Prison service with post-secondary school qualifications displayed more cynicism. Also, compared with those who had no or frequent contact with prisoners, officers with daily contact with prisoners ($\beta = −0.05$, $p = 0.04$) displayed less Cynicism. In terms of our substantive correlates, while Dangerousness ($\beta = 0.11$, $p = 0.00$) and Job Stress ($\beta = 0.06$, $p = 0.03$) increased Cynicism, Career development ($\beta = −0.21$, $p = 0.00$), Decision making input ($\beta = −0.22$, $p = 0.00$), Organizational commitment ($\beta = −0.15$, $p = 0.00$), and Autonomy ($\beta = −0.15$, $p = 0.00$) decreased Cynicism. However, our data did not support our hypothesis in relation to Relations with prisoners, peers, and superiors. This model explained 31.1% of the total variance in Cynicism. The relative contribution of the representative variables—individual characteristics, prison-based characteristics, and organization-based variables to change to Cynicism is represented in Fig. 1. Organizational based variables appear to have the largest percentage change in line officers' Cynicism to change (Adj. $R^2 = 29.9\%$), followed by prison level characteristics (Adj. $R^2 = 10.3\%$), and lastly, individual level characteristics with a negligible impact (Adj. $R^2 = 1\%$). Thus, organizational based variables

Table 3 Predictors of cynicism to change (CTC) among prison officers

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4		Model 5	
	All		Early		Transition		Mid-career		Later	
	(SE)	β	(SE)	β	(SE)	β	(SE)	β	(SE)	β
Gender	.05	.00	.09	−.11*	.11	.03	.12	.02	.08	.03
Age	.00	.03	.01	.07	.01	−.12	−.01	−.00	.01	.01
Education										
Sec. Sch. (Ref)										
Post-secondary	.05	−.06*	.11	−.09	.13	−.08	.13	.01	.08	−.05
University	.07	−.03	.19	−.13*	.15	.02	.17	.04	.15	−.03
Motivation										
Help prisoners	.05	.04	.09	−.02	.11	.10	.12	−.04	.07	.07
Admiration for role	.07	.03	.12	.05	.18	.12	.17	.05	.09	−.02
Contact with prisoners	.06	−.05*	.10	−.11*	.13	−.05	.15	.04	.09	−.08*
Prison-based characteristics										
Prison type										
Medium-security	.02	−.02	.05	.07	.05	.05	.05	−.09	.03	−.05
Relations with superiors	.04	.05	.08	−.01	.09	−.01	.11	.11	.07	.10*
Relations with peers	.04	.01	.08	.03	.10	.02	.08	−.02	.06	.01
Dangerousness	.03	.11**	.06	.14*	.06	.09	.07	.08	.04	.11*
Job stress	.02	.06*	.04	.07	.06	.08	.06	.05	.04	.06
Organizational characteristics										
Career development	.03	−.21**	.05	−.16*	.06	−.15*	.07	−.10	.04	−.27**
Decision making input	.01	−.22**	.02	−.27**	.03	−.17**	.03	−.21**	.02	−.24**
Org. commitment	.03	−.15**	.07	−.13*	.07	−.30**	.08	−.01	.05	−.12**
Autonomy	.03	−.15**	.07	−.08	.07	−.10	.07	−.28**	.04	−.13*
F	27.92**		7.95**		6.67**		4.22**		12.33**	
Adj. R^2	31.1%		31.9%		33.9%		22.0%		33.7%	
N	1,015		252		188		193		379	

*$p < .05$; **$p < .01$

appear to have the greatest impact on frontline officers' Cynicism to change.

The second part of our analyses was to estimate whether these predictors of Cynicism will differ according to officers' career stage. To answer this question, we estimated four OLS regression models to investigate the influence of these correlates. The findings are displayed in Table 3, Model 2 (Early career stage for officers with a tenure between a month to 6 years), Model 3 (Transition career stage for officers with a tenure between 7 and 10 years), Model 4 (Mid-career stage for officers with a tenure between 11 and 19 years), and Model 5 (Later career stage for officers with a tenure of 20 years and above).

At the early career stage (Model 2), female officers ($\beta = -0.11$, $p = 0.04$), officers with University qualifications ($\beta = -0.13$, p = 0.02), and those who have daily contact with prisoners ($\beta = -0.11$, $p = 0.04$) expressed less cynicism. On the substantial variables, whiles Dangerousness ($\beta = 0.14$, $p = 0.01$) increased cynicism, Career development

($\beta = -0.17$, $p = 0.00$), Decision making input ($\beta = -0.27$, $p = 0.00$), Organizational commitment ($\beta = -0.13$, $p = 0.01$) decreased cynicism. All three relations with prisoners, peers, and superiors, as well as job stress and autonomy were not related to cynicism.

For those officers at the transitional stage of their career (Model 3), Career development ($\beta = -0.15$, $p = 0.05$), Decision making input ($\beta = -0.17$, $p = 0.00$), and Organizational commitment ($\beta = -0.30$, $p = 0.00$) decreased CTC. None of the individual characteristic variables as well as relations with peers, superiors and peers, dangerousness, job stress, and autonomy were related to cynicism.

The fourth regression model represents line officers at the mid-career stage (Model 4). While Decision making input ($\beta = -0.17$, $p = 0.04$) and autonomy ($\beta = -0.28$, $p = 0.00$) decreased CTC, all the individual demographic variables and prison-based variables were not related to CTC. The organization-based variables involving career development and organizational commitment were unrelated to CTC.

In the final regression model which represents front-line officers at the later career stage (Model 5), while relations with superiors ($\beta = 0.10$, $p = 0.05$), dangerousness perceptions ($\beta = 0.11$, $p = 0.02$) were associated with increasing CTC; officers with daily Contact with prisoners ($\beta = -0.08$, $p = 0.05$), experienced career development ($\beta = -0.27$, $p = 0.00$), contributed to decision making ($\beta = -0.24$, $p = 0.008$), had high Organizational commitment ($\beta = -0.12$, $p = 0.01$), and high autonomy ($\beta = -0.13$, $p = 0.05$) decreased CTC. It is worth mentioning that throughout all the models and across all the four career stages, decision making input was the only significant predictor of Cynicism to change.

Discussion

Cynicism to change is not a new concept in prison management. However, for several decades, this concept has not been examined. The emerging wave of prison reforms in African countries to embrace international standards of human rights, prison classification, risk assessment systems, and evidence-based rehabilitation programs to reduce prisoner recidivism and promote reintegration demands assessment of African prisons readiness to embrace change. In addressing this void in the penal literature, we examined the influence of individual characteristics and contextual factors (organizational or prison-specific characteristics) and the effect of career stage on CTC. Capitalizing on unique data from a sample of 1062 prison officers based in low- and medium- security prisons in Ghana, we found empirical support that cynicism was conditioned upon mainly prison- and organizational- based characteristics and not based on the social backgrounds of prison officers such as sex, education, or enlistment motivations.

A surprising finding from our analyses was the stability of cynicism across officers' career stages: we observed no significant differences in cynicism to change between officers at different career stages. Although this contradicts previous research (e.g., Ulmer, 1992) and the career stage theory (Super, 1957) and thereby limiting its utility in an African prison context, the implication demonstrates that in addressing the issue of cynicism, management did not require specific managerial strategies for officers at different stages of their career.

A noteworthy finding is that organization-based variables have much more impact on cynicism than prison-based variables. This is good news since the prison service can directly improve these organizational climate variables in the right direction to reduce officer cynicism. Specifically, we found decision making input as the single most significant correlate of cynicism across all career stages. Prison officers who are not consulted or allowed to make inputs in

the decision-making process reported greater cynicism. This means organizational changes and policies are more likely to face resistance from frontline prison officers and may eventually sabotage such initiatives with potentially devastating consequences for prisoners' quality of life and the prison institution itself (see Trojanowicz, 1982; Woolf, 1991). This finding appears to chime with Reicher et al., (1997, p. 48) who observed that, "few changes can be mandated from the top and put into place without the need for much acceptance from employees. The success of many innovations depends upon discretionary commitment and follow through". To address this situation, it is obvious that creating a participatory decision-making atmosphere will be key in improving cynicism among officers. This is, however, a significant task in a paramilitary organizational structure where decisions made at top-level management positions occupied by superior officers and filtered down the organizational hierarchy is the norm.

Practical Implications

By examining cynicism to change, our study also yielded some vital practical implications. First, existing mechanisms of officer consultation forums known as "durbar" need strengthening. Officers have often lamented that such fora were a means by which decisions were communicated to officers (i.e., an information sharing platform) rather than a platform for soliciting information and input into policies from frontline prison officers (i.e., involvement). In order for new organizational changes and policies to see successful implementation, officer durbars must assume some democratic status where officer consensus can be built and such consensus subsequently feeding into organizational policies as a way of involving officers in decision-making. This can bridge the gap between the information provided and officers' experiences of proposed changes.

Creating a participatory decision-making atmosphere through active involvement of officers in decision making via durbars held once a week in all prison establishments in Ghana has the tendency to foster organizational commitment, a sense of control and autonomy and reduce job stress which were all found to be significant predictors of cynicism among the full sample of prison officers although not across the career stages. This approach has the added advantage of communicating to frontline prison officers that they are valued and build feelings of support from colleagues, supervisors, and the organization (Reeves et al., 2012). Of course, participatory decision making is not limited to officer durbars alone but also to improvement in supervisors and managers attitudes and behaviors to sharing information and soliciting ideas and opinions of peers which can give officers "increased responsibility and autonomy to organize and perform their duties as they see fit" (Cabrera et al., 2003,

p. 44). Second, there is a need for practicing managers and supervisors to focus on skills development schemes such as change-related training and career enhancement training as means of not only dampening down resistance to change, but also providing assurances that changes are geared toward the provision of a safe and secure environment for both prisoners and officers. Given that career progression is a significant predictor of cynicism, the enactment of fair and equitable policies and procedures to allow prison officers to advance in their careers is essential. Clear criteria for promotions and its consistent implementation especially in relation to the time taken to be promoted from one rank to the next would be essential across non-commissioned (junior)—and commissioned (senior)—officer ranks to boost officers' confidence in progressing with their career. Several officers in conversations reported that they spent too much time on a rank before being considered for promotion and that the process was fraught with inconsistencies, nepotism and favoritism (Akoensi, 2014). This has created feelings of career stagnation among officers without hope of further career development and a recipe for resisting proposed changes in the organization.

Theoretical Implications

This paper offers vital theoretical contributions. First, despite new lines of research on CTC (Brown et al., 2017; DeCelles et al., 2013), there has been noticeably limited insights on constrained organizational climate in developing economies. We draw insights from prison officers in Ghana to provide an African perspective of this complex issue. We also deviate from prior studies by offering a multilevel conceptualization and empirical verification encompassing individual characteristics and contextual factors (i.e., organizational and prison-specific characteristics), which remains an underutilized approach in the current literature. In so doing, we provide a much robust analysis of CTC in prisons. This is important given that employees who resist change can at times work to sabotage change initiatives and efforts (DeCelles et al., 2013).

Limitations and Future Directions

Our study has some limitations which lead to new directions for future research. First, given the several thousands of people working as prison officers in Ghana, we have a limited sample of 1,062 and also do not capture the experiences of all officers based in all prison sites in urban and rural settings. Future research could seek to broaden the scope of our sample to include prison executives, government ministers responsible for managing prisons i.e., the Ministry of Interior and regional bodies working in

collaboration with prisons e.g., the commission for Human Rights and Administrative Justice which acts as the prison ombudsman. This could provide a unique opportunity to provide deeper insights on CTC issues. Second, this is a single country study and as such the prison climate and nature of relationships between managers and officers have been shaped by decades of government regulations and directives and prison service's own policies. Ghana also shares a mainly collectivist culture with diverse ethnic groupings with unique cultural practices that shapes individual experiences which might have exerted influences on the findings. Accordingly, this represents an opportunity for future study to see a much larger longitudinal sample and a multi country dataset to attest to the generalizability of the observations and establish causality. These limitations notwithstanding, our study addresses an important gap in the literature and provides an important impetus to further build a body of cynicism to change research in African criminal justice institutions as sites of evolving reform initiatives often initiated from without.

Appendix: Results of Principal Component Analysis

Scaled variable	Factor loadings	*M*	*SD*
Cynicism to change (Cronbach alpha 0.73)			
1. I have pretty much given up trying to make suggestions for improvements around here	0.47	3.17	1.06
2. Changes to the usual way of doing things in the Ghana prisons service is more trouble than they are worth	0.69	3.34	1.11
3. When we try to change things here, they just seem to go from bad to worse	0.76	3.00	1.19
4. Efforts to make improvements in the Prison service usually fail	0.77	3.25	1.12
5. It is hard to be hopeful about the future because people have such bad attitudes	0.73	3.40	1.15
Relations with prisoners (Cronbach alpha 0.74)			
1. I am trusted by prisoners in this prison	0.80	3.50	1.01
2. I feel respected by prisoners in this prison	0.83	3.89	0.84
3. I have a good relationship with prisoners in this prison	0.80	3.94	0.82
Fair treatment by supervisors (Cronbach alpha 0.75)			

Scaled variable	Factor loadings	M	SD
1. I am valued as a member of the Prison service by my office- in-charge	0.66	3.99	0.77
2. I am trusted by superior officers in this prison facility	0.69	3.96	0.78
3. The in-charge of this prison is approachable when I need to discuss an issue with him or her	0.73	4.07	0.85
4. I am treated fairly by superior officers in this prison facility	0.73	3.82	0.87
5. The in-charge of this prison takes interest in my welfare	0.70	3.82	0.90
Dangerousness (Cronbach alpha 0.74)			
1. In my job, a person stands a good chance of getting hurt	0.61	3.92	1.18
2. I work in a dangerous job	0.80	3.78	1.29
3. My job is a lot more dangerous than most other jobs outside prisons	0.74	4.01	1.13
4. A lot of people I work with have been physically injured on the job	0.66	3.18	1.29
5. In this job, anything at all can happen to you at any time	0.67	4.18	1.01
Career development (Cronbach alpha 0.73)			
1. I am hurting my career progress by staying in the Prison service*	0.82	3.20	1.20
2. I have few opportunities to grow and learn new knowledge and skills*	0.77	2.62	1.18
3. I feel that I am at a standstill in my career*	0.81	2.87	1.22
Decision making input (Cronbach alpha 0.68)			
1. Staff durbars are a mere formality in this prison and the prison service*	0.74	2.73	1.21
2. Opportunities for participation in decision making is limited in this prison*	0.82	2.58	1.15
3. When I make suggestions at durbars, it is hardly taken into consideration*	0.78	2.78	1.18
Organizational commitment (Cronbach alpha 0.71)			
1. I tell my friends that this is a great organization to work for	0.75	3.60	1.12
2. I find that my personal values and the Ghana Prison Service are similar	0.64	3.09	1.17
3. I am proud to tell others that I work for this prison	0.80	4.03	0.96
4. The Ghana Prison Service really inspires the best in me in the way of job performance	0.75	3.80	1.10
5. I really care about the fate or outcome of this prison	0.43	4.01	0.83
Autonomy (Cronbach alpha 0.74)			
1. I have little control over the tasks that I perform*	0.58	3.19	1.24
2. I have little say in the decisions that affect my work*	0.75	2.59	1.19

Scaled variable	Factor loadings	M	SD
3. I have no control over what is happening in my work area*	0.74	3.16	1.24
4. I have little say in management's decisions that affect me*	0.72	2.51	1.17
5. I do not have the authority to do what is required*	0.71	2.84	1.22
Job stress			
1. The stress level in my job causes me concern	–	3.72	0.94

*Items were reverse scored

Declarations

Conflict of interest The authors have no conflict of interests to declare that are relevant to the content of this article.

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