



Research Week 2020

Defining Stress among Oregon Corrections Professionals

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Abstract

Corrections professionals experience some of the highest levels of chronic stress compared to other occupations. This leads to poor mental and physical health, increased mortality, negative job performance, and increased economic costs, such as work-related injuries, sick leave, worker's compensation claims and disability. Improving health and safety among this occupation requires identifying the factors contributing to stress and the associated economic impact. We assessed corrections professionals (n=296) working at six different Oregon Department of Corrections facilities near the Portland-area of varying security levels. Participants completed a cross-sectional survey, including demographics, work history and validated stress and occupational constructs. The outcome of perceived stress was measured by the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS-4 Short Form; Cohen, Kamarack & Mermelstein, 1983). Using a mixed linear effects regression model, we found that perceived stress increases with increased work-related stress ($p=0.02$), work hours ($p=0.03$), operational stressors ($p=0.002$), and procedural injustice ($p=0.03$) and decreases with more time employed at current facility ($p=0.06$), improved job satisfaction ($p<0.001$), and among married or partnered individuals ($p=0.05$). Further, perceived stress increases the odds of missed workdays due to work-related injuries (OR=1.18, 95% CI 1.05, 1.33; $p=0.01$). However, there is no association with perceived stress and worker's compensation claims (OR=1.04, 95% CI 0.88, 1.23; $p=0.61$). Identifying these predictors of stress and related adverse effects can inform the development of policy changes to improve working conditions, mental well-being, physical health, job performance, and economic outcomes within corrections.

