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Abstract

Jail staff who harbor negative attitudes toward their jobs can be detrimental for the functional operation of the organization. Presumably, personnel who are more involved with their work should have lower levels of stress and higher levels of job satisfaction and organizational commitment, compared with those who are not involved. The current study examined the effects of job involvement on job stress, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment at a large county jail system in Florida. Based on multivariate analyses of staff survey data, the results revealed that job involvement was negatively related to job stress and positively related to both job satisfaction and organizational commitment. The implications of these findings for correctional research and practice are also considered.

Keywords

jail staff, job involvement, job stress, job satisfaction, organizational commitment

Jails are a critical part of the field of institutional corrections. On a typical day, there are approximately 750,000 individuals detained in more than 3,300 U.S. jails, which collectively employ more than 200,000 staff members (Pastore & Maguire, 2009). Jails are the most common type of correctional institution; there are almost three times as many jails as prisons in the United States. Despite their importance in the criminal justice system, jails have not received the scholarly attention that they warrant.

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A lieutenant with a large urban county sheriff's department described the negative image of jails by stating that law enforcement is the golden child of the criminal justice system, prisons are the stepchild, and jails are the unwanted "bastard" child who is locked in the attic and ignored. (Lambert, Reynolds, Paoline, & Watkins, 2004, p. 1)

The majority of correctional research, to date, has focused on adult prisons (Castle, 2008; Castle & Martin, 2006). This is puzzling, given the aforementioned significance of jails as a vital cog in the criminal justice machine.

There is a growing body of literature that has examined how the prison work environments affects staff, yet there has been much less research on how the jail work environment affects jail staff (Farkas, 1999; Griffin, 1999). Hemmens et al. (1999) pointed out, "while there is a tremendous amount of research on attitudes and perceptions of [prison] correctional officers, there is relatively little research on the attitudes and perceptions of jail staff" (p. 16). There are similarities and differences between jails and prisons. Both hold people against their will and both rely heavily on staff to carry out the tasks necessary for the safe and orderly operation of the organization. However, jails differ from prisons in other aspects. Jails deal with diverse, and often transient, populations. The status of jail inmates range from pretrial detainees, those sentenced for misdemeanors and felonies, those awaiting transfer to prison, and parole and probation violators (Clear, Cole, & Reisig, 2009; Farkas, 1999). Jails, particularly large urban ones, often must deal with a higher rate of individuals suffering from mental health and medical issues than that found in prisons (Clear et al., 2009; Lindquist & Lindquist, 1999; O'Toole, 2002). There is also a higher inmate suicide rate in jails than prisons (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2005). Far more individuals are processed through jails than prison each year, with most being held for only a short period of time (Clear et al., 2009). These and other factors present unique challenges in terms of services, classification, programming, and security for jails. Jail staff generally receive less training when compared with the staff at prisons (Stohr, Lovrich, & Mays, 1997). Many urban jails are outdated, underfunded, understaffed, and overcrowded, which creates greater difficulties for the staff in accomplishing their jobs. All of this points to the fact that working in jails, particularly large urban ones, may be a different experience than working in a prison.

Often, despite a lack of empirical support, jail and prison work environments are assumed to affect staff in the same manner (O'Toole, 2002). Before this hypothesis is accepted, there needs to be cumulative empirical evidence supporting the premise that jail and prison staff are affected similarly by the work environment. In contributing to this knowledge base, the current study was undertaken to explore the effects of job involvement on a variety of important perceptions of the work environment (i.e., job stress, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment) among jail staff.

Literature Review

Job involvement. Job involvement is defined as the psychological identification a person has with the type of work that they are doing (Brown & Leigh, 1996; Kanungo, 1982a, 1982b; Lawler & Hall, 1970). It is the degree of central interest the job plays in a person's life (i.e., the importance the person places on the job in his or her life; Dubin, 1956; Kanungo, 1979; Paullay, Alliger, & Stone-Romero, 1994). According to Parasuraman (1982), job involvement is the level of the person's ego involvement with their work. As pointed out by DeCarufel and Schann (1990), "An individual with a high degree of job involvement would place the job at the center of his/her life's interests. The well-known phrase 'I live, eat, and breathe my job' would describe someone whose job involvement is very high" (p. 86). The opposite of job involvement is job alienation (Kanungo, 1979) or the feeling of being detached from the job and believing that the job is unimportant in the life of a person. "Persons with low job involvement would place something other than their jobs (e.g., family, hobbies) at the center of their lives" (DeCarufel & Schaan, 1990, p. 86). It is, however, important to note that a person can have too much job involvement which can lead to imbalance in a person's life (Griffin, Lambert, Hogan, Tucker, & Baker, 2009). Placing too much importance on the job can lead to strain for a person when things do not work out as planned at work. In addition, ignoring other domains outside of work, such as family or friends, can lead to a decreased overall quality of life for a person (Lambert, 2008).

Although job involvement may be an important factor influencing the views and behaviors of correctional staff, there has been little research devoted to it. A review of the literature revealed only one published study that examined job involvement among jail staff. In a study on turnover intent among staff at a Southern jail, job involvement had a negative impact on turnover intentions (Lambert & Paoline, 2010). Only four published studies were located that included job involvement with prison staff. In a study of turnover among staff at a state prison, job involvement had no direct effect on turnover intent (Lambert, 2006). Similarly, Lambert (2008) reported no association between job involvement and turnover intent, job stress, and life satisfaction among Midwestern prison staff, whereas, conversely, job involvement had significant positive relationships with work-family conflict, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment. In another study of staff at a private prison, job involvement was positively linked with the emotional dimension of burnout, but job involvement had no effect on the burnout dimensions of perceived ineffectiveness at work and treating others in a depersonalized manner (Griffin et al., 2009). In another study of private prison staff, no significant relationship between job involvement and organizational citizenship behaviors was observed (Lambert, Hogan, & Griffin, 2008).

There has also been some research on job involvement in the field of policing. Although working in policing differs from working in corrections, this literature provides a framework of understanding job involvement in different areas of the field of

criminal justice. In addition, unlike prisons, which are generally overseen by a state department of correction, jails are often run by sheriff's departments, which often include a law enforcement function as part of the overall organization. A study of police psychologists found no statistically significant correlation between job involvement and job satisfaction (Bergen, Aceto, & Chadziewicz, 1992). Conversely, police research has also observed that job involvement is positively associated with both job satisfaction and organizational commitment, and negatively with turnover intent (DeCarufel & Schaan, 1990; McElroy, Morrow, & Wardlow, 1999). Lord (1996) reported that role conflict and role ambiguity were positively linked with a lack of job involvement, and Brief, Aldag, and Wallden (1976) found that supervisory initiation of structure in the workplace correlated positively with job involvement. In other studies, tenure was found to be negatively associated with job involvement (Hazer & Alvares, 1981), whereas gender had no relationship (Love & Singer, 1988). These policing studies show that job involvement is an important concept that warrants more attention among researchers of criminal justice agents, including those who are assigned to jails.

The research to date suggests that job involvement is a salient variable for predicting some outcomes for prison staff (as well as for police officers). What is not known is whether job involvement has the same effects on the job stress, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment among jail staff. As previously indicated, there are similarities and differences between jails and prisons. On one hand, similar findings could be expected among jail staff since both working in jails and in prisons requires working with unwilling confined individuals. In addition, staff at both operate in a bureaucracy of rules and regulations. On the other hand, as indicated earlier, jails tend to have fewer resources and deal with a wider array of more transitory group of inmates, which can create a more difficult work environment than found in prisons. In addition, jail staff are more likely to encounter inmates with mental and physical health problems than prison staff, which can increase the challenge of working in a jail, and this, in turn, could mean that job involvement may have different effects on outcomes than observed with prison staff. Before it can be concluded that job involvement has similar effects as observed with prison staff, additional research is needed. Due to the scarcity of research on job involvement among jail staff (as well as prison staff), the current study was undertaken to determine the impact of job involvement on jail staff job stress, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment.

Job stress. Job stress is generally defined in the correctional literature as a staff member's feelings of job-related tension, anxiety, and distress (Cullen, Link, Wolfe, & Frank, 1985; Grossi, Keil, & Vito, 1996; Triplett, Mullings, & Scarborough, 1996). As such, job stress is basically the degree of psychological stress a person feels from his or her job.

Job stress can have negative effects for both staff and jails. Stress can reduce the quality of the interaction between staff and detainees. It can also work to harm the health and well-being of employees (Matteson & Ivancevich, 1987). Woodruff (1993)

reported that correctional staff die far sooner than the national life expectancy, and stress is the leading reason for the shortened life expectancy. Stress can also lead to increased absences from work (Lambert, 2002). Likewise, job stress has been positively linked with turnover intent among jail workers (Byrd, Cochran, Silverman, & Blount, 2000).

Due to the financial and emotional costs of stress, it is important to explore all the possible antecedents of stress among jail personnel. Past studies have found that satisfaction with administrative procedures, positive views of agency policies, views that quality medical care is provided, satisfaction with training, good relations with coworkers, input into decision making, and instrumental communication were each negatively associated with job stress among jail staff (Castle & Martin, 2006; Lambert & Paoline, 2005, 2008; Paoline, Lambert, & Hogan, 2006). Similarly, past research has shown that role ambiguity, role conflict, role strain, pay perception, and perceived dangerousness of the job, all have a positive effect on jail staff job stress (Castle & Martin, 2006; Lambert & Paoline, 2005, 2008; Smith, 1993). The findings are similar to those found among prison staff that suggest input into decision making, lack of quality training, role ambiguity, role conflict, and instrumental communication are important predictors of job stress (Dowden & Tellier, 2004; Lambert & Paoline, 2008).

Although there is a growing body of research on possible antecedents of jail staff job stress, not all antecedents have been explored. One possible antecedent is job involvement. In this study, job involvement was hypothesized to have a negative impact on job stress. Under the job control and resource conservation models of the person–environment fit theory, job involvement provides a buffer against workplace stressors (Lee & Ashford, 1996; Neveu, 2007; Sekiguchi, 2004a, 2004b). In addition, those employees who psychologically identify with their jobs may even look forward to work (Lambert, 2008). Thus, job involvement could add positive value to a person's life, and this feeling could help protect them from stress from the job (Etzion, 1984). Moreover, a lack of job involvement in and of itself can be a stressor. If a person has no psychological identification with his or her job, this individual could have little enthusiasm for attending work and may even dread going to work. Ultimately, this could lead to heightened job stress; therefore, a lack of job involvement can be seen as a form of resource depletion for jail staff, and this outcome could raise the chances of experiencing job stress (Neveu, 2007). It is also possible that over time there is a reciprocal association between job involvement and job stress. It could be that exposure to job stress in the long run could negatively feedback and weaken the psychological bond between person and the job. People may become psychologically less involved with their jobs that cause them stress.

Job satisfaction. Job satisfaction, another key dimension of the work environment, is the affective response that a worker has toward his or her job. According to Muchinsky (1987, p. 396), job satisfaction is an emotional, affective response resulting from the extent a person derives pleasure from his or her job. Hopkins (1983) defined job satisfaction as “the fulfillment or gratification of certain needs that are associated with

one's work" (p. 7). Job satisfaction, therefore, results from an assessment by an employee about his or her job in terms of meeting wants, desires, and needs (Cranny, Smith, & Stone, 1992). It is simply the degree that an employee likes his or her job (Spector, 1996).

Job satisfaction and job involvement are often confused with one another. Job involvement is the degree of psychological identification with the job experienced by a worker, regardless of whether he or she derives pleasure from the work (Kanungo, 1982b). As such, job satisfaction is the emotional state an employee has concerning his or her job, and job involvement is the cognitive view of the job. As pointed out by Brooke, Russell, and Price (1988), "distinctions between emotional state of liking one's job (job satisfaction) and the cognitive belief state of physiological identification with one's job (job involvement) have been advanced for some time" (p. 139). For example, a person may like his or her job as a jail staff member because of the pay and benefits but have no bond with the particular job. This person may be willing to leave employment at a jail if a higher paying job with better benefits opened at a local manufacturing plant. Likewise, an individual may have a psychological connection with holding a position in jail but not be happy with specific aspects of the job.

Like job stress, job satisfaction can have salient outcomes for both jail staff and jails. Higher levels of job satisfaction have been linked to more positive views of detainees (Kerce, Magnusson, & Rudolph, 1994). Byrd et al. (2000) observed a negative relationship between job satisfaction and turnover intent among jail staff. Moreover, they reported that job satisfaction was the most powerful explanatory factor of all variables used in their study. Likewise, Lambert and Paoline (2010) found job satisfaction had a negative effect on jail staff turnover intent. Due to its positive effects, exploring the possible causes of job satisfaction among jail officers is important. Past research has shown that instrumental communication, satisfaction with supervision, supervisory support, job variety, input into decision making, good coworker relations, positive views of agency policies, perceptions of quality training, and physical layout and operation of the facility all had positive effects on jail staff job satisfaction (Castle, 2008; Griffin, 2001; Lambert & Paoline, 2008; Paoline et al., 2006; Stohr, Lovrich, Monke, & Zupan, 1994; Williams, Rodeheaver, & Huggins, 1999; Zupan & Menke, 1988). Similarly, jail staff studies have found that role conflict, perceived dangerousness of the job, and concerns over detainee medical care and issues each had negative effects on job satisfaction (Kerle, 1985; Lambert et al., 2004; Lambert & Paoline, 2005).

Although many antecedents of jail staff job satisfaction have been examined, several others have not, including job involvement. Job involvement has been hypothesized to have a positive effect on job satisfaction. The job control model and the resource conservation model of the person–environment fit theory provide a theoretical foundation for why job involvement would be positively related to job satisfaction. People who identify with their job probably derive pleasure from it (Lambert, 2008). In addition, employees who psychologically bond with their job are probably eager to attend work and to do well, which, in turn, increases the chances that their emotional needs and desires will be fulfilled from their job. Thus, job involvement can be viewed

as a resource that increases the motivation at work, leading to more positive outcomes, and ultimately allowing for job satisfaction. Conversely, low job involvement can lead to less job satisfaction. Workers with low involvement are probably less motivated by the job and as such, put forth less effort in being successful at their jobs, and may gain little affective satisfaction from their jobs. Likewise, low job involvement probably leads to less stimulation from the job, resulting in a boring experience, which can lead to decreased job satisfaction (Lambert, 2004).

Organizational commitment. Organizational commitment is the bond between the employee and the organization (Mowday, Porter, & Steers, 1982). It is a connection with the entire employing organization and not with the job itself or a particular part of the organization (Lambert, Barton, & Hogan, 1999). Thus, organizational commitment focuses on bond at the organizational level, whereas job involvement focuses on the attachment at the job level (Kanungo, 1982a). In disentangling these concepts, Brooke et al. (1988), using factor analysis, empirically demonstrated that job involvement and organizational commitment (and also job satisfaction) were conceptually and analytically distinct from one another. For example, a person could have a psychological bond of as working as a jail officer but be uncommitted to a particular jail organization. In this case, this person may be more likely to leave employment with particular jail and seek employment with another jail system.

Organizational commitment is an important component of the correctional work environment. Lincoln and Kalleberg (1990) contended that “the committed employee’s involvement in the organization takes on moral overtones, and his/[her] stake extends beyond the satisfaction of merely personal interest in employment, income, and intrinsically rewarding work” (p. 22). Organizational commitment can lead to increased effort on part of the organization, and a lack of organizational commitment can lead to withdrawal behaviors on the part of employees. Organizational commitment has been found to have an inverse effect on both turnover intent and turnover among jail staff (Lambert & Paoline, 2010; Stohr, Self, & Lovrich, 1992). In addition, low organizational commitment can be linked with increased absenteeism (Lambert, 2002). Due to the benefits and costs associated with high and low organizational commitment, identifying the forces that may shape the varying levels of this construct among jail staff becomes paramount.

Although there has been less research on jail staff organizational commitment, past work has found instrumental communication, formalization, job variety, input into decision making, and perceptions of promotional opportunities were each positively related to organizational commitment, while role strain was linked with decreased commitment to the jail (Lambert & Paoline, 2008; Stohr et al., 1994). Additional research which explores the variables that influence the level of organizational commitment among jail staff is needed. Job involvement is one of these possible variables.

Based on the person–environment theory, job involvement is hypothesized to have a positive effect on organizational commitment. The person–environment theory is important in understanding the relationship between a staff member and the organization in explaining the perceptions, attitudes, views, intentions, and behaviors of the

employee (Cable & Edwards, 2004). This theory is based on the interactional perspective, in that the interplay between a person and his or her environment helps shape various outcomes, meaning that neither the individual nor the situation accounts for the outcome alone but in conjunction with one another (Sekiguchi, 2004a). The person–environment fit model holds that there must be congruence between the attributes, needs, and wants of the staff member and the work environment (Edwards, Cable, Williamson, Lambert, & Shipp, 2006). If there is a fit between the worker and the work environment, there are usually positive outcomes for both the worker and the organization. Similarly, if there is a poor fit between the employee and the work environment, negative outcomes generally result (Edwards et al., 2006; Sekiguchi, 2004b). Workers with high job involvement probably view the organization in a more positive light, and this should ultimately increase the strength of the bond between the jail staff member and the jail. Conversely, those with low job involvement may be more likely to blame the jail for the job toward which they have no connection, and, ultimately, this will probably lead to a weakened connection between the staff member and the jail. Furthermore, the lack of job involvement could become a negative demand placed on the person, which could eventually lead these individuals to view the organization in negative light because they feel strain and discomfort of holding a job that they care little about. Thus, under the person–environment theory, job involvement should have a positive association with organizational commitment among job staff.

Method

Data

The data for the current study were collected in the fall of 2001 under the direction of the Orange County Jail Oversight Commission, which was primarily interested in exploring morale among the jail's staff at the Orange County Corrections Department (OCCD) in Orlando, Florida. The county contains one major city and 10 other municipalities, all of which exclusively use the county jail for local detention needs. The commission wished to improve the working conditions so as to improve the efficacy of operations. To accomplish this task, a team of criminal justice researchers from the University of Central Florida (UCF) first conducted a series of focus groups designed to understand more fully those problems that might be unique to jail staff. Research staff conducted seven (2-hr) focus groups, with 48 jail employees from different organizational levels, during a 10 day period. Findings from the focus groups assisted in the development of a survey questionnaire that was administered to jail staff. The OCCD is an American Correctional Association (ACA) accredited institution, and housed approximately 4,000 inmates at the time of the survey. Ordered according to the average daily inmate population, the jail was among the 15 largest in the country and 3rd largest in Florida at the time of the study (Beck, Karberg, & Harrison, 2002).

During five consecutive days in the fall of 2001 staff from nine separate facilities of the OCCD were surveyed. The staff were informed that the survey was completely

voluntary in nature and the responses would be anonymous. With the consent of the jail director, personnel received 2 hrs of overtime for participating in the survey. The administration of the survey took place across each of the three primary shifts (i.e., 6:00 a.m.-5:30 p.m., 3:00 p.m.-2:30 a.m., and 7:00 p.m.-6:30 a.m.), and staff were afforded the opportunity to take part in any of the survey times even if it was not their assigned shift or work day. Survey administration took place at the main correctional facility, the county courthouse and an additional remote detention facility. Respondents represented all areas of the correctional facility, such as correctional officers, case managers, medical staff, industry staff, food service workers, and so on. Moreover, the respondents represented various administrative levels of the correctional facility, from line staff to supervisors and managers. The jail employed approximately 1,500 paid employees at the time of the survey, and 1,062 staff members participated in the survey, resulting in a response rate of 70%.¹

Table 1 presents the personal characteristics of the respondents.² The typical respondent was a nonwhite male with either a high school diploma or some college but no college degree, and was between 35 and 44 years old. The majority of respondents (67%) were correctional officers (i.e., they worked in a custody position), and the average length of time employed at the jail was almost 8 years.

Variables

Dependent variables. The potential outcome variables in this study were job stress, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment. The survey items for both independent and dependent variables were summed to form additive indices, and the items are listed in the appendix. Job stress was measured by six items, all of which were adapted from Crank, Regoli, Hewitt, and Culbertson (1995).

A global, rather than a facet orientated, measure of job satisfaction was used (Cranny et al., 1992). A global measure focuses on the broader domain of a worker's satisfaction with the overall job than with specific job facets, such as pay, supervision, and so forth. In other words, a global measure asks about a worker's level of satisfaction with their overall job in general, while a facet-orientated measure asks the level of satisfaction with specific aspects of the job. Job satisfaction was measured using five items that were adopted from Brayfield and Rothe (1951).

Finally, organizational commitment was measured by summing the responses to two items from Mowday et al. (1982). While organizational commitment is often measured using the full nine-item index from Mowday et al. (1982), the overall length of the survey questionnaire prohibited the inclusion of all items.³ The job stress, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment items were all answered using a 5-point Likert-type scale of *strongly disagree* (coded 1) to *strongly agree* (coded 5).

Independent variable of focus. Job involvement was the independent variable of focus. Job involvement was measured by summing the responses to four items, which tapped into the importance the job had in a person's life (i.e., the degree of

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables

Variable	Description	Min	Max	Med	M	SD
Race	40% Black, 11% Hispanic, 43% White, and 6% other 57% = non-White (coded 0) 43% = White (coded 1)	0	1	0	0.43	0.50
Educational level	21% high school diploma/GED, 43% some college but no degree, 15% associate's degree, 16% bachelor's degree, and 5% a graduate degree 38% = had a college degree (coded 1) 62% = no college degree (coded 0)	0	1	0	0.38	0.49
Age	Ordinal level measure of age were 4% = under 25 (coded 1) 9% = 25-29 (coded 2), 17% = 30-34 (coded 3), 21% = 35-39 (coded 4), 19% = 40-44 (coded 5), 12% = 45-49 (coded 6), 12% = 50-54 (coded 7), and 6% = 55 and older (coded 8)	1	8	4	4.53	1.81
Gender	54% = men (coded 1) 46% = women (coded 0)	0	1	1	0.54	0.50
Position	67% = correctional officer (coded 1) 33% = noncorrectional officer (coded 0)	0	1	1	0.67	0.47
Tenure	Number of months working at jail	0	336	72	95.33	74.68
Job involvement	4 item additive index, $\alpha = .74$	4	20	9	9.30	3.34
Job stress	6 item additive index, $\alpha = .78$	6	30	18	18.20	5.44
Job satisfaction	5 item additive index, $\alpha = .82$	5	25	17	16.42	4.92
Organizational commitment	2 item additive index, $\alpha = .72$	2	10	6	5.98	2.37

Note: Min = minimum value; Max = maximum value; Med = median value; SD = standard deviation; N = 1,062.

psychological identification). The items were adopted from Kanungo (1982a, 1982b). Those surveyed responded to the items by using a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from *strongly disagree* (coded 1) to *agree* (coded 5).

Personal characteristics. The personal characteristics of race, educational level, age, gender, position, and tenure were included as control variables. These variables have been used in a variety of correctional studies, especially those that have examined perceptions of the work environment (see for example, Lambert, Hogan, and Barton, 2002). See Table 1 for a description of how the personal characteristics variables were coded.

Table 2. Correlation Matrix

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Race	1.00									
2. Educational level	0.02	1.00								
3. Age	0.23**	0.14**	1.00							
4. Gender	0.43**	0.09**	0.15**	1.00						
5. Position	0.00	-0.22**	-0.07	0.26**	1.00					
6. Tenure	0.12**	0.01	0.45**	0.11**	0.16**	1.00				
7. Job involvement	-0.04	-0.05	0.13**	-0.03	-0.10**	-0.04	1.00			
8. Job stress	-0.01	-0.03	-0.01	0.05	0.13**	0.13**	-0.15**	1.00		
9. Job Satisfaction	0.10**	-0.02	0.14**	0.01	-0.05	-0.03	0.43**	-0.51**	1.00	
10. Organizational commitment	-0.02	-0.05	0.06	-0.03	-0.09**	-0.14**	0.45**	-0.49**	0.67**	1.00

Note: See Table 1 for a description of the variables and how they were coded. *N* = 1,062.
 p* ≤ .05. *p* ≤ .01.

Results

The descriptive statistics for all the study variables are reported in Table 1. There appeared to be significant variation in both the dependent and independent variables. Results based on the skewness and kurtosis statistics revealed no issue of either. The Kolmogorov–Smirnov test indicated that the variables were normally distributed. A principal factor analysis was conducted for the items that formed the indices. The items loaded on the expected factors, and the factors loading were .45 or higher, which is above the generally accepted levels of .30 (Kim & Mueller, 1978). The Cronbach alpha values, as a measure of reliability, for the indices, were all above the generally accepted level of .60 (Gronlund, 1981).

A matrix of Pearson’s product correlations is reported in Table 2. Job involvement had a statistically significant correlation with all the outcome (dependent) variables. That is, job involvement had a negative correlation with job stress. Thus, an increase in the job involvement index was associated with a decrease in the job stress index among the responding jail staff. Job involvement also had positive correlations with both job satisfaction and organizational commitment. As such, an increase in job involvement was associated with increases in job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

Ordinary least squares (OLS) regression equations were estimated with job stress, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment as the dependent variables. The independent variables in each of the OLS regression equations were the personal characteristics and job involvement. The results are reported in Table 3. Based on the correlation matrix, the Variance Inflation Factor scores (not reported), and Tolerance statistics, collinearity and multicollinearity were not a problem for any of the models.

Table 3. Multivariate Results of the Effects of Job Involvement on Jail Staff Role Stress, Job Stress, Job satisfaction, Organizational Commitment, and Turnover Intent

Variable	Job stress		Job satisfaction		Organizational commitment	
	B	β	B	β	B	β
Race	-.44	-.04	1.18	.12**	-.0	-.01
Education	-.33	.03	-.23	-.02	-.22	-.05
Age	-.16	-.05	.32	.12**	.10	.08*
Gender	.36	.03	-.22	-.02	.02	.01
Position	.91	.08	-.34	-.03	-.31	-.06
Tenure	.01	.14**	-.01	-.09*	-.01	-.17**
Job involvement	-.29	-.17**	.60	.40**	.31	.43**
R ²		.07**		.20**		.24**

Note: B represents the unstandardized regression coefficient, β represents the standardized regression coefficient. $N = 1,062$. Listwise deletion was used in each regression model and after listwise deletion, the n for job stress = 882, the n for job satisfaction = 876, and the n for organizational commitment = 794.

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

Additional tests were conducted for outliers, influential cases, normality, linearity and homoscedasticity of residuals, and independence of errors in the regression analyses. Finally, listwise deletion was used for missing data.

For the Job Stress equation, the R^2 value was .07, indicating that the independent variables explained approximately 7% of the observed variance of the job stress index. Both tenure and job involvement had statistically significant effects on job stress. Tenure had a positive effect, although job involvement had a negative effect.

Turning to job satisfaction, the independent variables accounted for roughly 20% of the variance in this index. Among the personal characteristics, race, age, and tenure had significant effects, and education, gender, and position had nonsignificant effects. Race and age had positive effects, and tenure a negative relationship. In general, White staff reported higher levels of job satisfaction than non-White staff. An increase in age was associated with an increase in satisfaction from the job. Interestingly, an increase in tenure was associated with a decrease in job satisfaction. As predicted, job involvement had a positive effect on jail staff job satisfaction. Based on the standardized regression coefficients (β column), job involvement had the largest sized effect.

Finally, for organizational commitment, approximately 24% of the variance was explained. Age and tenure were the only personal characteristics to have significant relationships. Age had a positive effect, and tenure had a negative effect on organizational commitment. Job involvement had a positive effect, suggesting that increases in job involvement were associated with increased commitment to the organization among the responding jail staff. In addition, job involvement had the largest magnitude

of effect on organizational commitment among the independent variables in the equation.

Conclusion and Discussion

The aim of the current empirical inquiry was to add to the existing research on job involvement, with a focus on an understudied criminal justice population—jails. Overall, the study results found that all three of the proposed job involvement hypotheses were supported, some more so than others. More specifically, jail staff job involvement was a significant predictor of job stress, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment.

Job involvement appears to lead to less job stress for jail personnel. As previously indicated, this may be because job involvement helps buffer workplace stressors and, more importantly, a lack of job involvement leads to feelings of strain for jail workers. It is important to note that this study only included personal characteristics and job involvement as independent variables in regression equation for job stress. This is a recognized limitation of the current work. Furthermore, of the three regression models, the least amount of variance was explained for job stress (i.e., R^2 was .07, which means that job involvement and the personal characteristics only accounted for 7% of the variance of job stress in the study). The amount of variance explained for job satisfaction and organizational commitment was approximately three times of that of job stress (i.e., the R^2 for the job satisfaction and organizational commitment equations was .20 and .24 respectively). This suggests that job involvement is less important in explaining jail staff job stress than it is for job satisfaction and organizational commitment. It could be that other variables, such as role stressors, cause greater strain for jail staff, and, in the end, this leads more job stress than does job involvement. In fact, it is possible that role stressors lead to both greater job stress and decreased job involvement for jail staff. This is an area that needs much more research attention before it can be conclusively stated that job involvement is a salient antecedent of job stress among jail staff.

The current study found a positive relationship between job involvement and job satisfaction. Jail staff with higher levels of job involvement may be more likely to have their affective needs and desires met from the job than those with low job involvement. Those alienated from their jobs are unlikely to feel job satisfaction. Greater job involvement likely increases the chances of being more engaged at work and this engagement increases the opportunities to be satisfied from the job (Lambert, 2008). It is important to note that only 20% of the variance of job satisfaction was accounted for by job involvement and the personal characteristics of race, educational level, age, gender, position, and tenure. As was the case with job stress, researchers need to explore what other variables explain the other 80% of the variance of job satisfaction. This will provide a more complete picture of how job involvement and job satisfaction correlate to one another.

Furthermore, this study found that job involvement was positively associated with organizational commitment. As previously indicated, those who have a psychological bond with the job are probably pleased with the organization for providing them with this job, and this increases the bond between staff members and the jail organization. In addition, it is likely that staff members with a high degree of identification with the job and commitment to the organization will put forth effort for the jail to succeed in the long run. Blau and Boal (1987) argued that workers with high levels of job involvement and organizational commitment are star employees who will be instrumental in the long-term success of the organization. Future research is needed to determine whether jail staff with high levels of job involvement do, in fact, put forth extra prosocial and work efforts that help the jail be successful over time. However, Blau and Boal (1987) contended that employees with low job involvement are apathetic and poor employees who do more harm than good for the organization in the long run. Research is also needed to examine how jail staff with low job involvement affect the performance and operation of the jail. Moreover, the relationship between job involvement and organizational commitment may change when other variables, such as work environment variables, are included in the analysis. Although about a quarter of the variance was explained, it is important to uncover additional variables that are important in helping shape the variance of organizational commitment of jail staff.

In augmenting the literature on the forces that shape jail staff job stress, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment, the results reported here indicate that job involvement is important and needs to be included in research on these work outcomes. What this study cannot answer is whether the effects of job involvements differ (or are similar) between jail and prison staff. O'Toole (2002) pointed out that "the prevailing assumption among nonjail correctional experts seems to be that jail expertise is a lesser included piece of prison expertise" (p. 2). O'Toole strongly contended that this assumption is unwarranted, at least until there is sufficient research to indicate whether forces affect the attitudes of prison and jail staff similarly. The limited research to date is mixed. There was a positive link between job involvement and both job satisfaction and organizational commitment in this study on jail staff and a past study by Lambert (2008) on staff at a state prison. However, a negative relationship between job involvement and job stress was observed for jail staff in this current study but not for prison staff in Lambert (2008). Similarly, Lambert and Paoline (2010) observed that job involvement had a negative effect on turnover intent among jail staff, whereas Lambert (2006) reported that it had no effect on turnover intent of staff at a Midwestern state prison. There is too little research on the effects of job involvement for both jail and prison staff to draw definitive conclusions at this time.

In addition, this study provides support for the person–environment fit theory. If there is a good connection between the person and his or her work environment, positive outcomes should result, including lower job stress, increased job satisfaction, and heightened organizational commitment. Conversely, a poor fit between the person and his or her work can lead to negative outcomes, including increased stress, reduced satisfaction from the job, and lower commitment to the employing organization. The

employee is thus affected, but so too are coworkers, detainees, and the employee's family members. As previously indicated, job stress can cause reduced work relationships between a staff member and coworkers, as well as impaired interactions with detainees. This, in turn, can lead to conflict at home. Job stress has been linked with job burnout and withdrawal from life activities. Besides psychological, emotional, and psychological harms, stress from work can lead to premature death. Job satisfaction is also an important consequence for both the worker and the organization. People who are satisfied with their jobs tend to be more pleasant to others and may even put forth additional effort at work. In the end, job satisfaction often is a positive outcome for the employee, coworkers, detainees, and family members and friends. Increased organizational commitment is a desired outcome as well. Those who are committed tend to work harder and wish to see the organization succeed, whereas low commitment tend to make one withdraw from the organization either figuratively (e.g., psychological withdrawal) or literally (e.g., absenteeism or voluntary turnover). The findings support the contention that job involvement is an important factor among jail staff. Those with high job involvement probably have a better fit between themselves and their work environment, whereas those who are not involved are likely alienated.

Although the results of this study are informative, the study is not without limitations. This was a single study involving staff at a single large, urban, Southern jail. Additional studies at other jails are needed to determine whether the results can be replicated. In addition, more research is needed to determine whether the results vary by region of the United States (e.g., rural versus urban, North, South, West, and Midwest) and by size of the jail facility. In this study, only the effects of job involvement on jail staff job stress, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment were examined. There are other outcome areas that should be explored, such as work–family conflict, life satisfaction, absenteeism, organizational citizenship behaviors (going above what is expected at work on a regular basis), job performance, and job burnout. Moreover, research is needed to determine whether the effects of job involvement vary between jail and prison staff. In addition, as previously noted, organizational commitment was measured using only two items rather than the nine-item index developed by Mowday et al. (1982). Because of this, the organizational commitment regression model should be taken with some degree of caution. How a concept is measured might influence the results and raises the issue of validity and reliability. Future research should examine whether more detailed and extensive measures of organizational commitment would yield similar results.

Future research should also explore whether using a more in-depth measure of job involvement would affect the results. This study used four items to create the index for job involvement. It is unknown what variables are important in shaping the job involvement of jail staff. Research is needed to identify the variables that influence job involvement among jail staff. Research among noncriminal justice employees has found that work environment factors were better predictors of job involvement than were personal characteristics (Brown, 1996; Elloy, Everett, & Flynn, 1995). We urge future researchers to focus on a wide array of work environment variables and explain

how they affect jail staff job involvement. Under the job demands model, it is very possible that role stressors, such as role ambiguity, role conflict, role underload, and role overload, cause a person to lose interest in the job over the long run. In a study of police officers, Lord (1996) reported that role conflict and role ambiguity were negatively associated with job involvement, providing support that role stressors may be negatively related to job involvement among jail staff. Under the resource conservation model, training, input into decision making, job variety, organizational justice/fairness (i.e., fair outcomes and fair processes for making outcome decisions), and supervisory and administrative support should be linked to job involvement. All of these variables enhance the work experiences of staff and allow for staff to become both more involved and successful in their jobs. This may translate into an increased psychological bond between the staff member and his or her job. Among police officers, supervisory initiation of structure in the workplace positively correlated with job involvement (Brief et al. 1976). This suggests the need to explore the effects of work environment variables on jail staff job involvement. Without this additional work, it is impossible to conclude the primary antecedents and consequences of job involvement among jail staff. Brown (1996) contended that

a deep understanding of job involvement and its antecedents and consequent influences has the potential to enrich a fundamental aspect of human experience (i.e., work) and contribute to heightened productivity in organizations and society by fostering greater use of human potential. (p. 253)

Another drawback of the current study was its cross-sectional design. This means that relationships can be observed, but no causal patterns across time can be determined. Although job involvement was associated with job stress, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment, it does not mean that job involvement caused each. It could be that the job stress, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment may have caused job involvement. Moreover, there may be a reciprocal relationship between these variables over time (e.g., job involvement causes job satisfaction, which in turn leads to greater job involvement). As such, future work should use longitudinal research designs to tease out the temporal ordering among these (and other) correctional constructs.

If the findings reported here are replicated, there are implications for jail administrators. To lower job stress, jail leaders could focus on increasing the job involvement of staff, as well as reducing workplace factors linked with job stress, such as role conflict and role ambiguity. Likewise, to increase the job satisfaction and organizational commitment of staff, attention should be paid to job involvement, as well as focusing on other workplace variables linked with job satisfaction and organizational commitment, such as instrumental communication, supervisory support, job variety, and input into decision making. This, of course, raises the question "what are the best methods for raising job involvement?" This question cannot be definitely answered at this time. There is a dearth of research on the possible antecedents of job involvement, not only with jail staff but also with prison staff. As previously indicated, there is a need to identify and explore the

factors which shape job involvement among jail staff. Without this information, jail administrators will have difficulty increasing the job involvement of their staff (assuming this can be done), and, in turn, lowering the job stress and increasing job satisfaction and organizational commitment of employees. For this to occur, scholars need to be aware of the concept of job involvement and include it in their research.

Working in jails is a unique experience. Staff are the heart and soul of these institutions. They are important for carrying out a myriad of tasks and duties that are necessary for a humane, secure, and safe jail. Satisfied, committed staff, who do not suffer from undue job stress, are critical in ensuring that a jail is successful, whereas highly stressed, unhappy, and uncommitted staff can result in disaster. Thus, continuing to explore the factors that may help shape the job stress, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment levels of jail staff is essential. In an era of increasing inmate populations, rising costs, shrinking budgets, and personnel shortages, this knowledge is paramount. In this study, job involvement had a negative effect on job stress and positive effects on job satisfaction and organizational commitment among jail staff at a large, urban, Southern jail. This indicates the need for scholars and jail administrators to pay attention to job involvement. The authors hope that this study will generate the interest required. Too much is at stake to ignore improving the fit between jail staff and their work environment.

Appendix

Survey Item Measures

Dependent Variables

Job stress

1. When I'm at work I often feel tense or uptight.
2. A lot of time my job makes me very frustrated or angry.
3. I am usually calm and at ease when I'm working (reverse coded).
4. Most of the time when I'm at work I don't feel that I have much to worry about (reverse coded).
5. I am usually under a lot of pressure when I am at work.
6. There are a lot of aspects of my job that make me upset. (response for all items 1 = *strongly disagree*, 2 = *disagree somewhat*, 3 = *uncertain*, 4 = *agree somewhat*, 5 = *strongly agree*)

Job satisfaction

1. I like my job better than the average worker (correctional officer) does.
2. I am seldom bored with my job.
3. Most days I am enthusiastic about my job.

(continued)

Appendix (continued)

4. I feel fairly well satisfied with my job.
5. I find real enjoyment in my job. (response for all items 1 = *strongly disagree*, 2 = *disagree somewhat*, 3 = *uncertain*, 4 = *agree somewhat*, 5 = *strongly agree*)

Organizational commitment

1. I am proud to tell others that I am part of this organization (jail). Employees feel proud of the facility.
2. This job really inspires the best in me in the way of job performance. (response for all items 1 = *strongly disagree*, 2 = *disagree somewhat*, 3 = *uncertain*, 4 = *agree somewhat*, 5 = *strongly agree*)

Independent Variable

Job involvement

1. I live, eat, and breathe my job.
 2. The major satisfaction in my life comes from my job.
 3. I am very much involved personally in my work.
 4. The most important things that happen to me involve my work. (response for all items 1 = *strongly disagree*, 2 = *disagree somewhat*, 3 = *uncertain*, 4 = *agree somewhat*, 5 = *strongly agree*)
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Authors' Note

Eric G. Lambert and Eugene A. Paoline equally contributed to the article and are listed in random order.

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Notes

1. Those who did not participate in the survey were either physically absent from work during this week (e.g., sick, injured, vacationing, training, etc.), did not wish to participate in the

- survey, or did not want to (or could not) come in before or after their shift to take part in the survey.
2. Although there is not a reason to believe that the sample of respondents surveyed is any different from the overall OCCD population, data are not available that would permit a complete comparison (i.e., across all of the demographic factors captured in our analyses). We do have data on the national and state jail figures, during the same time period, for gender, ethnicity, and custody variables that compare favorably. Comparisons with national and state data reveal that our sample of OCCD staff include more females (44% compared with 34% nationally and 40% in Florida), Blacks (39% compared with 24% nationally and 33% in Florida), Hispanics (10% compared with 8% nationally and 9% in Florida), and “other” races (6% compared with 2% nationally and 1% in Florida), and slightly fewer custody personnel (68% compared with 74% nationally and 74% in Florida; Stephan, 2001).
 3. The survey instrument included over 160 items, which generally took respondents between 15 and 30 min to complete. Per the collaboration between the oversight commission and university researchers, the design of the survey was aimed at measuring several facets of the jail environment. The two items chosen to measure organizational commitment were the ones, we believed, best tapped into this concept. The use of a shortened scale is certainly recognized as a limitation, but one that allowed for a survey that elicited numerous dimensions of the jail work environment.

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