Project Title: Psychological growth and benefit in correctional workers

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Level: PhD

Background to the project: There is a growing empirical evidence base which shows that working in prisons impacts negatively on health through stress (Finney et al, 2013) and where there are additional negative experiences (e.g. dealing with deaths in custody) individuals are vulnerable to developing Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and are at risk of suicidal ideation and even completion of the act (Wright et al, 2006). Other negative consequences identified in the literature include absenteeism (Lambert & Hogan, 2007; 2009), burnout (Lambert et al, 2010; 2012; Morgan et al, 2002; Neveu, 2007), and work-family conflict (Lambert & Hogan, 2010). There have been only limited attempts to intervene in this process (Minor et al, 2014). While a high proportion of staff report negative effects, a substantial number do not seem to be negatively affected and some even report positive levels of job satisfaction (Minor et al 2014). In other professions and areas of high stress there is evidence that many individuals actually experience positive growth and benefit finding (Joseph, 2011; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004). This literature has been more informative than the deficit literature in regard to identifying potential for effective intervention. This study therefore aims to explore psychological growth and benefit finding in prison staff / correctional workers in order to identify the factors that contribute to growth and inform intervention.

Methods to be used: A multi-level mixed method approach is proposed. Multi-level in that factors at individual, group, family, social and environmental levels will be explored, and mixed method in that information from quantitative survey methods will be further interrogated using qualitative interviews with a sub sample.

Objectives of the research: The aim is to explore psychological growth and benefit finding in prison staff to identify multi-level factors that contribute to growth in order to inform potential interventions.

Skills required of applicant: The applicant should have a first or upper second class honours degree in psychology with the Graduate Basis for Chartership. Experience of using survey methods in the field of occupational health would be desirable.

References:


