Irish Prison Officers' Perception of Job Burnout

Joyce Clarke

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Abstract

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Prison officers' job burnout is costly to everybody involved and it has not received the research attention it deserves. Prison officers as a professional group work in prisons, which requires dealing with individuals who are criminally involved and held against their will. The job characteristics model is important in developing employees objectives. This present study grew out of an apparent lack of research examining Irish prison officers' perceptions of the job characteristics model on the three dimensions of job burnout (i.e., emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation and a reduced sense of personal accomplishment). The research was conducted to expand knowledge about Irish prison officer perceptions of job burnout and perceived causes of job burnout.

From semi-structured interviews of eighteen prison officers drawn from committal institutions, findings of the present study indicate that Irish prison officers experience job burnout and considerable stress from their job. Furthermore, this study supported other research that prison officers' perceive the broader organisation rather than the unique attributes of the role as a prison officer that influences the level and sources of stress and job burnout among prison officers. The Irish Prison Service has commenced a self monitoring process on "Measuring the Quality of Prison Life" based on the Cambridge model compiled by Alison Libeling.

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List of Acronyms

IPS   Irish Prison Service

CO   Correctional Officer

POA   Prison Officer's Association

MQPL Measuring Quality Prison Life

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 - Introduction

The objective of this thesis is to explore "Irish prison officers' perception of job burnout". Working in a prison is a unique, tough and demanding experience; a type of 'people work' career that is unlike others. Deprivation of liberty is the most serious penal punishment given to a person (Sykes, 1958;Johnson 1996; Crewe, 2011). Goffman (1961) illustrates prison as a "*total institution... 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*" (p.11). Armstrong and Griffin (2004) argued that *"few other organisations are charged with the central task of supervising and securing an unwilling and potentially violent population"* (p.57). Caring for unwilling people can place a strain on staff, which over time can lead to burnout (Lambert et al, 2010).

1.2 - The Role of a Governor

Prison Governors carry out a fundamental role within the criminal justice system, enforcing the states objectives of modern imprisonment (Bryans, 2007). It is the governors who manage the 14 institutions within Ireland, depriving offenders of their freedom, enforcing rules and regulations, rehabilitating offenders, while

maintaining safe, secure and humane custody and providing regimes for prisoners in their care (West, 1997). Prison Governors are responsible with maintaining the "quality of prison life" by setting boundaries of satisfactory behaviour for staff and prisoners and stating what "right relationships" are (Liebling, 2011), while making sure staff-prisoner relationships have the accurate balance of control and respect. To achieve the "quality of prison life" governors are required to be highly skilled, with outstanding leadership skills (Liebling, 2011). This specifies that leadership and communication skills along with people management skills are extremely important for governors while reflecting the hierarchical cultural of prisons. McDonnell (2000) discussed that governors ought to maintain a balance of leadership and management skills in order to uphold stability between supporting staff and guaranteeing fair treatment of prisoners. McDonnell (2000, p.13) cites that;

"....a governor walking along the top of a wall, on one side are the prisoners who expect you to be fair, on the other are your staff who expect you to be supportive. If you climb down the wall to one side or the other for too long it could undermine your position with the other. It is good use of management skills and paying attention to detail that will keep you walking along the top of the wall".

This can result in staff having feelings of resentment and being undervalued, along with (Thomas, 1972., Bennet & Wahidin, 2012) other factors that may contribute to stress (Schaufeli and Peeters, 2000). Table 1 illustrates the complexity of the Governor's role.

Governors Competency Framework	
Planning & Coordinating	The Governor plans strategically in order to organise, prioritise and deploy resources effectively. Coordinates the delivery of projects by involving all stakeholders, delegating effectively and considering time and cost.
Interpersonal Communication	The Governor communicates a clear vision of team goals and objectives, demonstrates effective use of oral and written language skills and diplomacy and sensitivity in dealing with others. Networks with others to achieve positive results.
Leadership	The Governor has the ability to manage a team effectively by supporting others, promoting appropriate behaviour, leading by personal example, and communicating effectively. Provides coaching, feedback and effective performance management.
Decision making	The Governor seeks out all relevant information when making a decision. Is self-reliant in making decisions and accountable for the decisions taken.
Information Handling	The Assistant Governor Adopts a methodical and detail-conscious approach to administrative tasks. Completes tasks accurately and on time. Uses information technology to enhance data handling.
Personal Effectiveness and Commitment to Professional Development	The Governor continually learns and develops themselves and others. Identifies their own strengths and areas for improvement. Adapts well to, and supports, change. Encourages a culture of continuous learning, information sharing, and professional development..
Analysis/Problem Solving	The Governor identifies relevant information sources, objectively analysing and evaluating complex information to identify the key issues. Presents solutions to problems rather than complaining about the problem.
Managing and Developing People	The Governor provides others with clear guidelines and indication of expectations, sets high standards and monitors and supports in order to ensure delivery. Delegates wisely, inspires, motivates and challenges others to perform to their potential

Table 1 - Governors Competency Framework

1.3 - The Role of the Prison Officer

Vivien Stern (1987) described prison officers as:

......".a close-knit group of mainly family men – looking to each other for social life and support, feeling misunderstood, unappreciated and looking at life with a semi-humorous, semi-bitter, cynical pessimism – a group where breaking ranks in any way is very difficult, because the bonds are strong professionally, socially and culturally", cited by(Liebling, 2011, p.15).

Two decades later, this description can still be applied to a contemporary prison officer. Liebling et al (2011) identifies several characteristics of modern Prison Officer's such as multi-skilled, loyal, personal strength and proud (p. 80), whilst Bennett et al (2012) identify factors of prison officer culture as; suspicion, courage, solidarity and feelings of social isolation. Liebling (2000) states the core function of prison officers is to "*maintain secure custody, in a context where people are held in confinement against their will, provide prisoners with care, with humanity*" (p.338). Prison officers must learn coping skills while working in this environment where they have to impose deprivation of liberty. Skolnick (1966) remarks that prison officers develop a "working personality" comparable to police officers. This personality has an "us versus them" attitude with characterised of cynicism, hyper vigilance, suspicion and social isolation.

Crawley's (2004) found prisons as "*highly domestic spaces in which prison officers must perform and manage emotions on a day to day basis*" (p. 424). The term emotion is used to portray how the individual is 'feeling inside'. Prisons are places

of mixed emotions and feelings including anxiety, sadness, depression, frustration, joy, happiness, regret, resentment, hope. Staff – prisoner relationships are emotional since of the level of *intimacy* engaged in working with prisoners is immense. Staff to staff relationships is also emotional with colleagues being jealous and resentful towards each other, particularly where colleagues are able to do 'quality work'. Some new recruit officers often feel bullied by senior officers, while female officers are fed up with sexist behaviour, (Crawley, 2004). "*Where individuals spend long periods of time together in intimate settings they are drawn into emotional engagement with each other*" (Crawley, 2004, p. 415). Crawley (2004) found prisons are familiar with the home environment, where *"boredom often degenerated into bickering and squabbles"* and *"staff interrupt by sulks, rows, fall-outs and minor disagreements"*. Prison Officers need to manage emotion while at work because the mismanagement of emotions is deemed as 'inappropriate' to the role of the prison officer. The use of humour, detachment, strategies of de-personalisation, gossip about fellow colleagues and to tell and retell prison anecdotes from the past are important levels of emotion. This helps officers manage the wide range of skills and competencies central to their role as outlined in table 2. Mercier (1926) stated that humour neutralises situations and makes feelings bearable. Further to this Zijderveld (1983) believed "*through laughter and joking emotional experiences which are hard to express verbally are made collective, and communicative, cognitive and emotional dissonances are lifted, and reality is restored*" (Zijderveld, 1983, p.121). Crawley (2004, p 184) found that officers had common perceptions that they had been 'changed' by the
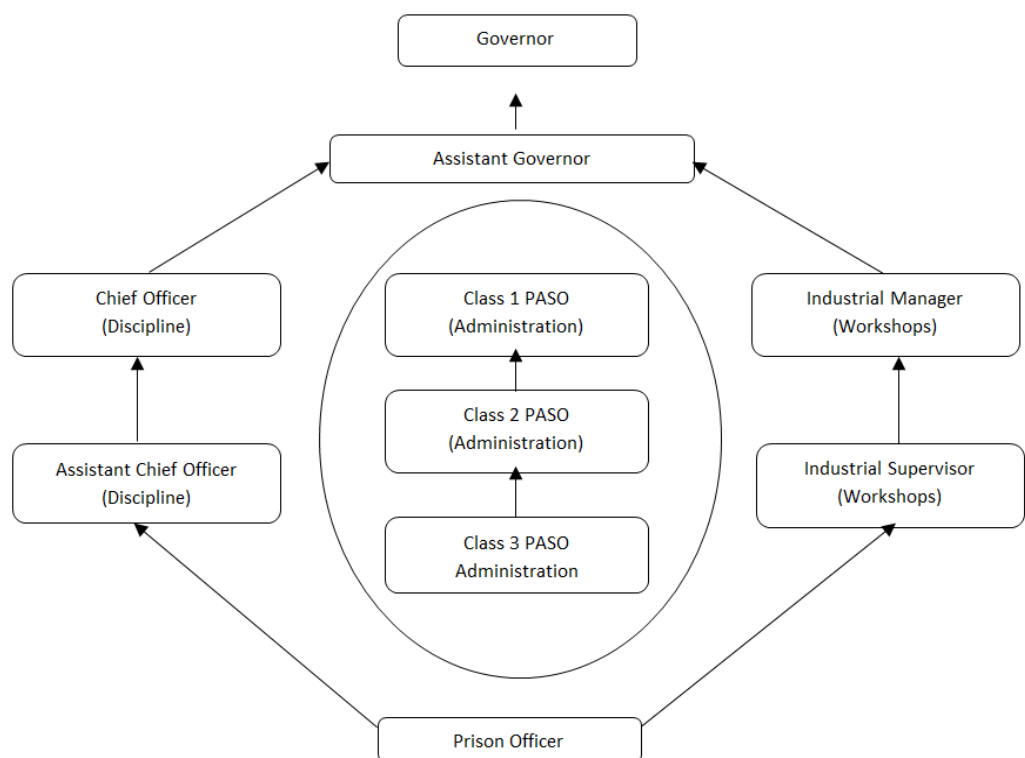
work they do, while most officers felt they had become "harder" and

"desensitised" to the distress and 'suffering of others'.

Competency Title	Summary Statement of Competency
Conscientiousness	Ensures that rules and procedures are followed consistently by self and others. Achieves a high standard of performance through regular supervision. Works within set time-scales. Will take responsibility for actions of self and other officers when necessary.
Vigilance	Observes and reacts to changes in the work environment. Considers safety and security issues at all times. Seeks to reduce potential risks when deciding a course of action. Draws on previous experience and up to date information to ensure appropriate reactions.
Assertiveness	Is prepared to deliver clear instructions, stand over decisions and follow through on intended actions. Clearly outlines boundaries and is confident to refuse unreasonable requests. Takes responsibility in critical situations. Remain independent, objective and level headed in challenging situations.
Teamworking	Works towards achieving the team objectives by supporting and consulting with team members. Utilises the expertise available within the team. Works co-operatively with colleagues.
Gathering and relaying information	Keeps self and others well informed and up to date. Seeks out full information and facts at all times. Attends to formal and informal information and responds accordingly. Acts as a communication link between staff and management. Presents clear and concise information both in oral and written form.
Managing and Developing others	Utilises skills and resources available to achieve objectives. Monitors and reviews individual/team performance. Provides others with timely and constructive feedback, both positive and negative. Develops staff through guidance and coaching. Treats people in a fair and consistent manner. Keeps staff up to date and informed.
People Orientation	Demonstrates respect for others, treating them fairly and in a polite manner. Is sensitive and supportive to others. Responds to individuals' needs in an appropriate and timely manner. Builds rapport by conversing and listening.
Organising and Planning	Plans and organises resources and people to meet with daily targets. Allocates work in a fair and objective manner. Checks progress against plans on a regular basis and implements contingency plans when necessary. Co-ordinates tasks to ensure the smooth running of the Prison Service.
Openness to change	Demonstrates enthusiasm for learning and developing. Regularly reviews own and other's performance. Actively suggests new ideas for improved ways of working. Willingly takes on additional tasks and duties.

Table 2 - Prison Officers Competency Framework

In addition to managing emotions and applying skills and competencies in an environment fought with tension, suspicion and mistrust, prison officers must adapt to the hierarchical structure of the organisation as outlined in figure 1. This can lead to further demands and expectations on staff as they receive direction from a number of 'bosses'.

Figure 1 **– Description of the staffing structure in the IPS**.

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                        ┌─────────────┐
                        │  Governor   │
                        └─────────────┘
                               ▲
                        ┌─────────────────┐
             ┌──────────│ Assistant Governor │──────────┐
             │          └─────────────────┘          │
             │                                         │
      ┌─────────────┐   ┌─────────────┐      ┌──────────────────┐
      │ Chief Officer │   │ Class 1 PASO │      │ Industrial Manager │
      │ (Discipline)  │   │(Administration)│      │   (Workshops)     │
      └─────────────┘   └─────────────┘      └──────────────────┘
             ▲                 ▲                      ▲
      ┌───────────────┐  ┌─────────────┐     ┌──────────────────┐
      │Assistant Chief │  │ Class 2 PASO │     │Industrial Supervisor│
      │Officer         │  │(Administration)│     │    (Workshops)     │
      │(Discipline)    │  └─────────────┘     └──────────────────┘
      └───────────────┘        ▲
             ▲          ┌─────────────┐
             │          │ Class 3 PASO │
             │          │Administration│
             │          └─────────────┘
             │                                         │
             └──────────┌─────────────┐──────────┘
                        │Prison Officer │
                        └─────────────┘
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1.4 Legal Framework

Irish employers have both a statutory and common law duty of care to protect their staff against stress. The Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act, 2005 imposed a greater duty on every employer to provide a safe system of work for their employees. Section 8 of the 2005 Act contains a duty on the employer to

manage and conduct work activities in such a way as to prevent, so far as is reasonably practicable, 'any improper conduct or behaviour' that is likely to put the safety, health or welfare at work of his or her employees at risk.

The IPS Attendance Management Policy highlights the need for an approach to manage attendance related problems. The IPS recognises that the "*prison environment is a uniquely challenging one and that staff are the most valuable resource of an organisation*", (IPS, 2014, p.5). Hence, the health and wellbeing of prison officers is vital. The IPS recognises that absences from work falls into one or more of the following categories; physical or mental illness, lack of motivation, bullying and harassment, stress, low moral and personal circumstance (IPS, 2014). This policy operates with the IPS Health and Safety Policy as outlined in the OHSAS 18001 Safety Management System for each institution. Where stress is a reason for absence from work, prison officers will be referred in the first instance to the Employee Assistance Service to identify the cause of the stress and if anything can be done by the IPS to reduce the causes, (Appendix IV).

1.5 – Purpose of Research

The purpose of this research is to examine "Irish prison officers' perceptions of job burnout". This thesis will address that question by conducting a review of literature in the areas of burnout and stress in prisons. Following this literature review, there will be interviews with a sample of prison officers in the IPS, using questions and themes derived from the literature review and to address any gaps

in the literature currently available. The sample will be representative of prison officer grades, and representative of all committal prisons in the estate. An analysis of the data collected in these interviews will follow and will be discussed before final conclusions are made.

Ultimately it is hoped that this thesis will provide an insight to management in the Irish Prison Service (IPS) in understanding the factors that influence job burnout.

Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 – Introduction

The literature review section is divided into the areas of burnout, stress, job characteristics, supervision, job autonomy, job variety, the dimension of burnout including emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation and a reduced sense of personal accomplishment; and research focus. The specific form of job characteristics are presented with each dimension of burnout among Irish prison officers.

2.2 Burnout

The term burnout can be described as "*state of exhaustion similar to the extinguishing of a candle or to the smothering of a fire*" (Eurofedop). The Oxford Dictionary defines burn-out as "*physical or mental collapse caused by working too hard over a period of time*" (Hornby, 1995 p. 150). The term burnout was first proposed by American psychoanalyst Herbert Freudenberger in 1974. Freudenberger (1980) defines job burnout as "*when a person becomes psychologically worn out from the job because of excessive demands at work*" cited by (Lambert, 2012 p. 939). Maslach (1978), asserts that burnout can be described as, when a person experiences "*the gradual loss of caring about the people they work with. Over, time they find that they simply cannot sustain the kind of personal care and commitment required in the personal encounters that are the essence of*

their job"(Maslach, 1978 p. 56). While Pines and Kafry (1978) identified burnout as "*psychological discontent, discomfort and distress*" as a consequence from repetitiveness at work that these psychological strains guide a person to experience emotional and physical exhaustion from their job. Whereas Kahn (1978) observed burnout as negative outlook from colleagues and one's self that was caused from unnecessary demands from the job, which wore the person over a period of time. Cherniss (1980a, 1980b) argued that workplace factors were accountable for job burnout not personal characteristics. Cherniss (1980a, 1980b) saw job burnout as three stages: first was a disproportion of work demands and resources which caused psychological strain on the person, second stage entailed treating colleagues in a depersonalized manner as a consequence from the first stage and the third stage was self-perception of being ineffective which ended up in withdrawal from the job and colleagues.

The job demands-resource model states that burnout happens when too many demands are made of an employee without providing the essential resources to complete the job. Likewise, the conservation – of- resources theory argues that when valued and needed resources are not sufficient to the job requirements the chances of burnout increases. A lack of essential resources can generate burnout from the job (Lambert et al, 2010).

Maslach and Jackson (1981) redeveloped the concept of burnout when they theorised that job burnout had three distinctive dimensions as emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and a reduced sense of personal accomplishment. They defined burnout as "*a syndrome of emotional exhaustion and cynicism that*

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occurs frequently among individuals who do 'people work' of some kind" (Maslach, 1981 p. 99). Today's common view of burnout is where emotional exhaustion relates to feelings of emotionally drained, tired and 'used up' from the job. Depersonalization relates to treating colleagues cold-heartedly, impersonally, unsympathetically and as objects, which results in becoming detached from colleagues and work.. Whereas a reduced sense of personal accomplishment relates to poor self perceptions of not being effective at work, with significant impact on others (Maslach & Jackson, 1981; Maslach, 2003; Maslach et al., 2001).

Burnout is a process that takes places over a period of time (Maslach, 1993). Garland (2002) argued that "*unless the burnout victim receives help and recovers, mustering the energy to function at an ordinary level will become a continual struggle*" (p.116). Substance abuse, metal health and physiological problems can all happen as a result from burnout. Job burnout can reduce the quality of home life and can be contagious affecting other colleagues in the workplace (Lambert et al, 2010).

2.3 Stress

Stress is often referred to as role strain. Hepburn and Knepper (1993) defined role strain as "*one's responsibilities and duties are vague, ill-defined and ambiguous or when administrative directives are inconsistent or contradictory*" (p.318).According to Crank et al (1995) role stress " refers to stress that derives from characteristics of occupational roles" (p.158). Role stress happens when an employee's job and

duties are 'ill-defined or structured' that causes problems for the employee's and includes but not limited to role conflict (Hepburn & Knepper, 1993). Role stress is theoretically and empirically different from job stress. Research shows that role stress is a significant predecessor of job stress for many correction officers. Researchers found that role stress increase correctional staff job stress (Griffin, 2006; Lambert & Paoline, 2005).

While Maslach and Jackson (1981) stated that job stress is feelings of '*anxiety and frustration*'. Burnout is often defined as an exact kind of chronic job stress response that transpires among professionals who work with people (Eurofedop). Job stress and burnout are not indistinguishable. Victims of burn out often describe themselves as "*empty batteries that cannot be recharged anymore*", (Eurofedop). The results of burn-out is where people give too much and receive nothing back in return over a long period of time, (Eurofedop).

Gunnigle (2007) found that Irish prison officers experience stress in their work with over half the prison officers feeling anxious at work, with three-quarters of prison officers feeling isolated in their job. Worryingly, three in ten prison officers had taken sick leave due to stress at work. While in August 2014 absenteeism in the public sector is the highest in the Garda and health services where an average of ten days are lost per employee every year, (The Irish Times, 2014). Irish prison officers' feel that stress is an everyday issue, but management will not admit that it is an issue, hence this research Irish Prison Officers' Perception of Job Burnout. In a study of Irish prison officers Regan (2009) found that a major stressor to emerge was a perceived lack of employee control within the context of a high

demand job. In this sense, the job of a prison officer conforms to the "high strain" job as conceptualised by Karasek (1979) in the Job Demand-Control model – where work that combines high demands with low control is predicted to cause a high state of job strain with the subsequent risk of psychological and physical morbidity *(Calnan et al., 2004)*. In the study respondents indicated that they do not have much say in the way that they do their work. Whereas, Kitt et al (2013) found that Irish prison officers felt that there was a "*deliberate attempt to ignore the existence of the impact of stress*" (p.35) within their job and that the IPS is avoiding dealing with the consequences of the stressful nature of the role of prison officers. This is represented through the nonexistence of strategies to avoid or limit stress related issues with the IPS.

2.4 Job Characteristics

The job characteristics model was recommended by Hackman and Oldman (1975, 1976). This model offers a theoretical base for why job characteristics may be associated with prison officers' burnout (Lambert et al, 2012). Positive job characteristics will present positive feeling and experiences for employees, these in time will increase the possibility that staff will experience positive work results such as job satisfaction, intrinsic motivation and job involvement (Lambert el at, 2012). On the contrary, negative job characteristics may cause a person to experience negative work outcomes for instance decrease performance, desire to leave and increase absenteeism, (Lambert el at, 2012). Job characteristics are vital for determining performance from employees. Hackman and Oldham (1980, p.60)

stated that job characteristics permit employees to "experience a positive, self-generated affective kick when they perform well". Hackman and Oldham (1980) observed that inspiring jobs resulted in gratifying employees needs of growth, while jobs that do not achieve the needs of employees lead to increase strain and frustration. Over time this strain and frustration increases the chances of job burnout predominantly the dimension of emotional exhaustion (Cherniss, 1980; Maslach, 1982; Maslach & Jackson, 1984; Whitehead, 1989).

Table 3 : - **Job Characteristics Model**
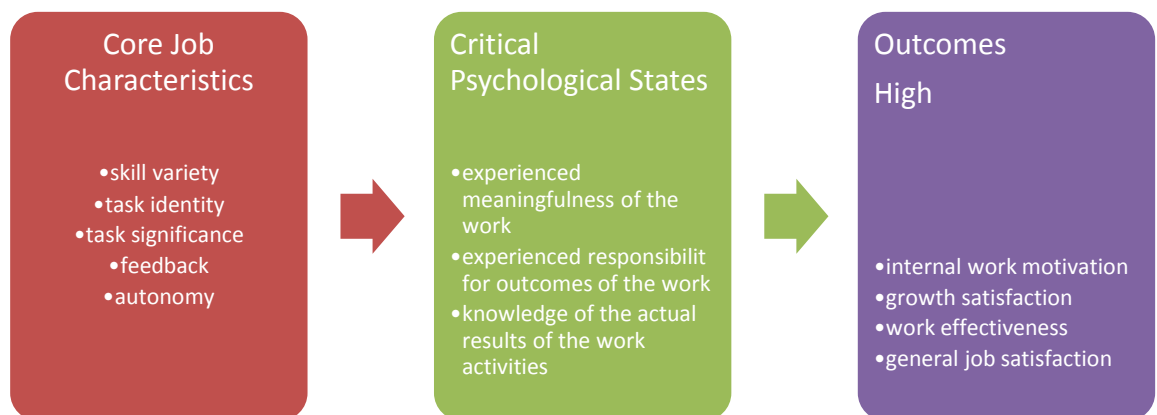
Source: Adapted from Hackman and Oldham, Work Redesign (Reading: Addison-Wesley, 1980).

The job characteristics dimension gives participants an opportunity to reflect on their relationship with supervisors, job variety and job autonomy; and the impact, if any, of job characteristics upon role burnout.

2.5 Supervision

Supervision is a critical factor within the prison environment. Supervisors are first line managers that can help employees by providing guidance, support and direction for employees (Brough & Williams, 2007). Studies have shown that good supportive and caring supervisors help employees to be successful in their jobs and to deal efficiently with problems (Cherniss, 1980; Lambert, 2004). Good supervision may protect employees from potential stress and strains of working in prisons, while supervisors can generate unpleasant, harsh work environments that result in frustration and strain for prison staff which increases job burnout (Lambert et al, 2009). Supervisory structures replicates the degree to which supervisors arranges employees in achieving the organisations objectives and goals (Lambert et al, 2009). A lack of structure can lead to confusion and frustration especially where staff members who follow the rules and put effort into their duties see employees who do not follow rules with no consequences from supervisors become resentful and increases the chances of job burnout, (Griffin, 2012).

Supervisor trust ought to be associated with burnout because a direct lack of trust can lead to stress and trust can act as a shield to other forms of stress associated with burnout (Lambert et al, 2012). Trust in supervisors can offer positive feelings for staff resulting in a significant resource for them to complete their jobs. Whereas, a lack of trust may act as a crucial missing component required for being successful in their job role. A lack of trust between staff and supervisors can lead to

strain for staff and this strain can lead to job burnout over a period of time (Lambert et al, 2012).

Supervisors should aware of the stressors faced by employees. Thus, supervisors support can reduce the stress on employees' which could reduce job burnout (Brough & Williams, 2007). Furthermore, supervisors can offer occasions for supportive listening to employees (allowing employees a chance to vent). Finally, supervisors support can give employees a sense of been valued and respected. Whereas, a lack of supervisors support can lead employees to questioning their value within the organisation (Lambert et al, 2010).

Dollard & Winefield (1998) found in a study among Australian correctional officers that support from co-workers and supervisors had a negative relationship with job stress. Similarly burnout and a lack of supervisory support were observed among Israeli correctional officers (Drory & Shamir, 1988). The literature suggests that support from supervisors is the most important in avoiding job burnout (Cherniss, 1980a).

2.6 Job Autonomy

Job autonomy is the amount of freedom that staff has in making job related decisions. Job autonomy allows staff a feeling of control and allows staff to feel that their input is reflected in their job (Lambert, 2004). This kind of job autonomy allows employees to feel pride and accomplishment about their work since the job outcomes reflect their decision making abilities (Lambert, 2004). Most employees

want a degree of control in what they do and how they achieve it (Bruce & Blackburn, 1992). Ross and Reskin (1992) stated that job autonomy is a positive feeling for the majority of staff. Whereas, a lack of job control can make staff feel less valued at their role.

Irish prison officers in Regan's (2009) study strongly indicated that they were never informed or consulted about organisational policies and decisions. Results revealed that the less prison officers in the study were consulted about organisational policies and decisions the more their levels of job dissatisfaction and frustration at co-workers and inmates increased. Low participation in workplace decision-making is often specified as a potential internal organisational stressor in the prison environment *(Auerbach et al., 2003; Farkas, 2001; Sims, 2001). Slate et al.(2001)* believed that participatory management was one of the ways forward and worthy of further exploration within the prison arena for reducing stress and turnover. *Josi & Sechrest (1998)* argue that prison officer's participation in workplace decision-making has been cited as a means for strengthening social support on the job and as a mechanism for reducing factors that have been found to contribute to stress and burnout.

2.7 Job Variety

Agho et al (1993) define job variety as the variation of tasks a worker may encounter in the course of their day to day work. Job variety allows staff to experience new tasks, new skills and a chance to grow in their role, while some jobs are extremely repetitive that present little opportunity for motivation and

growth. Repetitive jobs lead to frustration and psychologically wear a person down over time while increasing the possibility of burnout. Whereas, job involvement is the way an employee psychologically recognizes their job (Kanungo, 1982a, 1982b). Job involvement has important outcomes for both the organisation and the employee and has argued to be a measure of quality of work life (Elloy et al, 1992). Chen and Chiu (2009) stated that "workers with high job involvement are more independent and self-confident – they not only conduct their work in accordance with the job duties required by the company but are more likely to do their work in accordance with the employees' perception of their own performance" (p.478). research with prison staff has indicated that job involvement is linked with reduced job stress and turnover and increase levels of job satisfaction and commitment (Lambert & Paoline, 2010). The job characteristics model can have either a positive or negative affect among workers.

While feedback on job performance allows a person to make changes so they can become more successful at their job (Price & Muller, 1986). Appropriate feedback in a timely manner increases staff attitudes towards work and themselves, allowing them to comprehend what they are doing accurately and inaccurately. This feedback can make employees feel valued, while a lack of feedback can make the job more provoking and complicated.

The respondents in Regan's (2009) study On Irish prison officers reported that they are never given supportive feedback on the work they do and the majority of the officers believed that senior managers are not supportive of employees. These

strains can be associated with emotional exhaustion among prison staff (Lambert et al, 2012).

2.8 Emotional Exhaustion

Emotional exhaustion is the feeling of being emotionally drained and fatigued from your job. The emotional element is one of the most commonly experienced dimensions of burnout and has serious negative outcomes (Carlson & Thomas, 2006; Maslach et al., 2001; Schaufeli & Peeters, 2000). Hochschild states that emotional labour requires "one to induce or suppress emotions in order to sustain the outward countenance that produces the proper state of mind in others" (1983, p. 7). Emotional labour can be divided into two means 'surface' and 'deep' acting. Surface acting concerns emotions that the individual does not feel, symbolizing a type of 'fake it' emotion where the individual is acting in accordance to the organisational rules. Deep acting is where the individual makes an 'emotive effort' attempting to feel the emotion with more genuine feelings display, (Hochschild, 1983, Kruml and Geddes, 2000). Whereas wholehearted deep acting may possibly lead to exhaustion and surface acting is likely to confirm self-blame, detachment and cynicism, (Hochschild, 1983).

Prisons are essentially emotional institutions as their primary function necessitates detaining people against their will. A variety of emotions of anxiety, sadness, frustration, anger, fear, hopelessness depression and resentment are all common while joy, happiness, hope and satisfaction are much less evident, (Crawley, 2004). The level of intimacy occasioned by working directly with prisoners contributes

greatly to the emotionally stimulating relationship that can be observed between prisoners and staff. Crawley stated that during her fieldwork officers revealed that they were fearful of some prisoners and jealous of colleagues who perform 'quality work', they were frustrated by their managers (who are unsympathetic to the needs of uniformed staff and ignorant to the day to day realities of life). While others ridiculed colleagues who work in 'therapeutic community' and new recruits often felt they were bullied by senior officers and female offices were fed up with sexist behaviour, (Crawley, 2004). Most prison officers appreciate the need to control emotion at work because the risk involved maybe deemed as 'inappropriate' to the role of the prison officer. For this reason this requires humour, detachment and strategies of de-personalization, (Crawley, 2004).

2.9 Depersonalisation

Maslach (1981) refers to depersonalization as treating colleagues cold-heartedly, impersonally, unsympathetically and as objects. Dollard (1995) highlights that some studies found that social support of colleagues reduces stress among prison officers, while other studies found the exact opposite. Other research argued that group loyalty among prison officers are feebly developed and that only threats from management or prisoners can encourage any sense of solidarity among prison officers, (Kommer, 1990; Schaufeli & Peeters, 2000; Lombardo, 1981). Perhaps a rationale for this phenomenon is that penal organisations often place an emphasis on individual responsibility rather than team responsibility leading to the *John Wayne syndrome* that is regularly observed in prisons.

Kommer (1990) found that communication between management and prison officers as a serious problem with a lack of information and unclear information. Due to the hierarchical structure, communication is often only top-down with rules being imposed on prison officers without them having any chance to communicate with governors, (Chauvenet et al, 1994). A study among US CO's found that over one-third of the prison officers fully agreed with the statement: "*My superiors care more about the inmates than about the officers*", (Klofas & Toch, 1982). Poor relationships among prison officers and their managers obviously forms an significant source of stress among prison officers while the lack of management support has been positively related to burnout among prison officers, (Shamir & Drory,1982).

2.10 Reduced sense of personal accomplishment

Maslach (1981) refers to reduced sense of personal accomplishment as poor self perceptions of being ineffective at work. Research literature has revealed that the absence of challenging career prospects as a contributing factor to burnout. Correctional Officers' (Cos') states that they require a more structured career policy (Heuven, 2001). Officers who have been working rigorously with prisoners for many years may consider that they are "locked" in their careers with very limited opportunities for promotion. While young and less experienced Cos' endure burnout because idealistic expectations and aspirations about prisoners can be severely disturbed by the realism of prison life (Schaufeli & Enzmann, 1998). Research shows that CO's feel "trapped in a golden cage" since they are

paid a comparatively high salary to perform a job that requires low level education, (Willet, 1982, Heuven, 2001). Some authors have portrayed increasing cynicism, loss of idealism, energy and purpose as the main explanation of burnout (Edelwich & Brodsky, 1980).

The role of CO is acknowledged to have a low social status, with CO's faced with prejudices about their profession, changing from stupid to authoritarian warders,(Strijbos – Schellekens, 1984; De Waele, 1992). Research shows that insignificant status and disgrace of notorious job is a foundation of stress and burnout.

2.11 Past studies on job burnout among correctional staff

While there is a small but growing literature that has focused on burnout among correctional staff. Role stressors including role overload, role conflict and perceived dangerousness of the job have been explored and found to increase the likelihood of burnout (Dignam, Barrera & West, 1986; Drory & Shamir, 1988; Garland, 2004; Lambert, Hogan, Jiang & Jenkins, 2009; Whitehead, 1989). Social support in different forms have been found to protect staff from burnout, in particular, support from management, supervisors and co-workers have been found to have a negative affect on job burnout (Drory & Shamir, 1988; Garland, 2004; Neveu, 2007). Finally, enhanced contact with prisoners increased levels of burnout (Gerstein et al, 1987).

2.12 Research Focus

Given this literature, it appears reasonable to examine "Irish prison officers' perception of job burnout" considering the impact of supervision, job variety and job autonomy and the three dimensions of burnout – emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation and a reduced sense of personal accomplishment.

Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlines the research method and approaches implemented to achieve the aims of this study. It will also provide details on the rationalization of the method chosen and consider the strengths and limitations of the approach.

3.1 Research Objective

The research question sets out to explore;

"Irish prison officers' perception of job burnout"

This question was explored in relation to three components of burnout, emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation and reduced sense of personal accomplishment using items adapted from the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) (Maslach & Jackson, 1981).

The research aims to examine what Irish prison officers consider to be job burnout. Have Irish prison officers experience the symptoms of job burnout within themselves? The impact if any of job characteristics upon role burnout?

3.2 Research Design

Bryman (2001) states that a "research design provides a framework for the collection and analysis of data", (pg, 27). The type of research design replicates the choice of dimensions of the research process including expressing connections between variables; understanding behaviour and its meaning in its social context and over time having an appreciation of social experience, (Bryman, 2001).

The research design strategy used is based thematic analysis with the aim to generate theory from the data collected on "Irish prison officers' perception of job burnout".

The research was qualitative based as the methodology rationale was supported by Bachman and Schutt (2011) who noted that qualitative methods are "designed to capture the social reality of the participants as they experienced it, in their own words rather than in predetermined categories" (p.16). Qualitative methods offer the best instrument for exploring people's attitudes "especially under circumstances where emotions, such as isolation, motivation are to be part of the evaluation" (Bachman and Schutt, 2011, pg. 254), along with qualitative methods having their greatest appeal when exploring to study new issues, or determine how people attribute to their lives and actions.

The rationale of this research is to explore "Irish prison officers' perceptions on job burnout"? A qualitative research design necessitates depth of understanding (King, 2008), and using quantitative methods would not attain the depth of knowledge that the researcher requires in achieving the research objective. Quantitative

methods such as the MBI surveys measures levels of job burnout. However this method is primarily used but the researcher required descriptive data on an Irish prison officers' perceptions of job burnout. It is imperative to use qualitative research to capture the perspectives, emotions, attitudes and feeling of the staff involved in the process as this is a new, previously unexplored social phenomenon in the IPS. Lofland and Lofland (1984, p.12) described how intensive interviewing techniques used in qualitative research seek out the interviewee's perceptions, emotions, feelings and experiences The researcher used face to face semi – structure interviews to capture interviewees feelings, emotions and perceptions while also observing the interviewee's body language. If the researcher used quantitative methods the participants' perceptions, feelings, emotions and body language would not be captured to the same degree.

The research is comprised of a literature review, primary research in the form of semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders, secondary analysis of IPS official data relating to prison officers gender, age marital status and previous work experience. As a serving member of the IPS, this data was available freely upon request. The consequential data represents distinct sources which allows for the cross-examination of findings as part of their critical analysis, (Bryman, 2001).

The researcher used semi-structured interview techniques to explore primary data on 'Irish prison officers' perceptions on job burnout"?. This allowed the researcher to have a schedule and checklist of topics to be covered and flexibility to change the structure or questions depending on the reactions from the participants, (Robson, 2011,p.280). The interviews involved questioning as "interviewing allows

the capture of social life and experiences through the participant's own experiences" (Bachman and Schutt, 2011, p.16). This was the best approach for establishing true feelings of the interviewees as this study is a new unexplored social phenomenon in the IPS.

3.3 Pilot Study

Three piloted interviews were conducted to determine any issues of concern prior to the actual interview process. The interviews took place at the IPS College. The interviews lasted between forty-three and fifty-two minutes. All questions on the scheduled were asked and some additional questions came up during the interview. The respondents were satisfied with the content and structure of the interviews. The researcher did not have to modify the interview schedule and proceeded with the interviews. The merit of a semi-structured interview lies in its conversational nature; it necessitates the interviewers to have a vast set of skills such as listening and probing. The pilot interview gave the interviewer the opportunity to strengthen these skills. The data from the pilot interviews were included in the findings.

3.4 Participants

Participants in this research were eighteen prison officers in the IPS. Prison officers are men and women, with varying amounts of service and different grades including prison officers, assistant chief officers, chief officers and governors, all

are responsible for the safe, secure and human care for prisoners, while the assistant chief officer, chief officer and governors are promoted management grades. There is 3310.6 custodial staff employed by the IPS across 14 prisons, the number of staff in each prison is determined by the size and type of that prison, (IPS, 2014).

Bryans (2007, p. 5) highlighted one of the key issue for researchers is deciding how to gather primary data. Secondary data was analysed using official IPS records, including details such as age, gender, previous employment history, the date of joining the prison service, level of educational attainment, and current grade within the prison service. This data recognised the sample of prison officers which contributed to purposive sample, which contributed to the validity of this research.

The participants were seven females and eleven males, from different locations within Ireland and the average age joining the IPS was 24.5 years old. The martial status of the participants was; eight participants were single, five were married and five were divorced. Six of the participants had no children. Thirteen participants had completed a third level qualification. Four participants had a family member employed in the IPS when they joined. Thirteen participants had worked in different institutions while five participants had only worked in one institution. Rubin and Rubin (1995) suggested three guidelines when designing purposive sampling strategy; that they are knowledgeable about the experience being studied; they are willing to be interviewed and they are representative of the range of points of view (quoted in Bachman & Schutt, 2011 p. 129), the chosen interviewees met this criteria.
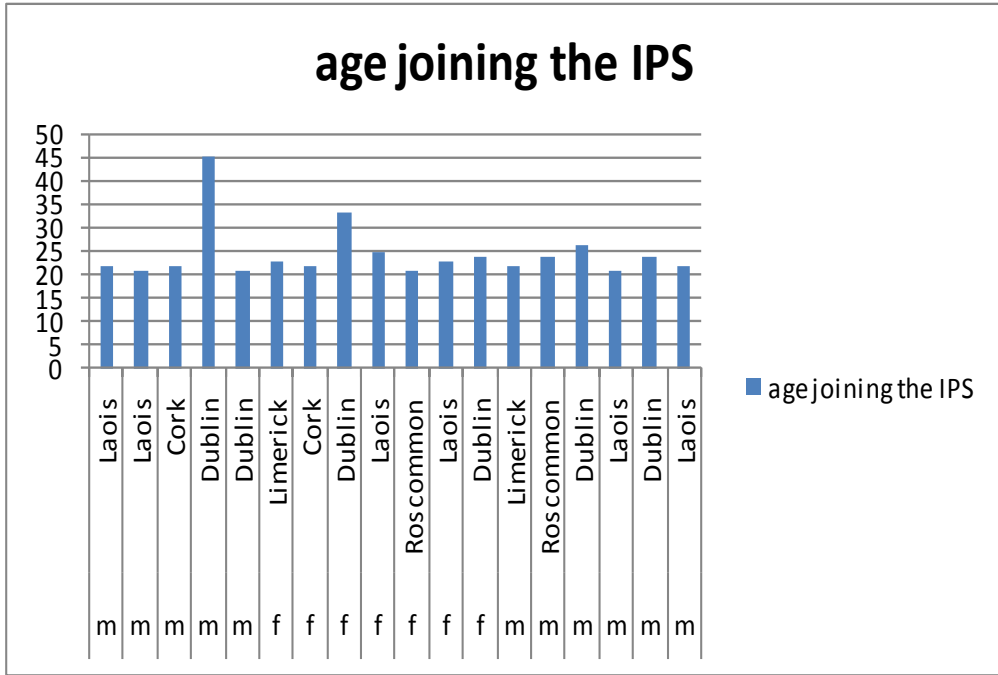
age joining the IPS

Table 4 - Gender, Demographic region and age of prison officers joining the IPS
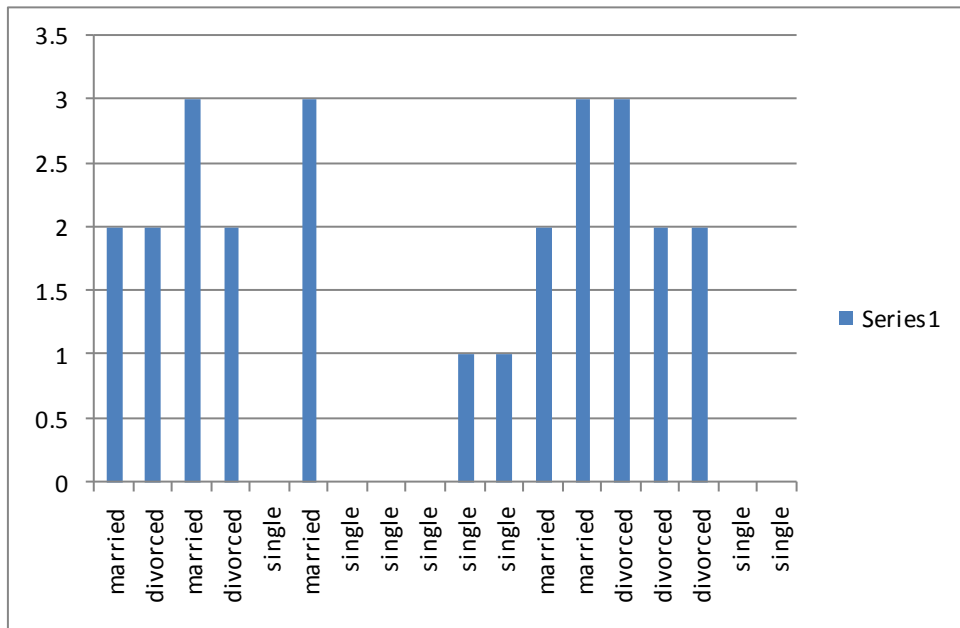

Table 5 – Social background of martial status and children

Permission was sought from the Governors of each institution to attend to interview unidentified prison officers. Once permission was attained, the

researcher contacted 15 potential interviewees by email to inform them of the research and to invite them to participate (Appendix). Initially only 12 responded to be interviewed, as the research interviews commenced the prison officers who had not responded to their invite contacted the researcher to partake. If these prison officers did not partake the researcher would have chosen three extra participants from the sample. The final sample group comprised 15 prison officers, 6 female and 9 male, representing a cross section of the committal prisons.

3.5 Research Instruments

The research instrument was generated from the literature review and interview questions adapted from the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI). As there has been no previous research on this phenomenon in the IPS, there were no previous research questions to guide me except adapting the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI).

The interview questions were compiled using the following three dimensions;

Demographic and social background – the interview questions were compiled paying attention to the idea that an individuals approach to their employment may be determined by a number of individual factors such as gender, race, age and standard of education (Farkas, 2001), by examining the significance of individual factors on job burnout.

Job characteristics - the interview questions in this dimension were designed to ascertain the participants' perceptions and opinions of their job variety, job

autonomy and relationship with their supervisor, and the impact of these characteristics on their job satisfaction. An underlying strand in these questions was to uncover how the participants defined their job role and their professional beliefs.

Dimensions of job burnout – the questions in this dimension were shaped to determine the participants' values and opinions on their own emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation and a reduced sense of personal accomplishment.

An underlying strand of all questions in each dimension was to uncover participants' perceptions job burnout.

Other instruments used were a digital voice recorder and a stand alone encrypted laptop.

3.6 Research Procedure

In February 2013, the researcher submitted a request to undertake research to the IPS Prison Based Ethics Committee, this application was granted with authorization to proceed.

As a member of the IPS, the researcher was granted permission from the Governors of the Committal Prisons to conduct research. The Governors were contacted by email regarding the dates of the interviews and permission was sought to bring recording equipment into the prisons. This was granted in all cases.

Potential participants were given an information letter (see Appendix I) which outlined the informed consent protocols and the nature of this study in easily

understood terms, also stating that this process was on a voluntary basis and confidentiality was guaranteed. The researcher was aware that the participants may have limited knowledge and understanding of the study and followed up the letter by attending some staff meetings outlining the nature of this research.

Once the participants agreed to partake in the study, emails were sent to each participant using the IPS internal internet outlining the interview schedule to minimise any possibility of stress or anxiety on the participant, also outlining that they could decided to withdraw from this process at any stage. Once the participants were agreeable to contribute arrangements for an interview date and time were made directly with the participant. Before commencing each interview each participant was given an informed consent form (Appendix II).

The interview followed the normal used sequence of; an introduction, warm up, main body and closure as identified by Robson (2011, p.284). They were conducted on a face- to- face basis to encourage more open discussion during the month of June and July at a time that was appropriate with the participants. The average length of each interview was 50 minutes; interviews were conducted at the IPS College and at Committal prisons in familiar surroundings and conditions of privacy. While some interviews in the Dochas Centre were interrupted, in some cases two or three times by supervising officers looking for clarification or assistance on a number of operational issues, this did not impact on the flow of the conversation.

The interviews were semi-structured with the researcher using an interview schedule (Appendix III) to help explore the related topics but the interviews were

guided by the participant's responses. The open ended questions gave the participants semi-structure to develop a conversation on a number of particular topics that could be identify (King, 2008). Robson (2011) states the advantages of open ended question as allowing greater depth, encouraging cooperation, flexible and producing unexpected answers (p283). While using semi-structured interviews allows the researcher control over the issues discussed, as well as time allocated for the questions to be answered, along with flexibility that the semi-structured interview can facilitate an element of 'drift', (King, 2008). Group interviews would not have been appropriate due to the sensitivity of some of the questions. Structured interview would not allow the scope to explore the perceptions or opinions of the interviewees (Saunders et al. 2012, p374).

Participants' well-being was closely observed during the interview process, while interviews stimulated strong emotional responses from some participants, all were happy to continue with the interview, one participant asked for the recorder to be stopped until she gathered her thoughts. At the end, participants were asked how they felt about the experience and if they would like to talk to the researcher further without the recorder or to a member of the staff support. After the interview each participant was emailed to thank them for their participation and contribution in the study.

The researcher took every effort to obliterate possible identifying material when necessary to avoid identity disclosure, (Bachman, 2011). Concern was taken with protecting and respecting the confidentiality and anonymity of the research participants in this study, while absolute anonymity could not be guaranteed due

to the small number of research participants who are employees of the Dochas Centre. While every appropriate step was taken to ensure non-identify of participants many of them would have been seen talking to the researcher and therefore their colleagues might have asked them were they taking part in the study.

All interviews were recorded on a digital voice recorder and transferred to a stand alone laptop. Once each file was successfully transferred the recordings were then deleted from the voice recorder. The researcher transcribed all recordings to ensure confidentiality of the interviewees.

3.7 Data Analysis

The research was assembled primarily from qualitative data gathered from the interviews. All interviews were recorded on a digital recorder with the permission of the interviewees and a summary of each interview was documented directly afterwards. The length of each interview varied between forty minutes and one hour twelve minutes.

All interviews were transferred on to computer files and stored on a stand alone encrypted laptop as soon as possible with the interviews on the digital recorder deleted. The transcription of the interviews was time-consuming, approximately three to four hours per interview. However transcribing the interviews allowed the researcher to become familiar with all data gathered and ensured confidentiality.

The researcher analysed the data by reading each interview transcript a number of times highlighting key responses. A word document was created whereby all key responses for each question were inserted. This enabled the researcher to analyse the data and group responses into themes. The themes recognized provided for additional analysis and interpretation. McMillan and Schumacher (1993, p. 479) stated that qualitative research is "primarily an inductive process of organising data into categories and identifying patterns among categories." The research initiated this to be reflective as the process advanced. The key responses from the interviews were categorised into themes that matched the terminology in the literature review.

3.8 Ethical Considerations –

As the researcher is employed by the IPS College and was interviewing prison officers, a formal application requesting permission to conduct this study was sent to the IPS Prison Based Ethics Committee and approval was granted. IPS was notified and permission was requested from the Governors to conduct the research at their prisons. The research protocol outlined the access process, participant anonymity and the conditions of confidentiality. Bachman and Schutt (2011, p. 297) described the impact of the six main ethical issues as voluntary participation, subject well-being, identify disclosure, confidentiality, appropriate boundaries and researcher safety. Robson (2011, p.194) stated that there is a potential for "*harm, stress and anxiety and a myriad of other negative consequences for research participants*" the researcher took Robson (2011)

potential issues into consideration when making ethical decisions for this research. There were no risks identified during the process.

3.9 The merits of been a practitioner researcher

The role of the practitioner researcher has potential difficulties and limitations that need to be understood and taken into account during this process. The practitioner researcher should not allow themselves to be influenced by political sensitivities within the IPS. A tangible risk associated with practitioner-research is knowledge of the process of prisons from the perspective of an employee which may lead to a sympathetic approach towards prison officers' views that can lead to bias, (Bennett et al, 2012). Practitioner researcher could be assumed to be to 'close' to the subject theme to be objective (Hammersley, 1983), may convey their "own beliefs, values and prejudices" into the research process, (Bryans, 2007)

As a practitioner I was cognisant that I had to make certain that my prejudices did not influence the process and I was aware of Hammersley (1983) and Bryans (2007) views in this research process. I have built considerable trust with the prison officers within the Committal Estates that I feel were of benefit to this research. The issue of trust was significant as research demonstrates that it guarantees acceptance. Not being looked upon as an 'outsider' allows the opportunity for a researcher to go through an internal prison culture that has been renowned as concealed, (Marquart, 1986). My role as an Assistant Chief Officer in the IPS College allowed access to prisons and reduced complications with security

procedures when conducting primary data research. I have privilege access to human resources databases which were of considerable benefit when gathering secondary data and my overall prison work experiences and insights were of significant benefit when designing this project and analysising the data gathered. Nevertheless, my role within the IPSC permitted me with access to other researchers who I used as my peer group to debrief and to provide sessions against bias, Robson (2011). I conferred with colleagues at the Prison Service College who have subsequently completed research and I used their knowledge and guidance to avoid any potential bias.

3.10 Limitations

The finding of this research was limited to Committal prisons. The data revealed consistent results and patterns between these institutions. Consequently, the researcher feels that using a larger sample population across all institutions in the estate would yield broadly similar results, representative of staff across the entire service.

Chapter 4

Analysis and Discussion of Findings

4.1 - Introduction

The purpose of this research was to explore "Irish prison officers' perception of job burnout". The research will be presented in six themes, supervision, job variety, job autonomy, depersonalisation, emotional exhaustion and reduced sense of personal accomplishment. These themes were complied from the job characteristics and the dimensions of job burnout. Each themes which will be explored in its own context. The scope of this research was limited to eighteen respondents and the themes covered were limited to six for sufficient analysis, while addressing key topics from the literature review. Once the interviews were transcribed the researcher analysed the data by reading each interview transcript a number of times highlighting key responses. The researcher created a word document whereby all key responses for each question were inserted. This enabled the researcher to analyse the data and group responses into themes. The quotations used represent opinions and views by all interviewed. To ensure confidentiality, quotations are not attributed to particular respondents.

4.2 Core Themes

4.2.1 –First Theme - Supervision – The role of the supervisor

Supervision is an important factor within the prison estate. The four principal managerial functions of supervision within the IPS are; planning, organising, directing and controlling. The key activities of the Supervisors include; managing regular security and safety checks; organising and allocation of resources such as

officers and equipment, ensuring in consultation with the Detail Office, that the deployment of staff is appropriate to the needs; monitoring attendance and performance of officers; supervising and developing performance on a day to day basis, example training, coaching and support, communicating instructions and relevant information to others, developing good working relationships with Governors and colleagues, resolving problems and conflicts between staff and prisoners; ensuring staff discipline and implementing the Prison Rules 2007.

Good supervision between Governors and prison officers may protect the officers from potential stress and strains of the prison environment, whereas unpleasant supervision can result in high levels of frustration and strain which increases job burnout (Lambert et al, 2009).

4.2.1. (A) -Implementing the Prison Rules and Policy

The trend that was discovered in the data was twelve respondents felt supervisors were strict about following the rules but sometimes the rules need to be adapted to suit the situation;

> *I think that rules are there for a reason....I like having set things, but I understand that on daily basis you have to bend the rules a little so I like that approach.*

While others (n=4) felt the supervisors were very military like and task orientated leaders;

> *Well you kinda have a mix in here em....some people are very military I would call it em....they believe in authority and following the rules and regulations but they don't allow any kind of derailing from it... I don't like the whole military style myself I wouldn't be that kinda person....*

A small number of respondents (N=2) felt that rules and policies should not be implemented if the resources are not there;

.......if he [Chief] implements' a rule and he can't give you the staff then you can't carry out the rule, so then if he gets annoyed with you for not bringing 4 staff with you all the time and if you say that you just don't have the staff he takes it personal. Then there is a problem and the relationships break down straight away therefore nobody should implement policy unless they can follow through with the resources required for it.

4.2.1. (B) Standard of performance

The most consistent feeling (n=18) centred on supervisors not maintaining a definite standard of performance from all employees under their command. This led to feelings of resentment and conflict towards supervisors and respondents felt some supervisors are incompetent in their management roles;

Probably not, no because some guys are pure wasters of course and they get away with murder and other guys end up carrying the can doing more or less 90% of the work and don't forget then you have the pets you'd say can do what they like and you end up carrying the slack for them and you end doing what they haven't done and you ah......

While one respondent felt that the supervisor measures staff on their ability to perform the task and this can result in "*lazy attitudes*" from fellow colleagues;

No to be fair I think he measures people on what he thinks their ability is. If he thinks you've got a very strong ability in a field then he will task you with a lot of work in that field and would expect a lot from you. I think in fairness to him he is able to, he tries to recognise everybody's capability; he will push people to about 95% of ability....

4.2.1 (c) Advance notice of changes

Managing change is most persistent and challenging. Managers need to gain employees acceptance of change in order to implement it efficiently, (Hitt et al, 2012).

Many respondents (n=10) feel that prisoners notify the officers of the changes;

> *The prisoners usually tell us....(laugh)....well I suppose it gets to the stage where it becomes normal ....there is no communication......you are not told anything ....and then if you question anything you are told em....you can't see the bigger picture..*

Other respondents (n=8) believed that their supervisors would inform them of changes;

> *He would in so far as he can yeah. If a little job is coming or if there is going to be a change of personnel or policy or something like that he will flag it so yeah.*

4.2.1 (D) Relationship with supervisor

The value an employee feels from their organisation is dependent on their relationship with the organisation. The quality of the relationship with supervisors varied greatly amongst respondents, figure 2. Greater emphasis is needed on the people management characteristics of the supervisory role, on providing skills to manage appraisal, personal development, resolving conflict, trust and providing leadership,(Bennett, 2012).

All respondents felt they could approach their supervisor about prisoners problems but some respondents (n=7) would not approach them about anything personal, while other respondents (n=11) felt it depended on what supervisor was working;

If you have a problem...well problems of prisoners you could say to them but whether they take too much hide in it I don't know....

I wouldn't approach them about anything personal because everybody would know everything about ye....they sit down and talk about everybody....their best friends the minute they leave the room they talk about .....I wouldn't approach any of them

Erm, it depends on the supervisor to be honest. Erm, like some of them would be very good, and then others would be.... erm again it's just consistency like, different managers deal with different things, different situations, different opinions.

A small percentage (n=4) felt they could approach the supervisors once the problem did not involve management.

Well yes....emm well everybody is fairly approachable well being approachable is grand but.... well if you know that they are going to do nothing for ye when ye walk away...... well that's where I think it falls down and like well like if you had a problem with a certain member of management, well then they would circle their wagons around you and then you are doomed.

Figure 2 : Indication of relationships with supervisor
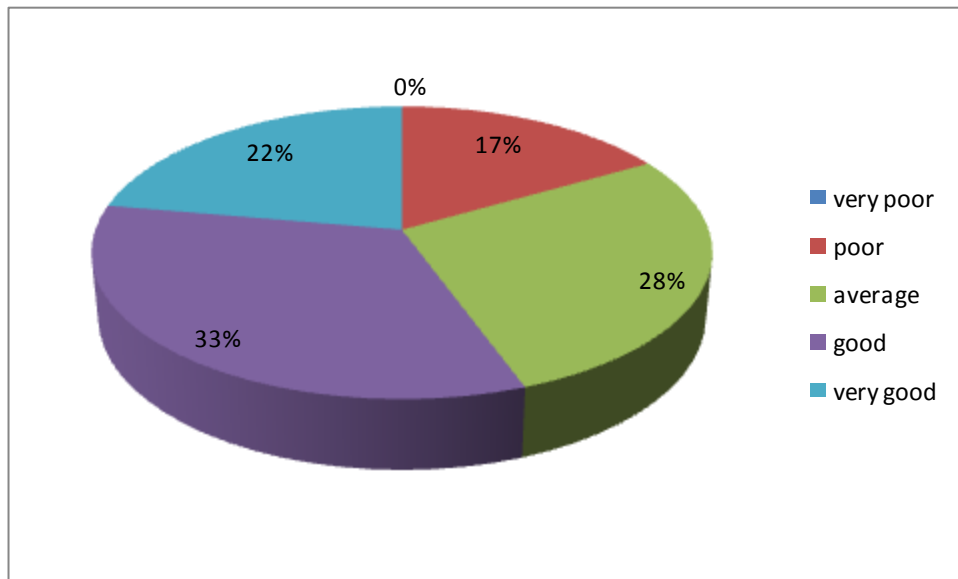
The theme 'supervision' is a reflection of the literature reviewed, and highlights similar issues, demonstrating how a lack of structure can lead to confusion and frustration, particularly where colleagues who follow the rules and put effort into their duties see fellow colleagues who do not follow rules and put no effort into their duties with any consequences from supervisors. They become resentful and a direct lack of trust in your supervisor can lead to stress and increases the chances of job burnout.

4.3. Job Variety

Job variety is the degree to which the job requires different variety in performing the task using a number of different skills and talents of the individual, (Hitt et al, 2012, p.266). The role of the prison officer involves mentor, 'locus parentis' (parent role), counsellor (in the event of bad news), stock controller and instructor (workshops and gyms), (Crawley, 2004).

4.3.1 Variety

The trend that was discovered in the data was many of the respondents (n=12) tried to find some variety in their job role with (n=4) some respondents comparing their day to that of a counsellor. Six respondents said that there was no variety in their role and that "*it is like ground hound day*";

> *If you're on the landings you are dealing with the prisoners and whatever requests problems, issues, they might have......sometimes you're even a counsellor.....*

> *I always enjoy going around and doing all my little bits and little jobs and over seeing things, dealing with the officer and the governor's parade, the school, the library and things like that.....*

4.3.1 (B) Creativity

Being creative allows staff to develop new skills and provides a chance to grow in their role, whereas repetitive jobs lead to frustration.

A large number of interviewees (n=14) felt that their job role did not allow them to be creative;

> *Not really it's more of a multi tasking rather than a creative thing.*

> *You can if you want but there's not really much point because a lot of the time you aren't even listened to.*

A small percentage felt they could approach their Governor with new initiatives; sometimes these initiatives would be put to action.

> *Erm, yeah I suppose, again here, the Governor is quite good like, if you have any ideas she is actually good to talk to, you do have a chance if you want to get involved in anyway.*

4.3.1 (c) Performance Feedback

The Performance Management Development System (PMDS) process establishes performance, objectives and standards; it measures the performance of the prison officers against those standards and gives the prison officer feedback about their performance and evaluation. However, the results of the evaluation need to be given back effectively to the prison officers to motivate their performance.

All respondents completed their annual PMDS forms for 2014, with only one having a meeting with his supervisor. All respondents felt the PMDS is a paper work exercise;

> *My PMDS is like with three different supervisors, I have never had proper feedback......*

> *PMDS here is a joke......feedback [laugh] only when you fuck up*

Inappropriate feedback can make the job more provoking and complicated, while these stresses can be associated with emotional exhaustion among prison officers.

4.4 Job Autonomy

Job autonomy is the degree to which the job allows for independence and discretion to the individual in determining the procedures to be used, (Hitt et al, 2012, p.266).

All respondents felt they had no input into matters that affected their jobs, while some respondents (n=14) felts they had opportunities to make decisions;

> *you don't have a choice with who you are working with so that effects your job, it effects how your day goes, if you are working with someone who is a good worker, you have a grand day, and if you are working with someone who doesn't want to lift a finger it can be a really stressful day.*

Ye I do - other staff are more likely to sit back and not make decisions and the senior staff says the management are been paid the big bucks so let them make the decisions well that is the attitude .....

Job autonomy is a positive feeling for the majority of staff, but a lack of job autonomy can make staff feel less valued and may lead to frustration and resentment, which will increase their probability of suffering job burnout (Ross and Reskin, 1992).

4.4.1 - Prisons

Goffman's (1961) portrayal of a prison as a 'total institution' exemplifies some of the difficulties prisoners face while in prison as isolation from society, restricted relationships with family and friends and loss of autonomy.

4.4.1 (A) What are prisons for?

The IPS mission statement is "Providing safe and secure custody, dignity of care and rehabilitation to prisoners for safer communities", all respondents felt that the resources are not there to rehabilitate prisoners, prisons are for containment and that society is happy when these people are removed from the streets;

Today it is only there for containment....prisoners are not coming out any better.....a lot of it is only a big smoke screen letting on that there is rehabilitation going on

They are to satisfy the public need, want, desire for punishment for people

It's a warehouse because society can't handle them or accept them.......nobody thinks about prisoners....the outside world don't think about them.... well when it comes on their telly they are fascinated for a couple of minutes

4.4.1 (B) Do prisons work?

Prison officers are under no delusion that prison will discourage prisoners from further crimes. Officers' acknowledge the 'revolving door system' and prisoners' acceptance to a life of crime interspersed by prison sentences. A lot of the cynicism that prison officers feel originate from their perception that it is impossible for prison's to rehabilitate either because of inadequate resources, because prisoners are uninterested in rehabilitation or because prisoners are going back to the same socio-economic circumstances, (Crawley, 2004, p.96).

All respondents stated strongly prisons do not work, while most respondents (n=16) described how prisoners would tell them that they would be 'coming back'. Seven respondents feel that they would like to think that they do some good for prisoners whether it is the humanitarian approach. The interviewees used metaphors such as 'conveyor belt' and 'meat factory' to describe the prison;

> *No definitely not.... I would say 90% of prisoners reoffend we see the same prisoners coming in here again and again - you see a quiet first time prisoner and then you see by the time he is getting out he is a professional and then you see him back in again and again.*

> *you take somebody, at 25 and you lock them up till they are 30, if they have not done anything by the time they leave the system all they know is the names and contact numbers of criminals that they met inside or how to get access to drugs easier or how they do a job on a shop better, that's what prison serves and all we've done is made the whole situation worse*

> *If you are looking at the whole humanitarian, treating the person as a whole having a plan with them, moving them through the prison and out into the wider community as a better person it works for a very small few people but it doesn't work for the majority of people*

4.4.1 (c) How do you perceive prisoners?

Most of the interviewees (n=14) were cynical about rehabilitating prisoners, none the less they felt doing something whether in the school or workshop was better than walking around a yard. Some prison officers feel that they can help to rehabilitate a few prisoners but the majority of prisoners even after attending all the courses will return to prison. All respondents felt the resources are not available and that resources are stretched to the limit;

> *I have seen very good people where their lives have went wrong and they end up in here but that does not make them bad people...... I have seen pure evil as well in here...well what I would say is pure evil....*

> *Today a lot more aggressive and rootless and organised able to manipulate outside and up to date with the law and all that. They are also able to manipulate management in the prison.*

> *Some of them you feel sorry for, and others I just think, that they get it too handy in here, its too easy for them.*

> *There isn't a whole a lot of rehabilitation or else the programmes are not been effective. Prisoners are taken into the shops just to relieve the boredom and just something to do.*

4.5 Dimensions of job burnout

Maslach and Jackson (1981) state that the concept of burnout has three distinctive dimensions; emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and a reduced sense of personal accomplishment. Burnout can be defined as "a syndrome of emotional exhaustion and cynicism that occurs frequently among individuals who do people work of some kind" (Maslach, 1981, p.99).

This dimension of the interview gave participants an opportunity to express their thought and feelings of job burnout, and whether or not Irish prison officers' experience the symptoms of job burnout within themselves.

4.5.1 Depersonalisation

4.5.1 (A) Prison Officer – prisoner relationships

Prison officer-prisoner relationships and prison officers behaviour is essential for operational reasons within the prison regime. A relationship can mean 'association' or 'connection', while in a prison environment relationships are invested with an unusual amount of power that lies with the prison officer. Both staff and prisoners are aware of who has the power; this power is kept to a minimum during the day to day interactions. Some prison officers are uncomfortable with the term 'relationship' but in a prison context it is the continuous periods of interaction between the prison officers and prisoner. Prison officers are faced with hostile demands from prisoners, yet they are expected to meet with these demands with a realistic outlook, (Liebling et al,2011). In Ireland, the relationships between prison officer and prisoner are generally characterised by levels of respect, good humour and relaxation. The majority of interviewees (n=16) feel that they treat prisoners with respect, while other respondents (n=2) feel they treat prisoners equally as prisoners;

> *Yes I treat prisoners with respect whether I'm fighting with them today or laughing with them tomorrow...... I often found prisoners dragging them from a to b for operation reasons and the first one back to the door was myself asking them do they want a cup of tea, have you calmed down or whatever I would always be the first one back to the door because I always got on well with them and they realised that if they did something wrong that there was consequences*

> *I treat all prisoners equally as prisoners......you would treat them all as people.*

I would be civil to all prisoners, respect has to be earned. So erm, with prisoners that going to treat me with respect, they get it back

All respondents felt that they are less sympathetic towards prisoners but they would listen to the prisoners stories;

Depending, its all kinda of like in terms of prisoners...... what type of sob story they come up with, if you know the prisoner and their background, you kinda know whether they are just trying to mess with the system, you're not going to be as sympathetic as someone whose only in and is physically upset and is genuinely upset over the whole, you are going to have a little bit more sympathy for them

I don't mind listening to them, that is all they have to do, all day is complain and cry and sure listen if I can do something for them , do it and if I can't just tell them.

4.5.1 (B) Prison Officer to Prison Officer Relationships

There can also be rivalry between the prison officer working relationships, arising from beliefs about the 'proper' way to treat prisoners and about the 'right' working regime. The rivalry can happen between staff working on the same wing or different wings. Differences of attitudes, values and vision can cause tension between prison officers. Officers who develop positive working relationships with prisoners complain about the authoritarian officer while 'lazy officers' hide from undesirable task and 'fob off' prisoners, (Crawley, 2004). Like-minded groups of officers do form close working relationships with each other.

All interviewees recognised the strength and value of the close relationships between colleagues, with the bond being particularly important in the context of the estranged relationships between prison officers and management. The majority of respondents (n=16) felt the high level of banter, sexual innuendo and slagging between prison officers act as a positive coping mechanism for stress and

it is the norm within the prison. All respondents feel they treated colleagues with respect;

> *I would like to think I do yes. Erm I think you can see it in people that you can be short with them instead of being nice and sweet and idealistically pleasant you can be very short with people when you are burnt out with stress*

> *No I've a great understanding of people's different needs and from day to day and I suppose that is why I get on so well with all the staff*

Threats from management or prisoners can encourage any sense of solidarity among prison officers, (Kommer, 1990; Schaufeli & Peeters, 2000; Lombardo, 1981). Poor relationships among prison officers, prisoners and management visibly forms considerable sources of stress among prison officers while the lack of management support has been positively related to burnout among prison officers, (Shamir & Drory,1982).

4.6 Emotional Exhaustion

Prisons are a 'community' for prisoners quite literally a home for prisoners for extended periods of time. Therefore it is common to see family photographs and hear gossip and rumours, football talk, arguments over personal possessions and privacy. Although prison officers have a tendency to portray their role as a masculine role, much of the working week is taken up with 'housekeeping jobs' including supervising family visits, ensuring prisoners have adequate supplies of toilet paper and toiletries, prisoners are receiving their meals, prisoners are attending activates and that cells are being kept clean. All of this has become extremely important since the introduction of the 'Incentives Regimes Scheme'. All domestic environments have a propensity to be emotional arenas where interactions between prison officers, prisoners and fellow colleagues , are interspersed by rows, fall-outs, sulks, and minor disagreements. Working in a

prison is emotionally demanding and the emotions are many and varied, (Crawley, 2004).

4.6.1 – Managing emotions

In the prison environment emotions are not freely expressed, prison officers are expected to manage their own emotions along with those of prisoners. Prison officers must manage the day to day emotions that are expressed at them from prisoners (for example anger, sadness and violence) and mange the emotions that prison generates (for example anxiety, stress, fear and depression) within them. The prison cultural expects prison officers to be courageous, fearless, authoritative and resilient, (Crawley,2004). Emotions experienced included; burnout, stress and depression (Figure 3). Emotional exhaustion is the feeling of being emotionally drained and fatigued from your job. All interviewees felt working with others wasan emotional strain on them, with a large percentage of respondents feeling very stressed due to the lack of resources. A few respondents (n=3) felt they were mentally drained from working with people and were always feeling very tired;

> *Working with others em......at the end of the day there is a strain but most of the strain comes from lack of resources, worrying about if something goes wrong are the staff going to be ok are you going to be ok, are prisoners going to be safe.....*

> *Definitely...definitely...working with people is a hugely emotionally straining thing..Definitely*

> *Ye but the tiredness is different, I am shattered coming out of here most days, the mental strain is the hardest, you have to try and forget about everything, your head is just fried*

Some respondents (n=10) felt emotional drained at the end of most working days, while others (n=8) felt different levels of stress;

I'm not emotionally drained but there have been days where I've gone home, where I got into bed and just started crying because I was so stressed after a day in here

You could be having a bad day with the prisoners and that's bad enough and then someone will say something to you and it could be an innocent remark but it's just enough to send you over the edge

Sometimes you can be going out of here and all you want to do is get home and have a gin and tonic

You just don't get a chance to switch off. I have gotten emails at 11 o'clock, 12 o'clock at night off people saying can you answer this? With absolutely no concept of the fact that its 12 o'clock at night. Maybe I'm worse for answering it but I think part of the fact is it's not just me that is doing this, it just seems to become the norm in this job at this level

A small percentage of respondents (n=2) feel burnt out from their job, while the other respondents (n=16) feel they are not burnt out 'yet' but at times are much 'stressed'. Six respondents discussed suffering from depression, with four respondents disclosing taking prescribed medication for depression. Four respondents conversed about colleagues who have left the IPS because they were so burnt out, while one respondent said he could see the early signs of burn out in a family member who works within the prison estate. Two respondents asked their doctor not to write 'stress' or 'depression' on their sick certificate in case it would be held against them if they were to apply for a promotion;

Ye totally.....totally....not from the physical battle but from the mental battle that you go through every day in there. All from management, prisoners never affected me, staff didn't.

At times, yes absolutely, absolutely just, you are just going to bed and you don't want to get up. I just want to hide away from the world for a little while because it's just...... so much misery and so much discontent and there's never anything good in the prison service.......

I think I need a break where I don't have something on my mind all the time. I wouldn't say I'm burnt out in the sense that I have nothing left to give but I do think that the tank is running low

I've heard of people having nightmares and stuff, not sleeping self medicating, the whole alcohol thing, going certified, not going certified because they are so stressed that the work load will be put on someone else, its ridiculous, huge problem

Figure 3 - Description of respondents views of emotional exhaustion
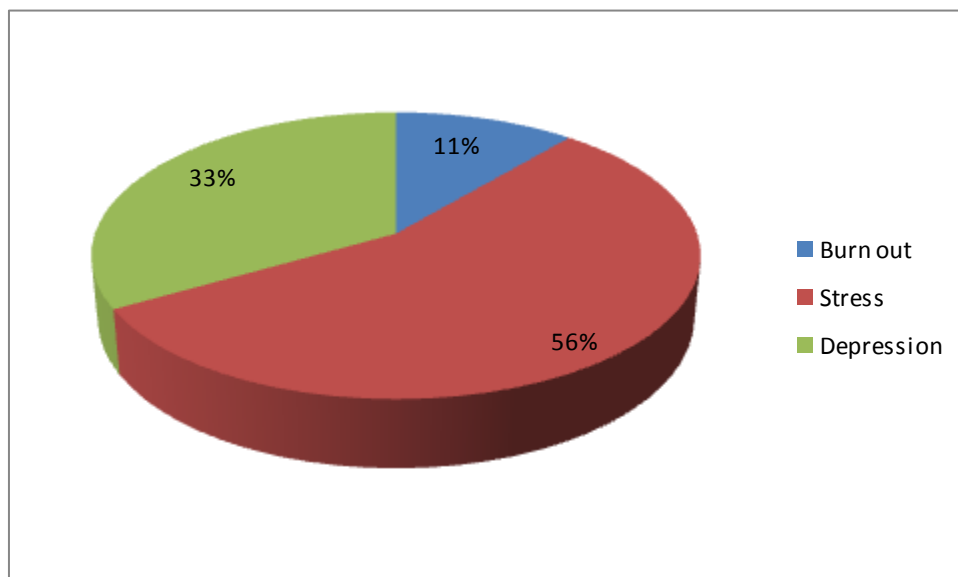
4.6.2 Family Life

The impact of prison work on prison officers' home lives and families can be profound, while the prison can have a capacity to 'spill over' into the family home, (Crawley, 2004).

The majority of respondents (n=15) spoke about having good family support, while some of them (n=7) discussed 'spill over' where family members can tell if they had a bad day. Some of them would shout at their children and one respondent described searching his fourteen year old daughter's school bag looking for cigarettes as if he was searching a cell. Two respondents briefly stated about their marriage break-ups and the stress from work;

> *Work is always there and I wouldn't see the kids as much as I should   I wouldn't interact with them as much as I should and I know myself and its wrong, if I've had a bad day here that does go home with me. And they can read that*

> *It was very very bad so much so I ended up separating, I ended up going into hospital and em...em...an it couldn't get any worse than that*

> *I'm in a happy relationship; I have a good family support*

> *I've reflected, reflected and I don't shout at my children anymore*

> *I got stabbed with a dirty blade, the prisoner had HIV, I had to go through all the test and my wife was just pregnant and she ended up losing the baby because of all the stress*

4.6.3 Changed by the job

All respondents felt they had 'changed' since becoming a prison officer, they felt they have become cynical, suspicious and intolerant. The respondents that had a long drive to work discussed the drive home as a 'wind down', as this gave them

time to unwind from the stress of the day. Six respondents recognised that they had a different persona when dealing with prisoners compared to their persona when at home, this is often referred to as the 'social mask';

A ye.... you look at some one and you say a there is overtime in him or her... you become a better person to read people a em.....that comes under judgemental a ye you do change a good bit .....You become a lot more security conscious and it gives you skills to deal with people

I suppose I have yeah. You just become less sensitive towards people

I'm less sympathetic to a lot of things but I'm more practical if something happened at home

You become harder to things because we see so much in here, that most people don't face in a life time....it is to try and strike that balance

4.6.4 Relaxation

Most respondents (n=12) discussed that if they were having a stressful day that they would go and have a coffee and a 'smoke', while a lot of respondents use their lunch break to exercise as a form of relaxation, six respondents said that they would relax when they go home by having drink Figure 4.

Figure 4 : Description of relaxation methods
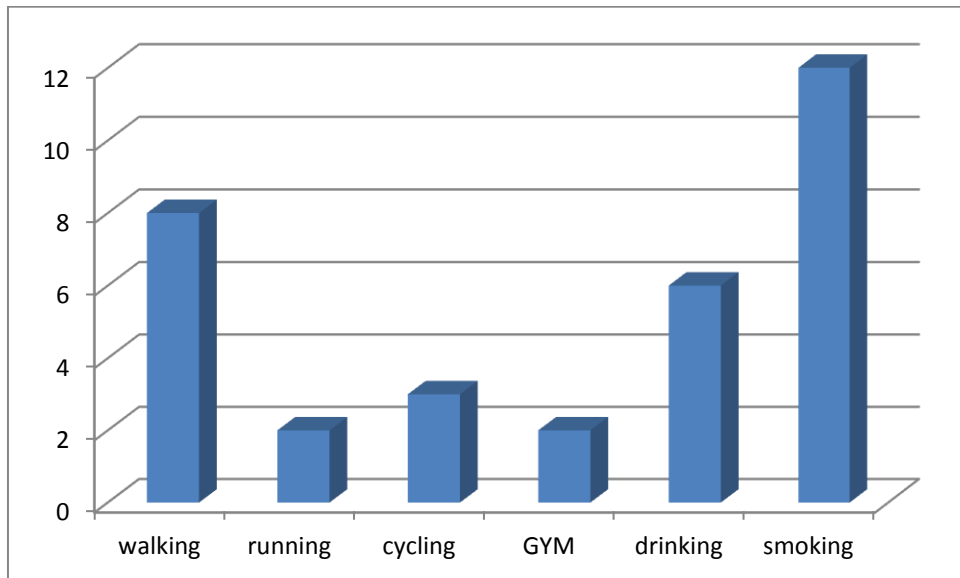
The emotional element is one of the most commonly experienced dimensions of burnout and has serious negative outcomes for the person. (Carlson & Thomas, 2006; Maslach et al., 2001; Schaufeli & Peeters, 2000).

4.7 Reduced sense of personal accomplishment

A reduced sense of personal accomplishment refers to poor self perceptions of being ineffective at work and reduced sense of personal accomplishments, (Maslach, 1981).

4.7.1 General Public

The majority of the interviewees (n=11) felt that they are undervalued by the general public and they are not seen on par with other 'pubic servants'. The general public and media have a perception that prison officers are 'bullies' and 'thugs'. Nine respondents commented that they find the word 'screw' offensive, while seven respondents feel that the general public have a perception that they are 'over paid' and 'uneducated' and are not sympathetic to prison officers;

My friends always say to me "I won't do your job for love or money" or "are you mad working in there"

I'm involved in a lot of very good things for the prison service.... in promoting its image and we run a charity cycles and that gives a different out look to prison officers who were always been targeted as bullies and thugs making a fortune of money and doing nothing only drinking and acting the maggot but as a result we get a lot of support from the public and even from the prisoners where they donated money to the cycle each year and that changed.

Sometimes you think you are just dirt on a piece of shoe to the general pubic cause they think we're worse than what we are locking up. The IPS sometimes, I think their impression isn't too different and sometimes you think that's management's impression of you, so it's like, what is the point.

4.7.2 IPS Management

Nine of the respondents felt that management did not like them and this created despondency and cynicism with prison officers feeling unsupported and undervalued. The respondents who did not feel this way were relatively junior in the IPS;

The Governor, she has said a couple of times that the school has never run so well and you're doing a good job

There is one supervisor here, they are like a stalker always annoying you

4.7.3 Role Model

In general new Recruit Prison Officers (RPO) are mentored by senior prison officers, providing support and guidance until the RPO adapts to the prison environment. The senior prison officers shares his/her knowledge in a relationship built on mutual trust. Although the new RPO's recognise the importance of senior

officers, some RPO's feel at times that they are bullied, while three respondents feel that RPO's know 'everything'. Generally, all respondents felt that colleagues value their assistance and that they were a positive influence in their institution;

I've noticed that some of the newer staff come in with the impression that they know it all which is, I've got to the stage now where I go right stand back, crash and burn because there is only so much advice that you can give someone and if they aren't willing to take it on board then so be it.

Some staff would say to you ....I don't know about this and what you think... so they would value your opinion and any type of help that you could give them, the longer you are here

I just don't like stupid people...my influence can be seen as a little bit negative maybe sometimes but I don't tolerate fools gladly.

4.7.4 Prison Officers Association (POA)

The POA objectives are: "to protect and promote the interest of its members, to improve the conditions of employment" (POA, 2014). Three respondents were ex-POA officials in their institutions, all three respondents resigned due to stress;

When you are on the union you solve problems with staff, there were like a few issues that were a problem for staff but it's just harder because when you are in the union it was management against us

everything was taken too personal to be honest with management ......anything I was doing from a union point of view, I don't know how many times I was asked what my personal agenda was, I was going to management with staff problems, problems staff would come to me about, but because it was me going to management all the time, it was me that had a problem, so I couldn't stay as a union rep.

4.7.5 Promotion

The majority of promotions within the IPS are internal competitions. A small percentage of respondents would consider applying for promotions, but three respondents were adamant that they wouldn't;

going for promotion is the biggest mistake you can make for your life, if you get promoted, you are basically putting yourself in a role where you may as well be shooting yourself in the head, that you are dealing with so much stress from staff, from management, from IPS, from visiting committees, from Director of whatever, from the inspector of prisons, from the prisoners, like before the ACOs role, way back before I joined, was mostly dealing with the prisoners and a little bit of dealing with detailing staff. Now they have to do everything, they have to fill out paperwork until it comes out of their ears

I've worked with people who have gone through the ranks and now I'm like are they actually the person I worked with or are they someone who is having a nervous breakdown because they are so stressed

I've gone from someone joining a job, eager to come in, looking at role models, one or two people who I would have thought yes great role model for this job, to actually sitting down with them and saying I wouldn't want your job

4.8 – Benefits of the Research to the Respondents

The purpose of this research was to explore "Irish prison officers' perception of job burnout". Twelve of those interviewed appreciated the research as it gave them the opportunity to voice their opinion, while some respondents felt this research allowed them express their emotions and discuss their job role.

More staff meeting, more interaction between management and staff. Management is the biggest cause of stress here.

I don't know if you become numb to this job …but nothing would shock ye….you don't real react to a whole lot…you know….when you come in first I suppose

I suppose it depends on what you can cope with yourself

I read a study done by an American on prison officers in America and he said Po should work a month on including rest days and then have at least 2 weeks of break because …I don't remember the term but it was on about burnout because he said when you're in a prison you're in a zone and your waiting for something to go wrong and things do go wrong and your waiting and waiting in the 'flight or fight' zone and your waiting and if nothing goes off you are burning out every day and eventually you need a rest.

A lot of lads in X prison, early in their life as prison officers burnout and that is where the problems started for them and they took to the drink…..

These comments and opinions support "Irish prison officers' perceptions of job burnout". While the process was time consuming, it was valuable; having this type of conversation with a representative from the committal prisons it gave an insight into prison officers' views of job stress and job burnout.

Table 6 - Summary of Key Findings

Summary of Key Findings
Job Characteristics
Supervision
Implementing Prison Rules and Policy **Respondents (n=12) felt supervisors were strict about following the rules but sometime the rules need to be adapted to suit the situation.**

Respondents (n=4) felt the supervisors were very military and task orientated leaders.
Standard of Performance
The most consistent feeling (n=18) centred on supervisors not maintaining a definite standard of performance from all employees under their command. This led to feelings of resentment and conflict towards supervisors and respondents felt some supervisors are incompetent in their management roles.
Advance notice of change
Many respondents (n=10) feel that prisoners notify the officers of the changes.
Relationship with supervisor
All respondents (n=18) felt they could approach their supervisor about prisoners problems but some respondents (n=7) would not approach them about anything personal, while other respondents (n=11) felt it depended on what supervisor was working.
Job Variety
Variety
Many of the respondents (n=12) tried to find some variety in their job role with (n=4) some respondents comparing their day to that of a counsellor. While six respondents said that there was no variety in their role and that "*it is like ground hound day*".
Creativity
A large number of interviewees (n=14) felt that their job role did not allow them to be creative
Performance Feedback
All respondents (n=18) completed their annual PMDS forms for 2014, with (n=1) having a meeting with his supervisor. All (n=18) respondents feel the PMDS is a paper work exercise.
Job Autonomy
Prisons
All respondents (n=18) felt that the resources are not there to rehabilitate prisoners, prisons are for containment and that society are happy when these people are removed from the streets.
Prisoners
Most of the interviewees (n=14) were cynical about rehabilitating prisoners, none the less they felt doing something whether in the school or workshop was better than walking around a yard.
Dimensions of job burnout
Depersonalisation
The majority of interviewees (n=16) feel that they treat prisoners with respect, while other respondents (n=2) feel they treat prisoners equally as prisoners. **All interviewees (n=18) recognised the strength and value of the close relationships between colleagues, with the bond been particularly important in the context of the estrange relationships between prison officers and management.**
Emotional Exhaustion
All interviewees (n=18) felt working with others an emotional strain on them, with a

large percentage of respondents feeling very stressed due to the lack of resources. A few respondents (n=3) feel they are mentally drained from working with people and are always feeling very tired.

A small percentage of respondents (n=2) feel burnt out from their job, while the other respondents (n=16) feel they are not burnt out 'yet' but at times are much 'stressed'.

Reduced sense of personal accomplishment

The majority of the interviewees (n=11) felt that they are undervalued by the general public and they are not seen on par with other 'pubic servants'.

Chapter 5

Recommendations and Conclusion

5.1 Recommendations for Future Research

As previously discussed, the main limitation of this research lies in the fact that the sample size is a small number of prison officers from committal prisons and therefore it may not be possible to generalise these findings across the IPS. Subsequently, there is scope for further research to examine a larger sample of prison officers from across the prison estate.

In addition, while the respondents in this study were prison officer grades, a recommendation for future research is to gain insights into management grades perceptions of job burnout.

The IPS is committed to implementing an effective Irish Prison Service Attendance Management Policy, Dignity at Work Programme and Health Screening Programme. From September 2014 the IPS will be promoting 'Smarter travel work place' and 'Wellness at work'.

The Irish Prison Service has commenced a self monitoring process on "Measuring the Quality of Prison Life (MQPL)" based on the Cambridge model compiled by Alison Libeling. The MQPL is designed to measure the prison services "moral performance" in relation to the "values" which are important to the prisoners and prison officers within the system. The results will identify the areas of good

performance which need to be maintained and can be further improved. The negative results provide the opportunity for the IPS to focus resources and energies to achieve improvements in these areas into the future.

5.2 Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to gain insights into "Irish prison officers' perceptions of job burnout". As initially outlined, Freudenberger (1980) defined job burnout as "*when a person becomes psychologically worn out from the job because of excessive demands at work*" cited by Lambert (2012, p.939). In accordance with the general principles of the 1989 Framework Directive on safety and health at work. It states that: "*under framework directive 89/391, all employers have a legal obligation to protect the occupational safety and health of workers. This duty also applies to problems of work-related stress in so far as they entail a risk to health and safety. All workers have a general duty to comply with protective measures determined by the employer.*" Working in a prison is a unique, tough and demanding experience. Armstrong and Griffin (2004) stated that "*few other organisations are charged with the central task of supervising and securing an unwilling and potentially violent population*" (p.57). Caring for unwilling and potentially violent people can place a strain on staff, which over time can lead to burnout (Lambert et al, 2010). Given that prison officers is the largest expenditure budget of the Irish Prison Service, employee burnout has the potential to be very costly considering prison officers carry out numerous duties necessary to operate a

safe, humane and secure service. Therefore, the need to explore "Irish prison officers' perceptions of job burnout" was evident.

5.2 Summary of main finding and discussion

Addressing the main aim of this study, the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews in order to gain insights into Irish prison officers' perception of job burnout. As Lambert et al (2011) and Garland (2004) observed there has been limited research in this area of Correctional staff burnout, this study adds to the theoretical body of knowledge by providing insights into Irish prison officers' perceptions of job burnout. This is significant in order to implement an effective Irish Prison Service Attendance Management Policy and a Dignity at Work Policy. Subsequently the findings of this study provided the following key insights into Irish prison officers' perceptions of job burnout:

Table 7 - Irish prison officers' perceptions of job burnout

Irish prison officers' perceptions of job burnout
I've worked with people who have gone through the ranks and now I'm like are they actually the person I worked with or are they someone who is having a nervous breakdown because they are so stressed
I've heard of people having nightmares and stuff, not sleeping self medicating, the whole alcohol thing, going certified, not going certified because they are so stressed that the work load will be put on someone else, its ridiculous, huge problem
I think I need a break where I don't have something on my mind all the time. I wouldn't say I'm burnt out in the sense that I have nothing left to give but I do think that the tank is running low
At times, yes absolutely, absolutely just, you are just going to bed and you don't

> *want to get up.   I just want to hide away from the world for a little while because it's just...... so much misery and so much discontent and there's never anything good in the prison service.......*

At the onset of this study, the following sub-objectives were outlined:

1. Have Irish prison officers experience the symptoms of job burnout within themselves?

2. The impact if any of job characteristics upon role burnout?

The study addressed each of these sub-objectives and found the following:

1. Have Irish prison officers experience the symptoms of job burnout within themselves?

Table 8 - Summary of key findings: Have Irish prison officers experience the symptoms of job burnout within themselves?

Summary of key findings: Have Irish prison officers experience the symptoms of job burnout within themselves?
Two respondents feel burnt out from their job.
Sixteen respondents feel they are not burnt out 'yet' but at times are much 'stressed'
Six respondents discussed suffering from depression, with four respondents disclosing taking prescribed medication for depression. Four respondents conversed about colleagues who have left the IPS because they were so burnt out, while one respondent said he could see the early signs of burn out in a family member who works within the prison estate. Two respondents asked their doctor not to write 'stress' or 'depression' on their sick certificate in case it would be held against them if they were to apply for a promotion.

2. The impact if any of job characteristics upon role burnout?

Table 9 - Summary of key findings: The impact if any of job characteristics upon role burnout?

Summary of key findings: The impact if any of job characteristics upon role burnout?
Supervision
The most consistent feeling with all eighteen respondents centred on supervisors not maintaining a definite standard of performance from all employees under their command. This led to feelings of resentment and conflict towards supervisors and respondents felt some supervisors are incompetent in their management roles
All respondents felt they could approach their supervisor about prisoners problems but seven respondents would not approach them about anything personal, while eleven respondents felt it depended on what supervisor was working
Four respondents felt they could approach the supervisors once the problem did not involve management.
Job variety
Twelve respondents tried to find some variety in their job role with (n=4) some respondents comparing their day to that of a counsellor. Six respondents said that there was no variety in their role and that "*it is like ground hound day*
Job Autonomy
All respondents (n=18) felt that the resources are not there to rehabilitate prisoners, prisons are for containment and that society are happy when these people are removed from the streets.
All respondents felt the resources are not available and that resources are stretched to the limit with staff been extremely stressed

By addressing the main aim and sub-objectives, this study has provided insights into Irish prison officers' perceptions of job burnout. Consequently, these findings should help the IPS to implement an effective Irish Prison Service Attendance Management Policy, Dignity at Work Programme and Health Screening Programme and conform with the general principles of the 1989 Framework Directive on safety and health at work, where problems of work-related stress entail a risk to health and safety. From September 2014 the IPS will be promoting 'Smarter travel work place' and 'Wellness at work'.

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Appendices

Appendix I - Information Letter

Letter to Proposed Participants:

(Adapted from University of Waterloo, Office of research ethics: Information letter for interview study downloaded from: http://iris.uwaterloo.ca/ethics/human/application/samples/B4_InfoLetter_Interview.htm on Saturday 16th March 2013.)

Training and Development Centre	National College of Ireland,
Beladd House	Mayor Street,
Dublin Road	Dublin 1
Portlaoise	01-4498500
Telephone: 087-7995836	
Email: jpclarke@irishprisons.ie	

Dear Officer,

This letter is an invitation to consider participating in a study I am conducting as part of my Master's degree in Human Resource Management at the National College of Ireland. I would like to provide you with more information about this research and what your involvement would entail if you decide to take part.

Title of Study: Irish Prison Officers' Perceptions of Job Burnout

Description of study: The objective of this research is to determine if Irish prison officers perceptions job burnout. In order to achieve this objective, I propose to conduct semi-structured interview with you and a purposive sample of other prison officers. If you decide that you wish to participate, the interview schedule will be sent to you in advance of the interview.

Information for Potential Participants: Participation in this study is strictly voluntary. Your participation will involve an interview of approximately 1 hour in length to take place at your institution. You may decline to answer any of the interview questions and you may choose to withdraw from the study at any stage simply by advising me. With your permission, the interview will be audio recorded to facilitate collection of information. The information will be transcribed for analysis and a copy of the transcript will be made available to you. All information you provide will be

completely confidential and your name will not appear in any thesis resulting from this study. With your permission anonymous quotations may be used to inform my thesis. Data collected during the study will be retained by me for approximately 12 months in a safe in a locked office in the IPS Training and Development Centre. As the sole researcher associated with this project only I will have access. There are no known or anticipated risks to you as a participant in this study. I would like to take this opportunity to assure you that this study has been reviewed and has received ethics clearance through the Irish Prison Service.

Benefits of Participation

There have been a few studies about prison officer in the United States and the UK. To date, no empirical studies have been carried out on Irish prison officers perceptions of job burnout. It is the aim of this research to contribute to the few existing studies on Irish prisons as it will provide an empirical account of the people who handle the complex daily strategic and operational aspects of Irish prisons. The results of my study should be of benefit to the Irish Prison Service as well as to the broader research community, and I hope that you can find the time to contribute to this research.

If you have any questions regarding this study, or would like additional information to assist you in reaching a decision about participation, please contact me at 087-7995836 or by email at jpclarke@irishprisons.ie. I will be in touch by email in the coming weeks to ask if you wish to participate in this research.

I very much look forward to speaking with you,

Yours Sincerely,

_____

Joyce Clarke,

Assistant Chief Officer, IPS Training and Development Centre.

Appendix II – Informed Consent Form

Consent Form

CONSENT FORM

By signing this consent form, you are not waiving your legal rights or releasing the researcher or involved institution(s) from their legal and professional responsibilities. I have read the information presented in the information letter about a study being conducted by Joyce Clarke, student researcher at the National College of Ireland, Dublin. I have had the opportunity to ask any questions related to this study, to receive satisfactory answers to my questions, and any additional details I wanted.

I am aware that I have the option of allowing my interview to be audio recorded to ensure an accurate recording of my responses.

I am also aware that excerpts from the interview may be included in the thesis and/or publications to come from this research, with the understanding that the quotations will be anonymous.

I was informed that I may withdraw my consent at any time by advising the researcher.

This project has been reviewed by, and received ethics clearance through the National College of Ireland and the Irish Prison Service Ethics Board. I was informed that if I have any comments or concerns resulting from my participation in this study, I may contact Mr. Desmond Gargan, Supervisor at the National College of Ireland, Dublin on 01-4498500

With full knowledge of all foregoing, I agree, of my own free will, to participate in this study.

☐ Yes   ☐ No

☐   ☐

agree to have my interview audio recorded.

☐   ☐

Yes   No

I agree to the use of anonymous quotations in any thesis or publication that comes of this research.

Yes   No

Participant Name: _____ (Please print)

Participant Signature: _____

Witness Name: _____ (Please print)

Witness Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix III – Interview Schedule

Irish Prison Officers' Perceptions of Job Burnout

Opening – Introduce Consent Form

(a). My name is Joyce Clarke and I am conducting this research as part of my studies on a Master's programme I am undertaking through the National College of Ireland. I'd like to ask you some questions about your background, how you define your role, job characteristics, emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation and a reduced sense of personal accomplishment. I hope this research will contribute to the few existing studies on Irish prisons as it will focus on if prison officers experience burnout. The interview should take about 1 hour although I want to ensure that you have an opportunity to raise any issues that you feel are important, so I am flexible on time if it suits you. I will provide you with a complete transcript of the interview when it is transcribed and I will make a copy of the completed thesis available to you.

(b). **Demographic and social background** - I would like to ask you some questions about your personal and professional background, your education, the experiences you have had in order to learn more about you.

- gender
- What county were you born in?
- What county do you live in now?
- What age are you now?
- What age were you when you joined the prison service?
- What is your marital status?
- Do you have children? How many, boys / girls?
- How would you define your socio-economic origin when you joined the IPS?

- What was your father's occupation when you joined the IPS?

- What was your mothers' occupation when you joined the IPS?

- Do you have any relatives employed in the IPS?

- What educational qualifications do you hold?

- Depending on previous answer - Do you have a degree? What is it in? Was it obtained before or during your current career?

- What work did you do before you came into the IPS?

- How long are you serving as a prison officer?

- Have you worked in any other prison?

- What made you join the prison service?

- How do you perceive prisoners?

(c) **Job characteristics**

Supervision

- Is your supervisor very strict about following the rules?

- Does your supervisor maintain a definite standard of performance for all employees under his/her command?

- Does your supervisor look out for your personal welfare?

- Is your supervisor friendly and approachable?

- Does your supervisor give you advance notice of changes?

- How would you rate (1-10) your relationship with your supervisor?

Job Variety

- Does your job have a lot of variety?

- Does your job require you to be creative?

- Do you get to perform tasks on your own?

- Is your job mainly concerned with routine matters?

- Does your supervisor conduct your PMDS with you?

- Does your supervisor give you effective performance feedback?

Job Autonomy

- Do you have input into matters that affect your job?

- Does your job allow you much opportunity to make decisions?

- What are prisons for?

- Do prisons work?

(d) Dimensions of job burnout

Depersonalisation

- Do you treat all prisoners and co-workers with respect?

- Are you less sympathetic to others at work?

- Are you insensitive towards your co-workers?

- Do you treat some prisoners as if they were impersonal objects?

Emotional Exhaustion

- Is working with others an emotional strain on you?

- Are you emotionally drained at the end of your working day?

- Do you feel burnt out from your job?

- Do you think you have changed as an individual since you have joined the service?.....if so how?........do recognise the change or has other people told you? Do you like the change?

- What is the quality of your family time like?

- Does your partner work for the IPS?

- Do you bring work distractions home with you?

- How do you relax?

Reduced sense of personal accomplishment

- Do you feel that your co-workers value your assistance?

- Do you feel that you are effective in solving problems at work?

- Do you feel that you are a positive influence in your prison?

- Have you the ability to deal effectively with prisoners problems
- Do you feel that you can create a relaxed atmosphere with the prisoners?

(e) **Interview close**

Thank you for taking the time from your busy schedule to facilitate me. Have you any questions that you want to ask?

Is there any area that you feel is important in understanding the impact of prison work on prison officers' characters that we haven't discussed or that you would like to talk about?

Close.

Appendix IV

Legal Framework

Irish employers have both a statutory and common law duty of care to protect their staff against stress. The Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act, 2005 imposed a greater duty on every employer to provide a safe system of work for their employees. Section 8 of the 2005 Act contains a duty on the employer to manage and conduct work activities in such a way as to prevent, so far as is reasonably practicable, 'any improper conduct or behaviour' that is likely to put the safety, health or welfare at work of his or her employees at risk. As a consequence, section 13 of the 2005 Act imposes a corresponding duty on an employee not to engage in 'improper conduct or other behaviour' that is likely to endanger his or her own safety, health and welfare at work or that of any other person. In addition, section 8 of the 2005 Act requires employers to take into account the General Principles of Prevention listed in Schedule 2 of the 2005 Act and is broad enough to impose obligations on employers to address stress in the workplace. An employer's duty of care includes the reasonable prevention of stress related injuries in the work place. There is a general legal requirement for employers to assess the working environment for systems and practices which lead to health and safety hazards – including stress – and to put in place preventative measures. (HSA, 2009). The HSA recommends that organisations use the risk management framework of health and safety systems, aiming as it does to identify and eliminate the causes of stress, as far as is reasonably practicable. Risk management is a structured step-by-step problem solving approach involving

participation and consultation. It helps identify and focus on the real issues causing stress. (HSA 2009).

In October 2004, EU employers and trades union representatives signed a *Framework Agreement on Work-Related Stress*. This was agreed under Article 139 of the EC Treaty. Article 139 provides that such agreements may either form the basis for binding rules to be contained in a Directive or else be in the form of 'soft law' which will not be formally binding. The Framework Agreement on Work-Related Stress is a form of 'soft law' and therefore not formally binding.

Nonetheless, it provides guidance, including the statement that stress be risk assessed in accordance with the general principles of the 1989 Framework Directive on safety and health at work. It states that: "*under framework directive 89/391, all employers have a legal obligation to protect the occupational safety and health of workers. This duty also applies to problems of work-related stress in so far as they entail a risk to health and safety. All workers have a general duty to comply with protective measures determined by the employer*."

The IPS Attendance Management Policy highlights the need for an approach to manage attendance related problems. The IPS recognises that the "*prison environment is a uniquely challenging one and that staff are the most valuable resource of an organisation*", (IPS, 2014, p.5). Therefore, the health and wellbeing of staff is vital. The IPS recognises that absences from work fall into one or more of the following categories; physical or mental illness, lack of motivation, bullying and harassment, stress, low moral and personal circumstance (IPS, 2014). This policy operates with the IPS Health and Safety Policy as outlined in the OHSAS 18001

Safety Management System for each institution. Where stress is a reason for absence from work, the staff member will be referred in the first instance to the Employee Assistance Service to identify the cause of the stress and if anything can be done by the IPS to reduce the causes.