

Distributive Justice and Locus of Control as Correlates of Correctional Officers' Well-being

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the influence of distributive justice and locus of control on the occupational well-being of correctional officers at the Davao Prison and Penal Farm (DPPF) in Panabo City, Philippines. Employing a non-experimental, quantitative-correlational research design, the study surveyed 300 correctional officers selected through random sampling based on predefined inclusion criteria. Standardized instruments were administered via survey, and the data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson's *r*, and multiple regression analysis. Results revealed high levels of perceived distributive justice and occupational well-being, while locus of control was rated at a moderate level. A strong positive correlation was found between distributive justice and occupational well-being, and a weak positive correlation was observed between locus of control and occupational well-being. Furthermore, the combined influence of distributive justice and locus of control was found to significantly predict occupational well-being. These findings underscore the importance of equitable organizational practices and psychological agency in enhancing employee well-being within correctional institutions.

Keywords: *criminal justice, distributive justice, locus of control, occupational wellbeing, correctional officers, Davao Prison and Penal Farm, Philippines.*

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I. INTRODUCTION

The occupational well-being of correctional officers has emerged as a critical concern within the broader discourse on public sector workforce management, particularly in correctional governance systems. In the context of penal institutions, occupational well-being encompasses the physical safety, mental health, and job satisfaction of personnel responsible for maintaining institutional order (Norman & Ricciardelli, 2022; Stinglhamber et al., 2022). However, the unique stressors confronting correctional officers—including overcrowding, exposure to violence, psychological threats, and under-resourced facilities—pose significant risks to institutional performance and policy implementation (e.g., Bowling, 2022; Harrison et al., 2024; McQueen, 2024; Saah, 2024). These challenges represent systemic governance failures that undermine the ability of correctional agencies to deliver on their mandates while ensuring the well-being of frontline personnel.

Beyond environmental stressors, correctional officers often contend with organizational constraints such as inadequate support mechanisms, ambiguous role expectations, and restricted autonomy (Lambert et al., 2021; McPherson & Rudes, 2022; Wills et al., 2022). These structural barriers, compounded by limited participation in decision-making processes, highlight critical gaps in internal governance systems and labor-management relations. Left unaddressed, these deficiencies in administrative support can erode morale, diminish performance, and compromise the delivery of secure and rehabilitative services within correctional institutions (Bayandalai, 2023; Cerrato, 2024; Mason, 2023). This creates a public management dilemma: how can government agencies balance institutional accountability with the ethical responsibility to protect the occupational health of civil servants?

Recognizing occupational well-being as a public value, recent studies emphasize the need for

integrative strategies within bureaucratic systems to mitigate workplace fatigue and stress. These include administrative reforms such as micro-breaks, flexible scheduling, and performance-based wellness programs that promote resilience and efficiency (Albulescu et al., 2022; Barbieri et al., 2024; Bhagwagar, 2021). Such strategies reinforce the state's duty to provide safe, dignified, and effective working environments, aligning with the normative principles of good governance, particularly transparency, responsiveness, and human-centered policy design.

Within the organizational justice framework, distributive justice serves as a salient predictor of employee well-being and performance. Fair allocation of workloads, compensation, and career advancement opportunities fosters a culture of meritocracy, equity, and institutional loyalty (Dandar & Lautenberger, 2021; Thompson-Powell, 2024). Conversely, perceptions of inequity can fuel dissent, reduce engagement, and lead to occupational disengagement—issues that directly affect the stability and governance of public institutions (Palumbo, 2024). In correctional settings, where discretion and discipline are paramount, fostering distributive justice is not merely a managerial preference but a public administration necessity (Felix et al., 2023; Waza & Ekambaker, 2024).

Complementing this is the psychological construct of locus of control, which profoundly shapes how public employees interpret their roles within bureaucratic structures (Kay, Rogger & Sen, 2020). An internal locus of control—a belief that outcomes are contingent upon personal effort and initiative—correlates strongly with enhanced job satisfaction, adaptability, and proactive behavior in high-stress environments (Anderson, 2016; Hyatt, 1995). This trait is particularly relevant in correctional governance, where officers must continuously navigate authority structures, institutional risks, and fluctuating public expectations. By contrast, personnel with an external locus of control may require greater administrative oversight and support, emphasizing the need for differentiated human resource strategies in the public sector (Galvin et al., 2018).

The case of correctional institutions in Davao Region presents a compelling policy imperative. Correctional officers serve not only as security agents but also as stewards of rehabilitative

justice. Their well-being directly influences institutional integrity, inmate outcomes, and the credibility of the state's correctional apparatus. Yet despite their centrality in the criminal justice system, limited empirical attention has been paid to the interaction between organizational justice, psychological agency, and occupational well-being within the governance context of Philippine correctional institutions.

Distributive justice, as situated within Adam's (2015) equity theory, reinforces the importance of fair treatment and rewards in maintaining institutional harmony and public trust (Mulgund, 2022; Stivers et al., 2023). Similarly, literature on public service motivation (e.g., Adinew, 2024; Honig, 2021; Molines et al., 2022; Siahaan et al., 2024) suggests that employees embedded in just and supportive environments are more likely to align their efforts with institutional missions, thereby enhancing policy implementation and accountability. Conversely, perceived injustices and restricted autonomy may contribute to absenteeism, mental health deterioration, and high turnover rates, thus burdening the system with inefficiencies and increased fiscal pressures (Alkhudhayr & Aljabr, 2024; Cavalieri, 2023; Ha & Moon, 2023). Meanwhile, emerging evidence in behavioral public administration highlights how locus of control modulates civil servants' capacity to navigate administrative stressors and maintain role efficacy (Dagasan et al., 2023; Abdalla & Suliman, 2021). Understanding how psychological orientation interacts with institutional culture offers practical insights for designing responsive interventions that support workforce resilience in high-risk environments like correctional facilities.

To date, however, empirical studies on the combined influence of distributive justice and locus of control on occupational well-being remain limited, especially within the Philippine correctional system. This gap becomes even more pronounced in Davao Region, where resource limitations, political dynamics, and institutional heterogeneity compound the challenge of effective governance. Hence, this study aims to explore the nexus between distributive justice, locus of control, and occupational well-being among correctional officers in Davao Region. Framed within the paradigm of ethical governance and public administration reform, the research

interrogates how institutional fairness and individual agency shape the operational effectiveness and psychological sustainability of correctional institutions. Specifically, the study seeks to: (1) measure the perceived level of distributive justice; (2) assess locus of control orientations; (3) evaluate the level of occupational well-being; (4) determine the correlations among the constructs; and (5) ascertain the extent to which distributive justice and locus of control influence occupational well-being both individually and interactively.

The study hopes to contribute to the governance literature on ethical work environments, institutional justice, and public sector human resource management. Findings are expected to inform policy reforms aimed at enhancing the performance, retention, and well-being of correctional personnel—thereby reinforcing the state's capacity to ensure humane, efficient, and accountable correctional services.

II. METHOD

A. Participants

The study involved 300 uniformed correctional officers currently assigned at the Davao Prison and Penal Farm (DPPF) in Panabo City, Philippines. The sample size was determined using Slovin's formula, a statistical method widely employed to calculate appropriate sample sizes from large populations (Anugraheni et al., 2023). To ensure representativeness, the researchers employed stratified random sampling, which involves dividing the population into distinct subgroups or strata before selecting participants. This method is especially effective when dealing with heterogeneous populations, as it enhances the precision and reliability of statistical estimates (Stehman, 2012).

Eligible participants included both Commissioned and Non-Commissioned uniformed correctional officers who were actively serving at DPPF during the data collection period. Excluded from the sample were uniformed officers who were on leave, as well as non-uniformed staff and job order personnel employed at the facility. The research site, formerly known as the Davao Penal Colony (DaPeCol), is located in Panabo City. Officially established on January 21, 1932, through Act No. 3732, the DPPF was

once the largest penal institution in the Philippines during World War II. It originally covered 30,000 hectares, with 8,000 hectares designated as prison reservation. Inmates at the facility are also engaged in agricultural labor, particularly on the 5,308.36-hectare banana plantation operated by Tagum Agricultural Development Company, Inc. (TADECO).

B. Research Instrument

The study employed standardized instruments to measure the variables of distributive justice, locus of control, and occupational wellbeing. Each instrument was adapted and modified from previously published and validated sources to ensure contextual relevance and conceptual clarity. The instrument for distributive justice consisted of 12 items distributed across four core indicators: equality, need, equity, and entitlement. Locus of control was measured using 23 items categorized under two dimensions: internal and external locus of control. Occupational wellbeing was assessed through a 21-item scale measuring four key dimensions: working conditions, worker and workload, working community, and professional competence.

All scales underwent content validation to ascertain their appropriateness, clarity, and alignment with the objectives of the study. The overall assessment of the instruments yielded high validity ratings. Prior to full-scale data collection, a pilot test was conducted with a sample of 40 respondents to establish internal consistency. Reliability analysis using Cronbach's alpha yielded coefficients of 0.833 for distributive justice, 0.931 for locus of control, and 0.964 for occupational wellbeing. These values indicate excellent internal reliability for all constructs, exceeding the generally accepted threshold of 0.70 for social science research.

To quantify participant responses, a five-point Likert-type scale was utilized. Responses were rated as follows: 5 (Very High), ranging from 4.20 to 5.00; 4 (High), from 3.40 to 4.19; 3 (Moderate), from 2.60 to 3.39; 2 (Low), from 1.80 to 2.59; and 1 (Very Low), from 1.00 to 1.79. These ranges were designed to capture the intensity and frequency of agreement with each item statement. The use of this scaling approach allowed for a nuanced analysis of perceptions across variables and facilitated the interpretation of mean scores in

subsequent statistical procedures. This rigorous process of instrument development, validation, and testing was undertaken to ensure the reliability and validity of the data collected, thereby enhancing the overall methodological robustness of the study.

C. Research Design

This study employed a quantitative, non-experimental approach utilizing a descriptive-correlational research design to investigate the relationship between distributive justice, locus of control, and occupational well-being among correctional officers. The quantitative method was selected for its systematic capability to collect and analyze numerical data to identify patterns, associations, and potential predictive relationships among variables of interest. As defined by Bhandari (2023), this approach supports empirical investigation through statistical techniques, allowing the researcher to draw meaningful inferences from observable data. The non-experimental nature of the study indicates that variables were not manipulated nor were participants randomly assigned to groups, consistent with the ethical and logistical considerations inherent in real-world institutional research (Chiang et al., 2015).

A descriptive-correlational design was deemed appropriate given the study's aim to describe prevailing conditions and to assess the strength and direction of the relationship between independent variables—distributive justice and locus of control—and the dependent variable, occupational well-being. As emphasized by Curtis et al. (2016), correlational research is instrumental in understanding the prevalence and association between variables, while also serving as a basis for future causal inquiries. This design is well-suited to public sector studies where experimental control may not be feasible, and where the emphasis is on evaluating systemic relationships and governance-related phenomena as they naturally occur.

Data were collected through a structured survey questionnaire, ensuring a standardized method of gathering information from a large sample while minimizing disruption to the correctional officers' work routines. The instrument was administered in person, allowing for clarifications and promoting higher response accuracy. The survey

captured multi-dimensional measures of the study's variables and was piloted for reliability and validity prior to distribution. The use of descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and multiple regression provided a robust analytical framework for interpreting the data and assessing the predictive strength of the independent variables.

For the data collection procedure, formal coordination was established with the management of the Davao Prison and Penal Farm (DPPF). Upon validation of the research instrument, a formal letter of request was submitted to the Acting Superintendent, duly endorsed by the Dean of the University of Mindanao's Professional Schools, seeking permission to conduct the study. Following approval, logistical arrangements were made with the Administrative Officer of DPPF to facilitate the systematic and ethical distribution of the questionnaires to qualified uniformed personnel. Face-to-face administration was permitted due to the easing of pandemic-related restrictions, ensuring an efficient and controlled data collection process.

Completed questionnaires were collected, screened for completeness, and encoded for analysis. Only valid and complete responses were included in the final dataset. The data were encoded using Microsoft Excel and analyzed in JAMOV 2.4.8 software. To analyze the data, the study employed three primary statistical tools: mean, Pearson r , and multiple regression analysis. The mean was used to describe the perceived levels of distributive justice, locus of control, and occupational well-being among correctional officers. Pearson r correlation assessed the strength and direction of the relationships between distributive justice and occupational well-being, as well as between locus of control and occupational well-being. Finally, multiple regression analysis was employed to evaluate the extent to which distributive justice and locus of control, both individually and collectively, significantly influence occupational well-being. The findings were then synthesized, discussed, and interpreted in subsequent sections of the study.

D. Ethical Considerations

Subsequently, the proponents submitted all the

documentary requirements to University of Mindanao Ethics Review Committee (UMERC) to secure their approval in the data collection. Approval was released under protocol number U MERC-2023-479.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. *Distributive Justice of the Correctional Officers*

As presented in Table 1, the overall level of distributive justice perceived by correctional officers at the Davao Prison and Penal Farm was high ($M = 3.99$, $SD = 0.75$). This indicates that the principles of distributive justice were often observed and experienced by the respondents. The relatively low standard deviation suggests that there was minimal variability in responses, implying a general agreement among participants.

Among the four dimensions assessed, the equity indicator received the highest mean score ($M = 4.23$, $SD = 0.79$), interpreted as very high, suggesting that correctional officers strongly agreed that fairness based on individual contribution is consistently practiced in the organization. Conversely, the equality dimension registered the lowest mean score ($M = 3.62$, $SD = 1.01$), though still categorized as high. This result indicates that while equal treatment was often experienced, perceptions varied more widely among respondents compared to the other indicators.

The findings align with previous literature emphasizing the positive effects of perceived distributive justice on employee performance and morale. Bala Subramanian et al. (2022) found that employees who perceive fair distribution of resources are more likely to go beyond transactional norms, engaging in voluntary, prosocial behaviors that reflect gratitude and loyalty to the organization. Similarly, Hamdani (2022) emphasized that well-implemented distributive justice significantly enhances individual work performance. Gündüz, Duyar and Örnekli (2020) also asserted that distributive justice contributes positively to psychological well-being and workplace harmony.

Taken together, these results suggest that the correctional officers perceive a generally favorable environment with regard to distributive

TABLE I: LEVEL OF DISTRIBUTIVE JUSTICE OF THE CORRECTIONAL OFFICERS

| Indicators | Mean | SD | Descriptive Level |
|-----------------------------|-------------|--------------|-------------------|
| equality | 3.62 | 1.013 | High |
| need | 4.14 | 0.883 | High |
| equity | 4.23 | 0.790 | Very high |
| entitlement | 3.98 | 0.834 | High |
| Distributive Justice | 3.99 | 0.747 | High |

justice, particularly in terms of equitable practices. This has potential implications for strengthening organizational commitment, improving job satisfaction, and enhancing operational efficiency within correctional institutions.

B. *Locus of Control of the Correctional Officers*

Table 2 presents the perceived level of locus of control among correctional officers within the Davao Prison and Penal Farm. The overall mean score for the locus of control was 3.23 ($SD = 0.35$), which falls under the moderate descriptive level. The low standard deviation indicates a high level of agreement among respondents in their perceptions, suggesting consistency in how locus of control is experienced within the organization.

A closer inspection of the two subdimensions reveals a pronounced disparity between internal and external orientations. The internal locus of control registered a very high mean score of 4.48 ($SD = 0.56$), indicating that correctional officers strongly agreed that they possess autonomy in their roles and are afforded opportunities for personal and professional growth. This suggests a work culture that promotes independence, initiative-taking, and self-efficacy. On the contrary, the external locus of control scored low ($M = 1.98$, $SD = 0.78$), indicating that officers generally do not attribute their success or work outcomes to external factors such as luck, chance, or authoritative supervision. This inverse relationship supports the dominance of internal locus of control in the organizational culture.

These findings underscore a psychologically empowered workforce capable of operating with minimal supervision while remaining motivated and accountable. The results echo the findings of Dagasan, Kitapci and Kilic (2023), who asserted that employees with a strong internal locus of control are more likely to seek autonomy, exhibit initiative, and embrace opportunities for skill development. Murthy, Nigam and Tapas (2020) similarly noted that such individuals are more

TABLE II: LEVEL OF LOCUS OF CONTROL OF THE CORRECTIONAL OFFICERS

| Indicators | Mean | SD | Descriptive Level |
|-------------------------|-------------|--------------|-------------------|
| external LoC | 1.98 | 0.776 | Low |
| internal LoC | 4.48 | 0.564 | Very High |
| Locus of Control | 3.23 | 0.349 | Moderate |

inclined toward problem-solving behaviors and are resilient in high-pressure work environments. Moreover, Reknes et al. (2019) observed that employees with internal locus of control tend to exhibit better health and workplace wellbeing compared to those with external orientations.

Taken together, the high level of internal locus of control suggests a positive governance environment in which correctional officers perceive themselves as active agents in shaping their work outcomes. This aligns with public administration values that emphasize autonomy, competency, and accountability in frontline public servants. Furthermore, fostering internal control beliefs may serve as a buffer against occupational stress and enhance organizational performance, reinforcing the importance of psychological empowerment in correctional governance systems.

C. Occupational Well-being of the Correctional Officers

Table 3 presents the perceived level of occupational wellbeing among correctional officers. The overall mean score for occupational wellbeing was 4.08 (SD=0.55), which falls within the "high" descriptive level. This suggests that, in general, correctional officers perceive themselves as physically and mentally well, safe, and satisfied in their workplace. The relatively low standard deviation indicates homogeneity in the responses, suggesting a shared experience of wellbeing among the respondents.

An examination of the subdimensions shows that professional competence received the highest mean rating (M=4.16, SD=0.60), indicating that correctional officers strongly believe in their capability to fulfill their professional duties with confidence and adequacy. Conversely, the dimension worker and work had the lowest mean score (M=3.97, SD=0.67), though still within the high descriptive range. This suggests that while officers feel competent, there may be marginally lower perceptions regarding workload management and the nature of work tasks.

These findings indicate that correctional officers in the Davao Prison and Penal Farm experience a generally supportive and health-promoting work

TABLE III: LEVEL OF LOCUS OF CONTROL OF THE CORRECTIONAL OFFICERS

| Indicators | Mean | SD | Descriptive Level |
|-------------------------------|-------------|--------------|-------------------|
| working conditions | 4.06 | 0.659 | High |
| worker and work | 3.97 | 0.667 | High |
| working community | 4.12 | 0.684 | High |
| professional competence | 4.16 | 0.599 | High |
| Occupational Wellbeing | 4.08 | 0.547 | High |

environment, contributing to their occupational wellbeing. The results affirm previous literature such as Gündüz et al. (2020), which demonstrated that organizational environments characterized by fairness and justice—particularly distributive justice—tend to improve employees' psychological and workplace wellbeing. This alignment reflects the importance of justice-based governance practices in public institutions, especially in high-stress environments such as correctional facilities.

Furthermore, the results are consistent with Sutton (2021), who found that occupational wellbeing is positively influenced by individuals with internal locus of control. Officers who perceive themselves as in control of their work situations tend to report higher levels of job satisfaction, performance, and organizational commitment. Similarly, Murthy et al. (2020) emphasized that individuals with strong internal orientation tend to build positive workplace relationships and adopt more considerate, community-oriented behaviors—traits beneficial in correctional environments where interdependence and mutual respect are essential.

In the context of public administration and governance, the results underscore the significance of cultivating occupational wellbeing as a dimension of public service professionalism. High levels of wellbeing among correctional officers contribute not only to institutional efficiency but also to ethical service delivery, workforce stability, and citizen-centered reform in carceral systems.

D. Correlation between Distributive Justice and Occupational Wellbeing

Table 4 presents the correlation analysis between distributive justice and occupational wellbeing. The results reveal a strong positive and statistically significant relationship between overall distributive justice and occupational wellbeing ($r = .700$, $p < .001$). Among the individual dimensions, the strongest correlations were observed between working community and

TABLE IV: PAIRWISE CORRELATION RESULTS FOR DISTRIBUTIVE JUSTICE AND OCCUPATIONAL WELLBEING INDICATORS

| | equality | need | equity | entitlement | Distributive Justice |
|-------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|----------------------|
| working conditions | 0.511 *** < .001 | 0.493 *** < .001 | 0.520 *** < .001 | 0.473 *** < .001 | 0.589 *** < .001 |
| worker and work | 0.574 *** < .001 | 0.522 *** < .001 | 0.489 *** < .001 | 0.431 *** < .001 | 0.598 *** < .001 |
| working community | 0.672 *** < .001 | 0.686 *** < .001 | 0.655 *** < .001 | 0.510 *** < .001 | 0.746 *** < .001 |
| professional competence | 0.359 *** < .001 | 0.360 *** < .001 | 0.293 *** < .001 | 0.310 *** < .001 | 0.393 *** < .001 |
| Occupational Wellbeing | 0.637 *** < .001 | 0.620 *** < .001 | 0.590 *** < .001 | 0.518 *** < .001 | 0.700 *** < .001 |

distributive justice ($r = .746$, $p < .001$), and worker and work ($r = .598$, $p < .001$), suggesting that perceptions of fairness are particularly influential in shaping interpersonal relations and task performance among correctional officers.

These findings support previous research emphasizing the role of distributive justice in enhancing employee wellbeing. Studies by Saha, Cerchione and Singh (2019) and Ho and Chan (2022) note that fair allocation of rewards and responsibilities contributes to a psychologically safe and supportive environment, particularly in high-stress professions such as correctional work. Within the framework of the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model, distributive justice functions as a key organizational resource, mitigating the negative effects of stressors and improving employee resilience and motivation (Cao, Chen & Khuangga, 2023).

Furthermore, the findings align with public administration principles that highlight equity, inclusion, and employee welfare as essential components of ethical governance. As noted by Nuzula and Nurmaya (2020) and Hamdani (2022), perceived fairness enhances employee morale, organizational loyalty, and discretionary effort—outcomes that contribute to institutional efficiency and public trust. In correctional settings, where occupational risks are high and administrative structures are hierarchical, promoting distributive justice serves not only employee wellbeing but also broader goals of organizational accountability and human-centered governance.

E. Correlation between Locus of Control and Occupational Wellbeing

Table 5 presents the correlation results between locus of control and occupational wellbeing

among correctional officers. The findings indicate a statistically significant but weak positive correlation ($r = .212$, $p < .001$), suggesting that locus of control is associated with occupational wellbeing, albeit to a limited extent. More specifically, internal locus of control showed a strong positive relationship with occupational wellbeing ($r = .663$, $p < .001$), while external locus of control was negatively associated ($r = -.291$, $p < .001$). These results suggest that officers who perceive themselves as having greater control over their professional circumstances are more likely to experience higher levels of workplace wellbeing, whereas those who attribute outcomes to external forces report lower wellbeing.

This pattern affirms the theoretical proposition that internal locus of control fosters greater self-efficacy, motivation, and resilience—key psychological resources in demanding work environments such as correctional facilities (Murthy, 2020; Sutton, 2021). Empirically, Naz et al. (2020) found similar moderate correlations, emphasizing that while locus of control is relevant, it functions in interaction with broader organizational factors such as leadership, job structure, and support systems. In governance settings like correctional institutions, where structural constraints are pronounced, internal locus of control may empower personnel to exercise discretion and agency in managing occupational stressors.

Conversely, the weak association for external locus of control reinforces findings by Reknes et al. (2019) and Thompson and Prottas (2020), who observed that employees attributing success to external circumstances are more vulnerable to stress, burnout, and reduced psychological

TABLE V: PAIRWISE CORRELATION RESULTS FOR LOCUS OF CONTROL AND OCCUPATIONAL WELLBEING INDICATORS

| | external locus of control | internal locus of control | Locus of Control |
|-------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------|
| working conditions | -0.209 *** < .001 | 0.493 *** < .001 | 0.166 ** 0.004 |
| worker and work | -0.246 *** < .001 | 0.543 *** < .001 | 0.166 ** 0.004 |
| working community | -0.432 *** < .001 | 0.697 *** < .001 | 0.083 0.153 |
| professional competence | -0.068 0.241 | 0.481 *** < .001 | 0.313 *** < .001 |
| Occupational Wellbeing | -0.291 *** < .001 | 0.663 *** < .001 | 0.212 *** < .001 |

wellbeing. While in high-stress environments, external locus of control can serve as a psychological coping mechanism, its protective capacity appears limited in environments that demand consistent decision-making and self-regulation, such as correctional settings.

Overall, the data supports the rejection of the null hypothesis, affirming a statistically meaningful, albeit modest, relationship between locus of control and occupational wellbeing. These findings underscore the need for integrated personnel management approaches in public institutions—ones that combine personality development with institutional reforms that promote autonomy, fairness, and meaningful engagement.

F. Distributive Justice and Locus of Control as Predictors of Occupational Wellbeing

Table 6 presents the model fit indices for two hierarchical regression models assessing the predictors of occupational wellbeing among correctional officers. In Model 1, which includes the four dimensions of distributive justice—equality, need, equity, and entitlement—the model explains approximately 49.8% of the variance in occupational wellbeing ($R^2 = .498$, $F(4, 295) = 73.10$, $p < .001$). This suggests that perceived fairness in resource distribution alone accounts for nearly half of the variation in the officers' sense of wellbeing in the workplace.

Model 2, which incorporates both distributive justice and the two dimensions of locus of control (internal and external), shows a notable improvement in predictive power, accounting for 58.3% of the variance in occupational wellbeing ($R^2 = .583$, $F(6, 293) = 68.40$, $p < .001$). The

increase in explained variance ($\Delta R^2 = .085$) indicates that the inclusion of psychological dispositions related to control further enhances the explanatory capacity of the model. These findings affirm that occupational wellbeing is a multifaceted construct influenced not only by structural fairness but also by employees' internal beliefs about control and agency in their work environment.

TABLE VI: FIT MEASURES FOR REGRESSION MODELS 1 AND 2

| | R | R ² | ΔR^2 | Overall Model Test | | | |
|---|-------|----------------|--------------|--------------------|-----|-----|--------|
| | | | | F | df1 | df2 | p |
| 1 | 0.705 | 0.498 | 0.491 | 73.1 | 4 | 295 | < .001 |
| 2 | 0.764 | 0.583 | 0.575 | 68.4 | 6 | 293 | < .001 |

As shown in Table 7, in Model 1, all justice subdimensions except entitlement significantly predicted occupational wellbeing. Equality ($\beta = 0.1778$, $p < .001$), equity ($\beta = 0.1711$, $p < .001$), and need ($\beta = 0.0996$, $p = .024$) were positively associated with wellbeing, indicating that correctional officers who perceived their organization as fair in distributing opportunities and rewards experienced greater levels of professional wellness.

Upon the introduction of locus of control variables in Model 2, both internal ($\beta = 0.3815$, $p < .001$) and external locus of control ($\beta = 0.1280$, $p < .001$) emerged as significant predictors, though the directionality of the latter warrants interpretive caution. While external locus of control was positively associated with occupational wellbeing, this may reflect a coping

TABLE VII: MULTIPLE REGRESSION ANALYSIS SHOWING THE COMBINED EFFECTS OF DISTRIBUTIVE JUSTICE AND LOCUS OF CONTROL ON OCCUPATIONAL WELLBEING

| Predictor | B | SE | 95% CI Lower | 95% CI Upper | t | p |
|---------------------------|------|------|--------------|--------------|-------|--------|
| Model 1 | | | | | | |
| (Intercept) | 2.08 | 0.13 | 1.82 | 2.35 | 15.64 | < .001 |
| equality | 0.18 | 0.04 | 0.11 | 0.25 | 4.94 | < .001 |
| need | 0.10 | 0.04 | 0.01 | 0.19 | 2.26 | .024 |
| equity | 0.17 | 0.04 | 0.09 | 0.26 | 4.01 | < .001 |
| entitlement | 0.05 | 0.04 | -0.02 | 0.13 | 1.45 | .148 |
| Model 2 | | | | | | |
| (Intercept) | 0.62 | 0.24 | 0.15 | 1.09 | 2.60 | .010 |
| equality | 0.15 | 0.03 | 0.08 | 0.21 | 4.47 | < .001 |
| need | 0.05 | 0.04 | -0.03 | 0.14 | 1.31 | .192 |
| equity | 0.11 | 0.04 | 0.03 | 0.20 | 2.69 | .007 |
| entitlement | 0.06 | 0.03 | -0.00 | 0.13 | 1.85 | .065 |
| external locus of control | 0.13 | 0.03 | 0.06 | 0.19 | 3.91 | < .001 |
| internal locus of control | 0.38 | 0.05 | 0.28 | 0.49 | 7.28 | < .001 |

mechanism in highly bureaucratic settings where employees defer accountability to external systems, as noted by Thompson and Prottas (2020). Nevertheless, the stronger coefficient for internal locus of control highlights its dominant influence, reinforcing the idea that officers who believe in their capacity to shape work outcomes are more resilient, satisfied, and psychologically secure in demanding institutional environments (Murthy, 2020; Sutton, 2021).

Interestingly, after adding locus of control into the model, the significance of the “need” dimension diminished ($p = .192$), while “equity” and “equality” remained robust predictors. This finding aligns with equity-based theories of governance that prioritize procedural and distributive fairness in shaping institutional trust and employee morale.

In governance contexts such as correctional institutions, these results underscore the importance of fostering both structural justice and psychological empowerment to ensure optimal employee wellbeing. Correctional officers operate in high-stress, high-risk settings that demand institutional fairness and personal agency to maintain operational integrity, mental health, and public accountability. The significant combined effects of distributive justice and locus of control affirm the broader public administration principle that effective institutions must balance procedural equity with individual autonomy to sustain organizational performance and personnel welfare.

IV. CONCLUSION

This study examined the influence of distributive justice and locus of control on the

occupational wellbeing of correctional officers assigned at the Davao Prison and Penal Farm in Panabo City, Philippines. Findings revealed that both distributive justice and occupational wellbeing were rated high by the respondents, while locus of control was assessed at a moderate level. Internal locus of control emerged as the dominant psychological orientation among officers, significantly contributing to their sense of professional competence, job satisfaction, and psychosocial resilience.

A strong, statistically significant correlation was found between distributive justice and occupational wellbeing, indicating that perceptions of fairness in workload, compensation, and resource distribution play a critical role in sustaining mental and emotional health among correctional personnel. While locus of control also demonstrated a significant relationship with occupational wellbeing, its influence was comparatively weaker. However, when examined together through multiple regression analysis, distributive justice and locus of control jointly explained a substantial proportion of the variance in occupational wellbeing, affirming that both institutional structures and individual psychological orientations matter in the wellbeing of public safety professionals.

Specifically, dimensions of equity and equality within distributive justice and internal locus of control were identified as the most significant predictors. These findings affirm core governance principles: fairness in decision-making, accountability in resource allocation, and fostering environments that empower personnel are foundational to cultivating a resilient, high-performing correctional workforce.

In contexts such as correctional institutions—where occupational stress, role ambiguity, and high emotional labor are common—the intersection of just institutional practices and psychologically empowered individuals becomes a pivotal fulcrum for effective public administration. As such, the study underscores the necessity for administrative reforms aimed at enhancing distributive fairness and promoting psychological empowerment strategies, such as leadership coaching, resilience training, and autonomy-supportive supervision models. Ultimately, this study contributes to the growing discourse on ethical governance and institutional wellbeing, offering empirical evidence that the moral infrastructure of public institutions—manifested through fair treatment and belief in personal agency—profoundly shapes the occupational health and effectiveness of its frontliners.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

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