

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this research report is my own unaided work and I have acknowledged all sources used. The research report has not been submitted previously for any degree or examination.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Foremost, to the Lord Almighty, I thank the strength and wisdom that he has bestowed upon me throughout my Academic journey.

Importantly, I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to Dr Francine Masson for her endless support, guidance and motivation, without which this research study wouldn't have been a success. Thank you.

To my Husband and Daughters, Thank you for your endless support and patience through the course of my academic journey. My dear Husband; your motivation and continuous support still humble me to this day, Thank you.

Abstract

Correctional officers face many stressors in their workplace settings such as guarding violent prisoners and ensuring the safety of everyone in the prison setting. The stressors they face may lead to occupational stress for some. The study aimed to understand the coping strategies used by correctional officers when dealing with occupational stress. To investigate the research aim, a qualitative approach and case study design were utilised. Convenience sampling was used to select 25 correctional officers employed at Leeuwkop prison, Medium B and Maximum facility. Semi-structured interviews schedules were used where one-on-one interviews were conducted to collect data. Thematic analysis was used to analyse data gathered.

The study revealed that correctional officers face many stressors in their work environment such as leadership style, prison violence, uneven ratio between inmates and correctional officers as well as shift work. These stressors have different impact on their professional and personal lives such as; aggression towards their family, psychological effects, society high expectations which prevent them from living their own lives and also some felt that their work isolates them from their families. To cope with occupational stress, the study revealed that correctional officers engage in sporting activities within the prison such as soccer, others make use of employee assistance programmes and some resort to less conventional ways of coping such as absenteeism and alcohol use. Recommendations were provided to curb the challenges experienced by correctional officers which included; the need for more advertisement of employee assistance programmes, hiring more correctional officers to even out the ratio between correctional officers and inmate, the need for more occupational social workers services within the prison and lastly the need for more South African research on correctional officers coping strategies.

Keywords: correctional officers, occupational stress, coping strategies.

LIST OF ACRONYMS

EAP-	EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMMES
CO-	CORRECTIONAL OFFICERS
DCS-	DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONAL SERVICES
JDCS-	JOB DEMAND-CONTROL SUPPORT MODEL