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# The perceived impact of stress on job performance: a case study of single mothers working in the correctional centre

**Malepe, Marcia**

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**ABSTRACT**

Working in the correctional centre comes with challenges. The majority of the correctional centre population in South African corrections are male offenders. Large numbers of female correctional officers are working in these correctional centres detaining male offenders, including single mothers. Drawing from theoretical frameworks of Boundary and Spillover theories the study was aimed at exploring the perceived impact of stress on job performance for single mothers working in the correctional centre. A qualitative exploratory research was conducted adopting a case study research design. Semi-structured face to face interviews were used to collect data from single mothers working in the correctional centre who were selected using snowball sampling. Data were analysed using the thematic data analysis. The research findings revealed that lack of employment opportunities, socio-economic factor and the interest in joining team of rehabilitators motivated single mothers to apply for employment in the Department of Correctional Services (DCS). More findings showed that single mothers were experiencing work related challenges emanating from shortage of staff, shift work and safety concerns. Inability to reach work related goals, absenteeism and work family conflicts were attributed to stress arising from the demands of the job. Participants felt that these aspects negatively affected their job performance. The study revealed that daily structured programmes of the correctional centre and social support are source of coping mechanisms to endure the strains caused by job demand. Moreover, the findings discovered that the services of employee assistant practitioner, team buildings and sports activities were programmes available in the correctional centre in response to work-life balance. However, it is also critical to highlight that participation in work life balance programmes were revealed to be inadequate. This study is intended to contribute to the body of knowledge and provide insight into the impact of stress experienced by single mothers in the field of corrections and influence the design of policies and programmes to mitigate the stressors and strengthen work life balance for single mothers.

**Key words**

Single mothers, Correctional Officers, Correctional Centre, Stress, Work life-balance