
REPORTS OF THE COURSE

GROUP A

CAUSES OF STRESS FOR CORRECTIONAL PERSONNEL AND NECESSARY ABILITIES FOR MID-LEVEL STAFF TO SOLVE THE PROBLEMS

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I. INTRODUCTION

Correctional work is one of the most stressful occupations around the world. During the Individual Presentations (IP) conducted by all participants of the 154th International Training Course of UNAFEI, we had a thorough discussion of what kinds of stress that correctional staff, including prison officers, probation officers and prosecutors, are now facing in our countries and at the same time, we tried to figure out different kinds of stress management programmes to reduce stress for correctional personnel.

During the training course, we also attended lectures conducted by Professors of UNAFEI and Visiting Experts for topics on Stress Management, Anger Management, Leadership, Training, Offender Management and Treatment Programmes for Sex Offenders.

After attending the IP sessions and lectures, we formed a group to discuss the following issues:

1. Identifying the causes of stress for correctional personnel;
2. Solving the problems and reducing stress;
3. Identifying necessary abilities required for mid-level staff to solve the mentioned problems;
4. Suggesting ways to gain or improve the necessary abilities identified for mid-level staff.

II. COMMON CAUSES OF STRESS

During our IP discussions and review sessions, we identified quite a number of causes of stress for correctional personnel of different countries. However, these causes of stress may vary across the participating countries due to our difference in culture, norms, history and level of development. Therefore, we agreed to discuss causes of stress which occur in most of the participating countries, but not necessarily in all countries. We also agreed to focus on major and critical causes of stress which are affecting all levels of correctional personnel, not only mid-level staff. Finally, we came up with the following common causes of stress for further analysis:

1. Budget
2. Nature of Work
3. Overcrowding

4. Leadership and Management
5. Training

III. BUDGET

A. Problems

Like any other organization, correctional organizations are also facing the problem of insufficient budgets, and it is one of the major factors that causes stress among correctional personnel. We need adequate funding in order to improve service. Insufficient budgets result in the following problems:

1. Poor and unsecure working environments;
2. Poor infrastructure such as weak buildings, poor security systems, insufficient transport provisions;
3. Understaffing and low pay to staff;
4. Lack of essential equipment such as inmate restraining equipment, fire prevention and fighting systems, radio and communication sets;
5. Poor welfare and facilities for inmates such as catering, medication, accommodation and sanitary facilities.

B. Solutions

As mid-level staff, it seems that there is not much we can do to solve the problem of insufficient budgets because budget matters are directly related to the central government policies and bureau-level discussions. However, we, as mid-level staff, can still do something which may change the result.

During our discussions, we concluded that we can have two ways to improve the situation of insufficient budgets:

1. Convince the senior management to approve our budget, that is, to convert a budget to funding;
2. Within our existing budgets, fully utilize the resources available to enhance our current services and even, if possible, initiate pilot projects for new services.

1. Convince Senior Management to Approve Budgets

In most correctional organizations, budget plans and proposals are prepared by mid-level staff. In order to convince senior management to approve our budgets, we need to prepare a proper plan to explain the budget based on facts and data, and the reasons why we need that amount of budget. However, the most important thing we should do is to “link-up” our budget proposal with the overall goals, short term and long term objectives of every decision-making unit within the chain of approval for budgets.

2. Fully Utilize the Existing Budget

In most cases, though we propose a well-planned and realistic budget, we do not get all the funding requested in the budget. The budget we got is not sufficient to achieve all our goals. Therefore, the limited budget must be managed efficiently in such a way that all the resources available are fully utilized to enhance the current services. Effective measures should be taken to improve the productivity of staff and to reduce recurrent expenditures such as conserving electricity and water, which can save money, and this money can be used to initiate pilot projects for new services.

C. Necessary Abilities for Mid-level Staff to Solve the Problems

1. Ability to Identify Chain of Approval and Familiarize with Budget Approval Procedures

In order to execute the first solution mentioned above, mid-level staff should have the ability to identify the chain of budget approval for different expenditure levels and to familiarize themselves with the budget approval procedures and requirements. The chain of budget approval may vary for

154TH INTERNATIONAL TRAINING COURSE
REPORTS OF THE COURSE

different expenditure levels. Therefore, mid-level staff should know how many levels of approval their budget will pass through in order to successfully get their budget approved.

2. Ability to Understand Goals and Objectives of Every Decision-Making Unit

Mid-level staff should study and understand the goals, both short-term and long-term objectives, of every decision-making unit within the chain of budget approval. Different decision-making units of every approval level may have their own concerns and objectives. Therefore, it is important to understand these decision-making units in order to gain support from them.

3. Ability to Link-up Budget Proposal with Goals and Objectives of Decision-Making Units

Sometimes, mid-level staff make budget proposals only according to their needs and requirements. However, it is insufficient in order to gain support from senior management. They should be able to link-up their budget proposal with the goals and objectives of every decision-making unit so that they will believe that the proposed budget can help to achieve their goals and objectives to a certain extent.

4. Ability to Conduct Effective and Efficient Management of Existing Resources

In order to execute the second solution mentioned above, mid-level staff should have ability to identify and familiarize themselves with all the resources available and conduct effective and efficient management of these resources. Sometimes, mid-level staff only recognize resources immediately available to them but neglect some other resources which they could use. Therefore, mid-level staff should always be sensitive to their surrounding environments and identify possible resources for their service enhancement.

5. Ability to be Innovative

Mid-level staff should be innovative in order to create new ideas to improve productivity and service enhancement. On the other hand, they should always be ready to adopt new ideas from their superiors and subordinates and put these ideas into action plans if possible.

6. Ability to Motivate Staff

Since we have limited budgets, mid-level staff should be able to motivate their staff for stronger teamwork and execution of new initiatives in order to reduce expenditures and increase productivity. Mid-level staff should have the charisma to lead their team members to launch pilot projects for new services without additional resources.

IV. NATURE OF WORK

A. Problems

Correctional work is quite unique in terms of dealing with offenders. Overwork, low salary, and poor relationships among staff in the workplace are some common causes of stress for staff in many organizations and companies. In addition, correctional personnel are facing some other causes of stress arising from the nature of their work.

1. Threats

According to the lecture given by Dr. Jeswal on Treatment of Offenders, correctional staff are always exposed to threats of offenders' violence, as well as potential threatening from other parties related to offenders such as requests for smuggling illegal drugs and threats from gangs.

2. Diversity of Offenders' Problems

Correctional personnel always deal with defilement cases such as sex offences, child abuse, etc. In addition, they face difficulties in treating offenders because the offenders have diverse and complex problems, such as suffering from drug abuse, mental disorders, or developmental disorders and being elderly, unemployed, or homeless. As the correctional staff are always dealing with the "dark" side of society, their emotions may be easily affected and full of unpleasant feelings.

3. Loneliness

As mentioned above, correctional staff always face various difficulties. Even worse, some of them have to handle these difficulties by themselves. For example, in Japan, probation officers are usually

in charge of one or a few local administration divisions and have to supervise all the cases within these divisions on their own. Sometimes this makes the probation officers feel lonely during the execution of their duties and personally responsible for offenders' misconduct.

4. Feeling Undervalued by the Public

In some countries, correctional officers are undervalued by the public because of public perception of corruption within prison environment and the poor nature of work — 3D (Dirty, Dangerous, Difficult) etc. In addition, in many countries, correctional services are not recognized or understood well by the public.

B. Solutions

Although sometimes stress is inevitable because of the nature of our work, the following measures can be taken to reduce stress and to overcome the problems caused by the nature of work.

1. Maintaining Law & Order

Correctional officers should conduct their duties according to the rules and regulations in order to maintain law and order. According to Dr. Jeswal's lecture on Treatment of Offenders, research shows that prison violence diminished when prison management was improved. Thus, maintaining law and order is not only necessary, but it is also effective to preventing offenders' violence.

2. Teamwork/Peer Support/Guidance from Superiors

Since correctional officers face a variety of challenges, in order to overcome those challenges or problems, they should work as a team. Teamwork enables them to get peer support and guidance from superiors easily. As a result, they share information and do not feel isolated while handling difficult cases.

3. Providing Offenders with Effective Treatment Programmes

In order to minimize the violence and misbehaviour of offenders, they should be provided with effective treatment programmes such as cognitive behavioural therapy, motivational interviewing and anger management.

4. Introduction of Technology

It is also meaningful to make use of technology to reduce threats from offenders and to improve services such as the implementation of prison robots in Korea, Knowledge Management Systems (KMS) — an intranet database system used in Hong Kong — or satellite systems for conferences in Japan.

5. Gain Public Understanding about Correctional Services

Arousing public awareness about the importance of correctional work will improve the image and gain understanding and support from the public for the correctional system.

C. Necessary Abilities for Mid-level Staff to Solve the Problems

1. Being Knowledgeable about Laws & Regulations

In order to maintain law and order, mid-level staff should be well familiarized with all rules and regulations. They should know what actions need to be taken in different situations and give directives to their subordinates promptly during emergency cases.

2. Ability to Communicate Effectively within the Organization

For good teamwork and supportive relationships in the workplace, the ability to communicate with subordinates, peers and superiors is important. As Mr. Muroi mentioned in his lecture on leadership theory, "Mid-level supervisors serve as points of contact between the upper and lower parts of the organization; they must carry out management as advisors".

3. Ability to Manage and Execute Effective Treatment Programmes

In order to provide effective treatment programmes to offenders, mid-level staff should be knowledgeable about various kinds of treatment programmes and, therefore, able to choose the appropriate treatment programmes for different offenders. In some situations, they should also have the capabil-

ities to manage or even execute those programmes on their own.

4. Being a Role Model

As Dr. Jeswal mentioned in her lecture on treatment of offenders, “Mirroring is the first step towards learning”; mid-level staff should be good role models for offenders as well as to the staff. Dr. Jeswal also mentioned, “Applying behaviour modification, mirroring and social learning principles can work in corrections by using systematic reinforcement of pro-social behaviours. This is a powerful and effective way to change behaviour”.

V. OVERCROWDING

A. Problems

Overcrowding is one of the major problems for custody and treatment of prisoners in prison settings which causes stress for staff at different levels. Many countries face the problem of overcrowding, which results in the following consequences:

1. Have to manage large number of prisoners
2. Disproportionate ratio between staff and prisoners
3. Lack of prisoners' segregation ability
4. A lot of troublemakers
5. Heavy workload

When a prison is overcrowded, a mass population of prisoners has to be managed with fewer prison officers, which causes a disproportionate ratio between staff and prisoners and results in overworking the staff. Overcrowding also increases prison suicides, the risk of assaults, bullying or worse case scenarios between prisoners and between prisoners and staff that make the prison more volatile and less safe for the staff. Moreover, the increased number of prisoners and the poor facility design of the prison affect the segregation of the prisoners.

B. Solutions

Solutions for overcrowding could be found in many ways. Most solutions focus on the diversion principle, management approaches or improving facilities. The following measures were suggested after our discussions:

1. Making Good Use of Parole, Probation or Pardons

Implementation of an effective policy on parole, probation or pardons can help to reduce the number of prisoners incarcerated in prison. In some participating countries, although the parole system exists, it is not fully utilized due to insufficient manpower and, therefore, prisoners who are eligible for parole are still waiting inside the prisons for completion of the parole application procedures.

2. Employment of Part-Time Officers and Outsourcing Tasks

In most cases, it is very difficult to decrease the number of prisoners in prisons to overcome the problem of overcrowding. However, we can focus more on reducing its consequences. In order to reduce the workload of the staff, the organization can employ more part-time officers to handle some work of the prison which does not fall within the core duties of prison officers. This can be more cost effective than recruiting more new permanent staff. Moreover some correctional jobs, such as conducting vocational trainings and industrial work, can be outsourced to the private sector, which can help to reduce the workload of the staff.

3. Facility Rearrangements, Renovation or Proposals for Increasing Capacity

In order to increase the holding capacity, some rearrangements or renovation of the facility can be done to accommodate more prisoners. We can also propose increasing the capacity of the prison to reduce overcrowding.

4. Implementing the Law and Prison Standards

Better implementation of the law and prison standards can prevent violence and other illegal activities caused due to overcrowding and helps the staff to work more comfortably.

C. Necessary Abilities for Mid-level Staff to Solve the Problems

In order to deal with those solutions, mid-level staff need the following abilities:

1. Communication, negotiation or active listening
2. Using instrument skills
3. Managing a mass population of prisoners
4. Teamwork
5. Being role models

In most cases, one or two officers have to handle or manage many prisoners. So the staff should have the ability to manage a mass population of prisoners. Since we have to manage a mass population of prisoners, the mid-level staff must have the capability to motivate their staff to work as a team to reduce stress. In order to avoid the problems caused by troublemakers, mid-level staff should be able to understand the situation thoroughly; using active listening and good communication or negotiation skills is required to handle and calm down these situations. Being a role model could help to implement the law and prison standards.

VI. LEADERSHIP & MANAGEMENT

A. Problems

Leadership has been described as “a process of social influence in which one person can enlist the aid and support of others in the accomplishment of a common task” (Chemers, 1997). Other in-depth definitions of leadership have also emerged.

The lack of good leadership skills thus jeopardizes the functioning of any organization and is a cause of poor output, unattained objectives, and feelings of incompetence, such as stress. Every country paper acknowledges insufficiencies in this skill caused by varying reasons. Below are some major problems:

1. Low Skills and Training

Individual officers are not highly trained in leadership, and, therefore, they have low impacts on the inmates' rehabilitation. Also, some correctional organizations lack schemes of service for role definitions. Lack of leadership also leads to poor communication between different ranks.

2. Absolute Power and Organizational Culture

Senior staff do not delegate duties for efficiency. Some leaders maintain traditional leadership styles with the belief that seniors should be overbearing.

3. Poor Succession Plans

There is no long term succession plan for some countries. Staff are not prepared for administrative changes and irregular and sudden transfers of leaders occurs frequently, which affects the operation of correctional organizations.

4. Lack of Strategic Plans

Some correctional organizations lack clear goals, missions and visions. Therefore, they are unable to formulate both long term and short term strategic plans for their organizations.

B. Solutions

1. Human Resource Development

- i. Improve training for all levels of staff and skill improvement*
- ii. Recruit high quality staff based on needs assessment unique to environment and population*
- iii. Provide training on communication skills and role play scenes that pertain to daily duty*
- iv. Develop better inmate rehabilitation programmes and test them for efficiency*
- v. Provide management training to acceptable international standards*

2. Administrative Structure Development

- i. Provide schemes of service for clear job descriptions and roles*
- ii. Develop a practical strategic plan and service charter*
- iii. Make transfer and appointment policies*

C. Necessary Abilities for Mid-level Staff to Solve the Problems

1. Recruit high-caliber staff and train staff for skill improvement
2. Identify training and equipment needs
3. Leaders should be social, encourage motivation of staff and improve their interpersonal skills
4. Develop a practical strategic plan and appointment policy
5. Role modelling

As fashion models best display the products from their shop in the most enticing manner so as to make sales, such is the case with role modelling where an individual's work is admirable so as to encourage good practices among other staff and elevate the image of the organization. This is an exceptional ability of a leader to influence the strategic direction of their organization. Good role models inspire greatness in others. It is a skill both nurtured and learned by practice. Some characteristics of positive role modelling include:

- i. High self-esteem and good behaviour*
- ii. Trustworthy and reliable*
- iii. Respect for others and encourages their growth*
- iv. Widely informed and demonstrates confidence*

However, bad role modelling exists and draws followers faster. Leaders are in the best positions to improve their places of influence by making appropriate choices knowing too well the consequences thereof. The model is: ***I HEAR, I FORGET; I SEE, I REMEMBER; I DO, I UNDERSTAND.***

VII. TRAINING

A. Problems

Training is one of the most important ways to improve ability and efficiency of the correctional staff. Lack of training or insufficient training and education will create stress among the staff. In some countries, work-related training and education are not provided adequately, and sometimes correctional officers are not trained even when they are transferred, promoted or after new laws or measures are implemented within the correctional organizations. Sometimes, although training is

provided, the effectiveness of training is minimized due to the following reasons:

1. No Interest in Training and Workplace Pressure

Some correctional officers are reluctant to participate in training, and on the other hand, some senior officers or colleagues do not want their subordinates or colleagues to attend training because of extra burdens during the trainees' absence. Due to the following reasons, correctional officers sometimes hesitate to apply because they do not want to bother others.

2. Insufficient or Lack of Resources for Training/Training is Not the First Priority

In some countries, there is not adequate funding, facility, material and technical staff for providing high-quality training because training is considered as less valuable compared to other issues by the senior management.

B. Solutions

1. Training to Enhance Knowledge and Skills

i. For different levels of staff

Training and education should be delivered to different levels of staff, such as based on their position and experience, on a regular basis (e.g. training for new staff/mid-level staff/senior-level staff /refresher programmes /training of trainers).

ii. About specific work

The contents of training should be specific according to the work of the staff, including stress management, treatment skills such as anger management, counselling skills, cognitive behavioural therapy, motivational interviewing, and also budget, personnel, supervision, law and regulations, etc. Also, training should be provided to appropriate staff according to necessity and their ability.

iii. In diverse ways

There are diverse ways of training that can be provided to the staff including seminars by experts, case meetings with colleagues and superiors, on-the-job training, and practical training such as mock wards, fire exercises, and table-top exercises. Also, approval systems should be included in on-the-job training. Dr. Jeswal mentioned in her lecture on stress management, "Simulation training and reality-based trainings help to develop psychological skills". Besides, on-line training by internet/intranet is effective in terms of budget and reduction of staffs' burdens.

2. Encouraging Staff to Participate in Training

It is necessary that all officers understand the importance of training. Therefore, the senior officers or mid-level staff should inform staff about the importance and effect of training. All officers should be given equal opportunities to participate in training. Moreover, in order to motivate officers to attend training, it is also effective to link-up the training with privileges such as promotion, increased salary or other benefits.

C. Necessary Abilities for Mid-level Staff to Solve the Problems

1. Ability to Plan, Manage and Execute Effective Training

First of all, mid-level staff should be able to assess their staff on what kinds of training are needed to enhance their abilities for service improvement. Based on this, they should be able to plan, manage and execute effective and appropriate training. Moreover, they also should be able to evaluate the effectiveness of the training conducted to improve the quality of training in the future.

Since approval systems should be included in training for subordinates, mid-level staff should have the ability to make decisions and should be knowledgeable about laws and regulations. According to Mr. Muroi's lecture on leadership theory, when mid-level staff give advice or instruction to subordinates, "assuming an attitude of teaching is more important than assuming an attitude of scolding".

2. Ability of Self-Motivation and Self-Enhancement and Motivating Others

In order to plan, manage and execute training, mid-level staff must have positive attitudes towards training and keep themselves studying to cope with the changes in laws and regulations. Thus, they should maintain their motivation for training and enhance their skills. In addition, they should have the

ability to motivate and encourage their staff to participate in different kinds of training.

3. Ability to Manage Departments/Ability to Manage Human Resources

Mid-level staff should be able to release their staff for training and manage the section or division in the absence of trainees in such a way that the other staff can work smoothly without burdening them too much.

VIII. EFFECTIVE STRESS MANAGEMENT

A. Overview

During our group workshop sessions, we agreed that there are two kinds of solutions to solve stress of correctional staff. Firstly, they are solutions to overcome the problems. However, sometimes we cannot solve the problems immediately, or we are unable to solve the problems. In that case, it is important to reduce the stress, that is, to adopt effective stress management among correctional personnel.

B. Experiences from the Participating Countries

During the IP sessions, many of our participants shared the experiences of stress management as adopted in their countries. Below are the major practices mentioned:

1. Sharing among Colleagues and Supervisors

Probation Officers in Japan and Tonga enjoy sharing their own cases with their colleagues. Although the conversations may not always solve problems faced in the workplace, they can relieve their stress and fulfill their emotional needs. Prosecutors in Japan are also encouraged to develop a vibrant organizational culture to achieve free-spirited discussions and mutual support. They are also trying to adopt “large room” systems to enhance communication with other prosecutors and assistant officers.

2. Professional Knowledge Enhancement

Probation Officers in Japan and Tonga believe that enhancing their professional knowledge can help them to solve difficult problems arising from offenders and therefore relieve their stress. The enhancement can be conducted by self-study or seeking professional advice (e.g. from a psychologist or psychiatrist).

3. Balanced Life

Correctional staff in Thailand and Hong Kong are encouraged to maintain a balanced life apart from concentrating on their work. Sports tournaments, family days and fishing trips are held regularly.

4. Employee Wellness Programmes

Probation Officers in the Philippines are encouraged to take part in healthy lifestyles programmes through regular physical activity, healthy diet and nutrition, regular physical and dental check-ups, weight control and anti-smoking campaigns. Correctional officers in Thailand are also encouraged by the “Prison Standard on Quality of Correctional Personnel Work Life” to maintain healthy lives.

5. Religious Pursuits

In Thailand, since Buddhism is the main religion, dharma practice is one of the activities for encouragement of prison staffs' morality. Meditation programmes are also organized as relaxing activities for prison staff. In Tonga, there is a chaplain who leads spiritual activities inside prisons. These activities give peace to the staff and relieve their stress.

6. Mental and Psychological Care for Staff

In Hong Kong, a staff psychological section was established to focus on helping staff with mental and psychological problems. They also conduct regular talks and seminars for staff and their family members to enhance their knowledge on stress management.

C. Suggestions from Visiting Experts

1. Anger Management Programme (Lecture of Dr. Honda)

It is important for correctional officers not to be agitated by the inmates' anger. Officers should try to understand their defensive action in difficult situations. They should also try to adopt strategies to avoid being caught up in the trouble caused by inmates.

2. Golden Ratio (Leadership — Lecture of Dr. Jeswal)

The "Golden Ratio" means that one negative comment or act from another person or event within each day must be balanced by three positive acts by you. It can go as high as 1:12 to experience a thriving environment.

3. Stress Utilization (Understanding Stress — Lecture of Dr. Jeswal)

When appropriately applied, stress utilization training can reduce the degree and intensity of the current stress reactions and help you develop skills for preventing additional and harmful stress reactions. The overall goal of stress utilization training is the reorientation of people's typical stress reaction habits into new, more rational and assertive patterns of problem solving.

4. Psychological Survival Training (Understanding Stress — Lecture of Dr. Jeswal)

Psychological survival training prepares staff to anticipate danger, capture the initiative, size up the situation, respond and recover quickly and efficiently and at the same time maintain peak physical and mental power to survive and overcome difficulties.

D. Necessary Abilities for Mid-level Staff to Adopt Effective Stress Management

1. Awareness of Importance of Stress Management

Mid-level staff should be aware of the importance of stress management to themselves and their colleagues. They should try to adopt stress management strategies for themselves first and introduce it to other colleagues.

2. Ability to Identify Staff under Stress and Make Necessary Interventions

Mid-level staff have to identify those staff that are under high stress and assess their needs for intervention. Mid-level staff should familiarize themselves with techniques of stress management or seek assistance from professional if necessary for their subordinates.

3. Taking Initiative to Avoid High-Stress Situations and Improve High-Stress Environments

According to Dr. Jeswal's lecture on stress management, certain amounts of stress are needed to motivate us to achieve a goal, but when stress becomes an obstacle instead of a motivator, one experiences negative by-products which hamper our performance and throw us off-balance emotionally. Therefore, facing the problem of workload for mid-level staff and their subordinates, mid-level staff should take the initiative to facilitate a working environment without "over stress".

4. Adaptability — Toughness towards Adverse Situations and Failure

Mid-level staff should be tough enough to face challenges ahead and pressure created by potential failure in order to give support to their subordinates. According to Dr. Jeswal's lecture on leadership, adaptability is important for a leader in which the strengths within an individual are used to motivate others to move forward, especially during times of crisis. This has much to do with the stress-response system.

5. Acquiring Ever-Changing Professional Knowledge

It is important for mid-level staff to equip themselves with sufficient and up-to-date job knowledge so that they can handle enquiries and challenges from inmates and offenders with confidence.

IX. WAYS TO GAIN OR IMPROVE THE NECESSARY ABILITIES FOR MID-LEVEL STAFF

A. Reliable Assessment Programmes

Reliable assessment programmes for evaluating strengths and weaknesses of staff are critical in order to understand what kinds of training are necessary for them. Dr. Jeswal introduced some

“Psychometric Assessment Tools” in her lectures. These tools will enable us to understand the staff strengths and weaknesses and how to make the best use of both of these dimensions. (*p. 8, Understanding Stress - Lecture Notes of Dr. Jeswal on 5 June 2013*)

B. Tailor-made Training Programme

After understanding the strengths and weaknesses of staff, we should try to provide training programmes which can improve their weaknesses and further enhance their strengths.

C. Broadening Exposure

1. Attending Senior Officers' Meetings

Mid-level staff should be allowed to attend senior officers' meetings occasionally in order to broaden their exposure. This kind of attendance will help mid-level staff to understand the concerns of top management, which is valuable for their strategic planning.

2. Deployment to Other Departments or the Central Government

It is a precious experience for mid-level staff to be deployed to other government departments or to the central government. They can be furnished with working knowledge out of their own profession and become familiarized with the operations of other departments for their own reference. On the other hand, they can build up their social network within the government which is useful for their future advancement.

3. Attending Overseas Training and Seminars

Overseas training and seminars always give some new insights to mid-level staff. They can benchmark the services provided by other countries and keep themselves updated about the recent global development of the correctional services. They can absorb the overseas experience and bring it back to their own countries for discussion and exploration.

D. Knowledge Sharing among Staff

Nowadays, mid-level staff are required to be knowledgeable about different aspects of their profession and updated on the ever-changing environment. Therefore, a convenient knowledge sharing database is crucial for mid-level staff to equip themselves with relevant information easily and quickly. The experience of Hong Kong for establishing a “Knowledge Management System” (KMS) on an intranet platform is a good example. Different levels of staff members can access the KMS and search for information they need according to a systematic classification. The information includes rules and regulations, case studies, updated memoranda, experience sharing, new services and staff welfare issues, etc.

E. Horizontal Development of Staff

Apart from vertical development of their profession for mid-level staff, some kinds of horizontal development are also helpful to staff. For example, staff may be given some tasks by their superior, which are not related to their core duties. As the mid-level staff may not be familiar with the tasks given, this will provide them opportunities to have new experiences and enhance their personal development. With the new experience, they can apply the skills and knowledge learned to their core duties and perform better.

X. CONCLUSION

After our group work discussion, we understand that there are numerous causes of stress for correctional personnel nowadays. This is because crime prevention and rehabilitation of offenders have become more sophisticated and require plenty of knowledge of different aspects. At the same time, public expectations towards the work performance of correctional personnel are also increasing.

Among these causes of stress, some of them can be manipulated but some of them cannot be avoided. Therefore, being mid-level staff of correctional organizations, what we can do is to identify the problems and find out possible solutions for them. In order to achieve our goals, we have to continuously equip ourselves with adequate abilities and skills to overcome these problems and prepare ourselves for further career advancement and take up more crucial roles within the organizations in the future.

Apart from practical knowledge and skills in our profession, acquiring stress management skills is also critical for mid-level correctional personnel in order to maintain good work performance. These skills not only help us to tackle stress, but also our subordinates and even superiors. Therefore, we should take up the responsibilities and play a leading role in our organizations to promote effective stress management among staff. As a result, we can help all staff of our organizations to maintain healthy lives while performing their correctional duties with confidence and satisfaction.

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