

## **GROUP B**

### **WHAT MID-LEVEL STAFF CAN DO TO ASSIST CORRECTIONAL PERSONNEL IN TERMS OF STRESS MANAGEMENT**

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## **I. INTRODUCTION**

Group B found a lot of serious problems which cause much stress in the workplace, such as overcrowding, nature of work (dirty, difficult, dangerous), lack of budget, lack of staff, heavy workload, lack of facilities and equipment, lack of communication, lack of staff training and so on. Unfortunately mid-level staff cannot control budgets, the number of staff or personnel, and workload, nor change the nature of work. Hence the group focused only on those stress-causing factors in the workplace which they believe they can be managed in their capacity as mid-level staff.

However, the group has acknowledged that each organization represented by the participants has its own initiatives towards mitigating stress in the workplace. This means that governments are also taking up measures or solutions to make stress in the workplace manageable so that organizations can function more effectively to accomplish their visions and missions. The current situations of the participants' countries are included in this paper.

## **II. SUMMARY OF THE DISCUSSIONS**

### **A. Current Situation**

#### **1. Japan (Police, Prosecution, Probation, Corrections)**

Administrative organizations' stress management of staff is regarded as an important issue. Various measures, such as provision of authorized annual leave, workplace recreation, contact points for consultations and suggestion box installment have been promoted. But the environment still does not allow free and candid opinion exchange between bosses and subordinates. Such environment is one of the causes of stress.

#### **2. Kenya (Probation)**

The department has put more emphasis on ensuring that officers are trained on trauma management so that they may not suffer burnout due to inadequate skills especially on handling rape and defilement cases.

#### **3. Korea (Corrections)**

Correctional institutions are currently working on the agreement with local medical centres. According to the agreement, physicians are in charge of correctional officers' mental health by consulting each staff member about job stress. Currently, stress management is divided into: (1) organizational-wide management halting and alleviating job stress factors including controlling the factors from features of work, reducing overburden, improvement of poor work environments, relieving stress from conflicting roles, finding rational ways to cope with being accused, raising recognition and improvement of the methods of operating the organization; (2) supportive measures for cultivating

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and strengthening the ability of individuals to deal with their stress directly such as establishing a task force, outlining stress treatment programmes; EAP (Employee Assistance Programmes), CISM (Critical Incident Stress Management); taking advantage of education and training, and financial support for the management of mental health.

4. Maldives (Prisons)

Most officers are very young, have not been provided with special training, and have very little knowledge about prison life. They are stressed because they do not have the basic knowledge on how to handle the stress created by inmates. Proper training at a professional level should be provided for the management of mental health.

5. The Philippines (Probation)

An open-door policy with regard to communication has been established. It also has a performance evaluation system for all employees which serves as the basis for promotion, rewards and other forms of incentives; a grievance system for informal discussion and settlement of work-related complaints; and a stress management programme consisting of wellness activities, seminars on health-related issues and how to cope with stress in the workplace.

6. Thailand (Corrections)

The levels of stress among correctional personnel may have increased in recent years due to correctional system problems such as prison overcrowding, understaffing, the impact of globalization, technological development and social modernization. The Department of Corrections has operated various projects in order to reduce sources of stress including: (1) Supportive Manpower, (2) Promotion of Self-sufficiency philosophy - developed by His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej which implies that morality and ethics are essential requirements in correctional work. The programme helps the staff in many ways such as providing guidelines for decision-making, learning to live without greed or overexploitation, and being able to cope appropriately with critical challenges, (3) Launching of the Prison Standards, (4) the Improvement of Quality of Life of Correctional Personnel, and (5) Dharma Practices for Prison staff.

7. Tonga (Probation)

The problem of communication is seen to have impacted the effectiveness of duties and roles conducted by probation offices. This problem occurred both within the organization and other related agencies which have caused stress in probation offices. We often received court orders very late and close to the deadlines; also we experience very poor communication regarding important information about discharged prisoners who are under supervision and probation orders. So establishing a proper Networking System is a matter of great urgency.

Group B agreed that there are common problems that cause stress in the workplace. These problems are presented below with their countermeasures.

**B. Common Problems and Countermeasures**

1. Lack of Communication

*(i) Problem*

The role of communication in a team, unit, or organization is very important. However, the mid-level finds it difficult to communicate with the senior level because they see the hierarchy as so rigid that they feel they are not welcome to express themselves. Similarly, mid-level staff sometimes are not aware of the work-related needs or problems of their subordinates. The latter feel inhibited to express them because they believe they would not be listened to.

*(ii) Countermeasures*

a. Feedback system —

It is important for mid-level staff to have a feedback system to be able to understand one another in the organization.

- (1) Superiors [including mid-level staff] must make the effort to communicate through the PDCA cycle. But they must have coaching and active listening skills.

*First*, think how to communicate with subordinates based on these skills [Plan].

*Second*, communicate with subordinates [Do].

*Third*, get feedback through regular job assessment [Check].

Regarding the ability to communicate effectively, an assessment system where subordinates can evaluate superiors should be adopted.

*Fourth*, improve communication based on that feedback [Act].

- (2) Subordinates: On the other hand, it is also important for subordinates to be given the opportunity to communicate, like this process below:

*First*, give them the chance to talk to superiors freely especially about work.

*Second*, give them feedback about what they said [Good points, bad points etc.].

*Third*, make them think by themselves on the given feedback so they will develop confidence and recognize that they can talk to superiors freely in an appropriate manner and time.

b. Improvement of work environment

To make the work environment conducive for communication, it is important for everyone to exchange frank opinions with each other.

Mid-level staff must provide opportunities where the exchange of ideas related to work performance is encouraged and welcomed. Group B termed this as “openness” — where there is a free exchange of ideas while at the same time respecting one’s position or authority in the hierarchy. Mid-level staff must be approachable and non-judgmental towards the staff so they would be able to talk about their problems, issues and concerns about their work. Immediate solutions to work-related problems may be hard to find but the feeling that one is being listened to eases stress in some ways. In doing so, staff are motivated to perform well because they are confident that mid-level staff would listen to and understand their problems in the workplace.

Strategies:

- (1) briefing and debriefing is useful to make use of the minimum chances of communicating with subordinates in their daily work. If mid-level staff and their subordinates have short meetings for only about 10 minutes in a small group of about 5 before and after work, they can share significant information about their work on that day.
- (2) weekly or monthly staff meetings not only with subordinates but also with senior officers is important for discussing problems in their work and finding solutions. For finding a solution, brainstorming techniques are useful.
- (3) use of new technology like e-mails and social networking systems enable every officer to express his/her opinion at any time and enable senior officers to send newsletters or bulletins without any extra cost.
- (4) use of suggestion boxes - some officers do not want to express their significant opinions openly, especially when they are afraid of being treated badly if they do so. Thus placing suggestion boxes for subordinates is one of the communication tools, so they can express their requests or opinions anonymously. They may even communicate to the upper level directly, skipping mid-level staff.
- (5) “Large room” systems, which allow mid-level and junior officers to work in pairs, can facilitate consultation or the sharing of problems regarding work.

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Because communication is necessary at work, mid-level staff must enhance their abilities by practicing assertiveness techniques to improve their skills in communication. They must learn how to give feedback to employees and senior officers and learn how to handle employees' complaints. They must also learn to be active listeners. They must understand both cognitive and affective contents of the communication (active listening) of their staff so that they would be able to respond to them appropriately.

2. Insufficient Staff Training

(i) *Problem*

Stress sets in when a subordinate feels inadequate and incompetent to perform his/her functions. Mistakes/errors happen frequently and these make the work inefficient. Under these circumstances, both mid-level staff and subordinates feel stressed because work is repeated, and it piles up. The stress may manifest in various forms, to mention a few: on the part of mid-level staff — irritability, anger, and frustration; on the part of subordinates — absenteeism and low morale.

(ii) *Countermeasures*

- a. Basic training/follow-up training
- b. Specialized training
- c. On-the-job training

Being mid-level supervisors and managers, mid-level staff can help to develop the skills and abilities of their subordinates. Because of their work experience, the mid-level staff are familiar with the work of their subordinates. Hence, they must have the ability to teach, mentor or train their staff. They must have the ability to identify the training needs of their subordinates and know how to prepare training designs and proposals. Mid-level staff can propose to top the level the need for a continuous human resource development programme for the staff to hone their competencies. The staff would also become mid-level in the future.

3. Lack of Leadership

Through our discussion in the Group Workshop sessions, all members in Group B mentioned the importance of leadership repeatedly and found that many of the problems derived from the lack of leadership. This means that the lack of leadership influences the stress at the workplace heavily, and this phenomenon is universal, despite differences in cultures. Therefore, Group B came to a consensus that improvement/enhancement of leadership as mid-level staff is needed in order to tackle many of the stress-related problems that we are facing at our workplaces.

In the 154th International Training Course, Mr. Seiichi Muroi, (Instructor of the Training Institute for Correctional Personnel) lectured about Leadership Theory. He introduced PM Theory, one of the major theories about leadership in organizational management, which was proposed by Professor Misumi at Osaka University. PM Theory focuses on the two aspects of leadership, "P (performance) Function" and "M (maintenance) Function", and analyses how different types of leadership affect the functions of the group/organization. In PM Theory, "P Function" means a function of the group/organization to achieve a goal. As for "P Function", a leader's functions are giving a clear job description, decisions and new ideas to the subordinates, comments/advice on their job performance, and scolding/warning. Meanwhile, "M Function" means a function to maintain or strengthen a group. As for "M Function", a leader maintains friendly relationships among the members through encouragement and support, and prevents the member's frustrations by promoting group cohesiveness through the enhancement of a member's feeling of belonging.

In PM Theory, "Pm" (High Performance, Low Maintenance) type leadership (Production-centered leadership) is limited productivity due to the subordinate's internal resistance/stress, while "PM" (High Performance, High Maintenance) type leadership is the most productive because the subordinates work most satisfactorily. Thus PM Theory leadership, which has both performance function and maintenance function, is essential for stress management in the workplace. Organizational management

without “M Function” will not lead to sufficient performance; on the contrary it will cause stress.

By considering the above, Group B discussed leadership of mid-level staff deeply, especially focusing on the maintenance aspect because Group B came to the conclusion that “M Function” of leadership performs a very important role for stress management. As a result of the Group Workshop, the group found that if mid-level staff acquired leadership and practiced it in the workplace appropriately, they can motivate subordinates more and utilize the human resources fully.

### **C. Enhancing Leadership**

Work can be stressful for mid-level staff if they lack the necessary management/leadership skills. When staff members perform their jobs poorly, it will affect the overall performance of the team or unit. Poor performance of the staff usually causes stress for the mid-level staff. Also, mid-level staff feel the stress when they have much work to do, both routine work and the more urgent and important tasks at hand.

Management is the ability to plan, organize, direct and monitor the activities of the organization in order to achieve defined objectives or goals. Performance management is one of the functions of mid-level staff as managers. Management and leadership complement each other: the latter provides the inspiration and motivation to bring the organization to its desired vision.

#### **1. Performance Management of the Staff**

Each member of the organization has his/her job description and the expected performance is based on that description. Goal setting and the expected performance are discussed between mid-level staff and subordinates. This is commonly called a performance contract. The staff pledges to perform his/her functions according to performance standards; the mid-level pledges to assist the staff achieve his/her work targets. Mid-level staff has the responsibility to evaluate the staff's actual performance against expected performance or performance targets. The evaluation may be done quarterly, semi-annually or annually.

Managing the performance of the staff means engaging in ongoing communication between the supervisor and the employees, providing feedback, coaching for improved performance, implementation of the employee development programmes and rewarding achievements.

Mid-level staff must enhance their ability to manage the performance of subordinates by learning how to give constructive performance feedback and how to improve staff performance. Mid-level staff must be able to evaluate subordinates' performance objectively, communicate clearly without being judgemental and accusatory, identify subordinate's training and developmental needs and identify subordinate's skills and abilities for purposes of promotion.

#### **2. Delegation of Authority**

Mid-level staff experience stress when they cannot perform all the tasks assigned to them. In order to meet the targets and concentrate on more important issues, delegating tasks to subordinates can be resorted to. In delegating the task, the mid-level shares the authority and responsibility with the staff in order to get effective results. The tasks that are to be delegated must be expressed clearly and results must be defined. The subordinate must be given enough independence to complete the task given within a specific time frame. Delegating tasks/authority develops the subordinate's potentials. It enables the subordinate to gain experience to take on higher responsibilities.

#### **3. Accountability and Autonomy**

All mid-level staff must share information and goals (long term, mid-term, short term) with subordinates so that they will know what their responsibilities are. Mid-level staff can use negotiation so that subordinates accept a suggestion or requirement (of the job/assignment). It is necessary to make them understand why they should accept it and what kind of benefit or advantage it has for their job.

Just giving subordinates an order or a command every time deprives them of their independence in carrying out their functions. Respecting subordinates' autonomy as much as possible makes them confident of their abilities and makes them more responsible.

4. Decision-making

This is a cognitive process which every mid-level staff member must have, develop and enhance. Mid-level staff make decisions in the workplace. Therefore they should keep the resource of information and sharpen their ability in analyzing situations. Every decision-making process produces a final choice; then immediate action is taken to implement the choice.

Mid-levels can ask for the ideas or opinions of subordinates which would make them feel that they are recognized in some ways, and would raise their morale and motivation. But it is the mid-levels who make the final decisions. However, mid-levels must also learn how to be flexible if the situation calls for it.

5. Transformational Leadership

A type of leadership that mid-level staff can develop further is one that motivates their staff to align their personal goals with the goals of the team and the organization as a whole. While not losing their own personal identities or uniqueness, workers must model, through their behaviour and conduct, the core values and mission statements of their organizations. And the mid-level staff must set an example of proper behaviour and conduct before their staff. They must “walk the talk” (lead by example). They must enhance their emotional intelligence to be able to act in proactive ways in problem situations. In the Individual Presentations, it was noticeable that mid-level staff are manifesting transformational leadership styles in the workplace. Mid-level staff can motivate their subordinates by appealing to their sense of commitment and dedication to public service, not just the satisfaction or fulfillment of their personal motives or goals.

6. Training for Mid-Level Staff

To enhance the ability of stress management of mid-level staff, it is desirable that systematic training programmes should be organized. Of course, stress management mainly depends on individual character, but to learn the knowledge or technique helps them to improve their abilities for stress management. Below are some of these training programmes.

- Coaching and mentoring training
- Training for effective performance feedbacking
- Stress/Anger management training (mid-level staff and subordinates)

### III. RECOMMENDATIONS

#### A. Establishing Stress Management Mechanisms

- Correctional officers should be mindful of their own stress and have their own ways of stress management which are easy to put into practice. Meditation practice, yoga exercise (the Self-sufficiency Philosophy Programme of Thailand corrections is an example).
- Stress management programmes should be introduced to correctional institutions for enhancing management skills or abilities. Trauma Management through counselling for probation officers in Kenya Probation is an example. The wellness programme and physical exercise of Philippine Probation is also an example.

#### B. Build Network Systems

- For mutual understanding between mid-level staff and subordinates, the most important thing is the spirit of “openness”. Feedback systems and communication tools such as social networking systems or suggestion boxes will support their openness.
- Improvement of communication environments and work environments. The “Large Room System” of the Japanese Public Prosecutors’ Office is an example. Prison Standard policy for improvement of quality of prison environment and prison officers of Thailand corrections is another example.

- Communication networking systems within organizations as well as between other relevant organizations should be developed in order to share significant information timely, accurately, and objectively.

### **C. Education and Training**

- Mid-level staff and subordinates have been already provided with professional education and training to some extent, but sometimes education and training are inconsistent and unsuitable for them. These cause heavy stress. Above all, their needs should be researched, and appropriate education and training based on their needs should be organized. Study corners, reference materials, academic calendars of the Maldives police are examples. Anger management training, including active listening training practiced by Japanese corrections, is also recommended.
- Nowadays, the demands for the leaders such as mid-level staff in correctional institutions are so difficult that a single dominant leader cannot handle everything. So the delegation of authority, in other words, shared leadership with subordinates should be considered. With shared leadership, mid-level staff will be freed from the pressure which requires them to be an impossibly strong and dominant leader, and subordinates will be motivated to take more responsibility and workload so as to reduce the stress throughout the office. For a common understanding of shared leadership, training courses on leadership should be organized.

## **IV. CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, through discussions, our group learned that work-related stress is experienced by correctional officers. We have identified the stress that we, mid-level staff, have little control of, the stress that is beyond our control and the stress that is within our control. We believe that stress could be well managed by utilizing whatever limited resources we have and that we have the capacity to minimize stress. Therefore, continuous education and training are encouraged to enhance our abilities, including the ability to manage stress, to become more effective in performing our duties.

As leaders, whether or not we engage in stress management depends on ourselves. As leaders, we are required to maintain friendly relationships, promote group cohesiveness, enhance communication and foster our subordinates' and colleagues' feelings of belonging. We have the capacity to develop and nurture this kind of work environment. We have the capacity to establish this kind of atmosphere. This will make our subordinates show more enthusiasm, bring out the best of their abilities and keep them inspired to do their work. Leadership requires a paradigm shift: we can display real leadership if we change our attitudes like understanding our subordinates' minds, and respecting them not only as part of the workforce, but as individuals who have a lot of abilities and potentials.