THE EFFICACY OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

ACTIVITIES IN COPING WITH NEGATIVE STRESS:

IDENTIFYING PERCEPTIONS AMONG

OKLAHOMA DEPARTMENT OF

CORRECTIONS (ODOC)

EMPLOYEES

By

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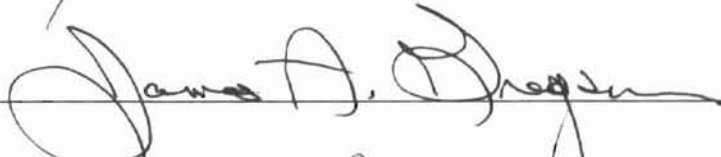the Degree of
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The American correctional environment in general is a value laden profession. Correctional professionals are sometimes faced with dilemmas which involve both moral and legal issues. In some cases, legal duties violate correctional employee moral beliefs and convictions. For instance, some correctional employees may not believe in the death penalty. Such a conflict may lead to stress among correctional employees when a death penalty is carried out. Wayne, Lloyd, and Lashley (1991) defined stress as any circumstance that threatened or was perceived to threaten an individual's well-being and thereby taxed their coping abilities. Other sources of stress among correctional employees may include, but are not necessarily limited to, overcrowding in prisons, health issues like Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS), drugs, and violence among inmates.

Correctional institutions also experience internal problems between the inmates and employees. Such problems can affect correctional employees in various ways. For instance, Williamson (1990) claimed that correctional institutional environments created negative effects on employees. Negative effects may come from problems common to a

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population such as that housed in prisons, including escapes, riots, inmate violence, drugs, sexual harassment, rape, and theft. Moreover, dealing with people in environments of conflict could create cynicism among correctional employees. Such negative effects may contribute to both short-term and long-term stress among correctional employees.

Lombardo (1981) contended that an element of danger was associated with working inside a correctional institution. In his research of New York correctional officers, 50% identified the fear of physical danger and the mental strain as dissatisfying features of their employment. Correctional employees related deaths was identified as another source of stress by the New York correctional officers. As another example, between 1976 and 1987 there were 116 correctional employees related deaths nationally (Travisono, 1987).

The dangers mentioned above make correctional employees feel threatened at work, which may contribute to their stress. Driskell and Salas (1996) defined threat as the anticipation or fear of physical or psychological harm. They contended that the threat of dangerous environments increased subjective stress. Some of the dangers correctional employees face include physical assault, sexual harassment, rape, and murder (Seymour & English, 1996). They claimed that these dangers made the correctional profession stressful.

Selye's (1980) stress theory indicated that individuals existed in normal states of equilibrium where they established personal boundaries based on a certain order or understanding of the world. He claimed that an occasional stressor destroyed an

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individual's state of equilibrium, but most people usually stayed within a familiar emotional range. However, he noted that trauma threw people so far off the familiar range that it was difficult for them to restore a sense of balance. Selye noted that developmental stressors, such as marriage, divorce, parenthood, and retirement, were common to everyone. However, he pointed out that correctional employees experienced extraordinarily high chronic stressors repeatedly.

Selye's theory was criticized by Lazarus and Folkman (1984). They noted that events did not produce stress in and of themselves. Instead, it was primarily the perception of events that made them stressful. The degree of stress that a person experiences may depend on the meaning attached to an event. They claimed that the ability to cope with stress varied from one individual to another. They noted that methods of coping had been categorized, observed, and quantified with instruments such as the Ways of Coping Checklist, the most widely used measure of coping. Examples of different styles of coping strategies included in the checklist were: (1) avoidance coping, an attempt to reduce the emotional discomfort caused by a situation; (2) problem reappraisal coping strategies, which call for reframing the meaning of a stressor, include such techniques as, "Didn't let it get to me", and (3) problem solving, which consists of coping strategies which may be reflected in comments like, "Took a big chance and did something risky."

PROBLEM

The problem which gave rise to this study was the negative effect of occupational stress on ODOC employees.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this study was to identify ODOC employee perceptions about the contributions of existing professional development activities to stress reduction.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study attempted to answer the following questions:

1. In what professional development activities do ODOC employees participate?

2. What professional development activities are believed to contribute to stress reduction?

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

An exploration of employee perceptions about the contributions of existing professional development activities in stress reduction will benefit ODOC and other

correctional agencies. ODOC, like other correctional agencies, is interested in

maintaining the effectiveness, efficiency, and well being of its employees. The results of

the study can identify opportunities for maintaining and improving the effectiveness of

professional development activities believed to have positive contributions on stress

reduction.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

The following terms are defined as used in this study:

Card Technique - process used by a group of people in problem solving. This

technique is a five step process.

Community Correctional Inmates - offenders housed in facilities which do not

have an armed perimeter. Movement of the inmates is unrestricted within the facility.

These inmates are allowed to work outside the facility without constant supervision.

Coping - cognitive or behavioral efforts to master, reduce, or tolerate the internal

or external demands that are created by the stressful transactions (Folkman and Lazarus,

1980).

Correlation - statistical method used to determine whether a relationship exists

between variables (Bluman, 1995).

Correctional Supervisor - classified or unclassified employee assigned authority

and responsibility for assigning work, training, reviewing work performance and

participating in determining appropriated personnel actions regarding employees.

Continuing Supervisory Training - training provided to all employees in a supervisory capacity. The employee must attend a minimum of 16 hours of approved supervisory training.

Cross-training - temporary work assignment designed to allow employees the opportunity to gain experience in different work responsibilities.

Employee Assistance Program - program designed to help ODOC employees deal with personal problems that interfere with job performance. These include alcohol and drug problems and financial, marital, legal, or family problems.

Employee Wellness - program designed to promote smoking cessation, reduction of alcohol and drug dependence, stress management, proper nutrition, weight control, and positive lifestyle management among the employees of ODOC.

First Instance Supervisory Training - training offered to employees who are new to positions that involve supervising other employees.

Human Resource Development - integrated use of training and development, organization development, and career development to improve individual, group, and organizational effectiveness (American Society for Training and Development, 1989).

In-Service Training - employee development which encompasses a broad range of training alternatives to include (1) statutory or departmentally determined annual training requirements and (2) advanced specialized training opportunities designed to enhance existing skills or instill new skills or knowledge based upon the assessed needs of the training participants.

Job Stress - lack of harmony between the individual and the work environment (Pelletier 1977, p. 90).

Maximum Security Inmates - offenders held within the confines of an armed perimeter and under staff supervision 24 hours a day. They are locked up 23 hours a day and allowed one hour of recreation. They are limited, controlled, and supervised by institutional staff.

Medium Security Inmates - offenders held within the confines of an armed perimeter. Movement of medium security inmates is structured and monitored. They have limited freedom of movement within the facility. They have jobs and can attend programs within the facility.

Mentors - employees who assist co-workers assigned to them in job assimilation, provide emotional and professional feedback, guidance, and support. Mentors are required to have positive attitude, high energy and motivation, competency in current job assignment, and interest in other employees.

Minimum Security Inmates - offenders held in facilities which may or may not have an armed perimeter. Daytime movement of these inmates is unrestricted within the facility, but nighttime movement is restricted.

Moral Reconation Therapy - systematic, step-by-step treatment strategy designed to enhance self image, promote growth of a positive, productive identity and facilitate the development of higher levels of moral reasoning among the inmates. It attempts to re-educate inmates to display positive habits and value oriented behavior based upon high levels of moral judgement (Little & Robinson, 1987).

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Multiple Regression - statistical method used to determine whether a relationship exists between variables. It explains statistical relationship between quantitative variables. It explains and predicts one variable from several explanatory variables.

Parolees - persons released from incarceration to be supervised in the community.

Policies and Procedures - a system of coordinated manuals of policies, procedures, and administrative rules established by the Oklahoma Board of Corrections which governs the department and its programs and its facilities.

Probationers - persons sentenced directly to community supervision by the courts.

Professionals - persons who have an assured competence in a particular field or occupation through certification, licensure or accreditation.

Professional Development - process that determines the state of readiness of professionals. Three criteria define readiness: current capability to perform socially, academically, and professionally; self-esteem, and preparation for future growth (Saline, 1977).

Pre-Service Training - formal introductory training provided at an academy site for new employees. The training is oriented toward specific learning objectives designed to familiarize new employees with the history, philosophy, structure, and values of the agency.

Significance level - statistical tool that defines unlikely sample means as those that would occur in no more than (say) five in 100 if the null hypothesis were true (Shavelson, 1981).

Stress - a state of an organism subjected to a stressor. It can take the form of an increased autonomic activity and in the long term contribute to the breakdown of an organism or development of a mental disorder (Davison and Neale, 1994).

Stress Management - the application of a range of psychological procedures which help people control and reduce their stress (Davison and Neale, 1994).

Stressor - an event that occasions stress in an organism, like the loss of a loved one (Davison and Neale, 1994).

Threat - the anticipation or fear of physical or psychological harm. For instance, threat of dangerous environments may increase subjective stress (Driskell and Salas, 1996).

Trauma- a severe physical injury to the body caused by an external force, or a psychological shock having a lasting effect on mental life (Davision and Neale, 1994).

T-test - statistical tool that enables comparison of different population means.

ASSUMPTIONS

1.   The participants answered the questions honestly.

2.   The participants were able to read and write.

3.   The participants were familiar with the professional development activities identified for the study.

LIMITATIONS

The following limitations apply to this study:

1.   The meaning of "stress" varies from person to person.

2.   Stressors produce varying effects on different people.

3.   Various jobs are vulnerable to different stressors.

4.   Participants were limited to correctional employees in Oklahoma.

4.   The questionnaire developed for this study identified both training and

non-training issues as professional development activities.

SCOPE OF STUDY

The study encompassed all employees of ODOC. Stratified random samples were

drawn from the 4,700 ODOC employees statewide.

OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

This chapter introduced the study by giving the title and background information

about the state of corrections in America, followed by statements of the problem,

purpose, and the study questions. The significance of the study was briefly stated,

followed by definitions of terms, assumptions and limitations. Chapter Two is devoted to

a literature review and begins with an overview ODOC. This is followed by sub topics

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on correctional env ironments, bureaucracy, management and line employees turnover, training, helping employees cope with stress, multiple regression and summary. Chapter Three is a comprehensive description of the methodology and the instrument selection. The chapter also describes the population of the study. Chapter Three also provides a description of the sample selection, instrument validity and reliability. It also provides a description of the statistical methods and analysis used in the study. Chapter Four presents findings of the study. Chapter Five is devoted to summary, conclusions and recommendations.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The intent of this chapter is to provide a review of the related literature for this study. This review will focus on the effects of stress on correctional employees in Oklahoma and in the country as a whole. It concentrates on the following areas: (1) Corrections Before the 1960's, (2) Overview of ODOC, (3) Correctional Environment and Stress, (4) Bureaucracy, (5) Management and Line Employees Turnover, (6) Training, (7) Helping Employees Cope with Stress, (8) Multiple Regression, and (9) Summary.

CORRECTIONS BEFORE THE 1960S

Before the 1960s, corrections in America functioned largely independent of external influence. According to Williamson (1990), correctional administrators defined both institutional and community environments. Beginning in the 1960s several factors began to exert considerable influence upon corrections. Williamson noted that increased social awareness and activism, the civil rights movement, judicial activities, and public exposure of abuses in prisons may have pressured correctional systems to become more

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open and to interact with their social, political, and legal environments.

The forced interaction between correctional institutions and their external environments had some effect on the correctional environment in America. Williamson (1990) claimed that rapid and radical social changes took place in many aspects of American society during the 1960s. He also claimed that laws, demonstrations, the War in Vietnam, and court decisions affected the area of criminal justice, especially corrections. He further noted that much emphasis was placed on community corrections, probation and parole, and innovative institutional programming.

According to Maher (1966); Szasz (1961); Ullmann and Kranser (1969); and Zilboorg and Henry (1941) rehabilitation based on the *Medical Model* of diagnosis and treatment became the primary ideology of corrections. The goal of the medical model was understanding the origin of maladaptive behavior, correcting such behavior when it occurred, and preventing its occurrence in the first place. Under the medical model of intervention, the "final" goal was generally to restore a preexisting state of health; in other words, to "cure." This change in ideology toward a greater emphasis on treatment led to a substantial increase in the number of professional persons involved in corrections, including professors, teachers, researchers, and social workers, which in turn prompted correctional organizations to start reforming their practices (Williamson, 1990).

The nature of the correctional administration can contribute to stress among correctional employees. Cayer and Weschler (1988) pointed out that corrections was public administration and, therefore, a value-laden practice. They argued that correctional administrators were often caught between their legal duties and the political

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elected officials who wanted different things from the agencies. Correctional

administrators, therefore, needed to balance competing interests, promote legitimate

policies of appropriate processes, and build outside support for their institutions. Such

diverse demands contributed to stress among correctional administrators (Cayer

&Weschler, 1988).

Overcrowding in prisons could create stress among correctional employees.

Williamson (1990) pointed out that political influence on corrections could be traced back

to the 1960s, when politicians began using crime, criminal justice, and corrections as

mainstays in their election campaigns. Further, starting in the late 1970s, laws were

passed which made prison terms mandatory for many offenses. Williamson claimed that

legislatures often passed laws without providing funds to meet the additional

responsibilities. This may have contributed to the overcrowding in prisons and to the

expansion of other correctional programs, such as probation and parole.

Rapid growth of the inmate population surpasses the resources available. A

survey conducted by the ODOC Human Resources Department (1996) on *correctional*

officer and security/contact staff ratio to inmates indicated that at the Oklahoma State

Penitentiary in McAlester, a maximum security institution, the daily ratios of workers to

inmates were as follows: day shift ratio 1:16, evening shift 1:27, and night shift 1:35.

The survey report indicated that the ratios were lower at the lower security institutions.

This low employee-to-inmate ratio could contribute to stress, especially among

correctional officers and contact employees.

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OVERVIEW OF ODOC

Oklahoma's first state prison was started in 1908. During the territorial days,

Oklahoma was sending its prisoners to Kansas' penitentiary at Lansing, Kansas. Kate

Barnard, a Commissioner of Charities and Corrections, played a substantial role in the

history of corrections in Oklahoma. She had received numerous complaints about the

mistreatment of Oklahoma inmates in the Kansas penitentiary. She made an

unannounced visit in August 1908 and took a tour of the institution. After the tour she

found systematic torture of inmates. On her return to Oklahoma, she wrote about the

conditions in the Kansas penitentiary and recommended that all Oklahoma prisoners be

transferred back to Oklahoma. As a result, the first contingent of 50 inmates was put on a

train and moved to McAlester, Oklahoma, on October 14, 1908. However, there were no

prison buildings waiting for the inmates. Kate Barnard helped set up prisons which

helped rehabilitate offenders. In gratitude for their "rescue" from the cruel treatment of

the Kansas penitentiary, the prisoners helped in the construction of their temporary

quarters and later the main penitentiary (Sandhu, 1991).

In early 1950 the Commissioner of Charities and Corrections made some

substantial recommendations: (1) all penal institutions be removed from politics, and an

experienced director be appointed to oversee them; (2) all guards at Oklahoma State

Penitentiary (OSP) be trained and be placed on merit system, and the guards at Oklahoma

State Reformatory (OSR) be designated as supervisors; and (3) legislation creating a

system of adult probation be introduced. There was general disdain about the

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interference of politics in the affairs of prisons and prisoners, as a result the

Commissioner of Charities and Corrections went outside the political arena and

contracted with the Oklahoma Citizens' Committee on Delinquency and Crime to

investigate the prison conditions. The Citizens' Committee presented its report in

September 1968, making several recommendations about probation and institutions: (1) a

statewide adult probation system be established; (2) staff be selected through a merit or

civil service system, therefore eliminating political patronage; (3) adult correctional

assistants be politically administered; and (4) each institution set up a full-time in-service

training program (Sandhu, 1991).

A second report, *Apathy or Action,* came from the Citizens' group in 1962 to

review the positions pointed out by the previous report. The 1962 report recommended:

(1) creation of a centrally administered correction system with its own director; and (2)

the appointment of a board. On January 10, 1967, Governor Dewey F. Bartlette made a

historic announcement in his legislative address, creating a state Corrections Department

and a state Board of Corrections (Sandhu, 1991).

ODOC was created in May, 1967. Today ODOC is governed by the State Board

of Corrections, a bipartisan seven-member panel of gubernatorial appointees. The board

establishes review policies for the operation of the department, appoints a director, and

confirms appointments of facility unit heads. The director is responsible to the board for

performing managerial duties. ODOC is responsible for the operation of 17 institutions

ranging from minimum to maximum security, seven community correctional centers,

fifteen community work centers, and six probation and parole districts. ODOC

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supervises more than 19,000 incarcerated inmates and more than 31,000 adults on probation and parole. It employs more than 4,700 persons across the state.

According to the Corrections Yearbook (1994), one of the fastest growing sectors of federal or state government is that of the number of prisoners under the jurisdiction of correctional authorities. In 1980, the United States prison population was 329,821, as compared to the record high of 995,730 in the year ending 1993. This was an increase of 665,909 inmates or 202% (an annual change of 9.0%). The United State has a high crime rate, and also has a high incarceration rate. It is the highest of any industrialized nation. Oklahoma has kept in step with the national trend as the correctional system population has increased steadily since the mid 1970s. The population more than doubled since the end of 1982, when there were 6,500 offenders incarcerated. Receptions in the prison system outpaced both releases and new beds. Receptions during 1986 averaged 370 per month. Since that year, the average monthly reception rates have risen steadily to 587 per month, a 59 percent increase. Among the 50 states, Oklahoma had the third highest total inmate incarceration rate per 100,000 residents with 517 as of January 1, 1994 (compared to the national average of 370). Oklahoma led the nation for five consecutive years (1987-1991) in the percentage of female inmates at 9.6 percent. The national average was 5.5 percent for states with over 500 female inmates. From 1988 to the year ending 1994, the incarceration of females in Oklahoma had increased by 793 inmates, or 108 percent.

As the crime rates continued to increase across the United States, citizens demanded that criminal elements be removed from the streets. Legislative bodies heeded

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the cry by enacting mandatory, lengthy sentences for those convicted of crimes, thereby

filling up jails and prisons (The Corrections Yearbook, 1994). Oklahoma enacted "Truth-

In-Sentencing," a mandatory sentencing law. This law required inmates to serve at least

80 percent of their sentence before being eligible for release.

Mandatory sentencing laws have led to increased prison populations. Henderson

(1990) claimed that in many prisons, two or more inmates were forced to live in cells

designed for only one inmate, or in dormitories when they should be more properly

housed in cells. Toilets, showers, and other communal facilities were shared by numbers

far beyond their intended capacity. Henderson argued that under these conditions, the

tendency for violent eruption increased dramatically. He claimed that interpersonal

tensions in housing units escalated and predatory inmates exploited these conditions.

There was also increased inmate animosities and group tensions. Support facilities, such

as gymnasiums, kitchens, dining rooms, industries, and medical facilities, became

increasingly stressed as the number of beds added to fixed-capacity institutions increased.

In many institutions, program resources became inadequate for the increased numbers of

inmates they served (Henderson, 1990).

CORRECTIONAL ENVIRONMENT AND STRESS

A positive work environment is beneficial to an organization. Repetti (1987)

contended that the social environment of an organization was important to the mental

health of its employees. Similarly, the relationships individuals had with supervisory

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personnel and with those within their work groups affected their work satisfaction, mental and physical health. However, the situation in corrections was a complex and dynamic environment with ill-defined goals and procedures to develop effective professional standards and ethics (Williamson, 1990).

The structure of an organization can influence its overall effectiveness. Fleisher (1996) argued that correctional institutions experienced stress just like families. On the one hand, he claimed that the formal correctional culture was relatively homogeneous and was established and sustained by policies and position descriptions for job specialties. On the other hand, he claimed that the informal correctional culture was more complex and varied due to the temperaments of employees and inmates. Further, he claimed that the informal culture was influenced by the leadership styles of the institutions' leaders. He claimed that correctional administrators who shouted at the employees could foster a hostile work environment that may create stress among correctional employees.

The health of a correctional environment can be measured. Fleisher (1996) claimed that incident reports could be used to measure the health of a correctional organization. The incident reports measure inmates' compliance with institutional rules and regulations. Reports on inmates' discontent with employees conduct can also be used to determine the health of a correctional organization. It can also be measured qualitatively through employee and inmate speech. Another way of measuring the health of a correctional organizational could be the occurrence of disturbances, such as riots. Riots are dreaded in corrections and could contribute to stress on both the employees and the inmates. Hostage taking, usually associated with riots in prisons, was identified as

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one of the dangers involved in working in corrections. In addition, the physical and psychological harm caused by being taken hostage was a source of stress among correctional employees (Seymour and English, 1996).

Riots can be attributed to many factors. According to an article in Time Magazine (September, 1971), the prison riot in Attica, New York, in September of 1971 was mainly attributed to poor living conditions, racism, and correctional officers' brutality. At the time of the uprising, at least 75 percent of the 2,250 prisoners were black or Puerto Rican. However all of the 383 guards, too few for that number of inmates, were white. According to the article, black inmates resented the racism shown by guards, who gave easier prison jobs to white inmates and openly referred to their clubs as "nigger sticks." The convicts also complained about the stern discipline of the prison superintendent, solitary confinement, and beatings.

The Attica riot may have prompted some states to start considering prison reform to avoid a similar situation. The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) warned many institutions to prepare for similar uprisings (Time Magazine, September 27, 1971). Oklahoma's public attitude toward prison reform may have changed as well. During the Attica riots, hostages were killed and massive destruction of property occurred.

When the McAlester Prison in Oklahoma, a maximum-security facility, rioted, an article entitled, McAlester: "Way Overdue For This Blow-Up" claimed that the hot, overcrowded facility, built in 1909, needed little excuse to erupt into violence (Sunday Oklahoman, July 29, 1973). The McAlester prison was characterized by problems such as poor living conditions, correctional officers' brutality, sexual harassment and rape,

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racism, and idleness among inmates. The prison also adhered to nineteenth-century penal codes. These factors may have contributed to the outbreak of the July, 1973 riot. The inmates wanted better medication, food facilities, lockup areas, standardization of rules, and no discrimination. Like the Attica riots, there was loss of life and massive destruction of property.

BUREAUCRACY

Foucault (1977) claimed that the prison institution had always been a focus of concern and debate. According to him a series of different conflicts had been witnessed in the field of corrections. Foucault claimed that the religious critiques argued whether conversion was to be the principal element of imprisonment. He also noted that the medical critics argued whether total isolation drove convicts insane. And that the economic critiques favored a method that was cost effective. But despite all this opposition, the primary objective of imprisonment was coercive individualization, and termination of any relation that was not supervised by authority or arranged according to hierarchy (Foucault, 1977).

The administrative structure of an organization can influence its overall effectiveness. Ngiro and Ngiro (1984) defined bureaucracy as a method of organizing in which routines were estimated and contingencies clearly defined in advance. According to them, bureaucracy had the following characteristics:

a)   a hierarchy of offices;

b)   a clearly defined systematic division of labor;

c)   formal written rules of conduct and procedure applied uniformly;

d)   impersonality in performance of duties; and

e)   neutral competence as a criterion for professional advancement.

Ngiro and Ngiro (1984) contended that professionals generally avoided the bureaucratic

form of organizations because it reduced creativity and did not allow for variation among

cases. Similarly, Williamson (1990) contended that agencies were becoming increasingly

bureaucratized because the courts increasingly ruled that procedures and operations be

standardized. Moreover, Brown (1987) contended that bureaucratic form of

organizations contributed to stress among the employees. In addition Hame (1987)

claimed that bureaucracy was the antithesis of effectiveness and was opposed to the

fundamental nature of man. Bureaucracy, Hame also believed that bureaucracy made

employees become uncaring individuals who dealt with people as cases rather than as

individuals having unique problems.

ODOC is a bureaucratic organization. According to Selke (1993), correctional

bureaucracy made employees feel like someone was always looking over their shoulder.

He also claimed that there was usually limited delegation in corrections and that

employees did their duties as prescribed by policy and procedure. He further claimed that

this made correctional employees lack a sense of authorship in their work. It also made

gave them less latitude in carrying out their duties. Nevertheless, professionals had been

forced to find ways to practice their particular professions in corrections complying with

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the requirements of bureaucracy (Williamson, 1990).

Selke (1993) claimed that a more participatory style of management could be preferable in corrections. However, rigid and authoritarian styles of management were still carried out in large closed prisons, with no input from either employees or inmates regarding planning, procedures, and assignments. Selke claimed that decentralization of power could be an important achievement in correctional reform. He argued that sharing power at various levels in correctional institutions could reduce stress among employees. He also claimed that employees input into the decision making processes could make them feel important.

MANAGEMENT AND LINE EMPLOYEE TURNOVER

Stress among correctional employees may be attributed to the nature of their work. According to Alpert and Hass (1991), corrections could be categorized as a human service. They claimed that the unfortunate circumstances and situations of the correctional offenders contributed to stress among the correctional employees as they provided their services to unwilling inmates, who often rejected them. Alpert and Hass also noted that the prevalence of psychological abnormalities among inmates created a wide range of behaviors which correctional employees confronted on a daily basis. As a result, high turnover was common among correctional employees, especially among correctional officers.

According to the Criminal Justice Institute (1989), a 50% turnover rate existed for

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all new correctional officers nationwide during their first year on the job. High turnover was also due to the low pay of correctional line employees. There was also a high turnover among correctional management staff. The average length of service of directors of adult correctional agencies in the United States was about 3.42 years (Criminal Justice Institute, 1989).

A high turnover rate also affected training. According to Henderson (1990), high turnover among correctional management and line employees led to high recruitment training costs. It also hindered the operational effectiveness of correctional institutions. Further, recruiting was made difficult by the demographic environment, which placed the correctional administrators at a disadvantage in the recruiting process. Henderson noted that the correctional administrators had to compete with numerous other private and public sector organizations for a shrinking pool of suitable candidates.

TRAINING

According to an article in the Oklahoma City Times (August 28, 1973), the Oklahoma State Safety Commissioner urged that more prison training was needed. This was after the McAlester riot. The commissioner claimed that prison officials had relied too much on inmates policing themselves. The commissioner also pointed out that lack of training had become evident during the prison riots. When asked about frequent criticism that the inmates actually run the state prison with officials overseeing their

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work, the commissioner replied that the employees at McAlester were so short of personnel that they had to rely on inmates.

The mid 1970s witnessed an increased emphasis on the training of employees in ODOC. The funding incentive came from a federal program referred to as the Law Enforcement Education Program (LEEP). Later, a private agency known as the Professional Agency for Correctional Training (PACT), with funding from LEEP, assumed the responsibility for training correctional employees at lower and mid-management levels. PACT hired both full-time and part-time instructors to instruct in their areas of specialization. Eventually, ODOC resumed the responsibility of training and started an academy (Sandhu, 1991).

Training was aimed at helping correctional employees to grow and develop on both personal and professional levels. It was also aimed at helping them cope with stress. Henderson (1990) contended that the most important factor in reducing the potential for disturbances was having efficient personnel who could handle their responsibilities and any emergencies in a confident manner. He claimed that such an attitude was a product of thorough training in necessary technical and interpersonal skills. Further, he claimed that when employees were proficient in technical and interpersonal skills, they were less likely to experience stress.

Training can offer other benefits. According to Henderson (1990), training programs were required to address problems associated with lack of experience. Training programs were also to be geared toward developing professional standards of conduct for correctional employees. Such programs helped in preventing misunderstandings among

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employees about an institution's philosophy and goals. Henderson claimed that a comprehensive and well organized training program was an essential part of every correctional institution.

Special attention was given to practical pre-assignment training programs for new correctional employees and to continuing professional development. At the national level, training was emphasized by the American Correctional Association. The American Correctional Association Standards Commission on Accreditation for Corrections required that new correctional employees receive 160 hours of training during their first year and 40 hours each year thereafter as long as they have contact with inmates. Training was also used to improve organizational effectiveness through increased personal and job satisfaction. Henderson (1990) claimed that ongoing developmental programs for employees at all levels was to provide for continuing professional development. Such programs included additional exposure to specific operational subjects, including riot procedures and control. Similarly, broader programs for management personnel allowed institutional managers to develop native skills and acquire new ones. These programs were aimed at helping managers to be better managers of their institution on a daily basis. Henderson further claimed that an improved institutional environment reduced tensions and stress among correctional employees.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND STRESS
REDUCTION

An individual's physical fitness has an effect on stress. Blonna (1996) claimed

that there were many physiological benefits associated with physical fitness. He pointed

out that lifestyle changes such as the individual's fitness level, were essential for effective

stress management. Blonna contended that, during all forms of physical activities,

muscles were contracted and relaxed. He advised that exercise was an appropriate use of

skeletal muscles and effectively eliminated chronic muscle tension which was associated

with the stress response.

Physical activities reduce stress. Sime (1984) argued that when the body was

stressed, it secreted various hormones into circulation to mobilize energy, maintain

homeostasis, and cope with the stressor. These hormones, if not utilized, wore down the

immunity placing high demands on the body's tissues, organs, and systems. However,

physical activity eliminated this problem by putting these hormones to use.

There are some physical benefits associated with physical activity as well. Sime

(1984) further claimed that the heart, lungs, and circulatory system took part in all forms

of exercise by pumping oxygen rich blood to the body tissue and removing carbon

dioxide and other wastes. During exercise the body experienced increased energy, greater

endurance, and increased mental alertness and acuity. The body also experienced

improved mood, reduced stress level, and decreased risk of heart disease.

Physical exercise improves the overall well being of a person. Sime (1984) also

claimed that exercise improved one's self-esteem, self-reliance, and self-efficacy. He

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contended that sticking to a fitness program required self-discipline, hard work, and self-control. Such qualities were important and were shared by habitual exercisers. Exercise provided a break from reality, giving an individual an opportunity to explore options.

Being an active member of a community can help stress in one's life. Insel and Roth (1993) used a wellness model to define health. According to this model, optimum health encompassed six dimensions: physical, social, emotional, intellectual, spiritual, and environmental. The category of social activities can be placed under the social dimension using, Insel's and Roth's wellness model. According to them, the social dimension was about being connected to others through various types of relationships and activities. They claimed that individuals who functioned optimally in this domain were able to form friendships, have immediate relationships, and give and receive love and affection. They were also able to give of themselves and share in the joys and sorrows of being part of a community. Individuals who functioned optimally in all six dimensions were able to cope with stress more effectively.

Education can help employees cope with stress. Continuing education is a step toward improving one's intellectual dimension. Roth and Insel (1993) contend that being able to distinguish fact from fiction depended upon one's knowledge. They claimed that a big component of intelligent life was a commitment to continually expand one's knowledge. Knowledge gave power to the individual and control in their life. A key to reducing stress was knowing as much as possible about a potential stressor. Education gave individuals a broader perspective and an appreciation of events in the world around them. This perspective improved the individuals ability to cope by making him more

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sophisticated in understanding potentially stressful situations.

A broad academic background can help an individual develop a multicultural perspective on life. Insel and Roth (1993) claimed that the stress response started in the brain with one's perception of events. Having objective knowledge about events helped reduce fear that caused stress. They pointed out that life long learning helped an individual to cope with stress. The brain worked best when it was stimulated. People who stopped being active learners became passive recipients of "news," and they were therefore less able to accurately assess a potentially stressful situation.

Paying for a college education represents a major financial concern for employees and their families. According to Craig and Collie (1998), a relatively new option for corporate work/life programs is a college planning and financial assistance program that employers can offer employees. A college planning and financial assistance program can reduce employee stress and improve their job focus and performance.

There is a certain amount of healthy pressure that promotes motivation and creativity among employees. However, stress of the negative kind arises when a person feels unable to cope, fatigued, or out of control. Williamson & Vine (1998) contended that as long as the feelings are short lived little damage is done. However, if the feelings persist, they become causes of chronic anxiety, subsequently leading to stress. There is also a noticeable detriment effect on both the mental and physical well-being of the individual. Although people have different degrees of coping ability, when stress becomes endemic in an organization, it will eventually show up in sickness, absence, poor motivation, and lost production.

An organization that is well-run on sound principles based on good management of people should not have a serious stress problem. However, according to Williamson & Vine (1998), some organizations are constructed and made operational with very little consideration for the emotional well-being of the employees. They claimed that a supportive supervisor is the most important factor in helping employees deal with stress. Anyone managing others should be trained in the understanding and recognition of stress. Many supervisors feel uncomfortable dealing with personal problems. Many lack skills of knowing when and how they can help employees. Some lack the skills to know what type of leadership style they should adopt to prevent an increase of stress among the employees.

Training and awareness programs for supervisors increase their personal coping skills and raise their awareness about stress in general. Craig and Collie (1998) claimed that training help supervisors to recognize stress in colleagues and provided them with supportive skills. Training also helps supervisors clarify the stress factors about which they can do something, and those which are outside their control.

Employee Assistance Program (EAP) can be an investment for any organization. According to the United States Department of Labor (1998), employers get returns of five to 16 dollars on each dollar spent on EAP. The benefits come from increased productivity, lower absenteeism, and employee medical costs. EAP programs aim at helping employees deal with their social problems. According to Williamson & Vine (1998), a serious event such as bereavement or divorce can cause stress and seriously affect the performance of some employees.

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The provision of someone to talk to, or the availability of a welfare service when a serious event occurs can help employees to cope with stress. This help can prevent a good worker or supervisor from becoming a long-term problem or from developing problem behavior such as heavy drinking. Self-help groups can also help employees cope with stress. All employees should have a support network through the provision of social clubs.

An increasing number of organizations are now training some suitable supervisors in the skills of helping employees after crisis or trauma happen in the workplace. Craig and Collie (1998) claim that a good supervisor will lead by example, and the example has to be set at the very top of the organization. Senior supervisors should be the first to undergo stress management training. This demonstrates their willingness to provide a safe working environment for the employees in their care, as well as acknowledging that stress is a legitimate workplace issue. In this way they become professional architects of their own organizations, molding the environment in which their employees can be better, more productive, and a cornerstone of the organization's success.

Training also helps employees cope with stress. Training concentrates on skill development for specific techniques and purposes. Henderson (1990) contended that the most important factor in reducing the potential for disturbances was having efficient personnel who could handle their responsibilities and any emergencies in a confident manner. He claimed that such an attitude was a product of thorough training in necessary technical and interpersonal skills. Further, he claimed that when employees were proficient in technical and interpersonal skills, they were less likely to experience stress.

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Cross-skill mentoring enlarges everyone's focus. According to Craig and Collie (1998), the image of mentoring conjures up the idea that both mentor and mentee operate in the same field. Some formal mentoring programs have discovered beneficial results when they pair individuals from different areas of expertise. Combining mentoring with the issue of increasing diversity highlights a potential strength of formal or guided mentoring. Supervisors play an important role in matching mentors and mentees according to the skills and capabilities the organization wants to develop. The key is finding the candidates who have displayed strengths in those areas and matching them with mentors who can help unlock the organizational secrets that lead to success. Mentors who work with mentees from different back grounds have the opportunity to expand their repertoires as well.

HELPING EMPLOYEES COPE WITH STRESS

Overcrowding in prisons, health problems like AIDS, drugs, and violence among inmates have been identified as issues that contribute to stress among correctional employees. Such factors weaken employee morale and subsequently contribute to stress. Nevertheless, Fleisher (1996) pointed out that there were several strategies that could be used to reduce stress among correctional employees. For example, open communication among employees could be used to reduce stress. Also free communication between employees and inmates could be used. Other strategies included ensuring rapid delivery

of services to inmates and effective response to daily institutional needs. Fleisher also recommended that having a commitment to maintaining a high quality of life for both employees and inmates could be used to reduce stress.

Similarly, Cornelius (1996) suggested that correctional supervisors could help employees cope with stress. Cornelius claimed that this could be done by guiding workers through tasks, prioritizing tasks, and ensuring that mistakes were corrected right away. He also noted that the supervisors could lead by example to avoid conflicting orders that led to stress among the employees.

Cornelius (1996) suggested that the supervisor look for the following behavior changes in order to detect employees under stress:

(1) Changes in employee personality and behavior, like a good worker who may start being late and missing work all of a sudden; or the development of negative coping habits, like a light smoker who may begin to smoke heavily.

(2) Decline in the quality of work or decline of good work habits in an individual.

(3) Presence of physical signs of stress, for example, employees under stress may constantly complain of headaches, stomach problems, and nausea.

An improved work environment could help employees cope with stress. Cornelius (1996) argued that the correctional supervisor could help employees improve their work environment by:

(1) helping employees arrange their working area to increase working space; restructuring files to make information more accessible; and simplifying work forms;

(2) encouraging upward communication by allowing employees to have an input in decision making;

(3) using informal communication to enhance working relationships between supervisors and line employees;

(4) eliminating boredom by rotating work assignments frequently;

(5) promoting teamwork to make work easier and to improve morale among employees; and

(6) letting the employees know that their work is good and is being appreciated.

Stress management consultants have suggested other stress reduction techniques. Driskell and Salas (1996) listed several techniques that could be used to help correctional employees cope with stress. They included systematic desensitization, relaxation training, biofeedback, meditation, and yoga. Others included structural changes in the work place, such as reducing the inmate-employee ratio, shortening work hours, and sensitizing administrators to effects of stress on employees. Offering employees more flexibility in their schedules, more autonomy in their work, and improving pre-service and in-service programs could also help correctional employees cope with stress.

Henderson (1990) suggested that a functional retention program based on realistic qualifications and standards be used to ensure that applicants were screened by

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competitive examinations. He claimed that emphasis should be placed on selectivity and improved personnel benefits. Such a program could ensure a sound foundation for developing well-trained correctional employees. He also argued that in order to attract quality employees in corrections, emphasis should also be placed on adequate salaries and satisfactory working conditions. He claimed that a sound merit system for promotion and adequate number of positions should be required to ensure efficient and safe working conditions.

Administrators should focus on specialty recruitment, as many correctional institutions have a high percentage of inmates representing racial and ethnic minorities. According to Henderson (1990), it may be desirable to have a similar ethnic/racial ratio among the employees. However, he noted that finding and retaining minority employees was a challenge that required considerable attention in corrections.

Providing a safe working environment can help employees feel safe at work and consequently, less stressed. According to Seymour and English (1996), little attention had been paid to the violent acts against correctional employees. They claimed that correctional jobs were made difficult by threats and violent acts that increased when correctional agencies failed to adopt strong policies and procedures that promoted work place safety. They claimed that ensuring employees safety should be used as a key factor in reducing stress.

Seymour and English (1996) suggested some strategies that could be used to reduce stress following an employee's victimization on the job:

1.   Correctional, probation, and parole agencies should establish clear policies and

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procedures for responding to work place violence. They should establish policies and procedures that encourage reporting of criminal incidents and provide support for the victimized employee, witnesses, and the whole unit in which a critical incident may occur.

2. Correctional agencies should have emergency response teams available around the clock with members trained in victimology theory, responses, and interventions.

3. Employees safety training programs should incorporate victim assistance, worker safety, and critical incident prevention.

4. Correctional managers and supervisors should receive training on how victimization affects their employee career choices, how victimized employees might treat inmates, parolees, or probationers, and how victimized employees are viewed by their co-workers.

5. Procedures on employees reintegration should be established and practiced, focusing on the victimized employee and his or her professional peers.

6. Correctional employees should be involved in any disciplinary hearings or criminal proceedings resulting from their victimization.

7. Correctional agencies should establish policies and procedures for rumor control following an employee victimization or critical incidents.

8. Correctional, probation, and parole agencies should establish strong affiliations with local victim service organizations. Such agencies may be able to provide crisis intervention, support groups for victimized employees, and training on victim trauma and reactions following a crime.

MULTIPLE REGRESSION

According to Anderson (1986), multiple regression explains the statistical relationship between quantitative variables. Multiple regression is a statistical method for studying relationships between a dependent variable and two or more independent variables. In this study, the employees demographics were the independent variables. Their perceptions were the dependent variables. Multiple regression explains and predicts one variable from several explanatory variables.

Bluman (1995) claimed that many relationships between variables existed in the real world. He claimed that multiple regression was used to determine whether a relationship existed between variables. This statistical technique is used to describe the nature of relationships between variables. Multiple regression can also be used to make accurate predictions for the dependent variables.

SUMMARY

Several issues have been identified as factors that may contribute to stress among correctional employees. Some of these factors include overcrowding in prisons, health issues like AIDS, drugs, and violence among inmates. Other problems identified include inmate escapes, prison riots, sexual harassment and rape, and theft. These factors contribute to both short-term and long-term stress among correctional employees.

The structure of the correctional organization has been identified as another factor

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that lead to stress among the correctional employees. Ngiro and Ngiro (1984) claimed that corrections was a bureaucratic type of organization in which routines were estimated and contingencies clearly defined in advance. They claimed that professionals generally avoided the bureaucratic forms of organizations because they reduce creativity and do not allow for variation among cases.

Another factor that may lead to stress among correctional employees is the nature of their work. The unfortunate circumstances and situations of the inmates cause the correctional employees to experience stress as they provide their services to unwilling offenders who often reject these services. Also, the presence of psychological abnormalities among inmates create a wide range of behaviors that correctional employees have to confront on a daily basis. Another factor included high turnover rates among correctional employees which hinder the operational effectiveness of correctional institutions and increase recruitment training costs (Henderson, 1990).

Several strategies were identified as factors that could help employees cope with stress. For example, training according to Henderson (1990) could used to help correctional employees to grow and develop on both personal and professional levels. Training could also be used to provide organizational effectiveness and increase personal and job satisfactions.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to identify ODOC employee perceptions about the contributions of existing professional development activities to stress reduction. This chapter explains the design of the study, administration of the instrument, and method analysis.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In order to accomplish the purpose of this study, two study questions were developed:

1.   In what professional development activities do ODOC employees participate?

2.   What professional development activities are believed to contribute to stress reduction?

COLLECTING DATA

A descriptive study was selected to identify the ODOC employee perceptions

about the contributions of existing professional development activities to stress reduction.

A questionnaire was utilized. Survey questions included perceptual questions, demographic questions, and one open ended question. The questionnaire was sent to the participants through the mail. A cover letter introducing the study and providing instructions on how to complete the questionnaire was attached. A reminder post card was mailed to the participants ten days after the questionnaire was mailed.

INSTRUMENT DESCRIPTION AND SELECTION

The process of identifying the perceptions of ODOC employees about the contributions of existing professional development activities to stress reduction depended upon choosing the correct tool to collect the information. A successful survey instrument was dependent upon clearly stated instructions, asking the right questions, keeping the survey short and piloting the instrument (Sudman, 1983; Zemke, 1989). A survey had several advantages:

a.   a large population was to be reached at a lower cost;

b.   anonymity was assured;

c.   all respondents were asked the same questions in the same way;

d.   respondents had time to consider their answers; and

e.   surveys were easier to score and analyze (Rossett, 1987).

The survey instrument was designed to identify ODOC employee perceptions about the contributions of existing professional development activities to stress reduction.

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To eliminate biases in the wording of questions, the perceptual part of the questionnaire

simply listed the activities, and for each activity the participants were asked to indicate on

a five point Likert-type scale how much each activity had helped them to cope with stress

at work. The score of one was defined as "very little help"; two was defined as "little

help"; three was defined as "somewhat help"; four was defined as "much help"; and five

was defined as "very much help." Demographic questions followed the perceptual

questions. The application of demographic questions to the attitudinal survey enabled in

evaluating overall results and in determining how specific strata of ODOC employees

perceived contributions of existing professional development activities to stress

reduction. One open ended question was asked at the end of the survey. This question

gave the participants some control on the way they responded. The responses to this

question were used to some extent to explain some responses on the perceptual questions.

INSTRUMENT VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

The questionnaire was developed by a panel of six senior correctional training

officers. In selecting the six senior correctional training officers, a random sample was

drawn from a list of all the senior correctional training officers in ODOC. There were

twenty senior correctional training officers in the department. The size of the group and

time given to accomplish the goal was crucial. Six participants were ideal for the task.

According to Davis (1997), a group of more than 10 or 12 has trouble involving all the

personalities and all the individual ideas. David claimed that a group of six or seven

individuals worked more effectively in accomplishing a task.

The senior correctional training officers were chosen for this process due to their expertise in the field of training and development. According to the department's Policy and Operational Manual, 1992, senior correctional training officers perform professional work in the formulation, coordination, and supervision of all general and specialized training conducted by the department. They direct the preparation and coordination of all formalized in-service and out-service training conducted by the agency. They also research and prepare periodic training lessons for the department's employees.

The senior correctional training officers are responsible for the maintenance of training records on all the correctional employees. They prepare training reports and conduct needs assessment studies. They also monitor and evaluate correctional personnel training.

Knowledge and skills required for senior correctional training officers include knowledge of the principles and methods of employees training and development. They are required to determine training needs and evaluate training results. They are also required to have skill in analyzing situations and adopting effective courses of action. They are required to establish and maintain effective working relationships with other state employees, the general public, city and governmental representatives.

The senior correctional training officers are required to have completed 60 semester hours from an accredited college or university. They are also required to have 12 semester hours in either penology, sociology, social work, criminology, education, police science, or criminal justice administration and three years of experience in

correctional or security work for a government agency.

The panel's first objective was to develop a list of all the professional development activities available to ODOC employees. The second objective was to group the activities into major categories. The third objective was to generate perceptual questions about the contributions of each activity to stress reduction. There was a facilitator who helped with the process. The panel used the Card Technique to achieve the objectives.

According to Spencer (1989), the Card Technique involved five steps. Step one involved setting the context. The facilitator defined the purpose of the meeting and the intended results. The facilitator also described the process and the time frame of the meeting. The facilitator defined the purpose of the meeting and stated the problem to be solved.

Step two was brainstorming. This step elicited from the panel as much objective data as possible. Step three was the process of ordering data into similar groupings. Step four was naming the categories that had been discerned. Step five was evaluation. This step enabled the panel to reflect upon the work they had done.

Spencer (1989) also claimed that the card technique saved time. Participants recorded their ideas simultaneously rather than waiting for the facilitator to write out each item on a flipchart or chalkboard. The card technique also allowed the brainstorm data to be ordered and re-ordered easily. This technique also afforded clearer viewing of relationships among ideas with data on "movable" cards rather than on lists. The technique also facilitated the ordering process and improved the quality of the names

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given to the groups of data.

The professional development activities were each generated on a 5 X 8 card. The cards were posted on the wall in no particular order. After an exhaustive list was generated the cards were rearranged under seven major activity categories. They included pre-service activities, in-service activities, social activities, outside training activities, wellness activities, and community activities and management activities. The facilitator moved the cards under the different categories depending on the panel's agreement. Some cards fell under more than one category. The panel had to reach a consensus on which category the card was to be placed. After all the cards were placed the panel generated perceptual questions about how each activity contributed to stress reduction. The panel achieved its objectives and completed the task in five hours. After the questionnaire was typed, each panelist was sent a copy to evaluate. Recommended changes and/or corrections were made.

The panel identified both training and non-training activities as professional development activities. Their definition of HRD was broad, probably because of their limited knowledge in the field. However, there is an element of truth in their judgment. For example, according to Geering (1985), HRD involved more than training. He advised that practitioners in this field needed to prepare themselves to be specialists in human relation skills and attitudes. He claimed that HRD focused on people. Lippit (1976) also advised that any HRD program should consider the relevant needs of the individual and all the unique needs of the human system. MuCullough (1985) contended that HRD should accommodate the personal, professional, business and social needs of

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the individual. Based on these perspectives, the non-training issues addressed in this study can be placed under professional development activities.

In addition, the 1982 Human Resource Wheel from the American Society for Training and Development identified Employee Assistance as one of the nine professional areas of the field. Other professional areas included in the wheel were Training and Development, Organization Development, Organization/job design, Human Resource Planning, Selection and Staffing, Personnel Research and Information Systems, Compensation and Benefits, and Labor Relations.

The 1982 Human Resource Wheel from the American Society of Training and Development gave this study some leverage in categorizing all employee assistance activities such as wellness under professional development activities.

According to McLagan (1989), a complex field like HRD should not be restricted by its definitions. She claimed that HRD included other organizational functions that affected people's performance but did not use development as their primary mechanism of influence. McLagan contended that other areas depicted by the Human Resource Wheel played an important role in the development of individuals, groups, and organizations. But because the primary process focus was not development they are not included in the definition of HRD. Further, she claimed that HRD was more than the sum of its parts. Therefore, it involved more than training and development in isolation.

The consistency of this study was determined by a review panel. The panel consisted of 20 participants. The review panel participants were randomly chosen. The participants were chosen by a similar process used in selecting the actual study

participants. These participants were not included in the actual study to avoid

contamination. After the review of the questionnaire, the following adjustments were

made. Conditional questions were removed, as they made it difficult to analyze data due

to missing information. Section C of the questionnaire was revised. This section had had

four open ended questions. The review panel participants requested one general question

that encompassed all four initial questions. They also assisted in clarifying questions that

were ambiguous.

POPULATION AND SAMPLE DESCRIPTION

The population encompassed all ODOC employees in the State of Oklahoma.

ODOC has 4,700 employees across the state. The demographics of ODOCC employees

are as follows. Sex: male 67.1%, female 32.9%; race: white 82.4%, black 10.3%, native

American 6.2%, Hispanic 0.8%, and other 0.3%. Stratified random samples were utilized

in this study. The samples were based on six general job categories in the department.

The job categories are: (1) Support Staff (staff with offender supervisory responsibilities),

(2) Correctional Officer, (3) Probation and Parole Officer, (4) Case Management Staff,

(5) Contact Support Staff (staff with minimal offender contact), and (6)

Administration/Management Staff. According to the ODOC Operations Manual, 1992

the job categories determined minimal training hours for correctional employees. The

stratified random samples were proportional to the total number of employees in each

category. The stratified random samples were drawn using a formula generated by

Krejcie and Morgan (1970) to estimate the sample size based on confidence level. The overall sample size according to Krejcie and Morgan formula for ODOC population of 4,700 was 350.

STATISTICAL METHODS AND ANALYSIS

Frequency counts, percentages, and measures of relationships were used. Frequency counts were used to show the distribution of perceptions among the participants. Median scores were computed for each professional development activity within each of the categories established. Percentages were computed to show the proportion of the returned surveys. Percentages were also computed to show the demographics on the returned surveys. Multiple regression was used to explain statistical relationships between demographic issues and employee perceptions.

SUMMARY

This chapter explained the methodology used in the study by describing the design of the study, the development and administration of the instrument, and the method analysis. Random stratified samples of ODOC employees were surveyed. The questionnaire, which included perceptual and demographic questions and one open ended question, was first reviewed by a panel of 20 participants and later administered to a study sample of 350 participants.

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CHAPTER IV

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to identify ODOC employee perceptions about the

contributions of existing professional development activities to stress reduction. This

chapter presents the findings of the study. A stratified random sample of 350 ODOC

employees was selected. The selection was conducted within the major job

classifications in ODOC.

The data were analyzed to identify the professional development activities in

which the employees participated and which of these activities they believed contributed

to stress reduction. There were 199 returned surveys. There were 68 females who

returned the surveys. This comprised 34.2% of the 199 returned surveys. There were

126 males who returned the surveys. This comprised 63.3% of the 199 returned surveys.

There were five participants who did not identify their gender. This comprised 2.5% of

the 199 returned surveys.

SURVEY RETURN RATE

There were 350 total participants in the study. The percentages of the stratified

random sample were as follows. There were 153 Correctional Officers, who comprised 43.7% of the 350 total participants. There were 64 Management Staff, who comprised 18.3% of the 350 total participants. There were 40 Support Staff (staff with minimal offender contact), who comprised 11.4% of the 350 total participants. There were 40 Contact Support Staff (staff with offender supervisory responsibilities), who comprised 11.4% of the 350 total participants. There were 28 Case Managers, who comprised eight percent (8%) of the 350 total participants. There were 25 Probation and Parole Officers, who comprised 7.1% of the 350 total participants.

There were 199 returned surveys. Six surveys were returned unanswered, as those employees had left ODOC. The returned surveys represented 57% of the 350 total participants. The returned unanswered surveys represented two percent (2%) of the 350 total participants. Table I represents the return rate of the surveys based on job classifications.

TABLE I

RETURN RATE OF SURVEYS BASED
ON JOB CLASSIFICATIONS

Job Classification	Total Number Mailed	Percentage of Number Mailed	Total Number Returned	Percentage Returned
Correctional Officers	153	43.7%	71	46%
Management Staff	64	18.3%	43	67%
Support Staff	40	11.4%	29	72.5%
Contact Support Staff	40	11.4%	32	73%
Case Managers	28	8%	20	71%
Probation & Parole Officers	25	7.1%	24	96%
Totals	350	100%	199	

OVERVIEW OF SURVEY

The survey consisted of three sections: A, B, and C. Section A consisted of 32

items. (See Appendix A.) The items were grouped into seven categories: pre-service

activities, in-service activities, social activities, outside training activities, wellness

activities, community activities, and management activities. The participants were asked

to indicate on a five point Likert-type scale how much each activity had helped them to

cope with stress at work. The score of one was defined as "very little help"; two was

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defined as "little help"; three was defined as "somewhat help"; four was defined as "much help"; and five was defined as "very much help." In section B, the participants were given eight demographic questions. The demographic questions were given to assist in determining how specific strata of ODOC employees perceived that professional development activities helped them to cope with stress. In section C, the participants were given an open ended question about how they thought professional development activities could be improved in ODOC.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES IN WHICH ODOC EMPLOYEES PARTICIPATED

The participants were not directly asked to identify the professional development activities in which they participated. This was because the activities had already been identified for the study by a panel of six correctional experts. There were 32 professional development activities identified in Section A. The participants were asked to rate their perceptions about each activity on a five-point Likert-type scale in which one was defined as "very little help"; two was defined as "little help"; three was defined as "somewhat help"; four was defined as "much help"; and five was defined as "very much help." There was also a "not applicable" option to select from each activity if it did not apply to the participants.

Since the participants were not asked to identify the professional development activities in which they participated, the "not applicable" responses were used to establish non-participation. The number of "not applicable" responses were counted for each

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activity. Less participation was inferred by the activities with a high percentage of "not applicable" responses. More participation was inferred by activities with a low percentage of "not applicable" responses.

The 32 professional development activities were each evaluated separately and ranked in the order shown on Table II. The activity with the lowest percentage of "not applicable" responses was ranked first and the activity with the highest percentage of "not applicable" responses was ranked last. The first ranked activity was taken to be the activity in which the employees participated the most and the last ranked activity was taken to be the activity in which employees participated the least. "Taking annual leave" was ranked first and "having a transitional development specialist" was ranked last.

TABLE II

RANK ORDER OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES BASED
ON THE PERCENTAGES OF "NOT APPLICABLE" (N/A)
RESPONSES ON EACH ACTIVITY

ACTIVITY	RANK	% OF "N/A" RESPONSES
Taking annual leave	1	4.25
Specialized training	2	10.55
Pre-Service training	3	12.06
Self-paced training	4	14.57
Recognition and awards	5	14.59
Continuing education	6	19.59
Schedule adjustment	7	26.63
Cross training	8	29.64
Employee Assistance Program	9	30.15
Community service	10	34.67
Having a mentor	11	46.00
Domestic violence intervention training	12	48.24
Mediation process	13	48.34
Oklahoma Correctional Association Training	14	50.75
Vocational technical education training	15	53.26
Use of staff library	16	54.27

TABLE II (CONT.)

RANK ORDER OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES BASED ON THE PERCENTAGES OF "NOT APPLICABLE" (N/A) RESPONSES ON EACH ACTIVITY

ACTIVITY	RANK	% OF "N/A" RESPONSES
Facilitator training	17.5	54.77
Training for trainers	17.5	54.77
Firearms training	19	55.27
Oklahoma Correctional Association training	20	56.78
Management training	21	58.79
YMCA/Workout facilities	22	59.29
First instance supervisory training	23	67.33
Moral Reconation Training	24	67.34
Council of Law Enforcement Education Training	25	72.36
ROPES activities	26	79.39
Fresh start program	27	81.90
Correctional officer training	28	82.41
Correctional Emergency Response Team	29	83.91
Secretaries' recognition week	30	85.42
Reserve officers program	31	85.92
Transitional development specialist	32	86.43

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES WHICH WERE BELIEVED TO CONTRIBUTE TO STRESS REDUCTION

In order to determine which professional development activities were believed to contribute to stress reduction, a median score for each activity was computed within each professional development category. In each category the activity with the highest median score was ranked first. The activity with the lowest median score was ranked last. The activity with the highest median score within each category of professional development activities was identified as the most helpful in stress reduction. The activity with the lowest median score within each category of professional development activities was identified as the least helpful in stress reduction.

The "pre-service activities" category of professional development activities consisted of two items. "Having a mentor" was ranked first with a median score of four. "Pre-service training" was ranked second with a median score of three.

The "in-service activities" category of professional development activities consisted of nine items. Table III shows the ranking of items within the category of in-service activities based on the median scores. The median score was four for "specialized training" and Correctional Emergency Response Team training. The median score for these two activities was the highest and therefore ranked first. The median score was three for "self-paced training," "cross training," "facilitator training," "training for trainers," and "domestic violence intervention training." These activities were ranked fifth. Moral Reconation Therapy training was ranked eighth with a median score of two. "Using staff library" was

ranked nineth with a median score of one.

TABLE III

RANK ORDER OF ACTIVITIES WITHIN CATEGORY OF
IN-SERVICE ACTIVITIES BASED
ON MEDIAN SCORES

IN-SERVICE	MEDIAN SCORE	RANK
Specialized training	4	1
Correctional Emergency Response Team	4	1
Self-paced training	3	5
Cross training	3	5
Facilitator training	3	5
Training for trainers	3	5
Domestic violence intervention training	3	5
Moral Reconation Therapy Training	2	8
Using staff library	1	9

The "social activities" category of professional development activities consisted of
two items. The median score was two for the "ODOC reward and recognition system" and
"secretaries' recognition week."

The "outside training" category of professional development activities consisted of
five items. Table IV shows the rank order of activities within the category of outside training
based on the median scores. The median score for "continuing education" was the highest
at four. It was therefore ranked first. The median score was three for "reserve officers
program" and "vocational technical education training." These two activities were ranked

2.5. The median score was two for American Correctional Association training and Oklahoma Correctional Association training. These two activities were ranked 4.5.

TABLE IV
RANK ORDER OF ACTIVITIES WITHIN CATEGORY
OF OUTSIDE TRAINING BASED ON
MEDIAN SCORES

OUTSIDE TRAINING	MEDIAN SCORE	RANK
Continuing education	4	1
Reserve officers program	3	2.5
Vocational technical education training	3	2.5
America Correctional Association training	2	4.5
Oklahoma Correctional Assoc. training	2	4.5

The "wellness activities" category of professional development activities consisted of seven items. Table V shows the rank order of activities within the category of wellness based on the median scores. The median score was four for "YMCA/workout facilities," "work schedule adjustment," and "taking annual leave." These activities were therefore ranked first. The "mediation process" ranked fourth with a median score of three. The median score was two for Recreational Outside Physical Exercises and Employee Assistance program. These two activities were ranked 5.5. The median score for Fresh Start Program for smokers trying to quit smoking was one and therefore ranked seventh.

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TABLE V

RANK ORDER OF ACTIVITIES WITHIN
CATEGORY OF WELLNESS BASED
ON MEDIAN SCORES

WELLNESS ACTIVITIES	MEDIAN SCORE	RANK
YMCA/Workout centers	4	1
Work schedule adjustment	4	1
Taking annual leave	4	1
Mediation process	3	4
Employee Assistance Program	2	5 5
Recreational Outside Physical Exercises	2	5 5
Fresh Start Program	1	7

The "community activities" category of professional development activities consisted of five items. Table VI shows rank order of activities within the category of community activities based on the median scores. The median score for Council for Law Enforcement Education Training was the highest at four. It was therefore ranked first. The median score was three for "participating in community activities," "firearms training," and "earning college credit from the correctional officers academy." These activities were ranked third. The median score for Transitional Development Specialist was two and therefore ranked fifth.

TABLE VI

RANK ORDER OF ACTIVITIES WITHIN CATEGORY OF
COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES BASED
ON MEDIAN SCORES

COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES	MEDIAN SCORE	RANK
Council for Law Enforcement Education Training	4	1
Community service	3	3
Firearms training	3	3
College credit from pre-service training	3	3
Transitional Development Specialist	2	5

The "management activities" category of professional development activities consisted of two items: "continuing supervisory training" and "first instance supervisory training." The median score for "continuing supervisory training" was the highest at four. This activity was ranked first. The median score for "first instance supervisory training" was three and therefore ranked second.

RESPONSES TO DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS

Demographic information was used to determine how specific strata of ODOC employees perceived professional development activities in helping them to cope with stress. Table VII shows the results of a multiple regression of all B's (demographics) on all A's (participant perceptions). The correlation of B values and A values established the T values. T values show the level of significant relationships between demographics

and participant perceptions.

TABLE VII

TABLE OF SIGNIFICANT T VALUES (p<.05) ESTABLISHED BY MULTIPLE REGRESSION OF ALL B'S ON ALL A'S

	Gender	Race	Age	Job Class.	Security level	Educ. Level	Years at ODOC	Work Outside	Years outside
	B1	B2	B3	B4	B5	B6	B7	B8	B9
A1					2.186	1.996	2.514		
A2									
A3									
A4		-2.503		2.455					
A5			-2.513		3.006				
A6		-2.973					2.893		
A7						1.722			
A8	-1.920					3.936			
A9							-3.169	2.255	
A10	-1.975					1.878			
A11				.	2.301				
A12									
A13	2.490			2.274					
A14				-1.771	2.430		-1.696	1.713	
A15	-1.733				2.487				
A16	-2.126								

LEGEND

A1=Pre-service training
A2=Mentor
A3=Self-pace training
A4=Cross-training
A5=Staff library
A6=Specialized training
A7=Moral Reconation Therapy Training

A8=Facilitator training
A9=Training for Trainers
A10=Correctional Emergency Response Team
A11=Domestic violence intervention training
A12=Awards and recognition
A13=Secretaries recognition week

A14=Continuing education
A15=Reserve officers program
A16=American correctional assoc. training

TABLE VII (CONT.)

TABLE OF SIGNIFICANT T VALUES (p<.05) ESTABLISHED BY MULTIPLE REGRESSION OF ALL B'S ON ALL A'S

	Gender	Race	Age	Job Class.	Security level	Educ. Level	Years at ODOC	Work Outside	Years outside
	B1	B2	B3	B4	B5	B6	B7	B8	B9
A17	-2.126					1.786			
A18	-2.063	-2.228			2.088				
A19			-1.835	2.031	1.938				1.942
A20			-1.942						
A21	-1.708					2.492			
A22				2.054					1.967
A23	-3.083								
A24			-2.801			2.958			
A25									
A26					1.701	-1.691			
A27	-2.546		1.846					-2.078	1.727
A28	-2.404				1.847				
A29	-2.449		1.902						
A30	-1.868								1.970
A31				-2.992	1.758		-3.440		
A32				-2.547			-2.178		

LEGEND (CONT.)

A17=Oklahoma Correctional Association Training
A18=Vocational Technical School Training
A19=Employee Assistance Program
A20=YMCA/Workout Facilities
A21=Fresh Start Program
A22=Work Schedule Adjustment

A23=Recreational Outside Physical Exercises
A24=Mediation Process
A25=Annual Leave
A26=Community Activities
A27=Firearms Training
A28=Correctional officer training

A29=CLEET
A30=TDS
A31=First Instance Supervisory Training
A32=Continuing Supervisory Training

Participant gender was the B1 value. According to the table of significance, the A values that showed a significant relationship with gender were: A8, facilitator training; A10, being a member of the Correctional Emergency Response Team; A13, being a secretary; A15, participating in local sheriff department; A16, American Correctional Association training; A17, Oklahoma Correctional Association training; A18, special training courses from a Vocational Technical Education School; A21, Fresh Start Program; A23, participating in Recreational Outside Physical Exercises; A27, firearms training; A28, earning college credit from pre-service training from the correctional officers academy; A29, training from the Council of Law Enforcement Education; and A30, being assigned a transitional development specialist.

Participant race was the B2 value. According to the table of significance, the A values that showed a significant relationship with race were: A4, cross training; A6, specialized training; and A18, special training courses from a Vocational Technical Education School.

Participant age was the B3 value. The age categories were grouped as follows for computational purposes: 18-29; 30-44; and 45+. According to the table of significance, the A values that showed a significant relationship with age were: A5, using staff library; A19, Employee Assistance Program; A20, using YMCA/Workout facilities; A23, participating in Recreational Outside Physical Exercises; A27, firearms training; and A29, training from the Council of Law Enforcement Education.

Participant employment classification was the B4 value. According to the table of significance, the A values that showed a significant relationship with employment

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classification were: A4, cross training; A13, being a secretary; A14, continuing education; A19, Employee Assistance Program; A22, work schedule adjustment; A31, First Instance Supervisory Training; and A32, Continuing Supervisory Training.

The security level of the participant institution was the B5 value. According to the table of significance, the A values that showed a significant relationship with the level of security of the institution were: A2, having a mentor; A5, using staff library; A11, domestic violence intervention training; A18, special training courses from a Vocational Technical Education School; A19, Employee Assistance Program; A26, participating in community activities; A28, earning college credit from pre-service training from the correctional officers academy; and A31, First Instance Supervisory Training.

Participant level of education was the B6 value. The education levels were classified as follows: High school diploma or less; Junior college or less; Bachelors degree or less; and Masters degree or more. According to the table of significance, the A values that showed a significant relationship with the level of education were: A1, pre-service training; A7, Moral Reconation Therapy training; A8, Facilitator Training; A10, being a member of the Correctional Emergency Response Team; A16, American Correctional Association training; A17, Oklahoma Correctional Association training; A21, Fresh Start Program for smokers trying to quit; A24, mediation process; and A26, participating in community activities.

Participant years of employment with ODOC was the B7 value. According to the table of significance, the A values that showed a significant relationship with B7 were: A1, pre-service training; A6, specialized training; A9, Training for Trainers; A14, continuing

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education; A31, First Instance Supervisory Training; and A32, Continuing Supervisory Training.

Participant work experience outside ODOC was the B8 value. According to the table of significance, the A values that showed a significant relationship with B8 were: A9, Training for Trainers; A13, being a secretary; and A27, firearms training.

The participant number of years of work experience outside ODOC was the B9 value. According to the table of significance, the A values that showed a significant relationship with B9 were: A19, Employee Assistance Program; A22, work schedule adjustment; A27, firearms training; and A30, having a transitional development specialist.

There were three A values that did not show any significant relationships with demographics. These included A2, having a mentor; A3, self-paced training; A12, awards and recognition system and A25, taking annual leave. This indicated that these three activities were important to all the participants regardless of what their demographics were. It can be implied that there were no differences among the participants about the way they perceived these activities.

These three activities were also ranked high as activities employees participated. Out of the 32 professional development activities identified for the study "taking annual leave" was ranked first. "Self-paced training" was ranked fourth and "having a mentor" was ranked eleventh. These activities also had high median scores. The median score for "taking annual leave" was four and was therefore believed to have helped much in stress reduction. The median score for "having a mentor" was also four and therefore believed to have helped

much in stress reduction. The median score for "self-paced training" was three and therefore believed to have somewhat helped in stress reduction.

RESPONSES TO THE OPEN ENDED QUESTION

The open ended question was about how participants thought professional development activities could be improved in ODOC. There were 122 participants who answered the open ended question. This comprised 61.30% of the 199 returned surveys. The open ended question was sorted and categorized according to emerging themes.

There were 32 participants who made comments about the "ODOC reward and recognition system." This comprised 26.22% of the 122 total participants who answered the open ended question. The only common theme among these participants was that they were sometimes not happy with the "ODOC awards and recognition system." They claimed that sometimes only those employees who were close friends of the supervisors were rewarded.

There were 25 participants who made comments concerning "YMCA/workout facilities." This comprised 20.49% of the 122 total participants who answered the open ended question. The only common theme among these participants was that having workout facilities and YMCA membership provided by the department would help very much in stress reduction. However, their comments suggested that they did not have workout centers in their facilities. Their comments also suggested that they did not have YMCA memberships provided by ODOC.

There were 18 participants who made comments about the use of "staff library." This comprised 14.75% of the 122 total participants who responded to the open ended question. The only common theme among these participants was that they did not have a staff library at their facilities. Nevertheless, they suggested that having a staff library available and accessible to all employees would help in stress reduction.

There were 17 participants who made comments concerning "continuing education." This comprised 13.93% of the 122 total participants who answered the open ended question. The only common theme among these participants was that continuing education was important. Their comments also suggested that ODOC did not finance for employee continuing education.

There were 15 participants who made comments about the Employee Assistance Program. This comprised 12.29 % of the 122 total participants who answered the open ended question. The only common theme among these participants was that they were not aware that this program existed or they were discouraged from using the program.

There were 11 participants who made comments concerning Moral Reconation Therapy training. This comprised nine percent (9%) of the 122 total participants who answered the open ended question. The only common theme among these participants was that this training was important to them. However, they claimed that it caused them stress as they were sometimes required to work outside their job description if they had the training.

There were nine participants who made comments about Oklahoma Correctional Association training and American Correctional Association training. This comprised

7.22% of the 122 total participants who answered the open ended question. The only common theme among these participants was that they did not think that both types of training were helpful. They indicated that they were sometimes not freely allowed to attend training offered by either Oklahoma Correctional Association or American Correctional Association. They also indicated that ODOC did not finance these activities for them. They further indicated that some supervisors usually refused them permission to participate in these activities.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY

The purpose of the study was to identify ODOC employee perceptions about the contributions of existing professional development activities to stress reduction. A descriptive study was conducted. A questionnaire was utilized. The questionnaire included perceptual questions, demographic questions and one open ended question. The study population encompassed all employees of ODOC. A stratified random sample of 350 participants was selected. The questionnaire was sent to the participants through the mail.

The sample selection was conducted within the major job classifications. The samples were proportional to the number of employees in each job category in the department. The data were analyzed to identify the professional development activities in which the employees participated and which of these activities they believed contributed to stress reduction. Frequency counts and percentages were used to show the distribution of employee perceptions on the activities. Multiple regression was used to explain statistical relationships between demographic issues and employee perceptions.

The questionnaire was developed by a panel of Senior Correctional Training Officers. They were able to identify all training and non-training activities offered to the employees by the department. However, they had limited knowledge in the field of HRD. They did not draw a clear cut line between training and non-training issues. Although their definition of HRD was somehow flawed the questionnaire was well developed.

According to the literature review, the field of corrections in general before the 1960s functioned largely independent of external influence. However, increased social awareness pressured correctional systems to become more open and to interact with their social, political, and legal environments. This in turn led to a substantial increase in the number of professional persons involved in corrections. The presence of professionals in prompted correctional organizations to start reforming their practices.

The nature of the correctional administration is source of stress among correctional employees. The bureaucratic structure may make employees feel like someone is always looking over their shoulder. Delegation is also be limited and employees are required to perform their duties as prescribed by policy and procedure. This lack of flexibility at work cause correctional employees stress.

Several strategies are recommended to help reduce stress among correctional employees. For example, open communication among employees should be established and communication between employees and inmates. More rapid delivery of services to inmates should be initiated. Maintaining a commitment to a high quality of life for both employees and inmates can also reduce stress among correctional staff. Correctional

supervisors play an important role of helping overly stressed workers. Improved working conditions can contribute to the mental outlook of correctional employees.

Stress among the correctional employees in general is caused by several factors. Some of the factors identified in the literature review include overcrowding in prisons, health issues like AIDS, physical and psychological assault, and drugs and violence among inmates. Stress also originates from problems associated with prisons, including escapes, riots, inmate violence, sexual harassment, rape and theft. The fear of physical danger and the mental strain caused by these factors also make correctional employees suffer from stress.

High turnover rates especially among correctional officers, is due to the stressful correctional work environment. Stress also occur as a result of providing services to unwilling offenders, who often reject services provided by the correctional employees. High turnover rates lead to a shortage of staff. A shortage of staff interferes with the smooth operation of correctional institutions.

Training has helped correctional employees to grow and develop on both personal and professional levels. Training has also made employees more efficient in handling their responsibilities. However, more thorough training is required to give employees proficiency in necessary technical and interpersonal skills.

Taking annual leave was identified as the number one activity in which most employees participated. It was also believed to have helped much in stress reduction. However, participants claimed that a shortage of staff sometimes prevented them from taking annual leave at their convenience.

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Continuing education was believed to have helped much in stress reduction. However, the participants claimed that ODOC did not finance employee continuing education. ODOC also does not have a staff library available to all employees. Workout/exercise facilities were also believed to be helpful in stress reduction. However, most participants claimed that the department did not have such facilities for them.

There were 199 participants who returned the surveys. There were 157 white participants who returned the surveys. This comprised 78.89% of the 199 returned surveys. There were 33 participants from other races who returned the surveys. This comprised 16.58% of the 199 returned surveys. There were 9 participants who returned the surveys but did not identify their race. This comprised 4.5% of the 199 returned surveys. The percentage of the females who returned the surveys was 34.2%. The percentage of the males who returned the surveys was 63.3%. The percentage of the participants who returned the surveys but did not identify their gender was 2.5%.

Participants who claimed to be 45 years old and comprised 44.44% of the 199 returned surveys. Those who claimed to be between 30-44 years old were the second largest group. Their total comprised 41.66% of the 199 returned surveys. Participants who claimed to be between 18-29 years old were the smallest. Their total comprised 13.88% of the 199 returned surveys. Only about eight percent (8%) of the participants indicated that they had started their careers in ODOC. About 90% of the participants indicated that they had joined ODOC from other professions.

The ODOC reward and recognition system is sometimes based on a "buddy" procedure. Employees who deserve rewards are overlooked sometimes. The participants

indicated that employees who have received Moral Reconation Therapy training are sometimes required to work with inmates outside their normal job description.

CONCLUSIONS

Corrections has a diverse inmate population. Research indicated that many correctional institutions have a high percentage of inmates representing racial and ethnic minorities. The study findings indicated that there are few minorities and female employees working for the ODOC department.

The ODOC reward and recognition system is misused sometimes. A reward and recognition system that is sometimes based on a "buddy" procedure can be detrimental to an organization. It can lower employee morale and affect work performance.

Research indicates that physical fitness can improve the overall well being of a person. There are many benefits associated with physical fitness including, reduced stress level, increased body energy, increased mental alertness, and decreased risk of heart disease. The study findings also indicated that ODOC employees believed that the use of exercise facilities could help them deal with stress.

Research indicates that educated employees are more aware of factors influencing their life in general. This put them in a better position in dealing with personal problems. They are likely to make better choices and are also likely to live healthy lives. They are also more productive compared to the average employees. However, research indicates that paying for college education is a major concern for many employees.

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ODOC employees suffer greatly from social problems such as divorce, alcoholism, drug addiction, domestic violence and a sense of helplessness. The ODOC Employee Assistance Program deals with employee personal problems. However, the participants indicated that the Employee Assistance Program helped them little in stress reduction. Most ODOC employees may not have resources to seek for help outside the department. They can therefore suffer from many social problems which might add to their work related stress if the Employee Assistance Program is not effective in addressing their needs.

ODOC employees are sometimes asked to perform tasks that are not within their regular duties. This can create role confusion among the employees. When employees are not clear about what is expected of them, they may perform poorly. The participants indicated that employees with Moral Reconation Therapy training were sometimes required to work with inmates outside their job description. Such a situation can affect employee work motivation.

ODOC employees believe that the Oklahoma Correctional Association and the American Correctional Association training are beneficial. The department may be wasting money by investing in both types of training. Such expenses are usually in employee travel, accommodations, and the loss of work days when they attend training.

The department has to compete with other agencies for a shrinking number of suitable employees. Changing the public's negative attitude about corrections can attract educated people into the profession.

Joining corrections from other careers can make employees view the profession as

a second hand career. Such employees can be less committed to the department.

Research indicates that correctional organizations can benefit from establishing a

recruiting and retention program. This can help them compete effectively with other

agencies for a shrinking pool of desirable employees.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTICE

ODOC should develop a rigorous recruitment and retention program. Such a

program cahelp the department overcome the problem of shortage of staff. As a result,

employees can take annual leave at their convenience. Although taking annual leave was

believed to have helped much in stress reduction, the participants felt that they should be

granted leave when they requested. A common comment made by participants was that a

shortage of staff sometimes prevented them from taking annual leave when they wanted.

They also claimed that sometimes they had been recalled back from their annual leave

due to a shortage of staff. Research indicates that taking leave affords employees an

opportunity to take vacations. Taking a vacation is a good way to let off some of the

pressure that has been building inside.

Organizations are using leave to energize their employees. Some organizations

have realized that the best way to replenish their employee energy is by giving them

sabbaticals. For example, Apple Computer Corporation, IBM Corporation and the

McDonald Corporation believe in sabbaticals. McDonald's, for example, offers

sabbaticals to employees after 10 years of service. Other options for employers include

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on-site fitness centers, retreats, and lunchtime seminars (Landon, 1990). Another way of replenishing employees is by offering creative retreats popular in many companies. This is an outdoor leadership course where everyone, in teams, participates in a series of obstacles designed to challenge the group (Landon, 1990). He also claimed that conducting educational lunchtime seminars for employees is a popular low-cost approach to providing personal and professional development.

ODOC should hire enough employees to prevent a shortage of staff from interfering with employee annual leave. The department should also develop the means to prevent high turnover rates, especially among the correctional officers. This can be done by developing a rigorous recruiting and retention program.

ODOC should also encourage employees to participate in the mentoring program. Research indicates that formal mentoring programs are beneficial to an organization. Mentoring enlarges participant focus. The study identified mentoring as helpful in stress reduction. ODOC should therefore encourage all the employees to participate in formal mentoring programs.

ODOC should establish ways to finance continuing education for the employees, especially if it enhances their job skills. Although continuing education was believed to have helped much in stress reduction, the participants made several comments that would help the department change its approach toward employee continuing education. Participants felt that the department should help finance employee education in full or partially. According to research, education increases one's intellectual dimensions and gives individuals a broader perspective and an appreciation for events in their lives. This

makes them less vulnerable to stress. Also educated employees can bring new ideas which may help reduce cynicism among correctional employees. ODOC can set up programs to plan and finance for the employees education.

The department should offer flex time so that employees can pursue continuing education. Flex time also allows employees to accommodate personal life activities in their work schedule. The participants claimed that lack of flex time caused them stress, especially during family emergencies.

The ODOC reward and recognition system should be based on merit. The comments made by the participants could be used to improve the ODOC reward and recognition system. The participants claimed that they were sometimes frustrated when some supervisors rewarded and recognized their "buddies." ODOC should also try to ensure that supervisors reward and recognize all employees based on merit.

ODOC employees who have received Moral Reconation Therapy training should be allowed to work with inmates outside their normal job description on a voluntary basis. Participant comments suggested that Moral Reconation Therapy training was important. However, the participants claimed that employees got stressed sometimes when they were sometimes asked to work with inmates outside their regular duties.

Staff libraries should be made available and accessible to all employees in ODOC. Participant responses suggested that having a staff library did not help in stress reduction. This was probably because they chose the "not applicable" option as many facilities did not have a staff library. However, the participants comments on the open ended question suggested that having a staff library would be beneficial to the employees. The

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department should therefore provide a staff library in all correctional facilities.

Workout/exercise facilities should be made available to all ODOC employees. Investing in such facilities could save the department losses caused by stressed and "burned out" employees. Organizations are offering employees the opportunity to be fit and healthy. Research indicates that during exercise the body experiences increased energy and mental alertness. The body also experiences improved mood and reduced stress level. For example, the First Federal Bank of Greenville South Carolina has a health awareness program for its employees. The bank provided its staff with aerobic classes, CPR training, a fitness facility that included weight and exercise equipment, and lectures on health and fitness. The key to the success of the fitness program was top management support, a president who acted as a role model for other program participants, and a health awareness committee composed of 16 bank employees. This bank also sought outside help for its employees. Representatives from a nearby hospital's education department acted as consultants to First Federal (Price, 1989).

The department should try to increase the number of minority employees. The findings showed that there were few minority employees and women working for the department. Since ODOC inmates are from diverse ethnic backgrounds, ODOC can benefit by having employees with similar racial backgrounds similar to those of the inmates. As a result, it would be desirable to have a similar ethnic/racial among employees working for the department.

The department should actively recruit young people to replace the 45+ employees who constitute the largest percentage in ODOC. This group is likely to be

retiring in the next 10-15 years. ODOC should therefore attract young and educated employees to join the profession. Education can be an effective tool of clearing the myths that surround the correction profession. Clearing such myths can change the public negative attitude about corrections. This can also be done by offering benefits to correctional employees that are more competitive with those of other professions. Research indicates that the correctional system competes with other agencies for a shrinking pool of suitable employees.

ODOC should start to attract employees entering their careers for the first time. Most of ODOC employees start their careers elsewhere. Entering corrections from other careers can make employees view corrections as a second hand career. Recruiting employees who are entering careers for the first time can change their negative attitudes toward the profession.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

1.) Further study should be conducted to assess the ODOC orientation program. An efficient orientation program can be instrumental in preventing stress among employees. Orientation programs are geared to shaping the behavior of the individual to fit organizational needs. Research emphasizes the importance of planning, commitment, and communication of the corporate culture. The roles of key personnel, supervisors, and colleagues are also important in shaping the attitudes of new employees. According to Mishra and Straight (1993), the primary objective of orientation is to shape individual

behavior to fit the needs of the organization. Orientation also tries to acclimate people to their surroundings, in all aspects. Cohen (1988) stressed that the ultimate objective of an orientation program was to provide employees with a feeling of self-worth, a sense of work, and a sense of belonging. Other objectives include providing employees with an attitude of pride, and confidence in oneself and in the organization, and a desire to succeed.

The research should assess the effectiveness of ODOC orientation program. The study should focus on the programs effectiveness in changing the employee attitude so that they mesh with the goals of the organization.

2.) Further research should be conducted to evaluate methods used by ODOC managers to motivate their employees. According to Online Women's Business Center 1997, successful managers know how to motivate their employees. They are also aware that different people are motivated by different things because of their different needs. When there is a problem of low employee motivation and/or productivity, it is important to search for the reason. For instance, one employee may feel underpaid. Another may want more recognition. Still another may be bored with day-to-day tasks. Simply raising the employee pay or giving them a promotion may not be the answer. What is the answer then? A research examining how ODOC managers go about answering this question may benefit ODOC.

There are other benefits more than pay that can keep employees motivated. According to Online Women's Business Center 1997, these benefits include pre-tax thrift-savings programs, recreational programs, discounts, scholarships, personal finance planning, loans, tuition refunds, profit sharing, company car, personal expense account, parking

privilege, legal assistance, extra vacation, child care, job titles, professional or trade memberships and travel. Such benefits are two-fold. They satisfy the employee needs and communicates the managers concern to meet those needs.

Other methods recommended by the Online Women's Business Center 1997, include involving employees in the decision-making process and keeping employees informed about changes that affect them. Managers also need to know when and why employee morale goes up and down. They need to maintain an open door policy, be able to listen, treat employees with respect and ask for suggestions. In addition, giving constructive criticism, recognizing employees, maintaining high standards and making employees aware of what is expected of them encourages manager/employee interaction.

The research findings can be used to improve the motivational process used by ODOC managers, which in turn may reduce unwanted employee turnover and related recruiting, hiring and training costs. Such costs can be shifted from developing new employees to keeping experienced employees.

3.) Further research should also be conducted to assess how ODOC measures its employees effectiveness. According to Online Women's Business Center 1997, not all employees are top producers, no matter how much training or coaching they receive. The research should focus on tools used to measure employee effectiveness. Being able to determine the level of productivity for each employee can help in determining any problem the employee is experiencing and how it can be solved. It can also help in determining each employees level of potential. The findings of the research can be used to improve processes and tools used to measure employee effectiveness in the department.

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APPENDIX

STUDY QUESTIONNAIRE

The comments you make on this form will help in planning and improving employee professional growth and activities. Please complete questions in Section A, B and C.

Circle the one best for each item using a 5-point scale, where 1=very little help, 2=little help, 3=somewhat help, 4=much help, and 5=very much help. Circle N/A if the item does not apply to you.

Section A

Pre-service Activities

1.   How much does pre-service training help you cope with stress at work?
        1   2   3   4   5   N/A

2.   How much did having a mentor when you first started working for the department help you cope with stress at work?
        1   2   3   4   5   N/A

In-service Activities

3.   How much does self-paced training help you cope with stress at work?
        1   2   3   4   5   N/A

4.   How much does cross training help you cope with stress at work?
        1   2   3   4   5   N/A

5.   How much does using the staff library at your facility help you cope with stress at work?
        1   2   3   4   5   N/A

6.   How much does specialized training in your job help you cope with stress at work?
        1   2   3   4   5   N/A

7. How much did Moral Reconation Therapy training help you cope with stress at work?

   1 2 3 4 5 N/A

8. How much did Facilitator Training help you cope with stress at work?

   1 2 3 4 5 N/A

9. How much did Training for Trainers help you cope with stress at work?

   1 2 3 4 5 N/A

10. If you are a Correctional Emergency Response Team member, how much does Correctional Emergency Response Team Training help you cope with stress at work?

    1 2 3 4 5 N/A

11. How much did training on domestic violence intervention help you cope with stress at work?

    1 2 3 4 5 N/A

Social Activities

12. How much does the Department's recognition and awards system help you cope with stress at work?

    1 2 3 4 5 N/A

Outside Training

13. If you are a secretary, how much does the Secretaries' Recognition Week help you cope with stress at work?

    1 2 3 4 5 N/A

14. How much does continuing education help you cope with stress at work?

    1 2 3 4 5 N/A

15. How much does participating in your local police or sheriff department's reserve officers program help you cope with stress at work?

    1 2 3 4 5 N/A

16. How much does the annual American Correctional Association training help you cope with stress at work?

1   2   3   4   5   N/A

17. How much does the training offered by the Oklahoma Correctional Association help you cope with stress at work?

1   2   3   4   5   N/A

18. How much do special training courses from a VOTECH school help you cope with stress at work?

1   2   3   4   5   N/A

Wellness

19. How much does the ODOC Employee Assistance Program help you cope with stress at work?

1   2   3   4   5   N/A

20. If you have a YMCA and/or a workout center membership provided by the department, how much does it help you cope with stress at work?

1   2   3   4   5   N/A

21. If you are a smoker trying to quit smoking, how much does the Fresh Start Program help you cope with stress at work?

1   2   3   4   5   N/A

22. How much does work schedule adjustment to fit other activities in your life (e.g. continuing education) help you cope with stress at work?

1   2   3   4   5   N/A

23. How much does participating in ROPES course activities help you cope with stress at work?

1   2   3   4   5   N/A

24. How much does using the official mediation process to resolve a conflict with a co-worker help you cope with stress at work?

1   2   3   4   5   N/A

25. How much does taking leave help you cope with stress at work?

1   2   3   4   5   N/A

Community Activities

26. How much does participating in community activities as a representative of your facility help you cope with stress at work?

    1   2   3   4   5   N/A

Correctional, probation and parole officer

27. How much does firearms training help you cope with stress at work?

    1   2   3   4   5   N/A

28. If you are attending college, did earning college credit from pre-service training at the correctional officers academy help you cope with stress at work?

    1   2   3   4   5   N/A

29. How much does training from Council for Law Enforcement Education Training help you cope with stress at work?

    1   2   3   4   5   N/A

30. How much does being assigned a Transitional Development Specialist (TDS) when you first started help you cope with stress at work?

    1   2   3   4   5   N/A

supervisor/manage Activities

31. How much did First Instance Supervisory Training within the first six months in the job help you cope with stress at work?

    1   2   3   4   5   N/A

32. How much does participating in continuing supervisory/management training for your position help you cope with stress at work?

    1   2   3   4   5   N/A

SECTION B

1. What is your gender? (Check one).

    1___ Female
    2___ Male

2.   What is your race? (Check one).

            1___American Indian
            2___Asian
            3___Black
            4___Hispanic
            5___White
            6___Other (Specify)_____

3.   How old are you? _____

4.   What is your employment classification? (Check one).

            1___Clerical/support minimum contact with inmates
            2___Support daily contact with inmates
            3___Professional Specialist
            4___Correctional Officer
            5___Correctional Emergency Response team member
            6___Probation and Parole Officer
            7___Case Manager
            8___Administrator/Supervisor
            9___Other (Specify)_____

5.   What is the security level of your institution? (Check one).

            1___Maximum
            2___Medium
            3___Minimum
            4___Community corrections
            5___Work centers
            6___Administration
            7___Training academy
            8___Other (Specify)_____

6.   What is the highest level of your education attainment? (Check one).

            1___Some high school
            2___High school diploma
            3___Some junior college
            4___ Associate degree

5___Some 4 year college with no degree
6___Baccalaureate degree
7___Masters degree
8___Other (specify)_____

7.   How long have you worked for the Oklahoma Department of Corrections?

(Nearest one year) _____

8.   Do you have any work experience other than in corrections? (Check one)

1___No
2___Yes

9.   If yes, how many years of work experience outside corrections do you have?

_____

Section C

What do you think should be done to improve professional development activities in ODOC?

APPENDIX B

COVER LETTER

PO Box 97
McAlester, OK 74502-0097
Dear Mr. Capers:

You have been randomly selected from Oklahoma Department of Corrections (ODOC) employee to participate in this . The purpose of the research is to identify ODOC employee perceptions about the contributions of existing professional developmental activities to stress reduction. Your participation in this research is voluntary. This research is being conducted by the Oklahoma State University College of Education.

To show our appreciation for your contribution in this research, you will receive a copy of the summary of the results.

Your participation in and contribution to this research is very important. We are also interested in any additional information you feel may be of value to the research. The results will be used to improve ODOC employee professional developmental activities.

Survey responses will be held in strict confidence. Identification of individual answers will not be possible as only a summary of responses will be reported. Please support the research by spending about 15 minutes to complete the survey.

If you have any questions about this research please contact our resource person, Janiece Siegerist, Assistant Training Director (405) 744-8684.

Please return the completed survey in the enclosed pre-addressed stamped envelope by October 25, 1997.

Thank you for your cooperation and assistance.

William R. Venable   Nancy Mathea
Associate Professor   Research Assistant
College of Education   College of Education
Oklahoma State University   Oklahoma State University

APPENDIX C

REMINDER POSTCARD

Hi There!

You recently received a survey from the Oklahoma State University College of Education. The Survey was in reference to your perceptions about the contributions of existing professional development activities to stress reduction.

Please complete the survey and return it by October 25, 1997. If you have any questions, please contact our resource person, Janiece Siegerist, Assistant Training Director (405)744-8684.

If you have already returned your survey please disregard this notice.

Thank you.

W. R. Venable, Associate professor

Nancy Mathea, Research Assistant

OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD
HUMAN SUBJECTS REVIEW

Date: 10-17-97   **IRB#:** ED-98-027

Proposal Title: THE EFFICACY OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENTAL ACTIVITIES IN
COPING WITH STRESS: AN ANALYSIS OF PERCEPTIONS AMONG OKLAHOMA
DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS (ODOC) EMPLOYEES

Principal Investigator(s): William R. Venable, Nancy W. Mathea

Reviewed and Processed as: Exempt

Approval Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved

ALL APPROVALS MAY BE SUBJECT TO REVIEW BY FULL INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD AT
NEXT MEETING, AS WELL AS ARE SUBJECT TO MONITORING AT ANY TIME DURING THE
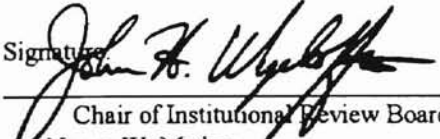APPROVAL PERIOD.
APPROVAL STATUS PERIOD VALID FOR DATA COLLECTION FOR A ONE CALENDAR YEAR
PERIOD AFTER WHICH A CONTINUATION OR RENEWAL REQUEST IS REQUIRED TO BE
SUBMITTED FOR BOARD APPROVAL.
ANY MODIFICATIONS TO APPROVED PROJECT MUST ALSO BE SUBMITTED FOR APPROVAL.

Comments, Modifications/Conditions for Approval or Disapproval are as follows:
Although a tremendous amount of demographic information is asked which could reasonably place the identity of
the respondent in jeopardy, there are no questions in the survey that could realistically place the respondent in a
situation of employment risk excepting the last open-ended question. It is suggested that the researchers give a
list of suggestions to choose from to avoid the possibility that the respondent could supply a response that would
jeopardize their employment if their identity were accidentally divulged.

Signature _[signature]_   Date: October 17, 1997
Chair of Institutional Review Board
cc: Nancy W. Mathea   94

VITA

Nancy Wanjiku Mathea

Candidate for the Degree of

Master of Science

Thesis: THE EFFICACY OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES IN COPING WITH NEGATIVE STRESS: IDENTIFYING PERCEPTIONS AMONG OKLAHOMA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS (ODOC) EMPLOYEES

Major Field: Occupational and Adult Education

Area of Specialization: Human Resource Development

Biographical:

Education: Graduated from Rurii Primary School Ol'Kalou, in 1980; received "O" level certificate from Nyandarua High school in 1984; received "A" level certificate from Kaaga Girls High school in 1986; received Bachelor of Education degree from Moi university in 1990; received Bachelor of Science Degree in Geography from Oklahoma State university in 1994; completed requirements for Master of Science degree at Oklahoma State university in July, 1998.

Professional Experience: Research Assistant, Oklahoma State university, 1996-1997, student intern Oklahoma Department of Corrections. 1996-1997, vice president African Student Organization, 1997-1998, Student Support Services Counselor/Advisor, Eastern Oklahoma State College 1997 to present.