

Organizational Stress in Community Corrections and the Impact of Ineffective Leadership

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Organizational stress in community corrections and the impact of ineffective leadership

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## **Abstract**

Organizational stress in community corrections and the impact of ineffective leadership

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### **Statement of Problem**

Research suggests probation and parole officers are exposed to significant amounts of stress stemming from the nature of the job (Haggis, 2018). Exposure to high risk offenders, supervision of such offenders, and coordinating their enrollment in treatment and other rehabilitative services are factors identified as leading to stress (Haggis, 2018). Impacts on individual officers can lead to health problems including heart disease, hypertension, alcoholism, depression, suicidal tendencies, anxiety, and other mental health disorders (Slate et al., 2000).

Impacts from stress also effect community corrections organizations as a whole. Organizations face greater turnover rates and lack of job satisfaction resulting from stress (Pitts, 2007). 40 percent of job turnover is a result of stress (Slate et al., 2000). Other effects include higher organizational costs, absenteeism, and decreased performance (Haggis, 2018). Occupational stress has been found to cost the US between 200 and 300 billion dollars annually (Pitts, 2007). Offender populations are also effected through deterioration in supervision, increased unnoticed violations, and recidivism (Lee, Joo, and Johnson, 2009a).

While research has found stress as stemming from the nature of the job, research also suggests stress coming from organizational structure (Haggis, 2018; Gayman & Bradley, 2013, Lee, Joo, and Johnson, 2009a; Farester, 2016). Probation and parole organizations operate with a mechanistic structure with emphasis on hierarchies and chain of command. Strict lines of communication create difficulties for probation and parole officers as well as limiting

participation in decision making. This organizational structure has been found to foster higher levels of role conflict, role ambiguity, and role overload (Haggis, 2018; Farester, 2016). These characteristics can result from excessive demands, unclear work criteria, and differing role conceptions (Haggis, 2018).

The role of leadership in community corrections is a factor less studied, but suggested as being an additional factor in causing stress. Effective leadership assists probation and parole officers in overcoming organizational factors. Coping with change, motivating and inspiring others, and providing support are all characteristics of leadership found to be effective in alleviating officer stress (Farester, 2016). Organizations can mitigate organizational stressors and implement effective leadership methods, further leading to higher job satisfaction and lower turnover rates.

### **Methods of Approach**

This paper will use a primary method of secondary research. Empirical findings from scholarly journals, course textbooks, and published first-hand accounts will highlight the issue of probation and parole officer stress and display its connection with organizational structure and leadership methods. Further analysis of research will offer recommendations for community corrections administrators.

Analysis of theoretical frameworks relevant to leadership and organizational structure will support the paper's argument. Defining and identifying such frameworks will offer an understanding of the issues agencies are facing. Including leadership methods used in the private sector in overcoming similar difficulties will offer further ideas for change.

The summary of preventive measures will offer the reader an understanding of what community corrections agencies can do to alleviate officer stress. An ideal preventative method will be developed based on research findings.

### **Summary of Results**

Probation and parole officers experience stress from both organizational factors and ineffective leadership. Stress factors resulting from these sources has been linked with negative outcomes such as officer burnout, turnover, and job dissatisfaction. The issue of stress impacts both individual officers and whole organizations. Working conditions such as role conflict, role overload, role ambiguity and lack of decision making create significant stress on officers.

By organizations involving officers in decision making, officers experience lower levels of stress. Participatory management influences officer stress, satisfaction, turnover intention, and burnout. Specific stress factors such as role conflict, role ambiguity, and role overload are mitigated by participatory management. By implementing participatory management practices, agencies are able to mitigate the impact of organizational structure on stress without making significant and costly changes.

Specific practices involving leadership are also evident in impacting officer stress. With agencies placing focus on leadership behaviors, officers report lower levels of stress and stress outcomes. Officers that perceive supervisors as using leadership behaviors report greater job satisfaction and lower stress resulting from working conditions. Such findings identify both the significant role leaders play in subordinates' stress as well as alleviating further negative outcomes of stress that impact entire organizations. Further implementation of leadership development programs and practices including leader-member conversational quality have been found to positively influence officer stress.

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## INTRODUCTION

### Statement of Problem

As of 2014, there were 91,700 probation and parole officers who made up a large portion of the justice system in the United States (Haggis, 2018). Their responsibilities include the supervision of nearly two million offenders serving probation sentences or having been released from prison onto parole (Haggis, 2018). It has also been shown that this profession has some of the highest levels of stress amongst justice system professionals (Haggis, 2018). Research identifies this stress as stemming from the nature of the job as well as impacts from agencies' organizational structures (Farester, 2016; Gayman & Bradley, 2013; Haggis, 2018; Lee, Joo, and Johnson, 2009a, Lee, Phelps, and Beto, 2009b; Pitts, 2007; Slate et al., 2003).

Probation and parole officers are responsible for providing surveillance of offenders as well as ensuring offenders receive treatment and other rehabilitative services (Haggis, 2018). This job duty along with the constant exposure to offenders also creates a sense of danger (Haggis, 2018). Officers work with offenders in their homes, office, and jails. Officers are also responsible for taking offenders in and out of custody and transporting them between jails and treatment facilities. Offenders' risk levels can vary, but exposure is consistent.

Stress can also stem from agencies' organizational structure. Probation and parole organizations operate with a mechanistic structure with emphasis on hierarchies and chain of command. Strict lines of communication create difficulties for probation and parole officers as well as limiting participation in decision making. This organizational structure has been found to foster greater levels of role conflict, role ambiguity, and role overload (Farester, 2016; Haggis, 2018). These characteristics can result from excessive demands, unclear work criteria, and differing role conceptions (Haggis, 2018).

The impact from officer stress on organizations can result in greater operational costs and lost human capital. Occupation stress is reported to cost between 200 and 300 billion dollars annually (Pitts, 2007). Absenteeism, another symptom of stress, directly impacts organizations by officers not being present to fulfill job duties. It is estimated nearly 50 percent of all absences in the general work population are a result of stress (Slate et. al., 2000). Job turnover results when officers chose to resign from their position. Probation and parole organizations suffer from high turnover rates as a result of stress. Slate et. al. (2000) found that approximately 50 percent of Probation and Parole officers reported turnover intention with 45 percent of the sample being due to job dissatisfaction.

Individual impacts of stress can lead to health problems including heart disease, hypertension, alcoholism, depression, suicidal tendencies, anxiety, and other mental health disorders (Slate et. al., 2000). It is suggested as many as 60 to 90 percent of doctor visits are stress related (Farester, 2016). Therefore, the impact of job stress on individuals and organizations is detrimental to the effectiveness of the organization.

By organizations targeting stress stemming from organizational factors, there is a greater likelihood of combating the negative impacts of stress (Farester, 2016). Effective leadership assists probation and parole officers in overcoming problematic organizational factors. Coping with change, motivating and inspiring others, and providing support are all characteristics of leadership found to be effective in alleviating officer stress (Farester, 2016). Organizations can mitigate organizational stressors and implement effective leadership methods, further leading to higher job satisfaction and lower turnover rates.

## **Significance and implications**

The significance of this study is to highlight the impact of organizational structure in community corrections and offer methods for change. By identifying stress of probation and parole officers and connecting the impact from organizational structure, agencies can recognize existing flaws. While agencies use methods targeting individually based stress, this study offers recommendations for broader organizational change. Improvements in leadership methods have been found to alleviate probation and parole officer stress and can further be adopted by other community corrections organizations. Involvement in work place decisions is one factor found to reduce stress (Slate et. al., 2003). By probation and parole organizations implementing preventive measures and targeting organizational factors, organizations are offered an opportunity for reducing officer stress. This paper provides analysis of specific leadership methods, trainings, and programs that can be used as a resource for community corrections administrators in alleviating officer stress.

## **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the research is to identify specific organizational factors unique to community corrections agencies that result in probation and parole officer stress. Factors specific to community corrections organizations results in stress, eventually leading to low job satisfaction and higher turnover rates. Identifying specific organizational factors displays the issues at hand and highlights areas in need of change. Relevant research provides recommendations for organization administrators in decreasing stress of their probation and parole officers.

Further recommendations are developed after analyzing current leadership methods. Leadership plays a role in officer stress. Examining leadership methods and specific leadership

training methods will offer administrators opportunities for change in reducing officer stress. Insight into community corrections organizations from this research can be used to develop training programs and other models to alleviate officer stress. Findings from both state and federal probation agencies suggest applicable methods in overcoming this problem.

### **Method of approach**

This study will use a primary method of secondary research. Empirical findings from scholarly journals, course textbooks, and published first-hand accounts will highlight the issue of probation and parole officer stress and display its connection with organizational structure and leadership methods. Further analysis of research will offer recommendations for community corrections administrators.

The analysis of theoretical frameworks relevant to leadership and organizational structure will support the paper's argument. Defining and identifying such frameworks will offer an understanding of the issues agencies are facing. Including leadership methods used in the private sector in overcoming similar difficulties will offer further ideas for change.

A summary of preventive measures will offer the reader an understanding of what community corrections agencies can do to alleviate officer stress. An ideal preventative method will be developed in being most effective based on research findings.

### **Contributions**

This research will help agency leaders to adopt preventive measures in overcoming probation and parole officer stress. The development of this paper will identify an ideal leadership program to be adopted by community corrections organizations in alleviating officer stress. Inclusion of the effort-reward imbalance model (Presley, 2017), leadership development programs (Farester, 2016; Schumaker, 2016; Siegel et. al., 2012), participatory management

practices (Lee et. al., 2009), and the transformational leadership model (Dale & Trlin, 2010) will argue the importance of effective leadership methods and training.

Leader-Member Conversational Quality used in the private sector will offer recommendations for decreasing the negative effects of role ambiguity, role conflict, and role overload (Jian & Dalisay, 2015). Analysis of such preventative methods will develop an ideal leadership program in combating probation and parole officer stress.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The development of the literature review section offers four sections in support of this paper's argument. The first section defines organizational stress within probation and parole organizations. The second section defines the organizational structure of these organizations and its influences on officer stress. The third section incorporates the role of leadership and its impacts on officer stress. The final section analyzes the resulting outcomes of the stressors.

### **Organizational Stress**

Stress is understood as the response to an inappropriate level of pressure (Blankenship & Slate, 2016). This emphasizes the response officers have when faced with increasing job duties and tasks. Stress on individual workers caused by organizational factors is further understood as organizational stress. Organizational stress is defined as “the emotional, cognitive, behavioral, and physiological response to harmful aspects of work, work environment, and organizational climate” (Mirela & Madalina-Adriana, 2011).

Probation and parole officers can experience organizational stress through a multitude of factors. One aspect unique to work in community corrections is that probation and parole officers work with offenders both in the community and in secure facilities. This can become stressful for officers when they are faced with increasing caseloads, increasingly violent

offenders, and excessive paperwork (Farester, 2016). Stress on officers working with high caseloads and an element of danger in their work is minimal when compared to other organizational factors (Farester, 2016).

Organizational factors such as work overload, time pressures, deadlines, role conflict, role ambiguity, and participation in decision making are all factors found to contribute to probation and parole officer stress at greater rates than elements of the work itself (Blankenship & Slate, 2016; Farester, 2016; Gayman & Bradley, 2013). These factors are a current element of organizational structure in community corrections.

### **Organizational Structure**

Organizational structure is based on how formal the organization is and its use of a rigid hierarchy or bureaucracy (Allen & Sawhney, 2015). Organizations that are centralized contain greater authority at the top of the hierarchy and upper levels administration (Allen & Sawhney, 2015). This creates a chain of command in which authority is based in the organization. Communication travels through the chain of command to lower-level staff. Information may include direction or be used to address any changes in policy or procedure (Allen & Sawhney, 2015). Roles of staff members can be restricted by organizational relationships being formal and impersonal, emphasizing one-way communication where managers tell employees how, when, and what to do (Askelson, 2008).

Organizations such as probation and parole agencies are much more formal and centralized than others in the private sector. This structure creates a clearly defined set of rules, procedures, and policies (Allen & Sawhney, 2015). Within police departments, the chain of command leads to information traveling from the chief of police, to the assistant chiefs, to the commanders and sergeants, and finally to the street-level officer (Allen & Sawhney, 2015).

While this structure is less rigid within probation and parole agencies, there remains a formal chain of command with officers reporting to their supervisor, who reports to their regional chief, who then reports to the department's administrator.

The stress caused by the centralized structure existing in law enforcement agencies also exists in probation and parole agencies (Lee, Joo, and Johnson, 2009a). The centralized structure within probation and parole agencies can lead to factors of: role conflict, role overload, role ambiguity, and lack of participation in decision making. Such factors have been found to influence stress of probation and parole officers (Farester, 2016; Haggis, 2018; Lee, Joo, and Johnson, 2009a).

#### **Role conflict.**

Probation and parole officers can experience role conflict in various forms. Probation and parole officers hold simultaneous roles and are expected to act as law enforcement, caseworkers, counselors, and attorneys (Farester, 2016). Another form of role conflict arises when one's values conflict with their role requirements or expectations (Farester, 2016). One may experience such conflict when forced to act as a law enforcement officer but possess social work tendencies. Another example could arise when a probation and parole officer views revocation as an appropriate response to an offender's violation, yet is pressured by the department to pursue other alternatives.

With probation and parole officers holding varying job duties, they fill roles of law enforcement in protecting the community and controlling the offender; while also holding the role of a social worker in fostering rehabilitative measures and treating offenders. Probation and parole officers are tasked in fulfilling both roles based on organizational goals. Goals held by the department may sway towards various points on the role spectrum (Farester, 2016).

The control model focuses on the control of the offender and encourages control methods such as unannounced home visits, drug tests, and other actions in catching offenders violating rules of supervision (Farester, 2016). The social services model focuses on the offenders' needs in establishing housing, employment, and necessary counseling services (Farester, 2016). The combined model is the combination of both the control model and social services model. This model requires probation and parole officers to provide social services while also using control functions (Farester, 2016). Stress rises from role conflict when there is a discrepancy between an officer's role and their agency's model (Farester, 2016). Such discrepancy exists when officers favor one model, but their agencies operate with another. Officers that favor the control model of surveillance and accountability may struggle if their agency operates with a social services model.

Gayman and Bradley (2013) found probation and parole officers reporting high levels of role conflict in their work environment. Role conflict has been found to lead to burnout amongst probation and parole officers and predict depressive symptoms (Farester, 2016; Gayman & Bradley, 2013). Respondents were more likely to identify with statements such as "You felt that you could not shake off the blues" and "You could not get going" when experiencing role conflict in the work place (Gayman & Bradley, 2013). Such responses identify probation and parole officers experiencing depressive symptoms. This direct relationship between role conflict and depressive symptoms signals the importance of studying such prevalence.

### **Role overload.**

Role overload is another aspect of organizational structure leading to probation and parole officer stress. This factor is understood as "the excessive demands related to the quality and quantity of work expected within a particular time period" (Farester, 2016). Probation and

parole officers experiencing role overload identify the tension between deadlines and the needs of assigned offenders (Farester, 2016). This event causes officers to be strained by the urgency in achieving deadlines while at the same time meeting the needs of their offenders.

This can result in officers taking more overtime or work not being completed. Role overload showed less of an impact on officer stress than role conflict in previous studies. Lambert and Hogan's (2009) study found role overload to have nonsignificant effects on correctional staff's commitment. While this may be the case, with increasing caseloads and more individuals placed on probation, role overload may play a significant role on officer stress in the future. Especially when mandatory overtime has been found to increase employee turnover (Lambert & Hogan, 2009).

### **Role ambiguity.**

Role ambiguity exists when officers lack necessary information to complete job duties efficiently (Farester, 2016). This can result when officers lack proficiency in techniques relating to the job. Probation and parole agencies have adopted methods such as evidenced-based practices in attempts to reduce offender recidivism. Such implementations include greater use of assessment tools and other developmental practices that have been proven effective (Farester, 2016). The pressure of learning new techniques can lead to officer stress when officers lack proficiency.

Role ambiguity becomes an issue for probation and parole officers when adding to officer stress. While Farester (2016) found little direct impact on stress, officers who reported higher levels of role ambiguity reported lower levels of self-perceived health. Haggis (2018) identifies role ambiguity as being strongly related to interpersonal strain. While not directly linked to officer stress, role ambiguity has a significant impact on job satisfaction (Lambert & Hogan,

2009). These findings show a varying impact of role ambiguity on probation and parole officers. The lack of direct relationship between role ambiguity and officer stress suggests less importance on the matter. However, with greater training measures and alleviating feelings of officer inefficiencies, it is suspected role ambiguity could be diminished.

### **Participation in decision making.**

Lack of participation in decision making by probation and parole officers is also identified as being a cause of officer stress (Blankenship & Slate, 2016). Farester's (2016) study reports officers experiencing relatively low levels of participation in organizational decision making. As identified with probation and parole agencies being centralized, workers have lower levels of control over means of production and can be alienated in the decision making process (Lee, Joo, and Johnson, 2009a). Creating greater opportunities in decision making addresses the findings that workers prefer to have an active role in decisions that directly affects their work (Lee, Joo, and Johnson, 2009a).

Attempts have been made in encouraging participatory management in the past. In 1993, President Clinton created the National Performance Review (NPR) which critiqued hierarchical and centralized bureaucracies (Lee, Joo, and Johnson, 2009a). Efforts promoted team environments, the empowerment of employees, and greater communication with employees (Lee, Joo, and Johnson, 2009a). The American Probation and Parole Association (APPA) then emphasized the transformation of bureaucratic culture through participatory management and further empowerment of employees (Lee, Joo, and Johnson, 2009a).

By agencies implementing participatory management and giving greater participation in decision making, officers report lower levels of stress and greater job satisfaction (Lee, Joo, and Johnson, 2009a). Agencies adopting participatory management practices and giving more

control to lower level workers creates a participatory climate. Participatory climates were found to play a significant role in reducing probation and parole officer stress (Lee, Joo, and Johnson, 2009a). Further findings then showed higher levels of job satisfaction and reduced turnover intention; both reported stressors (Lee, Joo, and Johnson, 2009a). In the agencies studied, officers reported less stress when having greater participation in decision making. This then led to higher job satisfaction and lower turnover rates. This implementation not only positively impacts individual officers, but also organizations as a whole by maintaining staff numbers.

Probation and parole officers who perceived having a voice in organizational decisions tended to view their jobs in a more positive light (Lambert & Hogan, 2009). This gives employees the perception of having input and abilities in shaping the organization in which they work. This creates the perception of being valued by the organization (Lambert & Hogan, 2009). More participation in decision making was also found to foster greater organizational commitment, another identifier of stress (Lambert & Hogan, 2009).

Such findings suggest when probation and parole officers feel they have input in decision making, they report lower levels of stress. With organizations offering more participation in decision making, they address turnover intention, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment. By restructuring organizational functions, agencies can impact a variety of important stressors of probation and parole officers.

### **Role of leadership.**

With the role upper management has in centralized organizations, leadership is found to influence stress on officers. Research on leadership within probation and parole organizations has focused on the faults in current leadership methods and how officer stress can be a result. By

analyzing differing leadership methods, researchers identify areas for change. Further leadership methods are analyzed and defined.

Askelson (2008) highlights the paradigm that exists within probation and parole management. While managers work within a paradigm (the established set of rules and regulations), leaders act between them (Askelson, 2008). This difference identifies managers acting within organizational guidelines, while leaders operate between them. Leaders bring about change and influence others to follow (Askelson, 2008). This is especially important considering the consistent changes probation and parole agencies are subjected to.

Ineffective leadership comes about when leaders place more focus on the control of employees rather than their commitment (Askelson, 2008). Rather than seeing their jobs as controlling the workforce through policies and punishments, effective leaders promote commitment (Askelson, 2008). This difference compares engendering commitment versus eliciting compliance. Methods used to bring about commitment include teaching, coaching, and leading team members to develop their own self-control rather than the imposed control of policies and procedures (Askelson, 2008). Askelson (2008) suggests probation and parole managers place more emphasis on relations rather than tasks. In managers listening, showing concern, and gathering feedback from officers, managers find better results (Askelson, 2008). By gathering feedback from officers, managers restructure the rigid organizational structure in offering opportunities for participation. This is shown in the benefits of shared decision-making.

Askelson (2008) identifies the positive impacts of effective leadership methods and how this was reflected in the Iowa Northern District of Probation and Pretrial Services adopting the Research to Results project. The implementation of evidence based practices has been identified as creating officer stress (Askelson, 2008). With focus on effective leadership methods,

Askelson (2008) found positive changes in the organization and its staff adopting the change. The project was found to foster greater direction in its operations with clear goals, objectives, and strategies. Officers were allowed to express their ideas and see their suggestions used. Staff was also revitalized with more opportunities for input. Teamwork was also fostered with work groups and peer to peer coaching and training. Further effects were seen in more productivity, satisfaction by staff, and greater recognition of efforts (Askelson, 2008). Askelson (2008) identifies the Northern District of Iowa benefiting with its focus on leadership, specifically with the success of the Research to Results project.

Dale and Trlin (2010) found similar concepts important to effective leadership in probation and parole organizations. Leaders whom emphasize coaching, teaching, and modeling have greater success in generating commitment than those using control techniques (Dale & Trlin, 2010). Dale and Trlin's (2010) contribution to leadership research in probation and parole organizations broadened the key factors important to officers. The first significant finding includes the importance of the relationship between managers and officers. Relationships that characterized a supportive relationship in which the officer is acknowledged and empowered fostered greater work performance (Dale & Trlin, 2010). Managers who presented as credible (clear articulation of professional values, possession of knowledge, and demonstrated expertise) received greater trust, respect, and confidence amongst probation and parole officers, which led to greater commitment (Dale & Trlin, 2010).

Findings in their study highlight solutions in overcoming organizational difficulties. Recommendations include involving staff in the development of best practices and establishing an office with responsibility for practice development (Dale & Trlin, 2010). This technique also includes the involvement of officers in decision making and valuing feedback in organizational

functions. The creation of opportunities for coaching gives officers a clear expectation of what is required in new or changing policies as well as giving them the opportunity for input. It can be expected that such methods would alleviate role ambiguity and further officer stress as officers are more certain of what is expected of them.

Dale and Trlin's (2010) research identified important characteristics of effective leaders recommended by officers. Of the sampled probation and parole officers, 77% placed value on managers acting as leaders. Credibility was found to contribute to the effectiveness of managers. Such credibility was enhanced when leaders promoted an organizational vision and goals that were both realistic and achievable (Dale & Trlin, 2010). Credibility led to greater trust held by officers and increased officers' adherence to required policies and practices (Dale & Trlin, 2010). Support, being another key factor, is generated by leaders empowering, providing feedback, backing decisions, and acknowledging efforts and concerns (Dale & Trlin, 2010). Leaders were directly connected with officer stress when they showed concern for officers becoming overwhelmed (Dale & Trlin, 2010). By managers adopting such leadership qualities, officers expressed greater commitment and reported less stress.

Farester (2016) found leadership behaviors of Chief United States Probation Officers (CUSPO) to be a significant factor in increasing working conditions (role conflict, role overload, role ambiguity, and participation in decision making) and impacting officer stress. Leadership behaviors are understood as the managers' use of quality leadership methods such as giving feedback, effective coaching, and listening (Farester, 2016). Officers who reported a perceived use of leadership behaviors by a CUSPO reported: more participation in decision making, greater organizational commitment, and higher job satisfaction. This impact on working conditions and

stress outcomes is significant when considering the role of top level managers. By CUSPO's adopting leadership behaviors, probation officers were benefited relating to their job stress.

### **Stress Outcomes**

While there are various stressors placed on probation and parole agents, stress has various outcomes. Researchers identify stress as leading to burnout, turnover, and job dissatisfaction (Farester, 2016; Gayman & Bradley, 2013; Haggis, 2018; Lee, Phelps, and Beto, 2009b). This section will define burnout, turnover, and job satisfaction and identify how such factors are a result of job stress.

#### **Burnout.**

Burnout is defined as the state of emotional exhaustion causing individuals to feel overwhelmed or overextended by their work, leading to a lack in productivity (Gayman & Bradley, 2013). Other definitions identify burnout as being a state of mental weariness, exhaustion, and cynicism (Haggis, 2018). It is also understood as an imbalance of work, emotional stress, and psychological stress, which further leads to officer detachment and feelings of ineffectiveness (Haggis, 2018). Individuals who work in professions that have intensive interactions with people on a regular basis have a greater likelihood of experiencing burnout (Blankenship & Slate, 2016).

Gayman & Bradley (2013) found probation and parole officers to characterize their work environments as having high levels of burnout/exhaustion. The most significant finding in their study was burnout being a result of conflicting demands on officers (role conflict) (Gayman & Bradley, 2013). Such findings highlight the direct impact of role conflict on officer burnout. Further analysis also found burnout leading to depressive symptoms.

Maladaptive coping mechanisms were found to intensify burnout amongst officers (Haggis, 2018). Maladaptive coping mechanisms are strategies used by individuals in attempts to alleviate stress. What makes such strategies ineffective is while they decrease symptoms temporarily, there is little to no longer term positive effect - examples include drinking, tobacco use, and avoidance (Haggis, 2018). Haggis (2018) found stress to increase maladaptive coping mechanisms, which in turn led to higher levels of burnout. This is problematic considering the positive correlation between maladaptive coping and officer burnout.

Probation and parole officers who reported lower levels of burnout reported a positive working relationship with their supervisors and also reported receiving support and recognition from their supervisors (Farester, 2016). By agencies promoting supportive employee-supervisor relationships and alleviating maladaptive coping mechanisms, levels of burnout could be decreased.

### **Turnover.**

Turnover is the event of employees ceasing employment. Turnover's impacts can be significant considering the impact on the individual and the organization. Direct impacts include the financial cost of losing an employee. Such costs can be significant considering the loss of performance and expertise when an employee leaves. The organization then puts costs into recruitment and training new hires (Lambert & Hogan, 2009). Further direct costs include the use of overtime to cover workload and administrative efforts in hiring new staff (Lambert & Hogan, 2009). The indirect costs of turnover include the loss of social networks, increased use of inexperienced and/or tired staff, insufficient staffing, and decreased morale (Lambert & Hogan, 2009).

Factors that influence turnover include job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Haggis, 2018). As officers reported higher levels of job satisfaction and organizational commitment, turnover intention decreased (Haggis, 2018). This suggests that by agencies focusing on increasing satisfaction and commitment, turnover will decrease. Another factors found to influence turnover is employee participation. Lee, Joo, and Johnson (2009a) found increased perceptions of participatory management resulting in decreased turnover intention.

The link between turnover intention and job stress amongst probation and parole officers is significant (Lee, Phelps, and Beto, 2009b). Internal stress was found to have a substantial positive direct relationship with turnover intention (Lee, Phelps, and Beto, 2009b). With such findings of correlation, probation and parole administrators should target existing high levels of turnover and work towards decreasing direct and indirect costs, but also in decreasing job stress. Based on the direct relationship between participatory climate and turnover intention, methods could be targeted to address employee participation in daily operations and strategic plans in reducing staff turnover (Lee, Joo, and Johnson, 2009a).

### **Job satisfaction.**

Job satisfaction is another key outcome of job stress amongst probation and parole officers. Participation in decision-making was found to add to job satisfaction and reduce job stress (Farester, 2016). When officers do not feel they are truly participating in the organization, their overall job satisfaction is found to decline (Lee, Joo, and Johnson, 2009a). Employees who are allowed input into decision making generally view their job in a more positive light, resulting in greater job satisfaction (Lambert & Hogan, 2009). Officers who reported greater levels of job satisfaction also reported higher levels of organizational commitment and less turnover intention (Lambert & Hogan, 2009).

Organizational fairness was identified as a factor in influencing job satisfaction. Officers who viewed their organization as fair, also reported greater job satisfaction (Lambert & Hogan, 2009). The factor of organizational fairness is the degree of fairness a worker perceives within an organization in terms of outcomes and procedures for reaching outcomes (Lambert & Hogan, 2009). As organizational fairness increased, job satisfaction too increased (Lambert & Hogan, 2009). This finding identifies the importance of officers' perceptions of work environment and how perceived fairness can impact satisfaction, which in turn can impact turnover and overall job stress.

By probation and parole organizations including officers in decision making opportunities, it is expected job satisfaction will increase. In researchers also finding job fairness as influencing job satisfaction, organizations should develop methods in increasing job fairness (Lambert & Hogan, 2009).

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

This section will include an analysis of existing theoretical frameworks relevant to probation and parole officer stress caused by organizational factors. Further analysis of leadership theories will provide suggestions for community corrections administrators. This section will be broken into two parts. The first part will include organizational theories that influence stress. The second part will include theories regarding leadership and highlight effective methods.

### **Organizational Theory**

Organizational theory is the process of examining organizations based on patterns and trends in organizational design and behaviors (Allen & Sawhney, 2015). Organizational structure plays a large role in this analysis when examining work environments, employee

interactions, and job responsibilities. In relation to probation and parole organizations, upper level managers can use organization theory to understand the relationship between the agency's organizational structure and specific outcomes both positive and negative. Models based on this theory explain organizational events and help in the development of classifications of structure.

### **Closed-systems model**

One classification is the closed-system model. The closed-system model considers external environment influences to be stable and predictable, and assumes such external factors have no impact on the organization's function (Allen & Sawhney, 2015). Analysis is therefore solely based on internal organizational processes (Allen & Sawhney, 2015). Probation and parole officer stress under this model is understood as resulting from the agency's processes and environmental factors and not impacted by external factors such as legal, political, or technological factors. This model stems from the industrial revolution when motivations for peak performance and productivity were priority with little regard for individual well-being. Focuses were placed on internal factors in achieving such goals (Allen & Sawhney, 2015). This creates limitations when examining a complex event such as stress. The closed system model includes three classical perspectives: scientific management, administrative management, and bureaucratic management.

### **Scientific management.**

This perspective focuses on the productivity of the individual worker (Allen & Sawhney, 2015). The basis of the perspective holds that poor management practices and procedures are the primary problem of an organization (Allen & Sawhney, 2015). By studying job decisions and organizations, researchers seek to develop optimal procedures (Allen & Sawhney, 2015).

Managers are then able to identify the most efficient way of performing tasks (Allen & Sawhney, 2015).

### **Administrative management.**

While scientific management focuses primarily on the work performed, administrative management focuses on managers and their functions (Allen & Sawhney, 2015). This perspective seeks to identify key functions of managers such as planning, organizing, commanding/leading, coordinating, and controlling (Allen & Sawhney, 2015). Specific roles and responsibilities are designated based on the position of the individual within the organization. This perspective is displayed in the common use of hierarchies in probation and parole agencies. This division of labor allows individuals to focus on secular areas of the organization and fulfill specific tasks based on their position (Allen & Sawhney, 2015). This further leads to efficiency and productivity, but also limits authority and decision making opportunities (Allen & Sawhney, 2015).

### **Bureaucratic management.**

Bureaucratic management perspective takes on a larger approach and focuses on the overall organizational system (Allen & Sawhney, 2015). Significant focus is placed on how workers and managers interact (Allen & Sawhney, 2015). Similar to the administrative perspective, this model emphasizes the specialization of tasks and matching personal competence to job requirements (Allen & Sawhney, 2015). Efficiency is enhanced through such task specialization and duplicated work is eliminated (Allen & Sawhney, 2015). Rules and procedures are also standardized, allowing for efficient work in a universal manner (Allen & Sawhney, 2015). This perspective is most advantageous when used in an organization with a chain of command, rigid hierarchy, and strict formal rules, much like criminal justice

organizations (Allen & Sawhney, 2015). While this method may be effective in providing standardized services, role ambiguity is heightened, and decision making opportunities decreased, both leading to stress of probation and parole agents.

### **Open-systems model**

The opposite of a close-system model is one that is open. This model differs in that it focuses on events occurring external to the organization (Allen & Sawhney, 2015). Because the organization cannot be equally subjected to all environmental factors, the open-systems model identifies the need to evaluate such factors (Stojkovic, Kalinich, & Klofas, 2012). One perspective of open systems model includes total quality management.

### **Total quality management model.**

Total quality management is based on the open system approach that focuses on the customer and their demand for quality products and services (Cronkhite, 2008). Rather than focus being put on procedures and organizational structure, emphasis is placed on the importance of quantitative methods in striving for continuous improvement in products and services (Cronkhite, 2008). Historically used in the private sector in fulfilling customer demands, the total quality management model has started to be used in the public sector and criminal justice administration. Focal points in its implementation have included: consistency in improvement, concern for quality, on the job training, improvement in leadership, and elimination of work standards (Cronkhite, 2008).

Within probation and parole, total quality management model may lead to a goal of improving services to offenders by reducing recidivism in a given year (Cronkhite, 2008). With this model, administrators are more open to the understanding that factors are not consistent and do change. In approaching stress, management using the open system are more cognizant of

external factors and that there is not one cause of stress. With the use of feedback and striving for improvement, management is better prepared to alleviate stress from both internal and external factors.

### **Effort-reward imbalance model**

The effort-reward imbalance model examines the extent to which job conditions and rewards influence the health and productivity of employees (Presley, 2017). This model suggests when the amount of the reward does not equal the amount of the effort given, emotional and psychological stress is likely to occur (Presley, 2017). Specifically, when rewards do not outweigh the negative impact of work environment or stress, adverse physical and emotional systems result (Presley, 2017). Examples of rewards include: income, esteem, prestige, and career advancement (Presley, 2017). When these rewards do not outweigh employee effort, stress is the result. This model is important when looking at probation and parole officer stress as it suggests negative outcomes of stress can be decreased with the use of rewards. Further research is required to determine what type of rewards are most effective. Based on previous literature, feedback and participation are intrinsic enough in alleviating stress coming from role ambiguity and lack of participation in decision making.

### **Participatory management theory**

Lee, Joo, and Johnson. (2009a) identify participatory management theory as assuming employees prefer to have an active role in decision-making that directly affects their work. The theory also seeks to balance the involvement of both superiors and subordinates in information-sharing, decision-making, and problem-solving related to production and quality control (Lee, Joo, and Johnson, 2009a). This theory specifically addresses the stressor experienced by probation and parole officers of not having a role in decision making. Participatory management

theory identifies the potential negative outcomes of work environment and suggests employee participation as being a significant eliminator.

### **Job demands resource model**

The job demands resource model (JD-R) assumes that every occupation has its own specific characteristics associated with work stress and that these can be classified into two categories: job demands and job resources (Nielsen et al., 2011). Job demands are understood as the physical, psychological, social, or organizational aspects of the work that require physical and mental effort. Such efforts can further result in physiological or psychological costs (Nielsen et al., 2011). Job resource differs in that while it refers to the same aspects (physical, psychological, social, and organization), they are understood as functional to work goals, reduce job demands, and stimulate personal growth (Nielsen et al., 2011). Job resources are the positive outcomes of the job demands. The theory further assumes that job stress develops when certain job demands are high and when job resources are limited (Nielsen et al., 2011). Much like the effort-reward imbalance model, stress arises when the ratio is unequal.

Examples of job resource include organizational offerings such as salary, career, opportunities, or job security (Nielsen et al., 2011). Further examples include interpersonal and social relations, or organizational aspects (e.g., role clarity, participation in decision making). Aspects specifically relating to job tasks include: performance feedback, task significance, and autonomy (Nielsen et al., 2011). The theory suggests that as job demand increases, job resources must also increase to avoid job stress. With probation and parole agencies specifically, job demands can be high. Between officers facing high caseloads, paperwork, and aspects of danger, demands are also high. With management taking the job demand resource model into account, varying job resources can be implemented to alleviate job demand's negative outcome. Existing

research identifies there being a negative relationship between job demands and job satisfaction meaning as job demands increase, job satisfaction decreases (Nielsen et al., 2011). There is also a positive relationship between job resources and job satisfaction, meaning the opposite in that as organizations offer more resources, job satisfaction increases (Nielson et al., 2011).

### **Conservation of resource model**

Conservation of resource model (COR) identifies that people try to acquire and manage their personal and social resources wisely, and that threat to those resources results in increased stress (Michel, Pichler & Kerry, 2014). Examples of threats to resources fit into three categories: 1) possible loss of resources, 2) actual loss of resources, and 3) failure to acquire resources (Michel et al., 2014). COR theory explains how people react to environmental stressors and how managing such stressors can lead to further negative impacts (Michel et al., 2014). Negative impacts result when individuals attempt to cope with stressors and deplete their resources in the process. Negative impacts can then include psychological and physiological stress (Michel et al., 2014). By attempting to gain resources in said process, other essential resources are depleted.

COR postulates individuals who are unable to counterbalance expenditure of personal resources at work with resource gain are at risk for burnout (Adler et al., 2017). Ways in decreasing negative impacts include: psychological detachment from work-related demands, relaxation or resting, and mastery of non-work-related activities during leisure time (Adler et al., 2017). By taking time for self-care, physical exercise, relaxation, and social support, improvements are made in avoiding negative impacts (Adler et al., 2017).

### **Leadership Theory**

With criminal justice organizations being based on a rigid hierarchical structure and strict chain of commands, managers play a significant role in employees' perceptions. As discussed,

managers can be responsible for officer stress when not acting as effective leaders. Leadership theories have been developed to explain certain practices and determine effective methods. Literature on leadership theories in criminal justice agencies has focused on LPC theory of leadership, path-goal theory, and transformational leadership model relating to work environment stressors.

### **LPC theory of leadership.**

Once called contingency theory of leadership, LPC theory of leadership suggests leader's effectiveness depends on the situation (Griffin et al., 2015). This means some leaders are more effective in one situation or organization, but not in another. Effective leadership is dependent on the match between the leader's personality and the situation (Griffin et al., 2015). Upper level management is therefore responsible for placing managers in situations in which they are effective.

Leaders are exposed to both favorable and unfavorable situations. LPC theory identifies which leaders are probable to be effective in specific situations. For example, a task-oriented leader is appropriate for very favorable as well as very unfavorable situations (Griffin et al., 2015). Person-oriented leaders are also more likely to achieve higher group performance (Griffin et al., 2015). Further explanation of LPC theory identifies the effectiveness leaders have in relation to task orientation, leader-member relations, and position of power. Effectiveness is based on the leaders' characteristics and style in differing situations. This theory can be useful by upper level probation and parole managers in placing supervisory staff.

### **Path-goal theory.**

Path-goal theory differs from the LPC theory of leadership in that it assumes leaders can change their behavior and exhibit any or all leadership styles (Griffin et al., 2015). This theory

specifies four kinds of leadership behavior: directive, supportive, participative, and achievement-oriented (Griffin et al., 2015). Leaders are most effective when using specific behaviors in the most appropriate situations. Determinants of what kind of leadership to be used is based on the personal characteristics of subordinates and environmental characteristics (Griffin et al., 2015). This theory identifies less emphasis on upper level management placing appropriate leaders in specific situations, rather, establishes importance in leaders responding most appropriately in given situations. By using varying leadership behaviors, leaders can meet their subordinates' needs.

This relates to stress research when considering the probation and parole officer need of participation. Participative leadership behavior involves subordinates in organizational decision making. As described a stress factor, participation in decision-making and the use of participative leadership behavior can alleviate probation and parole officer stress. Further use of directive leadership behavior to counteract role ambiguity suggests decreased stress as well. Achievement-oriented leadership behavior could be used in situations of low job satisfaction based on the employees' motivations. The multi-facet approach of path-goal theory displays its abilities in counteracting key factors of probation and parole officer stress (Griffin et al., 2015).

#### **Transformational leader model.**

Transformational leadership theory proposes a leadership approach that will be effective during periods of organizational change (Dale & Trlin, 2010). Further definitions identify transformational leadership as a process that changes and transforms individuals (Dale & Trlin, 2010). This theory suggests the importance of assessing employees' motives, satisfying their needs, and treating them as equals (Dale & Trlin, 2010). Such leaders are more concerned with values, ethics, standards, and long-term goals (Dale & Trlin, 2010). Other characteristics

describe the leader as being attentive, but also cognizant of organizational goals. Leaders possess a set of abilities that allow them to recognize the need for change, to guide that change, and to execute the change effectively (Griffin et al., 2015).

The effectiveness of transformational leadership being used in probation and parole agencies is expected to be high. Transformational leadership is positively associated with group climate, decision making, and moral action (Northouse, 2018). Such factors are important in alleviating stress, specifically decision making. Providing opportunities for feedback also suggests greater effectiveness in alleviating probation and parole officer stress.

## **METHODS**

The primary method of this research is based on secondary research. Empirical findings from journals, textbooks, and first-person accounts highlight the issue of probation and parole officer stress and its connection with organizational structure and leadership methods. A review of the literature makes an argument for changes within probation and parole organizations and the need to adjust working conditions. The issue of leadership is also displayed in the paper's review and supported by examples of effective leadership. Analysis of theoretical frameworks relevant to these issues further supports the paper's argument. By displaying the basis of the issue and including theoretical frameworks, recommendations are formulated.

Of the included research, sampling is made up of state, federal, and county level probation and parole officers and managers. Findings have made no distinction of stress levels varying between state, federal or county level organizations. Findings do identify the common experience of stress stemming from organizational structure and leadership in these organizations. Survey data being the most common tool found various correlations between

stress and organizational factors such as role overload, role conflict, role ambiguity, and participation in decision making.

The common independent variables in the studies include leadership and working conditions. Working conditions include role overload, role conflict, role ambiguity, and participation in decision making (Farester, 2016; Gayman & Bradley, 2013; Haggis, 2018; Lee, Joo, and Johnson, 2009a; Presley, 2017). Researchers also used coping and social support as independent variables. Dependent variables consist of stress outcomes, which include burnout, job satisfaction, turnover, organizational commitment, depressive symptoms, and self-perceived health (Farester, 2016; Gayman & Bradley, 2013; Haggis, 2018; Lee, Phelps, and Beto, 2009b; Presley, 2017). Control variables were also consistent between studies. Control variables were defined as age, gender, marital status, experience, and race. Research found little consistency between control variables and measured stress outcomes (Farester, 2016; Gayman & Bradley, 2013; Haggis, 2018; Lee, Joo, and Johnson, 2009a; Lee, Phelps, and Beto, 2009b; Presley, 2017).

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Organizational structure is a contributing factor to probation and parole officer stress with specific work conditions and leadership methods influencing stress levels. As previously discussed, multiple aspects of probation and parole organizations influence officer stress. Organizational structure resulting in working conditions such as role conflict, role overload, role ambiguity, and lack of participation in decision making are the most significant factors when analyzing officer stress. Additionally, leadership methods and behaviors are identified as significant factors in alleviating officer stress. Such methods are further discussed with the development of recommendations. Focus on participatory management and leadership practices

will identify effective ways probation and parole administrators can alleviate the organizational issue of stress.

### **Participatory management**

It is evident probation and parole officer suffer from stress stemming from multiple aspects of the job. The issue is multifaceted in that stress stems from various areas and aspects of the organization. To address all areas would be daunting for administrators, especially when considering how rooted such agencies are in centralized tendencies. The working conditions of role conflict, role overload, role ambiguity, and participating in decision making are prevalent in probation and parole officer research. Participatory management is one method found to be most common in alleviating the impact of these working conditions (Farester, 2016; Gayman & Bradley, 2013; Haggis, 2018; Lee, Joo, and Johnson, 2009a; Presley, 2017).

Participation in decision making has been found to decrease probation and parole officer stress as well as significantly increasing job satisfaction (Lee, Joo, and Johnson, 2009a). Job satisfaction is significant considering the identified impacts on both the individual officer and organization as a whole. Participatory management also has a direct relationship with turnover intention, and job satisfaction (Lee, Phelps, and Beto, 2009b). These relationships identify the significant impact decision making has on officer stress.

Research findings suggest that organizational factors play a greater role in predicting officers stress and turnover intention than individual employee factors (Lee, Phelps, and Beto, 2009b). By organizations adopting a participatory climate, officer stress and further impacts can be mitigated. Participatory climate consists of a non-traditional autocratic style of management. This style emphasizes employees' participation in information sharing, decision making, and problem solving (Lee, Joo, and Johnson, 2009a). Other benefits of participatory climate include

providing officers with the sense of control and self-efficacy (Lee, Joo, and Johnson, 2009a). Participation further improves officers' perceptions with providing feelings of value and trust, increasing a sense of autonomy (Simmons et. al., 1997).

Lee, Joo, and Johnson's (2009a) study on participatory climate found it to be the most important factor in reducing stressful conditions and also enhanced officers' levels of job satisfaction. Such findings suggest the imminent benefit of participatory management practices. Changes can be made from the traditional, autocratic organizational climate by involving officers in decision making (Lee, Joo, and Johnson, 2009a). This practice can be implemented in the selection, development, and training of managers in ensuring those in managerial roles elicit participatory climates (Lee, Joo, and Johnson, 2009a).

Enhancing communication and feedback between officers and managers also alleviates the outcomes of traditional, autocratic bureaucracy that foster one-way communication (Lee, Joo, and Johnson, 2009a). As shown in the effort-reward imbalance model, implementing officer recognition and feedback also decreases officer stress (Presley, 2017). Findings suggest the importance of recognition and feedback amongst probation and parole officers (Presley, 2017). When incorporating a participatory climate, organizations will foster greater communication, feedback, recognition, and opportunities of decision making. All of these factors are significant in decreasing probation and parole officer stress (Lee, Joo, and Johnson, 2009a; Presley, 2017).

### **Leadership practices**

Leaders within probation and parole organizations have a pivotal role in decreasing officer stress. While administrators can alleviate officer stress in altering organizational functions, leaders can influence stress in their practices as well. Leadership behaviors have a significant impact in working conditions and stress outcomes for probation and parole officers

(Farester, 2016). By leaders in probation and parole agencies displaying effective leadership behaviors, officer stress was found to decline (Farester, 2016).

Of the sampled Chief United States Probation Officers (CUSPOs), leadership behaviors were the strongest predictor of working conditions, such as: role conflict, role overload, and role ambiguity (Farester, 2016). This finding suggests the relationship between leadership behaviors and stress factors of probation and parole officers. Perceived use of leadership behaviors by CUSPOs showed lower levels of role overload and officer stress (Farester, 2016). The finding further highlights the importance of leaders in probation and parole organizations.

Other research has emphasized the role of leaders in probation and parole organizations. Findings from Dale and Trlin (2010) identify specific characteristics of organizational leaders that influence officer stress. Relationships between managers and officers characterized by support, acknowledgement, and empowerment led to a positive influence on officers (Dale & Trlin, 2010). Credibility was identified as second factor in eliciting trust, respect, confidence, and a willingness to work by officers (Dale & Trlin, 2010). By leaders clearly articulating professional values, displaying knowledge, and demonstrating expertise, officers showed greater levels of commitment (Dale & Trlin, 2010).

Dale and Trlin's (2010) findings show key operational procedures for leaders in fostering commitment and decreased officer stress. Leaders are encouraged to integrate the following practices:

- Develop a clear, integrated statement of purpose, values and beliefs by adopting an approach that values and emphasizes the centrality of the worker-client relationships to effective practice and organizational functioning.

- Establish foundations of professional practices by: promoting professional supervision; consolidating professional identify; involving staff in the development of best practice; and establishing a professional office with responsibility for practice development.
- Establish structures and processes necessary to support professional practice by introducing a professional role to focus upon coaching and advising front-line staff (Dale & Trlin, 2010).

This guideline proposed by Dale and Trlin (2010) addresses significant factors that lead to officer stress and the impacts of stress. With the adoption of such practices, leaders can diminish working conditions that lead to stress and other outcomes of turnover and job dissatisfaction (Dale & Trlin, 2010).

Other research on leadership behaviors in corrections identifies attributes of effective leaders as viewed by line staff. McCallum (2005) surveyed line-staff in identifying important attributes of leaders in their correctional organization. Participants identified the top five attributes as being: integrity, trustworthy, competence, decision making, and follower (McCallum, 2005).

Integrity is displayed in the commitment to the mission of the organization and their belief in the organization's goals and objectives (McCallum, 2005). The trustworthy attribute is displayed in the leader expressing openness and honesty with follow through of their actions (McCallum, 2005). Competence is gained through the leader fulfilling job requirements and expectations of their position while also offering clear guidance (McCallum, 2005). This concept also touches on the culmination of role ambiguity in officers being unclear of expectations. Decision making being the fourth most important attribute is shown in leaders

making necessary decisions (McCallum, 2005). With the previously cited research, it is suggested officers being involved in the process results in further effectiveness. Leaders who also possess the ability to align him or herself with the organization are viewed as being effective followers (McCallum, 2005). This is reflected in the leader following the wishes of the organization as well as the wishes of officers in passing necessary information up and down the chain of command (McCallum, 2005). This specific attribute also touches on previous research of participatory management in giving officers a voice in organizational operations.

Schumaker (2016), a senior probation and pretrial services officer, provides recommendations for agency leaders in his first-hand account of leadership in probation and parole. Schumaker (2016) identifies key functions of effective leaderships viewed by officers and other professionals. Valuable leaders were identified as establishing both short-term and long-term goals with clear communication of said goals (Schumaker, 2016). By leaders effectively planning and implementing said goals with clear expectations, officers experienced less stress with higher morale and an appropriate work and personal life balance (Schumaker, 2016). Leaders also modeling necessary organizational changes further led to officer commitment (Schumaker, 2016). Leaders that showed they cared for line staff also facilitated officers' positive perceptions (Schumaker, 2016). Traits that leaders were encouraged to avoid include poor communication and lack of positive feedback (Schumaker, 2016). Officers that saw such traits by their managers were viewed them as "bad" leaders (Schumaker, 2016).

### **Leadership Development Program**

The U.S. Probation and Pre-trial Service Systems implemented the Leadership Development Program in 1992 as a way to develop organizational leaders (Siegel, Valentine & Higgins, 2012). The goal of the program is cited as, "Ensuring a sufficient internal supply of

qualified candidates” (Siegel et. al., 2012). With such a program, the system should have readily available leaders to assist in achieving organizational goals, changes, and procedures. Specific goals of the program are cited as:

- Develop a personal approach to leadership management
- Develop new skills in the area of change management
- Develop an ability to benchmark the achievements of federal probation and pretrial services
- Broaden participants understanding about judicial administration
- Learn from the best practices of other probation and pretrial services officers across the country (Siegel et. al., 2012).

The program is implemented as a three-year program available to supervisory officers and other managers in the organization (Siegel et. al., 2012). The specific objective of the program is to challenge participants with a rigorous and dynamic program that includes multiple projects, leadership literature, and in-person leadership training (Siegel et. al., 2012).

The first aspect to the program is the Management Practice Report. It requires participants to analyze leadership literature, conduct interviews with leaders in both the public and private sector, and to report their findings relating to the impact of leaders in their organization (Siegel et. al., 2012). Second, participants complete an In-District Project, which tasks participants with analyzing a specific issue in their district and propose solutions (Siegel et. al., 2012). This gives participants the opportunity to apply their learnings to issues unique to their immediate organization. Projects are commonly fitted into areas of education/training, technology improvements, district policies, evidence-based practices, and safety/wellness programs (Siegel et. al., 2012).

The final phase of the program tasks participants with briefly working in another field such as other judicial districts, other governmental branches, and even the private sector (Siegel et. al., 2012). This phase's purpose is to provide participants with the opportunity to observe other management techniques and leadership strategies (Siegel et. al., 2012). With multiple phases, participants achieve both literary knowledge as well as real life experience.

Siegel et. al. (2012) identifies the program's effectiveness in participants' positive views of the program. The program was also deemed quantitatively and qualitatively successful based on statistics and participants' responses (Siegel et. al., 2012). Siegel et. al.'s (2012) study failed to measure the program's effectiveness in impacting probation and parole officers stress.

Farester (2016) studied the Leadership Development Program and its impact on probation and parole officers' stress. Farester (2016) found participation in the Leadership Development Program by CUSPOs as not having any impact on working conditions or stress outcomes of probation and parole officers. One possible reason behind this finding is that CUSPOs that had not participated in the program may still show effective leadership behaviors (Farester, 2016). As determined in Farester's (2016) study, officers expressed greater job satisfaction and fewer negative impacts from working conditions when perceiving CUSPOs as using leadership behaviors.

While the Leadership Development Program does not specifically address probation and parole officer stress, it still instills effective leadership methods. The program remains effective in developing leaders' expertise but should also be developed in promoting good leadership behaviors. Supervisors using leadership behaviors is directly related to officer stress and negative impacts of working conditions (Farester, 2016). Farester (2016) identifies the sample that did not attend the development program may still have received leadership training

elsewhere. This highlights the event that officers are benefitted by leadership behaviors and leadership training. By organizations promoting leadership behaviors and offering leadership trainings, it is believed officer stress and working conditions will be alleviated while also developing their leaders' expertise.

### **Leader-member conversational quality**

Working conditions such as role conflict, role overload, and role ambiguity are not specifically unique to probation and parole organizations. Such stressors exist in other agencies as well (Jian & Dalisay, 2015). Jian and Dalisay (2015) identify the effectiveness of leaders in reducing stress factors such as role conflict and role ambiguity. The specific variable studied by Jian and Dalisay (2015) is coined, "leader-member conversational quality" (LMCQ). LMCQ conceptualizes communication as both the exchange of information and sharing of meaningful interactions (Jian & Dalisay, 2015). This not only argues the importance of exchanging information, but also the importance of quality in such exchange. Jian and Dalisay (2015) hypothesize that if conversations between subordinates and leaders are of high quality, there will be a lower level of perceived role ambiguity.

The emphasis of LMCQ is not simply the flow of messages from supervisors to subordinates, but the communication and interaction between the two (Jian & Dalisay, 2015). Interactions within the understanding of LMCQ consist of high quality conversations. High quality conversations are understood as an interaction with robust feedback in which problems and questions can be addressed (Jian & Dalisay, 2015). This can be understood as supervisors and subordinates exchanging information in a meaningful way that elicits discussion and productive feedback (Jian & Dalisay, 2015). It is proposed when conversations between supervisors and subordinates display such factors, work stressors are diminished.

Jian and Dalisay (2015) confirmed their hypothesis and found LMCQ as decreasing workers' perceptions of role ambiguity, role conflict, and role overload. Communication frequency was also found to positively impact such stressors (Jian & Dalisay, 2015). As communication frequency between supervisors and subordinates increased, the effects of quality conversations became greater in lowering the perceptions of role stressors (Jian & Dalisay, 2015). Quality conversations provide more clarity of expectations, thus diminishing the factor of role ambiguity (Jian & Dalisay, 2015).

While LMCQ was found to be effective in diminishing work stressors, frequency of conversations was critical. When communication was infrequent, conversational quality did not show the predicted effects on workers' stress factors (Jian & Dalisay, 2015). When supervisors and subordinates communicated at medium or high levels of frequency, staff reported lower levels of role conflict (Jian & Dalisay, 2015). As conversation frequency increased, the positive effect on work stress increased (Jian & Dalisay, 2015). These findings identify the importance of the interaction between supervisors and subordinates. Effective communication will consist of both quality conversations with meaningful feedback and frequent interactions (Jian & Dalisay, 2015). These findings provide a simple technique that can be adopted by those in supervisory positions. By supervisors interacting with probation and parole officers both frequently and with meaning, officer stress factors will diminish.

### **CONCLUSION**

Probation and parole officers experience stress from both organizational factors and ineffective leadership. Stress factors resulting from these sources has been linked with negative outcomes such as officer burnout, turnover, and job dissatisfaction. The issue of stress identifies the problems organizations experience. Research on probation and parole officer stress identifies the organizational changes that can be made in alleviating officer stress. Changes

within organizational procedures as well as implementation of leadership methods has been found to positively influence probation and parole officer stress and further benefit probation and parole organizations.

The issue of stress impacts both individual officers and whole organizations. Working conditions such as role conflict, role overload, role ambiguity and lack of decision making create significant stress on officers. Outcomes of stress result in individual impacts such as health concerns, maladaptive coping, absenteeism, job dissatisfaction, turnover, and burnout. Impacts of stress impact organizations as well. With increased turnover and burnout, agencies are faced with lower performance and under staffing. While organizations have commonly counteracted stress outcomes with individually targeted programs, this paper offers recommendations for organizational changes and the adoption of certain leadership methods.

By organizations involving officers in decision making, officers experience lower levels of stress. Participatory management influences officer stress, satisfaction, turnover intention, and burnout. Specific stress factors such as role conflict, role ambiguity, and role overload are mitigated by participatory management. With probation and parole agencies being rooted in centralized and bureaucratic structures, organizational changes can be daunting. By implementing participatory management practices, agencies are able to mitigate the impact of organizational structure on stress without making significant and costly changes.

Specific practices involving leadership are also evident in impacting officer stress. With agencies placing focus on leadership behaviors, officers report lower levels of stress and stress outcomes. Officers that perceive supervisors as using leadership behaviors report greater job satisfaction and lower stress resulting from working conditions. Such findings identify both the significant role leaders play in subordinates' stress as well as alleviating further negative

outcomes of stress that impact entire organizations. Further implementation of leadership development programs and practices including leader-member conversational quality have been found to positively influence officer stress.

Specific aspects focusing on how leaders communicate with their officers is directly linked with officer stress. Frequent contacts and the use of feedback between supervisors and officers positively impacts officers' stress. Such findings provide the recommendation of quality conversations in alleviating officer stress.

Job duties and work factors are seen as stressful aspects of probation and parole work. By agencies targeting organizational factors, officer stress is positively impacted. The job itself creates stress for officers, but with agencies improving leader-member communication and offering opportunities for decision making, officer stress is diminished. The specific aspects of probation and parole officer duties are unlikely to change, but recommendations of participatory management and leadership behaviors are changes that are both reasonable and effective.

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