

Stressors Faced by Border Security Officers: The Singapore Experience

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Abstract : Border Security is unlike mainstream policing in that officers are essentially in static deployment, working round the clock every day and every hour of the year looking for illegitimate entry of persons and goods. In Singapore, Border Security officers perform multiple functions to ensure the nation's safety and security. They are responsible for safeguarding the borders of Singapore to prevent threats from entering the country. Being the first line of defence in ensuring the nation's border security officers are entrusted with the responsibility of screening travellers inbound and outbound of Singapore daily. They examined 99 million arrivals and departures at the various checkpoints in 2014, which is a considerable volume compared to most immigration agencies. The officers' work scopes also include cargo clearance, protective and security functions of checkpoints. The officers work in very demanding environment which can range from the smog at the land checkpoints to the harshness of the ports at the sea checkpoints. In addition, all immigration checkpoints are located at the boundaries, posing commuting challenges for officers. At the land checkpoints, festive seasons and school breaks are peak periods as given the surge of inbound and outbound travellers at the various checkpoints. Such work provides unique challenges in comparison to other law enforcement duties. This paper assesses the current stressors faced by officers of a border security agency through the conduct of ground observations as well as a perceived stress survey as well as recommendations in combating stressors faced by border security officers. The findings from the field observations and surveys indicate organisational and operational stressors that are unique to border security and recommends interventions in managing these stressors. Understanding these stressors would better inform border security agencies on the interventions needed to enhance the resilience of border security officers.

Keywords : border security, Singapore, stress, operations

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