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Managing Stress Among Librarians in Selected University Libraries in Ogun State Nigeria

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Introduction

Most employed adults discover that a great proportion of their daily life is spent at work. A lucrative job gives rest of mind while a poor job leads to lack of peace which may finally lead to stress. Akinboye, Akinboye and Adeyemo (2002) citing the 1992 Annual United Nations Report describe job stress as a 20th century disease and also observed in a survey report that almost 80% of employees describe their job as stressful.

People undergo different forms of stress emanating from the work environment as well as the conditions under which they work. According to Aldwin (2007), stressors can be in form of workload, speed of work, dangerous or toxic working conditions, poorly designed environment, interpersonal discord with supervisors, colleagues, and discrimination based on age, sex and frustration related to the social organization of the workplace. Librarians in academic libraries are not exempted from stress. They carry out the duties of acquiring, processing and preserving library materials for accessibility to staff, students and researchers. ILO (2009) quoting Ogunsola (2004) described university libraries as the heart of the institutions which are expected to maintain standard books, journals and audio-visual collections. Librarians must therefore ensure availability of resources and efficient services which in turn brings satisfaction to the clients.

The emergence of ICT in university libraries has brought a turnaround in the hitherto manual activities of the librarians. Apart from using various of ICT facilities to acquire and process materials, the librarian engages same in other professional assignments such as indexing and abstracting, selective dissemination of information, current awareness services and user

education. These activities no doubt place high demands on librarians, thus resulting in stress. Bamber (2011) observes that excessive job demands can result in excessive stress.

Schneider (1991) carried out a research on stress and job satisfaction; a comparison between people working in public libraries with technical services staff in large public library system. The study revealed that the major causes of stress to the employees studied include work overload, poor resources availability and poor work environment.

The interference of the home front with work place demands sometimes constitutes stress to librarians especially where the staff concerned is not able to manage both effectively. Library stress gives rise to in poor health conditions, low work output, increased heart beat and fear, poor services to users resulting in user frustration. Aldwin (2001) averred that stress gives rise to responses such as rapid heart rates, greater alertness and the capacity for bursts of energy.

Librarians can only overcome stress when they recognize that it is more beneficial to manage it than to experience its effects. Roy (2005) maintains that awareness of all the aspects of stress, familiarity with the situations that generate stress are all very important steps in the process of stress management. When we identify the existence and effects of stress on our lives, we should be able to manage its source positively or as librarians change our perception towards it. (Routray and Satpathy, 2007)

The adverse effects of stress on librarians, users as well as the parent institutions demand that strategies be put in place towards its management. Bamber (2011) gave suggestions on how workers can overcome occupational stress. These suggestions include making a problem list, prioritizing one's problems, setting goals, establishing criteria of success, planning interventions, developing self-help treatment plan, monitoring and reviewing progress.

Literature Review

Aldwin (2007) quoting Maso (1995) refers to stress as an experience that arises from a transaction between a person and the environment and observes that over scheduling, procrastination or failing to plan ahead are behaviours that can lead to stress. Stress is an inescapable part of life in our modern society since it is found in the home, schools and the workplace (Hart, 2007)

Causes of stress

Aldwin (2007) maintains that stressors can be physical, social or psychological. Physical stressors are described as those evasive environmental conditions which manifest harmful effects on individuals, e.g. pollutants, noise. Others include buildings with sealed windows, fumes from printers and photocopiers etc. Poorly ventilated offices and littering work areas also result in physical stress by leading to strain in the eye and muscle. Stress has to do with the way people react to conditions, changes and demands of life. The reaction could be mental, physical or even emotional (Lehnert, 2002).

Stress emanates from a wide range of issues. According to Bunge (1989), budget cutbacks and staff shortages have resulted in:

- more work to be done than there is time to do it

- lack of adequate knowledge of information sources or technology
- interpersonal relationship, library support staff feel a lack of recognition, appreciation and respect from other staff, tension between professionals and non professionals, negative co-workers and gossip.
- lack of effective feedback from supervisors, co-workers and patrons
- role conflict and role ambiguity.
- inadequate supervision and management in terms of feeling left out of decisions where one has important expertise.
- managers who will not risk advocating for their staff.
- inadequate office space, crowding and lack of privacy in offices.

Environmental factors

Miclellan (2011) in a study on stress and cataloguing paraprofessionals in academic and public libraries in Florida noticed some stresses from the library work environment. According to the study, environment factors attracted a 40.5% response, while 10.5% respondents averred that they often experience stress from work overload. In the study, 61% of respondents experience stress because they are expected to know so many things while others said their stress emanates from fear of making mistakes.

Ajalla (2011) quotted Kinman (1998) who revealed that condition of work environment in Africa is worse than that of UK where the impact of work stress is not inherently bad. Aldwin (2007) observed that physical stressors can result from environmental conditions which include fumes from photocopying machines and cleaning compounds.

Organizational

The parent institutions where librarians work also contribute in generating stress. Bamber (2011) maintained that physical working conditions, supports, relationships, change, pay and career prospects are factors that constitute stress to librarians. Employees also undergo stress while trying to meet up with professional assignments, teaching and writing papers for promotion. The interface satisfying the need of users and meeting up with publications gives librarians real time stress (Ajalla, 2011)

Schneider (1991) carried out a research on stress and job satisfaction among librarians in which it was discovered that the major issues that bring stress to the employees include poor communication between staff and Management as well as lack of opportunity for staff to lend their views on issues affecting them.

Home-work interface

Employees have family responsibilities outside the library workplace. These include caring for spouses, children and relatives. Home-work interface may pose stress to a librarians depending on what is happening at home. Okonkwo (2014) observes that family strain interference with work results in family conflict which in turn results to pressure, tension, anxiety, stress to the employee. Perlin (1989) identified juggling parent and work roles as one of the causes of stress. Working women experience a considerable amount of strains for their multiple roles.

Cultural

Ajalla (2011) noticed that stress emanates from beliefs, life cycle transition, culture and the environment people work in. Cultural stress results from frictions between an employee's, social, ethnic, religious and family background and the environments in which persons are

working. When cultures conflict with work expectations, they lead to problems in the workplace. Librarians suffering from deep conflicts between cultural issues and job are mistaken to be overreacting to their work environment. This negatively affects their work, behaviour and health.

Effects

Akinade (2007) maintains that stress at work may significantly contribute to ill-health, human suffering, productivity loss and compensation claim. Roy ((2005) maintains that though the positive aspects of stress are considered good and improve performance, high level of stress adversely affects the performance of most important tasks and contributes to falling performance rates. Bamber (2011) observed that occupational stress results in loss of huge amounts of money through employee's absence from work as a result of sickness, low staff morale, poor time keeping, decrease in productivity, increased industrial conflicts, replacement costs etc. The effects of such stress include headaches, irritation in the eyes and susceptibility to viral infections.(Aldwin , 2007) Ajalla (2011) quoting Kinman (1998) noticed that stress results in depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, absent mindedness as well as failure.

Management of stress

Individuals make various attempts to reduce the discomfort associated with stress. Aldwin (2007) quoting Frennd (1996) defined coping as the way in which the ego wards off anxiety and exercises control over impulsive behaviour, conflicts and instincts. Considering the effects of stress on both the employee and the employer, there is need for its reduction to the barest minimum. Onwushi and Meggison(2001) observed that stable social relations help people and

so advocate open communication and participatory management between librarians and other allied staff.

Ajalla (2011) posited that the best approach to manage work-place stress in the library is changing one's perception about the profession and its stress area. Librarians should also take out time to relax when they notice stressful conditions. Nawe (1995) observed that the time set aside for leisure is not a wasted time. It is useful to involve staff in consultation process and explain changes on employees job and communicate strategies put in place to manage change (Bamber, 2011) There is also need to cultivate the habit of working together as a group and cooperating with each other instead of engaging in unhealthy competitions.

Statement of the Problem

Librarians experience stress in university libraries. Unmanaged stress gives rise to emotional breakdown and poor health of librarians. This invariably results in reduced work output as well as poor services, leading to user frustration. Observations and library statistics reveal high usage rate of these libraries. However, many libraries do not have enough manpower to compare with the quantum of work and the large number of users. This situation generates stress to the librarians. Furthermore, with the upsurge of different ownership of universities in the country, there is bound to be differences in the level of stress among librarians. This has not been given enough attention in literature. This study therefore examined the various causes and management of stress among librarians from different categories of universities in Nigeria.

Objectives

The main objective of this study is to examine the coping patterns of librarians with job stress in both private and public universities. Other specific objectives are to

1. Determine the level of job stress among librarians in private and public libraries
2. Determine if university ownership affects the level of job stress among librarians in university libraries
3. Examine the causes of job stress among librarians in university libraries
4. Examine the management of job stress among librarians in university libraries
5. Determine the effect of job stress on effectiveness of librarians in university libraries

Research Questions

1. What is the level of job stress among librarians in university libraries?
2. How does university ownership affect the level of job stress among librarians?
3. What are the causes of job stress and the level among librarians in university libraries?
4. How do librarians manage job stress in university libraries?
5. What is the effect of job stress on effectiveness of librarians in university libraries?

Hypotheses

The following five hypotheses were raised from the statement of problem.

1. There is no significant gender difference in prevalence of stress among librarians in university libraries
2. There is no significant difference in prevalence of stress among librarians from private, state and federal universities
3. There is no significant difference in the causes of stress among librarians from private, state and federal universities
4. There is no significant difference in the management of stress among librarians from private, state and federal universities

5. There is no significant effect of stress on effectiveness of librarians from private, state and federal universities

Instruments for data collection

The major instruments used for data collection are questionnaire and interviews.

The questionnaire is divided into four sections. Section A contains questions on demographical data, while section B is divided into two. The first part measures prevalence of stress among librarians. There are 25 items with Likert-like rating scale which range from strongly agree (4) to strongly disagree (1 point). The undecided was not included. The interpretation indicates that the higher the score the higher the prevalence of job stress. The second part measures the causes and six factors are measured; social, physical, management induced, cultural and environmental factors. Participants responded by ticking their perceived causes of job stress. The section C measured the coping patterns with three main patterns measured; wishful thinking, emotional regulation and social withdrawal. The participants were asked to tick each of the management/coping patterns they adopt to cope with job stress for example “I wish sometimes that the deadline should be shifted” and “ I try to keep to myself when I am tired because of job demands”

The last section measures the effectiveness of the librarians on their job related activities. There are ten items on this section with Likert-like rating scale which range from strongly agree (4) to strongly disagree (1 point). The undecided was not included. The interpretation indicates that the higher the score the higher the effectiveness prevalence of job stress. Three university libraries, comprising a federal, state and a private university in Ogun state were used for the study. A total

of 75 questionnaires were administered while 41 were duly completed and returned. This represents a total of 54.7% of the entire questionnaires distributed. Out of the 41 respondents that returned their questionnaires 28(68.3%) were females while 13(31.7%) were males. The data were analyzed using t-test, chi-square and ANOVA.

Interviews were also implored in obtaining data. Interview is appropriate in the study of stress as Bunge (1987) emphasizes that the appropriateness results from the fact that stress is an experience which the affected individual is in the best position to explain how it happens.

Interviews were also conducted for university librarians and some selected librarians. The questions were on causes, effects as well as management strategies for stress. The responses were discussed in the content of the work.

Data analysis and Results

Table 1:Demographic Background of Respondents (n=41)

Variations	Freq.	Percent
Gender		
Male	13	31.7
Female	28	68.3
Age		
30-40	21	51.2
41-50	18	44
61 and above	2	4.8
Marital Status		
Married	31	75.6
Single	10	24.4
Job Status		
Assistant Librarian- Librarian II	22	53.7
Librarian I- Senior Librarian	12	29.3
Principal Librarian/ Deputy University Librarian	5	12.1
University Librarian	2	4.9
Ownership		
Private	18	43.9
State	9	22
Federal	14	34.1

Table 1 above shows the demographic background of the respondents. A total of 28(68.3%) respondents were females while the remaining 13 (31.7%) were males. 31 (75.6 %) were married while 10 (24.4%) were single. The status of the respondents are clearly shown on the table.

Hypothesis 1

There is no significant gender difference in prevalence of stress among university librarians

Table 2: Summary of t-test showing prevalence of stress among male and female university librarians

Variations	N	Mean	SD	Df	t-observed	Sig
Male	13	64.12	2.66	39	24.62*	0.00
Female	28	82.16	2.41			
Total	41					

***significant**

The table above presented summary of independent t-test. It shows that female librarians reported higher level of stress than the males. This difference is at t observed =24.62, 39 degree of freedom and <0.05 significant level. The first hypothesis is therefore rejected.

Hypothesis 2

There is no significant difference in prevalence of stress among librarians from private, state and federal universities

Table 3: Summary of t-test showing prevalence of stress among librarians in Nigerian universities

Source	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between	671.156	2	335.578	48.16*	.00
Within	264.784	38	6.968		
Total	935.94	140			

***significant**

The table above presented summary of ANOVA. It shows that librarians from private, state and federal universities reported different levels of stress. This difference is at $F_{(2, 38)} = 48.16$ and <0.05 significant level. The comparison of means however shows that librarians from private universities show the highest level of stress while librarians from federal

universities show higher level of stress than those in state . The second hypothesis is therefore rejected.

Hypothesis 3

There are no significant relative and joint contributions of social, physical, managerial environment and cultural stressors in predicting stress level of librarians from private, state and federal universities

Table 4: Relative and joint contributions of social, physical, managerial environment and cultural stressors in predicting stress level of librarians

Model	Predictors	R	r ²	f	Sig
1	Social	.628	.394	36.62*	0.003
2	Social, Physical	.742	.550	44.06*	0.000
3	Social, Physical, managerial	.792	.627	48.42*	0.000
4	Social, Physical, managerial, environmental	.804	.646	51.72*	0.000
5	Social, Physical, managerial, environmental, cultural stressors	.824	.678	59.11*	0.000

*significant

The relative and joint contributions of social, physical, managerial environment and cultural stressors in predicting stress level of librarians from private, state and federal universities was assessed. The findings revealed that social stressors contributed 39.4% to the stress level of librarians while combination of social and physical stressors contributed 55% which implies that only physical stressors contributed 15.6%. The addition of managerial stressors to the equation raised the level of contribution to 62.7% which implies that managerial stressors contributed 6.7%. The addition of environmental stressors increased the level of contribution to 64.6%, it implies that these factors contributed 1.9%. The addition of the last factors, cultural stressor increased the level of contribution to 67.8%, cultural stressors contributed 3.2%. The findings revealed that hypothesis is rejected. It implies there are significant relative and joint

contributions of social, physical, managerial environment and cultural stressors in predicting stress level of librarians from private, state and federal universities.

Hypothesis 4

There is no significant difference in the methods of coping with stress adopted by librarians in private, state and federal universities

Table 5 Summary of chi-square showing difference in methods of coping with stress

	Wishful Thinking		Emotional Regulation		Social Withdrawal		df	X ² Observed	Sig
	Obs	Exp	Obs	Exp	Obs	Exp			
Private	7	6.59	6	6.59	5	4.83	4	0.355	.986
State	3	3.29	4	3.29	2	2.41			
Federal	5	5.12	5	5.12	4	3.76			

****Not significant**

The table above presented summary of chi-square. It shows that librarians from private, state and federal universities reported identical methods of coping with stress. There is no significant difference in the methods of coping with stress adopted by librarians in private, state and federal universities at $X^2 = 0.355$, 4 degree of freedom and >0.05 significant level. The fourth hypothesis is therefore retained.

Hypothesis 5

There is no significant effect of stress on effectiveness of librarians from private, state and federal universities

Table 6 ANOVA table showing effect of stress on effectiveness of librarians from private, state and federal universities

R=-.691, R ² =.477, Adj. R ² =.448, Std Error =4.070						
Source	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	
Regression	19408.4496	2	9704.2248	28.36*	.00	
Residual	13002.84	38	342.18			
Total	32411.2896	140				

*Significant

The table above presented summary of regression. It shows the effect of stress on effectiveness of librarians from private, state and federal universities. The model summary reveals that 47.7% of variation in effectiveness of librarians could be accounted for by job stress. There is a significant effect of stress on effectiveness of librarians from private, state and federal universities at $F_{(2, 38)} = 28.36$ and < 0.05 significant level. The fifth hypothesis is therefore rejected.

Discussion

The findings of this study revealed that female librarians reported higher level of job stress than their male counterparts. This concurs with the findings of Perlin (1989) in an earlier study where it was reported that shouldering multiple roles expose women to more stressors than male employees.

This assertion was corroborated in an interview by one of the respondents thus:

“I once had an experience where my Nanny did not come to my house in the morning. I had to keep my baby in my neighbour’s house. My mind was on my baby. I was emotionally depressed. It was so overwhelming. It was a lot of stress...”(Female Librarian, Private University)

Women without children and those over 40 years of age with children experienced less job stress than younger women working full-time and having small children. This latter group was linked to role conflict, overload and poorer health which eventually lead to low productivity (Arber, Gilbert, Dale, 1985). This also agrees with Okonkwo (2014) who maintained in an earlier study that the conflict between work and family results in pressure, tension, anxiety and stress to the employee. Combining family and work responsibilities generates family to work strain which interferes with work among women.

The finding equally revealed that job stress has significant effects on effectiveness of librarians in university libraries. The negative implications of work stress are recognized as a challenge to both employers and employees. This was also supported by an interviewee thus:

“Job stress in the library is caused by excess workload. There are between eight to

ten thousand clients to attend to. The job is enormous for the librarians... ”
(University Librarian, Federal University)

The above is in line with Schneider (1991) who observed in a study that lack of sufficient number of staff to handle workload had effects on the health of workers. Those who reported high level of stress perceived their work to be physically demanding and less satisfying. This also supported Akinboye, Akinboye and Adeyemo ((2002) about the place of heavy workload in generating stress.

The work reveals that librarians devise different ways of resolving stress. They manage stress through social withdrawal, emotional regulation and wishful thinking. This was further confirmed through this response:

I leave my table and work on other things, after which
I take up the original work that constitutes stress.
Sometimes, I listen to music and walk around the library.
I damn the stress and keep working. I also talk to friends. Occasionally,
I rest my head for twenty minutes and continue my work. I share a
The activities that constitute stress with others...”(Librarian, Private University)

This is in line with the observation of Routray and Satpathy (2007) who maintained that when we identify the existence and effects of stress on our lives, we should be able to manage its source positively or as librarians change our perception towards it.

The research also revealed that the Library Management can positively help in reducing stress.

This was confirmed by an interviewee as stated below:

The library organizes orientation for new staff in the first week of resumption. We don't assume their experience but take them through procedures, work ethics and operations using our equipment and facilities. This helps to ensure standards and total commitment to efficiency. At the university level, there is orientation for proper integration. There is also a very cordial relationship between Library Management and staff. We hold weekly meetings for the purpose of information dissemination. Staff are invited for chats. Management publicly applauds good work and denounces behaviours that are not

representative of the university. Management also holds monthly meetings with Professional and Para professional librarians, as well as Library Assistants. These serve as avenues for reviewing operations and harvesting input from the staff...”(University Librarian, Private University)

This concurs with the views of Onwushi and Meggison (2001) who advocated open communication and participatory management between librarians and other allied staff as this helps in reducing stress.

Library Management can also help in reducing stress by creating good social relationship between librarians. This is as revealed by an interviewee below:

Management encourages cordial relationship among staff. One major way this is done is through organized welfare. Staff make contributions to attend to welfare issues of their colleagues such as weddings and childbirths. The university handles broader welfare issues...”
(University Librarian, State University)

Onwushi and Meggison also (2001) observed that stable social relations help people and plays major role in reducing stress.

Suggestions for Improvement

The negative impact of stress on librarians and their output cannot be overemphasized. It results in librarians’ ill-health and loss of man hour which further manifests in low productivity.

It is therefore necessary to ensure that stress is reduced to the barest minimum in the library workplace. Creating healthy working environment is paramount in this regard. The provision of adequate facilities is also important since it helps librarians to perform maximally.

Female library staff need to strike a balance between their job and family. Those with children must as a matter of fact ensure that they employ adult house helps to manage their home activities and take proper care of their children while they are at work. It is indeed difficult to

manage the work and home fronts without putting adequate plans in place. Home -work interface can also be checkmated through effective time management both at home and in the office, assertiveness, training as well as cognitive skills required to balance situations. Library Management should be able to convince the Management of parent institutions on the need to employ sufficient number of librarians at each point in time.

Librarians should cultivate positive attitude towards various areas of stress, knowing that changes will surely bring some degrees of stress.

The deployment of ICT in library operations has come to stay. Librarians need to become ICT savvy in order to be free from the stress associated with changes in technology. Training and re-training help librarians to fit into the changes emanating from ICT. This invariably removes stress. Since the application of technology to library practices demands skills, librarians experience stress when they lack the know-how required to accomplish tasks. It therefore behooves Management to ensure that librarians are trained and retrained in various aspects of technology.

Library employees should also create stress-free work environment and ensure they exercise themselves. Recreational facilities will surely be of help. Staff should also be encouraged to practice ergonomics while at work. Nawe (1995) avers that time set aside for relaxation or leisure after working hard for the day is worth it.

Librarians already know the issues that give them stress. They should therefore always think on the best ways to handle them.

Conclusion

Unmanaged stress in academic libraries reduces output and may lead to ill-health and death. It is therefore wise for libraries to make provisions for adequate stress management. This results in positive outcomes which invariably remains beneficial to librarians and their employees.

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