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Abstract

The study assessed the ways stress affects the occupational performance of librarians in federal university libraries in South East, Nigeria. Three specific objectives and research questions guided the study. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The entire population of 191 librarians was studied; therefore, no sampling was made. A 43-items questionnaire was used for data collection. Cronbach Alpha method was used to determine the internal consistency of the items and the overall reliability result is .95. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation. The findings reveal that the causes of work stress among librarians include inadequate or poor working tools and facilities, increased workload, poor incentives and few promotional opportunities from management, and inadequate or lack of amenities; ways stress affects librarians occupational performance are low productivity level, delay in completing assigned tasks, lack of commitment, and inability to relate well with colleagues and users; and the strategies for encouraging stress management practices include organizing stress management workshops, conferences, and seminars, engaging a psychologist often to council librarians on stress management strategies, and establishing a fitness section in the library complex. Based on the findings of the study it is recommended that the management should frequently carry out a survey on the librarians to identify stressors that results in stress exposures in the library environment; and the management should include stress management in their management plans and budget.

Key Words: Occupational Performance, Stress, Librarians, Effect of Stress, University Libraries, South East, Nigeria.

Introduction

Occupation being a meaningful job or profession that one does on a daily bases serves as a means of livelihood and contributes to human well-being and good living. Ali (2016) sees occupation as an important aspect of an individual's life that occupies a lot of personal and professional time compared to any other human activity. One of the most viable occupations in the world today is the library and information science (LIS) profession. This is so because the occupation of librarians is dealing with providing information and information services needed in all spheres/ fields of human engagements. Abdulsalami, Okezie, and Agbo (2012)

posits that information brings knowledge. Thus, the librarians' occupation is very important because the information is needed to thrive in all human daily businesses.

It is expected that librarians as information professionals will be competent and skilled in carrying out library house-keeping duties for effective services to the users. Library managers expect high occupational performance from the librarians. Librarians are expected to be professionals, experts, proactive in decision-makers, responsible, collaborative/ team-spirited. This why Hordos (2018) maintain that a business's success rests mainly on the shoulders of its employees because they are one of its most significant assets, making strong job performance imperative; top-notch performers understand your goals and strive to meet or exceed them, and overall good job performance helps to keep stakeholders interested and onboard. "The progress of any organization or establishment can be measured by the performance of workers" (Olorunsola, 2013, p. 285). The occupational performance of employees is the most critical subject which plays an important role in accomplishing organizational goals (Wang, Yen and Liu, 2015). Librarians are expected to carry out their professional responsibilities effectively, maintain a good job personality, and adapt well in their work and professional environment.

These expectations are often inhibited by so many internal and external factors in the library's working environment. Fogaça, Rego, Melo, Armond, and Coelho Jr (2018) note that occupational performance may be influenced by factors such as social, cultural, or demographic conditions as well as job conditions. Some of the factors affecting the performance of librarians include excess workload, leadership styles of library managers, inadequate staff, lack of competencies and skills for emerging technologies and services in the librarianship, poor funding, poor motivation, and incentives, etc are negatively affecting the job of librarians. These factors in most cases constitute stressors in the library environment and expose librarians to stress. Dina (2016) found that stress is one of those factors that affect the occupational performance level of employees. Also, Ekewlem (2016) affirm that stress affects the performance of employees. Because of these, there was a need to assess the ways stress is affecting the occupational performance of librarians in federal university libraries in South East, Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives of this study are to determine:

1. causes of stress among librarians in federal university libraries in South East, Nigeria;
2. ways stress affects librarians' occupational performance in federal university libraries in South East, Nigeria;
3. strategies for encouraging stress management practices for improved occupational performance of librarians in federal university libraries in South East, Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are the causes of stress among librarians in federal university libraries in South East, Nigeria?
2. What are the ways stress affects librarians' occupational performance in federal university libraries in South East, Nigeria?

3. What are the strategies for encouraging stress management practices for improved occupational performance of librarians in federal university libraries in South East, Nigeria?

Concept of Stress

Stress has been identified as one of those natural phenomena that frequently occur in our body in the course of engaging in various daily activities, or interacting and relating with our immediate environment. Stress is the way ones' body responds to demands and events that occur in the environment. The concept of stress was developed by Hans Seyle in 1956. Seyle defined stress as "the non-specific response of the body to any demand for change". According to Scott (2018), stress is ones' body's response to changes in life. Because life involves constant change (ranging from changing locations from home to work each morning to adapting to major life changes like marriage, divorce, or death of a loved one), stress becomes unavoidable. Stress exposure is imminent as the librarians make efforts to meet up with their professional duties. Stress could occur as a result of a mismatch between what librarians aspire or desire to do or achieve and what they are capable of doing. Stress in the context of this work is the way the psychological or physiological body systems of librarians respond and react to unfriendly events or occurrences that threaten their well-being in the library.

Stress affecting librarians is usually perceived as a mediator, which is an observable inferred construct that is believed to account for certain observable behaviors or reactions such as being able to complete tasks, illnesses, poor reasoning, low performance, etc. Mental Health Foundation (2018, p. 5) states, "stress is our body's response to pressures from a situation or life event (called a 'stressor')." "Stress is the feeling one experience when he perceives a gap between want and what one gets or has, it becomes an excess of demand over individual ability to meet them" (Shabana, Singhal, Siddique and Agarwa, 2017, p. 2). Dawson, O'Brien, and Beehr (2015) view stress as a pattern of negative physiological states and psychological responses occurring in situations where individuals perceive threats to their well-being, which they may be unable to meet. Stress can be helpful and needful to the body in what Seyle called "fight or flight." When stress is helpful, it is referred to as positive stress or eustress. But when it is dangerous to the body, it is called negative stress or distress.

Stress that emanates from the workplace is called occupational/ job stress. Occupational stress according to Pabla (2012) refers to a situation where occupation-related factors interact with employees to change, disrupts, or enhance their psychological and physiological conditions such that the person is forced to deviate from normal functioning. It is worthwhile to assert that stress is an individual affair, this is because what can be regarded as stressful by a librarian can be well handled by another librarian. For a librarian to feel stressed with an event or occurrence around him/ her, it may have to do with the librarians' perception, capacity (intellectual, resources, etc), exposure, and rationality. Stress results from events or activities that happen within the librarians' environment (work or social). Hence, it should be noted at this juncture that events that cause stress are called stressors.

Causes of Stress in the Workplace

Stressors are events or activities that lead to stress in the human body. Therefore, the Centre for the Studies of Human Stress (2017) defines stressors as any stimuli that cause the release of stress hormones in the human body. Events that cause stress in the university library are called work stressors while those that emanate from social life are called social stressors. Khan and Khurshid (2017) affirm that stressors may originate from the work domain and non-work domain. This study is focused on workplace stress. Workplace stress is a global issue because events that cause stress are eminent in working environments. Shabana, Singhal, Siddique, and Agarwa (2017) identified stressors as over workload, frequent changes in the working environment, innovations, pay amenities, lack of communication, career hurdles, administrative problems, lack of management support and funding policies. Ekwelem (2015) reveal that poor working condition such as poor promotion opportunity for librarians, having to publish academic papers for promotion, delayed promotion and stagnation, and lack of recognition for good and extra work are causes on stress on librarians.

O'Connor (2018) include a high workload, limited control at work, and conflicting demands or unclear performance expectations. Causes of stress among Libyan teachers in Turkey according to Mohamed (2018) are the nature of work, wages, and incentives, physical work environment, social and educational relations, and relations with others such as management, students, colleagues, and parents. Vijayan (2018) traced work-related stressors to technological changes, competitive lifestyles, and various other social factors. It also includes workload, job security, autonomy, role conflicts, shift work, low salaries, technology change, low morale, and lack of recognition. Saliha (2018) identifies role conflict, overload and ambiguity have been well substantiated as key stressors in organizations. The consistent appearance of excessive workload in these views is evident that it is a major cause of stress in the workplace.

Effect of stress on occupational performance

Generally, the harmful effects of stress on human well beings are global issues. Ordinarily, stress can affect librarians positively and negatively. When stress affects librarians positively, it can spur them to do what they are expected to do. Vijayan (2018, p. 21) states, "job stress is a double-edged sword. It can be both productive and counter-productive. It can be productive when it helps or motivates people to work more and perform well. It can be counter-productive when external factors create more pressure to work but do not lead to a concrete outcome." Jadoun, Kushwah, Barodiya, and Holani (2017) aver that stress accounts for 80 percent of all illnesses either directly or indirectly. Fonkeng (2018) found that 68.75% of respondents affirm that stress affects their occupational performance, and find it difficult to perform well under stressful conditions. In essence, stress can negatively affect and threaten the health, well-being, psychology, and physiological state of librarians which may result to decline in their performance level in the library.

Stress in terms of distress or periodic or chronic stress can affect ones' emotions, behavior, physiology, and physical body. Stress can negatively affect librarians' perceptions, views, and attitudes towards their job. If these situations occur, invariably, the occupational performance of the librarians will reduce. On an individual basis, stress could affect the way librarians go about and handle their professional duties/ responsibilities in the university libraries. In a study, Chan, Leung, and Liang (2018) found that stress manifests in terms of the difficulty of the task and too many tasks to handle. The respondents state, "I work slowly and ineffectively when I

am under stress because I waste time getting mad about the [poor] working methods of the locals”; “My mind is less clear when I am under stress, etc. “Workplace stress is normal. While, excessive stress can interfere with productivity, performance and affects the physical and emotional health” (Asmaa, Wessam and Naglaa, 2018, p. 183). These reports show that low productivity, unsatisfactory services, and lack of good initiatives will be predominant if stressors are not reduced or eradicated.

Stressed librarians are likely to lack composure at work which in most cases tends to get them confused on how to attend to users’ information needs. Some negative attitudes librarians exhibit when users approach them could be resultant effects of stress. Abdelrazek, Ghabbour, Fahmy, and El Sayed (2017) note that stress affects the ability to concentrate, cognitive reasoning, initiative ability, causing depression, negative thinking, and lack of attention in their job and wrong or delayed decision making. Conversely, Aldrup, Klusmann, and Lüdtké (2017) discovered that work-related stress exposure is linked to employees' occupational well-being because it is associated with their need for competence and, most importantly, with their need for relatedness with the users. Stressors are individual affairs because what one person could see a threat to their well-being could be handled with ease by another. Therefore, the effects of stress exposure are also an individual affair.

Stress can result in a lack of job interest, poor relationship approach with users and colleagues, and emotional outbursts, easy provocation, and unprofessional conduct in the workplace. Soegoto and Narimawati (2017) observed that stress among employees was associated with a lack of commitment and passion for work, feelings of boredom, and bad mood leading to decreased performance. Khan and Khurshid (2017) affirm that stress is causing poor performance, reduced employee morale, lack of autonomy, job insecurity, and to a greater extent the employee's well-being. Effect of stress will reflect not only on their health and reduce their work efficiency but also affect the discipline and efficiency of the subordinates causing undue delays or mistakes in inpatient care and hence dissatisfaction among the patients and their relatives about the service of the hospital (Rajan and Joseph, 2012). It is pertinent that proper measures are taken to manage stress and reduce and eradicate stressors in the workplace.

Some related studies have been conducted, Fonkeng (2018) studied the effects of job stress on employee performance in an enterprise: a microfinance institution in Cameroon. The results reveal that the participants endure an excessive amount of stress which negatively affects their performance as many of them opine that management exerts pressure on them to increase their output. Some of the employees affirm that a stress-free program goes a long way to boost their productivity and that of the institution. A related study was conducted by Dina (2016) on the effect of stress on professional librarian’s job performance at the University of Lagos, Akoka, and Lagos State University, Ojo, Lagos. The findings showed that the librarian’s quality in terms of job performance concerning their job demand and expectation can be affected because of enormous stress. Librarians who engage in other activities aside from their primary assignment for which they were employed are more prone to stress than the others are, thereby affecting their job performance negatively.

A similar study was conducted by Mwanza (2016) on the effects of stress on employee productivity: a perspective of Zimbabwe’s socio-economic dynamics of 2016. The results of

the study showed that change factors, demands or pressure factors, lack of support, and participation at work by supervisors and other staff members, and work roles were to a greater extent the most stressful factors. Thus, the present study aimed to investigate the effect of stress on the occupational performance of the librarians in federal university libraries in South East, Nigeria. This is based on the premise that librarians are exposed to stress as a result of various factors facing them in and outside the libraries which could be having a negative effect on their occupational performance.

Research Method

Design of the Study

The study adopted the descriptive survey research design which was conducted in South East, Nigeria. Nworgu (2015) declares that a descriptive survey aims at collecting data on and describing systematically the characteristics, features, or facts about a given population. A descriptive survey design was adopted because the study collected data with a questionnaire that was used to describe the ways stress affects the occupational performance of librarians in federal university libraries in South-East, Nigeria.

The population of the Study

The population of the study was librarians; that consist of academic and non-academic librarians. in federal university libraries in South-East, Nigeria. According to the 2019 nominal roles of federal university libraries in South-East, Nigeria, the population of the librarians is 191; which consists of 109 academic and 83 non-academic librarians.

Sample and Sampling Technique

The sample size is 119; no sampling was made because the entire population was studied. After all, it is of manageable size.

The instrument for Data Collection

A questionnaire was used to collect data. It has 43 items, 3 clusters on a 4 point rating scale. Cluster A is on the causes of stress among librarians. It has 13 items. Cluster B is on ways stress affects librarians' occupational performance. It has 12 items. The response options are SA = Strongly Agree, A = Agree, D = Disagree and SD = Strongly Disagree. Cluster C is on the strategies for encouraging stress management practices for improved occupational performance of librarians. The response options are HA = Highly Appropriate, A = Appropriate, FA = Fairly Appropriate, and NA = Not Appropriate. It has 8 items. Face-validation was done on the instrument by two research experts in the Department of Library and Information Science, and one research expert in Measurement and Evaluation in the Department of Science Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka.

Methods of Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation.

Results

What are the causes of stress among librarians in federal university libraries in South East, Nigeria?

Table 1: Mean rating of librarians' response to the causes of stress in university libraries

s/n	Item Statement	Mean	STD	R	D
1	Inadequate or poor working tools and facilities	3.48	.65	1 st	A
2	Increased workload	3.37	.67	2 nd	A
3	Poor incentives	3.30	.71	3 rd	A
4	Few promotional opportunities from management	3.30	.69	3 rd	A
5	Inadequate or lack of amenities i.e ventilation, lightning, space	3.28	.68	4 th	A
6	Insufficient salary	3.26	.71	5 th	A
7	Delay in salary payments	3.19	.77	6 th	A
8	Commitment with many professional and social bodies	3.19	.79	6 th	A
9	Bullying and harassment from superiors/colleagues	3.11	.79	7 th	A
10	Users' attitudes and behaviour	3.08	.80	8 th	A
11	Information technological changes	3.06	.68	9 th	A
12	Role conflict in the library	3.05	.64	10 th	A
13	Unprofessional attitudes from colleagues	3.04	.79	11 th	A
Cluster Mean		3.20	.72		A

Table 1 shows that the causes of stress among librarians in federal university libraries in South East, Nigeria are inadequate or poor working tools and facilities (3.48), increased workload (3.37), poor incentives and few promotional opportunities from management (3.30), and inadequate or lack of amenities i.e ventilation, lightning, space (3.28) which are ranked 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th. Other causes of stress in the workplace are insufficient salary (3.26), role conflict in the library (3.05), and unprofessional attitudes from colleagues (3.04). The standard deviation that ranges from .80 to .60 shows a high variation in the librarians' responses. The cluster mean score is 3.20 suggests that librarians agree on the work-related stressors.

What are the ways stress affects librarians' occupational performance in federal university libraries in South East, Nigeria?

Table 2: Mean rating of librarians' response on extent stress affects librarians' occupational performance

s/n	Item Statement	Mean	STD	R	D
1	Low productivity level	3.13	.80	1 st	A
2	Physiological ill-health	2.94	.83	2 nd	A
3	Psychological imbalance	2.92	.90	3 rd	A
4	Delay in completing assigned tasks	2.87	.87	4 th	A
5	Lack of commitment and passion for work	2.84	.99	5 th	A
6	Inability to relate well with colleagues	2.80	.97	6 th	A
7	Avoiding responsibilities	2.78	1.00	7 th	A
8	Inability to relate well with the users	2.73	1.01	8 th	A
9	Increased turnover rate	2.71	.96	9 th	A
10	Unethical conducts	2.68	.96	10 th	A
11	Constant lateness to work	2.68	.94	10 th	A
12	Regular absenteeism from work	2.58	1.08	11 th	A
Grand Mean		2.80	.94		A

Table 2 shows that librarians agree that stress affects their job performance of librarians in the following ways low productivity level (3.13), physiological ill-health (2.94), psychological imbalance (2.92), and delay in completing assigned tasks (2.87). Other ways they agreed that stress affects their job performance are lack of commitment and passion for work (2.84), inability to relate well with colleagues (2.80), avoiding responsibilities (2.78), and inability to relate well with the users (2.73). The grand mean 2.80 is an indication that stress to a high extent affects the job performance of librarians. The standard deviation that ranges from .80 to 1.08 shows high response variations of the librarians on the ways stress affects their occupational performance.

What are the strategies for encouraging stress management strategies practices for improved occupational performance of librarians in the libraries?

Table 3: Mean rating of librarians' response on the strategies for encouraging stress management strategies practices for improved occupational performance of librarians

s/n	Item Statement	Mean	STD	R	D
1	Organizing stress management workshops for librarians	3.51	.69	1 st	HA
2	Organizing stress management seminars for librarians	3.45	.69	2 nd	A
3	Organizing stress management conferences for librarians	3.41	.74	3 rd	A
4	Including stress management strategies in management policies	3.31	.73	4 th	A
5	Engaging a psychologist often to council librarians on stress management strategies	3.19	.79	5 th	A
6	Providing information resources on stress/ stress management strategies for librarians	3.19	.85	5 th	A
7	Establishing a relaxation or recreational canter in the library complex	3.13	.86	6 th	A
8	Establishing a fitness section in the library complex	3.06	.94	7 th	A
Grand Mean		3.27	.78		A

Table 3 reveals that the highly adequate strategy for encouraging stress management practices among librarians is organizing stress management workshops (3.51) ranked 1st, more so, the adequate strategies are organizing stress management seminars for librarians (3.45), organizing stress management conferences for librarians (3.41), engaging a psychologist often to council librarians on stress management strategies, providing information resources on stress/ stress management strategies for librarians (3.19) and establishing a fitness section in the library complex (3.06). The grand mean 3.28 suggests that the strategies are adequate for encouraging stress management practices among the librarians. The standard deviation that ranges from .94 to .69 shows high response variations.

Discussion

Result 1 reveals that the causes of stress (stressors) among librarians are inadequate or poor working tools and facilities, increased workload, poor incentives, few promotional opportunities from management, and inadequate or lack of amenities, insufficient salary, role conflict in the library, and unprofessional attitudes from colleagues. This finding corresponds with Shabana, Singhal, Siddique, and Agarwa (2017) who identified work stressors to include over workload, poor amenities, lack of management support and funding policies. Consequently, Ekwelem (2015) reveal that poor working condition such as poor promotion opportunity for librarians, having to publish academic papers for promotion, delayed

promotion and stagnation, and lack of recognition for good and extra work are causes on stress on librarians. Saliha (2018) identifies role conflict, work overload, and ambiguity as key stressors in organizations. On a daily basis, librarians are faced with difficult issues and situations that constitute stress on them. Librarians need to take cognizance of these stressors, this will enable them to observe and know when they occur and thus prepare their minds to face, handle, and deal with the stressors. Such preparedness will help them to effectively handle stressors with ease.

The second result shows that the ways stress affects librarians' occupational performance are low productivity level, physiological ill-health, psychological imbalance, delay in completing assigned tasks, lack of commitment and passion for work, inability to relate well with colleagues, avoiding responsibilities, and inability to relate well with the users. This finding is in line with Fonkeng (2018) who found that 68.75% of respondents affirm that stress affects their occupational performance, and find it difficult to perform well under stressful conditions. Similarly, in a study, Chan, Leung, and Liang (2018) found that stress manifests in terms of the difficulty of the task and too many tasks to handle. The respondents state, "I work slowly and ineffectively when I am under stress because I waste time getting mad about the [poor] working methods of the locals". Also, Khan and Khurshid (2017) affirm that stress is causing poor performance, reduced employee morale, lack of autonomy, job insecurity, and to a greater extent the employee's well-being. Since stress distorts human physiological and psychological body systems, librarians exposed to stress will be psychological and physiologically imbalanced which would lead to distraction and frustration to concentrate and carrying out their job duties effectively. The implication of this will be poor service delivery, poor users' library experience, lack of satisfaction with the services of the library, and possible low library patronage.

The third result reveals that the highly adequate strategies for encouraging stress management practices among librarians are organizing stress management workshops, organizing stress management seminars for librarians, organizing stress management conferences for librarians, engaging a psychologist often to council librarians on stress management strategies, providing information resources on stress/ stress management strategies for librarians, and establishing a fitness section in the library complex. In support of this finding, Beheshtifar and Nazarian (2013) suggest that managers should organize a stress management program that focuses on the different employee at all hierarchical level and undertake stress audit at all levels in the organization to identify stress area improving conditions of the job and alleviating job stress. Consequently, Ruxandra (2012) recommend proper gyms or halls, an exercise program can be implemented with minimal cost. Non-formal activities, team buildings can enhance the feelings of belonging to the group, valuing people and personality, optimizing the potential and creativity. To eradicate or reduce stress, these identified stressors need to be addressed by the library management.

Stress management is known as methods, approaches, practices, and activities that are used in managing stress. The management of the library have roles to play in ensuring that stress is well managed in the library working environment. Training of librarians on how to handle and deal with stressors is very important, in their study, Khadivi, Davodi, Eydi-Baygi, & Ahmadian (2014) found that training on stress management resulted in diminished psychological and

occupational problems of the staff. Through effective management of stress, librarians will be able and fit to carry out their library house-keeping duties effectively.

Conclusion

Workplace stress is a global concern. It was found that the causes of stress (stressors) in university libraries are inadequate or poor working tools and facilities, increased workload, poor incentives, insufficient salary, role conflict, etc. This implies that stressors are existing variables in the library working environment. Therefore, there is a need for a proper understanding of these stressors and to create modalities for reducing them to the barest minimum or eradicate them. It was also found that stress affects librarians' occupational performance leading to low productivity level, delay in completing assigned tasks, lack of commitment, inability to relate well with colleagues, etc. This implies that stress affected librarians will perform below average and standards. Finally, the study identified the strategies for encouraging stress management practices such as engaging a psychologist often to council librarians on stress management strategies, providing information resources on stress/ stress management strategies for librarians, establishing a fitness section in the library complex, etc. This implies that individual librarians and the management have a huge responsibility to ensure effective management of stress and to ensure a stress-free library environment.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. The management should frequently carry out a survey on the librarians to identify stressors that results in stress exposures in the library environment.
2. The management should engage stress management experts such as psychologists, physiotherapists, etc to enlighten librarians on ways to deal with the effects of stress.
3. The management should include stress management in their management plans and budget.

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