

MANAGEMENT OF STRESS IN THE ACADEMIC LIBRARIES

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Abstract

Stress can vary depending on the individual and circumstance. Techniques like mindfulness-based approaches, time management, cognitive interventions, and relaxation exercises are all part of stress management. The objective of this paper is to make academic librarians aware of the stress-reduction strategies that are essential for avoiding the stress that comes with the current trends in academic librarianship. An analytical review on the stress management in academic libraries due to various factors was attempted by thoroughly analysing various journals and other primary sources. The causes of stress, positive and negative effects of stress in the library profession were traced under the study. It describes about the stresses in library environment, reasons of stress in the library and how to manage stress in the library. This paper concludes that in a digital library environment, ways to deal with stress are to foster a supportive environment, value individual diversity, identify stress symptoms, and address problems as they come up, think about team building, allow for autonomy, and have a backup plan.

Key Words: Library profession, stress, stress management, academic libraries.

1. Introduction:

An organisation is group of people working towards common objectives, which develop and maintain stable and predictable behaviour patterns. Management is commonly defined as

“getting work done through people”. This definition explains the signification of the role of the people in the organization. The work will not be done unless people want to do their work, and if the work is not done there will be no organization. Hence

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it is the cooperation of organizational employees, which is crucial to the success or failure of the organization. Libraries are different from business organization being service oriented organizations. Stress is an inevitable part of today's fast life. It is very essential to manage stress in libraries as it affects not only the individual and organization but also society at large. Now library profession is being changed due to the advent of information technology in the age of information explosion. The technology is progressively replacing the old methods of information collections, storage and retrieval so that library profession is becoming very hectic that is the reasons of stress.

2. Concept and definition:

Stress may be considered as any physical, chemical or emotional factor that caused bodily or mental unrest and that may be a factor in causing disease. Physical and chemical factors that can cause stress include trauma, infections, toxins, illness and injurious of any sort. Emotional causes of stress and tensions are numerous and vary. While many people associate the term stress with psychological stress, scientists and physicians use this term to denote any force that impairs the stability and balance of bodily functions.

The Stress is derived from a latin word "stringere" which means to bind tight and it is also the shortened form of distress, which denotes noxious human experiences. House Selye who introduced the concept of stress in life science. According to Selye, stress is defined as the non-response of the

body to any demand made upon it. Hans Selye was one of the founding fathers of stress research. His view in 1956 was that "stress is not necessarily' something bad- it all depends on how you take it the stress of exhilarating, creative successful work in beneficial, while that of failure, humiliation infection is detrimental".

Stress is the psychological, physiological and behavioural response by an individual when they perceive a lack of equilibrium between the demands placed upon them and their ability to meet those demands, which over a period of time, leads to ill health. Stress has been used to denote any of three thing: an excessive environmental force, the harm caused and the individual reaction in such a situation.

What is Stress Management?

Stress management is the alteration of stress and especially chronic stress often for the purpose of improving everyday functioning. Stress produces numerous symptoms which vary according to persons, situations and severity. These can include physical health decline, as well as depression. The process of stress management is one of the keys to a happy and successful life in modern society. Although life provides numerous demands that can prove difficult to handle, stress management is the best way to manage anxiety and maintain overall well-being.

3. Symptoms of Stress

1. Physical- Sleeping problems, headaches, rapid heartbeat, pains, blood pressure, difficulty waking up in the morning etc.

2. Feeling- Fear, sadness, moodiness etc.

3. Thoughts- Constant worry, negativity, frustration, self-criticism, confusion, visualizing failure etc.

4. Causes of stress:

- Poor planning
- Continuous unreasonable performance demands
- Lack of effective communication
- Lack of job security
- Long working hours
- Office politics and conflict among staff
- Insufficient resources and infrastructure to do the job
- Not feeling appreciated
- Repetitive work
- Low pay
- Funds problem
- Lack of training and development programmes
- Lack of reading materials
- Lack of staff
- Pressure of authority
- Organizational change

5. Positive effects of stress

Stress is valuable under certain circumstances, e.g. sports, making speeches and taking examination. Without

stress, we would be unable to react the situations quickly and would not have the stimulation, we need to think and act. Stress provides life's energy, and keeps us from being bored.

6. Negative effects of stress

The negative effects of stress show particularly when a person allows stress to remain in the body, usually when there is no chance to take the necessary steps to release, a stress response that is too strong or too long. The negative effects of stress show up in three ways in particular:

- A. Unsuitable behaviour
- B. Lower energy and performance levels
- C. Poorer health

7. Stress in libraries

The stresses in library environment can be broadly divided into following types:

1. Technostress: "Technostress" (computer related stress) covers that range of chronic human psychological problems that may result from the use of automation. It is a common problem for librarians, is a combination of performance anxiety, information overload, role conflict's and organizational factors. Rapid technological change has become a fact of life in the libraries. The development and application of information technologies in libraries is the major stress for LIS professionals. Due to rapid change in computer and hardware and software is a common phenomenon in almost all libraries.

2. Job security stress: the application of information communication technology has compelled the library professionals to acquire new knowledge along with the traditional library functions and services. On the contrary, there is limited scope for them to undergo in service training programme, higher studies, refresher course etc. which has increased a considerable amount of stress among professionals.

3. Physical stress: in the digital environment, sitting in front of computers for a long hour, working air-conditioned environment etc. have also resulted in the physical stress and illness.

8. Reasons of stress in library

❖ **Technological Change:** The information and communication technology (ICT) is a fast changing phenomena. Accordingly the application of ICT in libraries is also changing at an alarming rate, which creates stress among library professionals.

❖ **Changing Library Environment:** Many libraries have migrated from older manual system to automated systems and more recently to newer more sophisticated digital library systems. Staff members must unlearn old habits and procedures and learn to understand the new system

❖ **Change in Type of Document:** In addition to hard copy, most libraries are now acquiring at least some materials in alternative formats, such as CD-ROM or electronic documents or digital format. These materials, which were once handled on an ad hoc basis, must now be

incorporated into the normal acquisitions workflow.

❖ **Change in Library Physical facility:** Problems or changes in physical facilities have become a vital problem in today's libraries. With the increased use of electronic formats, the library authorities are reluctant to expand facilities to cope with increasing space requirements. Some libraries are actually moving into new facilities with less space or losing space to other functions. But the hybrid type of libraries having both print and non-print documents face much problems relating to change in physical facilities of the library.

❖ **Changing users demand:** With the development of various micro subjects, information explosion, time bound academic programmes etc users attitude towards pin pointed information have changed. Accordingly the acquisition, organization and retrieval of information in quickest possible time have given a tremendous amount of stress in the mind of library professionals.

❖ **Reduce staff strength:** Restructuring, layoffs, loss of staff positions, and doing more with fewer people have become increasingly common which has been a source of stress with the increasing workload. Further problems such as illness, disability, or death of a member of the library community have a growing impact on co-workers.

❖ **Lack of respect and recognition:** library staff members are also distress at a lack of respect and recognition in their interpersonal relationships. Public services

librarians and administrators usually report this as a lack of recognition of the library's role and value by people outside the library.

❖ **Inter-organizational conflicts:**

There are interdepartmental conflicts, tensions between professionals and non-professionals, competition for status and resources, irritable and negative coworkers and gossip.

❖ **Career Stage:** Most of the position of library staff in many state has no proper promotion channel like other department's employees as the result employees approach becomes negative and ultimately leads to them stress.

❖ **Loss of books:** Many institutes do not follow the rules of Government for loss of books which creates stress among library professionals.

9. How to manage stress:

➤ The first step to effective stress management is gaining knowledge of how stress operates in one's life and the role that various types of stressor and coping strategies can play in hurting stress .

➤ Library administration should assess the degree to which all staff members receive clear, timely, and full information relevant to their jobs and their contributions to the organisational mission.

➤ Identified gaps and deficiencies should be remedied, policies, goals, rules and expectations should be made as clear and explicit as possible for each staff member.

➤ Librarians should provide staff members with the maximum feasible autonomy and control over their work including participation in collective decision-making.

➤ Librarians and others in authority should continually monitor the physical work environments of staff members for sources of stress and strain.

➤ Orientation programs for new entrants into library are especially important.

➤ Administrators should be knowledgeable about development stages in careers and the special stressor that are associated with the various stages.

➤ Libraries should explore the development of dual career tracks and associated reward systems so that those who lack administrative interests and aptitudes can have satisfying and high status careers in the technical or service arrears of librarianship.

➤ It is very important that librarians are as well trained as possible for carrying out their complex responsibilities, so the job demand do not rise faster than competence, thereby contributing to strain.

10. Conclusion:

Elimination of stress is unrealistic, since stress is a part of normal life. One reality of the twenty-first century is that LIS professionals are faced with constant challenges in their working environments. This is particularly true for LIS professionals of digital Library Environment, not only

because of the role they play inside their libraries but because users expectations always seems to exceed library's capacity in terms of documents, infrastructure facilities, finance, staff etc. It is simply not possible to remove all sources of stress in the digital library workplace but, the library managers can manage stress among their teams which will help to reduce

some of its consequences, such as: poor morale, reduced performance and team conflict. The best way to manage stress in digital library environment are: create a supportive culture; appreciate people's differences; recognize the signs of stress; resolve issues as they arise; consider teambuilding; enable autonomy; and have a contingency plan

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