



Management of Pressures and Stress on Library Professionals in 21st Century

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Abstract:

Being universal element, stress has become a major concern of the modern times and is faced in every walk of life by both Library Professionals and Library Organizations. A group of researchers have already anticipated that the level of stress in libraries and information centres will continue to rise in the future, if not properly understood and managed. Another group have investigated the aspects of techno stress of librarians owing to the introduction of new technologies in the library field. This paper attempts to define stress in the light of Library and Information Science profession. It describes about the types of stress in libraries and its reasons and remedies. Also critically analyses the best ways to manage the pressures and stress of LIS professionals in digital library environment.

Keywords: *Library Professionals, Pressure, Stress*

1. Introduction

Pressures and Stress are the changes which our bodies experience as we adjust to our continuous changing environment. The rapid adoption of information and communication technologies and their extensive use in learning institutions and system administration has introduced new library and information services. Introduction of different learning modes and expansion of academic programs have also resulted in the librarian, facing more challenges as compared to his predecessors. It is the fact that the librarians have exposed to a considerable amount of pressures and stress in their work. Many factors are responsible to create stress; like staff problem, inadequate budget allocation and management support, too much responsibility with secondary duties & heavy workload, working with changing technology, changing users' demands etc. According to Pantry (2007) library workers deal with constantly changing technology, shrinking budgets, outsourcing, excessive workload, and burnout, all of which can precipitate internal stress and conflict. Libraries are also vulnerable to stress from external sources as a result of their accessibility to the general public, welcoming atmosphere, and service ethic. However, in the words of (Shaughnessy, 2006; Naess, 2007) workplace stress may be manifest by lack of motivation, ill health, poor employee performance at work.

2. Definitions

2.1 Library

A library is a means of access to information, ideas and works of imagination. The term "library" is often taken to equate to "public library". However, there is a huge variety of other kinds of libraries, fulfilling different purposes and serving different client groups. National libraries are required to collect and preserve the national publishing output of the country for current users as well as for future generations. Public libraries provide services free of charge to anyone who wishes to use them and act as an information point for the availability of local public services. They collect and preserve a wide range of materials relating to the history and development of the locality. School libraries clearly need to support the curriculum, but they also collect books and other to meet the needs of the teachers and students and administrative staff. University libraries are usually among the most advanced in terms of

developing electronic based services. Many have large collections of electronic journals, as well as sophisticated searching tools available both to students and faculty. According to The Librarian's Book of Lists, "A library is a collection of resources in a variety of formats that is (1) organized by information professionals or other experts who (2) provide convenient physical, digital, bibliographic, or intellectual access and (3) offer targeted services and programs (4) with the mission of educating, informing, or entertaining a variety of audiences (5) and the goal of stimulating individual learning and advancing society as a whole."

2.2 Technology

Technology is defined as the organization of knowledge for the achievement of practical purposes. Technology is one major component that is changing constantly. Oxford Dictionary defines Technology as 1) The application of scientific knowledge for practical purposes, especially in industry. 2) Machinery and devices developed from scientific knowledge. 3) The branch of knowledge dealing with engineering or applied sciences. According to Kumar et. al (1999) technology consists of two primary components: 1) a physical component which comprises of items such as products, tooling, equipments, blueprints, techniques, and processes; and 2) the informational component which consists of know-how in management, marketing, production, quality control, reliability, skilled labour and functional areas.

By scrutinizing the technology definition, there are two basic components that can be identified: 1) 'knowledge' or technique; and 2) 'doing things'.

2.3 Pressure

Pressure is a situation in which you perceive that something at stake is dependent on the outcome of your performance. Pressure involves feelings--often of an anxious and fearful nature--of a "do or die" type situation. When you've only got one shot to get it right--like being at bat in the ninth inning of the World Series with the tying run in scoring position, or a presentation to a client or job interview--you'll experience pressure. The reality is pressure makes us do worse, and sometimes leads us to fail utterly.

2.4 Stress

There are many definitions of Stress. Defining the term stress and choosing a definition of stress can be difficult even for those who are considered experts in the field of stress, stress management and stress relief. It is a reaction to a changing and demanding environment. It is primarily a physical response when the body thinks it is under attack, it 'reacts' or comes into 'reaction mode', and releases a complex mix of hormones and chemicals to prepare the body for physical action and our body goes into a state of stress in the inappropriate situations. Beside it creates many other types of challenges including anxiety and tension. According to Cox (1985). the concept of 'stress' is elusive because it is poorly defined. There is no single agreed definition in existence. It is a concept which is familiar to both layman and professional alike. It is understood by all when used in a general context but by very few when a more precise account is required and this seems to be the central problem. Skinner (1985) defined stress as "a reaction of a particular individual to a stimulus event". In the words of Pollock, (1988). Stress is something which is not naturally occurring but is a manufactured concept which has now become a 'social fact'. Tension is a natural reaction to anxiety. In other words Stress is a response to an inappropriate level of pressure. Stress can also be described as the distress that is caused as a result of demands placed on physical or mental energy. Continuing stress can lead to feelings of lethargy and tiredness, migraine, severe stomach upset and sleeplessness and many other abnormalities.

3. Nature of stress

Stress is really more about our capacity to handle change than it is about whether that change makes us feel good or bad. Change happens all the times, and stress is in large part what we feel when we are

reacting to it. Though different people may experience the same type of events, each of them will experience that event in a unique way i.e., some people are more vulnerable to becoming stressed out than others are in any given situation. Some people become highly anxious while others remain calm and composed. How vulnerable you are personally to becoming stressed out depends on a variety of factors, including your biological makeup; your perception of your ability to cope with challenges; characteristics of the stressful event such as its intensity, timing, and duration; and your command of stress management skills. Some of these factors are not under ones direct control. Wikipedia (2007) categorize stress using different criteria, but generally stress was grouped as physical or psychological. Stress may be positive or negative in nature. Positive stress motivates, focuses energy, improves performance and feels exciting. It perceives as within our coping abilities and is of short term. In contrast, negative stress, causes anxiety, feels perceived as outside of our coping abilities unpleasant and is of long term. It can lead to mental and physical problems and decreases performance. But it is somewhat difficult to categorize stressors into objective lists of those caused by positive stress and those caused by negative stress, because different people will have different reactions to particular situations. Liz Farler, Judith Broady-Preston, (2012). described about the results of a case study conducted in 2008/2009 investigating workplace stress in a further education college library service. This study shows that positive stress may motivate librarians to engage actively with students and thus create job satisfaction. Negative stress may be managed by measures such as zoning and flexible governance.

3.1 Types of Stress in Libraries

The stress psychology triangle shows that stress rarely comes from a single source. Stress is most often caused by a combination of several work-related sources. The individual's private life and the expectations and demands the person has to himself also play an important role. However, the Pressures and stress of Library and Information Centres in the present times of digital library environment can be broadly divided into following types:

1. Technological Stress: The development and application of information technologies in libraries is the major stress for library and information science professionals. Due to rapid change in computer hardware & software, obsolescence of existing hardware & software is a common phenomenon in almost all libraries. Further due to financial, technological constraints, it is difficult to keep pace with the changing technologies. Besides the change in information storage media, from print to electronic, then digital Medias have resulted in the storage space facilities. Denny (2001) investigated the aspects of techno stress of librarians owing to the introduction of new technologies in the library field.

2. Stress relating to security of job: The application of Information Communication Technologies 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 courses etc, which has increased a considerable amount of stress among library professionals. Further, with the increasing intrusion and appointment of Information technology professionals into the library profession have created fear among library professionals about their job security in future.

3. Physical Stress: The Digital Library Environment has changed the physical structure of the job environment. Due to this sitting in front of computers for log hours, working in air-conditioned environment etc., have also resulted in the physical pressures and stress related illness. Mental stress can be traced to a person's mental state of mind, which involves expectation, fears, regrets etc. Situational stress is derived from interaction with the outer world like interaction with modern technologies, role as a library manager etc. According to Routray and Satpathy (2007) stress has both physical and emotional effects on people and can create positive or negative feelings.

Stress is not necessarily negative for performance of the individuals. Some level of stress is desirable to generate enthusiasm, creativity and productivity. Stress could be beneficial or detrimental. A beneficial stress motivates the employees. This type of stress is called Eustress. The detrimental stress is that which makes one irritable and loses the spirit of work. This type of stress is called Distress. Lehnert (2002) described stress as a complex, dynamic process of interaction between a person and his

or her life. He explained further that it is the way we react physically, mentally and emotionally to the various conditions, changes and demands of life

3.2 Factors of Stress in Libraries

The findings from many studies revealed that apart from too much load of work affecting the health of workers, there were more factors and sources bringing greater pressure and stress on the library professionals. During the past few years, libraries, like many other institutions, have been experiencing change at an accelerating rate. The digital library environment has exhibited a drastic change in the functions & services of libraries. Accordingly, the library & Information Science professionals have exposed to a considerable amount of pressures and stress in their different events which are responsible for stress factors. Being unhappy in job, poor management, a heavy workload or too much responsibility in libraries are some of the reasons and factors. Besides this working for long hours, passive participation in the decision-making process, facing discrimination and working under dangerous conditions are also some more factors and reasons of stress among library professionals. Schneider (1991) explained, life stress associated with getting married, divorce, financial obligations, death of a loved one, loss of a job, emotional problems, chronic illness, fear and uncertainty, attitude and perceptions, unrealistic expectations etc. as some more reasons of stress in libraries. Accordingly the following factors and reasons are considered for making pressures and stress on library professionals in the present age of 21st century:

Change in Technology: 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 pressures and stress among library professionals. Routray and Satpathy (2007) described the types of stress in digital library environment and broadly divided them into: Technological, Physical, Mental and Situational. Technological stress was described as the stress due to the development and application of information technologies among the library and information professionals.

Change in 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. "Academic librarians, paraprofessional staff and administrators are all susceptible to experiencing the effects of stress burnout because of the nature of academia, the stress of providing customer service to students and the pressures of trying to meet promotion and tenure requirements (Huprich, 2007).

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 adhoc 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.

Users' Changing demands: 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.

Reduction in 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.

Symptoms and Effects of Stress

No doubt, in a stressful situation, your body launches a physical response and the nervous system springs into action, releasing hormones that prepare you to either fight or take off. Physical stress

includes; Headache, Heart palpitations, Dizziness, Stomach pains, Diarrhoea, Nausea, Aggravation of infections and chronic illness and Reduced libido. Whereas the Psychological Stress shows symptoms of; Memory lapses, Difficulties concentrating, Lack of direction, Crowded thoughts, Fatigue/a feeling of exhaustion, Irritability, Loss of sense of humour, Terrines, and De-motivation. Behavioural stress shows; Disturbed sleep, Loss of appetite, Reduced performance, Low self-esteem, Indecisiveness, Introverted-ness, Short fuse/anger and aggression, Increased use of Stimulants and Increased absenteeism

3.3 Stress prevention management among library professionals

Stress levels are higher than ever these days and stress affects more than just your energy levels. It can directly impact on the health and appearance of your skin and body. As stated earlier, the stress reaction is triggered by the perception of danger, which may be physical and emotional. In such situation it is better to adopt more moderate and try to reduce the intensity of emotional reactions to stress. To maintain the emotional reserves, stress prevention requires a joint effort at work, as stress is a shared responsibility. Everyone in the workplace must therefore work to prevent and limit stress, and all levels of the workplace must be involved in this work. Work Stress can be minimized by coping strategies such as integrating new skills into professional responsibility, effective communication within the environment, giving close attention to physical health, acquiring technological skills continuously and thereby lead to increased feelings of confidence and competence, attending yoga classes and doing regular exercises to reduce stress.

At the level of organisation suitable guidelines and strategies including occupational health and safety work, e.g. work assessment procedures and tools, staff policies regarding interviews in connection with absence due to illness, and competence development etc., must be framed for the work performed by the staff and therefore for their well being. Elisa F. Topper, (2007). an author described in his article about aims to help people understand the impact that stress has on library employees and the library as an organization. And the author finds— the Library workers are under stress and the library as an organization needs to provide training in how to deal with this issue. Strategies for reducing stress are outlined. Since the manager plays a key role in stress prevention suitable measure with regard to being aware of the sources of stress promoting openness and dialogue about stress and reacting if a staff member does not appear to be thriving are some of the measures which could be taken at the management level.

At the group level staff members are responsible for contributing to well-being and collaboration in the workplace by clarifying roles and responsibilities within the group and with the immediate supervisor. So the supervisor must be polite when communicating with colleagues especially in stressful situations and also by actively supporting new initiatives to promote well-being in the workplace. At the individual level, it is necessary to identifying stress for reducing its harmful effects. Luckily, implementing a few daily stress-management techniques can help. So Library and Information Professionals become aware of the stressors and its emotional and physical reactions for better stress management. After becoming aware of reactions, the events of stress be determined and recognized as to how these could be avoided, changed or eliminated completely to change the stressors?

Moving your body is important to combat stressful reactions, and prevent them from arising in the future. Some of the ways to manage stress by the library and information professionals for living a healthy and balanced life:

Library Professional must get Some Exercise daily. When the body is kept in peak condition, one feels lighter and more energized, leaving him prepared to manage life's stresses. No matter what fitness level may be, the central key is simply to move the body every day. Identifying the type or types of exercise that one most enjoy—and those best suited to the mind and body type.

Meditation is one of the best tools the Library Professionals have to counteract stress, and their brain's bias to hold onto negativity.

Everybody has different nutritional requirements. Nourishing of body with the right food will give energy needed to tackle what life brings them, including stress. Library Professional must adopt the habit of Eat Well.

Restful sleep is an essential key to staying healthy and strong. Library Professional should make it sure that they are not only getting enough sleep, but that the quality of sleep they are getting is restful and restorative. When they are well-rested, they can approach stressful situations more calmly at their workplaces.

Research has found that even a phoney smile can help you handle stress. Our brains are interconnected with our emotions and facial expressions. So laughs or smiles can help relieve some of that tension and improve the situation. Some of these relaxation techniques can built the physical reserves. Further mix leisure, Art, Music, Dance, Massage, Journaling and Cognitive restructuring with work. "Librarians and Library professionals 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.

4. Conclusion

In the changing environment of modern technological advancement, the traditional concept of the library profession is subjected to rapid changes. Related to technological stress librarians also have cataloguing electronic resources stress McClellan, (2011). The advent of computer, software, internet technologies etc. have shaken the existing concept of the profession. With such changes, the structure and nature of library profession has also changed in a dynamic way. The library and information professionals experience stress as they readjust their lives with the changing library environment, job structure, job promotion etc. Of course many library professionals/librarians are suffering with various types of work pressures, frustrations and stress in the libraries with various reasons. It is not possible to remove the all work stress to all librarians but stress is not illness in itself and library professionals can manage or reduce their work stress by various personal, planning, team work, managerial skills and organizational strategies. The present study has been focused on not only to study the causes and effect of stress but also suggesting the methods to manage the stress.

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