



A STUDY ON STRESS MANAGEMENT OF THE ACADEMIC LIBRARIANS IN MICHAEL OKPARA UNIVERSITY OF AGRICULTURE, UMUDIKE

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Abstract

This study examined Librarians and stress management at Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike, Library. The study has five research questions. It adopted a descriptive research design. The population of the study was 24 academic librarians drawn from Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike, Library. The entire 24 librarians were used for data collection. The instrument for data collection was structured questionnaire. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistical tools of frequency, percentage, rank, and mean scores. The paper identified some challenges in stress management on academic librarians. It recommends, among others, that academic librarians should develop a support network of trusted friends, colleagues, relations and neighbours to avoid isolation and loneliness when things go wrong. Academic librarians should be prepared to check critically why things are the way they are. The paper found out that exercise is another therapy for stress reduction and management and that Librarians should avoid over stressing themselves by setting unrealistic for themselves.

Keywords: Academic Library, Librarians, Stress, Stress Management.

Introduction

Stress is the non-specific response of the body to any demand for change. It is a pressure felt when one is overwhelmed by things around him/her. Stress is an emotional pressure suffered by a human being or other animals. It could also be defined as the internal distribution of force per unit area (Beehr and Newman 2008). Perceived stress to be an occupational setting to mean conditions wherein job-related factor interacts with workers to change. There must be an interaction between the environment and the individual before stress could occur. Stress occurs when the pressure is more than the resource. According to Ordqvist (2015), when faced with a challenge or a threat, our body activates resources to protect itself to either get away as fast as it can (flight) or fight.

Academic libraries are libraries situated in the institutions of higher learning which are the Universities, Colleges of Education and Polytechnics. These libraries are there to

help in the learning research and training needs of students. Academic libraries are saddled with the responsibility of helping the parent institution to mediate between the world of information and the end users of information in such a way as to ensure that the user gets the needed information at the appropriate time. Academic Librarians are library professionals that are employed to work in an academic library. These are people that underwent training in the field of library and information science in reputed institution for the purpose of obtaining either Masters or Ph.D. Degree in library and information science

Stress is as old as human, and human being can never exist without stress, and it is bound to occur in every human life. Stress management is necessary in any human life, it is vital in the sense that if not properly managed, it leads to crisis sometime to untimely death. Stress is the physical, mental and emotional adjustment that the human body makes in accordance with the circumstances of life. It has been an integral part of our daily life since prehistoric times and library and information science personnel are example to this. Thus, one cannot avoid stress in one's life rather the best policy is to manage it properly to increase one's efficiency. Malissa (2010) observed that a mild degree of stress and tension can sometimes be beneficial. Stress is the term often used to describe distress, fatigue and feelings of not being able to cope. It refers both to the circumstances that place physical or psychological demands on librarians and other individual and to the emotional reactions experienced in these situations.

Statement of the Problem

Stress has been a re-occurring decimal in every human life, that if not well managed can lead to one being incapacitated or can even lead to sudden death. Stress symptoms (muscle pain\ tension, headache, chest pain, fatigue, negative change in sex drive, sleep problems, lack of focus, anger, feeling overwhelmed, sadness, etc) can adversely affect the body, mood, thoughts, feelings and behavior of Librarians. With such adverse effect, the Librarians professional service delivery in academic library will be impaired. From observations, academic librarians suffer stress symptoms and they seem to be doing nothing about it. The seemingly inability to manage stress by academic librarians has been seen as a major challenge that negatively affects the life of academic librarians which adversely affect their professional service delivery in the Libraries. Could it be that the academic librarians work load is stressful on them? Could it also be that they need to know the symptoms of stress so that they can manage stress adequately? This study tends to find out the answers to these and other related important questions.

Research Question

The following research questions were used to guide the researcher

1. What are the academic librarians work-load?
2. What are the symptoms of stress in the life of academic librarians?
3. What are the causes of stress in the life of academic librarians?
4. What are the challenges faced by academic librarians in managing stress?
5. What are the solutions to stress management by academic librarians?

Review of related literature

Academic Library

The term academic librarian covers a number of job title including subject librarian and faculty librarians. Academic librarians provide support to an academic community through managing, organizing and disseminating information. These academic communities may be in further education, higher education or various research institutes and can consist of students, researchers and other institutional staff. The daily duties of academic librarians vary greatly.

Stress on the professional librarians has been on the increase around the globe. Series of research have been carried out generally on stress and its management and also on academic librarians. Stress is one of the most fundamental problems spanning through human endeavor. Nwaeze (2005) stated that for two and half decades, stress phenomenon has become a topical issue in management development, seminar and workshops in Nigeria. He further stated that the popularity of stress stems from a number of obvious reasons. First, nobody is immuned to stress. Therefore, we can be caught up in a situation that causes stress in the individual. Thus, as part of human living, the young, the old, the rich or the poor, professional and lay men alike are potential victims of stress

Job schedule of Academic Librarians

Nwafor-Orizu (2016) stated that academic librarian in the universities faced very busy and highly unpredictable work days, with many individual and groups competing for their time. Ekwelem (2015) stated that the typical Nigerian academic Librarian daily battle with the routine library work, classroom teaching, research and publication demand, management work, university committee and assignment and teaching information literacy skills. He is also faced with professional bodies' responsibilities at state, national and international levels. Beyond the official sphere, the academic librarian has domestic and community responsibilities.

Furthermore, Prospects (2016) stated that academic librarian, in order to accomplish the traditional library works, should involve the following:

1. Creating, updating and managing electronic and printed information resources
2. Selecting, acquiring and cataloguing information using library and information software
3. Developing and managing collections of books and Journals both print and non-print resources
4. Managing and supporting the provision of reading lists and allotting length of loans
5. Assisting researchers with literature search using database, printed resources and internet
6. Dealing with users enquiries, which may involve one-on-one advice sessions

Causes of stress in academic librarians:

Nwafor-Orizu (2016). Stated some workloads of academic librarians, which most of the time causes stress, include the following:

1. Manning the library and taking responsibilities

2. Attending to users in assisting them and answering their queries
3. Lecturing students more especially, in the area of use of library
4. Sometimes, they are involved in the lecturing of students of library and information sciences, where the school has a department of library and information.
5. Writing articles for publications in order to earn their promotion
6. Some are involved in training, furthering their education, attending conferences, workshops, etc.
7. Managing of buildings, furniture and equipment
8. Keeping up-to-date with relevant professional development in the Library section
8. Establishing and maintaining effective working relationship academic staff and students

Stress is one of the most fundamental problems spanning through the human endeavour. Nwaeze (2005), as earlier indicated, stated that for two and half decades, stress phenomenon has become a topical issue in management development, seminars and workshops in Nigeria. He further stated that the popularity of stress stem from a number of obvious reasons such as

Signs, symptoms and effects of stress

Michie, S (2002) as earlier indicated stated that when stress occurs in people manifest in different ways, either physically, mentally or psychologically. (Nwafor-Orizu)2016) stated that when librarians are stressed, the blood pressure rises, heart beating becomes more rapid, digestive system slows down, heart rate pulse rises, immune system goes down, muscles become tense and the librarians involved do not sleep. These will then manifest in both physical and mental or emotional abnormality. The physical signs arising from stress may include, headache, fatigue, body aches and pains, heart palpitation, racing pulse, rapid shallow breathing, dry mouth and throat excessive sweating, cold hand or feet, frequent urination, etc. There are still some other signs like excess weight gain, high blood pressure, etc. Emotionally, stressed out people feel depressed, anxious, frustrated, irritable and angry, they might also find it difficult to focus or pay attention or even making any tangible decision, (Tomas Rivera Center, 2016). Psychological symptoms include irritability, impatience, anger, hostility, worry, anxiety, moodiness, sadness. upset etc. Other signs and symptoms are: low performance, frequent distraction, isolation, compulsive shopping, over-eating or under eating. harsh treatment of others, etc.

Stress Management

Before any stress could be managed, the causes have to be identified first. When the causes of one's stress are identified, it will then be easy to look for solution or remedy. Therefore, Nwafor-orizu (2016). Sees stress management here as the ability to manage and control stress in the life of academic librarians. There are various ways in which librarians can manage stress in order to safe- guide both the life of an academic librarian and his/her profession. Different people try to cope with stress in different ways, some can be healthy while others can be unhealthy. Some of the unhealthy things we should avoid in order to overcome and manage stress are:

1. Using pills or drugs to relax: Avoid the use of pills or drugs because if it masters your body system, one will find it very difficult to relax without it.
2. Sleeping too much or too little: Always make sure that you have enough sleep per day
3. Procrastinating: plan yourself very well and make sure that you follow your time table strictly.
4. Changing our thinking: Always think positively and do not allow your mind to be filled with negative thinking.
5. Changing our behavior: Behave normally and try to associate or relate freely with people.

Methodology

The researcher adopted descriptive survey design for the study. The population of the study was twenty-four academic Librarians of Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike, Library. The researcher's self-structured questionnaire was the instrument used for the data collection. Data collected from the academic librarians were analyzed by using descriptive statistical tools of frequency, percentage, rank and mean scores.

Data were analyzed based on the research questions that guided the study. A total of twenty-four (24) copies of instrument were administered out of which 24, representing 100%, were filled and returned and were found usable for the study.

The result of the analyzed data obtained was summarized and presented below.

Research Question 1: What is the academic librarians work-load?

Table 1: Responses on Scheduled work for academic librarians

S/N	Work Schedule	SA	A	D	SD		Remark
1	Managing the library and taking	7	13	4	0	3.13	Agree
2	Selecting and acquisition and	8	16	0	0	5.00	Agree
3	Assisting researchers in literature	10	12	2	0	3.54	Agree
4	Carrying our staff management duties, which may include, appraisal of staff,	9	10	5	0	3.17	Agree
5	Maintaining relationship with external	8	12	4	0	3.17	Agree
6	Dealing with users enquiries which	9	15	0	0	3.13	Agree
7	Writing and publishing articles in order	12	7	5	0	3.29	Agree
8	Lecturing students more especially in	7	14	2	1	3.13	Agree

The Result in table 1 shows the mean ratings on the work Schedules of academic librarian in Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike, Library. Data presented in the above table revealed the that respondents agreed with all the items on scheduled work for academic Librarians. The mean response of 5.00 on us selecting and acquisition and cataloguing information resources has the highest mean scores. This is followed by the items assisting researchers in with 3.54, followed with writing and publishing articles in order to earn their promotion with 3.29 maintaining relationship with external bodies like suppliers and carrying our staff management duties, which may include appraisal of staff, recruitment internet and selection both have 3.17 each, and managing the library and taking responsibilities, dealing with users enquiries which may involve dealing them one-on-one and lecturing students more especially in the use of library that had 3.13 each, while the item engaging themselves in further studies had 2.96 mean score.

Research Question 2: What are the symptoms of stress in the life of academic librarians?

Table 2: Symptoms of stress in academic librarian

	Signs and symptoms of stress	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Remark
1	Fatigue	11	8	5	0	3.25	Agree
2	Headache	12	8	4	0	3.33	Agree
3	Weight gain	5	6	10	3	3.17	Agree
4	High blood pressure	10	7	3	4	2.96	Agree
5	Depression	6	14	4	0	3.08	Agree
6	Frustration	6	12	4	2	2.92	Agree
7	Difficulty in focusing or paying attention or even making any tangible decision	7	9	5	3	2.83	Agree

The result in table 2 shows the mean rating scores on the symptoms of stress in academic librarian in Michael Okpara University Umudike, library. Data presented in the above revealed that the respondents agreed withal the items on symptoms of stress in academic Librarians. The mean response of 3.33 on Headache has the highest mean score, followed by fatigue3.25, weight gain, that had 3.17, depression,3.08, High blood pressure with 2.96, frustration, 2.92 difficulty in focusing or paying attention or even making any tangible decision with s 2.83 mean scores.

Research Question 3: What are the causes of stress in the life of academic librarians?

Tables 3 shows the causes of stress in academic librarian

S/N	Causes of stress	SA	A	D	SD		Remark
1	Managing the library and taking responsibilities	8	10	4	2	3.00	Agree
2	Selecting and acquisition and cataloguing information resources	6	12	4	2	2.83	Agree
3	Assisting researchers in literature search , using databases, internet and printed resources	7	12	5	0	3.00	Agree
4	Caring our staff management duties , which may include, appraisal of staff, recruitment and selection	6	11	4	3	2.79	Agree
5	Maintaining relationship with external bodies like suppliers	7	12	3	2	3.00	Agree
6	Dealing with users enquiries which may involve dealing them one-on-one	8	13	3	0	3.21	Agree
7	Writing and publishing articles in order to earn their promotion	13	8	3	0	3.42	Agree
8	Lecturing students more especially in the use of library	9	10	2	3	3.04	Agree
9	Engaging themselves in further studies	7	10	4	3	2.88	Agree

The result in Table 3 reveals the mean rating scores on the causes of stress in academic librarian in Michael Okpara University of Agriculture Umudike, Library. Data presented in the above showed mean scores of writing and publishing articles in order to earn their promotion, with the highest mean score of 3.42, followed by dealing with users enquiries which may involve dealing them one-on-one, 3.21, lecturing students more especially in the use of library, 3.04, managing the library and taking responsibilities, assisting researchers in literature search, using databases, internet and printed resources, Maintaining relationship with external bodies like suppliers, had 3.00, then engaging themselves in further studies, with 2.88, selecting and acquisition and cataloguing information resources with 2.83, and caring our staff management duties, which may include, appraisal of staff, recruitment and selection 2.79 mean scores.

Research Question 4: What are the challenges faced by academic librarians in managing stress?

Table 4:Challenges of stress management in academic librarians of MOUA, Umudike

	Challenges faced by academic librarian on stress management	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Remark
1	Non-identification of sources of stress	14	7	3	0	3.63	Agree
2	Inability to handle the stress	12	12	0	0	3.50	Agree
3	Inability to critically check why things are happening the way they are	8	8	6	2	2.92	Agree
4	Lack of exercise by academic Librarian	2	4	10	8	2.00	Disagree
5	Always thinking that you can do it by yourself	10	10	3	1	3.30	Agree

The result in table 4 shows the mean on the challenges of stress management in academic librarian in Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike, library. Data presented in the above showed mean scores of non-identification of sources of stress with highest mean score of 3.63, followed by always thinking that you can do it yourself with the mean score of 3.30, inability to handle the stress with 3.50, managing conflict, lack of exercise by an academic librarian with 2.00, which happened to be lower than the accepted mean score of 2.50 mean score, therefore being rejected.

Research Question 5 : What are the solutions to stress management by academic librarians?

Table 5 shows the solution to stress management by academic librarian of MOUA, Umudike

	Solution of stress management by academic librarian	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Remark
1	Identification of sources of stress	8	10	4	2	3.00	Agree
2	Ability to handle stress	12	12	0	0	3.50	Agree
3	Ability to critically check why things are happening the way they are	13	8	3	0	3.42	Agree
4	Always take some exercise no matter how little	8	13	3	0	3.21	Agree
	Always take your matter to God in prayer	7	10	4	3	2.88	Agree

The result in table 5 shows the mean rating score on solution of the stress management by academic Librarian in Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike, library. Data presented in the above showed the mean scores of ability to handle stress with the highest mean score of 3.50, followed by ability to critically check why things are happening the way they are scored 3.42, always take some exercise no matter how little follows with mean score of 3.21, identification of sources of stress with mean score of 3.00 and always take your matter to God in prayer had mean score of 2.88. by these mean score being above the 2.50 which is the mean score means that these items raised as solution to stress management by academic Librarian were all accepted by the respondents.

Findings \Discussion of Results

The data from the results showed that there were work schedule for academic librarian of Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike, Library. The work schedule were selecting, acquisition and cataloguing information resources; writing and publishing articles in order to earn their promotion; maintaining relationship with external bodies like suppliers; Managing the library and taking responsibilities, dealing with user's enquiries which may involve dealing with them one-on-one; and lecturing students more especially in the use of library ; and then engaging themselves in further studies. It was found out that all these items mention above were part of the academic Librarians work schedule in Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike, Library. This also contend with Nwaspr-Orizu (2016) stated that academic librarian in the universities faced very busy and highly unpredictable work days, with many individual and groups competing for their time. (Ekwelem, 2015) stated that the typical Nigerian academic Librarian daily battle with the routine library work, classroom teaching, research and publication demand, management work, university committee and assignment and teaching information literacy skills. He is also faced with professional bodies' responsibilities at state, national and international levels. Beyond the official sphere, the academic librarian has domestic and community responsibilities. Therefore, an academic

Librarian as a human being involving him/ herself in all these items mentioned above is enough to cause stress in one's life.

In response of the questions on the symptoms of stress in academic librarian, Michael Okpara University Umudike, library. The study found out that Headache, Fatigue, Weight gain, Depression, High blood pressure, Frustration, Difficulty in focusing or paying attention or even making any tangible decision were all identified as symptoms of stress. The claim was backed up with (Nwafor-Orizu)2016) who stated that when we are stressed the blood pressure rises, beating becomes more rapid, digestive system shows down, heart rate pulse rises, immune system goes down, muscles become tense and we do not sleep. There will then manifest in both physical and mental or emotional signs. The academic Librarian does not have to wait for the signs and symptoms of stress before taking care of themselves, at least once in a while they have to involve themselves in one thing or the other that could help them minimize stress in their lives.

The study further found out causes of stress in academic librarian in Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike, library as writing and publishing articles in order to earn their promotion, using databases, internet and printed resources, Maintaining relationship with external bodies like suppliers, Engaging themselves in further studies, with, Selecting and acquisition and cataloguing information resources, Caring our staff management duties, which may include, appraisal of staff, recruitment and selection. An academic Librarian has to plan his/her programme in a way it will not cause him stress, start on time, don't wait until it is late before you start.

In a bid to identify the challenges faced by academic librarian in stress management in Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Umudike, library. The study found out that non-identification of sources of stress, possess the highest challenge in stress management in the life of academic librarians, this was followed by Inability to handle the stress, managing conflict. Librarians should learn to manage stress in their life.

Conclusion

This study on academic librarians and stress management in Michael Okpara University of Agriculture, Library has actually enlightened the researcher and the general public to the work schedule of academic librarians, causes of stress and also opened the eyes of the librarians to the challenges they faced in managing stress. Since the nature of the librarian's work exposes them to stress, it is therefore, necessary for them to know and understand through research results how to manage the stress in order to help them keep it in control so as to attain their height in life.

The Study Recommends that:

1. Academic Librarians should try to identify their work load and focus on them.
2. Academic Librarians should always identify the symptoms of stress and know how to manage them.
3. Academic Librarians should identify the causes of stress and try to avert it on time
4. Academic Librarians should identify the challenges of stress management and know how to tackle them.

5. Academic Librarians should always put to practice all the findings in order to manager their work effectively without being stressed up.

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