Article

Job Stress and coping strategies among staff of polytechnic libraries in Nigeria

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Abstract
The study investigated the causes and coping strategies of job related stress among library staff of Polytechnics in Nigeria, with particular reference to the entire Southern region of Nigeria. The descriptive research design was used for this study. The population of the study was made up of 452 respondents, comprising 113 professional librarians, 58 para professionals and 279 support staff (library attendants and assistants) of the library, in all the Federal and State owned polytechnics in Southern Nigeria. A questionnaire titled ''library staff job stress questionnaire'' (LSJSQ) was used for data collection. Data was analysed using percentage counts and mean. Findings revealed that the introduction and use of new technology, insufficient funds and non conducive work environment are the major causes of job related stress to all library staff in Polytechnics in Nigeria, irrespective of age, gender and rank. The study found out that seeking more information in order to clarify ambiguous role expectations, job sharing, flexible work time, socializing and keeping friendship are coping techniques employed by library staff to manage job stress. Based on the findings, the study concluded that managing job stress is necessary for the realisation of organisational goals. Recommendations were put forward to ameliorate job related stress amongst polytechnic libraries staff in Nigeria.

Keywords: job stress, library staff, coping strategy, polytechnics, Nigeria

Introduction

Stress is a subjective and an anxiety based syndrome which manifests differently among individuals hence the lack of stereotyped definition. However, Bunge (1990) defined it as physical, mental or emotional strain or a condition of feeling experienced when a person perceives that demand exceeds the personal and social resources the individual is able to mobilise. When condition presents extra demand on an individual's capability and resources, it is said to be stressful. As stated by Nawe (1995), stress is all about cause of disruption, disruption itself and effect of disruption which culminate in anxiety and tension.

According to Kupersmith (1999) stress is a response to changes in an environment as perceived by the individual; which if severe and prolonged can have harmful physiological and psychological effects.

People experience stress in many areas of their lives, as stress is a by-product of modern life. Although stress is inevitable in many activities at work and at home, it becomes harmful when it develops to impair daily activities. Harmful workplace stress has often been associated with jobs that demand a lot from employees while allowing them little control over how the job is performed; it stems from work environments that are unsafe or uncomfortable, and organisational practices that exclude employee participation or input (Petrus and Kleiner, 2003). Many organisations and experts such as The International Labor Organisation (1996), National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) (1999), Palmer (2004) and others identified job stress as harmful physical and emotional responses that occur when job requirements do not match the worker's capabilities, resources and needs. They also believe that stress is a major challenge to the individuals' mental and physical health whereas stressed workers are more likely to be unhealthy, poorly motivated, less productive and less safe at work while their organisations are less likely to succeed in competitive markets. Jobs are, therefore, perceived sources of stress in individuals as they trigger adjustments in timing, schedules, relationships, opinions, events, lifestyle which could be negative or positive as opined by Scott (2008). She is of the view that long hours at work, heavy workload and overwhelming feeling in every area of life are causes of job stress. Given the diverse causes of job stress, Nawe (1995) discovered among others, that common issues as non-conducive work environment, subjection to career development, noisy environment and crowded work environment are stressful agents to the individual that works in the library. Bunge (1990) posited that an individual could experience stress from management procedures, unattractive or unappealing regulations in a workplace. Furthermore, he maintained that inadequate provision of facilities or inability to cope with some facilities that constitute stressors in the libraries.

Librarians are said to have experienced stress for years as it is a maladaptive response to pressure. However the level of stress appears to have increased because of a number of factors associated with the information age. Some of the factors contributing to

increased level of job stress are the introduction of new technology, increased threats of censorship, limited funding, demand for additional services, and the opinion that libraries will become obsolete as maintained by Haper (2000). The staff of academic and research libraries such as the polytechnic library have the role of promoting access to the accurate and appropriate information to serve the needs of their clientele. However, the Information Age has made this mission much more challenging and complex. It has also dictated the imperative for librarians and library support staff to develop new technical skills to promote information access. This requirement, could lead to technology induced stress among the librarians. Beyond that, librarians in universities in Nigeria are classified as academic staff of their institutions and are therefore expected to be involved in teaching, research and publishing. This expectation is alongside their primary job of information provision in order to earn career progression. The combination of these responsibilities tasks library staff to stressful point.

The American Library Association (ALA) (2001; cited by Smith, 2003), summarised the societal factors currently impacting on the library profession thus: the acceleration of the pace of change; the ubiquity of technological innovation; rapid globalisation; economic issues; expanding educational formats and opportunities; demographic shifts; population diversity; changing workplace structures and ethics; altered worker demands; changes in customer expectations and lifestyles. If these constitute stressors to the library staff, and how can they be managed? These are the main issues that the study intends to address, with particular reference to the Polytechnics in the Southern Region of Nigeria.

Objectives of the study

The study is aimed at achieving the following objectives:

   i. Find out the causes of job stress experienced by the various categories of library staff.
   ii. Find out the causes of job stress of the different age groups of library staff.
   iii. Ascertain the techniques adopted to manage job stress by male and female library staff.

Research questions

The following research questions are expected to be answered in this study:

i.   What are the causes of job stress experienced by various categories of library staff of Nigeria?

ii.   What are the causes of job stress experienced by library staff of the polytechnic libraries in Nigeria of different age ranges?

iii. What are the techniques employed by the male and female library staff to manage job stress?

It is hoped that the findings of this study will assist library managers and other stakeholders to guard against those factors that cause job related stress, as well as providing techniques for tackling job stress.

Methodology

The descriptive survey design was adopted for this study. This design was adopted because it would enable the researcher to explore the current status of the the causes, and management techniques of job related stress among staff of polytechnic libraries in Southern Nigeria. The population of the study consisted of 452 respondents comprising 113 librarians, (58) paraprofessionals and (279) support staff (library attendants, assistants) working in the federal and state owned polytechnic libraries in the seventeen states that make up Southern Nigeria as shown in Table 1. The instrument employed for data collection was the questionnaire entitled "Library Staff Job Stress Questionnaire (LSJSQ)". Copies of the questionnaire were administered to the librarians, library officers, library assistants, library attendants of the various polytechnic libraries studied. This was done with the help of five trained research assistants in order to ensure high response rate. Frequency counts, percentages, mean were used to analyze data for the research

Table 1: Population of the study

No	Polytechnic Library	State	Librarians	Para professionals	Library assistants/ Library attendants	Total
1.	Akwa Ibom State Polytechnic Library, Ikot-Osorua	Akwa Ibom	4	1	17	22
2.	Delta State Polytechnic Library, Oghara	Delta	9	1	19	29
3.	Delta State Polytechnic Library, Ogwashi-Uku	Delta	7	2	20	29
4.	Delta State Polytechnic Library, Ozoro	Delta	5	1	15	21
5.	Federal Polytechnic Library, Auchi	Edo	9	7	26	42
6.	Rivers State Polytechnic Library, Bori	Rivers	6	2	9	17
7.	Akanu Ibiam Federal Polytechnic, Unwana-Afikpo	Ebonyi	5	2	9	16
8.	Federal Polytechnic, Ado-Ekiti.	Ekiti	4	2	11	17
9.	Federal Polytechnic, Ede	Osun	5	1	13	19
10.	Federal Polytechnic, Ilaro	Ogun	5	2	10	17
11.	Federal Polytechnic, Nekede	Imo	4	2	11	17
12.	Federal Polytechnic, Oko	Anambra	5	3	12	20
13.	Yaba College of Technology, Yaba	Lagos	10	5	14	29
14.	Federal Polytechnic, Ekowe	Bayelsa	3	1	9	13
15.	Abia State Polytechnic, Aba	Abia	2	2	10	14
16.	Imo State Polytechnic, Umuagwo	Imo	3	2	9	14
17.	Lagos State Polytechnic, Ikorodu.	Lagos	5	4	13	22
18.	Moshood Abiola Polytechnic, Abeokuta	Ogun	3	3	13	19
19.	Osun State Polytechnic, Iree	Osun	4	3	12	19

20.	Rufus Giwa Polytechnic, Owo	Ondo	4	3	10	17
21.	The Polytechnic, Ibadan	Oyo	9	6	18	33
22.	The Polytechnic, Ijebu Igbo	Ogun	3	3	11	17
	Total		**113**	**58**	**281**	**452**

Source: Library staff records obtained from the various heads of libraries.

Findings and discussions

Research question one: What are the causes of job stress experienced by different categories of library staff of the Polytechnics in Southern Nigeria

Table 2: Causes of job stress experienced by categories of library staff

Causes	Ranks	$\overline{x}$
Non-conducive working environment	Librarians	3.4
	Library Officers	3.5
	Library support Staff	3.2
Work hour	Librarians	2.0
	Library Officers	2.5
	Library support Staff	2.8
Inability to meet deadline	Librarians	2.9
	Library Officers	2.6
	Library support Staff	2.4
Change in rules/procedures	Librarians	2.1
	Library Officers	2.5
	Library support Staff	2.3
Increased work load/long working hours	Librarians	2.8
	Library Officers	3.3
	Library support Staff	3.1
High expectations from bosses	Librarians	2.6
	Library Officers	3.0
	Library support Staff	3.2
Office politics	Librarians	2.8
	Library Officers	2.5
	Library support Staff	2.7
Co-workers	Librarians	2.7
	Library Officers	2.3
	Library support Staff	2.3
Clients needs/demand	Librarians	2.4
	Library Officers	2.2
	Library support Staff	2.5

Job rotation	Librarians	2.1
	Library Officers	2.1
	Library support Staff	2.5
Pension scheme	Librarians	2.2
	Library Officers	2.1
	Library support Staff	2.1
Introduction/use of new technology	Librarians	3.1
	Library Officers	3.4
	Library support Staff	3.9
Work tools e.g cataloguing tools	Librarians	2.3
	Library Officers	2.1
	Library support Staff	2.3
Insufficient funds to meet personal needs	Librarians	3.4
	Library Officers	3.6
	Library support Staff	3.7
Multiple roles in the institution	Librarians	2.3
	Library Officers	1.9
	Library support Staff	2.0
Lack of organisational motivation	Librarians	2.7
	Library Officers	3.1
	Library support Staff	2.9
Membership of many committees	Librarians	2.6
	Library Officers	2.2
	Library support Staff	2.2
Lack of training/continuing professional education opportunities	Librarians	2.3
	Library Officers	2.7
	Library support Staff	2.4
Lack of promotion/advancement opportunities and promotion requirements	Librarians	2.6
	Library Officers	2.4
	Library support Staff	2.9
Lack of appreciation/understanding for work done	Librarians	2.2
	Library Officers	2.6
	Library support Staff	2.6
Finding problems	Librarians	2.6
	Library Officers	2.4
	Library support Staff	2.2
Sexual Harassment	Librarians	2.1
	Library Officers	2.4
	Library support staff	2.7

Criterion =3.0

Table 2 reveals the causes of job stress experienced by categories of library staff. Non-conducive working environment attracted the mean (3.4) for librarians, (3.5) library officers

and (3.2) for library support staff. Library officers have the highest mean score. The entire mean are relatively high which confirms the work of Nawe (1995) that non-conducive and crowded work environment are stressful agents to the individual that works in the library. On Introduction/use of new technology the mean score of all cadre of library staff under study ranked above 3.0 criterion mean with the lowest skilled work force (library support staff) scoring even higher. This position confirms that of King and Bachmann (1999) where they found that the greatest work concerns to Canadians are adaptation of new technology especially for those in low-skill jobs. The situation was similar for issues relating to insufficient funds where all the various cadre of staff in the study scored above the criterion mean (3.0) and just like the case of introduction of new technology where the less skilled workforce (library support staff) scored higher for insufficient fund. This indicates that the lower workforce considers insufficient fund more positively as a cause of job stress. This position corroborates Lim and Teo (1996) where they reported that low pay is a major cause of job stress.

Increased work load/ long working hours attracted the mean of (3.3) for library officers, (2.9) Librarians and (3.0) Library support staff. However, the mean score of library officers is higher than that of the librarians. This is in agreement with Scott (2008) who viewed long working hours at work, heavy work load and over whelming feeling in every area of life as causes of job stress. Polytechnic staff run shift duties and work on weekends. This is probably the reason that the staff indicated long work hours as stressor. High expectations from bosses as stressor received diverse response from the library staff. Library support staff ranked high with the mean of (3.2), closely followed by library officers with (3.0) and librarians came last with (2.6) mean. This finding is in congruence with the work of Cartwright and Cooper (2002) which reported that almost 50 percent of Britons workers blame bosses for making their blood boil and giving them anxiety at work. The study maintained that nearly one in every four bosses in the UK is bad or dreaded. However, the non- professionals and the Para-professional are most affected from the study.

Research question two: What are the causes of job stress experienced by library staff of the polytechnic libraries in Southern Region of different ages?

1Criterion =3.0

Table 3 shows the causes of stress among library staff of different ages. Non-conducive working environment attracted high mean score (X) of (3.5) 41 – 50 years (3.3) above 50 years (3.2) 31 – 40 years, while (3.1) for 30 years below. However, 41 – 50 years mean score (X) is higher than other ages. This is followed by those above 50 years. This finding corroborates the study of Karasek (1979) who observed that staff of age 40 – 45 years was most likely to perceive their work as stressful. On Introduction/use of new technology the mean score of all age groups of library staff under study ranked above 3.0 criterion mean with the older work force scoring even higher, this position confirms that of King and Bachmann (1999) where they found that the greatest work concerns to Canadians are adaptation of new technology especially for older workforce and those in low-skill jobs. The situation was similar for issues relating to insufficient funds where all the various age groups under study scored above the criterion mean (3.0). But unlike the case of introduction of new technology the reverse was the case as the younger workforce scored higher for insufficient fund indicating that the younger workforce mostly of the lower cadre considers insufficient fund more positively as a cause of job stress. This confirms the report by Lim and Teo (1996) that low pay is a major cause of job stress.

High expectation from bosses also attracted high mean score from age 30 years and below with (3.2) mean and 31-40 with (3.0) mean. While 41-50 and 50 and above attracted low mean of (2.7) and (2.5) respectively. This finding agrees with the work of Cartwright and Cooper (2002) which reported that almost 50 percent of Britons blame their bosses for making their blood boil and giving them anxiety at work. Disparity was also observed from the mean score of librarians of different ages with regard to increased work load / long working hours. Ages 41-50 attracts the highest mean score of (3.3), followed by 50years and above with the mean of (3.1). However, 31-40 and 30 years and below attracted low mean of (2.9) and (2.7) respectively. This finding corroborates the survey by Statistics Canada (2001) which revealed that older counterparts at work complain more of too many hours or too many demands as a source of stress in their work environment than their younger colleagues. This was also supported by Yandrick and Freeman (1996) who posited that lack of control of work schedule gives rise to dissatisfaction, disillusionment and depression which affect the worker negatively.

Research question three: what are the techniques employed by the male and female library staff to manage job stress?

Table 4: Coping strategies employed by library staff to manage job stress

Techniques	SEX	$\overline{\text{X}}$
Seeking more information in order to clarify ambiguous role expectations	Male	3.3
	Female	3.0
Breaking challenging pieces of work into smaller sets of task	Male	2.3
	Female	2.1
Learning to identify early warning signs of aggression in co-workers and clients/users	Male	2.4
	Female	2.1
Developing interpersonal skills that dissipate aggression	Male	2.3
	Female	2.0
Flexible work time	Male	2.8
	Female	3.3
Job sharing	Male	3.1
	Female	3.6
Telecommuting/increased communication	Male	2.4
	Female	2.0
Counseling programme	Male	2.4
	Female	2.2
Job delegation	Male	2.3
	Female	2.4
Taking coffee/short break during working hours	Male	2.2
	Female	2.0
Going on vacation/sabbatical leave	Male	2.3
	Female	2.4
Altering the way I perceive the situation	Male	2.4
	Female	2.3
Positive self esteem/optimism	Male	2.3
	Female	2.4
Physical exercise/fitness	Male	2.2
	Female	2.4
Developing healthy life	Male	2.2
	Female	2.3
Relaxation and meditation	Male	2.4
	Female	2.1
Alcoholism and use of drugs	Male	1.9
	Female	1.6
Socialising and keeping friendship	Male	2.7
	Female	2.7
Training and retraining	Male	2.4
	Female	2.3

Conflict avoidance in workplace/removing oneself from stressful situation	Male	2.4
	Female	2.2
Setting realistic goals	Male	3.3
	Female	3.1
Cultivating positive attitude to work	Male	2.3
	Female	2.2
Visualisation	Male	2.2
	Female	2.2

Criterion =3.0

Table 4 reveals the job related stress management techniques employed by male and female library staff. Among the major techniques are; Job sharing attracted mean of (3.6) female and (3.1) male. Seeking more information in order to clarify ambiguous role expectations got a mean score of (3.3) males and (3.0) females with the male mean slightly higher than that of the female. This finding is in congruence with the work of McShane and Glinov (2000) that suggested a number of strategies to help cushion the effect of stress. They identified stress as work-focused and emotion - focused and held that both situations be addressed. Their work clearly revealed that work focused stress could be matched with role clarification, time management, job delegation, search for more information and direct task help, cooperative work strategies and finally departure from work when it became unbearable. Flexible work time also attracted high mean (3.3) from females and (2.8) mean from the males. This is an indication that the females develop a better healthy lifestyle than their male colleagues. Both sexes positively respect setting realistic goals with (3.3) mean for males and (3.1) mean for females. This agrees with Babalola (2008) who emphasises that as you work, you must be realistic and do not try to be perfect as no one is. He emphasised that expecting other people to be perfect can add to a worker's stress level while people should ask for help when needed.

Moreso, the respondents affirmed that flexible work time, socialising and keeping friendship and setting realistic goals with a mean score greater than 2.5 are some other techniques employed by library staff to manage job stress irrespective of gender this findings corroborated those of Burns 1980, Billings 1991, Tennet 1991, Caputo 1991, Fisher 1990, Ritch 1991, and Calloghan 1991 where they suggested that flexible work time, socialising and keeping friendship and setting realistic goals are some of the techniques mainly employed by library staff to manage job stress.

Conclusion and recommendations

The research surveyed the causes, and management techniques of job related stress among library staff of the polytechnics in Southern Nigeria. It specifically set out to inquire if differences existed in those job stress variables, with respect to gender, age and various categories of library staff in the polytechnics in the region.

The study revealed the following:

i. The study revealed that the introduction and use of new technology, insufficient funds and non-conducive work environment are the major causes of job related stress to all library staff in polytechnics in Southern Nigeria irrespective of age, gender and rank.

ii. The study revealed that job dissatisfaction, depression, moodiness, disillusionment, frustration as well as negative job attitude are the main effect of job related stress among library staff irrespective of age, gender and rank.

iii. The study found that seeking more information in order to clarify ambiguous role expectations, job sharing, flexible work time, socialising and keeping friendship and setting realistic goals are the techniques mostly employed by library staff to manage job stress irrespective of gender, age and rank.

From the research findings, the following recommendations are made:

i. The polytechnic authorities and library management in Nigeria should provide congenial work environment such as standard offices, cooling systems and basic facilities in the libraries in order to ameliorate job related stress among the staff.

ii. The management of the polytechnic libraries should ensure a reduction in the workload of the staff in order to reduce the incidence of job stress to the barest minimum.

iii. Efforts should be made by the polytechnic authorities and library management to provide training on new technology to the staff, especially the older ones.

iv. Prototype stress management packages should be adopted as policy for librarianship in all institutions of learning. Formalised management tips such as Seminars, talk

shops and interactive sessions should be integrated at corporate level for library staff to air feelings, cross fertilise ideas on job stress.

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