

Causes and Effects of Job Related Stress among Polytechnic Librarians in Delta State, Nigeria

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Abstract The paper provides an overview of some elements that are responsible for job stress. It specifically proffers meaning to the term job stress. Based on a thorough review of related literature, the study sought to find out the causes and effects of job stress on polytechnic librarians in Delta State. The results shows that pressure from management/bosses, poor work environment, excess workload, inadequate support system, challenges in coping with new technology and lack of supervision are some of the causes of job stress among polytechnic Librarians in Delta State. And that these have negative consequences such as job dissatisfaction, frustration, low productivity, depression, negative job attitude, absenteeism, illness amongst others. Based on these some recommendations were put forward.

Keywords Stress, Job Stress, Polytechnic Librarians

1. Introduction

Stress is a subjective phenomenon and an anxiety based syndrome which manifests differently in different persons hence a lack of stereotyped definition. However,[3] defined it as physical, mental or emotional strain or tension or a condition feeling experienced when a person perceives that demand exceeds the personal and social resources the individual is able to mobilize. When condition presents extra demand on an individual's capability and resources, it is said to be stressful. As stated by[11] it is also about cause of disruption, disruption itself and effect of disruption which culminate in anxiety and tension.

According to[6] 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. 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 Organizational practices that exclude employee participation or input[14] Job related stressor should be identified so as to manage them successfully. An attempt at identifying sources of stress among the staff of libraries (especially of polytechnic libraries) is the first step in creating a healthy working environment. Though making

the library work environment stress free may appear impossible, attempts at implementing management techniques can make a difference.[16] opined that the level of stress in libraries if not properly understood and managed, will continue to increase in future. In recent times job related stress especially in the field of librarianship have become a common feature for librarians and researchers mostly in developing countries where the problem has become much prevalent. Studies have shown that lean budget and poor funding for libraries in developing countries have seriously affected the job and working environment of librarians and library staff. [13] reported that inadequate funding for libraries in Nigeria has resulted in lack of expansion of existing library capacity both human and material. This situation coupled with the ever increasing library clientele has in no small measure created a near chaotic situation for library staff and facilities. This situation has made the job of library staff very stressful. Because of the potential negative consequences of stress on library workforce, it is necessary to find out those elements that causes job stress and their effects on staff of polytechnic libraries in Delta State, Nigeria. For this purpose, the following research questions were raised to guide the study;

- What are the causes of job stress amongst polytechnic librarians in Delta State?
- What are the effects of job stress amongst polytechnic librarians in Delta State?

2. Research Methodology

The population and sample for the study is 56 librarians from the three polytechnic libraries in Delta State. Namely,

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Delta State Polytechnic, Ogwashiuku, Delta State Polytechnic, Ozorro and Delta State Polytechnic, Otefe. The questionnaire, titled "Causes of job stress Questionnaire" (CJSQ) was administered on the polytechnic librarians to obtain information on the causes of job stress. Frequency counts and simple percentages were used to analyse the data collected.

3. Literature Review

It is logical to note that 'stress', the scourge of the 21st century has come to stay with us. To effectively curb or address it, the causes must be determined.[4] indicated that half a million people in United Kingdom experience work-related stress to the level of illness, 5 million people feel extremely stressed while the loss incurred from this is estimated at 6.5 million US dollars per year. With such colossal consequences it becomes arguably justified to inquire about the causes of the scourge. Also unrealistic deadlines and expectations, technology overload, unimaginable overload and under recruitment of staff for work already timed, pose intimidating schedules to workers and that almost 50 percent of Britons blame bosses for making their blood boil and giving them anxiety at work. The Conference of the British Psychological Society of Occupational Psychology [7] asked 2,330 British workers what stress them most at work. The survey revealed that 48 percent said management (boss); the workload 22 percent; the environment 12 percent; commute to work 11 percent and clients they deal with 7 percent. While all the enumerated sources constitute stressors, the study maintained that nearly one in every four bosses in the UK is bad or dreaded .It also stated that fifty eight percent of respondents have looked for another job because of bad bosses and how they feel about their jobs.

[11] opined that librarians have the interest of 'serving the information needs of clients while there would never be enough time to do everything that needs to be done. He noted that failure to meet all patrons' needs, finding answers too late and not knowing the resources to consult are causes of stress among librarians. It has also been noted that when organization arraigned responsibilities with unmatched support systems, problems that lead to stress would arise. This is occasioned by high quality work expectation not backed by sufficient on and off the job training, lack of adequate supervision and lack of installed communication mechanism. A lack of confidence at work place and some other environmental problems such as noise, annual leave forfeiture, occasioned by work overload and sometimes job under load, which result in underutilization of the workers acquired skill, could result in stress [1]. In another development, job stress has tremendously been attributed to conditions of work and reasonably, the role of the individual in a workplace. A research by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH)[12] discovered that the conditions like job designs which may involve heavy workload, infrequent rest breaks, long hours

and shift work, hectic routine, tasks that have little inherent meaning, underutilization of workers' skill and little sense of control by the worker are ready sources of stress. Apparently, these are true reflections of the librarian's plight. Routine jobs which cannot be modified pose challenges. Repetition of tasks is therefore a killer to the librarian who has no right to redesign a work schedule. Closely knit with the job design is the problem of management procedure that does not allow the worker opportunity to make decisions or input in affairs concerning him. Poor communication trend in an organization and lack of family/friendly policies affects a worker adversely, while stereotyped organizational policy that does not integrate the workers' private/personnel interests could frustrate to a point of stress. Accordingly, [12] posits that interpersonal relationship such as poor social work environment and lack of support, help from co-workers and supervisors are ready stressors in a place of work. A situation where the worker stay in silence without interaction with friends, always talking the official language, inferiority complex and feeling of results inadequacy.

[5] see work stress as response to strong stimulus, and suggest the following as some of the causes;

Task demands caused by: quick decisions, critical decisions incomplete information for decisions

Physical/Environmental demands caused by: temperature extremes, poorly designed office and threats to health

Role demands caused by: role ambiguity, role conflict

Interpersonal demands caused by: group pressures, leadership style and conflicting personalities.

Each of these demands are said to result in stress when the worker can no longer muster resistance on the effect but rather yields when overwhelmed. It arises when the task is overwhelming and stretches the worker to a breaking point, while physical demands arise from overbearing job setting such as poorly designed offices; poor lighting, poorly heated or cooled offices.

[18] reported that, a constant variable for stress for all respondents was 'too many demand hours', threat of layoff/job loss, poor interpersonal relations, risk of accident were closely identified as sources of stress while adaptation to computer skills constituted a bore to a greater percentage of librarians. This experience could be said to be common to other countries whereas majority have opted for self employed jobs where they perceive greater chances of control in their jobs.[8] also found that the greatest work concerns/stress are heavy workload and long hours spent at work, followed closely by new technologies and their problems of adaptability especially for older workforce and those in low-skill jobs.[3] 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 constitutes stressors in the Libraries.

Stressful lifestyle may give rise to strange feelings while late sleep renders the body incapable of normal life the next

day.[2] noted that stress contributes to illnesses in many individuals. According to him, it affects the immune systems which normally protect people from various diseases. They also contribute to the development of bad habits such as alcoholism, obesity, suicide, drug addiction, cigarette addiction and other harmful behaviors.

[6] has identified emotional and mood behavior with librarians in the developed world resulting from stress.[17] compilation of facts and figures about stress in the workplace revealed various stunning and negative stress impact on workers.

The range of impact of stress spans finance, health, job satisfaction, irritability on learning ability and share loss of man hours. In terms of costs, Sautés_[10] noted that “the total health and productivity cost of worker stress to American business is estimated at \$50-\$150 billion annually.[9] noted that unscheduled absence by US employees rose by 9% in 1993 and that it cost work organization as much as \$750 per employee. According to[4] the average depressed worker cost their organization \$3,000 per year.[15] also reveals that insurance claims for stress related industrial accident cost nearly twice as much as non stress related industrial accidents.

Furthermore, frequent absenteeism at work has been attributed to stressful conditions at work. To buttress the above claim,[13] found that workers with high stress were over two times more likely to be absent 5+ days a year. Secondly, their study revealed that stress was responsible for forty percent job turnover.

4. Results and Discussion of Findings

Research Question 1: What are the causes of job stress to polytechnic librarians in Delta State?

The result on the causes of job stress among polytechnic librarians in Delta State is as shown in figure 1.

Figure 1 show that management/bosses (56%), poor work environment (52%), excess workload (50%), inadequate support system (48%), coping with new technology (43%) and lack of supervision (41%) ranked high among the causes of job stress amongst polytechnic librarians in Delta State. This report is in tandem to similar findings such as those of [7];[11];[1];[12];[8] where they reported same causes of stress among librarians. Transportation problems (21%), threat of layoff or job loss (8%) and client/patrons (6%) are also found to be causes of job stress in the current study. This position corroborates [18] where he posited that, a constant variable for stress for all respondents in his study was threat of layoff/job loss. Also, commuting to work and dealing with clients according to Conference of the British Psychological Society of Occupational Psychology [7] survey were reported as some job stressors facing librarians.

Research Question 2: What are the effects of job stress on polytechnic librarians in Delta State?

The result of the analysis is as shown in the bar chart in figure 2.

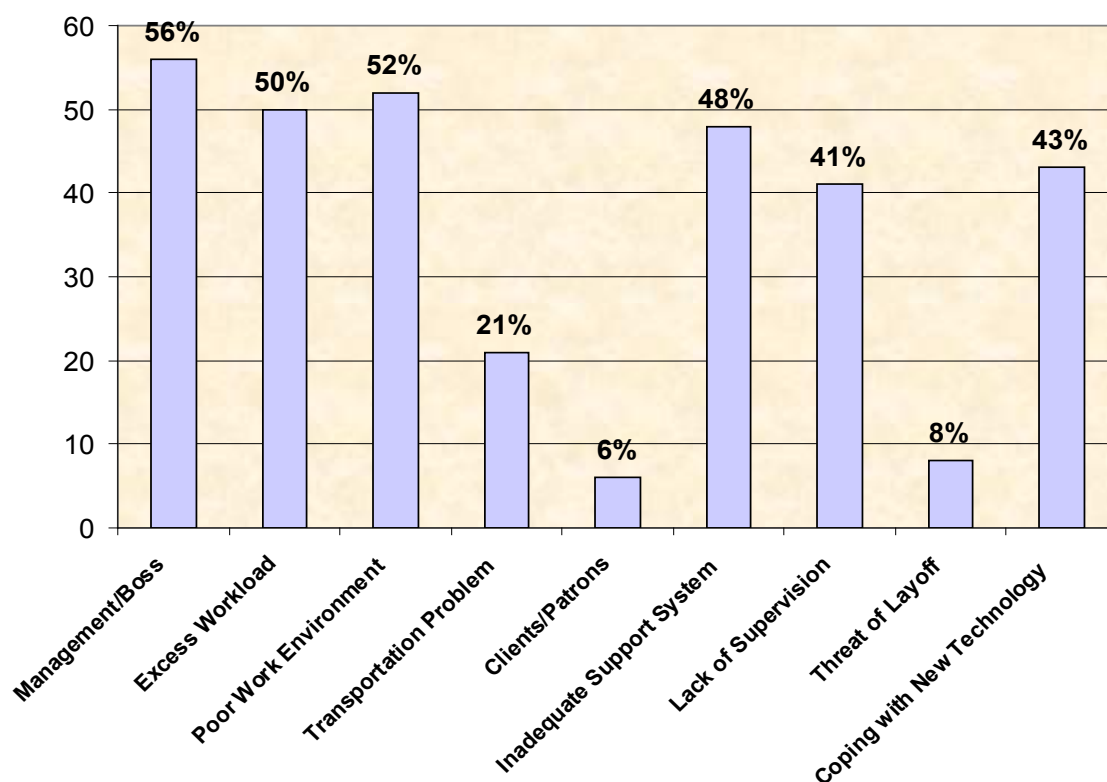


Figure 1. Bar chart of causes of job stress

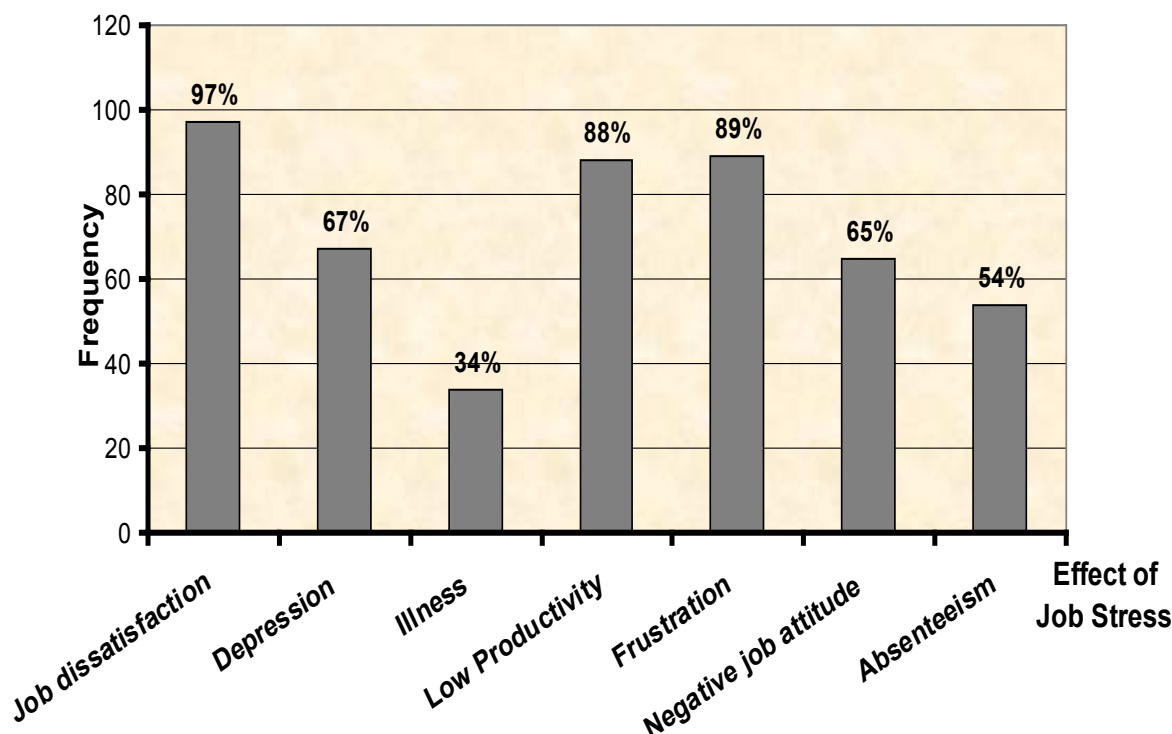


Figure 2. Bar chart of effects of job stress

From Figure 2 it could be observed that job dissatisfaction (97%), frustration (89%), low productivity (88%), depression (67%), negative job attitude (65%), absenteeism (54%) ranked high among the effects of job stress amongst librarians in Polytechnics in Delta State. This position corroborates similar studies such as [17] where they found that impact of stress spans, health, job satisfaction, irritability on learning ability and eventually, share loss of man hours. Moreso, frequent absenteeism at work has been attributed to stressful conditions at work. To buttress the above claim, [13] found that workers with high stress were over two times more likely to be absent and that stress was responsible for forty percent job turnover. Furthermore, [6] identified emotional and mood behavior with librarians in the developed world resulting from stress. [9] noted that unscheduled absence by US employees cost work organization as much as \$750 per employee yearly. Although, illness (34%) was least seen as effect of job stress in this study. [2] in their study reported that stress contributes to illnesses in many individuals. According to [10], the total health and productivity cost of worker stress to American business is estimated at billions of dollars annually.

5. Conclusions

The study shows that pressure from management/bosses, poor work environment, excess workload, inadequate support system, challenges in coping with new technology and lack of supervision are some of the causes of job stress

among polytechnic Librarians in Nigeria. And that these have negative consequences such as job dissatisfaction, frustration, low productivity, depression, negative job attitude, absenteeism, illness amongst others.

6. Recommendations

Based on the foregoing, the following recommendations were made;

- Conducive working environment should be made for polytechnic libraries.
- Management should avoid overbearing tendencies on library staff.
- Tasks should be assigned staff in such a way as to avoid overload, in fact emphasis should be on division of labour.
- Adequate staff training should be done prior to the introduction of new technologies.
- Proper job supervision and support system should be put in place

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