

STRESS MANAGEMENT OF LIBRARY & INFORMATION SCIENCE PROFESSIONALS IN DIGITAL ENVIRONMENT

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***Abstract:** Stress is the changes which our bodies experience as we adjust to our continually changing environment. It has been an integral part of our daily life since prehistoric times and Library & Information science personnel are not exception to this. Thus we cannot avoid stress in our life; rather the best policy is to manage it properly to increase our efficiency. This article attempts to define stress in the light of LIS profession. It describes about the types of stress in libraries and its reasons. Also critically analyses the best ways to manage the stress of LIS professionals in digital library environment.*

1.INTRODUCTION

Generally stress is the changes, which our bodies experience as one, adjust to the continually changing environment. It has both physical and emotional effects on us and can create positive or negative feelings. As a positive influence, stress can help compel us to action, result in a new awareness and an exciting new perspective. As a negative influence, it can result in feelings of distrust, rejection, anger, and depression, which in turn can lead to frustration to work and also several health problems such as headaches, high blood pressure, heart disease etc. The library environment has changed drastically over the past few decades. With the development & application of information technologies, the library environment has shifted from the traditional library to computerized library, then automated library and more recently digital library. With such changes, the structure and nature of library & information science professionals has also changed in a dynamic way. The library & Information Science professionals experience stress as they readjust their lives with the changing library environment, job rotation, job promotion etc, the In adjusting to such changing library job environment, stress will help or hinder us depending on how we react to it.

2.TYPES OF STRESS IN LIBRARIES

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

2.1. Technological Stress: The development and application of information technologies in libraries is the major stress for LIS 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.

2.2. Job Security Stress: The application of Information Communication Technologies has compelled the LIS 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 professionals. Further, with the increasing intrusion and appointment of IT/Computer Science people into the LIS profession have created fear among LIS professionals about their job security in future.

2.3. Physical Stress: The Digital Library Environment has changed the physical structure of the job environment. Due to this sitting in front of computers for a long hour, working in air-conditioned environment etc have also resulted in the physical stress and illness.

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, loses the spirit of work. This type of stress is called Distress.

3. REASONS OF STRESS IN LIBRARIES

Stress can be derived from three sources such as physical, mental and situational. Physical stress can be brought on by overwork, lack of rest and poor diet. Mental stress can be traced to a persons' mental state of mind, which involves expectation, fears, regrets etc. Situational stress is derived from the interaction with the outer world like interaction with modern technologies, role as a library manager etc. 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

function & services of libraries. Accordingly the library & Information Science professionals have exposed to a considerable amount of stress in their day-to-day work. Different events which are responsible for stress factors are as discussed below.

3.1. 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.

3.2. 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

3.3. 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.

3.4. 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.

3.5. 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.

3.6. 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.

4. HOW TO MANAGE STRESS IN A BETTER WAY

Identifying stress and being aware of its effect on our lives is not sufficient for reducing its harmful effects. Just as there are many sources of stress, there are many possibilities for its management. However, all require work toward change: managing the source of stress positively and/or changing the library & Information Science professionals' reaction to it. Therefore the professionals should proceed stepwise in the following ways for better stress management with the ever-changing library job situation.

4.1. Become aware of the stressors and its emotional and physical reactions.

- (a) It is necessary to notice the distress, which arises due to change in library environment i.e. from manual to digital. Further the stress should neither be ignored nor anybody should gloss over the problems.
- (b) Determine the events from the group of events, which distress professionals and what it mean to them.
- (c) Determine the body responds of the professionals to this stress. Are they become nervous or physically upset? If so, decide in what specific ways it responds.

4.2. Recognize what you can change.

- (a) Determine whether avoiding or eliminating them completely can change stressors?
- (b) Determine whether managing the stress over a period of time instead of on a daily or weekly basis can reduce intensity of stressors
- (c) Decide whether exposure to stress can be shorten by taking a break, leave the physical premises, remaining absent in job at certain intervals etc.
- (d) Decide whether the time and energy necessary to make a change can be devoted (goal setting, time management techniques, and delayed gratification strategies etc are helpful for a change) through motivation, training, performance appraisal etc.

4.3. Reduce the intensity of your emotional reactions to stress.

The stress reaction is triggered by the perception of danger, which may be physical and emotional. Hence different matters such as whether professionals view the stressors in exaggerated terms and/or taking a difficult situation and making it a disaster, whether the professionals expect to please everyone, whether they are over reacting and viewing things as absolutely critical and urgent etc.

In such situation it is better to adopt more moderate views, try to see the stress as something the professionals can cope with rather than something that overpowers them. Further they should try to temper their excess emotions and put the situation in perspective.

4.4. Maintain the emotional reserves.

To maintain the emotional reserves, some skills need to be developed by the library & information Science professionals. Also realistic goals should be pursued which are meaningful to them rather than goals set up by others that they do not share.

4.5. Learn to moderate your physical reactions to stress.

Physical exercises, well balanced diet etc helps to overcome the physical stress. Relaxation techniques can built the physical reserves. Also nicotine, excessive caffeine, and other stimulants should be avoided. Further mix leisure with work.

5. CONCLUSION

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. In this context the LIS professionals have two choices, either to manage and/or control the events that impact their work and produce stress, or to allow stress to manage them.

Today's fast-paced library environment called upon to do more than what the Professionals did in the past both in their personal or professional lives. Couple this with the fact that they often have fewer resources to help them and it is easy to see how opportunities for stressful situations can and do grow exponentially.

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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