



Managing stress among library staff in public university libraries in Ghana

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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Causes
Library staff
Management
Strategies
Stress
Universities

ABSTRACT

The study investigated the management of stress by public university library staff in Ghana. The major purpose was to identify strategies that are employed by public university library staff to manage the stress they experience. One hundred and forty-four (144) respondents were sampled for the quantitative phase using the Fisher et al. (1998) formula for determining sample size, but for the qualitative phase nine (9) management staff were chosen. Purposive, simple random and convenience sampling techniques were employed. Questionnaires and interview guides were used as research instruments to gather relevant data for the study. Descriptive statistics, inferential statistics and thematic analysis were used as statistical tools to analyse the data. The study showed that indeed the library staff in public university libraries has a lot of stressful job events. However, it was indicated that library staff also adopt numerous coping strategies such as taking time off work and leave, positive thinking, building a strong human relationship and going for counselling in an attempt to manage their stress.

Introduction

Stress is an inescapable reality of most working environments. Every individual is subjected to stress either knowingly or unknowingly, but would one be better off without stress? A stress-free life would offer one life without hustle in every aspect of one's being. It is now generally accepted that prolonged or intense stress can hurt an organization and individual, affecting an individual's mental and physical health as well as the efficient performance of an organization (Landy & Conte, 2016). Stress emanates from today's tough economic times; therefore, it requires that the physical and mental health of workers is maintained (Williams, 2014).

Shah (2015) defined stress as an internal drive or an external event that threatens to trouble the organismic balance. Stress is an experience that arises from a transaction between a person and the environment and observes that over scheduling, procrastination or failing to plan are behaviours that can lead to stress (Ilo, 2016). Similarly, Akpene (2014) defined stress as any condition or characteristic of the work environment which threatens the individual's psychological and physiological homeostasis.

Stress is a very natural and important part of human life, but many people fail to realize this. Moreover, stress can serve to enhance a person's motivation, fulfillment, performance, and personal attainment in the workplace (Akpene, 2014). The concept of job stress has been a

great concern for the past decades among employees and employers in different governmental organizations, but little attention has been paid to it by these organizations. Experience has shown that stress has done more harm than good to organizational staff. Work related stress refers to stress caused by or made worse by work. It occurs when a person perceives the work environment in such a way that his or her reaction involves feelings of an inability to cope.

Several studies conducted in the higher education sector have associated work-related stress with low levels of job satisfaction (Oghenetege et al., 2014). The situation in Ghana is not different because a study conducted by Kusi et al. (2014) found that the level of stress among academics was high. Undoubtedly, stress is a major problem. The quality of life of workers is determined by the occupational stress that stands as a real threat (Akpene, 2014). It can be deduced from this that most of the stressful events are linked to the workplace.

The Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP), does not offer a library-related definition of stress, rather it recommends that provided by the Health and Safety Executive, 2008 (Shah, 2015). The library staff in universities face very busy and highly unpredictable workdays with many individuals and groups competing for their time (Ekwelem, 2015). The most related stressors on university staff include workload, conflicts, demand from colleagues and supervisors, incompatible demands from different personal and organization roles, inadequate resources for appropriate performance, insufficient

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competency to the demands of their roles, inadequate autonomy to decide on different tasks and the feeling of underutilization.

Many jobs in a library require staff to lift, carry and shelve heavy books and push or pull carts loaded with books. All of these activities can put stress on various parts of the musculoskeletal system and, specifically can cause injuries of the upper extremities and back (Ekwelem, 2015). Changes are evident in role definitions, tasks, organizational structures, user expectations, vendor relations, and campus perceptions of academic library and learning resource personnel (Ranjna, 2015). The library environment has changed drastically over the last few decades, work stress among the academic library staff is prevalent due to inadequate budget, lack of skilled manpower, job insecurity and library infrastructure problems (Salunke & Hemade, 2015).

According to Salunke and Hemade (2015), the stress in the library can be derived from three sources such as physical, mental and situational. Physical stress can occur as a result of overworking, lack of rest and poor diet. Mental stress can be traced to a person's mental state of mind which involves expectation, fears and regrets. Situational stress is derived from the interaction with the external world like interaction with modern technologies or even the role of a library manager. The library staff is exposed to a considerable amount of stress in their day-to-day work and different events which are responsible for stress factors are technological change, changing library environment, change in the type of document, change in library physical facility, changing users' demand reduce staff strength.

The current working environment continues to change due to the increased use of Information Communication Technology (ICT) (Ayyagari et al., 2011). The emergence of ICT in university libraries has brought a turnaround in the previous manual activities of the library staff. Apart from using various forms of ICT facilities to acquire and process materials, the library staff engages ICT in other professional assignments such as indexing and abstracting, selective dissemination of information, current awareness services and user education (Ilo, 2016). Changes in ICT mean that the library staff involved in providing a reference service may need to develop new skills, while at the same time maintaining their traditional skills (Chawner & Oliver, 2013).

There is pressure on the library professionals to adopt knowledge of new technologies along with traditional methods of functions and services. But there is limited scope for training programmes, higher studies, refresher courses, and these become a cause of stress among library professionals. The fear of job security is also a reason for stress among library professionals because a lot of departments give the appointment to the computer professionals (Somvir, 2013). The interference of the home front, coupled with workplace demands, sometimes constitutes stress to library staff especially when the staff concerned is not able to manage both effectively.

Stress is considered an important human resource management issue because of its relationship with various diseases and interaction with job resources. Also, it is seen as a process in which job characteristics have harmful effects on the individual's health and wellbeing. As a common phenomenon that is experienced by workers of every organization in both developed and developing countries, stress needs to be given all the necessary attention it deserves.

Statement of the problem

Ilo (2016) describes job stress as a 20th century disease and also observed in a survey report that almost 80% of employees describe their jobs as stressful. The World Health Organization (WHO) predicted that by 2020, stress would be a major cause of workplace ill-health (Regan et al., 2009). Unmanaged stress gives rise to emotional breakdown and poor health of library staff. This invariably results in reduced work output as well as poor working conditions, leading to frustration. Observations and library statistics reveal the high usage rate of these university libraries (Duze, 2011).

However, many libraries do not have enough staff to compare with

the quantum of work and the large number of users that visit the library daily (Ranjna, 2015). This situation generates stress for the library staff. Furthermore, with the increase in the number of universities in the country, there are bound to be differences in the level of stress among library staff in Ghana. Most of the findings of the studies on stress conducted in Ghana were conducted in other fields either than the library field. To the best of my knowledge, this has not been given enough attention in the literature. This study, therefore, sought to examine the management of stress among library staff from public universities in Ghana.

These research questions are delineated as follows:

1. What level of job stress do public university library staff experience in Ghana?
2. What are the strategies that are employed by public university library staff to manage the stress they experience?
3. What is the statistical difference between the three universities (UCC, UG and KNUST) with regards to their stress management?

Theoretical framework

The use of the Person-Environment Fit Theory to underpin the study was dictated by the nature of the topic and the literature reviewed. The theoretical framework for this study anchors the Person-Environment Fit Theory that was initially proposed by French et al. (1974). Person-Environment Fit is the degree to which individual characteristics harmonise with those of his or her environment (Meyer & Dale, 2010). The basic principle of the Person-Environment Fit Theory asserts that the interaction between an individual and his or her environment determines whether or not the situation is stressful for that person.

Human behaviour is a function of the person and the environment, and that a person's vocational satisfaction, stability and achievement depend on the congruence or fit between the person's personality and the environment in which the person works. If the fit between an individual and his environment is incompatible, that results in stress. Similarly, a lack of fit between the demands placed on individuals and their abilities to meet those demands can result in stress. An understanding of the theoretical framework was relevant to the study as it was the main lens for the study.

Literature review

Workload among library staff, which can eventually lead to stress, does not have just one problem with an "easy-to-fix" solution. There are several reasons for which people feel stressed on the job. Also, some workers can handle stress better than others due to personality traits and learned techniques, which help handle stressful situations in a more positive way. The literature has dealt extensively with issues that guided the study. In this review, the researcher discussed the view of varying scholars, authors, editors and authorities in different concepts that relate to the problem under study.

Coping, as a process, is a person's constant efforts in thought and deed to manage exact demands appraised as challenging or overpowering (Christian, 2015). Shuler and Morgan (2013) mention that coping strategies involved cognitive or behavioural endeavours to achieve specific situational demands that are appraised as challenging or beyond one's ability to adapt. There are two types of coping strategies and this is affected by one's stress reaction. The effort of coping may be directed at them and this is referred to as problem-focused strategies on one hand and on the other hand, the emotional reactions that frequently escort those demands are known as emotion-focused strategies (Christian, 2015).

Matteson and Miller (2012) research recommended that one's coping strategies are compensatory factors that help to sustain their health and also reported that problem-solving and effective regulation as coping responses were associated with fewer and simple dysfunction, whereas

coping responses directed towards emotional-discharge were connected to more dysfunction and were used more often by women. In reaction to stress problems, some employees have taken stress management training seriously and efforts have been made to separate occupations perceived to be causing the stress (Azumah, 2014). The increasing stress among the supporting staff in the university should be acknowledged and attempts should be made to alleviate it.

According to research done by Humboldt et al. (2013), which examined occupational stress, sources of stress and stress management strategies through the eyes of management consultants: a multiple correspondence analysis for latent constructs. Besides, they used 39 respondents and found out that 'coaching' (19.0%) was the highest for stress management strategies and the differences between the two gender groups were not major. Stress management strategies were best clarified in a three-dimensional model as 'individual support strategies', 'group dynamics strategies' and 'organizational culture strategies'. There is consistent evidence that employees with more support from others experience lower stress. According to Ikonne (2015), support from colleagues and supervisors had a significant buffering influence on librarian stress, and feelings of isolation exacerbated the stress experienced, and can also help to build positive self-efficacy in librarians.

Relevant empirical work on stress

Within the background of this study, the researcher consciously reviewed works that are empirically related to the study. Siakwa (2014) studied "Sources of stress and coping strategies". She examined the relationship between sources of stress and coping strategies adopted by academic senior members in the University of Cape Coast. The findings of the study were that senior members barely experienced stress-related disorders.

Although senior members are endowed with knowledge on stress and its attending issues, the study revealed that they still go through stress. It is fascinating, however, that they have defensive mechanisms or adaptive strategies thereby making the coping strategies adopted work for them. This explains why they scarcely experience stress-related disorders. The most predominant stress-related disorders faced by the senior members of the university were pains of any kind, sleeping problems, and feeling overwhelmed. It was also found out that respondents found interpersonal relationships, research work, teaching and professional development as stressful. Senior members adopted coping strategies such as confronting, distancing, self-controlling, seeking social support, accepting responsibility, escaping avoidance, planned problem solving and positive reappraisal.

However, Siakwa's (2014) study relates to the one under investigation because it was carried out in the same country and also the study adopted the descriptive survey research design where questionnaire method of data collection with the data analysed using descriptive statistics; with the area of study and population as Ghana and public university libraries respectively. Azila-Gbettor et al.'s (2015) study implied that irrespective of stress level, students could still achieve academic excellence. This demonstrated that students found a way of minimizing the effects of stress on their performances. Also, the study suggested that authorities undertake further study on the ways students manage to cope with stress, develop a policy and use it in educating the larger students' population. On the contrary, this study was carried out in a Ghanaian Polytechnic while the present study is in public university libraries in Ghana.

Also, Esia-Donkoh et al. (2011) investigated if students of the Winneba Campus of UEW (University of Education, Winneba), have appropriate strategies to cope with stress. The results of the study showed that among the ten strategies used, "active coping" and "positive reinterpretation and growth" were the two most predominant for problem-focused and emotion-focused styles of coping respectively. The study also indicated that students of the Winneba campus of UEW used more emotion-focused strategies than problem-focused strategies in

managing stress. This study differs from the one under study in that neither the title, the area of the study or the sampling technique relates but there is a relationship in the research design, method of data collection and analysis.

In addition, Akpene (2014) studied stress and coping strategies among supporting staff at the Central Administration in the University of Ghana. Results showed that the first three sources of stress ranked highest included dealing with several pressing problems at once; finding that rewards are not based on performance and having inadequate personnel or equipment to respond in an emergency. The supporting staff's best coping strategies for stress were to increase effort to make things work, praying or finding faith in God or one's religion and to make a plan of action and follow it.

The findings of this study revealed that 80.8% of the supporting staff perceived stress moderately and this is associated with their educational level. They face a wide range of sources of stress and they find coping strategies to overcome their issue concerning stress. However, this study partly relates to the one under investigation because it was carried out in the same university and country and also the study adopted a cross-sectional research design where the questionnaire method of data collection with the data analysed using descriptive statistic. Whereas the study under investigation adopts descriptive survey, questionnaire method of data collection and the data analysed using descriptive statistics; with the area of study and population as Ghana and public university libraries respectively.

Methodology

Given the objectives of the study, the design employed was mixed-method design. The quantitative data provided the initial picture of the research problem, and the additional qualitative analysis explains the larger picture of the research problem. The researcher again adopted a descriptive survey design for the study. This design was found suitable because they report just the way things are (Babbie, 2015). Descriptive surveys are directed towards the determination of the nature of the situation, as they exist, as at the time of the study.

There thirteen (13) public Universities in Ghana, but the study concentrated on three universities and their libraries in Ghana. They have been in existence for more than 30 years and their library systems are more organized with more experienced staff. The population of the study constitutes the three premier public universities (University of Ghana, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology and University of Cape Coast) library staff (from the library assistants to the librarian). The total number of library staff among the three premier universities is three hundred and forty-eight (348). To get a sample size of the population of the study area, Fisher et al.'s (1998) formula for determining sample size was adopted.

One hundred and fifty-three (153) respondents were sampled and one hundred and forty-four (144) responded to the questionnaire for the quantitative phase. But for the qualitative phase, nine (9) members were chosen because it is manageable and in the qualitative study it is necessary to select a sample size that would enable the phenomenon under study to be explored for a better understanding (Creswell, 2013). Selecting a large number of interviewees will result in superficial perspectives and the ability of the researcher to provide an in-depth picture diminishes with the addition of each new individual.

A simple random sample technique was used to select library staff for the quantitative phase of the study. Further, a stratified sample selects separate samples from subgroups of the population which are called "strata" and can often increase the accuracy of survey results. The convenience sampling technique was used for the management staff of the three premier universities. After carefully examining the research questions, the type of information the researcher wants to obtain and the purpose of the study, the researcher chose the Likert scale type of questionnaire for the quantitative phase (scale used was as follows: Strongly Disagree-1, Disagree-2, Agree-3 and Strongly Agree-5) and

semi-structured interview for the qualitative phase.

The quantitative data obtained was compiled and processed, using descriptive statistics and inferential statistics, which were assisted by SPSS. Specifically, Tables was analysed using mean score; where decision-making was based on the test value; which is 2.5. Consequently, the test value for this four-point Likert scale was rated from four (4) through to one (1) in that order and are calculated thus:

$$\text{Test Value } (\bar{x}) = \frac{(1 + 2 + 3 + 4) = 10}{4} = 2.5$$

A mixed-method data analysis requires knowledge and strategies used in analysing quantitative and qualitative data. This may involve the interpretation of meaning and functions that may be assigned to the data.

The analysis was done based on the research questions set for the study. The quantitative data obtained was compiled and processed using descriptive statistics (Means and Standard Deviation) and inferential statistics (Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and Multiple Regression), which were assisted by the Statistical Product and Service Solutions (SPSS version 22.0). The test value that was a mean score of 2.5 was used for decision making. The qualitative data were analysed using content thematic analysis. Content thematic analysis is an analytical process which requires study to work with data, organizing them, breaking them into manageable units, coding them, synthesizing them and searching for the pattern (Sheperis, Scott & Harry, 2010).

Findings

The demographic data includes the respondent’s institution, job status, gender and age. Table 1 presents the background information of respondents.

What level of job stress does public university library staff experience in Ghana?

Table 2 above presents the level of job stress that public university library staff experience in Ghana. The mean of means (M = 2.33) which is less than the test value of 2.5 indicates the library staff experience fewer stress levels in the three institutions. On the contrary, two of the factors proved to be significant showing that they influence on job stress among library staff. For example, on the statement whether “It has fuelled loss of attention among them” The (M = 2.65, SD = 0.858) which is greater than 2.5 shows that indeed one of the levels of job stress is that it has fuelled loss of attention among them. That notwithstanding the above, stress exposing library staff to severe repetitive strain injury was identified to be one of the levels of job stress. The mean and standard deviation of (M = 2.60, SD = 0.839) which is greater than 2.5 confirms the findings.

Table 1
Background information of respondents (questionnaire) (N = 144).

Background information		Frequencies	Percentages
Institution	UCC	53	37
	UG	46	32
	KNUST	45	31
Job status	Senior staff position	68	47
	Junior staff position	55	38
	Senior member position	21	15
Gender	Male	83	58
	Female	61	42
Age	36–40	40	28
	31–35	26	18
	25–30	24	17
	41–45	19	13
	46–50	16	11
	51–55	16	11
	56 and more	3	2

Table 2
Descriptive analysis (means and standard deviations) of levels of job stress among public university library staff in Ghana.

Levels of job stress	Mean	Std. deviation
It has fuelled loss of attention among them	2.65	0.858
It has exposed them to severe repetitive strain injury	2.60	0.839
Muscles, bones and joints are affected	2.35	0.620
It has made them prone to the constant breakdown of rules and regulations	2.31	0.743
It has in all its form lowered the productivity of staff	2.27	741
It has brought them prolonged headache and pains	2.25	0.780
It has affected their sight with intermittent impairment of vision	2.25	0.824
With a heavy workload, their social status is adversely affected	2.24	0.750
It has also exposed them to heart diseases	2.24	0.769
Occasionally, it has led to the untimely death of the staff	2.22	684
Mean of means	2.33	0.760

What are the strategies that are employed by public university library staff to manage the stress they experience?

The researcher further looked into the strategies that are employed by public university library staff to manage the stress they experience. Table 3 on average revealed that eleven of the listed strategies were appropriate for managing job stress among public university library staff in Ghana. A mean of means and standard deviation of (M = 2.54, SD = 0.766) was obtained. The individual mean score of these eleven items was also above the test value. Some of these strategies include; taking time off work and leave with the highest mean and standard deviation of (M = 3.76, SD = 0.743), positive thinking (M = 2.71, SD = 0.747), building a strong human relationship (M = 3.51, SD = 0.648) and going for counselling (M = 2.99, SD = 0.876).

What are the statistical differences among the three universities (UCC, UG and KNUST) with regard to their stress management?

The researcher sought to find out the differences among the three institutions (UCC, UG and KNUST) with regard to their stress management. To achieve this, a One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted. The results are presented in Fig. 1.

Fig. 1 provides an easy way to compare the mean scores for the institutions. It is obvious from the figure that the University of Cape Coast recorded the highest mean scores followed by the Kwame Nkrumah

Table 3
Descriptive (means and standard deviations) analysis of strategies that are employed by public university library staff to manage the stress they experience.

Strategies for managing stress	Mean	Std. deviation
Take time off work and leave	3.76	0.743
Positive thinking	3.71	0.747
Building strong human relationship	3.51	0.648
Delegating responsibility	2.99	0.753
Going for counselling	2.99	0.876
Provision of equitable shifting system in the environment	2.85	0.651
Managing time effectively	2.71	0.657
Strategic planning of job schedule	2.66	0.628
Talking with friends and family	2.62	0.840
Controlling personal contracts	2.61	0.689
Watching TV	2.57	0.882
Taking medication	2.42	0.897
Listening to music	2.28	0.850
Conferences and seminars	1.97	0.877
Playing sport and exercise	1.90	0.864
Making holidays compulsory	1.90	0.778
Balancing of work and home life	1.80	0.695
Good eating habits	1.63	0.764
Education and training on new technology	1.53	0.719
Mean of means	2.54	0.766

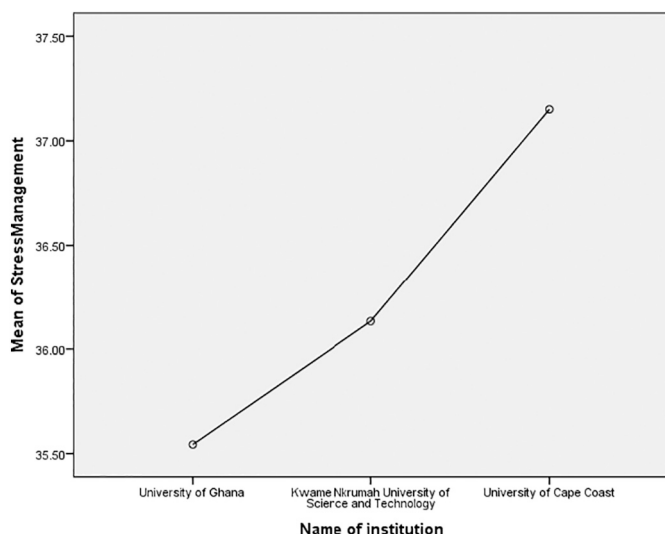


Fig. 1. Means plot.

University of Science and Technology and the University of Ghana recorded low mean scores. This, therefore implies that University of Cape Coast was identified to be having more stress management strategies followed by the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, and the University of Ghana was identified as an institution that adopted fewer stress management strategies. However, in order not to jump to premature conclusions, ANOVA was conducted to give more statistical evidence.

From Table 4 above, the Significance value (Sig) for Levene’s test is 0.541 which is greater than the alpha or critical value of $p = 0.05$ shows that the assumption of homogeneity has not been violated for this sample that is [$F(3, 141) = 0.616, p = 0.541$ at the 0.05 alpha level] hence, the variance is assumed equal.

Table 5 above presents the results of the ANOVA test. The overall F ratio for the One-way ANOVA is 0.677 which is significant at the Sig value of $p = 0.05$. It is evident from the test that the F -ratio is significant $F = 0.677 (p = 0.001)$ at the 0.05 alpha level. This implies that there was a significant difference among the mean scores of the institutions concerning their stress management.

However, it is noted that the sig value of 0.001 did not indicate the differences between the three institutions. Therefore, the Post-Hoc test was conducted to find out the statistically significant differences between each pair of institutions as presented in Table 6.

Table 6 shows the result of the Post-Hoc test (Games-Howell). The Post-Hoc test shows the differences among the institutions about their stress management. From the Post-Hoc test, there are significant differences between UCC and KNUST, UCC and UG but KNUST and UG are not significant for example, between UCC and UG, the Mean Difference and Standard Error of (MD-1.60747, SR = 1.3517) with a Sig value of 0.004 shows that there was a difference in UCC and UG and the results are statistically significant meaning that the UCC has high stress management level than UG. Between UCC and KNUST, the results show a significant difference of ($p = 0.003$) showing that the UCC again has high stress management levels than KNUST, but no significant difference between UG and KNUST concerning their stress management level.

Table 4
Test of homogeneity of variances.

Institutions - Stress management			
Levene statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
0.616	3	141	0.541*

* Significant at $p = 0.05$ (2-tailed).

Table 5
Summary of the ANOVA results.

Institutions–Stress management					
	Sum of squares	Df	Mean square	F	Sig.
Between groups	65.900	2	32.950	0.677	0.001*
Within groups	6867.405	141	48.705		
Total	6933.306	143			

* Significant at $p = 0.05$ (2-tailed).

With the first item which demanded the library staff managing strategies in their work environment, the data suggested that all of them had their ways of dealing with stress. Most of the interviewees talked about talking with friends and family (social interactions) during their leisure time, browsing for fun or visiting social networks, engaging in exercise or sports, maintaining positive thinking and prayer for assistance as their managing strategies. KNUSTRespondent-3, for instance, explained:

I walk up and down the stairs to interact with colleagues, I crack jokes and we laugh over it. I interact with students whom I consider to be matured and respectful. I also sit behind my computer to browse for fun or visit Facebook to chat with friends on campus sometimes I walk outside the office to exercise or stretch my legs. I also try to always think positively and pray constantly for assistance because the Lord knows better than human beings.

UCCRespondent-1 added that:

I walk a lot when I feel cramped in my office, I walk out and with my cell phone I call a friend or somebody to reduce stress. I have also pasted a lot of posters in my office to make the place friendlier and whoever comes to my office gets something to read to entertain him or herself to reduce stress. Sometimes, I sit behind my computer to browse.

Another KNUSTRespondent-1 commented:

I talk with my friends when I am stressed. I also like sports a lot so I always engage in sports. I think positively and try not to internalize or harbour issues and also not forgetting my prayers because in Psalm 131:1–2 the Bible says “Destructive fear (worry, panic, suspicion) is generated from the anticipation of the unknown.” We all like to be in control of our circumstances. But when I compared my minimal human capabilities to that of an all-knowing, all-powerful, all-present God, I surrender myself. Suddenly my fears (and anger) diminished.

Another dimension of managing strategy suggested by the interview data was effective time management. The interviewees were of the view that the little time when managed appropriately relieves one from stress.

UGRespondent-3 shared this view commented:

Managing stress deals with effective time management, so I plan my timetable very well and adjust to it. When there is a clash, I look for a convenient time to attend to that schedule and make sure that the time is effectively managed as the saying goes “time is money”

In a follow-up question to examine interviewees typical approaches they use to deal with or manage the stress they experience during teaching, supervision of research work and in their administrative work.

When I am teaching and I realize that I am stressed out because students are not getting the concept, I break for a while, tell a story or create a scenario to make the lesson lively. Sometimes, the projector is used to make the lesson self-explanatory especially when it is audiovisual. Those who are far and near enjoy the lesson and I move on.

(UGRespondent-1)

Table 6
Multiple comparisons of the institutions (UCC, UG and KNUST).

Dependent variable: Stress management		(I) Name of institution	(J) Name of institution	Mean difference (I – J)	Std. error	Sig.	95% confidence interval	
							Lower bound	Upper bound
Games-Howell	UG	KNUST		-0.58986	1.5057	0.919	-4.1798	3.0001
			UCC	-1.60747	1.3517	0.004*	-4.8263	1.6114
	KNUST	UG		0.58986	1.5057	0.919	-3.0001	4.1798
			UCC	-1.01761	1.4494	0.003*	-4.4728	2.4375
	UCC	UG		1.60747	1.3517	0.004*	-1.6114	4.8263
			KNUST	1.01761	1.4494	0.003*	-2.4375	4.4728

* Significant at p = 0.05 (2-tailed).

The data suggested that interviewee library staff did not go for formal counselling as a way of dealing with stress experienced, they rather enjoyed informal counselling from friends. The friends advised them to take a rest when stressed. UCCRespondent-3, for example, commented: If it is geared towards the counselling centre, then no, because I have never been there, but at the friends' level, I have received some sort of guidance about to life. Though one may not know its importance, it helps.

KNUSTRespondent-2 also said that:

I have never benefited from any formal counselling service before. Though I have a counsellor friend, we interact, share ideas and sometimes when he sees me stressed, what he says is "take rest". I am aware that such things exist for library staff, but I know students mostly use the centre.

It emerged from the data that library staff did not patronize the counselling centre meant to assist individuals in and outside the university to deal with their problems. They knew the centre could be patronized by both staff and students, but they did not see the need.

The interview data also highlighted how the library staff managed stress at home. It emerged that they avoided taking official work home and watched television with their family. UGRespondent-2, instance commented, "Oh, at home I relax and just watch 'comic' programmes with my wife and children. I also avoid taking library work home"

The data suggested that library staff used a lot of strategies to manage the stress they experience but they still think that they need a lot of support to manage such situations. Another major issue that emerged from the interview data was related to the support services or strategies the library staff thinks can help them manage the stress they experience. All the interviewees were particularly concerned about their trusted colleagues in the university. They believed that their trusted colleagues can share their experiences with them and boost their morale because they know what they are going through.

Some trusted library staff and friends in the university can help me manage the stress; they can share a bit of jokes with me and I think that helps, laugh it off a bit. They can walk to me and have a conversation with me when I am stressed and lonely. It can help make me feel better. I only have to avoid friends who are boastful and will complicate my problems

(KNUST Respondent-3)

UCCRespondent-1 again added:

In the university, the support or the very best thing that I think can help us (library staff) manage the stress is developing fairly decent relationships among us, such that one could consult a colleague in times of need. So, I always thought I could go to somebody and say 'hey this is happening' or this is what I want to do, how do you see it? I think that's the thing that will get me through my stress.

Another source of support services that the interviewees suggested would help them is adequate resources to facilitate their library work.

They also needed regular in-service training and mentorship programme. UGRespondent-1, for example, commented:

Library staff needs to be provided with the necessary resources that will enhance their work. They should be encouraged to network with their colleagues at other departments or universities, organize in-service training for library staff, mentorship programmes and providing office space for them to get their comfort.

The interview data also suggested that library staff needed a lot of support to enable them to manage the work-related stress. Special counselling centres and stress management programmes will help them manage the stress; they needed a point of contact in times of personal stress and difficulty. The conflict resolution unit to resolve conflict among library staff must be revived, instituting regular leave for library staff and prepare them sufficiently towards retirement. UCCRespondent-3, for example, remarked:

Whereas students can go to the counselling centre to seek support, there is no specific place for university staff, so I think there should be a specific place for university staff. The university should prepare them for retirement to help them have a sound mind when getting to retiring age. If university staff is sick, the university system is very impatient with them. The university should have people to identify university staff who are suffering from serious stress and take them to hospital and make sure that they are granted regular leave.

The responses of the interviewees emphasized that the university among, its support systems, had a clubhouse where staff sometimes at their leisure time gather to interact. It came from the data that sometimes they organize social gatherings, end of year party, and receive encouragement from superiors. Though these minor supports were offered to staff, the interviewees were of the view that the university ought to do a lot to support staff. They believed that putting up recreational centres and regular sporting activities for staff would help them manage the stress they experience. About the item that showed how library staff manages stress they experience, three main themes emerged, thus; strategies library staff used to manage the stress in their work environment, library staff benefits from counselling services to manage the stress and how library staff copes with stress at home.

Discussion of findings

Data were equally collected on the level of stress among public universities, library staff and analysed. These findings of the study are in line with the literature, as authorities like Akintayo (2012), Chrousos (2009) and Ferrell, Harold and Cherne (2008) posited that stress among employees; is accountable for prolonged headache and pains; prone to the constant breakdown of rules and regulations; affected their sight with intermittent impairment of vision; exposed them to severe repetitive strain injury; fueled loss of attention among them; exposed them to heart diseases; muscles, bones and joints are affected with a heavy workload, their social statuses are adversely affected; occasionally, it has led to the untimely death of the staff; it has in all its forms lowered

the productivity of staff which this study forthrightly discovered to be the level of stress among library staff in the public university libraries of the country. Stress experienced by library staff affects them in so many ways.

About the item that showed how library staff manages stress they experience, three main themes emerged, thus; strategies library staff used to manage the stress in their work environment, library staff benefits from counselling services to manage the stress and how library staff copes with stress at home. It emerged from the interview finding that the majority of the respondents resorted to talking with family and friends and library users during their leisure time. They believed that walking, use of mobile phones, sitting behind their computers to visit social media networks and discussing issues of common interest with friends and putting aside things that bother them helped them cope with stress. The questionnaire data also confirmed this claim as it recorded a high mean = 3.42, std. deviation = 0.648. This implies that talking with family and friends in building strong relationships helped library staff to cope with work stress.

This finding is supported by [Lemu \(2007\)](#) who put forward that in terms of dealing with organizational change or efforts to modify or eliminate the source of stress by dealing with the situation, individual employees can seek information by talking to family, friends, superiors, co-workers or subordinates, by making plans of action, or through bargaining or reaching a compromise to seek a possible solution. [Nagy \(2006\)](#) also argued that joining others for lunch and sharing stories that do not relate to work helps keep individuals motivated and fresh. The data also suggested the posting of posters and pictures in the offices to make them look friendlier also helped library staff to reduce stress in their work environment. It was discovered from both interview and questionnaire that quite a number of the respondents were good at seeking solutions to their struggles as such they engaged in sports and exercise, sticking to prayers, discipline, effective time management and made sure not to internalize or harbor issues.

Another dimension of coping strategy suggested by the interview data was effective time management. The interviewees were of the view that the little time managed appropriately relieves library staff from stress. They believed that planning their timetable very well and adjusting to it helped them. When there was a clash, they looked for a convenient time to attend to that schedule and made sure the time was effectively managed as the saying goes "time is money" as evident in the comment made by (UGRespondent-3). The questionnaire data also pointed out clearly that effective taking time off work and leave was a mechanism the library staff adopted in alleviating work place stress with a significance mean = 3.76, std. deviation = 0.743.

The data suggested that interviewee library staff did not go for formal counselling as a way of dealing with stress experienced, they rather enjoyed informal counselling from friends. Their friends advised them to take a rest when stressed. The responses to the questionnaire also confirm this as it recorded an insignificant mean = 2.99, std. deviation = 0.876. This finding is contrary to [Cole \(2004 cited in Adjei \(2009\)\)](#) that to examine one's own attitudes towards personal strengths and weakness, one must take appropriate action by changing individual's job responsibilities, providing greater opportunity for personal autonomy in the job by subjecting themselves to counselling. The comment made by UCCRespondent-3 and KNUSTRespondent-2 suggested that library staff did not patronize the counselling centre meant to assist every individual in and outside the university to come out of his or her problems. They thought the centre belonged to only students.

The interview finding also highlighted how the library staff coped with stress at home. It emerged that they avoided taking official work home and watched television with their family as appeared in the comment of (UGRespondent-2). The findings suggested that library staff used a lot of strategies to cope with the stress they experience but they still think that they need a lot of support to cope with the stress they experience. It came up from both the interview and questionnaire findings that their trusted colleagues in the university could help them

cope with the stress experienced. They believed that their trusted colleagues could share their experiences with them and boost their morale because they know what they are going through. Employees can seek information by talking to family, friends, superiors, co-workers or subordinates, by making plans of action, or through bargaining or reaching a compromise to seek a possible solution. Library staff trusted colleagues and friends can share ideas, make jokes and laugh it off which will be a good way of managing stress. The responses of the interviewees emphasized that the university in its support system has a Club House where library staff sometimes at their leisure time gather to interact. Sometimes they organize social gatherings, end-of-year parties, and received encouragement from Heads of departments. Though these minor supports were offered to library staff, respondents were of the view that the university needs to offer a lot of support to library staff.

Conclusions and recommendations

Every individual experience some form of stress as one goes through the day-to-day activities of life. It is caused by both individual and environmental factors or home-related or job-related factors. However, what brings about stress varies from person to person. Often, people experience stress because of situations at the workplace or in social relationships, such as poor working conditions, environmental hazards, staff relationship problems and ill-health. Some people may be particularly vulnerable to stress in situations involving the threat of failure or recognition for good efforts. Stress also motivates individuals most, especially workers to achieve and fuel creativity.

Although stress may hinder performance on difficult tasks, moderate stress is needed to improve motivation and performance on less complex tasks. However, if stress is not properly managed, it can lead to serious problems. This makes stress coping strategies very essential. The goal of stress coping strategies is to manage one's stress level so that it does not result in serious problems. However, library staff has defensive mechanisms and adaptive strategies, therefore, making the coping strategies adopted work for them. This explains why they have lower levels of stress-related disorders.

The findings indicated that library staff at public university libraries go through a lot of stressful activities. For instance, lack of recognition for good efforts, students being difficult to handle in the library, insufficient preparation time for work, financial difficulties among others which need the attention of the university authorities. Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made:

1. Counselling

It is recommended that the various counselors assigned by the Guidance and Counseling units at the university should institute proactive measures to frequently identify and also encourage library staff to report some of these stressful life experiences that need counselling for necessary action to be taken. High levels of stress can result in a variety of physical and behavioural consequences. The quality of life of library staff can be improved by identifying stressors affecting them so that the necessary changes can be made. Although stress and its related events cannot be eliminated, appropriate measures through counselling must be taken to improve the staff's reactions and negative perceptions to these events.

2. Social support

As important as social support is, many people think they do not have access to this valuable resource. Everyone benefits from social and emotional support. Having strong social support can make you more able to cope with problems on your own and by improving your self-esteem. You do not need a larger network of friends and family to benefit from social support. Just a handful of people, be it co-workers, neighbours or friends from the church or religious institution. Yet social skills don't always come naturally. Some people have trouble making social connections; many others lose established connections due to life changes such as retirement, relocation or the

death of a loved one. In any case, it is possible to forge new connections to reap the benefits of a healthy support network. Some steps for growing social support network include:

1. Improve social skills.

If you feel uncomfortable in social situations and just do not know what to say, try asking simple questions about the other person to get started. If you are shy, it can be less intimidating to get to know others over shared events rather than just going out and talking. If you feel nervous in social situations, consider talking to a therapist with experience in social anxiety and social-skills training. Social support systems and a resourceful working atmosphere must be provided in the libraries; management must be involved in combating job stress in the libraries and total adherence to strategies for the control of job stress among the staff of public university libraries in the country.

2. Compensation

Compensation for additional work; work performed separately from or in addition to an employee's position must be well compensated under certain circumstances. Some of these circumstances are awards, overload payments and consultant agreements for work performed for another institution.

CRedit authorship contribution statement

All authors participated sufficiently in the work, including contribution to the concept, design, analysis, writing, or revision of the manuscript. We all take public responsibility for the content.

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