STRESS MANAGEMENT AMONG LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SCIENCE PROFESSIONALS IN DIGITAL ENVIRONMENT

Renu Bala (Librarian)
Tilak Raj Chadha Institute of Management and Technology Yamuna Nagar
And
Anju Nagpal (Librarian)
Mukand Lal National College Yamuna Nagar

ABSTRACT

Stress is a fact of everyday life. It is an integral part of our life. It is difficult to exclude stress from our life. So it is better to manage it properly to live happily our lives. Library and Information Science professionals also face stress in their professional life. Often they have to deal with circumstances, situations, and stressors in their professional lives due to which they feel emotionally and physically overwhelmed. This paper is an attempt to define stress and its management in relation to Library and Information Science professionals.

KEYWORDS

LIS profession, LIS professionals, Stress, Stress Management

INRODUCTION

A living society is always in a state of change. To survive in the society, it is essential to change ourselves to accept the change. Library as a social institution has to respond also to social changes. It has to reorient its functioning accordingly, to avoid any possibility of becoming irrelevant. It is very important as library has no predetermined permanent grounds of action which can be mastered once and for all. All the factors related to library have distinct and ever changing characteristics which need to be assessed afresh every time a new library is planned or new documents are selected/accessed.

With the development and application of technology, the traditional library is shifted to digital library. The LIS profession has also changed. Due to the change in the profession, the traditional role of LIS professionals is also changed. They have become Information Scientists. They have to satisfy the different demands of the users. To survive in the profession, every LIS professional has to change. This change brings stress, and this stress may harm physiologically or psychologically to the employees. Employees' stress affects their work and ultimately the organization.

MEANING OF STRESS

Stress is an individual's response to a distributing factor in the environment, and the consequence of such reaction. Stress obviously involves interaction of the person and the environment.

Stress is reaction of mind and body to change.

Stress is feeling bad due to troubles beyond our control.

Stress is our body's way of responding to any kind of demand. It can be caused by both good and bad experiences. When we feel stressed by something going on around us, our bodies react by releasing chemicals into the blood. These chemicals give us more energy and strength, which can be a good thing if stress is caused by physical danger. But this can also be a bad thing, if stress is in response to something emotional and there is no outlet for this extra energy and strength.

Situations that are considered stress provoking are known as stressors. Stress is not always a bad thing. Stress is simply response of body to the changes that create taxing demands.

However, we may say that situations are stressful because we are not fully prepared to deal with them. Stress is a part of life. Stress in small quantities is good. We may give better results as stress can motivate us. However, too much stress can be harmful. Our level of reaction determines impact of stress on our health. Two types of situations may arise due to the events in our lives we may feel refreshed and motivated or we may feel stressed and react in a manner that may affect our physical, mental, and social well-being negatively.

If we always respond in a negative way, our health and happiness may suffer. By understanding ourselves and our reaction to stress-provoking situations, we can learn to handle stress more effectively.

TYPES OF STRESS

Stress has been grouped as physical or psychological. Physical stress is one that irritates or affects physically and have long term negative effects. Whereas the psychological stress affects immediately and have long term negative effects on psychological or mental state.

According to Routary and Satpathy, there are four types of stress in the digital library environment:

1. **Technological Stress** is due to development and application of technology. Due to development of the technology, LIS professionals have to change themselves according to the needs of users. To survive in the profession, they have to keep pace with the new technologies. Technology is changing rapidly, so professionals have to develop themselves continuously.

2. **Physical Stress** is due to the physical exertion. Due to the application of new technologies, LIS Professionals have to sit in front of the computers. The traditional manual library work has to be done on machines. This continuous sitting in front of computers brings physical stress and illness.

3. **Mental Stress** is state of mind. It occurs due to failure of expectations, over burden, fears and regrets.

4. **Situational Stress** is outcome of change in working conditions, change in position, etc. It may be due to differences with managers, co-workers, or users.

CHALLENGES FOR LIS PROFESSIONALS

Professional development for library staff is necessary to implement change, although meetings are often difficult to arrange for logistical reasons. Some of the reasons are for:

1. Low levels of penetration of the infrastructure and supporting environment necessary to effective use.

2. Computer hardware, inadequate funds.

3. Lack of ICT and proper training in libraries.

4. Lack of resources, lack of TV, satellite communication.

5. Resource management- providing information from different resources (print, e-resources and online resources), resource usage, usage evaluation and measuring the impact of usage of the resources (research output).

6. Providing information about open access resources and educating the users about open access.

7. Building institutional repositories.

8. Providing seamless integration to different database, electronic and online resources.

9. Knowledge of intellectual property rights.

CAUSES OF STRESS IN LIS PROFESSIONALS

- **Quantitative Workload**

    Due to shortage of funds and staff, staff members feel that they have to do more work in comparison to their capacity to do work. Limited staff members are being employed in libraries and they have to manage all the works of library. Reference Librarians have to perform non reference duties like dealing with problem users and maintaining photocopiers. Similarly support staff has to handle computers etc as to cope up with changes in technologies.

- **Qualitative Workload**

Due to shortage of staff, the staff members have to   perform the duties other than for which they are capable of. Usually the library staff has been assigned the duties which are not related to them. Obviously they get trained to do the duties after getting experience by doing again and again the work. But when they don't get time to perform the library duties the quality of their routine work gets affected. They feel irritated as they have to perform the duties which are not appropriate for their positions.

- **Under load**

Under load may also be another cause of stress for library staff members. Some of the library jobs like answering reference queries, job of technical section staff, work of supporting staff etc. are repetitive and unchallenging. The members who perform such jobs feel disappointed as the skills acquired through studies and training is not properly used.

- **Lack of motivation**

Lack of feedback from supervisors, co-workers and users may be another cause for stress among library science professionals. If a supervisor does not evaluate his subordinate timely, a co-worker gives comments instead of giving compliments and a user does not respond after getting required information, the staff member does not feel motivated and it affects his/her working.

- **Relationship with library users and co-workers**

Relationships with library users and co-workers may be another reason of stress for library staff members. Sometimes, when users don't get required information from the library, they may behave rudely, steal or mutilate materials. Conflicts among library staff members may also be the reason of stress for library staff members.

- **Working Conditions**

Good working conditions, if not provided, may be another reason of stress among workers.

MANAGING STRESS IN A BETTER WAY

In the most accurate meaning, stress management is not about learning how to avoid or escape the pressures and turbulence of modern living; it is about learning to appreciate how the body reacts to these pressures, and about learning how to develop skills which enhance the body's adjustment. To learn stress management is to learn about the mind-body connection and to the degree to which we can control our health in a positive sense.

Identification of stress and its effects is not sufficient for reducing the stress from our lives. If there are many sources of stress, there is lot of possibilities for its management.

The involvement of both the individual worker and the organization is required for better stress management.

1. LIS Professionals Role

In avoiding and managing their stress, role of LIS professional is very important, this involves three approaches:

(a) Identification

Identifying the reasons what may be causing stress is often the first step in learning how to better deal with stress.

(b) Evaluation

Evaluation is necessary to manage the stress, the following can be done:
- The sources of the stress can be evaluated only if the factors which are creating stress are known.
- The intensity and severity of the symptoms of the stress are measured. How the stress affected the body- the person under stress is feeling nervous or is upset with it.
- Determination of coping strategy of the person under stress.
- Determination of their social support.

(c) Management

The following factors may be considered to manage the stress in the libraries

- Avoid the possible stress factors.
- Learn to control the emotions.
- Provision of stress-free environment.
- Provision of leisure with work.
- Provision of physical working infrastructure.
- Professional training.
- Positive attitude towards change.
- Proper management of time.
- Setting of realistic goal.
- To take preventive measures to avoid a recognized stressor.
- Good health of library professionals.

2. Organizational Role

The organization can play a major role in reducing stress from librarian's life. It can be categorized into following groups:

(a) Reducing the stressors

The employee should be given the duty for which he or she has been appointed. The inappropriate duties should be kept at minimum. Professional trainings, chances for learning should be provided to the

employees. Collaborative work strategies should be developed to reduce the stress.

Stress due to interpersonal relationships can be resolved through good organizational communication.

Aims, policies, rules and expectations should be clearly defined to the library staff.

Timely supportive and positive feedback should be provided to each employee.

Authority and responsibility are the two sides of a coin. Without one there is no existence of other. Authority should be given to the employees to complete their responsibilities. The participation in collective decision making and control over their work matters a lot to the employees. They feel the library of their own and work freely without any stress.

The librarians should try to provide the congenial work environment to the staff members to keep them away from stress.

Librarians should be competent to carry the complex responsibilities. They should be given trainings to deal with conflicts and change.

(b) Helping workers in managing stress

Library staff members who are able to identify sources of stress in their work need to cope up   with their stress. Staff development programs which include opportunities to develop skills to deal happily with stress should be organized.

Effective social support system should be developed for getting information, advice, and aid to change the stressed situation. Team efforts, consultative approaches can be useful in this regard.

(c) Assisting stressed workers who are not able to cope up effectively

It becomes the moral duty of library manager to help the stressed employee in identifying and evaluating the sources of stress, and in coping effectively with stress, so that he/she can work effectively for the organization.

CONCLUSION

Stress Management is the collective effort of organizations, and the library professionals. Whenever changes occur, problems arise but if changes are accepted in positive manner there will be no stress. We ourselves have to prepare a ground for working which is without stress.

In LIS Profession ICT developments have changed the role of the professionals worldwide. Now the information is not only available in printed form, it is available in digitized form also. We, LIS professionals have to change our attitudes, practices and policies to survive in this technological era.

LIS professionals should attend training programs, seminars etc being organized by different institutions and associations to learn about new technologies and to develop their professional skills. The managers should allow their staff to attend the same.

Reduced performance, team conflict and poor morale can be reduced by creating supportive culture, motivating employees and resolving issues.

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