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2021

## Categories of Stress Among Librarians in Public Universities: The Causes and Effects.

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Kodua-Ntim, Kwame PhD; Adjei, Emmanuel PhD; and Akussah, Harry PhD, "Categories of Stress Among Librarians in Public Universities: The Causes and Effects." (2021). *Library Philosophy and Practice (e-journal)*. 4957.

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# **Categories of Stress Among Librarians in Public Universities: The Causes and Effects.**

## **Abstract**

The study aimed at investigating the causes and effects of stress encountered by library staff of University of Ghana, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology and University of Cape Coast and the various categories of stress. Using the purposive, simple random and convenience sampling techniques, the researcher sampled 153 respondents from UG, KNUST and UCC to respond to the questionnaire and interview questions. Descriptive statistics (Means and Standard Deviation), inferential statistics (Multiple Regression and ANOVA) were used for the quantitative analysis while content thematic analysis was used for the qualitative analysis. The study among other things found that poor administrative support, lack of support systems, lack of in-service training and inadequate resources, anxiety and frustration, staff conflict, ill-health and smoking and drinking were the major causes of stress among public university library staff in Ghana. However, it was revealed that library staff also adopt numerous coping strategies such as taking time off work and leave, positive thinking, building strong human relationship and going for counselling in an attempt to manage their stress. It was recommended that universities institute proactive guidance and counselling measures, strong social support systems and compensation for additional work.

## **Keywords**

Categories, causes, effects, library staff, psychological, stress, universities

## **Introduction**

Everyone may experience stress in one way or the other within the family, business, organization, work or any social or economic activity. Modern living is accompanied with, not only innumerable means of comfort, but also an overabundance of increasing complexities and competitiveness in living standards that tax the human body and mind. People often have too many of these demands placed on their time such that they become worried about the uncertain future, and have little time for themselves and their family. In the fast changing world today, no individual is free from stress and no profession is stress free (Sharma & Bagga, 2016). This suggests that one of the most important issues of today's struggling world is stress and

psychological pressure considered by physicians, psychologists and management behavioural science researchers as human, physical and mental disorders generators (Andreassi, 2013).

Stress has become an important topic in academic circles as well as in our society. Many scholars in the field of Behavioural Science have carried out extensive research on stress and its outcome and concluded that the topic needed more attention (Agolla, 2009). The stress experienced by people of different occupations and job roles has been discussed in many papers and a number of such people of different occupations being described as experiencing above average levels of stress (Stevenson & Harper, 2006). Hans Selye coined the term “stress”, in 1936, and defined it as “the non- specific response of the body to any demand for change” (Shah, 2015). It was derived from the Latin word “stringere”; which means the experience of physical hardship, starvation, torture and pain. Stress has been defined by various authors and writers to mean any form of intensive pressure caused by numerous activities one engages in which tends to affect ones wellbeing either physically, mentally or emotionally (Furnham, 2012).

However, stress may be best defined as a psycho physiological process, usually experienced as a negative emotional state, resulting from physical or psychosocial demands. Physical stress is one that irritates or brings immediate or long term negative effects on one’s physical health but not necessarily on one’s mental status. Psychological stress is what brings immediate or long term irritation or negative effects on one’s mental status which may not necessarily have any immediate effect on one’s physical status but these two can be interactive (Akakandelwa, 2013). Extreme stress conditions are detrimental to human health, but in moderation stress is normal and in many cases, proves useful. As such, stress is not a medical diagnosis, but severe stress that continues for a long time may lead to a diagnosis of depression or anxiety, or more severe mental health problems (Hockenbury & Hockenbury, 2012). Stress is healthful and necessary to keep us alert and occupied. A researcher of stress Selye (1936), referred to such healthful stress as “eustress”. But intense stress can overtax the individual’s adjustive capacity, dampen the mood, impair ability to experience pleasure, and harm the body (Adeoye, 2008). Everyone

experiences stress a little differently; it can either be good or bad depending on the experience but overload of it is a different story.

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). Job stress in tertiary institutions is something that all academic and administrative staff encounter (Duze, 2011). 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 workload, conflicts, demand from colleagues and supervisors, incompatible demands from different personal and organization roles, inadequate resources for appropriate performance, insufficient competency to the demands of their roles, inadequate autonomy to make decision on different tasks and the feeling of underutilization. Work related stress such as high turnover, poor job performance, accidents and errors, alcohol and drug abuse, burnout, absenteeism and hypertension could also make employees who are physically present at work to perform and produce less (Ikonne, 2015).

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). Library jobs are repetitive in nature; therefore, doing a monotonous job that lacks variety will no doubt lead to high occupational stress levels (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 man power, job insecurity and library infrastructure problems (Salunke & Hemade, 2015). Library staff must ensure availability of resources and efficient services which in turn bring satisfaction to the clients.

According to Salunke and Hemade (2015), stress in the library can be derived from three sources such as physical, mental and situational. Physical stress can occur as

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 as 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 type of document, change in library physical facility, changing users' demand reduce staff strength. Library professionals experience stress as they readjust their lives with the changing library environment, job rotation and job promotion. While adjusting to such changing library environment, stress will either help or interrupt us depending on how we react to it (Somvir, 2013).

The current working environment continues to change due to the increased use of Information Communication Technology (ICT) (Ayyagari, Grover & Purvis, 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 programs, higher studies, refresher courses, and these become a cause of stress among library professionals. The fear about job security is also a reason of stress among library professionals, because a lot of departments give appointment to the computer professionals (Somvir, 2013). The interference of the home front, coupled with work place demands, sometimes constitutes stress to library staff especially when the staff concerned is not able to manage both effectively. Library stress gives rise to poor health conditions, low work output, increased heart beat and fear, poor services to users resulting in user frustration. The library staff has many roles to perform in the library and any of the roles could

be stressful as every task in the library needs to be executed while considering the human factor in undertaking it.

### **Statement of the problem**

Stress is considered an important human resource management issue because of its relationship with various diseases and interaction with job resources. In addition, it is seen as a process in which job characteristics have harmful effects on the individual's health and wellbeing. As a common phenomenon which is experienced by workers of every organisation in both developed and developing countries, stress needs to be given all the necessary attention it deserves. Preliminary investigations suggest that pressure from management, poor work environment, excess workload, inadequate support system, challenges in coping with new technology and lack of supervision are causes of job stress among university library staff in Ghana. Research has shown that there is high level of stress among library staff (Ilo, 2016). Kinman and Wray (2013) state that unlike advanced countries such as United States of America, Britain and France where library staff stress has received reasonable attention because of the relationship between occupational stress and work effectiveness, the issue of stress associated with the profession has not received the required attention in Ghana and therefore very little literature exists on this topic. The argument is that most of the findings of the studies on stress among library staff conducted in the Western educational context cannot be applied in Ghana due to contextual and environmental differences. This study, therefore, sought to investigate the various categories and causes and effects of stress in public universities in Ghana.

These research questions are delineated as follows:

1. What are the causes of job stress among public university library staff in Ghana?
2. What are the effects of job stress on library staff in public university libraries in Ghana?
3. What are the categories of job stress among public university library staff in Ghana?

## **Theoretical framework**

A theoretical framework offers a “map” of the research process that directs the researcher in investigating the nature and scope of the study in relation to the research questions, objectives, and the purposes of the study. The theoretical framework for this study anchors on the Person-Environment Fit Theory which was initially proposed by French, Rodgers and Cobb (1974). Person-Environment Fit is the degree to which individual characteristics harmonise with those of his or her environment (Meyer & Dale, 2010). The match between individuals and the environment, or Person-Environment Fit, has long been a research topic of interest to industrial and organizational psychologists (Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, & Johnson, 2005).

The concept of Person-Environment Fit is grounded in the Interactionist Theory of Behaviour. Chuang, Shen & Judge (2016) rested upon the assumption that certain environments correspond to each individual, mostly matching the characteristics of the individual’s personality, and that this correspondence, in turn, results in higher performance, higher satisfaction, and less stress for the individual. Hochman and Yechiam (2011) concluded that, decision-making performance reaches an optimal level when an individual’s cognitive capability matches the complexity of their environment. In the context of the workplace, the individual’s attributes are interests, transferable skills, career motives and values, personality preferences, career orientations, self-concepts and sense of self-efficacy. The work environment include individual’s expectations and perceptions regarding workload, control over one’s work, tangible and intrinsic rewards of work, the relationship and sense of community among co-workers, perceptions of fairness in the workplace and the role of personal and organizational values (Herr et al., 2004). If the fit between an individual and his environment is incompatible, that results in stress. The theoretical framework assisted in the preparations of data collection, data analysis and presentation.

## **Literature review**

Work environment could be seen as the physical, social, psychological and technological conditions that are found in the work places and have an impact on the job performance of librarians. This impact could be direct or indirect, and environment could be internal or external. Environmental factors include social

interaction, power supply, physical facilities, lighting level and motivation (Babalola, 2012). The work place or environment can impede or enhance the productivity of librarians whose jobs require comfortable, conducive, and congenial environments.

Kampert (2008) claims that employers who pay attention to all the details that affect the welfare of their workers, including their work environment are likely to retain the best people, save cost, and improve the productivity of their workers' psychological and emotional stability. According to Sahin (2009) stress is a dynamic condition in which an individual is confronted with opportunity, constraint or demand related to what he desires and for which the outcome is perceived as both uncertain and important. From this definition one can say that stress is not necessarily bad; it also has a positive value when it offers potential gain.

According to Sutherland and Cooper (2000), organizations are continually reinventing themselves and as a consequence, changes to job roles are common. The impact of changes in the workplace can alter the nature of job roles, causing role ambiguity or role conflict, or additional demands, resulting in role overload. Role ambiguity, role conflict and level of responsibility for others are often regarded as the major sources of stress relating to a person's role in the organization (O'Driscoll & Cooper, 2002).

Role Overload and Responsibility is a source of stress among library staff in Ghana. Role overload, referring to the number of different roles an individual has to fulfill, can lead to excessive demands on the individual's time and may create uncertainty about the ability to perform these roles adequately (O'Driscoll & Cooper, 2002). Sutherland and Cooper (2000) posit the view that being responsible for work and performance of others, demands more interaction with others, and is; thus, more stressful than being responsible for equipment, budgets and other issues.

Another source of stress relating to role in organization is role ambiguity. Role ambiguity refers to the extent to which employees lack clarity about their role or the task demands at work (Spector, Zapf, Chen, & Frese, 2000). It occurs when an employee does not understand or realize the expectations and demands of the job, or the scope of the role (Harwell, 2013). Role ambiguity has been associated with



tension and fatigue, intention to quit or actually leaving the job, and high levels of anxiety, physical and psychological strain, and absenteeism. The stress arising from unclear objectives or goals can lead to job dissatisfaction, a lack of self-confidence, a lowered sense of self-esteem, depression and low work motivation, increased blood pressure and pulse rate, and intentions to leave a job (Christian, 2015). Research has demonstrated a consistent link between role ambiguity in a job and high levels of psychological strain and burnout. Role ambiguity involves a lack of clear and consistent information about duties, tasks, responsibilities and rights (Ekwelem, 2015).

Role conflict is also a source of stress among library staff. According to Ekwelem (2015), role conflict arises when an employee experiences incompatible demands or incompatible goals surrounding tasks connected with their job which can induce negative emotional reaction due to perceived inability to be effective on the job. Furthermore, having to do tasks that are not perceived to be part of one's job role can potentially lead to stress associated with role conflict (Cooper & Sutherland, 2000). O'Driscoll and Cooper (2002) maintain that people who have a more flexible orientation to life, suffer less from role conflict than people with high anxiety levels. Lehnert, (2002) also explained that role conflict could cause stress because library and information professionals have various supervisors who do not agree on what the employee should be doing. Whereas stress is also caused by role ambiguity which is present when an employee does not know that for which he or she is responsible. She explained also that when employees do not use their skills, it can be as stressful as being overworked whereas librarians may experience stress in assisting patrons because they do not have time to become an expert on each and every system.

The other causes of stress as suggested by Ilo (2016), budget cut and staff shortages have resulted in:

1. Lack of adequate knowledge of information sources or technology, interpersonal relationship, library support staff feel a lack of recognition, appreciation and respect from other staff, tension between professionals and non-professionals, negative co-workers and gossip.
2. Lack of effective feedback from supervisors, co-workers and patrons
3. Role conflict and role ambiguity.

4. Inadequate supervision and management in terms of feeling left out of decisions where one has important expertise.
5. Managers who will not risk advocating for their staff.
6. Inadequate office space, crowding and lack of privacy in offices.

McClellan (2011) in a study on stress and cataloguing paraprofessionals in academic and public libraries in Florida noticed some stress from the library work environment. According to the study, environmental factors attracted a 40.5% response, while 10.5% respondents averred that they often experience stress from work overload. In the study, 61% of respondents experience stress because they are expected to know so many things while others said their stress emanates from fear of making mistakes. Kinman and Wray (2013) who revealed that the condition of work environment in Africa is worse than that of UK where the impact of work stress is not inherently bad.

The parent institutions where librarians work also contribute in generating stress. Employees also undergo stress while trying to meet up with professional assignments, teaching and writing papers for promotion. The interface satisfying the need of users and meeting up with publications gives librarians real time stress (Ilo, 2016). Employees have family responsibilities outside the library workplace. These include caring for spouses, children and relatives. Homework interface may pose stress to a librarian depending on what is happening at home. Okonkwo (2014) observes that family strain interference with work results in family conflict which in turn results to pressure, tension, anxiety, stress to the employee.

Ajalla (2011) noticed that stress emanates from beliefs, life cycle transition, culture and the environment people work in. Cultural stress results from frictions between an employee's, social, ethnic, religious and family background and the environments in which persons are working. When cultures conflict with work expectations, they lead to problems in the workplace. Librarians suffering from deep conflicts between cultural issues and jobs are mistaken to be overreacting to their work environment. This negatively affects their work, behaviour and health. In Ghana, Akussah, Dzandu & Osei-Adu (2012) researched on stress and coping mechanisms among works of the Public Records and Archives Administration Department (PRAAD) headquarters.

It was revealed that, out of 21 stress factors, the whole staff scored above the median of 3 on 20. Lack of performance based reward (promotion or recognition) scored 3.43, revealing the most stressful factor.

### Effects of stress

Stress has a lot of effects on the individual, the organisation and the society at large. The effects of stress to an organization are found in premature deaths of employee, higher rates of accidents, performance inefficiencies, increased turnover and increased disability payment among others (Adjei, 2009). Griffin & Clarke (2011) say, although it is individuals who experience stress it has direct consequences for businesses. To him, stress may translate into poor quality of work and lower productivity. Withdrawal behaviours such as sick leave or excuse duty may also occur. A particular unsettling manifestation of stress on the job that has become all too prevalent in recent years is known as desk rage; a situation where office workers behave violently toward others when stressed out by long hours and difficult working conditions. It takes many forms such as yelling at people or verbal abuse. This situation can be compared to angered drivers who are known to express their negative reactions to others in dangerous ways (Greenberg, 2005).

Matteson and Miller (2012) also identified absenteeism at workplaces as a direct consequence of the stress phenomenon. To O'Driscoll and Cooper (2002), it has been estimated that at least half of all absenteeism from work are, in some manner, stress related. Ivancevich, Konopaske and Matteson (2008) assert that in view of the devastating effects of stress, organizations are now beginning to realize that they should be involved in helping employees cope with stress. One argument for this reason is that because the business is at least partially responsible for stress, it should help relieve it. Also, stress-related insurance claims by employees can cost the organization considerable sums of money hence there is the need to be concerned.

From an organizational point of view, the consequence of stress results in a significant loss of skilled workers through resignation or premature retirement from all levels of workforce. The stressed librarian who remains within the profession, on

the other hand, is likely to be less effective in key areas such as lesson organization, student behaviour management, responsiveness to students and self-confidence relationships with parents. In individual human terms, the cost of lecturer stress can be huge and include impaired health, reduced self-confidence and self-esteem and damaged personal relationships.

Researchers generally agree that a certain degree of stress is a normal part of life, but prolonged stressors could lead to symptoms that are physical, psychological or behavioural. The hypothalamus, when it identifies danger, triggers the pituitary gland to release hormones that cause the adrenal glands to increase its secretion of several hormones, including cortisol which provides more energy to the body; epinephrine which increases both the rate and strength of the heart's contractions and raises blood pressure; and nor epinephrine, which is similar to the body's sympathetic nervous system, acts as the body's fight or flight system when faced with emergencies (Chrousos, 2009). The hormonal responses determine the severity of the individual's anxiety reactions, mind-set, energy level, level of depression, and physical state of health after experiencing a stressful event (Akintayo, 2012). Dollard (2002); however, maintains that when the challenge is short term the body's first reaction is adaptive, enabling the person to set in action energy resources to combat the stressor, however when these challenges are continuous, severe or repetitive the "normal physiological reaction may turn pathological".

The human response to stress may be linked to that of a rubber band being stretched. The rubber band stretches as the stress continues to be applied until a limit is reached when the rubber band eventually breaks. Similarly, for humans, various physical and psychological changes are observed with the repetitive stimuli of stress. Until the limit is reached, the harmful effects can be reserved. The effects on human; however, become pathological with an increase in duration of the stress beyond the individual's limit. According to Ivancevich, Konopaske and Matteson (2008) stress has been associated with a vast array of diseases which directly affects the endocrine system, the cardiovascular system, the muscular system and the emotions.

Cole (2004) discussed the symptoms under three main headings. Rather, they hold the view that most of the early interest in stress focused heavily on physiological concerns. According to him, historically, the majority of research on stress has explored its link with physical illness but works on psychological and cognitive outcomes are a more recent development. Increased heart and breathing rates, blood pressure, headaches and heart attacks are some of the physiological symptoms of stress.

The physiological symptoms could be short term reactions and long- term effects (such as coronary heart disease, indigestion, gastric ulcers, back pain or even cancer). The psychological signs tend to manifest in anxiety states and depression such as feeling anxious, worried, upset, bitter and boredom. As it is, both the physiological and psychological symptoms eventually lead to generalized changes in behaviour such as sleeplessness, loss of appetite, increased cigarette smoking and alcohol consumption. In the long run, there may be increased absenteeism, committing more errors than normal, aggression towards colleagues and procrastination.

### **Methodology**

However, 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 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 situation, as they exist, as at the time of the study. In order to get a sample size of the population of the study area, the Fisher, Laing, Stoeckel and Townsend's (1998) formula for determining sample size was adopted. One hundred and forty-four (144) respondents were sampled for the quantitative phase. But for the qualitative phase, nine (9) members were chosen because it is manageable and in 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; Kusi, 2012). 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

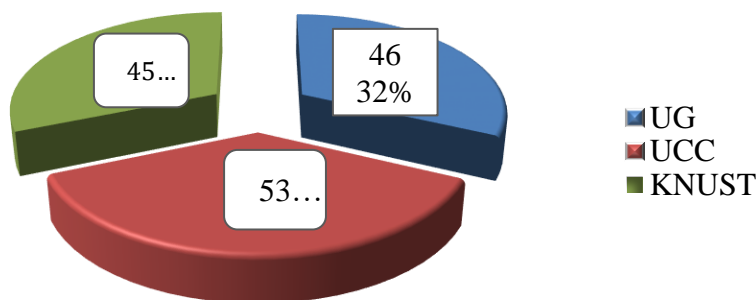
new individual. Simple random sample technique was used to select library staff for the quantitative phase of the study. Further, a stratified sample selects separate samples from subgroups of the population which are called “strata” and can often increase the accuracy of survey results. Convenience sampling technique was used for the management staff of the three premier universities.

## Data analysis and discussion of findings of the study

### Statistical analysis of demographic data

This section of the questionnaire was designed to elicit the personal information of the respondents (library staff). The demographic data includes the respondent’s institution, job status, gender, age and number of children. The data is presented using pie charts and bar graphs, data on respondent’s institutions is presented in figure 1.

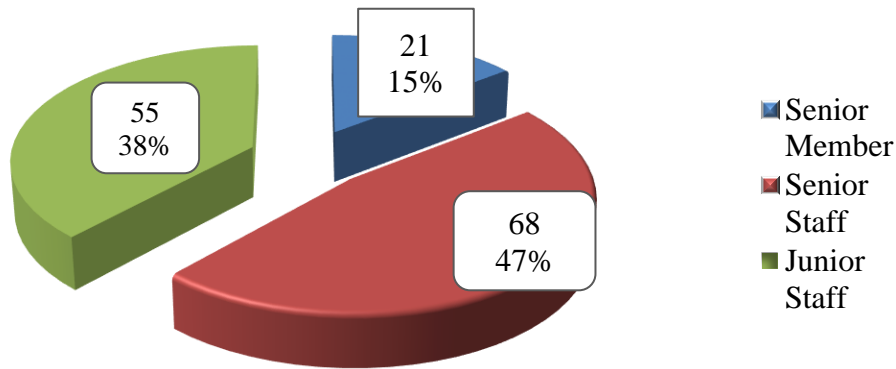
Institution of the Respondents (N)=144



**Figure 1: A pie chart showing the institutions of the respondents**

Figure 1 gives graphical representation of the institutions of the respondents. The figure shows that the majority of the respondents, 53 representing 37% were UCC staff; 46 of the respondents representing 32% were UG staff, and 45 representing 31% were KNUST staff. This implies that most of the staff were from UCC. Figure 2 below shows Job Status of the respondents.

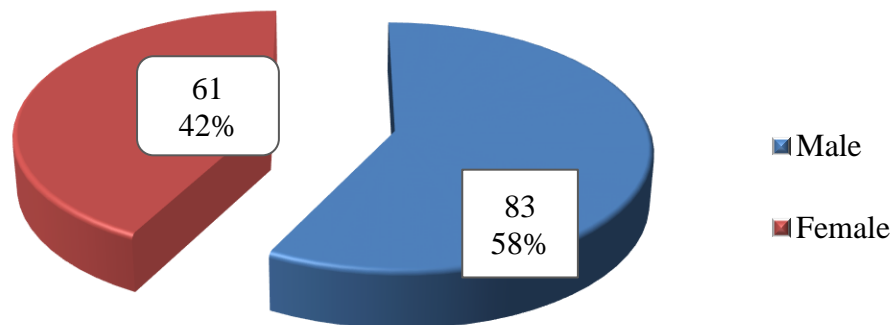
Job Status of the Respondents (N)=144



**Figure 2: A pie chart showing the job status of the respondents**

From Figure 2, 68 of the respondents representing 47% held the senior staff position, 55 representing 38% held junior staff position and 21 representing 15% held the senior member position. This therefore gives reasons to establish that the majority of the staff were senior staff. The Gender of the respondents was also considered as presented in Figure 3 below.

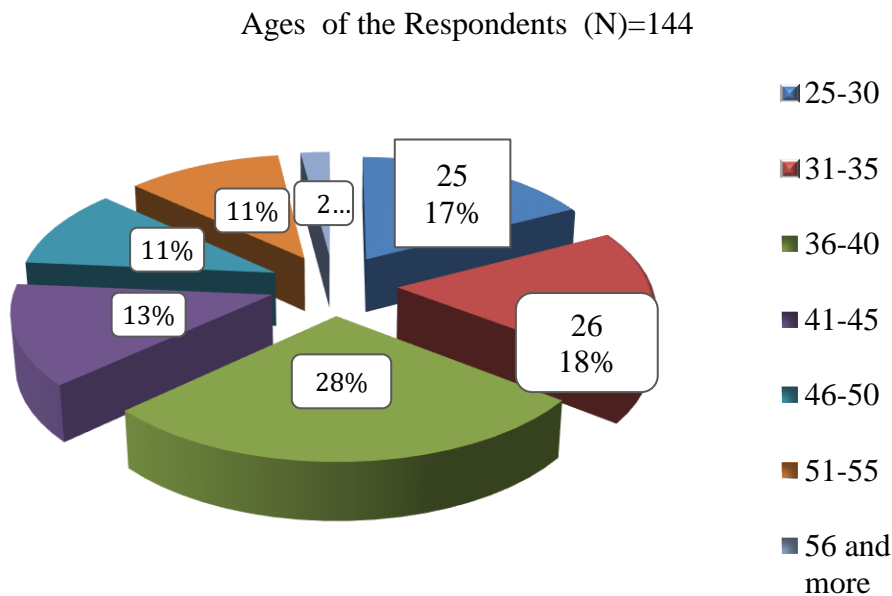
Gender of the Respondents (N)=144



**Figure 3: A pie chart showing the Gender of the respondents**

Figure 3 presents the gender of the respondents. The data in Figure 3 shows that male library staff was 83 representing 58% and 61 representing 42% were female library staff. This implies that there were more males than females in the study.

Figure 4 below shows a pie chart with a presentation of the respondents respective Ages.



**Figure 4: A pie chart showing the Ages of the respondents**

Figure 4 presents the ages of the respondents. The Figure shows that respondents within the ages 36-40 were 28%, those within the ages 31-35 were 18%, 25-30 were 17%, 41-45 were 13%, 46-50 were 11%, 51-55 were 11% and 56 and more were 2%. The results, therefore, suggest that the majority of respondents were within the ages of 36-40.

The causes of job stress among public university library staff in Ghana.

Table 1: *Descriptive Analysis (Means and Standard Deviations) of Causes of Job Stress among Public University Library Staff in Ghana.*

Causes of Job Stress	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Staff relationship problem in the library	144	2.51	.819
Students being difficult to handle in library	144	2.68	.781
Insufficient preparation time for work	144	2.77	.747
Too many unproductive meetings	144	2.60	.879
Inability to adapt new forms of technology	144	2.04	.756
Poor working condition	144	2.74	.700
Poor administrative support	144	3.84	.763
Lack of adequate communication	144	1.94	.677

Test Value=2.5



Post-retirement uncertainties	144	2.12	.873
Failure to share information	144	1.97	.742
Lack of support systems	144	3.82	.686
Interferences between work and home	144	2.40	.863
Lack of recognition for good efforts	144	2.67	.658
Poor leadership style	144	2.01	.865
Environmental hazard	144	2.77	.796
Lack of control and role ambiguity	144	2.17	.751
Lack of in-service training	144	2.95	.864
Inadequate resources	144	2.85	.810
Ill-health	144	2.68	.853
Mean of Means	144	2.60	.783

Table 1 above sought to find the causes of job stress among public university library staff in Ghana. The general result shows that there are a number of causes of job stress among public university library staff in Ghana. The mean of means ( $M=2.60$ ,  $SD= .783$ ) which is greater than the test value of 2.5 gives evidence to that effect. Twelve items indicated causes of job stress, they had individual mean scores exceeding the test value of 2.5. To sample few of these causes, poor administrative support was a cause of stress among the library staff, the mean and standard deviation of ( $M=3.84$ ,  $SD= .763$ ) which gives strong indication that poor administrative support is one of the key causes of stress among the staff. Lack of support systems produced a strong mean and standard deviation of ( $M= 3.82$ ,  $SD= .686$ ) which shows that one of the causes of stress among library staff is the lack of support systems.

To find out whether “Lack of in-service training” could cause stress among the library staff, the mean and standard deviation of ( $M=2.95$ ,  $SD= .864$ ) gives strong indication that lack of in-service training is one of the key causes of stress among library staff. Two, inadequate resources among the three institutions gave a mean and standard deviation ( $M=2.85$ ,  $SD= .810$ ) which is greater than the test value of 2.5. This shows that inadequate resources in the three institutions leads to job stress. However, a rundown of the Table 8 shows that seven items could not cause stress among the

library staff out of the nineteen items in the table. This is simply because their means were less than the test value. The mean and standard deviation of these items are lack of adequate communication (M=1.94, SD= .667), failure to share information (M=1.97, SD= .742), poor leadership style (M=2.01, SD= .865) and finally inability to adapt to new forms of technology (M=2.04, SD= .756) were the least of seven items.

When asked about their major causes of stress, most of the interviewees noted that excessive workload, the work conditions such as denied grievances and opportunities, uncomfortable stationary were not very appealing and potential stressor to the majority of the staff. They also commented on stressors relating to pace of change of general university atmosphere, inadequate resources, insufficient preparation of time, lack of in-service training and bureaucracy. The majority of library staff believed that workload or demands made on them were high. They attributed it to university running various programmes without a break in the whole year. UCCRespondent-3 for example remarked: I experience my stress when there is excessive workload on me; teaching, research work. When it happens like this and you don't meet deadline, it sometimes creates tension for me which worsens the case.

UGRespondent-1 shared his view:

Over the years, we have been under staffed, so workload for individuals here have been so much compared to the times we had personnel. We can talk of those who have gone on retirement and those who have resigned all contribute to this. The personnel is not immediately replaced, thus making the workload heavier. I can make indications to the junior staff and senior staff where they are supposed to be many coming early morning to shelve, you find only a few doing the shelving. So the workload starts from the lower level and climbs.

Some interviewees experience severe stress when dealing with the university authorities, the data revealed that bureaucracy and favouritism in terms of appointments of senior positions at the library to head various departments or units and promotion of staff were the library staff source of worry leading to severe stress.

UCCRespondent-1 commented:

Sometimes there is some kind of favouritism when it comes to who should be at a particular place or who should head a particular faculty

or department or unit. I am stressed up when I feel that it should be my turn and I am not appointed. The university has flexible promotion policies but the authorities do not go by it; they are biased, not fair and consistent.

KNUSTRespondent-2 complained particularly about bureaucracy in dealing with problems, processing of documents and promoting staff members. UGRespondent-3 also affirmed that:

It is very stressful when the authorities tend to favour some colleagues. At times processing of our documents and promotions are not attended to as expected while others get it easily. Meanwhile, they cannot give you the criteria they use to measure and even sometimes not ready to explain to you why the delay.

Most of the interviewees were particularly concerned about discrimination. This kind of discrimination made library staff stressed up. The data suggested that some positions were preferably given to only second degree holders but for now the authorities are discriminating against these second degrees.

We sometimes feel discriminatory against. For example, MA degree holders feel discriminatory against MPhil degree holders. Even, some positions are preferably given to only Professors or PhD holders because of that you are compelled to further your education when you are not prepared emotionally and financially which is very stressful (KNUSTRespondent-1).

Some of the interviewees, especially the low-ranked ones rather complained about colleagues at other universities advancing ahead of them both in academics and research. They felt that some of their colleagues looked down on them perhaps because they were not Professors or PhD holders, especially when they had not presented any paper or research. UCCRespondent-2, one of those library staff remarked:

Some colleagues at other sections or universities become more stressed when they get to know that others have gone on study leave while they do not pose the requisite for further studies or have not made any attempt. Again when others have been able to publish papers, but difficult for them to publish or do not even know how to publish. Sometimes those who have higher educational background such as PhD holders look down on them because they do not have the PhD or publications.

UCCRespondent-3 again added that self-adequacy was what he considered not good at the library. Though, he was not much concerned about some things that went on at the library, he felt that certain decisions that directly affected people were taken without their knowledge and that causes most library workers to be stressed.

If leaders go ahead and make their own decisions and do their own things to torment some people, then what they have decided may well affect the people that work right under them. Certain decisions that directly affected library staff are taken without their knowledge. As a leader I know some workers wish to be consulted well about some decisions before they are being implemented because it affects them, (KNUST Respondent-1).

Another cause of stress to the library staff that emerged from the data was that the university system did not pave the way for them to enjoy regular leaves neither was it part of the university's culture to encourage library staff to embark on regular holidays outside the country (change of some sort) to reduce stress. UCCRespondent-2, for example, commented:

Previously leave (taking time off work) was very common in our work places including universities but employers or heads of institutions do not want employees to go on leave. In this university for instance, no day passes by without getting some work to do; when regular students are on holidays, sandwich students also come. How can a library staff rest? These cause stress.

KNUSTRespondent-1 complained that sitting at one place is very stressful. When probed further about his statement, he said, when school re-opens, students come in their numbers for registration process. There is a likelihood that the person registering the student, can sit for a long time that cause stress. Again, sharing books to all students and run many errands for the registration process. These activities also contribute to the stressful situations for library workers.

Interviewee from UCC made a divergent statement complaining bitterly:

In UCC library for the past two weeks, we had no light and people will come in and vent their anger on us the staff. It is not our fault for the light out, the university was working around the clock to see to it that the issue of light out was sorted. But people think we work here so we are to be blamed for the bad things that happen, this becomes

stressful. Sometimes when exams are in session, the kind of pressure mounted here is so huge that some library staff refuses to go for break and therefore becoming stressful (UCCRespondent-1).

The effects of job stress on library staff in public university libraries in Ghana.

Table 2: *Descriptive (Means and Standard Deviations) Analysis of Effects of Job Stress in Public University Libraries in Ghana.*

Effects of Job Stress	Test Value = 2.5		
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Absenteeism	144	2.75	.738
Aggression	144	2.26	.755
Poor quality of work	144	2.96	.774
Anxiety and frustration	144	3.91	.699
Depression and tiredness	144	2.86	.696
Unfriendly attitude towards students and colleagues	144	2.98	.833
Forgetfulness	144	2.38	.718
Poor time management	144	2.13	.682
Procrastination	144	2.16	.716
Inability to meet deadline	144	2.55	.713
Higher rates of accidents	144	2.72	.799
Resignation and pre-mature retirement	144	2.69	.848
Staff conflict	144	3.31	.855
Ill-health	144	3.27	.795
Sleeplessness	144	2.28	.797
Functional inconsistency	144	2.29	.818
Excessive smoking and drinking	144	2.99	.811
Mean of Means	144	2.73	.767

The researcher again sought to investigate the effects of job stress on library staff in public university libraries in Ghana. The general result shows that there are numerous effects of stress on library staff in Ghana. The general mean of means

and standard deviation of (M=2.73, SD= .767) shows that the majority of the items elicited positive response from library staff. To confirm some of these responses with statistical evidence, anxiety and frustration produced a higher mean and standard deviation of (M=3.91, SD= .699) showing that anxiety and frustration highly affect job stress among library staff. Staff conflict proved significant with a high mean and standard deviation of (M=3.31, SD= .855) showing that staff conflict among the library staff can be attributed to job stress. Ill health was also significant with a mean and standard deviation of (M=3.27, SD= .795) showing that the enormity of stress among the library staff can be attributed to ill health. And lastly, excessive smoking and drinking with a mean and standard deviation of (M=2.99, SD= .811) is as a result of job stress among library staff in the three universities.

The data in table 5 further shows that poor time management was not an effect of stress among library staff. The mean and standard deviation (M=2.13, SD= .682) gives statistical evidence to those results. On the issue of “Procrastination” it was evident it did not affect stress among library staff in Ghana. The means and standard deviation (M=2.16, SD= .716) gives strong indication to that effect. Again, aggression was not as a result of stress among library staff, the mean and standard deviation (M=2.26, SD= .755) gives statistical evidence to that fact. The mean and standard deviation of sleeplessness was (M=2.13, SD= .682) gives statistical evidence to that results sleeplessness was not as a result of stress among library staff.

The interview data suggested that the stress experienced by library staff affected them in four ways, their general health, reduced work output, their administrative work and their home life. With regards to the first theme, eight (8) out of the nine (9) respondents said that stress experienced affected their general health. The Majority of the respondents complained of minor headaches. One of them remarked “in one instance a library staff went to hospital with a minor headache and was admitted as a result of stress” (UCCRespondent-1). Another said “we (library staff) have seen in this university where library workers only complained of minor headaches and were taken to hospital and never came back due to stress” (KNUSTRespondent-2). Others said they experienced high blood pressure, some severity of anxiety or frustration, depression, nervous stomach, weight problems and body weakness. However UGRespondent-3 said though he was always stressed up, he never

encountered stress-related health problem. He commented “personally, I have been lucky I have never experienced stress-related sicknesses just that when I am tired I cannot work for long hours at the library.”

As pointed out earlier, the data suggested that stress experienced by library workers affected their work output. This problem had two (2) main dimensions; work preparation, delivery and relationship with colleagues. The interview data pointed out that when library staff was stressed they are unable to work and as a result it affected the quality of work delivery and working relationship with their colleagues and users or clients.

When I am stressed I cannot do proper reading and research and as such go to work place unprepared, so I don't deliver to my satisfaction. I sometimes portray some unfriendly attitude towards users (students) and colleagues; my time is not always managed well (KNUSTRespondent-3).

UCCRespondent-2 also confirmed this view:

I am always dull when stressed, which affects my teaching and working relation. Sometimes I cannot carry out effective research on the topic to be taught. In an attempt to use previous knowledge, I get to know that I am not fully prepared. Sometimes, the lesson is postponed which affects the next lesson.

When a further probing question was asked on how stress experienced affected their teaching work, the majority of the interviewees said they were not involved in any teaching work. Those involved in teaching work said combining teaching and that of management responsibility made their case worse, more especially when colleagues were not cooperative.

I was a Head of Reader and Reference Service for years now, though, my credit hours were not too much, and the little teaching coupled with the management work was a very stressful task for me. Seeing to the smooth running of the Department, attending meetings, attending to students, and the worse thing is when your colleagues doubt your efficiency (UCCRespondent-3)

The interviewees were asked whether their job affected their home life or not. The Majority of them claimed their job as library staff affected their home life. Their views pointed that it was so because bad mood at library translates itself to the home. They

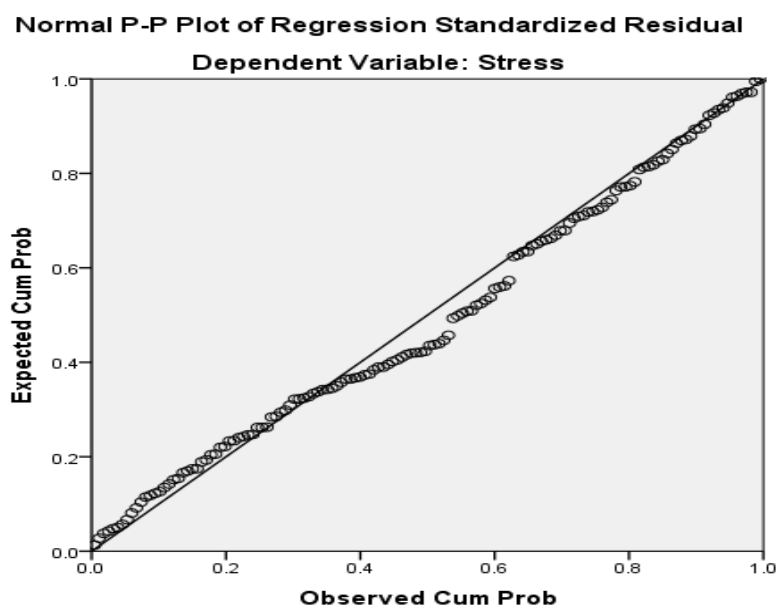
also commented that they spent all their time on library work so they missed out on personal responsibilities or activities in the home; their family concerns were not well attended to. Most of the interviewees felt their work as library staff affected their home life. UGRespondent-2, shared his experience:

My work as a library staff affects my home life because when I am stressed and in a bad mood the library, I go home with it. I spend one day in a weekend working on library which makes me miss out personal activities. I don't get enough time to attend to my wife and children and extended family issues are not also properly attended to.

KNUSTRespondent-1 reported that stress is not something that is wide spread, it affects only few individuals at the library. To me stress at the library does not affect my work in the library because this is a public library and the workers here are in numbers but if it was to be a one man library, then it can affect the running of the library. The responses of the interviewees revealed that the stress they experienced as library staff affected their general health, teaching responsibilities, their management work and their home lives. However, the data suggested that they were prepared to remain in the profession.

The categories of job stress among public university library staff in Ghana.

The researcher sought to find which of the categories of job stress predict the library staff category of stress. To achieve this, Multiple Regression was deemed appropriate for the analysis.





**Figure 5: Normality plot**

Figure 5 above presents the normality of the study variables. The movement of the variables along the diagonal line shows that the data was normal and multiple regression could be preformed. Table 5 below shows Multicollinearity Dagnostic Test of the variables.

Table 3: *Multicollinearity Diagnostic Test of the Variables*

Study Variables	Psychological	Emotional	Technological	Physiological	Financial	Situationa I	Accidental
Physiological	1.00	.301	.062	.062	.086	.062	.076
Emotional	.301	1.00	.076	.076	.062	.076	.545
Technological	.062	.076	1.00	.062	.076	.062	.076
Psychological	.434	.545	.615	1.0	.067	.076	.545
Financial	.301	.076	.062	.301	1.0	.062	.076
Situational	1.00	.545	.076	.062	.062	1.0	.062
Accidental	.076	.076	.062	.434	.076	.545	.076

The problem of multicollinearity is said to exist when independent variables used in the study are highly correlating each other. The study followed literature to test this assumption. It is assumed that correlation coefficient of 0.70 or more between independent variables is assumed to demonstrate evidence of multicollinearity problem. From Table 5 above, the highest correlation coefficient is .615 which is even less than 0.70. This gives evidence that there is no problem of multicollenearity. Having tested for the assumption, running multiple regression was deemed appropriate.

Table 4: *Multiple Regression Analysis of the Categories of the Job Stress Coefficients<sup>a</sup>*

Model		Unstandardized		Standardized		Sig.
		Coefficients	Std. Error	Coefficients	T	
1	(Constant)	24.347	3.490		6.977	.000
	Physiological	1.693	1.036	.147	1.634	.000*
	Emotional	-.017	1.038	-.035	-.016	.003*
	Technologica 	-.417	.948	-.001	-.440	.660
	Psychologica 	2.934	.917	.266	3.200	.002*
	Financial	2.440	.976	.197	2.499	.014*
	Situational	.395	1.043	.032	.379	.706
	Accidental	.709	.832	.071	.853	.395

a. Dependent Variable: Stress

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

Table 4 above presents the SPSS coefficients model for the stress among the library staff. It also contains the correlations for the independent variables (Physiological, Emotional, Technological, Psychological, Financial, Situational and Accidental). Psychological, financial, physiological and emotional stress of the independent variables is statistically significant, showing that they predict stress among the library staff: physiological (p-value = .000), emotional (p-value = .003), psychological (p-

value = .002) and financial (p-value = .014). When evaluating the standardized beta values, the greatest influences upon the dependent variable (stress) are in the following order: psychological (beta = .266), financial (beta = .197), physiological (beta = .147) and emotional (beta= -.035).

Table 5: *Multiple Regression Analysis of Contribution of each of the Variables*

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Change Statistics R Square Change
Psychological	.602 <sup>a</sup>	.377	.365	.377 (37.7%)
Financial	.614 <sup>b</sup>	.705	.693	.328 (32.8%)
Physiological	.839 <sup>c</sup>	.874	.867	.170 (17.0%)
Emotional	.935 <sup>d</sup>	.886	.877	.022 (2.2%)

Note:

a. Predictors: (Constant), Psychological, Financial, Physiological, Emotional.

b. Dependent Variable: Stress

Table 5 above reflects how each of the predictors contributed to stress among library staff. Using the R Square Change Statistics from Table 6, it is evident that Psychological stress contributed more than all the others. That is .377 representing 37.7%. Financial stress contributed R<sup>2</sup>Change results of .328 representing 32.8% indicating the second contributor. Physiological stress contributed R<sup>2</sup>Change Statistics = .170 representing 17% showing the third contributor. Finally, emotional stress was the least contributor with R<sup>2</sup>Change value of= .022 representing 2.2%.

One of the items on the interview guide revealed whether the library staff were stressed at work or they find their work stressful. Their responses suggested that they all found their work as stressful. They emphasised that looking at the heavy workload on them, they were always stressed up. With regard to categories of stress, almost all the respondents highlighted that their categories of stress are more psychological, physiological and financial. When probed further, KNUST

Respondent-1 and KNUST Respondent-3 share similar comment by saying supervisors who are very strict can put pressure on library staff and it will result in stress situation.

On the contrary, UGRespondent-1 commented:

Some workers get information from different sections of the library and from different universities make comparisons, especially with regard to the salary saying, “ I do this, I do that but the other party gets more pay than I do “such comparisons and comments can make the individual think and stress can be developed out of this.

KNUSTRespondent-2 supported the comment of UGRespondent-1 by saying, for him financial reward of the library staff, especially the junior and senior staff lead or contribute to the stressful situation they found themselves in. Respondents from UCC interviewees revealed that the stress the library staff goes through can be associated to job related stress, personal stress, financial, emotional or even psychological (UCCRespondent-1). In support of this, UCCRespondent-3 also maintained that the stress the library staff goes through can be associated to job related stress, personal stress, financial, emotional or even psychological. UCCRespondent-2 believed that 90% of the stress library staff goes are psychological.

### **Conclusions and recommendations**

Every individual experiences 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.

Moreover, the findings of the study revealed that; four categories of job stress affect library staff of public university libraries in the country; twelve items cause job stress among them; two items were identified to have been the level of job stress among them; eleven items extensively affected their health, level of productivity and services in the libraries and eleven strategies were put in place to control job stress among them. The study revealed that psychological, financial, physiological and emotional stresses were the constituents of job stress among public university library staff in the country while technological, situational and accidental stress were not.

The findings indicated that library staff at public university libraries go through a lot of activities that are stressful. 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. Psychological

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 counseling for necessary action to be taken. High levels of stress can result in a variety of physical and behavioural consequences. The quality 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. Physiological

When it comes to your social supports, there is not only one way of doing things. Maybe you have a co-worker you can talk to about problems at work, look to different relationships for special kinds of support. But remember to look to

people you can trust and count on, to avoid regret and prevent unhelpful interactions that can make you feel bad. Often people expect others to reach out to them, and then feel rejected when people don't go out of their way to do so. To get the most out of your social relationships, you have to take the first step. Spend time with friends and family. If you are there for others, they will be more likely to be there for you. Research suggests that providing social support to friends and family may be even more important than receiving it. It is best to have a face-to-face conversation with a friend, but it isn't always possible. Happily, technology makes it easier than ever before to stay connected with loved ones no matter the distance. Writing an email, sending a text message or making a date for a video chat. However, one must not rely heavily on digital connections. Some research suggests that face-to-face interactions are most beneficial.

### 3. Emotional

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 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 staff of public university libraries in the country. Do you like to sing, make jewelry, play tennis, get involved in local politics? You are more likely to connect with people who like the things you like. Join a club or take on a volunteer position that will allow you to meet others who share your interests. Do not be discouraged if you do not make friends instantly, but try to enjoy the experience as you get to know others over time.

### 4. Financial

Compensation for additional work; work performed separately from or in addition to an employee's position must be well compensated under certain circumstances. The University should recognize library staff for scientific, educational, artistic, literary, and professional achievements that have a direct impact on the mission of the library and the university as whole in teaching, research, and service. Overload payment for an activity conducted by a library

staff which contributes to the mission of the university for which the individual is uniquely qualified to perform. Such work must be outside the scope of the individual's job description. Payments must be effected for agreements involving consulting by a library staff for another institution that have received advanced approval by the institution seeking such services and approved by the university.

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