

## Review Article

# Stress Management Strategies as Correlates of Librarians' Task Performance

Usuka Enweremadu Isaac<sup>1</sup>, Isaac Abu Umaru<sup>2</sup>, Odiachi Anwuli Rosemary<sup>3</sup>,  
Ekere Felix Chimaobi<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Federal University Lafia Library, Federal University Lafia Library, Lafia Nasarawa State, Nigeria.

<sup>2</sup>University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Nigeria.

<sup>3</sup>Benson Idahosa University, Benin City, Nigeria.

<sup>4</sup>Department of Library and Information University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Nigeria.

## I N F O

### Corresponding Author:

Usuka Enweremadu Isaac, Federal University Lafia Library, Federal University Lafia Library, Lafia Nasarawa State, Nigeria.

### E-mail Id:

uenweremadu@yahoo.com

### Orcid Id:

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3214-4290>

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## A B S T R A C T

The task performance of librarians is their ability to carry out their assigned library house-keeping duties and tasks very well. The study investigated stress management strategies as correlates of librarians' task performance. The study was guided by 2 specific objectives and research questions. The study tested 2 null hypotheses on a 0.05 level of significance. A correlational survey research design was adopted for the study. The population of the study was 191 librarians. The sample size was 191 librarians; the entire population was studied, therefore, no sampling was done. Data were collected with a pair of questionnaires. Standard linear regression analysis was used to test the null hypotheses on a 0.05 level of significance; whereas, Pearson Product Moment Correlational Coefficient (PPMCC) was used to analyze data for the research questions. The findings of the study show that there is a significant ( $0.00 > 0.05$ ) and a high ( $r = 0.71$ ,  $R^2 = 0.50$ ) relationship between individual stress management strategies and librarians' task performance; and there is a significant ( $0.00 > 0.05$ ) and high ( $r = 0.61$ ,  $R^2 = 0.38$ ) relationship between organizational stress management strategies and librarians' task performance. In line with these findings, the study recommends that Librarians should frequently consult stress management experts such as psychologists and physiotherapists to guide and sensitize them on the appropriate stress management practices they should engage in daily; and the library managers should ensure that they employ organizational stress management strategies in carrying out their administrative functions.

**Keywords:** Librarians, Stress, Stress Management Strategies, Task Performance, Correlate, University Libraries, South-East, Nigeria

## Introduction

Librarians are experts and professionals in the business of using information resources and various technologies in providing library and information services in a systematic

and defined manner to satisfy the information needs of users. Reitz (2014) defines librarians as professionally trained persons responsible for the care of a library and its contents, including the selection, processing, and organization of materials and the delivery of information,

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instruction, and loan services to meet the needs of its users. On the other hand, Yaya and Adeeko (2015) see librarians as information professionals saddled with the responsibilities of selecting, acquiring, processing, and effective dissemination of relevant information resources to information seekers to satisfy their information needs. In essence, librarians utilize their professional skills, expertise, and competencies to man the daily library house-keeping functions to ensure that users' information needs are adequately met.

Librarians mainly work in information centers such as museums, archives, information centers, and especially libraries such as academic, public, special, private, and national libraries. Users who visit the library and information centers see librarians as information experts who are capable and competent to provide them with any information they seek. Therefore, librarians are engaged to carry out library house-keeping functions such as selection, acquisition, classification, cataloging, indexing, abstracting, a compilation of bibliographies, bindery, and repair of information resources in the technical services. Librarians also engage in Selective Dissemination of Information (SDI), Current Awareness Services (CAS), document delivery, book review, referrals, literature, charging and discharging of information resources, registering and clearing of users, resource exhibition, resource sharing, shelving, re-shelving and shelf reading of information resources in the users' services.

In line with these professional and statutory duties and responsibilities, librarians also engage in other meaningful activities for career development. Nwafor-Orizu (2017) reveals that university librarians in Nigeria daily battle with the routine library work, classroom teaching work, research and publication demands, professional bodies' responsibilities at state, national and international levels. More so, librarians are also faced with issues like over workload due to understaffing, delay and poor remuneration, poor incentives, poor leadership styles at the university administration and library management levels, unprofessional attitudes of colleagues, poor attitudes of users, inadequate working tools, poor amenities, etc. All these worrying issues constitute stress on the librarians and could affect their task performance level.

Stress is an unfriendly feeling one has when unfavorable events occur in their environment (working or living) or when there is a mismatch between what one aspires to do and what they are capable of doing. Sharma (2018) defines stress as a way by which the body overcomes a demanding or undesirable situation. Stress is simply a response to physical and emotional demands. Work-related stress is a growing problem around the world. It affects not only the health and well-being of employees but also the quality

of goods and services offered to the users (Better Health Channel, 2018). Kagwe, Ngigi and Mutisya (2018, p. 18) state, "stress exists in many occupations due to the lack of congruence between expectations from employees, the ability of individuals and support systems available." Librarians in university libraries also encounter work-related stress in the course of carrying out daily library house-keeping functions and relating to their immediate living environment. Stress exposure could affect the performance of librarians in university libraries.

To reduce, deal with, and handle stress very well there are techniques, activities, practices which can be utilized which are called stress management strategies. The essence of this study is to find out the nature of the relationship existing between stress management strategies and task performance of librarians in federal university libraries in South-East, Nigeria.

### Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested on 0.05 level of significance:

- HO<sub>1</sub>:** There is no statistically significant relationship between individual stress management strategies and librarians' task performance.
- HO<sub>2</sub>:** There is no statistically significant relationship between organizational stress management strategies and librarians' task performance.

### Research Questions

The specific objectives of the study were to determine:

- What is the relationship between individual stress management strategies and task performance of librarians?
- What is the relationship between organizational stress management strategies and task performance of librarians?

### Review of Literature

#### Task Performance of Librarians

Performance is important in all spheres of human endeavors. Performance detects how well or bad tasks, goals or objectives have been carried out. Fogaça, Rego, Melo, Armond, and Coelho (2018) see performance as skills, professional competences, and expertise applied in the context of a duty or task or to the way individual acts in terms of effectiveness and efficiency. Raza, Anjum, and Zia (2014) define performance as ability (both physical and psychological) to perform a particular task in a specific method that can be evaluated as excellent, average, or low in the scale. Performance according to Afshan, Sobia, Kamran, and Nasir (2012) is the attainment of specific tasks by employees of an organization (through the effort applied by employees within such organization) and it

is measured against the predetermined or identified standards of accuracy, completeness, cost and speed set by the organization. Employers' utmost expectation from employees is high and credible job performance.

Every employer creates standards and systems to measure the performance level of employees in line with the organization's goals, mission, and objectives. Usuka, Nwachukwu, and Ekere (2019, p. 2) state, "one of the rationale for employing experts to man library house-keeping duties is for high-level performance." Occupational performance is an extremely important criterion that relates to organizational outcomes and success (Kumari, Bajwa, and Priya, 2016). Occupational performance according to June and Mahmood (2011) is how well or accurate an employee meets job tasks in line with the organizational goals. The performance of librarians is how well and good they can execute their duties in line with the goals and objectives of libraries that lead to effective library and information service delivery. In modern-day global information service competitiveness, librarians are expected to perform highly by using their expertise, competences, and skills in manning the daily library house-keeping functions.

Job or occupational performance is how well and credible employees can execute their duties to ensure the effective delivery of quality goods and services to the customers. There are three distinct types of job/ occupational performance expected of employees (librarians inclusive). The three performances are task performance, contextual performance, and adaptive performance. Although, Koopmans, Bernards, Hildebrandt, Schaufeli, de Vet, and van der Beek (2011) identified four major dimensions of occupational performance: execution of tasks, contextual performance, counterproductive work behavior, and adaptive performance. The interest of this study is on the task performance of librarians.

Task performance is how well employees carry out the specific duties assigned to them in line with the dictates of their job obligations. Task performance comprises job explicit behaviors which include fundamental job responsibilities assigned as a part of the job description (Conway cited in Pradhan and Jena, 2017). Motowidlo (2003) & Motowidlo, Borman, and Schmit (1997) aver that task performance has to do with the effectiveness with which librarians perform activities that contribute to the libraries' technical core. Díaz-Vilela, Rodríguez, Isla-Díaz, Díaz-Cabrera, Hernández-Fernaud, and Rosales-Sánchez (2015) see task performance as the prescribed role employees should comply with to attain organizational goals. Therefore, task performance can be defined as how well librarians apply competences, creativity, and skills in carrying out their assigned library house-keeping duties to ensure effective service delivery to the users.

Conventional librarianship practices entail that the duties of librarians are assigned and specified within the scope of the technical services and users' services of the library. Amusa, Salman, and Ajani (2015) affirm that librarians carry out readers' services and others behind the screen activities that constitute a pivot of library and information services. Users' services involve direct contact with the users. Warriar, Shivarama, and Angadi (2015) captured the rationale behind users' services as the responsibility of building, designing gathering, updating, capturing and re-capturing the information to suit the requirements of its users. Users' services include reference services such as referrals, Selective Dissemination of Information (SDI), Current Awareness Services (CAS), literature search, document delivery, book review, information repackaging, information brokerage, user education, library orientation, indexing and abstracting; circulation services such as exhibition, charging and discharging of information resources, library registration, shelving, re-shelving, and shelf reading, taking of library statistics/ headcount, reservation of information resources; and reprographic services such as printing and photocopying.

The technical services or behind the scene duties include selection, acquisition, processing of information resources, cataloging and classification, bibliographic compilation, storage, bindery, lamination, duplication, and fumigation of information resources. Akwang (2017) observed the technical duties as information and knowledge creation, communication, identification, selection, acquisition, organization and description, storage and retrieval, preservation, analysis, interpretation evaluation, dissemination, and management. Otikey and Omboi (2010) state that the librarian in the university coordinates the evaluation and selection of information resources required for the various programs, organizes, and maintains the collection of these resources. Tripathi, Chand, Sonkar and Jeevan (2017, p. 27) note that librarians have expertise in classifying and cataloging of information and the same can be used for classifying, indexing, organizing, and preserving the datasets generated in the research activities of their universities for future use and sharing. Task performance is the essence of employing librarians to man the library house-keeping functions. Therefore, there is a need to ensure that librarians are stress-free, healthy, and enjoy good welfare.

### **Stress Management Strategies**

Stress has been identified as a threat to human health (psychologically and physiologically) and well-being. It is important to manage stress to curtail its harmful effects on the human psychological and physiological body systems. Stress can be managed through readjustment and physical activities and techniques. Managing stress

entails employing techniques that help in dealing with, reducing, and eradicating stress. Kurki (2018) view stress management as an extensive variety of techniques, methods, and procedures to be able to know how to handle the stress once it has already established itself. Shabana, Singhal, Siddique, and Agarwa (2017) declare that plans and tactics used to overcome stress are known as stress coping/management strategies. There are varieties of readjustment and physical activities and techniques which help people in managing stress. Readjustment and physical activities and techniques are called stress management strategies.

Stress management strategies could be seen as therapeutic and psychological solutions that help one live a stress-free, happy, and healthy life and be productive, creative, and efficient in carrying out their job duties. Quick and Henderson (2017) maintain that organizations and individuals can mitigate stress disorders through preventive stress management and enhanced well-being. Autonomic response to stress includes the “fight or flight” response in which the body prepares to either avoid a situation or fight for its survival (Smith and Perez, 2018). According to Holman, Johnson, and O’Connor (2018) stress management strategies represent a class of activities that are used by organizations or individuals to improve employee well-being and reduce stress, principally by either addressing the causes of stress or by reducing the impact of stress on an individual. From these definitions, it is ascertainable that stress can be managed at the individual level and organizational level.

Every librarian is responsible for living and enjoying a stress-free life. At the individual level, stress can be managed by a librarian on their own with little or no assistance. Wong (2018) identified the individual stress management strategies to include: clear your room and your desk, read something for leisure, reduce sugar intake, reduce phone usage, think of happy memory, get some sunlight every day, sing the heart out, learn and apply time management technique and write down the things you’re worried about. Furthermore, listen to good music, don’t multitask, get enough sleep, use positive affirmations, be kind to yourself, exercise regularly, stretch, take a short walk, get enough vitamin C, drink tea, and focus on progress, not perfection. Nwafor-Orizu (2017) includes changing our thinking, changing our behavior, changing our lifestyles in terms of having a good diet, reducing or quitting smoking, drinking alcohol, caffeine, and sugar, engaging in regular exercises, having adequate sleep, leisure and relaxation. Usuka, Nwachukwu, and Ekere (2019) suggest spending time with nature, praying, listening to soft and cool music, reading comic and interesting information resources, regular medical checkups, etc. One obvious fact about these individual stress management strategies is that they need to be cultivated as a daily habit, lifestyle, and routine.

Amba (2018) suggests setting realistic deadlines, take a lunch break, go home on time, take your holiday leave, leave work early, participate in work functions, establish open and professional communication, respect other employees and do not tolerate discrimination of any sort. Besides, Better Health Channel (2018) includes resolve on changes you desire to make; discuss with your employer or human resources manager, time management and proper task schedule, take care of yourself and seek professional counseling from a psychologist. Mahakud, Sharma, and Gangai (2018) suggest relaxation, exercise, time management, cognitive intervention, and mindfulness-based approaches. Abdelrazek, Ghabbour, Fahmy, and El Sayed (2017) added time management, problem-solving skills, and relaxation techniques. Reddy, Karishmarajanmenon, and Anjanathattil (2018) include biofeedback, yoga, life-skills training, mindfulness meditation, psychotherapy are effective ways of managing stress. To effectively implement these stress management strategies, all daily activities should be properly timed to accommodate only tasks that one can accomplish.

On the other hand, stress can be managed at the organizational level. It is incumbent on library managers to implement appropriate strategies, techniques, and actions in managing stress in the libraries. Holman, Johnson, and O’Connor (2018) observe that library organizations and librarians have at their disposal a range of techniques and practices that can be used to reduce stress and promote the well-being of employees. Organizational stress management strategies according to Shafaghat, Zarchi, and Kavosi (2018) include establishing proper communication with employees; and creating the perfect environment for them to continue their professional activities. Raguž and Čučuk (2017) include fostering organizational communication with employees because effective communication can change employee views. Organizational stress management strategies include activities such as job redesign, environmental changes, and wellness programs (Abdelrazek, Ghabbour, Fahmy, and El Sayed 2017). Organizational stress management strategies are mainly readjustment activities, actions, and decisions.

Furthermore, Better Health Channel (2018) suggests creating or ensuring a safe working environment, proper training of staff, issues, and grievances with employees are settled and initiate stress management policy in consultation with the staff. Pharmacists’ Support Service (2018) suggest suitable rewards to recognize achievements, provide opportunities to teach or mentor trainees and promote participation in a professional organization, sharing the workload, delegating tasks where possible and appropriate, re-planning or redesigning workspace where possible to ensure an organized and logical work-flow.

There are so many benefits of managing stress at the

individual and organizational levels. Kihara and Mugambi (2018) found that stress management strategies have a greater influence on the performance of employees in the Public Service and specifically in the twenty-one (21) government ministries. Corroboratively, Robinson, Segal, Segal, and Smith (2018) reveal that stress management can help reduce everyday stress, boost ones' energy and mood, and improve ones' mental and physical health. McPheat (2010, p. 9) states, "without effective stress management, the problem tends to increase in a snowball effect until absenteeism, disability, injury on the job, poor communication skills, and poor relationships at work can result." Udofia (2014) discovered a significant positive relationship between staff training (an aspect of organizational stress management strategy) and job performance of librarians. Librarians and library managers who meticulously implement and utilize these strategies are creating and sustaining a healthy life, improved well-being, and improved job productivity level.

Interestingly, Kang (2013) declares that stress management skills bring about the continuation of daily activities, previously stopped on the influence of the stressor through establishing an emotional balance, helping the individual to feel mentally and psychologically empowered. Kihara and Mugambi (2018) reveal that counseling services, flexitime programs, meditation techniques, and relaxation techniques strategies, which had an effect on employees' performance explaining a variation of 91.1% and that there was a strong relationship between employees performance and stress management strategies. Herr, Barrech, Riedel, Gündel, Angerer, and Li (2018) observe that improvement of stress re-activity resulting from organizational stress management intervention was effective and generally long-lasting in preventing mental health and improving task efficiency. Motlokoa, Sekantsi, and Monyoloc (2018) confirm that training not only increases employees' performance but also positively affects employees' motivation and job satisfaction within the banking sector. In essence, stress reduction, good health, and sound well-being are eminent in the life of librarians who implement stress management strategies. Consequently, stress reduction, improved occupational or job performance, effective service delivery, and users' satisfaction are eminent in a library that the managers manage stress.

## Research Methodology

### Design of the Study

The study adopted the correlational descriptive research design. Cheng (2016) posits that a correlational research design could be used to describe the relationship between two or more variables, as well as how strongly these variables relate to one another. The correlational survey research design was considered appropriate for the study

because it was used to determine the relationship that exists between stress management strategies and occupational performance of librarians.

### The Population of the Study

The population of the study is librarians, which consists of the academic and administrative librarians in federal university libraries in South-East, Nigeria. According to the 2019 nominal roles of federal university libraries in South-East, Nigeria, the population of the librarians is 191, which consists of 174 non-administrative librarians and 17 administrative librarians. The non-administrative librarians were included to elicit information on the stress management strategies they employ in managing stress. The administrative librarians consisting of the university librarians, deputy university librarians, and sectional heads were included to get information on the performance of the librarians.

### Sample and Sampling Technique

The sample size is 119. The entire population of the librarians was studied; therefore, no sampling was made.

### Instrument for Data Collection

Data were collected with a pair of four-point-rating-scale questionnaires. The first questionnaire which has 41 items is titled Stress Management Strategies Questionnaire (SMSQ). It has two clusters and the response modes and ratings are HE = Highly Employed = 4, E = Employed = 3, LE = Less Employed = 2; and NE = Not Employed = 1. Cluster A focused on individual stress management strategies employed in managing stress. It has 21 items. Cluster B dealt with the organizational stress management strategies employed in managing stress. It has 20 items. The second questionnaire is titled Librarians' Task Performance Questionnaire (LTPQ). It has 1 cluster that elicited a response on the level of librarians' task performance in the library. It has 19 items. The response mode and ratings are VHL = Very High Level = 4, HL = High Level = 3, ML = Moderate Level = 2; and LL = Low Level = 1.

### Methods of Data Analysis

Standard linear regression analysis was used to test all the null hypotheses on 0.05 level of significance. Where the calculated value is less than the probability level (0.05), the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative hypothesis accepted. Conversely, where the calculated value is greater than the probability level (0.05) the null hypothesis was accepted. All analysis was done using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22.

Descriptive statistics of Pearson Product Moment Correlational Coefficient (r) (PPMCC) was used to analysis raw data for the research questions. The result is calculated and interpreted from -1 to +1 using the 5-way guide by

Nwana in Nworgu (2015) as follows:

0.00 - .20 = very low relationship;

0.20 - .40 = low relationship;

0.40 - .60 = medium relationship;

0.60 - .80 = high relationship;

0.80 and above = very high relationship.

## Result

**Hypothesis 1:** There is no statistically significant relationship between individual stress management strategies and librarians' task performance.

The result in table 2 shows that the correlational coefficient (r) between individual stress management strategies and librarians' task performance is 0.71. This implies that there is a high relationship between individual stress management strategies and librarians' task performance. It also reveals that the coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) associated with the correlational coefficient (r) of 0.71 is 0.50. This depicts that 50% of individual stress management practices predict task performance of librarians.

**Hypothesis 2:** There is no statistically significant relationship between organizational stress management strategies and librarians' task performance

**Table 1. Standard Regression Analysis on Individual Stress Management Strategies and Librarians' Task Performance**

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig	Decision
Regression	6577.486	145	6577.486	147.403	0.00	Rejected
Residual	6425.644		44.623			
Total	13003.130		44.623			

df = of freedom, Sig = Level of Significance  $p < 0.05$ , F = F-ratio

Table 1, Shows that the obtained F-ratio 147.403 is associated with an exact probability value of 0.00. The null hypothesis was rejected because 0.00 is less than the probability level of significance 0.05. Therefore, it can be inferred that individual stress management strategies significantly relate to the task performance of librarians.

**Research Question 1:** What is the relationship between individual stress management strategies and task performance of librarians?

Table 3 shows that the obtained F-ratio 86.589 is associated with an exact probability value of 0.00. The null hypothesis was rejected because 0.00 is less than the level of significance 0.05. Therefore, an inference could be drawn that organizational stress management strategies significantly relate to the task performance of librarians.

**Research Question 2:** What is the relationship between organizational stress management strategies and task performance of librarians?

**Table 2. Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Co-efficient Analysis on the Relationship between Individual Stress Management Strategies and Task Performance of Librarians**

Variable	Mean	Std	N	R	$R^2$
Individual Stress Management Strategies	68.69	9.46	146	0.71	0.50
Task Performance	63.69	9.46			

Std = Standard Deviation, N = Population size, r = Correlation Coefficient,  $R^2$  = Coefficient of determination

**Table 3. Standard Regression Analysis of Organisational Stress Management Strategies and Librarians' Task Performance**

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig	Decision
Regression	4882.828	145	4882.828	86.589	0.00	Rejected
Residual	8120.302		56.3991			

**Table 4. Pearson's Moment Correlation Co-efficient Analysis of the Relationship between Organisational Stress Management Strategies and Task Performance of Librarians**

Variable	Mean	Std	N	r	$R^2$
Organizational Stress Management Strategies	63.95	11.66	144	0.61	0.38
Task Performance	64.36	12.44			

The result in table 4 reveals that the correlational coefficient ( $r$ ) between organizational stress management strategies and librarians' task performance is 0.61. This implies that there is a high relationship between organizational stress management strategies and librarians' task performance. The table also reveals that the coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) associated with the correlational coefficient ( $r$ ) 0.61 is 0.38. What this implies is that 38% of individual stress management strategies account for the task performance of the librarians.

## Discussion

The first and second results show that there is a significant and high relationship between individual stress management strategies and task performance of librarians. This implies that one of the best techniques and approaches for adequate preparation to face daily hassles, responsibilities, and issues is. Therefore, Kang (2013) declares that stress management skills bring about the continuation of daily activities, previously stopped on the influence of the stressor through establishing an emotional balance, helping the individual to feel mentally and psychologically empowered. Corroboratively, Kihara, and Mugambi (2018) found that stress management strategies have a greater influence on the performance of employees in the Public Service and specifically in the twenty-one (21) government ministries studied. These make stress management strategies important and healthy life practices because they help in suppressing and dealing with stress, revitalizing the human body systems and also help one get used to handling stressors with ease.

The finding also implies that librarians who practice individual stress management strategies are bound to improve in their job duties. Thus McPheat (2010, p. 9) warn that "without effective stress management, the problem tends to increase in a snowball effect until absenteeism, disability, injury on the job, poor communication skills, and poor relationships at work can result." In essence, librarians who desire to distinguish themselves through commendable and credible performance need to manage stress at the individual level such as sleeping well, spending time with family, friends, and colleagues, maintaining a balanced diet with minimum caffeine and sugar, exercising daily on the moderate basis, taking time for leisure activities, time management, avoiding multi-tasking, spending time with nature, taking a walk, avoiding arguments, resisting competitions, regular medical checkup and consulting a professional such as psychologists or physiotherapists.

The third and fourth results show that there are a significant relationship and high between organizational stress management strategies and task performance of librarians.

This finding implies that the Librarians will be motivated to accomplish their job duties if the management of the library implements stress management strategies in their managerial functions. It is expected that librarians who work in such a library environment will be motivated, dedicated, and diligent to duty. Herr, Barrech, Riedel, Gündel, Angerer, and Li (2018) observe that improvement of stress reactivity resulting from organizational stress management intervention was effective and generally long-lasting in preventing mental health and improving task efficiency.

One of the sterling qualities of transformational library managers is ensuring that the well-being, welfare, and good health of librarians are sustained and safeguarded. This can be achieved by ensuring that librarians are stress-free and stressors are eliminated by implementing stress management strategies at the organizational level. Rewardingly, this will help put librarians in a good position to effectively carry out their duties and job responsibilities.

## Conclusion

Since a high relationship exists between stress management strategies and task performance of librarians, it can be stated that librarians who frequently employ stress management strategies in dealing and handling stress will perform highly in their job tasks and duties. By such healthy practices, they are expected to carry out their assigned library house-keeping duties effectively and efficiently in a manner that satisfies the needs of the users and also earns a recommendation from the library management. Consequently, such librarians are bound to enjoy sound well-being, good health, and happy life.

## Recommendations

The following recommendations were made based on the findings of the study:

- Librarians should frequently consult stress management experts such as psychologists and physiotherapists to guide and sensitize them on the appropriate stress management practices they should engage in daily.
- The library managers should ensure that they employ organizational stress management strategies in carrying out their administrative functions.

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