



Health Care Habits, Job-Related Stress and Job Performance of Librarians in Akwa Ibom State University Library, Ikot Akpaden, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria: A Conceptual Review

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Abstract

This paper presents a conceptual review of the interrelationship among health care habits, job-related stress and job performance among librarians in Akwa Ibom State University Library, Akpaden, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. Librarianship within contemporary academic settings has become increasingly demanding, characterised by prolonged sedentary engagement, continuous exposure to information and communication technologies, interpersonal pressures from library users, and administrative responsibilities, all of which predispose librarians to physical and psychological strain. Drawing on the Transactional Model of Stress and the Job Demands-Resources theory, the paper argues that the health care habits which librarians adopt or neglect, including physical activity, dietary practice, sleep hygiene, routine medical check-ups and stress-coping behaviour, shape the extent to which occupational stressors translate into diminished job performance. The paper synthesises existing theoretical and empirical literature on occupational stress among librarians in Nigerian and international university libraries, situates the discussion within the operational context of the Akwa Ibom State University Library system, and proposes a conceptual model linking the three constructs. It concludes that deliberate attention to librarians' health care habits constitutes a practical and relatively low-cost intervention point through which university library management can buffer the adverse performance effects of job-related stress. Recommendations for library



administrators, university management, librarians themselves, and future empirical researchers are offered.

Keywords: health care habits, job-related stress, job performance, librarians, academic libraries, Akwa Ibom State University

1. Introduction

1.1 Background to the Study

The university library occupies a central place in the actualisation of the teaching, learning, research and community service mandates of any institution of higher learning. As the intellectual nerve centre of the university, the library depends heavily on the competence, commitment and wellbeing of its human resources, chief among whom are the librarians who organise, mediate and deliver information resources to staff and students. In recent decades, the nature of librarianship has been transformed by the introduction of information and communication technologies, the proliferation of electronic resources, the demand for round-the-clock service delivery, and the expansion of user populations, all of which have combined to intensify the workload and occupational demands placed on librarians (Petek, 2018; Shupe et al., 2015).

These intensified demands do not exist in isolation; they interact with librarians' personal habits and lifestyle choices, resulting in varying outcomes for their wellbeing and productivity. Health, as broadly defined by the World Health Organization (1948), is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease. Health care habits which involves the recurrent personal practices individuals adopt to preserve or improve this state of wellbeing, therefore constitute an important, though often overlooked, variable in discussions of occupational stress and performance among library personnel. Librarians who maintain regular physical activity, balanced nutrition, adequate rest, routine medical check-ups and constructive coping practices may be better equipped to withstand the physical and psychological demands of their work than colleagues who neglect these habits.

Akwa Ibom State University Library, with its main campus at Ikot Akpaden in Mkpato Enin Local Government Area and a subsidiary campus at Obio Akpa, has, since attaining full academic library status in the 2010/2011 academic session, continued to expand its services in support of the Faculties of Engineering, Education, Biological Sciences, Physical Sciences, Agriculture, Arts, Social Sciences and Management Sciences (Akwa Ibom State University, n.d.). As with

most Nigerian public university libraries, the growth in student population; the expansion of digital services such as the institutional repository and e-library; and the persistent challenges of funding and infrastructure common to Nigerian tertiary institutions are likely to have implications for the occupational stress experienced by librarians serving in this system and, consequently, for their healthcare habits and job performance.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Despite growing scholarly attention to occupational stress among librarians in Nigerian and international university libraries (Dina, 2016; Ilo, 2016; Ilo et al., 2019; Oyeniran, 2023), the specific role of librarians' personal health care habits in shaping how job-related stress affects job performance remains under-theorised, particularly within the South-South Nigerian context in which Akwa Ibom State University Library is situated. Much of the existing literature treats job-related stress and job performance as a direct, unmediated relationship, giving comparatively little attention to the buffering or aggravating role that everyday health practices such as diet, exercise, sleep, medical attention and coping behaviour, may play in this relationship. Where health-related factors are considered, they tend to be examined as outcomes of stress (for example, musculoskeletal disorders arising from sedentary library work) rather than as antecedent habits capable of moderating the stress–performance relationship.

This conceptual gap is problematic because it limits the practical guidance available to university library management on how to intervene meaningfully in the wellbeing of librarians. If health care habits genuinely condition the extent to which job-related stress translates into reduced performance, then interventions targeted at improving librarians' health practices could constitute a cost-effective complement to broader organisational stress-management strategies. This paper, therefore, addresses the following problem: there is presently no integrated, theoretically grounded conceptual account of how health care habits, job-related stress and job performance interrelate among librarians serving in a Nigerian state university library system such as that of Akwa Ibom State University, Akpaden.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The broad objective of this paper is to develop a conceptual understanding of the interrelationship among health care habits, job-related stress and job performance among librarians in Akwa Ibom State University Library, Akpaden. Specifically, the paper sets out to:

- i. examine the concept and dimensions of health care habits as they apply to librarians in academic library settings;
- ii. review theoretical and empirical perspectives on job-related stress among academic librarians in Nigeria and beyond;
- iii. explore the theoretical linkages between health care habits, job-related stress and job performance;
- iv. develop a conceptual model illustrating these relationships within the context of Akwa Ibom State University Library; and
- v. proffer recommendations for library management, librarians and future researchers.

1.4 Theoretical Propositions

As a conceptual paper, this study does not test statistical hypotheses but advances the following theoretical propositions to guide future empirical enquiry:

- P1: Positive health care habits are inversely associated with the experience of job-related stress among librarians.
- P2: Job-related stress is inversely associated with job performance among librarians.
- P3: Health care habits moderate the relationship between job-related stress and job performance, such that librarians with favourable health care habits experience a weaker negative effect of stress on performance than those with unfavourable habits.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The paper is significant to several audiences. For university library management, it offers a conceptual basis for designing occupational wellness programmes that address librarians' health practices as a stress-management strategy. For librarians themselves, it provides a rationale for the deliberate cultivation of healthy habits as a professional, and not merely personal, responsibility. For scholars in library and information science, occupational psychology and public health, the paper contributes a synthesis that can be empirically tested in Akwa Ibom State University Library and comparable institutions. Finally, for policymakers concerned with the broader governance of tertiary education and workforce welfare in Nigeria, the paper reinforces the case for embedding staff wellbeing within educational development planning.

1.6 Scope of the Study

This paper is conceptual and theoretical in nature. It draws on published theoretical and empirical literature on health behaviour, occupational stress and job performance, with particular reference to studies conducted among librarians in Nigerian and international university libraries, and situates the discussion within the specific institutional context of Akwa Ibom State University Library, Akpaden. It does not report primary survey data; rather, it proposes a conceptual model intended to guide subsequent empirical investigation.

2. Conceptual Clarification

2.1 Health Care Habits

Health, according to the World Health Organization (1948), is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. Health care habits may therefore be understood as the recurrent, largely voluntary practices that individuals engage in with the intention of preserving, promoting or restoring this state of wellbeing. Commonly identified dimensions of health care habits include regular physical exercise, balanced and adequate nutrition, sufficient hydration, sufficient and quality sleep, routine medical and dental check-ups, avoidance of harmful substances, and the deliberate use of relaxation or stress-management practices such as recreation, worship, hobbies or social support.

For librarians, whose work frequently involves long hours seated at circulation or cataloguing desks, sustained use of computer terminals, and repetitive physical tasks such as shelving and retrieving materials, health care habits assume particular importance. Evidence from studies of office-based higher education staff indicates that prolonged sedentary engagement is associated with musculoskeletal discomfort and other health complaints (Okezue et al., 2020). Consequently, librarians who cultivate habits such as periodic postural breaks, deliberate physical activity outside working hours, and attentive dietary and sleep practices may be better placed to sustain their physical and mental capacity for work over time.

2.2 Job-Related Stress

Job-related stress refers to the psychological and physiological strain that arises when the demands of a job exceed, or are perceived to exceed, the resources and coping capacities available to the individual (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Selye, 1956). In the library and information science literature, job-related stress among librarians has been attributed to factors such as role ambiguity, role overload,

inadequate staffing, poor remuneration, difficult patron interactions, exposure to rapidly changing technology, and unconducive physical working environments (Petek, 2018; Shupe et al., 2015). In the Nigerian context specifically, studies have identified heavy workload, epileptic power supply, inadequate funding, lack of career progression, poor motivation and unfavourable organisational climate as recurring sources of stress among academic librarians (Ilo, 2016; Ilo et al., 2019; Oyewole & Popoola, 2013).

Job-related stress is not inherently and uniformly negative; moderate levels of demand can be motivating and can enhance engagement. However, when demands are sustained and coping resources are insufficient, stress tends to manifest in outcomes such as fatigue, reduced concentration, irritability, absenteeism, burnout and, ultimately, diminished performance (Dina, 2016; Oyeniran, 2023).

2.3 Job Performance

Job performance is generally conceptualised as the totality of behaviours and actions that are relevant to, and that contribute towards, the goals of an organisation (Campbell, 1990). It is typically distinguished into task performance, which concerns the core technical duties of a role, and contextual performance, which concerns discretionary behaviours such as cooperation, punctuality and willingness to assist colleagues and users. Applied to librarianship, job performance encompasses dimensions such as the efficiency and accuracy of reference and information services, the quality of cataloguing and classification work, promptness in responding to user enquiries, engagement in continuing professional development, and the overall quality of the user experience within the library.

Several Nigerian and international studies have documented a negative relationship between job-related stress and job performance among librarians, suggesting that as stress increases, the quality and consistency of service delivery tends to decline (Dina, 2016; Ilo et al., 2019; Oyeniran, 2023). This underscores the practical importance of identifying factors, such as health care habits, that may buffer this relationship.

2.4 The Academic Librarian and the University Library Environment

The academic librarian operates within an environment that combines intellectual, administrative, technical and interpersonal responsibilities. In the Nigerian university system, librarians are typically organised into readers' services, technical services, and increasingly, digital or electronic resources units, each carrying distinct but overlapping demands. Akwa Ibom State University Library operates as a multi-

campus system, with the main library located at Ikot Akpaden, Mkpato Enin Local Government Area, and a subsidiary library at the Obio Akpa Campus, the latter having originated from the defunct College of Agriculture Library (Akwa Ibom State University, n.d.). Since attaining full academic library status in the 2010/2011 session, both campus libraries have continued to expand their functions, including the development of an institutional repository and an e-library, in support of the university's teaching, learning and research mandate.

This expansion of functions, while beneficial to the university community, plausibly adds to the range of technical and administrative demands placed on librarians, reinforcing the relevance of examining how job-related stress, arising from such demands, interacts with librarians' personal health care habits to shape their overall job performance.

3. Theoretical Framework

3.1 The Transactional Model of Stress

This paper is anchored, first, on the Transactional Model of Stress propounded by Lazarus and Folkman (1984). The model conceptualises stress not as a fixed property of the environment or of the individual, but as arising from a transaction between the person and the environment. When confronted with a potential stressor, the individual first engages in a primary appraisal, evaluating whether the situation constitutes a threat, a challenge or is irrelevant. This is followed by a secondary appraisal, in which the individual assesses the resources and coping options available to manage the demand. The outcome of this appraisal process determines the coping strategies adopted, which in turn influence the individual's immediate stress response as well as longer-term health and functional outcomes.

Applied to the present discussion, a librarian's health care habits can be understood as part of the personal resources drawn upon during secondary appraisal. A librarian who is physically fit, well rested and equipped with constructive coping practices is likely to appraise occupational demands as more manageable than a colleague who lacks such resources, thereby experiencing a comparatively lower level of subjective stress from similar objective demands.

3.2 The Job Demands–Resources Theory

The second theoretical anchor is the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) theory, originally advanced by Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner and Schaufeli (2001) and subsequently elaborated by Bakker and Demerouti (2007). The JD-R theory

proposes that every occupation can be characterised in terms of job demands, which are aspects of the job requiring sustained physical or psychological effort, and job resources, which are aspects of the job or the individual that assist in achieving work goals, reduce job demands, or stimulate personal growth. The theory identifies two parallel processes: a health-impairment process, whereby excessive demands deplete an individual's energy and lead to strain and, eventually, burnout, and a motivational process, whereby resources foster engagement and enhanced performance.

Importantly for this paper, the JD-R theory recognises personal resources, alongside job resources, as buffers against the health-impairment process (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Health care habits can be conceptualised as a category of personal resource; librarians who invest in their physical and mental health effectively build a reservoir of resource capacity that can offset the depleting effects of high job demands, thereby weakening the pathway from job-related stress to reduced job performance.

3.3 Application to the Study

Taken together, the Transactional Model of Stress and the Job Demands–Resources theory provide complementary lenses for understanding the phenomenon under discussion. The Transactional Model explains how librarians' personal health-related resources shape the subjective appraisal of, and coping response to, occupational stressors, while the JD-R theory situates health care habits as a personal resource that intervenes in the pathway between job demands, strain and performance outcomes. This dual theoretical grounding informs the conceptual model presented in the following section.

4. Conceptual Model

Drawing on the theoretical discussion above, this paper proposes a conceptual model (Figure 1) in which health care habits are positioned as a resource that shapes the strength of the relationship between job-related stress and job performance among librarians. In this model, unfavourable health care habits are expected to weaken librarians' capacity to cope with occupational demands, thereby strengthening the negative effect of job-related stress on job performance, whereas favourable health care habits are expected to buffer this relationship, reducing the extent to which stress translates into diminished performance. A feedback pathway is also acknowledged, whereby sustained poor performance and its associated consequences, such as reprimand or reduced job satisfaction, may themselves

become an additional source of job-related stress and may further erode the motivation to sustain healthy habits.

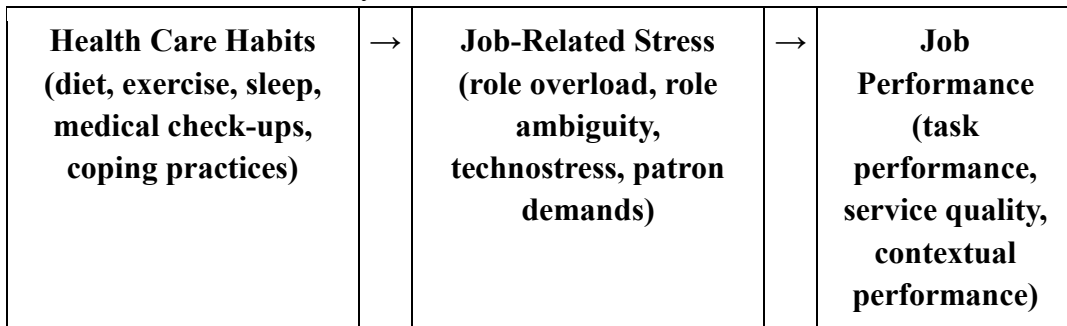


Figure 1. Conceptual model of the relationship among health care habits, job-related stress and job performance among librarians

The model suggests three interconnected pathways worthy of future empirical testing in Akwa Ibom State University Library and comparable institutions: a direct pathway from health care habits to job-related stress (Proposition 1), a direct pathway from job-related stress to job performance (Proposition 2), and a moderating pathway whereby health care habits condition the strength of the stress–performance relationship (Proposition 3).

5. Review of Related Literature

5.1 Health Care Habits and Occupational Wellbeing

A growing body of international literature links workplace health promotion and personal health behaviours to occupational outcomes. Organisations such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development have highlighted those unhealthy lifestyles, including sedentary behaviour, poor dietary habits and unmanaged stress, as major contributors to reduced workplace productivity and increased healthcare costs, while policies that promote employee health and wellbeing yield benefits for both individuals and employers (OECD, 2022). Within academic and office environments specifically, prolonged sedentary engagement has been associated with musculoskeletal disorders among higher education staff, with studies noting that extended periods at a workstation without adequate postural breaks constitute a significant occupational health risk (Okezue et al., 2020). These findings are directly relevant to librarianship, an occupation that similarly combines sedentary desk-based duties with, at times, physically demanding tasks such as shelving and materials handling.

5.2 Job-Related Stress and Job Performance among Librarians

Empirical attention to job-related stress among librarians has grown steadily, both internationally and within Nigeria. Shupe et al. (2015), studying a diverse sample of academic librarians, found that role ambiguity and role overload predicted burnout and a range of psychological, health-related and work-related outcomes, at levels comparable to or exceeding those found in other occupational groups. Petek (2018) similarly documented stress among reference library staff arising from patron-related pressures and organisational demands in both academic and public library settings.

Within Nigeria, several studies converge on the finding that job-related stress bears a negative relationship with librarians' job performance. Dina (2016), examining professional librarians in Lagos, reported that occupational stress adversely affected job performance, while Ilo (2016) found that librarians across federal, state and private universities in Ogun State experienced varying levels of stress arising from physical, environmental, organisational, cultural and managerial factors, with attendant effects on productivity. Ilo, et al. (2019), in a broader study of librarians in Nigerian university libraries, similarly established that job-related stress was negatively associated with job performance, while Oyeniran (2023), studying librarians in selected public university libraries in Nigeria, confirmed a significant negative relationship between job stress and job performance, recommending regular training and stress-management interventions for library staff. In a related study of library personnel in federal colleges of education, Oyewole and Popoola (2013) found that psycho-social factors, including stress, significantly shaped job performance outcomes. Ekwelem (2015), focusing on academic librarians in South-East Nigeria, further documented the coping strategies librarians adopt in the face of occupational stress, underscoring the practical relevance of personal coping resources, of which health care habits form a part.

Collectively, these studies establish a reasonably consistent evidentiary base for the proposition that job-related stress undermines job performance among librarians. However, as noted earlier, comparatively few of these studies interrogate the moderating role of librarians' personal health practices in this relationship, a gap which the present conceptual paper seeks to address.

5.3 Health Care Habits, Stress and Performance: Towards an Interconnected Understanding

Although the direct literature linking librarians' health care habits to the stress–performance relationship remains sparse, related strands of literature offer support



for the plausibility of such a linkage. Usuka, et al. (2019), reviewing stress-management strategies for librarians, argued that librarians are more likely to achieve high occupational performance when they are relatively free of unmanaged stress and identified both individual and organisational stress-management strategies, several of which overlap substantially with health care habits, such as relaxation techniques, exercise and recreation. This lends conceptual support to the proposition that health care habits function as a coping resource within the broader stress-management repertoire available to librarians.

From the standpoint of the Job Demands–Resources theory, personal resources such as health status and health-promoting habits are understood to buffer the health-impairment process triggered by excessive job demands (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). It is therefore theoretically coherent to expect that librarians who maintain favourable health care habits will be comparatively better positioned to sustain job performance even under conditions of elevated job-related stress, relative to colleagues whose health care habits are poor.

5.4 Contextualising the Discussion: Akwa Ibom State University Library, Akpaden

Akwa Ibom State University Library, comprising the main campus library at Ikot Akpaden and the subsidiary library at Obio Akpa, shares many of the structural characteristics documented in the broader Nigerian university library literature: expanding user populations, growing digital service demands including an institutional repository and e-library, and the funding and infrastructural constraints characteristic of Nigerian public tertiary institutions (Akwa Ibom State University, n.d.). While no study specific to the health care habits, job-related stress and job performance nexus among librarians at Akwa Ibom State University Library was identified in the course of this review, the structural and occupational parallels between this institution and those studied elsewhere in Nigeria (for example, Ilo, 2016, in Ogun State; Oyeniran, 2023, in Bayelsa State) suggest that the conceptual model proposed in this paper is plausibly transferable to, and empirically testable within, the Akwa Ibom State University Library context.

This transferability is strengthened by the recognition, in the broader Nigerian discourse on governance and educational development, that the effectiveness of public educational institutions depends considerably on the welfare and working conditions of their staff [PLACEHOLDER – to be replaced with a full citation of the author’s prior publication(s) on Nigerian politics and educational development]. Attending to librarians’ healthcare habits may therefore be



understood not merely as a matter of individual welfare, but as an element of the broader institutional and policy environment that shapes educational service delivery in Nigeria.

6. Discussion: Implications for Practice

The conceptual analysis presented in this paper carries several implications for library management, librarians themselves, and policymakers. For library management, the analysis suggests that occupational wellness programmes, encompassing periodic health screening, provision of ergonomic furniture and workstation design, sensitisation on nutrition and physical activity, and access to counselling or stress-management support, could serve as a practical complement to conventional stress-reduction measures such as workload redistribution and improved remuneration. Given that many of these interventions are comparatively low-cost relative to structural reforms such as staff expansion or infrastructural overhaul, they represent an accessible entry point for university library management operating within the resource constraints typical of Nigerian public universities.

For librarians, the discussion underscores the professional relevance of cultivating personal health care habits, not as a matter divorced from work, but as an investment in the personal resource base that sustains performance under demanding conditions. Simple practices such as taking regular postural breaks during long periods of desk-based work; maintaining a balanced diet; prioritising adequate sleep; engaging in routine medical check-ups; and adopting constructive coping outlets such as recreation, exercise, or social and spiritual support are all consistent with the health care habits identified in this review as theoretically relevant to buffering occupational stress.

For policymakers and university administrators, the paper reinforces the broader point that staff welfare, including health-related welfare, is integral to institutional effectiveness in the delivery of educational services. Embedding attention to librarians' health and wellbeing within wider human resource and educational development planning is consistent with international guidance on workplace health promotion (OECD, 2022) and is likely to yield dividends in terms of sustained service quality within university libraries.

7. Conclusion

This paper has undertaken a conceptual review of the interrelationship among health care habits, job-related stress and job performance among librarians, with specific reference to Akwa Ibom State University Library, Akpaden. Anchored in the

Transactional Model of Stress and the Job Demands–Resources theory, the paper has argued that librarians’ health care habits function as a personal resource capable of shaping how job-related stress, arising from the increasingly demanding nature of academic librarianship, translates into job performance outcomes. The review of Nigerian and international literature confirms a fairly consistent negative relationship between job-related stress and librarians’ job performance, while related literature on stress-management strategies and workplace health promotion lends theoretical support to the proposition that health care habits can moderate this relationship.

Given the absence of empirical studies specifically examining this nexus within Akwa Ibom State University Library, the conceptual model proposed here is offered as a theoretically grounded foundation for future survey-based research. Such research would allow the propositions advanced in this paper to be empirically tested, thereby contributing both to the library and information science literature and to practical efforts to enhance librarians’ wellbeing and performance within Nigerian university library systems.

8. Recommendations

Based on the conceptual analysis presented in this paper, the following recommendations are proposed:

- i. University library management, including that of Akwa Ibom State University Library, should institute structured occupational wellness programmes for librarians, incorporating periodic health screening, sensitisation on nutrition and physical activity, and access to stress-management or counselling support.
- ii. Library administrators should give attention to the ergonomic design of librarians’ workstations, including seating, lighting and computer terminal arrangement, to mitigate the musculoskeletal risks associated with prolonged sedentary duties.
- iii. Librarians should be encouraged, through continuing professional development programmes, to recognise and cultivate personal health care habits, including regular exercise, balanced nutrition, adequate rest and constructive coping practices, as an integral part of professional self-management.



- iv. University management should consider staff welfare, including health-related welfare of library personnel, as a component of broader educational development and human resource planning, in line with international best practice on workplace health promotion.
- v. Future researchers should undertake empirical, survey-based studies to test the conceptual model and propositions advanced in this paper, using librarians in Akwa Ibom State University Library and comparable Nigerian university libraries as respondents, in order to generate context-specific evidence to guide policy and practice.

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