



## Perceived Effect of Mental Health on the Service Delivery of Librarians in Academic Libraries in Edo State, Nigeria

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### Abstract

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**Introduction:** By the nature of their work, library professionals are exposed to situations and events affecting their mental health. This could adversely affect their performance in service delivery. However, a paucity of social science literature examines this issue, specifically in developing countries like Nigeria. This study aims to investigate the perceived effect of mental health and its impact on the service delivery of librarians in Academic libraries in Edo State.

**Methods:** A descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study with a population of 115 library professionals across six academic libraries in Edo State, Nigeria. A structured questionnaire was used to elicit responses from the professionals. Of the 115 copies distributed, 92 were retrieved constituting a 77% response rate. Descriptive statistics was used for data analysis, including mean and standard deviation, with the aid of IBM SPSS version 25.0.

**Results:** The present study found that the library personnel's awareness of mental health issues was slightly high. The library personnel faced several mental health challenges ranging from frustrations at the workplace, professional challenges/work conflict, anger and confusion to personal challenges. Besides, the study found that mental health issues will significantly influence the service delivery of the library personnel. Strategies for curbing mental health challenges among the personnel were increased awareness, quick response to treatment, enlightenment on self-management, stress management and time management for work-life balance.

**Conclusion:** The mental well-being of library staff, encompassing emotional, cognitive, and behavioral aspects, plays a substantial role in their workplace performance. Consequently, it directly impacts the quality of service they provide. Therefore, the mental health of library professionals is critical to realizing the library's objectives.

## Introduction

Mental health has become an issue of global concern and has been adjudged to be one of the most burdensome health concerns (1, 2). It bothers people across demographic lines and social class, including the young, middle age, and old. It

cuts across the emotional, psychological, and social well-being of people (3). Thus, a mentally healthy person is one that demonstrates wellness across the tripartite well-being. Conversely, one with mental health disorder, mental illness, mental disarrays, or



mental health challenge is one that demonstrates dysfunctional social, psychological, and emotional behaviors. These behaviors could be mild, ranging from regular stress, mood swings, restlessness, anxiety, and hopelessness to severe indications like depression, insanity, self-injury, and suicidal ideations. A critical consideration of the various behaviors that fall under the ambit of mental health concerns suggests that most people knowingly or unknowingly are facing mental health challenges. This implies a high prevalence of mental health concerns among people around the globe.

According to Dsouza et al. (4), mental health is defined as “a state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and can make a contribution to her or his community. “Mental health thus determines the all-round wellness of people and how they interact with the happenings around them. The World Health Organization (WHO) noted a global increase in mental health conditions by 13% in the last decade (5). The organization also noted that one in every eight people in the world live with a mental disorder (6). This incidence was affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, as mental health challenges are heightened in periods of crisis. Reportedly, mental health issues like anxiety and depressive disorders grew during the COVID-19 pandemic (7). This study further affirmed that depressive symptoms increased by 28% globally while anxiety disorder increased by 25% globally. In Nigeria, the statistics for the incidence of mental health have not been well documented. However, rough estimates abound that could help give an idea of its level of prevalence. One in every four Nigerians suffers from a mental illness (8). Although no reliable data exist on the prevalence of mental illness in Nigeria, the COVID-19 pandemic worsened the incidence (9).

The high incidence of mental illness or mental health challenges could affect anyone if not consciously guided against or monitored. As such, it has become a growing public health concern to everybody, institution, and nation (10). It affects people’s personal, social, and professional lives i.e., mental health influences how people deal

with private life issues, societal or public issues, and work-related issues, respectively. This agreed with the WHO (5) when they affirmed that mental health conditions affect all areas of human life, from their relationship with family and friends and how they participate in society to work performance. The latter depicts how professionals behave in the workplace, how they relate with colleagues, employers, or employees, and how they perform their tasks are all influenced by their mental health condition. Thus, the personnel mentally healthy have more propensities to perform better than the one that is mentally ill. This is particularly true in service-oriented institutions like libraries, where library personnel render information services that require social and emotional intelligence. As such, the mental health of library personnel is a factor for consideration in ensuring the delivery of quality information services.

The nature of information services delivered in academic libraries can trigger some form of stress, anxiety, resentment, and more complicated emotions within the personnel. When interacting with users to ascertain their information needs, seeking information sources and systems from which to retrieve the information, and delivering the same to users, library personnel could be mentally exhausted, which, if not properly managed, could lead to mental health issues. Similarly, work stress, personal life, hostile work environment, and poor economic conditions could precipitate mental health conditions among library personnel. In the context of the library workplace, Thomas et al. (11) asserted that mental health disorders can be triggered by various factors, including the inability of some employees to manage unconventional behaviors, workplace disruptions fostering a hostile environment, and the presence of complaints and issues. Thus, various personal and professional factors exist that could trigger the mental health challenge of library personnel, which the library personnel ought to be aware of.

The awareness of mental health among library personnel is crucial in addressing mental health conditions. This is because people who are unaware of mental health issues do not often seek help for the

conditions and suffer in silence (12). This reinforces the need to create awareness of mental health issues among people. Unfortunately, awareness of mental health challenges among individuals is mainly unexplored (13). Therefore, there is a need for the exploration of mental health issues among individuals and professionals.

Research has shown that roles in libraries often come with a degree of job-related stress, potentially impacting the mental health of library staff. This was called emotional labor attached to being a librarian (14). However, there is a paucity of empirical investigations that examined the mental health of library professionals globally and in developing countries like Nigeria, where several environmental, occupational, and economic stressors exist to strain the mental health of these professionals.

Few studies, like Robinson et al. (15), have examined how mental health could impact library service in the post-COVID-19 era. However, this study was conducted outside the Nigerian context, where people face peculiar challenges like economic difficulties, unhealthy work environments, and poor communication structure. Despite the significant

increase in mental health research in Nigeria from 2016 to 2019 (16), there is a noticeable lack of such studies in librarianship, specifically concerning library personnel and their information service delivery. This creates a knowledge gap, which this current study intends to fill. In light of this, this study examines the perceived effect of mental health on the service delivery of personnel in academic libraries in Edo State, Nigeria.

## Methods

The descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study in order to elicit data from the respondents on the variables of the study; as a result of this, ascertaining the state of the respondents concerning the variables under investigation (mental health and service delivery of librarians). As such, the population of the study comprised of professionals (those with a minimum of Bachelor's degree in Library and Information Science) and para-professional librarians (those with a minimum of Diploma degree in Library and Information Science) in selected academic libraries in Edo State as seen in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Population of the Study

S/N	Names of institution	No. of professional	No. of para-professional	Total
1	Benson Idahosa University Library	10	10	20
2	Igbenedion University Library	4	2	6
3	John Harris Library, University of Benin	13	11	24
4	Ambrose Alli University Library	13	27	40
5	Glorious Vision Library, Oguwa	6	4	10
6	Auchi Polytechnic Library	6	9	15
Total		52	63	115

The total population of 115 library personnel was sampled for the study based on its manageable size. The structured questionnaire was employed as an instrument for data collection. Items in the questionnaire were extracted from the study of Burns and Green (17) and adapted to fit this current study. The questionnaire was divided into Part A

and Part B. Part A elicited data on the demographic information of the respondents: gender, age range, staff status, and working experience. Part B addressed the research objectives of the study through Sections A to D. Section A elicited data on the level of librarians' awareness of mental health issues using a four-point Likert scale of Very High

Level (VHL), High Level (HL), Low Level (VLL) and Very Low Level; with scores ranging from 4 to 1 respectively. Section B elicited data on the mental health challenges faced by the librarians, using a four-point Likert scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD), with scores ranging from 4 to 1 respectively. Section C elicited data on the perceived effect of mental health impact on the service delivery of the librarians, using a four-point Likert scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD), with scores ranging from 4 to 1, respectively. Lastly, section D elicited data on the possible ways of curbing mental health challenges, using a four-point Likert scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD), with scores ranging from 4 to 1, respectively. The instrument was validated by experts in Library and Information Science (LIS), and corrections on grammar, structure, and content were affected

accordingly. Twenty-five copies of the questionnaire were pretested using academic librarians in Delta State, Nigeria to determine the reliability of the measuring instrument. The Cronbach alpha method was adopted to determine the reliability coefficient, which yielded 0.83 for the overall scale.

A total of 115 copies of the questionnaire were administered, of which 92 were duly completed, returned, and used for the analysis, representing 77% of the entire population under study. The responses were analyzed using descriptive statistics of simple percentage, frequency count, mean ( $\bar{X}$ ), and standard deviation (St.D), with the aid of IBM Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25.0

## Results

This section presents the results of the analyzed data based according to the objectives of the study.

### Demographic distribution of the respondents

**Table 2.** Respondents' demographics

S/N	Demographics	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Gender</b>			
1	Male	34	37%
2	Female	58	63%
<b>Age (in years)</b>			
1	30 and below	11	12%
2	31-40	37	40%
3	41 and above	44	48%
<b>Staff Status</b>			
1	Professional	30	33%
2	Para-professionals	62	67%
<b>Working Experience</b>			
1	1-10 years	49	53%
2	11-20 years	32	35%
3	21 and above	11	12%

Table 2 reveals that there is an uneven gender distribution among the library personnel as the female tends to be more in number than their male counterparts. This could suggest that there are more females in the librarianship profession, especially in Nigeria. Most of these respondents are in their mid-age upward and, as such, expected to be confronted by inevitable mid-life crises (like withdrawal, denial, anger, and depression) experienced by people above 40 years. The majority

of the respondents were para-professionals, which could either be because the para-professionals were more accessible and willing to participate in the survey and/or there are more para-professionals in academic libraries in Edo State, Nigeria. In addition, more than half of the respondents had less than ten years of working experience, implying that they are relatively new to the practice of librarianship and still have more active working years ahead of them.

## Results of the research questions

**Table 3.** Awareness of mental health

S/N	Level of librarians' awareness	VHE	HE	LE	VLE	$\bar{X}$	St.D	Remarks
1	Depression	53 49.3%	35 30.4%	-	2 2.2%	3.0	0.75	Agreed
2	Sleep disorder	42 66.2%	35 23.6%	10 13%	5 5%	3.5	0.87	Agreed
3	Traumatic experiences at home and workplace	24 54.0%	56 37.8%	10 13%	2 2.2%	3.4	0.85	Agreed
4	Work-load/stress due to economic crisis	26 55.4%	58 39.1%	3 3.2%	5 5%	3.4	0.85	Agreed
5	Professional challenges/ work conflict	60 78.6%	22 14.8%	2 2.1%	8 11.4%	3.6	0.9	Agreed
6	Frustrations at workplace	9 46.6%	6 7.1%	23 55.7%	49 30%	1.7	0.42	Disagreed
7	Anger and confusion	12 53.3%	45 30.4%	30 6.0%	5 31%	2.6	0.67	Agreed
8	Anxiety and worry	34 22.9%	28 39.1%	20 2.0%	10 5%	3.1	0.78	Agreed
9	Self-injury	3 3.2%	7 47.2%	26 28.2%	56 60%	1.5	0.38	Disagreed
10	Suicidal ideation due to workplace conflict	6 35.8%	9 46.6%	70 3.3%	7 30%	2.1	0.53	Disagreed
11	Stress due to economic crisis	58 63.0%	19 20.7%	3 3.3%	12 13%	3.3	0.83	Agreed
12	Personal challenges	50 52.3%	42 45.7%	-	-	3.5	0.88	Agreed

**Grand Mean = 2.8**

Table 3 reveals that the library personnel that were surveyed are aware of a myriad of mental health issues, primarily those around professional challenges/work conflict, personal challenges, sleep disorders, and traumatic experiences. Conversely, there seems to be low awareness of self-injury,

frustrations at the workplace, and suicidal ideation due to workplace conflict. However, with a grand mean of 2.8 and a criterion mean of 2.5 (based on a four-point Likert scale rating), the library personnel's awareness of mental health issues is slightly high. By implication, the library personnel are conscious

of these issues, suggesting that they might be open to taking steps toward addressing them.

**Table 4.** Mental health challenges faced by the librarians

S/N	Mental health challenges	SA	A	D	SD	$\bar{X}$	St.D	Remarks
1	Frustrations at workplace	58 77.0%	20 13.5%	9 6.0%	5 3.3%	3.6	0.9	Agreed
2	Sleep disorder	61 41.8%	19 50.6%	11 7.4%	1 0.6%	3.3	0.87	Agreed
3	Traumatic experiences at home and workplace	43 66.8%	27 18.2%	5 3.3%	7 4.7%	3.3	0.76	Agreed
4	Work-load / stresses due to economic crisis	42 66.2%	43 29.0%	5 3.3%	2 1.3%	3.3	0.85	Agreed
5	Professional challenges/work conflict	53 73.6%	30 20.2%	6 4.0%	3 2.0%	3.6	0.87	Agreed
6	Depression	6 35.8%	9 46.6%	70 3.3%	7 30%	2.2	0.53	Disagreed
7	Anger and confusion	57 76.3%	30 20.2%	3 2.0%	2 1.3%	3.1	0.69	Agreed
8	Anxiety and worry	32 59.4%	40 27.0%	12 8.1%	8 5.4%	3.4	0.85	Agreed
9	Self-injury	68 45.9%	14 47.2%	2 1.3%	8 11.4%	3.3	0.82	Agreed
10	Suicide ideation due to workplace conflict	6 35.8%	9 46.6%	70 3.3%	7 30%	2.2	0.53	Disagreed
11	Stress due to economic crisis	34 22.9%	50 39.1%	3 2.0%	5 5%	2.1	0.52	Agreed
12	Personal challenges	53 35.8%	13 46.6%	5 3.3%	21 30%	3.0	0.75	Agreed

Table 4 indicates that the library personnel surveyed face several mental health challenges ranging from frustrations at the workplace, professional challenges/work conflict, anger, and confusion to personal challenges being the least accepted. Mental health challenges not faced

by these personnel were depression and suicide ideation. Overall, the study has shown that most of the library personnel experience one form of mental health issues or another, from mild cases like personal challenges to severe issues like depression, which needs immediate intervention.

**Table 5.** Perceived effect of mental health impact on service delivery

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	$\bar{X}$	St.D	Remarks
1	Depression among librarians can lead to poor job performance	60 65.2%	20 21.7%	4 4.3%	10 10.9%	3.4	0.86	Agreed
2	Work conflict can reduce the level of service delivery in the library	41 44.5%	35 38.0%	10 10.9%	6 6.5%	3.2	0.80	Agreed
3	Traumatic experiences at home and workplace can affect job output among librarians	33 35.9%	50 54.3%	7 7.6%	2 2.2%	3.2	0.80	Agreed
4	Frustration due to economic crisis can affect librarians' job satisfaction and quality of job performance	12 13%	58 63.0%	10 10.9%	12 13%	2.7	0.69	Agreed

**Table 5.** Perceived effect of mental health ... (continued)

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	$\bar{X}$	St.D	Remarks
5	Professional challenges can hinder quality service delivery	43 46.7%	28 30.4%	6 6.5%	15 16.3%	3.0	0.76	Agreed
6	Personal challenges can hinder quality service delivery	12 13%	45 45.7%	30 32.6%	5 5.4%	2.6	0.67	Agreed
7	Confusion among librarians results in a negative attitude toward service delivery	34 37%	28 30.4%	20 21.7%	10 10.9%	3.1	0.78	Agreed
8	Anxiety and worry can affect librarians' readiness to serve library patrons	26 28.3%	56 60.9%	3 3.3%	7 7.6%	3.0	0.75	Agreed
9	Librarians who suffer from self-injury will find it difficult to carry out their jobs professionally	70 76.0%	7 7.6%	6 6.5%	9 9.8%	3.3	0.82	Agreed
10	Suicide ideation due to workplace conflict can affect team management and teamwork in the library	58 63%	3 3.3%	19 6.0%	12 13%	2.8	0.7	Agreed
11	Stress due to economic crisis can affect librarians' job satisfaction and quality of job performance	33 35.9%	44 47.8%	5 5.4%	10 10.9%	3.1	0.77	Agreed
<b>Grand Mean = 3.0</b>								

Table 5 demonstrates that the respondents agreed to all items measuring the effect of mental health issues on library service delivery. As such, the ability of library personnel to deliver services that are of quality will be strongly influenced by their mental health. The items with the highest mean score (3.4) show that library personnel who are depressed will perform poorly at their job. This is followed by the agreement that librarians who suffer self-injury borne from mental health challenges will find it difficult to

discharge their duties professionally ( $\bar{x} = 3.3$ ). The items with the lowest mean score of 2.6, which is slightly more significant than the criterion mean, reveal that personal challenges can hinder quality service delivery. By implication, personal challenges are the least of the mental health issues that affect service delivery among library professionals. With a grand mean of 3.0, mental health issues significantly influence or impact the service delivery in the academic libraries under study.

**Table 6.** Possible ways of curbing mental health challenges

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	$\bar{X}$	St.D	Remarks
1	Creating awareness on mental health issues among librarians	62 79%	20 13.5%	7 4.7%	3 2.0%	3.8	0.95	Agreed
2	Enlightenment of librarians on self-management, stress management and time management for work-life balance	25 68.2%	39 26.3%	2 1.3%	6 4.0%	3.8	0.95	Agreed
3	Building healthy relationships among librarians and between librarians and employees	60 78.3%	18 12.1%	10 6.7%	4 2.7%	3.6	0.91	Agreed
4	Quick response to treatment of mental illness among librarians	52 72.9%	36 24.3%	1 0.6%	3 2.0%	3.8	0.95	Agreed
5	Access to mental health resources and mental health self-assessment tools	66 44.5%	20 51.3%	4 2.7%	2 1.3%	2.8	0.72	Agreed
6	Providing social support and effective communication structures in libraries	24 54.0%	68 45.9%	-	-	3.5	0.88	Agreed
7	Provision of incentives to personnel who display emotional intelligence and healthy behavior	12 45.9%	76 51.3%	4 2.7%	-	3.4	0.85	Agreed

Table 6 shows possible measures of curbing mental health challenges among library personnel. The respondents agreed to all items on the scale as possible ways to address mental health issues. The most effective strategies, as indicated by the highest average scores, included raising awareness about mental health issues among librarians, ensuring rapid response to mental illness treatment, and educating librarians on self-management, stress management, and time management to achieve a balanced work-life scenario. The item with the lowest mean score (2.8) is access to mental health resources and mental health self-assessment tools.

## Discussion

This study's results showed that librarians had a slightly high level of awareness of mental health issues ranging from professional challenges to anger and confusion. However, the respondents were unaware of some mental health issues like self-injury and suicidal ideation. As part of their roles in promoting mental health awareness and Health Information Literacy (HIL) programs (17), librarians are inherently expected to be knowledgeable about mental health issues, as indicated by this study. This supports Zhang (18), whose study found that librarians were aware of mental health challenges in the library, such as anxiety, worry, and depression, among others. Contrarily, the study of Kyumana (19) showed that most of the library staff investigated had low awareness of mental health issues. Possibly, while library personnel face some challenges and issues at the workplace, they might be fully aware that these challenges/issues are classified under mental illness or mental health challenges.

Moreover, the present study revealed that librarians face a series of mental health issues like frustrations at the workplace, professional challenges/work conflict, anxiety and worry, sleep disorder, workload/stresses due to economic crisis, and traumatic experiences at home and workplace. Meanwhile, depression and suicide ideation were not generally faced by the respondents. The research supports Anaraki and Sardari's findings (20), revealing a minimal incidence of depression among librarians. However, most librarians participating in

the study reported experiencing other mental health problems, including anxiety and sleep disorders. In the same vein, Zeinali et al. (21), in their study on hospital librarians, found a significantly higher level of stress and anxiety among the librarians. However, contrary to this study, Zeinali et al. (21) revealed that the librarians investigated in their study experienced depression. The majority of the librarians in the study of Burns and Green (17) believed they had hitherto been diagnosed with anxiety and depression a form of depression. Although the librarians who participated in this study are aware of depression, they do not experience it. However, possibly, the prolonged experiences of other forms of mental illness they experience could, in the long run, lead to depression.

Moreover, the study found that the mental health of the library personnel has an impact on their service delivery. By implication, when library personnel are in good mental health, they tend to possess the necessary wellness and wholeness required to do their job effectively and efficiently. Conversely, poor mental health or mental illness will adversely affect their job performance, resulting in poor service quality delivery. This supports the study of Chopra (22), where common mental disorders negatively affect workplace productivity. The author noted that these disorders would negatively affect the work environment as co-workers might need to do extra work to compensate for their colleagues' poor performance, which could cause them to stress and invariably have a toll on their mental health. Besides, when library personnel are faced with personal challenges and other mental health challenges, it affects their productivity as the incidence of absenteeism increase and performance decline accordingly, as opined by Kyumana (19). Those who do not or cannot absent themselves from work exhibit Presenteeism Chopra (22), adversely affecting quality service delivery in libraries. The finding of this study implies that academic libraries attend to the mental health of their personnel towards delivering quality services. Notably, the effect of mental health on service delivery is as perceived by the respondents, which is subject to social desirability bias. As such, there is a need for further



research to use scientific experiment methods like Randomized Controlled Trails (RCT) to achieve a more reliable result.

The current study showed several interventions or approaches that could be adopted in curbing mental health challenges among the respondents. They include awareness creation on mental health issues, enlightenment on self-management, stress management, time management for work-life balance, access to mental health resources and mental health self-assessment tools, building healthy relationships in workplace, and providing social support and effective communication structures. Although there seems to be a lack of empirical investigations addressing how mental health challenges can be curbed among library professionals, a general assessment can be made to discuss this finding. According to Thomas et al. (11), some general practices to promote mental health were good communication, social support, increase awareness, and mental health promotion.

## Conclusion

The mental health of library professionals is critical to the overall realization of the library's objectives. However, much attention has not been given to this issue both in theory and practice. The emotional labor and occupational stress that library personnel undergo in rendering information services could cumulate into mental health challenges of which they are pretty aware. Although they are aware of mental health issues, this does not translate into taking remarkable or significant steps to manage them. This study did not address issues bothering on the management, treatment, or interventions of mental health challenges, but it has shown the predominant mental health issues faced by library personnel and possible ways to curb them.

The mental well-being of library staff plays a crucial role in their performance and the quality of service they provide. This encompasses emotional, cognitive, and behavioral wellness. Notably, even staff with stable mental health can face mental health challenges over time due to personal, occupational, economic, and societal factors. This should provide a directive for further research in assessing factors

influencing the mental health of library professionals.

Consequent to the findings and conclusion of the study, the following recommendations are made:

i. Academic libraries should heighten awareness of mental health issues among library personnel and encourage affected staff to seek internal or external interventions made available to them.

ii. Academic libraries make available clinical or psychological interventions for mental health challenges as quick responses to mental illness.

iii. Academic libraries should periodically organize workshops and trainings for their staff aimed at training them on emotional intelligence, stress management, and time management for work-life balance.

iv. Social structures and communication channels should be created by academic libraries' management to enable personnel to relate and discuss freely issues that can stimulate mental health challenges.

v. Management of academic libraries should provide a convenient working environment and eliminate possible stressors at the workplace.

## Declaration

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### Conflicts of Interests

The authors declared no conflict of interest.

### Ethical Statement

The study's participants were duly informed on the aim of the study prior to their participation, which was voluntary, and they were informed that they could discontinue participating in the study whenever they dimmed necessary. The participants anonymously participated in the survey without any incentive, and their responses were kept confidential. Authors take responsibility for the integrity of the study.

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### Authors' contributions

Original draft preparation: M.O.I.; Review, editing, and final draft preparation: M.O.I.

Conceptualization: P.E.E.; Design of research

instrument: P.E.E.; Administration of data: P.E.E.

Collection of data: J.O.E.; Administration of data: J.O.E.; Analysis of data: J.O.E.

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