



LIBRARIES AS INCLUSIVE THIRD SPACES: A MULTIFACETED ROLE IN PROMOTING WELLNESS AND SOCIAL RESILIENCE

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ABSTRACT

Mental health and stress management have turn to be an extensive intercontinental issue today, impacting scholar, professionals and inhabitant people. No longer merely inaudible rampart of books, the library is being perceived as a living, respiring institution that can strengthen mental health. Herein, we explore the spiraling role of libraries in supporting mental health and stress management through their services, programs, and environments. Libraries nurture extensive spaces while reducing communal isolation, amplify emotional persistency and enhance psychological well-being. Despite these philanthropy, their full aptitude is hampered by a lack of awareness, limited funding and insufficient training. The paper accentuates the discrete aspects of how libraries provide mental health and stress management services. The study inspects the effect of bibliotherapy, community programs, digital resources and extensive services. This investigate suggests that libraries not just promote the process of accessing information, but furthermore invigorate mental peace, social engagement and personal development.

Keywords: Bibliotherapy, Libraries, Mental Health, Stress Management, Well-Being, Social Resilience

INTRODUCTION

The 21st century has introduced concepts such as globalization, information communication and technology (ICT), digitalization, and knowledge-based economies, all with their opportunities, challenges, and pressures. This age of technology has rapidly grown with computers and other ICT tools as an inseparable part of life, and librarians are well up-to-date to provide speedy services to the library users. Advancements and innovations in technology have brought libraries into the modern world, and an aspect of this evolution is the delivery of information services and organization of information in a proper setting and format.

Today, life has become more hectic owing to increasing workloads and competition. All of these goods and services have played a significant role in making our lives easier and causing more distress. Minor stressors due to

technological dependence play a pivotal role in adding pressure on people. Librarians have been interested in research on the phenomenon known as computer-related stress or "technostress" (Laspinas, M. L., 2015). Researchers have described technostress as technophobia, cyber phobia, computer attitudes, and computer aversion, which are apparent in every walk of human endeavor, including libraries. Technostress is defined as anxiety or mental stress caused by excessive use of or exposure to computer technologies.

In particular, many people living in urban areas are seeking relief from increased mental fatigue, isolation, and anxiety. During times like these, libraries have become a "mental refuge." Website read is not only an information system, but also provides the opportunity to enjoy mindfulness, quiet reflection and social interaction. Gone are the days when libraries were little more than storehouses of knowledge. Libraries like these are now acts of mental health mitigation, info repositories and safe spaces where people can mingle (Karki, M., et al., 2024).

MENTAL WELL-BEING AND STRESS CONCEPT

Mental well-being

Mental health is a condition by which people cope with the stresses of life and productive coping within work. Our understanding of mental well-being has evolved in tandem with advances across the fields of psychology, medicine, sociology and public health. Focus on mental illness for years; diagnosing and treating problems that overshadow mental health well-being. Over the last several decades, this view has been replaced with a much more positive and holistic one. However, the term mental well-being is somewhat nebulous and does not necessarily equate to absence of mental illness or distress. Well-being has been hailed as an indicator of national prosperity and appears to be linked to improvements in physical health and mental health (WHO Factsheet, 2023).

According to the World Health Organization, "Mental health is a state of well-being in which an individual realizes his or her own abilities can cope with the normal stresses of life can work productively

and fruitfully and is able to contribute to his or her community. It is a vital component of health and well-being that underpins how we as individuals and communities make choices, develop relationships, and change the world around us (WHO, 2019). That is well-being is the complete state of mental, physical and social health; so it identifies with goodness of life such as life satisfaction or happiness.

Stress

Stress is an overpressure and disequilibrium. Stress refers to mental, physical, and emotional stress when they feel muddled or sign tortured through a challenge or obstacle. In simple terms, when the work conditions and duties become more than our control, we get disturbed, anxious, or pressurized, and these types of situations are known as stress. This indicates stress for all three: the mind, brain, and body. When prolonged, this daily hustle stress affects our health and performance.

Stress is broadly defined as a response to tangible or imagination-based threats to a person's homeostasis. These threats can be either real or perceived. As proposed by the functionalist viewpoint, stress is a survival mechanism that induces physiological transformations required to evade threatening situations (Mahakud, G. C., 2004). However, difficulties can occur if financial, family, or workplace stress triggers a similar response.

According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, "stress is a constraining force or influence. It is a force applied when one body or part of the body presses on, pulls, or pushes against another body or part; it is a physical, chemical, or emotional agent that creates bodily tension and may be implicated in the causation of disease" (Merriam-Webster Dictionary).

These methods and psychotherapies are used to control a person's level of stress, especially chronic stress. Libraries contribute to support access (Sergeyev, N., et al., 2025) to reliable information and self-help resources.

PREDOMINANT TYPES OF STRESS

Stress is understanding it based upon the scenario

1. **Positive stress:** This is called positive stress because any pressure or problem which impels

you to some purpose is called positive stress as it enhances reproduce also increases the energy needed for ourselves with energy to perform and give us motive so this helps us and we feel stressed. For instance, if you get good results (exam) then try to work on the things as per these types of stress comes under positive stress and better; or have a wish do your part in duty to follow it that also expiring productive stresses upon their lives.

2. **Negative Stress:** Negative pressure, on the other hand, is a sort of strain that climbs as far as possible and affects mental peace (or equality), health and execution. Constant unease, worries, annoyance, difficulty maintaining focus on the job, sleeping too much, which slows down performance, pain, fatigue or hypertension, self-confidence depletion, and stress, should be paid attention to promptly as negative stress symptoms.
3. **Immediate stress:** Immediate stress is also known as situational professional challenges. It is a type of physical response to an immediate incident or event, where one witnesses something unusual that may last for a few seconds. This results in the heart beating faster, sweating from palms and feet, and hands trembling, all of which are followed by increased anger.
4. **Chronic Stress:** Long-Term (Chronic) Stress chronic stress is an endless and slow-moving pressure that affects our health and day-to-day life. This is referred to as chronic stress, which affects mood and behavior. Chronic stress symptoms include headache, fatigue, sleep problems, excessive blood pressure, depression, and cardiovascular disease.

CAUSES OF STRESS

There are various causes of stress, and if we attempt to list them all, they can be generally categorized as follows:

1. **Personal and Psychological Causes:** Personal causes such as Excessive Work Pressure and worrying about the future, negative thinking,

poor responsibility level, low self-control, and failure to achieve what one wants.

2. **Family and Social Causes:** Family conflict, in-law wars, fights with friends or society, inability to perform up to the expectations set by society, relationship break-ups or love disappointments, loneliness, and being alone all serve as additional fuel for stress.
3. **Physical and Medical Aspects:** For instance, you might have a chronic illness or fitness condition, get less sleep, or need to understand how the altered lifestyle puts up our slender existence genuinely doctoral tatte by weightiness or exhaustion exceeded, and eating more bananas is practically safer.
4. **Financial Aspects:** Money urges or unwanted credits, family issues, business misfortunes, and compelling generators to endure the way of life every one of these are monetary issues that produce strain, which creates pressure and impacts the operational fringes in a person.
5. **Environmental and External Causes:** Masses, racket, pollution, traffic, and day-to-day problems; catastrophes or accidents are additional external motives.

STRATEGIES TO PREVENT MENTAL STRESS

In the fast-paced and furious life today, everyone in every age group is gradually succumbing to stress, and one can see its effect in some way or another in everybody's day-to-day existence. Stress is not new but rather an issue so prevalent that people of all backgrounds and ages are losing the battle against it. This stress exerts a heavy toll and manifests in ways that everyone can see. The nature of this impact depends on the area of a person's life being impacted, how stress is currently impacting their life, and what form the stress that they are feeling takes. These effects can be used to develop effective strategies to combat stress. Another way to outline these corrective assets is to divide them into three broad types:

Physical Measures or Strategies

It's an epidemic these days, Physical consequences of stress are the most common ones and

manifested in form of weakness, frequent headaches, sleep disturbance (Insomnia), intestinal disorders and deficient immune system. With stress levels exploding on historically high scales, the same amount of energy is now being devoted to seeking and implementing methods to alleviate it. Other practices, such as yoga, meditation, stretching, and Zumba, have also shown excellent results in releasing physical stress.

Mental Strategies

The second most critical and immediate impact of stress on a person is their mind and intelligence. This causes insomnia, restlessness, anger, lack of confidence in oneself, memory loss, negative thinking, depression, hopelessness, and symptoms that hinder job performance. Over time, they begin to become disassociated and isolated from the rest of the family. The best approach to overcoming this is simply being aware of your negative thinking patterns and trading them for more supportive ones. Moreover, it is crucial to analyze stressors and systematically address them from the perspective of structural solutions. In fact, you can soothe your passions by overloading yourself with books and motivational anecdotes. Indeed, it is one of the most relevant and efficient drugs for controlling this ailment, a remedy that already existed in antiquity. Reading books (at a library or at any place) this traditional habit is one of the best means; 'Bibliotherapy,' which has its origin from ancient sages, has been useful and valuable in modern hectic lifestyle as well.

Bibliotherapy: A Therapeutic Approach

The concept of bibliotherapy fits this goal, as every academically oriented social institution holds the motto that we must mold today's children into citizens of our country. Bibliotherapy is the use of books to help children process their issues. Bibliotherapy uses reading as a therapeutic tool to overcome personal and emotional problems. It is acknowledged as one of the best ways to relieve stress and improve mental health. Research indicates that bibliotherapy reduces anxiety and enhances emotional stability with enhanced coping mechanisms (Morin, R. A., & LaVertu, A. E., 2025).

Libraries assist in bibliotherapy by providing access to relevant materials and programs that utilize reading for mental health. This theory is founded on the assumption that a person can discover their own issues by relating to a story or a character. Reading nurtures self-examination and reflection. Modern libraries have evolved into multifunctional spaces that embrace learning, socializing, and well-being (Karki, M., et al., 2024).

In this context, there are certain specific theories that have proven effective since ancient times. In the field of Library Science, this is a very old concept. According to an Egyptian theory, the library was regarded as a "Royal Chamber of Books," and its motto has been translated as "The House of Healing for the Soul." Bibliotherapy is a deeply rooted concept within Library Science; it involves the use of books to help resolve people's problems.

Social and Behavioral Strategies

Third ranked following are stress effects in social and behavioral levels of a person. This is where they begin to modify their behavior a little. They lose relationships growing colder, bordered by walls of bitterness and resentment, retreat into themselves as this person creeps further away to where the noise wraps protectively, becoming fainter and fainter. This case also tends to disrupt their eating habits. The best way to cope with this is to learn time management and stay away from the distracting fellows. Moreover, the most effective must be reducing internet and mobiles use and it is the time to get far away from social nets. This can be achieved through self-discipline and at the same time taking immediate care of one's approach towards those around them, as it is widely regarded one of the most effective remedies based on Social Capital Theory (SCT), has been proved theoretically too and practically to withstand such kind of situations.

Theory of Social Capital

The notion of "social capital" has been at the heart of a recent revival in thinking about social connectedness and health promotion. According to a study social capital creates "features of social organization, such as networks, norms and trust that

facilitate actions for mutual benefit.” (Putnam R. Bowling alone, 1995). The state of the economy and social conditions also affect social capital. Argues that the more social capital a person possesses, the less likely they are to be socially isolated, a sense of social security is created, there is less crime and an improvement in education and societal functioning as well as job performance. (Woolcock M., 1998). Social science tells us that a person’s social relationships influence his mindset. The simplest way libraries connect people is through community activities, which counteract loneliness and isolation. According to social science, a person's social relationships affect his mental state. Libraries connect people to each other through community activities, thereby reducing feelings of loneliness and isolation.

1. **A Multifaceted Role of Libraries in Promoting Mental Well-Being**

Modern libraries have transformed into multifunctional spaces that support learning, interaction, and well-being. They are increasingly recognized as safe and inclusive environments that foster a sense of belonging. In the past, libraries were expected to play a role in building and maintaining knowledge gateway. Today, however, libraries tend to provide a therapeutic environment to their users, which in addition to educating its users, also makes sure to enlighten and entertain them abundantly. They have succeeded in transforming and improving the quality of people’s lives. Such findings add weight to the idea that libraries today fulfill not only the intellectual needs of their community members, but also promotes well-being. So far, there is no common definition of the term ‘wellbeing’ within current research literature. However, the term has been characterized as “a broad concept concerning the quality of people’s lives, in which wellbeing is described as a dynamic process that arises from how people adapt to their surrounding environment” (Reis, S., 2018). To put it another way, well-being is a state of full psychological, physical and social health which can be similar to the quality of life such as happiness and life

satisfaction. Libraries have some other strategic advantage as a Wellness Centre to promote the wellbeing and social resilience.

2. **Universal Accessibility and Neutrality:** Library is a singular and uniquely important “third space,” a neutral, non-commercial community hub apart from home or work that everyone can access for free at little social cost compared to a clinic or mental health center. Such low-barrier access is especially important for vulnerable or marginalized groups, including homeless people; socially isolated people; and those with mild mental distress (Fredericks, L. & Gwin, P., 2020). The study will conclude that the library is an essential entry point for individuals who deliberately avoid healthcare routes because it marks an unprecedented absence of financial or diagnostic barriers.
3. **Therapeutic Environment and Social Resilience:** Library's physical and programmatic environment deliberately promotes wellness as well as provides knowledge. Therapeutic landscapes can be built with silencing, illumination and contemplative privacy in mind. Furthermore, social interaction programs based on reading have proven to be very effective in combating loneliness and building social capital, both of which has been shown to constitute a relevant buffer against the decline of mental health during such an episode (Hanel et al, 2017). In addition to its role as a bastion of curated information, library plays a role in public health by fostering supportive social environments.
4. **Ethically Scaled:** The accomplishment of a library based glossary program can be endowed to the quality, pertinence, and ethical maturation of its collection. This requisites a conscious, specialized perspective to collection management; a one-size-fits-all self-help section will not suffice.
5. **Collecting for Span, Validity, and Authentication:** A triumphant collection must encompass multiple genres. Fiction, memoir and

expert nonfiction provide the emotional aspects needed to achieve catharsis and identification, allowing users to safely explore the challenging emotional territory. In contrast, nonfiction resources, particularly those written through the perspective of research supported by authenticity-based therapeutic modalities such as cognitive-behavioral therapy which impart actionable coping strategies needed to then be able to apply what you're learning in a therapeutic process.

The librarian must go through a strenuous process of screening for psychological accuracy or validity. Resources that offer stale advice, promote stereotypes or are published without basis in solid psychology should be discarded. This is an important ethical requirement. Library staff must, if necessary, ensure that literature is not misleading and redirects users towards professional therapeutic support and verified supportive viewpoints (Brewster, L., 2014). Echoing findings from UK 'Reading Well' schemes where sticking to clinically validated/prescriptively recommended reading lists resulted in significant reductions in symptoms of mild to moderate anxiety and depression (Gould, A., Pyle, J., & Cudworth, J., 2012). There is an important distinction in the literature between a casual collection and curated, evidence-based reading lists created in consultation with clinical experts. Yet there is no evidence that such curation is a direct predictor of therapeutic outcome. This is because bibliotherapy needs to resonate deeply within someone's lived experience and that requires a curated list of books that reflects the diversity of the community served.

6. **Age-Appropriate Literature:** For the enthusiasm that needs to be adapted into careful curation, age-appropriate literature. In picture books and graphic novels, metaphors are used to assist kids in building emotional literacy. Young adult fiction prioritizing identity, peer pressure and complex family dynamics generates maximum identifications for teenagers through

an authentic, friendly voice.

7. **Cultural Competency:** Resources with divergent characters and occurrence from numerous ethnic, sexual, and gender marginalized groups are used to develop cultural awareness. Identification is much stronger when a client reads literature which reflects back an accurate picture of their own region. This leads to better understanding and increased emotional application straight away. This promise to collection growth that represents diversity across on entire health and well-being field of expertise, ensures balanced access to treatment properties.
8. **Programming and Facilitation Have the Most Therapeutic Value:** The only kind of programming which has therapeutic value is organized using facilitated guided discussion and expressive reflection, passive reading does not work. Reading circles facilitated by bibliotherapists, there is a distinction between usual book clubs and bibliotherapy reading circles that is essential here. the four stages of therapy, each requiring a skilled facilitator to shepherd the conversation. A psychotherapist and a librarian would normally facilitate together. The facilitator must be an expert in setting boundaries and defining his/her own and the participants' principles of secrecy in order to create a psychologically safe environment (Shapiro, B., & Hugtes, H., 2015).
9. **Less Focused on their Experiences:** Keeping the discussion mainly to the feelings and themes of the book does not permit any unsupervised clinical self-disclosure that would harm participants or facilitators. These facilitated groups help participants quickly build social connectedness and reduce isolation, which in turn brings about an understanding that one is not alone; this sense of inclusion is likely an effective mental health preventative intervention.
10. **Literacy Story with Art:** For low-literacy and younger children, narrative story salon is analogue to reading groups. This means you will

need to read aloud and develop participants through discussions about the emotional domains of the characters during story time in order to teach them emotional vocabulary and literacy. Moreover, adding expressive arts (i.e., guided journaling, moment reflection poetry, painting from the reading), can serve to add a levels of therapeutic insight-application cycles by converting concepts into functional reflective activities.

11. **Professional Boundaries versus Collaborative Relationships:** Librarians are not Certified Healthcare Provider, Not Trained in Psychology but Ethical Information Professional Realizing and maintaining the boundaries that exist between providing a psycho-spiritual reading guidance and actual mental health treatment, is imperative. Formalized collaboration is the only way to delineate and save this boundary.
12. **Fountain of Trust:** Developing secure, transparent referral channels is the key task. We must train librarians to recognize acute distress and make appropriate, timed and soft referrals to real clinical partners when the needs of a patron exceed developmental self-help.
13. **Shared Authority:** This approach uses the different expertise of both professions in a cooperative way. The librarian's efficiency in organization and access the information, clinician's proficiency in psychiatric assessment and management. The ethics behind this highly successful service delivery framework is that the same system is demonstrably both directly and indirectly accountable to its end users.
14. **Joint Programming:** Sharing events that complement each other well, like having a certified therapist lead an entire workshop on anxiety management and then immediately following it up with a curated library book. thwarts the academic legitimacy of the library initiative and professionalism due to this making very obvious this only an adjunct partner and not a substitute for clinical care.

15. **Staff Training and Ethical Risk Management:** Lack of training is the biggest risk. Continuing, targeted professional development on critically trauma-informed practice, boundary keeping and facilitation should have been made available for librarians. Giving people false information, or going beyond what is permitted in terms of therapeutic scope to provided miscounseling, is an unethical crime against clients who are suffering. There needs to be ongoing training for employees that their role is not diagnosis or therapy, it is curation, facilitation and referral.
16. **More than Replication, Secrecy, and Privacy:** Bibliotherapy programs are public organizations but they still must navigate sensitive and private complicated topics. Facilitators undergo intensive training in how to maintain confidentiality within groups and what to do when someone discloses information that might put themselves or others at risk. Another great challenge is that having long term funding. In order to be awarded grants and municipal support that validate the long-term chronic stress alleviation they provide to communities, libraries have deliberate targeting of their message as public health assets.

ROLE OF LIBRARY PROFESSIONALS

Librarians are also becoming more interested in the design of experiences that enhance and improve how community members navigate their interactions with all of a library's services, resources and staff. They define it as the "totality" of everything that a library has to offer in ways of experience, not just ease of using the catalog. In addition to meeting users' needs of a library, it is an efficient workplace with empathetic and understanding colleagues who work together for the welfare of the institution by serving the needs/wants of all the beneficiaries. Only a library should be changing well since it is created for a purpose. Library staff bring guidance, education, and support as well as wellness initiatives to users. But they can also suffer from occupational stress on account of workload and expectations. This is well

accepted as one way that librarians can help with the emotional, behavioral and social needs of individuals who value the benefits of a physical library. Librarian acts on a better character building depending upon which one will engage in the society he lives in, that is why beyond merely being custodians of books or information, plays a very active role of character building.

CONCLUSION

The modern library holds a powerful position to be a community center for healing of the mental strains of affliction in our society today. By creating not only safe, contemplative spaces, but also ethically-curated evidence-based collections and required strategic programmatic partnerships, librarians extend their reach far beyond literacy numbers. This institutional evaluation affirms the library's role as a caring place that actively nurtures better emotional and mental health life and social resilience in the community besides being an information center. Embracing this public health responsibility is not an add-on service. It is an integral and essential action towards ensuring the library remains a far-reaching, institution of modern society. To make the long-term community benefit and return on investment (ROI) of these vital wellness programs quantifiable.

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