INTRODUCTION

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The end of the twentieth century witnessed a series of violent changes battering our society. In fact, a new civilization has been found to be emerging in our lives all over the world. The well-known social thinker Toffler (1980) describes this powerful tide of revolutions as the ‘Third Wave’ of change surging across the world. He made a startling sense of it when he wrote: “This new civilization brings with it new family styles; changed ways of working, loving and living; a new economy; new political conflicts; and beyond all this, an altered consciousness as well… The dawn of this new civilization is the single most explosive fact of our lifetimes”. The third wave thus begins a truly new era. All the bio, socio, and techno spheres of the new century will have to be enmeshed with the weft and weave of these transformations.

The key to such an extra ordinary change is, of course, the computer coupled with new advancements in electronics and communication technology. These technologies multiply the means and powers of spreading the new developments in different fields at different nook and corners of the world. Readymade information easily tapped from Internet and other information technology sources trembles all spheres of human life and all systems of human activity like marketing, engineering, management and so on. Information has become the vital resource, valuable input and a super power for societal development. The future society will be functioning around the axis of information values rather than material values. Knowledge capital will predominate over material capital in structuring the national economy.
Consequently, the information and knowledge industries assume greater significance and can play a prominent role in the economic transformation of a nation. Today, the primary and secondary information sectors have come to account for a significant proportion of the GDP and GNP of many developed and developing countries.

Implications of this emerging scenario of ‘Information Society’ are likely to be profound in many ways and its ramifications manifold. They also raise a host of questions including those related to the labour and workforce strategies in every sector. In the volatile environment, work in the factories and offices grow less repetitive and becomes less fragmented. Each person is entitled to do a somewhat longer, rather than smaller task. Workers are forced to cope with more frequent changes in their tasks as well as a blending succession of personnel transfers, product changes, and reorganisations. Changes in the organisation of work dictate new roles and relationships, which will have a direct impact on jobs and staff. Consequently, responsiveness to the needs and problems of an organisation’s employees as well as its clientele also implies change and requires scrutiny.

The speed of the busy life; cultural, economic and political changes in the society; ever changing roles and role ambiguity of the individuals etc. are causing to precipitate a strange disease to human beings – the stress. Stress has become common and very frequent when and wherever there is human involvement. It has also become one of the most serious occupational health
hazards of the time. Stress at work and the stressful transactions are characterised in all organisational settings. The factors that lead to stress at the workplace are categorised mainly into four by Summers, et al. (1994) (viz.), Personal characteristics, Organisational characteristics – structural, Organisational characteristics - procedural and Role characteristics.

A person who enjoys the work and derives satisfaction alone can perform in the best perfect manner. The fulfillment of personal needs and goals leads to satisfaction, well-being and happiness. To be in a state of satisfaction or well-being or happiness is the prime motto of individual life. But how far and how long the individual can be satisfied in his profession, which is full of work-related stress and strain? Finding an answer to this question is not an easy task.

The Quality of Work depends on the Quality of Work Life. It has been clear that one can accomplish his mission and provide the level of service the public demands only if we recruit and retain the best and the brightest and provide them with a work environment that supports them in getting their jobs done. The phrase “Quality of Work Life” (QWL) has come in use recently to evoke a broad range of working conditions and the related aspirations and expectations of the employees. The QWL can be described as the subjectively perceived satisfaction in one’s different aspects of work life as reported by the individual. It is an index of what people find interesting and satisfying at their work. For this reason, one needs to be sensitive to the factors related to
performance, recognition, work content, responsibility, promotion and pay, organisational policies, working conditions etc. Quality of Work Life is a concern not only to improve life at work, but also life outside work. Hence it encompasses a vide variety of programmes and techniques that have been developed to endeavor to reconcile the twin goals of an individual and the organisation, i.e. Quality of Life and Organisational Growth. The Quality of Work Life has, therefore become key area of consideration now a days.

The adverse effects of stress situation will impinge upon the running of an organisation. Unnecessary tensions may be created, employer-employee relationships as well as staff-clientele relations may deteriorate, inaccuracies may develop in work, and so on. More serious effects of Job Stress could include employee absenteeism and burnouts, which in turn could increase the load of fellow workers. The stress management has therefore got enough significance in improving the Quality of Work Life. As such it is felt that much exploration has to be ventured in the area of Quality of Work Life in connection with Job Stress. However, this sort of problems cannot be orally touched; it requires in-depth study, investigation and research for reaching palpable solutions.

NEED AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

In today’s fast moving world, organisations live and last with innovations and competitions. So they cannot allow their employees to fall
behind in their task accomplishment, quality of service and sense of commitment. This observation seems particularly appropriate for libraries and information centres where many people are involved in the collection, processing, retrieval and dissemination of information to the fullest satisfaction of their users. These institutions exist without profit motive to provide quality information services and products. However, it is seen that a profit sector is fastly emerging in the arena of information services primarily due to the advances in Information Technology and its offshoots. Subscription agencies are now taking charge of abstracting and indexing business, and publishers are moving into bookshop or document supply business. A user can directly deal with the author or a publisher with the help of Internet. Consequently, as Goswami and Gaur (1998) have rightly pointed out, the direct role of libraries and information centres in the delivery of services (e.g.: document supply, abstracting, indexing etc.) and in the traditional form of regulations (e.g.: copyright, censorship etc.) may become less important. The emergence of “information brokers” (who act as collector, sorter, synthesizer or reviewer of information) and “information designers” (who can present information in a form which can be absorbed at a glance) will raise stiff challenges to the library and information professionals. The library and information science profession will be under stress as more varied structures and competing service methods are likely to be introduced by the private sector along with some innovations in the funding systems.
Stress is the changes which our bodies experienced as we adjust to our continually changing environment. It has been an integral part of our daily life since early times. We cannot avoid stress in our life; rather the best policy is to manage it properly to increase ones efficiency. Occupational stress is also called as burnout. Burnout is defined as a syndrome consisting of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and reduced personnel accomplishment. Popular sources and researchers have variously defined stress. On the one hand it is a feeling of well-being and on the other hand it is a perceived sense of imbalance. i.e. managed with effective coping strategy. Further, it is a stage on which the use of inappropriate copying strategies results in a loss of physical and mental resources; things are out of control. Another is the burnout in which one feels “done in” by the stressful situation. It is important to consider here the great role a person’s perceptions of situations to play. Perceiving ones skills and resources and adequate to deal with situation is very different from perceiving oneself confronted with demands that appear seriously threatening (Sadoviche, 2005).

Stress has both physical and emotional effects on us and create positive and negative feelings. As a positive influence stress can help us to compel action result in a new awareness in an exciting new perspective. As a negative influence, it can result in feelings of distressed, rejection, anger, and depression, which in turn lead to frustration to work. And also several health problems, such as head ache, high blood pressure, heart disease etc. The
library environment has changed drastically over the past few decades. With the development and application of information technologies, the library environment has changed from the traditional library to computerised library, then automated library and more recently digital library. With such changes, the structure and nature of library and information science professionals has also changed in a dynamic way. The Library information Science professionals experience stress as they readjust their lives with the changing library environment, job rotation, job promotion etc, while adjusting to such changing library environment, stress will either help or interrupt us depending on how we react to it (Routray and Satpathy, 2007).

The new technologies compelled the professionals to acquire new knowledge along with traditional library functions and services. But the scope for undergoing in-service training programmes, higher studies, refresher courses etc. have very limited scope in the profession, which increased to the stress among professionals. The appointment of computer professionals into the libraries, have created fear among the library professionals about their job security.

Working beyond normal hours and night shift duties adversely affect the physical conditions of the professionals resulting into physical stress and illness. Stress is not necessarily negative for performance of individuals. Some level of stress is desirable to generate enthusiasm, creativity, and productivity. Stress can be beneficial or detrimental. A beneficial stress motivates the
employees. This type of stress is called Eu stress. The detrimental stress which makes one irritable loses the spirit of work, called Distress (Pors and Johannsen, 2003).

Stress can be felt from sources such as physical, mental and situational among other various sources. Physical stress can be brought on by overwork, lack of rest, poor diet, polluted atmosphere etc. Mental stress can be traced to a person’s state of mind, which involves expectation, fears etc. Situational stress is derived from the interaction with the outer world, like interaction with modern technologies, role as a library manager etc. During the past few years, libraries, like many other institutions, have been experiencing changes at an accelerating rate. Accordingly the Library Professionals have been exposed to a considerable amount of stress in their day- to-day work.

Change in technology, change in library environment, change of supervisors, change in library physical facilities, change in user’s demand, reduction of staff strength, lack of funds and the like create unnecessary tensions and stresses to the library professionals. Identifying stress and aware of its effect on once life is not sufficient enough for reducing its harmful effects. Just as there are many sources of stress, there are many possibilities for its management (Elliot, 1990).

One reality of the twenty first century is that the library professionals are faced with constant challenges in their working environments. This is not only
because of the role they have to play inside their libraries, but also due to the increasing demands and expectations of the users with the libraries.

Many members of the library profession fear that the computers and other developments in Information Technology have shakened the very existence of this profession. Some others feel that inspite of the multi-dimensional role of such professionals as Librarians or Information Specialists, the very identity of the profession is at stake. The downfall of the profession has been predicted in many journal articles also. Even then, most of the professionals believe that the fast changing scene will not diminish their responsibility of ensuring the specific interests of their users. But they know that they must be required to deviate from their old practices and accept several new methods of customised services.

Therefore, as explained above, Library and Information Professionals are bound to assume new roles and functions in the wake of the information society. Activities of the information profession now attain great speed and keep pace with the fast developing cyber culture. The Information Professionals in their various capacities act in tune with their positions and according to the requirements of the aspirants. The question is whether they are able to perform at the expected level of contribution to the community they are supposed to serve. The bare truth is that some are not making any strain in serving the user community. In other cases, though strenuous efforts are made to put their maximum to the needy they are unable to contribute to the optimum
level because of so many factors which stand as impediments on their way of performance of their job. Situations like this lead to the necessity of proper analysis of the problems prevalent to organisational and occupational psychology of the individuals of this profession. Since this aspect has not been subjected to serious study by the experts, there is an immense potential and significance to conduct research in this area.

In India, high unemployment rate makes any work attractive. For the sake of getting a reasonably good job, many educated youths make up their mind to enroll as Library Science graduates and enter into the profession of Librarianship. Individuals who join the profession with great enthusiasm and ideas, later experience many hurdles and constraints for their successful functioning and professional development.

Unlike other professionals, the Library Professionals lack the deserving identity in their own organisation as well as in the society as a prominent figure who collect and disseminate information to the users which add to the woes of the profession. The advancement in computer and Internet technologies also made the problem a little more complex. The Library and Information Science is relatively a new discipline in India and there is a lack of proper understanding of it by the public. The work involved in organising a library for service is also not very much appreciated. Unlike other profession, Librarianship does not have the exclusivity or demand in the market to work independently without the support of the state. Like social workers, librarians
are considered as producers of ‘merit goods’ in the society. It is compared that the profession of a chartered accountant has a price tag in the market whereas the “chartered librarian” neither has any credibility nor any similar ‘value label’.

Librarians often find it difficult to locate his place in the inter or intra positional hierarchies. They are always kept out of mainstream organisational functions like planning, decision-making etc. The higher echelon in any organisational structure often pays less attention in the performance of these professionals. The success of the profession is also associated with the key factors such as visibility and celebrity status. The librarians also lack bargaining power in any institution. Librarian in isolation cannot act as a pressure group to the management. In general, the society perceives Librarian as merely a custodian of books; the knowledge and skill of the professionals are recognized only by a tiny section of the society. There is also a ‘dealing clerk’ culture in India. Often the clerks play vital role in framing proposals for creating a library and even in determining the grades of the librarian where professionals’ voice is not heard. The status of the profession also relates to the position titles “Librarian”. There is a perception that librarians who opt to enter the corporate world in positions requiring the same competencies, but with different job titles such as Information Specialist, Information Officer, Knowledge Manager, Information Scientist etc., enjoy higher status and higher salaries than those in the traditional roles.
Most of the libraries in Kerala have qualified librarians, but in some of the libraries they have no control over the supporting staff. The supporting staff is controlled by the Head of the institution, or by other office staff, who are unfamiliar with the functioning of the library. This situation often causes malfunctioning of the library. In many libraries the library and information professionals are equated with clerical staff. They are also not given independent charge of the libraries, but have to work under other designated officers-in-charge of libraries, who have no idea of what Librarianship is and what its responsibilities involved. This is unconducive for the librarians in regard to their professional development and performance. The low pay scales and status of librarians kept the profile of the professionals low. Again it can be nothing frustrating and demoralising for a professional to retire in the same position where he/she had entered into the professional service. Another handicap of the system is that the Librarians have no involvement in allocating fund for their disposal while budgeting. It is of course the advancement of technologies i.e. the use of computers, Internet and other communication systems that poses another threat to the profession if not adaptive to the developments. The change in technology raises the fundamental issues of the change in nature and perception of the Library workforce, which in turn leads to occupational stress to employees. It is also observed that the librarianship and information work continuously suffer from tension related problems between its professionals and paraprofessionals. Another concern for the seniors in the profession is the resolution in role conflict. Most of the jobs in
the library set up are performed through team efforts. Continuous interaction with colleagues is necessary for the development of a professional, which is lacking in most of the libraries. The participative decision-making and communication methods are important indices of inter personal relations. Holding the librarians responsible for the missing of books, which in turn discourages them from rendering uninhibited library service, is another drawback the profession met with.

This sort of problems confronted by the profession in this country are very much highlighted and well documented in the library and information science literature. Select reports and write-up such as Isaac (2001), Raza and Gupta (2000), Rajyalakshmi (1999), Vara Lakshmi (1999), Saha (1998), Sharma (1998), Goswami and Gaur (1998), Joy Committee Report (1994), are some of them to mention the gravity of the issues. It may be seen that the above-mentioned issues fall into the following two major categories.

1) Status related issues – which includes the identity, social status and prestige of the professionals.

2) Work related issues – which include physical working conditions, recognition with the work conducted, job security, promotion, wages, skill and knowledge, feeling of inadequacy, change of any type, role conflict, interpersonal relations, work related stress etc.
The first type of problems are available not only here, but they are all the more global in nature and it is by no means an easy task to get over them. So we need to concentrate on the second and strive for a better working environment, including physiological environment, so that the professionals could develop their potential qualities for the benefit of the community. In the Indian context, we also need to recognize the professional’s economic, social and self-actualization needs so that he could experience a better quality of life and mental satisfaction from his/her work. However, there has been little research in this direction especially in Kerala where there is a high incidence of libraries and library professionals. It is in this context that the Investigator decided to conduct an empirical study of the Quality of Work Life and Occupational Stress aspects of the Library Professionals in Kerala. The outcome of the study may be very useful for the proper manpower development of our Libraries. It will also be useful for the government and other agencies concerned to make the Library and Information Services in the state, more effective and valuable.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The present study is entitled as “QUALITY OF WORK LIFE AND OCCUPATIONAL STRESS AMONG THE LIBRARY PROFESSIONALS IN KERALA”.
DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

The important terms used in the statement of the problem are defined in the following subsections.

Quality of Work Life

The term Quality of Work Life is a vast, broader and diverging concept to be covered into a single or a few terms. It cannot be defined or connoted in a few terms or sentences as it is the convergence of various factors like nature of the job, nature of the individual employee and employer, work environment, social condition, job facilities, objectives and goals of the organisation, qualification, experience and visions of the human elements involved etc.

For the present study, the term Quality of Work Life refers to values and attitudes contained in working life of any employee. The “working life concept” consists of many factors such as, Pay, Promotion, Opportunity for Continued Growth and Security, Benefits, Contingent Rewards, Safe and Healthy Working Conditions, Operating Procedures, Coworkers and Supervision, Nature of Work, Social Integration in the Work Organisation, Constitutionalism in Work Organisation, Work and Total Life Space, and Social Relevance of Working Life; each of which plays its role in evaluating working life.
**Occupational Stress**

Occupational Stress is a mental or physical tension or both emerged from related occupation and its environment comprising of persons and objects from within and outside the work place which results into absenteeism; turnover, accidents, low productivity and service efficiency, lack of motivation and initiative, job dissatisfaction, alienation and disruption of the smooth functioning of the organisation. For the present study, it is defined as ‘a person’s response to some threatening or disturbing stimuli emerged from the occupation’.

**Library Professionals**

Library Professional in the context of the present study refers to the professionally qualified person possessing minimum educational qualification a bachelor degree or equivalent diploma in Library and Information Science and employed in a Library or Information Centre.

**VARIABLES OF THE STUDY**

The variables identified and selected for the conduct of the present study are categorised into two (viz.)

(1) Dependent Variables and (2) Independent Variables.
**Dependent Variables**

‘Quality of Work Life’ and ‘Occupational Stress’ are taken as the dependent variables.

**Independent Variables**

The following variables have been selected as the independent variables.

1) Gender
2) Age
3) Marital status
4) Number of children
5) Educational background
6) Job title category
7) Professional experience
8) Primary functional area
9) Salary range
10) Involvement in IT applications
11) Number of supervisors
12) Work schedule
13) Type of library
14) Size of library
15) Type of management

**OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The major objectives formulated for the conduct of the present study are:
1. To find out the extent and levels of ‘Quality of Work Life’ and ‘Occupational Stress’ among the Library Professionals in Kerala.

2. To compare the ‘Quality of Work Life’ among the Library Professionals in Kerala (taken in pairs) categorised on the basis of select independent variables.

3. To compare the level of ‘Occupational Stress’ among the Library Professionals in Kerala (taken in pairs) categorised on the basis of select independent variables.

4. To estimate the relationship between the ‘Quality of Work Life’ of Library Professionals in Kerala and each of the select independent variables.

5. To estimate the relationship between the ‘Occupational Stress’ of Library Professionals in Kerala and each of the select independent variables.

6. To study the extent of association between ‘Quality of Work Life’ and ‘Occupational Stress’ among the Library Professionals in Kerala.

**HYPOTHESES**

The major hypotheses formulated for the study are given below:
1. The percentage of Library Professionals in Kerala having high level of ‘Quality of Work Life’ will be significant.

2. The percentage of Library Professionals in Kerala having high level of ‘Occupational Stress’ will be significant.

3. There will be significant difference in the mean ‘Quality of Work Life’ scores of the sub samples (taken in pairs) when Library Professionals categorised on the basis of each of the select independent variables are compared.

4. There will be significant difference in the mean ‘Occupational Stress’ scores of the sub samples (taken in pairs) when Library Professionals categorised on the basis of each of the select independent variables are compared.

5. The relationship between ‘Quality of Work Life’ of Library Professionals in Kerala and each of the select independent variables will be significant.

6. The relationship between ‘Occupational Stress’ of Library Professionals in Kerala and each of the select independent variables will be significant.

7. The relationship between ‘Quality of Work Life’ and ‘Occupational Stress’ of Library Professionals in Kerala will be significant.
1.7 PROCEDURE

1.7.1 Sample

The study was carried out on a representative sample of 300 qualified Library Professionals in Kerala. Proportionate stratified sampling technique was employed for the selection of the sample. Due representation was given to the factors like age, sex, job category, qualification and experience, type of the library etc. of Library Professionals.

1.7.2 Tools for the Study

The necessary data were collected using the following tools.

1) Quality of Work Life Scale for Library Professionals.

2) Occupational Stress Inventory for Library Professionals.

3) General Data Sheet.

1.7.2.1 Quality of Work Life Scale for Library Professionals (QWLSLP)

The scale was developed by the investigator as part of the study to measure the Quality of Work Life of Library Professionals in Kerala.

1.7.2.2 Occupational Stress Inventory for Library Professionals (OSILP)

The investigator constructed this inventory in order to assess the Occupational Stress among the Library Professionals in Kerala.
1.7.2.3 General Data Sheet

The data relating to the independent variables were collected through a systematically framed structured questionnaire.

The above tools are presented as appendix III, V and VI respectively.

1.7.3 Analysis of Data

The following statistical techniques were employed to analyse the data.

1) Test of significance for percentage.

2) Two-tailed test of significance for difference between means of large independent samples.

3) Two-tailed test of significance of difference between means of small independent samples.

4) One-Way Analysis of Variance (one-way ANOVA) for comparing the means of more than two groups.

5) Scheffe’ test for Multiple Comparison.

6) Chi-square test of independence.

1.8 SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The main purpose of the study is to investigate the extent and level of Quality of Work Life and Occupational Stress among the Library Professionals in Kerala, and to estimate the relationship between these variables and select
independent variables. The study also aims to examine the relationship between Quality of Work Life and Occupational Stress among the sample. The tools were constructed in such a way to explore the measures of the variables selected. It is expected that generalisable results may be yielded from the study. However owing to practical considerations, certain limitations were anticipated for the study.

1. Selection of independent variables for the study is confined to few personal attributes and organisational characteristics only. Other psychological variables such as Motivation to manage, Achievement Motivation, Self Concept, Aspirations etc. and other organisational variables such as ‘Amount of Technology’, ‘Organisational Climate’ etc. were not included.

2. While measuring the dependent variables, only the overall Quality of Work Life and Occupational Stress were considered. The different components of the variables were not considered separately.

3. Even though population for the study was intended to be representative of professionally qualified librarians working in all types of libraries in Kerala, certain types of libraries (viz.) School Libraries, Prison Libraries, Newspaper Libraries, and Libraries of self financing professional colleges are not included in the study for practical reasons.
4. The generalisability of the study was limited to the extent of the nature of the tools and the sample selected. All possible precautions were taken to attain the optimum degree of accuracy in respect of these factors.

5. The interpretation of the results is only tentative. The present results may be superseded by other interpretations if more rigorous statistical techniques for analysis are used.

1.9 ORGANISATION OF THE REPORT

The report has been presented in five chapters.

Chapter 1 presents the underlying rationale for selecting the present problem, its significance in the present context, statement of the problem, definition of key terms, statement of variables, objectives and hypotheses, and the outline of the procedure.

Chapter 2 gives the detailed description of the concepts used in the study in its first part. The second section provides the survey of related studies to support the hypotheses.

Chapter 3 describes the design of the investigation under the major headlines: variables, objectives, hypotheses and procedure.

Chapter 4 covers the detailed analysis of the study conducted and the major findings evolved, with discussions of results and conclusions.
Chapter 5 (last chapter) contains the summary of the major findings, tenability of hypotheses, implications and suggestions for further research.

The list of references is given at the end.

The tools used for the study are given as appendices.