Effect of COVID-19 Pandemic on the Use of Library

By

Agbeniga Kazeem Abiola
Emmanuel Alayande College Of Education, Oyo
College Library

and

Imran Akoworada Abdulakeem
Federal College of Education (Special), Oyo
College Library

Abstract

This paper seeks to investigate on how libraries are affected by lockdowns caused by the COVID-19 Pandemic. Ordered choice models are developed to understand factors that affect the number of online deliveries made before COVID-19, and the number of household expenditure on online deliveries during the COVID-19 lockdown. Higher levels of technology utilization are also associated with higher levels of deliveries and expenditure. In view of the findings in this study, recommendations are made that librarians in all institutions should be motivated by means of enhanced package that can be used to cover cost for subscription and other social media tools that will boost their dissemination of health information on COVID-19 to the people, librarians should center their health information dissemination on COVID-19 on the need adhere strictly to measures such as isolation and lockdown going out for only vital reasons and essential services, stopping local travel, maintaining proper hygiene, avoiding hand shake, touch, hug, kiss and employing a social distancing of one meter from each other.

Key words: Library, Librarian, COVID-19 pandemic, Effect.

Introduction

COVID-19 pandemic has become a household name which spread its tentacles across the global Community, consequently imposing restriction on freedom of movement with arising death toll. COVID-19 Pandemic, Coronavirus, has affected educational systems

world-wide, leading to the near total closures of schools, colleges and universities. The virus has since then spread to over 200 countries around the globe. It was characterized as a pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO) on March 11, 2020. (World Health Organization, 2020).

Robinson (2005) defines a library as an institution that manages the intellectual products that individual can gain access readily. Iyanda and Salawu (2006) on the other hand sees library as a building, an instructional and self-development centre, which operates as an integral part of the entire school environment. Library as a concept is charged with the collection, availability and accessibility of information necessary for effective and efficient use by its host community and the society at large. (Sobalaje & Ogunmodede, 2015) are of the view that the general role of library is to provide information about its community while its objective is to serve as a centre for information where people acquire the needed knowledge to reduce their ignorance about their environment.

Before COVID-19 was declared a pandemic, libraries offer minimal services to library patrons to curtail the continuous spread of the infection (IFLA, 2020). COVID-19 spreads through respiratory droplets of an infected person when they cough or sneeze into the air. When a contaminated surface is touched with hands and is used to rub mouth, eyes or nose it leads to infection. The best way to mitigate the spread of the infection declared by the WHO, 2020 is isolation of infected people, staying at home, maintaining social distancing of at least 6 feet between individuals in a place, avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth, cover your cough or sneeze with your bent elbow or tissue. When tissue is used, it should be discarded immediately into a trash bin, the two hands must be washed under a running tap for at least 20 seconds, alcohol-based hand sanitizer can also be rubbed on the hands.

On March 17, 2020, the Executive Board of the American Library Association (ALA) issued a statement recommending that libraries should close to the public due to public health concerns: "To protect library workers and their communities from exposure to COVID-19 in these unprecedented times, we strongly recommend that academic, public and school library leaders and their trustees and governing bodies evaluate closing libraries to the public and only reopening when guidance from public health officials indicates the risk from COVID-19 has significantly subsided" (Gretchen, 2020). This was done for few weeks during which different phases of easing the lockdown was considered and re-opening of institutions of higher education.

Leaders of countries and government after some weeks of lockdown of companies,

industries, institutions of learning from primary to tertiary, closure and various other sectors of the economy due to COVID-19 began to consider gradual easing of the lockdown in phases based on overall assessment to revitalize the economy. This decision as suggested could be a four-stage process for re-opening, especially for the library - analyzing risks from surfaces, close contacts with people, the ways in which people use the libraries, and overall levels of infection in the region (IFLA, 2020).

Libraries around the world have been facing lockdown challenges in providing access to its collections and services. All types of libraries have promoted their digital services during the coronavirus pandemic situation. However, the physical resources are often put on demand by the users most preferably in the scientific organizations where research on drugs and pharmaceutical is being carried out for medical diagnosis and drug discovery. Libraries having significant number of e-resources which may permit them to have enough opportunities to serve their users even in the lockdown period throughout the world. Several Libraries have brought out their digital services, organizing virtual exhibitions, highlighting content on the websites and Lets Read Together online campaign. There have also been major efforts to boost access to the library resources online as well as offline, for example by increasing the number of e- Books/ e-Journals/CD-DVD, etc. in order to lower the risk of virus spread.

The technological advancements and innovations have transformed the traditional libraries to the present smart Libraries. Today's Libraries offer wide range of innovative services to the users for their information need in the pandemic situation. There has been a paradigm shift of libraries in twenty first century. The major role of libraries in selective dissemination of Information and knowledge among its users predefine the scope of libraries. Libraries are the store houses of knowledge recorded in physical/digital medium. Libraries are growing organism and therefore continue to increase the library collection and services. Unlike the traditional libraries present trends of libraries includes digital/virtual mode of library collection and also offer remote access facility for their users. The application of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), the Internet and particularly the World Wide Web (WWW) have revolutionized library activities, hence there has been changes in the normal functioning of Libraries in the digital world. The present trend of library resources includes e-books, e-resources, digital library, e- services etc. The future prospects of smart libraries would involve utilization of skill and knowledge whereas the information is also recorded, stored, retrieved and disseminated in the e-format at a large scale.

COVID-19 Pandemic does not seem to be eradicated completely. Librarians are looking forward, exciting to discover new services and opportunities to build a stronger library-

user interface in the future. In order to achieve these goal libraries need to be equipped with latest infrastructure, information communication technologies and skilled manpower. World Health Organization (WHO) has declared the COVID-19 pandemic. COVID-19 or Coronavirus Disease is being caused by a newly discovered coronavirus. Old age people underlying medical problems like cardiovascular disease, diabetes, chronic respiratory disease, and cancer are more likely prone to serious illness. The Common symptoms of COVID-19 include high fever, tiredness and a dry cough. Other symptoms include shortness of breath, aches and pains, sore throat, and very few people will report diarrhoea, nausea or a runny nose. The Spread of Coronavirus people to people occurs through spread of droplets like respiratory droplets when infected person sneeze in the public domain.

In the case of libraries where books come in contact of many persons at a time, therefore, the chances of virus transmission can occur by direct contact with infected user and indirect contact with surfaces in the library or with objects used by the infected user/staff. To understand and know more about the disease World Health Organization is releasing daily updates on the situation at the global level. To find out more about the virus, go through the WHO's research pages or the Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) on the virus prepared by the WHO. Handling of study materials in the libraries Although, there is a huge risk of infection through objects carrying coronavirus yet the use of library resources is equally important to carry out research on the on-going projects. Librarian today has to extend library services on a safer mode by following the standard operation procedure or the Government Guidelines. In the view of the above, some libraries have imposed a waiting period (quarantine) for Issue/ return of books. Different countries have set their own operating procedure to handle the Library resources, for example Australian Library and Information Association has suggested cleaning with alcohol wipes with plastic covers, such as DVDs, etc. The Italian Library Association, in addition to the above, has suggested that users could be asked to indicate if materials being returned have been in contact with someone with the virus.

There are different types of libraries that serve different categories of people in the community where they are established. They sometimes perform functions similar to one another to achieve the purpose for which they are established in the community. The academic libraries are established to function and serve tertiary institutions and universities, public libraries serve communities, and cities, school libraries serve pupils from the lower kindergarten to the senior primary class, and special libraries offer services to designated establishment such as private business organizations, hospitals etc. there is also research library that are established in specific research institutions and

offer services mainly to the institutions and engage in publication of their research result for proper use. The mode of operation differs because of the different categories of patron but services such as collection building, users' services, technical services, ICT and administrative services are in operation in all. This makes the impact and challenges of COVID-19 not exempt on any type of library. (Rajan, 2017).

Social media network sites are online platforms through which individuals, groups and organizations create presence and share information through texts, photos, music videos etc. Social media platforms are also one the fastest mode/medium of public health awareness, and twitter tag information provided (Thelwall & Thelwall, 2020) about what going on all over the world in the fastest mode. Examples of social media are Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter and Instagram etc which are renowned forums of message sharing to the public about the latest updates of the situation (Ali & Bhatti, 2020). According to Allcott, Gentzkow and Yu (2019), the more worrisome aspect of the social media is its potency to be used to spread fake news with its significant negative effects on the society and on people's decisions and behaviours. Therefore, this paper focused on the effect of COVID-19 pandemic on the use of library

Concept of COVID-19 Pandemic
Coronavirus is an infective agent of zoonotic origin which causes COVID-19. Coronavirus causes respiratory tract infection and it also mutate as it infects which cause symptoms such as fever, cough with coryza, head and body ache, throat pain and shortness of breath. (Mynepalli Sridhar et al, 2020). According to World Health Organization WHO (2020) corona virus disease is an infectious disease caused by a newly discovered coronavirus which affect people in different ways. Covid-19 seems to spread from person to person by the same mechanism as other common cold or influenza viruses- i.e. by face to face contact with a sneeze or cough, or from contact with secretions of people who are infected (WHO, 2020). The role of fecal–oral transmission has yet to be determined in COVID-19 but was found to occur during the earlier Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) outbreak (Heymann & Shindo, 2020). Current report shows that there are over 14 million confirmed cases of coronavirus with over 580, 000 deaths (European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC, 2020). The rate of infection on the COVID-19 pandemic might be due to lack of proper dissemination of information and public awareness on the virus, and this has increased the need for use of social media as it has the ability to inform a wide population in the shortest possible time.

Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is an infectious disease caused by a newly discovered

novel strain of coronavirus, SARS-CoV-2 (WHO, 2020). It first appeared in the city of Wuhan, China, and has spread rapidly to almost all countries across the world. The coronavirus belongs to a family of viruses that may cause various symptoms such as pneumonia, fever, breathing difficulty, and lung infection. These viruses are common in animals worldwide, but very few cases have been known to affect humans. The World Health Organization (WHO) used the term 2019 novel coronavirus to refer to a coronavirus that affected the lower respiratory tract of patients with pneumonia in Wuhan, China on 29 December 2019 (Li, Guan, Wu, Wang, Zhoum & Tong, 2020). The WHO announced that the official name of the 2019 novel coronavirus is coronavirus disease (COVID-19) (WHO, 2020). And the current reference name for the virus is severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2). It was reported that a cluster of patients with pneumonia of unknown cause was linked to a local Huanan South China Seafood Market in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China in December 2019 (Zhu & Song, 2020).

According to World Health Organization WHO (2020) corona virus seems to spread from person to person by the same mechanism as other common cold or influenza viruses—i.e. by face to face contact with a sneeze or cough, or from contact with secretions of people who are infected. The common symptoms include fever, dry cough, tiredness, shortness of breath, pains and aches, sore throat, and very few people will report diarrhoea, nausea or a runny nose (WHO, 2020). Most people infected with the COVID-19 will experience mild-to-moderate fever and respiratory illness with no special treatment available. The 2019 novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is currently the disorder with the greatest social impact (Ryu & Chun, 2020) due to several factors, including associated deaths, its geographical expansion, stock exchange fall worldwide, cancellation of sporting/ artistic events, shortage of goods in marketplaces, among others (Castro, 2020). That in turn is related to the behavior of societies at different levels (micro and macro) (Villegas-Chiroque, 2020).

Concept of Social Media
Social media has been defined by several authors. Fang, Hu, Li, & Tsai (2014) defined social media as computer and mobile-mediated tools that facilitate interaction and sharing of information in text, visual, audio and video forms in an online networking environment. Social media according to Bradley and McDonald (2011) is defined to include any Internet-based or mobile application that operates for the purpose of collaboration, which allows participants to connect, create, comment, view, share, rate, discover, profile, and exchange user-generated content.

Rogers (2012), sees social media as an information content created by people using highly accessible and scalable publishing technologies. At its most basic sense, social media is a shift in how people discover, read, and share news, information, and content. It's a fusion of sociology and technology that transforms monologue (one-to-many) into dialogue (many-to-many), and is the democratization of information that transforms people from content readers into publishers (Ganiyu & Oluwafemi, 2016).

Kruger & Painter (2011) described social media as a virtual information sharing space which promotes face-to-face interaction and relationships between individuals. A common position in all the definitions is that social media are online tools whose principal aim is to offer social interactions and exchange of items, ideas, products and services among people of common interests (Chitumbo & Chewe 2015). Social media operate in dialogic transmission where there may be many sources to many receivers of information, pictures, images and other resources. Examples of social media applications include the Facebook, MySpace, Twitter, You tube, Blogs, Wikis, LinkedIn, WhatsApp, Flickr, Orkut among others.

The potentials of librarians and its associates to acquire, evaluate, package, store and disseminate information, especially to the information poor society has placed a huge demand on it to intervene in critical situation such as COVID-19 pandemic era (Ladan, Haruna & Madu, 2020). The librarian's aim is to ensure that patrons are provided with updated information on various aspects of their needs. As information specialists, librarians also deliver specialized information to their parents as a number of them also practice privately as consultants or information brokers. Librarians are also expected to provide decentralized and accessible health knowledge through social media which is one of the prominent goals of primary health care in developing countries. Yet, lack of knowledge and information dissemination using appropriate social media platforms remains a significant deterrent to good health practices, leading to heightened health risk (Sokey, & Ankrah, 2018).

Social media as a Web-based channel of information dissemination is rapidly permeating all aspects of the librarians' profession as it has been used to communicate with potential library users, as well as extending the information services to other remote users particularly in the community (Ganiyu & Oluwafemi, 2016). Librarians are now realizing the potentials of social media such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn, Skype, and Google+, and other social tools found in the study, and are making efforts to integrate them into library services. Sahu (2013) maintained that some of the information disseminated by librarians through social media tools includes selective

dissemination of information (SDI), and customer services in general which includes information on Covid-19.

Librarians' Use of Social Media as Trusted Sources to Disseminate Covid-19 Information

Due to the hard hit from the Covid 19 pandemic, public services have been paralyzed, academic activities and classes have restricted to online due to closure of colleges. Community members and the public need information on how to protect themselves against coronavirus. In this view, librarians have been highly engaged to control the situation through effective dissemination of relevant health information on Covid 19. IFLA (2020) reported that on 23rd March 2020, the president of IFLA had announced that "Libraries around the world are being affected by the emergence and spread of the coronavirus. This situation has made librarians around the globe to mobilize and provide a collection of valuable and reliable information on coronavirus in order to give people a source they can trust (IFLA, 2020).

It is apparent that fake news and misinformation have created confusion and subsequently, posed greater challenge to every effort to curtail the spread of the virus. In this regard, librarians can strengthen social media online services to provide access to their resources. Recently, National Digital Library of India (NDLI) has initiated of specially designed collections of e-resources for specific group of students to help the student community in the difficult situation rising out of the suspension of physical classes and closure of physical libraries arising out of COVID-19 lockdown. These services are provided through the library social networking pages (National Digital Library of India, 2020).

Librarians can provide and share information quickly, efficiently and in real- time as strategies in response to COVID- 19 pandemic through their social networking pages like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn (Ladan, Haruna & Madu, 2020). They can provide a platform for gathering and disseminating information to promote awareness of the current situation through their use of internet and blogs.

The librarians' use of social media as trusted platforms allow patrons to access local issues and acquire global awareness through online activisms and campaigns. In the current scenario of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) outbreak, social media platforms as currently applied by librarians are crucially disseminating information worldwide. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention, the World Health Organization (WHO), a large number of healthcare organizations and journals are

regularly posting and updating awareness and guidance across a host of online platforms (WHO, 2020). Librarians can utilize these resources to create a blog to disseminate Covid 19 information. Librarians can also leverage on social media, as these online tools offer global platforms for dissemination of information, content and opinion, and also promote social interactions among and between individuals, and organisations (Brindha & Kadeswara, 2020).

In view of the rate of infection of Covid 19 on the people, librarians can beef up their efforts to link users and patrons on the right social media sources to access thereby directly playing their role in public health information and to educate users, regarding the importance of proper hand washing and social distancing. If librarians take on this approach will reduce the probability of millions of people contracting the Covid 19vvirus, thereby limiting its transmission rate

Preventive Measures and Guidelines for Libraries during COVID-19 Pandemic
Libraries are facing challenges and restrictions in the lockdown. Governments regularly are taking different approaches, sometimes ordering the full closure of all institutions, in these situations library professionals may take following preventive measures to curb the spread of COVID-19 through the libraries:
1.   Stay at home if you feel sickness
2.   Use appropriate sanitizer frequently
3.   Roster of staff duty
4.   Keep books at separate place at least for 48 hours when check in/check out
5.   Maintain social distance
6.   Follow good health and hygiene habits
7.   Limiting concentration of users in reading room allowing just one table per user
8.   Use mask and cover while sneezing or coughing
9.   Avoid sneezing or coughing while handling books
10.   Keeping surfaces clean, including toys and library computers surface like door knobs, switches and railing etc.
11.   Use online platforms or social media to share Knowledge/Information.
12.   Provide remote access of library resources to the users
13.   Promote paperless work culture in the libraries
14.   Frequently used items such as magazines and newspapers may only be accessible to people with gloves and masks, etc. Asif and Singh, (2020).

Effect of COVID-19 Pandemic on Libraries
Libraries play a very important role in the academic environment or any community

where they are instituted. The teaching, learning and research functions cannot be overemphasized and the cultural and recreational activities that library encourage has great impact in the lives of library users. Measures, services and practices that were initiated during the crisis for teaching, learning, research, entertainment, socializing and all forms of connection must be sustained. During the lockdown, some libraries provide remote access to databases that are restricted to on site use, promote or ease restrictions on digital content, introduce chat services for reader's advisory assistance with digital resources and basic referencing, virtual programming which include group discussions, collaborative projects. Several libraries also organize seminars, training, classes, and promote new ideas about the situation virtually (Gretchen, 2020).

Staff also employed various technologies to give access to patrons to ensure safety for all. During this period of full closure, librarians all over the world promote use of digital libraries, increase the number of e-book users can borrow, raise awareness of digital offers through pages of their websites (WHO -COVID-19 and the Global Library Field, June 19, 2020, https://www.ifla.org/covid-19-and-libraries). During this period, several publishers gave free access to some journals and electronic-materials/resources that users would have to subscribed. Various virtual learning opportunities opened up on the internet. Subscription rates reduced greatly for those that required it for access to information resources. Though libraries are closed to offer in-person library or visits by library patron but it has used its digital infrastructure that has been built for over two decades to offer high level services and some additional when students and faculty members moved online (Jodi, 2020). Libraries have supported users with technology-enhanced learning (TEL), promotion of digital libraries and dedicated support for students, work remotely to give access to users. While physical branches may have shut down, many libraries still offer a wealth of digital content for those who have internet access elsewhere (Boone, 2020).

Lack of formal pandemic policies for libraries is a complicating factor throughout the crisis. Because the COVID-19 phenomenon is unchartered territory in terms of its level of imminent danger to staff and patrons and the uncertain duration of its resulting library closings, few libraries possess procedures for how to deal with a situation of this magnitude. "To reduce the impact of a pandemic on your operations, employees, customers and the general public, it is important for all businesses and organizations to begin continuity planning for a pandemic now." (Gretchen, 2020).

Users could not visit the library in-person but the library has been able to use digital services to promote access to electronic resources. The core functions of the library were and are sustained. This also led to increase the rate of development of digital services to a

great extent, though an unplanned development but that which will yield long term positive results. It will also help develop pandemic planning document that will give guidance to plan continuity of operations and services for the future in case of such occurrence.

The situation is a global crisis and different countries approach it as the National Center for Disease Control gives guidance. There has been a period of gradual easing of lockdown in some countries in preparation for re-opening of the economy, and institutions of higher education which comes in different phases. There is no one size fits all in the process of re-opening, so decisions and plans differ all over the globe. It is therefore, expedient for each country to consider what is best and applicable to their situation and the possibility of allowance to evolve plans. Library practices have been, and will be, driven by three factors:

a) national health regulations, which vary from one country to another within the general framework provided by the World Health Organisation;

b) risk perception, which is different whether the library is based in Estonia, where half of all hospitalised Covid-19 patients were in the Saare island, or in Italy and Spain;

c) the size and the arrangement of library spaces, which differ from one library premise to another.(EBLIDA, 2020).

Conclusion

Libraries must prepare for the new normal as our institutions cannot remain lockdown forever but new ways to apply our technology and tools to carry out the same services and operations needed to fulfill the vision and mission of the library must be applied. While it is clear that majority of academic libraries in Nigeria are yet to be open for in-visit, they are to make comprehensive preparations for a safe reopening. The emerging trend is towards more community engagement, building synergy with parent institutions, health agencies and improving infrastructures, this indicates that the libraries need to emerge new and upgrade their system to meet the new guidelines provided by the National Centre for Disease Control for library re-opening (NCDC, 2020; WHO, 2020).

Additionally, Libraries are seeking to change from traditional manual services to a more technology-driven process in order to meet the exigencies of a changed environment. This is being done by formulating and upgrading of policies, practices and technology, to ensure library users' improved access to information resources even with reduced contact among themselves and the library staff as identified and advocated in related studies.

Public health awareness is key to minimize causalities, and librarians can play a vital role to disseminate this information with health care workers, society, and communities. Librarians can then utilize effective social media platforms such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Whatsapp, 2go, YouTube, Instagram, among others to educate people on maintaining preventive measures during the lockdown phase. These social media channels if properly utilized by librarians play a vital role in informing and updating the general public on new updates about public health information

Recommendations

In view of the findings in this study the following recommendations are made:

I.   Librarians in all institutions should be motivated by means of enhanced packages that can be used to cover cost for subscription and other social media tools that will boast their dissemination of health information on Covid-19 to the people

ii.   Health information dissemination on Covid-19 on the need to adhere to measures such as isolation and lock down, going out for only vital reasons and essential services, stopping local travel, maintain proper hygiene, avoid hands shake, touch, hug, kiss and to employ a social distancing of one meter from each other should be emphasized by librarians.

iii.   Librarians should carefully plan, efficiently executed, well reported means of disseminating authentic and reliable information on Covid-19 health information to people by using the most appropriate trusted social media so as to curb false information.

iv.   Public sensitization using the social media to educate people on how to use their mobile phones to access or interact with the health professionals on any health related issue must be organized from time to time by librarians.

v.   There is the need for the library management in Nigeria and other part of the world to encourage librarians in using innovative tools for library instruction and services as consistent use may help in reaching out to more users as well as increasing their ICT skill in the use of other online sources.

vi.   The library management in Nigeria should organize routine training programme for the librarians on the use of innovative tools to enable them acquire relevant skills in handling library instruction and servic

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