

Preparedness of Nigerian University Libraries and Librarians for Service Delivery in Post Covid 19

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ABSTRACT: *The study adopted a descriptive survey design which sought information on the preparedness of academic libraries in Nigerian universities for post COVID-19 pandemic library service delivery. The study was conducted in Anambra State of Nigeria. The population for the study comprised of all the 10 academic librarians in the libraries in the 3 campuses of Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University Anambra State. There was no sampling because of their small size. The instrument for data collection was a self-developed questionnaire entitled COVID-19 Pandemic Preparedness Questionnaire (CPPQ). Data collected were analysed using mean. The major findings of the study included that all categories: ensuring access to soap and warm water, ensuring they have a supply of hand sanitizers, keeping surfaces clean were some of the measures libraries adopted to mitigate COVID-19 pandemic; staff were advised to work from home, online services were adopted, zoom trainings was always there to ensure the staff safety from the virus: among the problems were inadequate fund, power failure and poor internet services. Based on the findings, the study recommends among others that academic libraries should provide free Wi-Fi around the library and prepare the library's physical surroundings for people to study in groups of two, three, and more, without necessarily entering the library, government should provide more funding for academic libraries to meet with contemporary best global practices in their library as the library reopens amid the COVID-19 pandemic.*

KEYWORDS: Covid – 19, Preparedness. Post pandemic, University Libraries, Librarians.

INTRODUCTION

Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is an infectious disease caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2). The disease was first identified in December 2019 in Wuhan, the capital of China's Hubei province, and has since spread globally, resulting in the 2019–20 coronavirus pandemic. Common symptoms of the disease include fever, cough, fatigue, shortness of breath, and loss of smell. While the majority of cases result in mild symptoms, some progress to viral pneumonia, multi-organ failure, or cytokine storm. The time from exposure to onset of symptoms is typically around five days but may range from two to fourteen days. COVID-19 according to Okike (2020) is a new strain of coronavirus that has not previously been seen in humans with symptoms such as fever, cough, loss of smell, tiredness, muscle pain and mostly difficulty in breathing. The virus is primarily spread between people during close contact, often via small droplets produced by coughing, sneezing, or talking. The droplets usually fall to the ground or onto surfaces rather than remaining in the air over long distances. People may also become infected by touching a contaminated surface and then touching their faces. On surfaces, the amount of virus declines over time until it is insufficient to remain infectious, but it may be detected for hours or days. It is most contagious during the first three days after the onset of symptoms, although spread may be possible before symptoms appear and in later stages of the disease. The standard method of diagnosis is by real-time reverse transcription polymerase chain reaction (rRT-PCR) from a nasopharyngeal swab. Chest CT imaging may also be helpful for diagnosis in individuals where there is a high suspicion of infection based on symptoms and risk factors; however, guidelines do not recommend using it for routine screening. Recommended measures to prevent infection include frequent hand washing, maintaining physical distance from others (especially from those with symptoms), covering coughs, and keeping unwashed hands away from the face. In addition, the use of a face covering is recommended for those who suspect they have the virus and their caregivers. Recommendations for face covering use by the general public vary, with some authorities recommending against their use, some recommending their use, and others requiring their use. Currently, there is not enough evidence for or against the use of masks (medical or other) in healthy individuals in the wider community.

Local and international health professionals work round the clock tirelessly to limit COVID-19 from further infections and probably provide a permanent cure to the disease. According to the World Health organization (WHO), as of 24 April 2020, there were close to 3 million confirmed cases globally and since then, cases have risen substantially. As scientists and health professionals search for solutions to COVID-19, librarians in university libraries have the important role of disseminating COVID-19-related information and resources to the clientele through various virtual media channels available to them, especially as most people may not come to the library for fear of contracting COVID-19.

This disease has caused a serious pandemic resulting to shutting down of the entire world for months. Public places like schools, markets, shops, government and non- governmental offices, burial and wedding ceremonies, inter-state and international movements were all put to a stop in an effort to reduce or stop the spread of the deadly virus called COVID-19. People were advised to simply sit at home and stay safe because the virus in the air is lethal and highly contagious. Presently, the lockdown has been eased off. The world has come alive once again. Schools and other public offices have bounced back. Movements have started both local and international. But things are not exactly the same as everyone is mandated to observe the World Health Organisation (WHO) stipulated measures for post COVID-19 pandemic. These measures are also inherent in the university libraries in Nigeria.

University libraries in Nigeria returned to work alongside their parent organization which is the universities. Being located in the university, the university library otherwise known as the academic library has the mandate to provide information sources that supports learning, teaching and research among the members of the university community. The members of the university community include teachers, students, researchers and staff of different categories. The outburst of the COVID-19 pandemic triggered changes in all works of life including the library. For instance, universities are resorting to online teaching and learning. Both students and lecturers are gradually getting themselves acquainted with online teaching and learning. The university library in Nigeria is not left out at all. However, the role of libraries during COVID-19 pandemic in the age of digital knowledge has changed, and in the future requires greater effort with increased acquisition of new skills for both users and librarians in order to effectively use ICTs in order to improve the resources and services to meet the information needs of these library users (Othman, 2020). The librarians in the university libraries have to discharge their normal duties mostly in the e-form. This gave rise to the 'new normal' in library parlance.

The new normal involves doing the normal things in a new way. Academic libraries in Nigerian universities are expected to offer their services in a new way so as to maintain its relevance in the post pandemic era. With the new normal, digital literacy becomes a must for all librarians working in the university library. Since one can only give what he has, the librarian needs to acquire the knowledge of computers and the internet. Anunobi (2020) suggests that the librarian must be knowledgeable in all fields of human endeavour and proficiency in using print and digital options for information dissemination.

First of all there should be careful rearrangement of the reading chairs and tables such that social distancing would be observed by the readers. Hence a university library reading hall that usually holds 100 readers at a seating now holds about 40 readers or less only. This according to Adeleke

(2020) calls for expansion of library building which costs money, time and even personnel. The primary services provided at the library include circulation and the use of computers and printers that reside on the circulation floor. Secondly, there should be constant power supply since most; if not all other library services have been shifted to fully online intervention (Dipti, and Xiaocan 2020). It is needless to mention that university libraries in the new normal have to ensure stronger internet provider. The Wi-Fi must always be efficient at all times of the day. In order to ensure that library services reach all library users in the university community, the academic libraries resorted to the following strategies;

1. Personal space/My Library is a self-service platform where library users manage their personalized accounts with custom-made collections. Here users can set up and manage their profile, preferences for searching library collections, receive alerts on reserved items, check their records, track interlibrary loan requests and renew borrowed items and document delivery requests (Ifijeh, & Yusuf, 2020; Ladan, Haruna, Madu, 2020). In this regards, librarians are able to send customized scanned documents, images, audio books and ebooks to library users' personalized accounts.
2. Text notifications via the use of mobile devices can disseminate information and multimedia content such as videos, images and audio files. Librarians can use this service to alert patrons regarding the latest information on happenings around COVID 19 on how to stay safe or other related information. In a study conducted by Shonhe and Jain (2017), most respondents prefer to access library collections or resources through mobile devices.
3. Social media are more appropriate for use on marketing information and delivering personalized information resources to groups of people or individuals.
4. Quick response (QR) codes, twodimensional barcodes that direct users to desired websites, can be used by libraries on a certain topic or subject area. Verma and Verma (2014) noted that QR codes are akin to mobile tagging.
5. Online reference services can use for research outreach. According to Barnhart and Pierce (2011), online platforms allow librarians to create a bond with patrons and improve their efficiency through provision of a 24/7 reference and information service. Library websites can be used effectively to share information, links, share updates and announce news.
6. Mailing lists to targeted fusers can be used by libraries to receive personalized information at the same time.

Academic librarians have to reach user populations and their need for up-to-date relevant information. When this is done, there can be limitless access to the library and information resources of users and information seekers among the members of the university community. Echezona (2007) writes that by delivering high-quality services, libraries and information centres have contributed immensely to ensure greater access to information resources. Going with the study by Okiy (2010), is an example of one study that revealed that students and lecturers in learning institutions increasingly demand and prefer access to electronic sources and networked information from their respective libraries. In the quest to meet up with the needs of library users, Shonhe (2017) suggests that libraries can use various information dissemination techniques such as mentioned and explained above (Okike. 2020). It is against this backdrop that this paper seeks to investigate the preparedness of academic libraries in Nigeria for post pandemic services delivery.

Statement of the problem

The emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic has caused all academic libraries of the world to migrate to online system of service delivery. Actively reaching out to faculty and students in the virtual world and engaging them with library services are of utmost importance and meanwhile of significant challenge. Libraries have been actively adjusting to the unprecedented period and continues delivering services to patrons at the right time. Other measures that have been taken include creating more virtual displays every month and raising awareness of the library's virtual services and e-resources, and expansion of library building. Without training and preparedness beforehand, some library staff do not know how to access Microsoft outlook off campus, the documents saved and specific software installed on their office computers, the shared network drives, etc. This study sets to find out the preparedness of academic libraries in Nigeria for post COVID-19 pandemic services delivery.

Objectives

The main objective of this research work is to investigate the preparedness of academic libraries in Nigerian universities for post COVID-19 pandemic library service delivery. The specific objectives includes

1. the restriction approach academic libraries adopt to mitigate the COVID-19 pandemic
2. preparations made for staff safety as the library reopen amid the COVID-19 Pandemic
3. preparations for user's safety as the library reopen amid the COVID-19 pandemic
4. the challenges faced by libraries as the library prepare to reopen amid the COVID-19 Pandemic

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a descriptive survey design which sought information on the preparedness of academic libraries in Nigerian universities for post COVID-19 pandemic library service delivery. The study was conducted in Anambra State of Nigeria. The population for the study comprised of all the 208 librarians in the libraries in the 3 campuses of Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University Anambra State. There was no sampling because of their small size. The instrument for data collection was a self-developed questionnaire entitled COVID-19 Pandemic Preparedness Questionnaire (CPPQ). The instrument has two parts: Part 1 sought information on the personal data of the respondent; Part 2 was on the issue of the study. Part 2 has four sections. Section A sought information on the restriction approach academic libraries adopt to mitigate the COVID-19 pandemic; Section B was on the preparations made for staff safety as the library reopen amid the COVID-19 Pandemic; while section C was on the preparations for user's safety as the library reopen amid the COVID-19 pandemic; finally, Section D treated the challenges faced by libraries as the library reopens amid the COVID-19 pandemic. The structured pattern adopted was a four point Likert - type scale of strongly agree (SA), agree (A), disagree (D) and strongly disagree (SD). The responses were weighted as follows; SA = 4, A = 3, D = 2, SD = 1. All the questionnaires distributed were returned and used for data analysis. Data collected were analysed using mean. Any score from 2.50 and above was adjudged to be acceptable while scores below 2.50 were regarded as non- acceptable.

DATA ANALYSIS

PART A:

Variable	Frequency	Percentage%
Gender		
Male	3	30
Female	7	70
Years of Experience		
1-5yrs	3	30
6-10yrs	2	20
11yrs and above	5	50
Qualification		
BLIS	1	10
MLIS	6	60
PHDLIS	3	30

Table1: Demographic distribution of respondents

This study is dominated by female respondents 7(70%) as against their male counterparts 3(30%). They are mostly librarians with holders of Masters-degree certificate in Library and Information Studies (MLIS) 6(60%), followed by holders of Doctorate degree in Library studies (PHDLIS) 3(30%). Only one Librarian has first degree in Library Studies.

PART B

Research Question 1: What restriction approach did your library adopt to mitigate the COVID-19 pandemic?

Table 1: Librarians responses on restriction approach adopted by the library to mitigate the COVID-19 pandemic.

S/N	ITEM	MEAN	DECISION
1.	Ensuring access to soap and warm water	3.00	Accepted
2.	Ensuring they have a supply of hand sanitizers	2.80	Accepted
3.	Keeping surfaces clean, including tools, computers, etc.	2.75	Accepted
4.	Rewrite library policy to allow staff and users to stay at home when they feel sick	3.50	Accepted
5.	Cancellation of planned workshops and rescheduling them to the webinar.	3.50	Accepted
6.	Closing reading areas where users spend hours for studies, especially group study areas.	2.50	Accepted
7.	Plan for further restriction; equipping staff with skills (digital skills) and tools require to work from home	2.80	Accepted
8.	Implementing quarantine policies on returned books	3.45	Accepted
9.	Implementing safety guidelines, and improving library hygiene by disinfecting surfaces/objects.	3.00	Accepted
10.	Removing riskier items like headsets from circulation	4.00	Accepted

Table 1 revealed the mean ratings of items 1 through 10 as the restriction approach adopted by the library to mitigate the COVID-19 pandemic.

They have mean of 2.50 and above. However, item 10 (Removing riskier items like headsets from circulation) has the highest acceptance while item 6 (Closing reading areas where users spend hours for studies, especially group study areas) has the lowest acceptance with respective mean

ratings of 4.00 and 2.50. All items were accepted by the respondents as the restriction approach adopted by the library to mitigate the COVID-19 pandemic.

Research Question 2: Determine preparations made for staff safety as the library reopen amid the COVID19 Pandemic

Table 2: Librarians responses on preparations made for staff safety as the library reopen amid the COVID19 Pandemic

S/N	ITEM	MEAN	DECISION
1.	Train staff, equipping them with new proficiency skills and tools to enable them to work remotely from home	3.00	Accepted
2.	Provision for the use of an infrared thermometer for temperature checks at the entrance of the library	2.85	Accepted
3.	Finalizing plans for library staff to work from home	2.61	Accepted
4.	Organize and prepare library resources and serves for additional restrictions ensuring staff have the skills and equipment (digital) to work from home for a longer time	3.50	Accepted
5.	Using library infrastructure like 3 D printing machines to support community pandemic mitigation efforts	2.55	Accepted

Table 2 revealed the mean ratings of items 1 through 5 as the preparations made for staff safety as the library reopens amid the COVID19 Pandemic. They have mean of 2.50 and above, therefore, they are accepted as preparations made for staff safety as the library reopens amid the COVID19 Pandemic. However, item 4 (Organize and prepare library resources and serves for additional restrictions ensuring staff have the skills and equipment (digital) to work from home for a longer time) has the highest acceptance while item 5 (Using library infrastructure like 3 D printing machines to support community pandemic mitigation efforts) has the lowest acceptance with respective mean ratings of 3.50 and 2.55.

Research Question 3: What are the preparations made for users' safety as the library reopen amid the COVID19 pandemic?

Table 3: Librarians responses on the preparations made for users' safety as the library reopens amid the COVID19 pandemic

S/N	ITEM	MEAN	DECISION
1.	Keeping surface clean, including library computer accessories	4.00	Accepted
2.	Review library hygiene policy on frequently used resources or touched areas in the library like toilets, railing, doors knobs, keyboards, counters and workstations, etc.	4.00	Accepted
3.	Receiving useful coverage in the local press for COVID 19 Mitigation library service	3.20	Accepted
4.	Ready to deploy library space and infrastructure like 3 D printing machines to support community pandemic mitigation efforts	1.50	Not-Accepted
5.	Arrange keyboards and screens to allow for regular cleaning	2.90	Accepted
6.	Offering access to Zoom subscriptions	2.95	Accepted
7.	Organizing demonstration on how to effectively wash hands from the finger, then between fingers and under the nails	3.00	Accepted

Table 3 revealed the mean ratings of items 1, 2, 3, 5, 6 and 7 as the preparations made for users' safety as the library reopens amid the COVID19 pandemic. These items have mean of 2.50 and above. Items 1 (Keeping surface clean, including library computer accessories) and 2 (Review library hygiene policy on frequently used resources or touched areas in the library like toilets, railing, doors knobs, keyboards, counters and workstations, etc.) have the highest acceptance with the mean of 4.00 each. However, item 4 (Ready to deploy library space and infrastructure like 3 D printing machines to support community pandemic mitigation efforts) have mean scores of 1.80 which falls below the interior mean of 2.50. It was therefore not accepted.

Research Question 4: What are the challenges faced by your library as the library prepared to reopen amid the COVID19 pandemic?

Table 4: Librarians responses on the challenges faced by the library as the library prepared to reopen amid the COVID19 pandemic

S/N	ITEM	MEAN	DECISION
1.	Finance Problem	2.50	Accepted
2.	Additional responsibilities	3.05	Accepted
3.	Lack of adequate ICT knowledge on library users	3.50	Accepted
4.	Fear of contracting the virus in the working environment	4.00	Accepted
5.	Erratic power supply	2.50	Accepted
6.	Lack of adequate ICT equipment	2.90	Accepted
7.	Lack of adequate training on librarians	3.00	Accepted

Table 4 revealed the mean ratings of items 1 through 7 as the challenges faced by the library as the library prepared to reopen amid the COVID19 pandemic. They have mean of 2.50 and above. Therefore, all the items are accepted as the challenges faced by the library as the library prepared to reopen amid the COVID19 pandemic

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The analysis made on Table 1 revealed that restriction approach adopted by the library to mitigate the COVID-19 pandemic includes: ensuring access to soap and warm water, ensuring they have a supply of hand sanitizers, keeping surfaces clean, including tools, computers, etc., rewriting library policy to allow staff and users to stay at home when they feel sick, implementing quarantine policies on returned books among others. This finding is in line with the finding of Ishola, Adebayo, and Ogunbanjo, (2022) asserted that librarians actually introduced some effective restriction approach to mitigate the COVID-19 pandemic. These findings agree with ALA (2020) that libraries during the COVID-19 pandemic restricted access to their buildings, implemented safety protocols for staff and users.

From Table 2 it can be concluded that the effectiveness of the preparations made for the staff safety as libraries reopens amid the COVID-19 pandemic is high. These findings concur with ALA (2020) that libraries during the COVID-19 pandemic provided online library services like phone services to their patrons, finalizing plans for library staff to work from home, and provision for the use of an infrared thermometer for temperature checks at the entrance of the library.

In Table 3, it was revealed that the preparations made for users' safety as the library reopens amid the COVID19 pandemic includes Keeping surface clean, including library computer accessories,

offering access to Zoom subscriptions, Review library hygiene policy on frequently used resources or touched areas in the library like toilets, railing, doors knobs, keyboards, counters and workstations, among others. This finding is in line with Nwankwo, Chukwu, Igbokwe, Eze-Onwuzuruike, & Agwuna, (2022) who reiterated that keeping surface clean, including library computer accessories is a safety measure that libraries should take in a pandemic situation.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Academic libraries in Nigeria have adopted a combination of different restriction approaches at various times to mitigate the COVID-19 pandemic and halt its spread as libraries reopen. Consequently, preparations are made for staff and users' safety as the libraries reopen amid the COVID-19 Pandemic, given the need to continue education while staying safe. Covid-19 pandemic has redefined the narrative especially in library service delivery across the globe. Traditional library service delivery methods have been rendered near useless as libraries were shut down in order to protect patrons from the risk of contracting the virus. Nigerian libraries are among the worst hit due to poor infrastructures to seamlessly migrate to the virtual method of information dissemination. For library services to operate in academic libraries in Nigeria during and after the pandemic, Librarians must redefine the library activities and get actively involved in the new normal. Based on the findings of this research work, recommendations are as follows:

1. Academic libraries should provide free Wi-Fi around the library and prepare the library's physical surroundings for people to study in groups of two, three, and more, without necessarily entering the library.
2. Government should provide more funding for academic libraries to meet with contemporary best global practices in their library as the library reopens amid the COVID-19 pandemic.
3. Academic library managers should, as a matter of urgency, update library policies, patron behavior policies, meeting room policies, collection development policies, etc., in line with COVID-19 preventive measures.
4. Academic Library managers should move library services online, like zoom meetings, minimizing human contact with their library physical environment.
5. Academic libraries should implement strict COVID-19 protocols in line with NCDC/WHO recommendations as they reopen amid the COVID19 pandemic.

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