

**ADJUSTING TO NEW NORMAL IN THE FACE OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC
LOCKDOWN: A STUDY OF PUBLIC ACADEMIC LIBRARIES IN BENUE STATE,
NIGERIA**

BY

MANASSEH TYUNGU SAMBE CLN

AND

THADDEOUS NGUECHIA IORYEM CLN, MLIS

Abstract

This study investigated how public academic libraries in Benue State were adjusting to new normal during Covid-19 lockdown and the challenges faced during the process. The study employed descriptive survey research design. The population of the study and sample was 100 public academic library professionals. Data was collected through questionnaire and analyzed with the use of descriptive statistics such as frequencies, mean and standard deviation. Results show that the public academic libraries in the state were adjusting to new normal during covid-19 lockdown through the use of social media, blog, library website, email and SMS notifications for information provision and dissemination. However, inadequate access to the affordable ICT facilities, lack of functional website, inadequate social media skills, lack of proper implementation of ICT policies, stress, inconsistent power supply, poor network connection and management resistance to covid-19 change were identified as the challenges confronting public academic libraries in a bid to adjusting to new normal. The study recommends among others that public academic libraries should also view and utilize QR codes, Wechat, television and radio as other means of adjusting to new normal during and after covid-19.

Keywords:

Introduction

Public academic libraries are established to provide adequate services that will support their parent institutions. In a bid to achieving this, they provide information resources and access to the resources provided to save the time of the user. Traditionally, this involves physical

contact between public academic libraries and users. Consequently, the emergence and the alarming rate of covid-19 pandemic spread cause public academic libraries to suddenly suspend their physical methods of information provision and sharing for the betterment of staff and users health.

As noted by Ifije and Yusuf (2020), university libraries' traditional methods (which requires physical contact between the library and users) of meeting the information needs of users have become redundant during the current and may remain so in post covid-19. This means public academic libraries are now forced to adjust to a new normal in order to educate users on the emergence of the pandemic, different ways it spreads and the preventive measures. However, in a bid to public academic libraries adjusting to new normal during covid-19 pandemic, a number of challenges may be recorded. This study therefore sought to determine the challenges faced by the public academic libraries in adjusting to new normal during covid-19 in Benue State.

Statement of the Problem

Adjusting to new normal is one of the sure ways of enhancing the effective provision of information and access to the information provided by the public academic libraries the world over and Benue State in particular. Despite the importance of adjusting to new normal during covid-19 pandemic, some public academic libraries may not achieve improved information provision and dissemination due to some challenges. Although, public academic libraries in the state may invest heavily in the provision of functional ICT facilities for public academic

librarians to utilize in the provision and dissemination of information during covid-19, no commensurate improvement in the provision and delivery of information may be observed. In spite of this, it has been observed that no investigation has been carried out in the area to the best of the researchers' knowledge to determine how public academic libraries in the state are adjusting to new normal and the challenges encountered. This created a gap that this study is designed to fill.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to investigate how academic libraries in Benue State were adjusting to new normal during covid-19 lockdown and the challenges faced during the process. Specifically, the study sought to

1. Determine how public academic libraries in Benue State were adjusting to new normal during covid-19 pandemic
2. Determine the challenges associated with public academic libraries adjustment to new normal during covid-19 lockdown in Benue State

Research Questions

The research was guided by the following research questions

1. How were the public academic libraries in Benue State adjusting to new normal during covid-19 pandemic?
2. What are the challenges associated with public academic libraries adjustment to new normal during ncovid-19 lockdown in Benue State?

Literature Reviews

Public academic libraries are academic libraries found in public institutions of higher learning such as government owned universities, polytechnics, colleges of education, schools of nursing and midwifery, colleges of health technologies, colleges of agriculture among others. They are established and attached to these institutions to provide adequate support to the institutions through the provision and dissemination of information. Traditionally, public academic libraries make physical contact in the provision and dissemination of information to the public academic library community. However, with the introduction of ICT such as smart technologies and the emergence of covid-19 pandemic leading to the lockdown and suspension of traditional library activities, public academic libraries are challenged to adjust to new normal. COVID-19 or Coronavirus Disease according to IFLA (2020) is the infectious disease caused by a newly discovered type of coronavirus. It is according to World Health Organization (2020) a novel virus that was identified in Wuhan specifically in Hubei City of China on the 31st of December, 2019. Its common symptoms as identified by IFLA (2020) include fever, tiredness and a dry cough as well as shortness of breath, aches and pains, sore throat, and very few people will report diarrhoea, nausea or a runny nose. The Virus is according to Ishtiaq, Sehar and Shahid (2020) highly contagious and has a death rate that is multiple times higher than the one of seasonal flu, fever, a dry cough, shortness of breath, and extreme tiredness. In Nigeria like other parts of the world as noted by Hamzat and Otulugbu (2020), the first index case was reported on the 27th February, 2020. This index case was recorded from an Italian who just returned to the

country Nigeria from his country. In the beginning of March, 2020, the Nigerian government in a bid to curtailing the spread of the virus order for the closure of all schools, including universities. However knowledge of the existing pandemic is very necessary as the user community cannot just be knowledgeable of the existence, mode of transmission, symptoms and its preventive measures unless they are informed. To inform the information user community about the virus, public academic libraries must adjust to new normal.

Adjustment is the process that is not liner or well defined. It is however, a change from one way of doing things to another. Nutten (2020) defined adjustment as a **process** that looks differently for most people. This process according to him is not liner or well-defined. New normal on the other hand is defined according to Miles (2022) as a state where our global economy and society have settled since the onset of the covid-19 pandemic. It is evolving as libraries are adjusting to covid-19. In the context of this study, new normal is generally described as a sudden shift from old to new way of doing things due to accumulated wealth of experience and emergence of a health challenge. It is a prevailing situation that follows crises. Adjusting to new normal therefore is a radical transformation from the traditional methods of information resources and services provision to new methods of information resources and services dissemination of the academic libraries to support the curriculum of their parent institutions in which they are established to serve. The term new normal was first introduced in 2008 during the drastic economic, cultural and social transformation that caused precariousness and social unrest, impacting collective perceptions and individual lifestyles. It has been used again according to

Ingusci (2021) during the Covid-19 pandemic to point out how it has completely invested and transformed unbeatable pivots of human life such as professional identity, economic subsistence, work and family organization, children's education management, imposing a radical revision of the traditional ways, practices and skills used to manage them.

Neog (2020) investigated the use of Social Media by the university libraries of Assam for delivering different library services in the pandemic situation caused by COVID-19. The findings reveal that WhatsApp is the most used social media for delivering library services during lockdown. Alibi and Sani (2021) investigated librarians and information service delivery in Kogi State Nigeria during covid-19 pandemic. Findings reveal the major types of information services provided by librarians during COVID -19 seasons as Current Awareness Services (CAS), online Selective Dissemination of Information (SDI) services and Electronic Document Delivery Services, which are delivered majorly through social media platforms, emails and library websites. Aghadiuno, Amidu and Zaccheaus (2021) investigated the influence of social media platforms on dissemination of information about covid-19 by librarians in universities in Nasarawa State, Nigeria. The results of the study revealed that Facebook is the most used social media platforms to obtain information about COVID-19 among librarians in universities in Nasarawa State. In Indonesia, Winata, Fadelina and Basuki (2020) case studied university library services in new normal. Findings reveal that the most appropriate practices of university library services in the new-normal era are provided and libraries have experienced a service transformation implementing the COVID-19 health protocols.

In a bid to adjusting to new normal however, a number of challenges are recorded. These according to Gboje and Katso (2014) include absence of library website. Mohammed et al (2016) in a related study reveals that many Nigeria University libraries do not have functional and updated websites. Gabriel (2020) in his survey of the challenges in using ICT Gadgets to cope with effects of COVID-19 on Education revealed that limited or lack of ICT skills and resources which make online learning during the COVID-19 lockdowns not inclusive as the challenges of using ICT gadgets to cope with effects of covid-19 on education. In the study of technological barriers and challenges in the Use of ICT during the COVID-19 emergency remote learning, Rahiem (2020) revealed the technology barriers and challenges in using ICT as device issues, internet connectivity, technology costs, and lack of technology skills. Jeyaraj (2021) examined the response of university libraries during the COVID-19 outbreak in order to establish the practices in carrying out their operational procedures, delivery models, implemented tactics and overall functioning. The study revealed the challenges to include strain on library staff, unawareness of readers in digitally accessing library resources, permission to access and disseminate information, synchronization of distributed libraries, mass data storage and security issues. Maison, Jaworska, Adamczyk and Affeltowicz (2021) had a qualitative longitudinal study of the challenges arising from the COVID-19 pandemic and the way people deal with them. Results reveal the challenges arising from the covid-19 pandemic as limitations on movement and travels, necessary changes in active life style, boredom and monotony and uncertainty about future. Eurofound and the International Labour Office (2017) identified the challenges of

adapting to new normal as lack of flexibility/telecommuting policies, employer and managerial attitudes towards teleworking and management resistance to teleworking. Omeluzor, Oyovwe-Tinuoye and Abayomi (2016) investigated social networking tools in library service delivery with particular reference to academic libraries in South-East Zone of Nigeria. Their findings some challenges inhibiting use of SN in academic libraries are erratic power supply, inadequate skill to manipulate SN and other ICT tools, technophobia, lack of awareness, insufficient bandwidth, apathy in using modern technologies and lack of internet connection.

In summarizing the review of literature, it is pertinent to attest that a lot of literature exists on adjusting to new normal during covid-19 lockdown in other parts of the world. However, only few has been done or seen on the challenges of public academic libraries in adjusting to new normal in the face of covid-19 lockdown in Benue State, hence, the thrust of the present study.

Methodology

The study employed descriptive survey research design. The population of the study was 100 public academic library professionals. The entire population was used as the sample of the study. Data was collected through questionnaire. Data collected was analyzed with the use of descriptive statistics such as frequencies, mean and standard deviation. The researchers considered the average mean of 3.50-4.00 as SA; 2.50-3.49 as A, 1.50-2.49 as D and 0.50-1.49 as SD.

Results

The results of the study are presented in the table below and analyzed based on the research questions that guide the study.

Table 1: Mean Responses of Librarians on How Public Academic Libraries Adjust to New Normal during and after covid-19 pandemic

S/N	Item Statement	SA	S	D	SD	\bar{X}	Std Deviation	Remark
1.	Use of library social media for information provision and dissemination	64	31	1	2	3.60	.62160	Agree
2	Use of library blog for information provision and dissemination	62	31	3	2	3.56	.65906	Agree
3	Use of library website for information provision and dissemination	59	34	2	3	3.52	.69207	Agree
4	Use of email information provision and dissemination	58	34	4	2	3.51	.67724	Agree
5	Use of SMS notifications for information provision and dissemination	58	31	7	2	3.47	.72125	Agree
6	Use of QR codes	15	27	17	26	2.36	1.10029	Disagree
7	Use of Wechat	9	12	42	23	2.08	.91027	Disagree
8	Use of television	11	8	16	52	1.74	1.06987	Disagree
9	Use of Radio	6	9	25	47	1.70	.91645	Disagree

Source: Fieldwork, 2022

Results of the analysis in Table 1 demonstrated that respondents agree with items 1-5 as how academic libraries adjust to new normal during and after covid-19 in Benue State while they disagree with items 6-9 as how libraries can adjust to new normal.

Table 2: Mean Responses of Librarians on the challenges of Adjusting to new Normal During Covid-19 Lockdown

S/N	Item Statement	SA	S	D	SD	\bar{X}	Std Deviation	Remark
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10.	Stress of adjusting to new normal	56	27	1	2	3.59	.63945	Agree
11	Inadequate access to the affordable ICT facilities	57	22	4	4	3.51	.79038	Agree
12	Lack of functional website	54	25	5	3	3.49	.76056	Agree
13	Inadequate social media skills	40	38	5	4	3.31	.78222	Agree
14	Lack of proper implementation of ICT policies	40	35	6	6	3.25	.86560	Agree
15	Inconsistent power supply	35	35	11	6	3.13	.89146	Agree
16	Poor network connection	37	37	10	3	3.24	.79190	Agree
17	Management resistance to new change	20	42	16	9	2.83	.90056	Agree
18	Management attitudes towards new normal	12	19	31	36	2.07	1.02796	Disagree
19	Lack of awareness of the existing technologies	6	9	25	47	1.70	.91645	Disagree

Source: Fieldwork, 2022

Analysis in Table 2 reveals that respondents agreed with items 10-17 presented as their challenges of adjusting to new normal during covid-19 lockdown in Benue State while items 18-19 are rejected as the challenges.

Discussion

The findings of the study are discussed using the research questions that guided the study as the baseline. In a bid to discussing how public academic libraries in Benue State are adjusting to new normal during covid-19 pandemic, findings reveals that the public academic libraries in the state are adjusting to new normal during covid-19 lockdown through the use of social media, blog, library website, email and SMS notifications for information provision and dissemination. This is therefore in relations with Neog (2020) who reveal that WhatsApp is the most used social media for delivering library services during lockdown. It is also in consonance with Alibi and

Sani (2021) who revealed in their study of librarians and information service delivery in Kogi State Nigeria during covid-19 pandemic that the major types of information services provided by librarians during COVID -19 seasons as Current Awareness Services (CAS), online Selective Dissemination of Information (SDI) services and Electronic Document Delivery Services which are delivered majorly through social media platforms, emails and library websites.

In view of the challenges encountered by the public academic libraries in adjusting to new normal during covid-19 lockdown, the result shows that public academic libraries in the state were confronted with the stress of adjusting to new normal, inadequate access to the affordable ICT facilities, lack of functional website, inadequate social media skills, lack of proper implementation of ICT policies, inconsistent power supply, poor network connection and management resistance to covid-19 change. This is in agreement with Omeluzor, Oyovwe-Tinuoye and Abayomi (2016) who reported that some challenges inhibiting use of SN in academic libraries are erratic power supply, inadequate skill to manipulate SN and other ICT tools, technophobia, lack of awareness, insufficient bandwidth, apathy in using modern technologies and lack of internet connection. They are also in line with Eurofound and the International Labour Office (2017) which identified the challenges of adapting to new normal as lack of flexibility/telecommuting policies, employer and managerial attitudes towards teleworking and management resistance to teleworking.

Recommendations

Based on the study findings, the following recommendations are made

1. Public academic libraries should view and utilize QR codes, Wechat, television and radio as other means of adjusting to new normal during and after covid-19
2. Public academic libraries should feel free in embracing new technologies for information provision and dissemination
3. Adequate access to the affordable ICT facilities should be provided in the public academic libraries by the government
4. Functional library website should be created and utilized by public academic libraries during and after covid-19
5. Adequate social media skills should be acquired and possessed by the public academic library professionals
6. There should be proper implementation of ICT policies for information provision and use during and after covid-19 lockdown
7. There should be consistent power supply in public academic libraries in the state for enhanced adjustment to new normal during and after covid-19
8. There should be improved network connection in public academic libraries for enhance use of technologies for information provision and dissemination
9. Management should not resist embracing the changes brought about by covid-19.

Conclusion

The importance of adjusting to new normal during covid-19 lockdown is obvious from this paper. This is to prevent library professionals' physical contact with users in the process of

information dissemination. It also facilitates easy information provision, dissemination, access and use. Based on this, the public academic libraries are adjusting to new normal through social media. However, they are challenged by stress, inadequate access to the affordable ICT facilities and lack of functional website among others. The study therefore concludes that the public academic libraries are adjusting to new normal through social media but the adjustment is militated by stress and inadequate access to the affordable ICT facilities among others.

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