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COVID-19 PROTOCOLS AND INFORMATION SERVICE DELIVERY TO LIBRARY USERS OF FEDERAL UNIVERSITIES IN BENUE AND NASARAWA STATES

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Abstract
The study investigated application of Covid-19 Protocol on information service delivery to library users of Federal Universities in Benue and Nasarawa states, Nigeria. Three (3) objectives with corresponding research questions guided the study. The population of the study was 1,766 registered library users from the 2018/2019 academic session, from the universities studied. The sample size for this study was 326 library users who were sampled using proportionate random and accidental sampling techniques. The instrument of data collection was a self-structured questionnaire titled: Application of COVID-19 Protocol on Information Services Delivery Questionnaire (ACPISDQ)". Data were collected and analyzed using mean, and Standard Deviation to answer the research questions. Findings of the study revealed that the applied Covid-19 protocols on information service delivery to library users of Federal universities of Benue and Nasarawa States were temperature monitoring device and using alcohol-based sanitizer among others. The finding also revealed that there were temperature-monitoring device, use of alcohol-based sanitizer for disinfectant of hands, provision of running water and soap for hand washing and information resources were applied on information service delivery to library users of Federal universities of Benue and Nasarawa States among others Based on the findings, it was recommended that, the university management should continue the provision of some of the Covid-19 protocols as this will improve hygiene of both library staff and users for effective service delivery as well as the university library management should ensure that adequate infrastructural facilities are made available and accessible among others.
Keywords: Covid-19 protocols, information service delivery, library users

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has necessitated significant changes in how information services are delivered, particularly in university libraries. Adhering to strict protocols is crucial to ensure the safety and well-being of both library staff and users. According to European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (2020) key notes on the application of non-pharmaceutical COVID-19 protocols in information service delivery to library users are: remote access and virtual services. By this the university libraries hath shifted towards virtual services, providing access to digital resources, online catalogues, and e-books to reduce physical visits. Online reference services through email, chat, or video conferencing have become primary means of communication. That is by controlled access to limit the number of users inside the facility at any given time, ensuring social distancing. Reservation systems may be employed to manage user flow and avoid overcrowding. Others include: enhanced Cleaning and Sanitation by regular cleaning and disinfection of high-touch surfaces, including computer terminals, seating areas, and bookshelves, is imperative. Hand sanitizing stations are strategically placed for both staff and users; Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).Library users and staff are required to wear appropriate PPE, such as face masks, gloves, and face shields, to reduce the risk of transmission. Clear Signage and Communication: University libraries use clear and informative signage to indicate safety protocols, including social distancing markers, hand washing instructions, and mask requirements. Regular announcements and reminders over intercom systems reinforce these messages as well as training and education where Staff members receive training on COVID-19 safety protocols, including proper sanitation techniques, use of PPE, and guidelines for interacting with library users. Users may receive informational materials or online resources outlining library-specific COVID-19 protocols.

As important as these COVID-19 protocols are, they may not even be put in place by university libraries for safety information service delivery to users. This may be due to underfunding which has been adversely affecting the application of COVID-19 protocol on information service delivery. It is important, therefore, that every effort be made by university libraries to avert the danger of infection from COVID-19 scourge by applying the COVID-19 protocols, such as regular hand washing, social distancing, and wearing face masks, which were introduced by the Federal Government of Nigeria to curtail the further spread of the disease.

Objectives of the study

The objective of the study was to investigate the application of COVID-19 protocols on information service delivery to library users of Federal Universities in Benue and Nasarawa States. The specific objectives are:

1. Identify the COVID-19 protocols on information service delivery to library users of Federal Universities in Benue and Nasarawa States.
2. Determine the extent of the application of COVID-19 protocols on information service delivery to library users of Federal Universities in Benue and Nasarawa

States.

3. Identify the challenges encountered in applying COVID-19 protocols on information service delivery to users by libraries of Federal universities in Benue and Nasarawa States.

Statement of the Problem

The University library is an important unit in any institution. It exists to provide library users with relevant information services as well as promote improved academic performance of students and teaching capabilities of staff and users. However, university libraries face several challenges in the information service delivery process, especially in the 21st century, and the most recent and devastating one is the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic has caused significant disruptions to the delivery of library services to users, and has negative impact on academic activities.

There is therefore a need for concerted effort to prevent both library users and staff from getting infected. Although other scholars have researched on different aspects of COVID-19, their researches were not on Application of COVID-19 protocols on information service delivery to library users in Federal Universities of Benue and Nasarawa States, Nigeria, hence this study which seeks to find out the application of COVID-19 protocols and information service delivery to library users of Federal Universities in Benue and Nasarawa States

Review of Empirical Studies

Several empirical review studies on the application of Covid-19 protocols and the delivery of information services among library users have be conducted. Oche (2021) conducted a study on the observance of Covid-19 protocols and the effective use of library resources and services in state universities in North Central Nigeria. The purpose of the study was to examine the observance of Covid-19 protocols and the effective use of library resources and services in state universities. The study population consisted of 402 library staff. A structured online Google questionnaire was used as the data collection instrument. The collected data were analyzed using frequency distribution tables, charts, percentages, and means. The findings revealed that library services in the North Central universities were impacted by the observation of Covid-19 protocols. The challenges affecting the provision of library services included power supply, lack of adequate electronic resources in the library, lack of funds to fumigate the library and its surroundings, and lack of internet access, among others. This study is related to the present study as both are concerned with Covid-19 protocols and universities. However, there are differences between the two studies in terms of population.

In a related study by Ishtiaq, Sehar and Shahid (2020) on information dissemination during Covid-19 and lockdown: the role of university libraries in Sindh, Pakistan, the researchers investigated the role of university libraries in this outbreak situation. The novel virus Covid-19 emerged as a global pandemic, leading to a shift from traditional working styles to online platforms due to the shutdown of all activities. The

main objectives of the study were to identify the services, skills, instructional methods, and training programs being carried out during this pandemic period and to highlight how university libraries are contributing to the dissemination and mobilization of information. The study used an online survey research design and included 29 libraries from private sector universities in the Sindh Province of Pakistan. The findings revealed that a high percentage (79.3%) of university libraries provided services during the lockdown, while only a few relied on traditional services that were not offered online during this period. The study concluded that in this new era of information, library staff should always be prepared to face challenging situations. This previous study is related to the present study as both studies focus on Covid-19 and university library services. However, there are differences between the two studies in terms of location, population, and data collection instrument.

Furthermore, Nwosu (2020) conducted a study on the importance of library services and information dissemination during the Covid-19 pandemic in Nigeria. The study evaluated the importance of library services and information dissemination during the pandemic, which resulted in the lockdown of all sectors of human life and the economy, including libraries and institutions. The study used a survey research design and included a random sample population of fifty (50) academic librarians. A structured online questionnaire containing eight weighted questions related to the importance of library services and information dissemination during the pandemic was developed and distributed to academic librarians. The findings showed that academic libraries in Nigeria were shut down during the pandemic, and librarians faced numerous challenges in carrying out library services and information dissemination due to the introduction of a 'new normal' during the Covid-19 pandemic. Based on the findings, the study recommended that academic libraries and librarians in Nigerian institutions adopt the digitalization of library services, ensure that all physical library services are also digitalized, and provide more training for librarians in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) related courses to prepare for future challenges. This previous study is related to the present study as both studies focus on Covid-19 and university library services. However, there are differences between the two studies in terms of location, population, and data collection instrument.

The application of COVID-19 pandemic protocols is indispensible in the delivery of modern library services to library users. This study therefore, was set out to find out the application of COVID-19 protocols and the information delivery services to users of Federal Universities in Benue and Nasarawa States.

Research Methodology

The study adopts a survey research design. The study Area is Benue and Nasarawa States, which are located in the North Central geopolitical zone of Nigeria. Benue state has five universities: Joseph SarwuanTarka University Makurdi (JOSTUM), Benue State University Makurdi (BSUM), University of Mkar, Mkar (UMM), University of Health Technology Otukpo Benue State, and National Open University of Nigeria

(NOUN) Makurdi and Otukpo Study Centers. On the other hand Nasarawa state has four universities: Federal University of Lafia (FUL), Nasarawa State University Keffi (NSUK), Bingham University Karu (BUK), and National Open University of Nigeria (NOUN) Lafia and Keffi Study Centers.

The population of the study will comprise 1,766 registered library users from the 2018/2019 academic session, from the universities under study. Since the population is large, a sample size of 326 respondents was used based on Taro Yamen 1964 formular. The instrument for data collection is a self-developed structured questionnaire titled *"Application of COVID-19 Protocol on Information Services Delivery Questionnaire" (ACPISDQ).* The data for this study was collected using direct delivery and retrieval methods. The data was analysis using descriptive and non-parametric inference statistical tools. Mean and standard deviation were employed to address the research questions.

Results and Discussion

The results of the study are presented according to research questions answered below:

Research Question 1

What are the Covid-19 protocols on information service delivery to library users in Federal universities of Benue and Nasarawa States?

To answer this research question, data on the Covid-19 protocols on the information service delivery to library users in Federal Universities of Benue and Nasarawa States were collected and analyzed as presented in Table 1

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation of Covid-19 protocols information service delivery to library users of Federal Universities in Benue and Nasarawa States (n=326).

S/N	Item Statement	N_1	N_2	X_1	X_2	SD_1	SD_2	Decision
1.	Temperature monitoring device	228	98	3.46	3.5	.56	.57	A
2.	Using of alcohol-based sanitizer for disinfectant of hands	228	98	3.45	3.4	.59	.58	A
3.	Provision of running water and soap for washing of hands	228	98	3.43	3.42	.49	.50	A
4.	Wearing of face mask to avoid transmission of Covid-19	228	98	3.60	3.57	.53	.49	A
5.	Maintaining social distance at least 2 meters (5 feet)	228	98	3.54	3.52	.57	.57	A
6.	Disinfectant/Sanitization of library structure and information resources	228	98	3.34	3.33	.47	.49	A

Key: *N_1= Number of Library users in JOSTUM, N_2= Number of Library users in FUL, X_1= Mean of Library users in JOSTUM, X_2= Mean of Library users in FUL, SD_1=Standard Deviation of Library users in JOSTUM,SD_2= Standard Deviation of Library users in FUL, D= Decision, and A=Agree.*

Table 1 revealed that all the 6 items had mean values for library users in JOSTUM ranging from 3.34 to 3.60 while library users in FUL had 3.32 to 3.57 which are all above the cut off mean of 2.50.This implies that all the 6 items are the application of Covid-19 protocols on information service delivery to library users in Federal Universities of Benue and Nasarawa states. The standard deviation of all the 6 items ranging from 0.47 to 0.59for library users in JOSTUM and 0.49to 0.58 for library users in FUL, indicating that the respondents were not far from the mean and each other in their responses.

Research Question 2

To what extent is the application of Covid-19 protocols on the information service delivery to library users in Federal universities of Benue and Nasarawa states?

To answer this research question, data on the extent of the application on Covid-19 protocols on the information service delivery to library users in Federal universities of

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation of protocols on the extent of application of Covid-19on information service delivery to library users in Federal Universities of Benue and Nasarawa States (n=326).

S/N	Item Statement	N_1	N_2	X_1	X_2	SD_1	SD_2	Decision
7.	Temperature monitoring device	228	98	3.52	3.46	.55	.52	GE
8.	Using of alcohol-based sanitizer for disinfectant of hands	228	98	3.53	3.57	.50	.49	GE
9.	Provision of running water and soap for washing of hands	228	98	3.43	3.39	.51	.51	GE
10.	Wearing of face mask to avoid transmission of Covid-19	228	98	3.58	3.53	.55	.57	GE
11.	Maintaining social distance at least 2 meters (5 feet)	228	98	3.50	3.46	.55	.57	GE
12.	Disinfectant/Sanitization of library structure and information resources	228	98	3.50	3.53	.53	.52	GE
	Pooled			**3.51**	**3.49**	**.53**	**.53**	

Key: *N_1= Number of Library users in JOSTUM, N_2= Number of Library users in FUL, X_1= Mean of Library users in JOSTUM, X_2= Mean of Library users in FUL, SD_1=Standard Deviation of Library users in JOSTUM,SD_2= Standard Deviation of Library users in FUL, D= Decision, and GE= Great Extent.*

Table 2 shows that all the 6 items had mean values for library users in JOSTUM ranging from 3.43 to 3.58 while library users in FUL had 3.39 to 3.57.This implies that all the 6 items are the extent to application of Covid-19 on information service delivery to library users in Federal Universities of Benue and Nasarawa states. The pooled mean of 3.51 and 3.49 for JOSTUM and FUL respectively implies that there is a great extent of application on Covid-19 protocols on the information service delivery to library users in Federal universities in Benue and Nasarawa states. The standard deviation of all the 6 items ranging from .50 to .55for library users in JOSTUM and .49 to .57 for library users in FUL, indicating that the respondents were not far from the mean and such other in their responses.

Research Question 3

Challenges encountered in applying Covid-19 protocol on information service delivery to library users in Federal Universities of Benue and Nasarawa states

To answer this research question, data on the challenges encountered in applying Covid-19 protocol on information service delivery to users in Federal Universities of Benue and Nasarawa states were collected and analyzed as presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation of the challenges encountered in applying Covid-19 protocol on information service delivery to users in Federal universities of Benue and Nasarawa States (n=326).

S/N	Item Statement	N_1	N_2	X_1	X_2	SD_1	SD_2	Decision
23.	Lack of hand sanitizers in the library	228	98	2.91	2.89	.96	.98	A
24.	Lack of running water and soap in the library for regular washing of hands	228	98	2.81	2.83	.97	.97	A
25.	Unavailability of library policy on disaster management	228	98	2.96	2.93	.94	.97	A
26.	Inadequate funding of the University library to acquire necessary equipment for the application of Covid-19 protocol	228	98	2.94	2.97	.92	.95	A
27.	Inadequate capacity infrastructure to maintain social distance	228	98	2.91	2.89	.96	.98	A
28.	Inadequate digital skills to adopt online services	228	98	2.81	2.83	.97	.97	A
29.	Lack of library social media page for posting Covid-19 related information	228	98	2.96	2.93	.94	.97	A
30.	Inadequate internet connectivity	228	98	2.94	2.97	.92	.95	A
31.	Erratic power supply	228	98	2.79	2.77	1.04	1.04	A
32.	Inadequate ICT facilities	228	98	2.96	2.93	.94	.97	A

Key: *N_1= Number of Library users in JOSTUM, N_2= Number of Library users in FUL, X_1= Mean of Library users in JOSTUM, X_2= Mean of Library users in FUL, SD_1=Standard Deviation of Library users in JOSTUM,SD_2= Standard Deviation of Library users in FUL, D= Decision, and A=Agree.*

Table 3 show that all the 10 items had mean values for Library users in JOSTUM ranging from 2.81 to 2.96 while library users in FUL had 2.77 to 2.97.This implies that all the 10 items are the challenges encountered in applying Covid-19 protocol on information service delivery to users in Federal universities of Benue and Nasarawa states. The standard deviation of all the 10 items ranging from 0.92 to 1.04for library users in JOSTUM and .95to 1.04 for library users in FUL, indicating that the respondents were not far from the mean and such other in their responses.

Discussion of the Findings

Based on the findings derived from the results of the study, the following were discussed:

Findings on Table 1 of the study showed that, the six Covid-19 protocols were applied on information service delivery to library users in Federal universities of Benue and Nasarawa States. These Covid-19 protocols were temperature monitoring device for checking temperature, alcohol-based sanitizer for hand disinfectant, provision of running water and soap for hand washing, wearing of face mask to avoid transmission of Covid-19, maintaining social distance of at least 2 meters (5 feet), and disinfectant/sanitization of library structure and information resources. The result correspond with the null hypothesis as shown on the Table 6 which states that, There was no significant difference in the identified Covid-19 protocols on the information service delivery to library users of Federal universities of Benue and Nasarawa States. This supports the study of Mohan, Rao and Bhat (2021) observed that limiting the number of users into physical library, mandatory face mask, provision of sanitizers at the library entrances and maintenances of social distancing were some of the measures taken by the libraries of MAHE during the Covid-19 pandemic. The researcher equally shares these views because a visit to both university libraries showed wearing of face mask, provision of running water and soap for hand washing, maintaining social distance of at least 2 meters (5 feet) existed. The researcher equally shares her view because a visit to the university libraries showed that a near absence of temperature monitoring device, using alcohol-based sanitizer for hand disinfectant, and disinfectant/sanitization of library structure and information resources. Even if they existed, they were usually not functional.

In the same vein, the findings on table 2 revealed that, out five of the six Covid-19 protocols on information service were applied to a great extent. These Covid-19 protocols were: temperature monitoring device, use of alcohol-based sanitizer for disinfectant of hands, provision of running water and soap for hand washing, wearing of face mask to avoid transmission of Covid-19, maintaining social distance of at least 2 meters (5 feet), and disinfectant/Sanitization of library structure and information resources except temperature monitory device that had low extent at FUL.

The third findings of the study as shown in Table 3 revealed some challenges encountered in applying Covid-19 protocol on information service delivery to users. The findings of the study revealed lack of hand sanitizers in the library, lack of running water and soap in the library for regular hand washing, the absence of a library policy on

disaster management, insufficient funding of the university library to acquire necessary equipment for the application of the Covid-19 protocol, and insufficient capacity infrastructure. These findings are in line with those of Olatunde Aiyedun, Ogunode and Eyiolorunse Aiyedun (2021) that discovered that, inadequate funding of public universities, inadequate ICT infrastructural facilities, poor implementation of ICT policies in public universities, high cost of ICT facilities, poor ICT literacy level of lecturers and students, unstable electricity, unstable Internet Services and inadequate man-power as reasons why many public universities could not switch into virtual learning during the COVID-19 school clock down period. In line with these findings, Oche (2021) observed that, erratic power supply, lack of adequate electronic resources in the library, lack of funds to fumigate library environment, lack of internet access in the library, nonchalant attitude of staff towards observing COVID-19 protocols, lack of adequate accommodation in the library to observe social distancing, and inadequate digital skills to adopt online services and so on, as major challenges. The study also agrees with Alabi and Sani (2021) who found out poor funding for effective service delivery, inadequate facilities and inadequate internet services.

Conclusion

The application of Covid-19 protocols has shown a great impact on information service delivery to library users. It has created awareness to library users on how to apply the Covid-19 protocols from being infected of the covid-19 virus. Also in the application of the Covid-19 Protocols, it has prevented a lot of disaster like death from happening. This study on the application of Covid-19 protocols on information service delivery to library users in Federal Universities of Benue and Nasarawa states confirms this.

Recommendations

1. The University library management should provide adequate digital skills training to their staff so as to adopt online services in the era of crisis or pandemic.
2. The university library management should insure adequate infrastructural facilities be made available and accessible.
3. The university library management should insure adequate funding, upgrading of library services to online services as a way of enhancing the roles of librarians in information services delivery in the era of crisis or pandemic.

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