

Covid-19 and Quality Service Delivery of Academic Libraries in Oyo State

By

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Abstract

The outbreak and subsequent spread of COVID-19 to the West African sub-region have brought significant changes to the different aspects of our lives and grounded educational system and also, the quality of service delivered in the various academic institution libraries. The main thrust of the study is to examine covid-19 and quality service delivery of academic libraries in Oyo State. Descriptive survey research design was used in the study. A sample size of 80 librarians was selected through the simple random sampling technique. Questionnaire was the instrument used for collecting data for the study which was titled 'COVID-19 and Quality Service Delivery Questionnaire' (C-19QSDQ). Three research questions were raised in the study. The research questions were analysed using descriptive statistics of simple percentages, Mean and Standard Deviation. Results revealed that some of the library service delivered in the covid-19 era include; reference service by e-mail or the web technology, virtual reference utilities, Instant messaging applications and Instant messaging applications. lack of awareness of new library resources due to the covid-19 pandemic, suspension of all book loans, Information services are suspended and o access to some electronic information resources were the effect of covid-19 on quality service delivery. Poor information literary skills and digital literacy, insufficient communication skills among library personnel and lack of trained and skilled manpower were some of the challenges encountered by librarians in service delivery. It could be concluded that covid-19 has effect on quality service delivery and if necessary steps are not taken, it could further inhibit the quality of services delivered in the library. Consequently, it was recommended that librarians should also be trained more on how to use ICT more effectively in this pandemic period as this would enhance their service delivery even if some of the staff would be working from home.

Keywords: Covid-19 pandemic, Librarians, Quality service delivery

Introduction

The Corona Virus otherwise referred to as COVID-19, was first discovered in 2019 in the Chinese city of Wuhan following which the pandemic has spread like wildfire across continents. This has constituted to global health crises with attendant effects on politics, economies, education and lifestyles globally. The catastrophic effects of the pandemic in terms of the daily geometric increase in the number of confirmed infections and deaths prompted the World Health Organisation (WHO) and political leaders across the world to initiate strict measures. The interventions to contain the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic included the travel restrictions, massive testing, aggressive contact tracing, establishment of isolation centres and quarantine procedures, huge investments in medical supplies, ventilators, and training of medical practitioners, social distancing, locking down societies, among others.

Other efforts at mitigating the spread of the virus globally have been in the areas of collating data daily developing effective vaccines and preventive measures to contain the spread or surge in infected cases. The strict procedures introduced to protect lives and curb the spread of the novel Corona virus portend a major shift in peoples' lifestyles globally in terms of social relations, economy, politics and education to mention but a few. In most African states, the threats of the pandemic were not taken serious early enough and so, the response was weak. While other continents were seriously battling the pandemic, most African states were still going about their normal daily socio-political and economic routines. The first case of the pandemic was recorded in Egypt on February 14, 2020 and the first confirmed case in sub-Saharan Africa was in Nigeria in February 27, 2020 (BBC News, 2020). Maclean (2020) averred that most of the index cases of COVID-19 in Africa were imported from Europe and America rather than China, where the virus originated. Scientists and health professionals are working day and night, tirelessly to limit COVID-19 from further infections.

COVID-19 is a new strain of virus that has not previously been seen in humans with symptoms such as fever, cough, loss of smell, tiredness, muscle pain and mostly difficulty breathing. According to the World Health organisation (WHO), as of 24th April, 2020, there were close to 3 million confirmed cases globally and since then has risen substantially. As scientists and health professionals search for solutions to COVID-19, librarians have the important role of disseminating COVID-19-related information and resources to the public through various virtual

media channels available to them, especially as most people may not come to the library or because the library may be closed during the COVID-19 pandemic (Okike, 2020). The library has been operating its services in a unique model that it has never practiced before. The challenges facing both the staff working in-house and at home are not minimum. Some of the challenges have opened the door for library staff to learn, to become more equipped with technologies and to be creative and collaborative, while some have created real barriers that affect their abilities to perform their jobs effectively.

The provision of quality service by the university library is the primary mission of a library as the librarianship profession is service-oriented. The development of the library is driven by users' needs which are affected by the changing environment. Library services are now operating within a user-centred and self-learning world, as this has made user behaviour to shift from a passive learning pattern to an active one in which users want simple, helpful self-service and personal help only at times of greatest need. Libraries engage in various services which are directly and indirectly offered. Library services can be divided into two categories: public services and technical user services. Library public user services are services that bring the library users directly in contact with the library staff. Examples of these services include current awareness service, circulation, bibliographic instructions, selective dissemination of information among others.

Library technical user services focuses on procedures and operations of maintaining, developing and supporting library collection and services behind the scene such as acquisition, cataloguing, classification, compilation of bibliographies, document delivery and serial systems. The technical services are specialised services that are carried out by the library professionals (Amaechi & Enweani, 2018). Current awareness service is created for promoting library services. The library needs to offer proactive services on informing the library users about new acquisitions in their libraries. The purpose of a current awareness service is to inform the users about the new services the library is offering. Selective dissemination of information (SDI) is a current awareness system which alerts the users of the library on the latest publications in their specific fields of interest. A library user registers at such a system with keywords representing his or her fields of interest, called a search profile. The internet service is an essential service offered by the university library to their users. ICTs are making it possible for university libraries to provide variety of library and information services to clientele. The bibliographic service involves provision of facts about publications rather than people, events or organisations. User education

service is essentially to orientate the university students and other library users with the required knowledge on the use of library services and the resources available. Regardless of the fact that studies have been done on quality service delivery, there are not many studies on covid-19 and quality service delivery among librarians. Therefore, this study will provide empirical evidence on COVID-19 and quality service delivery among librarians in Oyo state.

Review of related literature

There are few publications and limited paper on the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on quality service delivery in academic libraries. Among the few is that of UNESCO (2020) that submitted that most governments around the world have temporarily closed educational institutions in an attempt to contain the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic as this also affected the various services delivered in academic libraries. These nationwide closures are impacting over 89% of the world's students' population. Several other countries have implemented localized closures impacting millions of additional learners.

Ogunsola (2011) categorised library services into three, namely, collection development, technical service and library service delivery. Collections development can be defined as the acquisition of library materials; such as books, e-books, databases among others. Technical services refer to the processing of acquired materials to enable easy organisation, access and retrieval. This included, labeling of library materials, binding and so on. Library service delivery refers to the processes and procedures of disseminating information, electronic document delivery, OPAC and reference services and so on. Over the years, library services have however undergone a lot of changes. In the past, before the advent of computers, library services were traditional in nature, however, at the introduction of the computers into different aspects of life; libraries inclusive, the needs of library users, service generally as well as the library profession have become transformed in a bid to meet the expectations of the ICT driven world. Anunobi and Nwabueze (2010) in their survey of the migration of the traditional library to the digital library environment and the prospects of information professionals in Nigeria maintained that librarianship has passed through three metamorphic stages, namely; the traditional stage, the computerized/automated stage and the digital stage. Each of these stages has affected information service delivery and though the first two stages complement each other, while the third is totally different in its operations. Umunnakwe and Onyebinama (2007) investigated the

type of services rendered by academic libraries in Imo state and found that cataloguing, reference, circulation and indexing and abstracting services were the most important services rendered. They concluded that service provision in any library was an indispensable activity.

The presence of COVID-19 pandemic has caused a lot of problems in the educational system and also in the library. It has caused enormous effect in the quality of service rendered to users. Nimsomboon and Nagata (2013) examined the effect of service quality of Thammasat University Library from users' perspective. They identified the service quality dimensions related to 'affect of service –organisational', 'collection', 'access', and 'affect of service-personal' with reference to affect customers' evaluation of service quality by factor analysis method. Their finding revealed that some of the effect of quality service are book loan could be suspended, some EIRs may not be accessible, suspension of information services among others. Brown, Clark, Houser, Kilby, and Lyle (2020) conducted a study on the effect of COVID-19 pandemic on quality service delivery of library personnel in public libraries in US and the result revealed that the level of service delivery in the pandemic period has reduced drastically due to social distancing and the lockdown. It was also revealed that some services such as technical, reference, outreach, user education, reprographic among others were affected as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In the quest for appropriate service delivery in the 21st century and in this pandemic period, there is need to step up effort to work eradicate some these challenges that could hinder effective service delivery among library personnel. Some of challenges encountered by library personnel in service delivery include demand for new skills, cost/funding, lack of skilled manpower, lack of well-defined ICT policy. Abubakar (2011) observed that digital revolution has dramatically changed the face of libraries in the 21st century. This posed a challenge to academic libraries to digitize their services and resources through appropriate ICT application in order to remain relevant. However, academic libraries in Nigeria are faced with enormous problems, notably the lack of proper funding. Despite that, they must against all odds try to measure up with their contemporaries elsewhere.

Similarly, in a study conducted by Eze and Uzoigwe, (2013) on the challenges encountered by library personnel in service delivery in selected universities in Southeast Nigeria and the findings revealed that certain factors pose problems to these academic libraries, such factor as

poor funding (62.5%) of the libraries and others which have a bearing on its poor infrastructure (especially electronic facilities) and high cost of maintaining the facilities. Haruna and Oyelekan (2010) conducted a study on the challenges encountered by library personnel in service delivery in universities library in Southwest Nigeria and the findings revealed that inadequate ICT facilities (63.7%), inability to put the virtual library into operations (48.3%), out dated information resources (51.4%), poor shelving and re-shelving of library materials (58.2%) and lack of qualified staff to provide relevant information resources and services (44.2%) were some of the factors inhibiting information resources and services.

Statement of the problem

Quality service delivery from inception has been the bedrock of libraries' existence since libraries are established for the sole purpose of providing information services, but due to the emergence of covid-19 pandemic, the quality-of-service delivery has reduced to the lowest ebb. Academic libraries are regarded as the hub of academic activities because they house those information needed by the academic community and thus users come into the library to search for information. Due to the technological advancement, innovations have been brought into higher institutions education and invariably, the application of ICT in libraries has changed library service delivery. Hence, the position of librarians as sole custodian of information has been eroded while information format and service delivery are being continuously redefined to include among others, current awareness service, information provision on library website and internet services. However, it has been observed that, in the current ICT driven information era and the emergence of covid-19 pandemic, there is continuous decrease in number of library users because users are not satisfied with service delivery in the libraries. This could be as a result of lockdown, social distancing among others as a result of covid-19 pandemic. This could however spell doom on the quality of service delivered by the library personnel. To this end, this study investigated COVID-19 and quality service delivery among librarians in Oyo state.

Objectives of the study

The main objective of the study was to examine COVID-19 and quality service delivery of academic libraries in Oyo state. The specific objectives of the study were to;

- i. examine the services delivered by librarians in COVID-19 era;

- ii. examine the effect of COVID-19 pandemic on quality service delivery among librarians in Oyo state; and
- iii. identify the challenges encountered by librarians in quality service delivery in COVID-19 era in Oyo state.

Research Questions

The research provided answers to the following questions:

- i. What are the services delivered by libraries in COVID-19 era in Oyo state?
- ii. What is the effect of COVID-19 pandemic on quality service delivery among librarians in Oyo state?
- iii. What are the challenges encountered by librarians in quality service delivery in COVID-19 era in Oyo state?

Methodology

Research design

A survey research design was adopted for this study. This research work was carried out among librarians who work in higher institutions libraries in Oyo state. The total population of the study was 126 librarians from three different higher institutions in Oyo state which are Immanuel Alayande college of Education, Oyo, University of Ibadan and Federal college of Education Special, Oyo. Out of the entire population of librarians in the three higher institutions that were selected for the study, only (80) librarians were sampled because this number is manageable. Simple random technique was used to select the sample size. A structured questionnaire, titled the 'COVID-19 and Quality Service Delivery Questionnaire' (C-19QSDQ) was used in obtaining information for the study. It consisted of open and closed item questionnaire and is made up of two sections 'A and B'. Section A elicited information on the demographic characteristics of the respondents and instructions to the respondents on how to fill the questionnaire, while section B consisted of items of the three research questions that guided the study. It contains 17 questionnaire items, and the response options with values assigned to them are: Strongly Agree (SA)...4; Agree (A)...3; Disagree (D)...2; Strongly Disagree (SD)...1. To ensure the face and content validity of the instrument, copies of the questionnaire were sent along with copies of the research questions and the purpose of the study to two experts in the

college library, Immanuel Alayande College of Education, Oyo. They scrutinized the items in terms of clarity and adequacy in addressing the purposes and research questions. Their suggestions were used to produce the final draft of the questionnaire used in this study.

The reliability of the instrument was determined through the test re-test method. Twenty (20) copies of the instrument were administered to librarians in tertiary institutions in Osun state, Nigeria and after an interval of two weeks, the questionnaire was re-administered to the same librarians. The scores of the first and second administrations were correlated using Pearson Product moment Correlation Co-efficient statistic and the correlation co-efficient value stood at 0.74 which was considered high enough to confirm the instrument reliable. Copies of the questionnaire were then administered by the researchers through online medium. The researchers requested for the email addresses of the librarians in their various institutions and they were informed of the study. They responded positively and they were all sampled for the study. E-questionnaire copy was sent to the various librarians through their email addresses and their responses were later sent to researcher's email. The researcher sorted the responses and collated them for data analysis. Data were analysed using frequency counts, simple percentage.

Results

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of the Respondents

Variables		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Female	46	57.5
	Male	34	42.5
Years in service	0-3	18	22.5
	4-7	31	38.7
	8-11	22	27.5
	12-15	9	11.3
Position	Assistant librarian	15	18.8
	Librarian II	21	26.2
	Librarian I	19	23.8
	Senior librarian	14	17.5
	Principal librarian	11	13.7

Source: *Field survey, 2022*

Result from Table 1 shows that 46 (57.5%) were females and the rest 34 (42.5%) were male. This means that more females participated in the study than their male counterparts. Eighteen (22.5%) have been in service for 0-3 years, 31 (38.7%) for 4-7 years, while 22 (27.5%) have been in service for 8-11 years and the rest 9 (11.3%) for 12-15 years. This means that

respondents who have been in service between 4-7 years participated more in the study than their other counterparts. Fifteen (18.8%) were assistant librarians, 21 (26.2%) were librarian II, 19 (23.8%) were librarian I while 14 (17.5%) were senior librarians and the remaining 11 (13.7%) were principal librarians. This means that librarian II participated more in the study than their other counterparts.

Research question 1: What are the services delivered by libraries in COVID-19 era in Oyo state?

Table 2: Services delivered by libraries in covid-19 era in Oyo state

Items	SA	A	D	SD	\bar{x}	Rank
1 Reference service by e-mail or the Web Technology	18 (22.5%)	34 (42.5%)	18 (22.5%)	10 (12.5%)	3.19	1 st
2 Virtual reference utilities	13 (16.2%)	22 (27.5%)	40 (50%)	5 (6.3%)	2.89	2 nd
3 Instant messaging applications	16 (20%)	29 (36.2%)	32 (40%)	3 (3.8%)	2.63	3 rd
4 Inter-library loans and documents to other libraries	8 (10%)	17 (21.2%)	43 (53.8%)	12 (15%)	1.48	4 th
5 Current Awareness	12 (15%)	20 (25%)	41 (51.2)	7 (8.8%)	1.36	5 th
6 Online/C.D ROM Database searching	4 (5%)	8 (10%)	53 (66.2%)	15 (18.8%)	1.24	6 th

Source: *Field survey, 2022*

Table 2 shows the service delivered by librarians in covid-19 era in Oyo state. The result shows that reference service by e-mail or the web technology ($\bar{x} = 3.19$) was ranked highest by the mean score rating and was followed in succession by virtual reference utilities ($\bar{x} = 2.89$), instant messaging applications ($\bar{x} = 2.63$), inter-library loans and documents to other libraries ($\bar{x} = 1.48$) and current awareness ($\bar{x} = 1.36$), and online/C.D ROM database searching ($\bar{x} = 1.24$). It could be concluded that some of the library service delivered in the covid-19 era include; reference service by e-mail or the web technology, virtual reference utilities and instant messaging applications.

Research question 2: What is the effect of COVID-19 pandemic on quality service delivery among librarians in Oyo state?

Table 3: Effect of covid-19 pandemic on quality service delivery among librarians

Items	SA	A	D	SD	\bar{x}	Rank
1 Information services are suspended	21 (26.2%)	37 (46.2%)	12 (15%)	10 (12.5%)	2.36	3 rd
2 Retrenchment of some staff	10 (12.5%)	18 (22.5%)	48 (60%)	4 (5%)	1.39	5 th
3 No access to some electronic information resources	22 (27.5%)	35 (43.7%)	18 (22.5%)	5 (6.3%)	2.31	4 th
4 Suspension of all book loans	19 (23.7%)	49 (61.3%)	10 (12.5%)	2 (2.5%)	3.15	2 nd
5 Lack of awareness of new library resources due to the covid-19 pandemic	15 (18.8)	54 (67.5%)	11 (13.7%)	-	3.79	1 st

Source: *Field survey, 2022*

Table 3 shows the effect of covid-19 pandemic on quality service delivery among librarians. The result reveals that lack of awareness of new library resources due to the covid-19 pandemic ($\bar{x}=3.79$) was ranked highest by the mean score rating and was followed in succession by virtual suspension of all book loans ($\bar{x}=3.15$), information services are suspended ($\bar{x}=2.36$), no access to some electronic information resources ($\bar{x}=2.31$) and lastly, retrenchment of some staff ($\bar{x}=1.39$). It could be concluded that some of the major effect of covid-19 pandemic on quality service delivery among librarians in Oyo state are; lack of awareness of new library resources due to the covid-19 pandemic, suspension of all book loans, Information services are suspended and o access to some electronic information resources.

Research question 3: What are the challenges encountered by librarians in quality service delivery in COVID-19 era in Oyo state?

Table 4: Challenges encountered by librarians in quality service delivery in covid-19 era

Items	SA	A	D	SD	\bar{x}	Rank
1 Lack of trained and skilled manpower	21 (26.2%)	34 (42.5%)	20 (25%)	5 (6.3%)	3.21	4 th
2 Insufficient communication skills among library personnel	18 (22.5%)	42 (52.5%)	16 (20%)	4 (5%)	3.43	3 rd
3 Poor information literary skills and digital literacy	23 (28.7%)	50 (62.5%)	5 (6.3%)	2 (2.5%)	3.52	2 nd
4 Inadequate ICT infrastructure in libraries	16 (20%)	47 (58.7%)	13 (16.3)	4 (5%)	2.98	5 th
5 Lack of exposure to international standards and experience to deliver services during covid-19 pandemic	13 (16.3%)	52 (65%)	9 (11.2)	6 (7.5%)	3.56	1 st
6 Lack of financial support to buy library materials as a result of low budgetary allocations to the development of libraries	19 (23.7%)	34 (42.5%)	20 (25%)	7 (8.8%)	2.67	6 th

Source: *Field survey, 2022*

Table 4 shows the challenges encountered by librarians in quality service delivery in covid-19 era. The result reveals that lack of exposure to international standards and experience to deliver services during covid-19 pandemic ($\bar{x} = 3.56$) was ranked highest by the mean score rating and was followed in succession by poor information literary skills and digital literacy ($\bar{x} = 3.52$), insufficient communication skills among library personnel ($\bar{x} = 3.43$), lack of trained and skilled manpower ($\bar{x} = 3.21$), inadequate ICT infrastructure in libraries ($\bar{x} = 2.98$) and lastly lack of financial support to buy library materials as a result of low budgetary allocations to the development of libraries ($\bar{x} = 2.67$). It could be concluded that some of the challenges that are encountered by librarians include; lack of exposure to international standards and experience to deliver services during covid-19 pandemic, poor information literary skills and digital literacy, insufficient communication skills among library personnel and lack of trained and skilled manpower.

Discussion

Result on research question one revealed that some of the library service delivered in the covid-19 era include; reference service by e-mail or the web technology, virtual reference

utilities and instant messaging applications. This means just few services were delivered by the librarians during the period of lock down as a result if the covid-19 pandemic which limited the use of these services by library users. The finding corroborates that of Umunnakwe and Onyebinama (2007) who reported that cataloguing, reference, circulation and indexing and abstracting services were the most important services rendered. They concluded that service provision in any library is an indispensable activity.

Result on research question two shows that some of the major effect of covid-19 pandemic on quality service delivery among librarians are; lack of awareness of new library resources due to the covid-19 pandemic, suspension of all book loans, Information services are suspended and o access to some electronic information resources. The finding supports that of Brown, Clark, Houser, Kilby, and Lyle (2020) who reported that the level of service delivery in the pandemic period has reduced drastically due to social distancing and the lockdown. It was also revealed that some services such as technical, reference, outreach, user education, reprographic among others were affected as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. The finding also goes in line with that of Nimsomboon and Nagata (2013) who reported that some of the effect of quality services are; book loan could be suspended, some EIRs may not be accessible, suspension of information services among others.

Result on research question three reveals that some of the challenges that are encountered by librarians include; lack of exposure to international standards and experience to deliver services during covid-19 pandemic, poor information literary skills and digital literacy, insufficient communication skills among library personnel and lack of trained and skilled manpower. The finding lends credence with that of Eze and Uzoigwe, (2013) who reported that certain factors such as poor funding of the libraries and others which have a bearing on its poor infrastructure (especially electronic facilities) and high cost of maintaining the facilities. The finding also supports that of Haruna & Oyelekan (2010) who reported that inadequate ICT facilities, inability to put the virtual library into operations, out dated information resources, poor shelving and re-shelving of library materials and lack of qualified staff to provide relevant information resources and services were some of the factors inhibiting information resources and services.

Conclusion and Recommendations

It could be concluded that covid-19 pandemic has created an increasing need for librarians to give quality service more than before to its users. Most academic libraries in Oyo state have always been at the forefront in providing a range of quality services. The global pandemic has impacted library services, users and the library professionals who provide these services in many ways. It could be recommended that all academic libraries should create a local pandemic task force comprised of team leaders in order to effectively create internal processes and procedures in response to the pandemic so as to enhance quality services that has been hindered by the pandemic. Librarians should also be trained more on how to use ICT more effectively in this pandemic period as this would enhance their service delivery even if they are working from home. Management of academic libraries should create and amend their service and staffing plans based on the advice of their task force as this would make them to acquire staff who are technology savvy and could enhance the quality of service delivered in the libraries. Adequate ICT infrastructure and internet facilities should be made available in the university libraries. Universities libraries should increase their level of investment on ICT facilities in order to improve their service delivery. To reduce the further spread of the pandemic most especially in the library, the number of library users that should be allowed in the library at once should be reduced as this would give room for social distancing, consequently, quality service is ascertained to the number of users at a time.

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