

School Librarians' Wellbeing in Post-Covid Era

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Abstract

The article examined school librarian's wellbeing in postCOVID-19 era. Various definitions and impact of COVID-19 pandemic on different countries of the world as presented by WHO and other authors were examined. Symptoms of COVID-19 as well as effects of COVID-19 pandemic on school libraries were also scrutinized. Finally, the article observed various measures that will promotes wellbeings of both library users and librarians especially in school libraries such as observing social distancing in the library, use of infra-red temperature check, book quarantine and introduction of digital contents.

Keywords: *Coronavirus, school librarian, post-covid era, librarian's wellbeing*

Introduction

The World Health Organization (WHO), in December 2019, received reports on clusters of pneumonia cases of unknown causes in Wuhan City, Hubei Province of China. The Chinese authorities subsequently identified a novel strain of Coronavirus (SARS-COV 2) as the causative agent of corona virus disease (WHO, 2010). Sequel to the advice of the International Health Regulation Emergency Committee, the Director-General of the WHO declared the COVID-19 outbreak as a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) on 30 January 2020 and characterized it as a pandemic on 11 March 2020 (WHO, 2020). The outbreak has been reported in all continents, with first case in Africa reported in Egypt in February 2020 (WHO, 2020). Globally, over 2.6 million confirmed cases and over 186,000 deaths have been recorded (Pullano et al. 2020). Nigeria is one of the two hundred and ten countries affected globally by the pandemic.

The World Health Organisation declared the disease as pandemic as Italy, Iran, South Korea, and Japan reported rising numbers of cases of infection. The COVID-19 (Coronavirus) outbreak was having a global impact and affecting local communities, libraries are not left out. Staff in libraries of all types are learning the facts about this pandemic and adapting services to meet the new challenges in the community. Library and information workers are doing their best both personally and professionally, to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic.

The potentials of the libraries and information centers to acquire, evaluate, package, store and disseminate information has placed a huge demand on it to intervene in critical situation such as COVID-19 pandemic era. The first case of COVID-19 was reported to have been confirm in Africa on 14th February, 2020, and subsequently to the sub Saharan Africa. Consequently, Nigeria also recorded a first case of COVID-19 virus on 27th February, 2020 when an Italian citizen entered Nigeria from Milan on a business trip, was tested positive in Lagos, Nigeria (Wikipedia. 2020). Similarly, on 9th March, 2020 a second case of the virus was reported in Ogun State all in South West of Nigeria (Wikipedia, 2020). However, as at 1st April, 2020 twelve new cases was reported in the country, which account for one hundred and ten confirmed cases, twenty five discharge, and three deaths. Following the announcement by World Health Organisation (2020), Nigeria was among thirteen African countries identified as high-risk for the spread of the virus. The Federal

government of Nigeria thus set up a Coronavirus Preparedness Group (CPG) to alleviate the impact of the virus. Although, the Federal Government of Nigeria assured its citizen on the readiness to prevent the spread of coronavirus in the country. Likewise, the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) set up a group for coronavirus monitoring which was ready to be activated if any incident emerged in Nigeria.

Available evidence indicates that COVID-19 virus is transmitted during close contact through respiratory droplets (such as coughing and sneezing) and vomiting (WHO, 2020) Furthermore, the virus can spread directly from person to person when a COVID-19 infected person coughs or exhales producing droplets that reach the nose, mouth or eyes of another person. Alternatively, as the droplets land on objects and surfaces surrounding the person. Other people become infected with COVID-19 by touching these contaminated objects or surfaces.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to ascertain school librarian's wellbeing in POST-COVID Era. The specific objectives are to:

1. explain the word COVID-19 Pandemic
2. find out symptoms of COVID-19 Pandemic
3. explain the word health and wellbeing
4. state the effect of COVID-19 pandemic on school libraries
5. ascertain step by step to school librarian's wellbeing in Post COVID Era

COVID-19 Pandemic

COVID-19 is an infectious disease caused by the coronavirus, SARS-CoV-2, which is a respiratory pathogen. In January 2020 the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the outbreak of a new coronavirus disease in Wuhan, China and called it COVID-19. WHO stated that there was a high risk of COVID-19 spreading to other countries around the world from Wuhan, China. In March 2020, WHO characterized it as pandemic disease (WHO, 2020). Since then, WHO and public health authorities around the world are acting to curtail the COVID-19 spread. The time from exposure to COVID-19 to the moment when symptoms begin is, on average of five to six days and can range from one to fourteen days. This is why people who have been exposed to the virus are advised to stay home for at least fourteen days in order to reduce the spread of the virus, especially where testing is not easily available.

People aged 60 and over, and those with underlying medical problems like high blood pressure, heart and lung problems, diabetes, obesity or cancer, are at higher risk of developing serious illness. However, anyone can get sick with COVID-19 and become seriously ill or die at any age. Taking some simple precautions, such as physical distancing, wearing a mask, keeping rooms well ventilated, avoiding crowds, cleaning/washing your hands at regular intervals and coughing into a bent elbow or tissue can help to stay safe. In Nigeria as of 26th October, 2020, 62,111 cases have been reported across the 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT). Table 1 shows the detail reported cases of the disease across the states in Nigeria. Of this number, 57,571 cases have been discharged, and 1,132 deaths were recorded.

Table I: Breakdown of Corona Virus in Nigeria by States

S/N	State	Number of Cases
1	Lagos	20,884
2	FCT	5,993
3	Plateau	3,603
4	Oyo	3,425
5	Rivers	2,773
6	Edo	2,652
7	Kaduna	2,617
8	Ogun	2,010
9	Delta	1,812
10	Kano	1,742
11	Ondo	1,666
12	Enugu	1,314
13	Kwara	1,067
14	Ebonyi	1,049
15	Katsina	952
16	Osun	923
17	Abia	898
18	Gombe	883
19	Borno	745
20	Bauchi	710
21	Imo	614
22	Benue	486
23	Nasarawa	479
24	Bayelsa	403
25	Ekiti	332
26	Jigawa	325
27	Akwa Ibom	295
28	Anambra	277
29	Niger	274
30	Adamawa	257
31	Sokoto	165
32	Taraba	140
33	Kebbi	93
34	Cross River	87
36	Yobe	82
36	Zamfara	79
37	Kogi	5

Source: Nigerian Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) October 26,2020

Symptoms of COVID-19

The most common symptoms of COVID-19 are fever, dry cough, fatigue, loss of taste or smell, nasal congestion, conjunctivitis (also known as red eyes), sore throat, headache, muscle or joint pain, different types of skin rash, nausea or vomiting, diarrhea, chills or dizziness. Some people become infected but only have very mild symptoms or none at all. Symptoms of severe COVID-19 disease include shortness of breath, loss of appetite, persistent pain or pressure in the chest, high temperature (above 38 °C). Other less common symptoms are irritability, reduced consciousness (sometimes associated with seizures), anxiety, depression, sleep disorders, more severe and rare neurological complications such as strokes, brain inflammation, delirium and nerve damage (Willis, 2020). People of all ages who experience fever and/or cough associated with difficulty breathing or shortness of breath, chest pain or pressure, or loss of speech or movement should seek medical care immediately.

Around the world, library and information workers are doing their best, both personally and professionally, to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic. There should be concerted effort by all stakeholders in the information dissemination sectors to

rise to the challenge of the hour in ensuring adequate restriction to the spread of this disease within library facilities in our country. Naturally, the focus of this write-up is on how to keep library staff and users safe, how to keep offering services as best possible, how to manage uncertainty during and Post-COVID era.

School Librarian's Health and Wellbeing

The World Health Organisation (WHO) defines health as a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity (WHO, 1948 as cited in WHO, 2020). Huber et al. (2011) as cited in WHO (2020) proposed a new definition of health as the ability to adapt and to self-manage which includes the ability of people to adapt to their situation. Health is a means to living well. It also acknowledges the subjective element of health; what health and wellbeing mean will differ from one person to the next, depending on the context and their needs. WHO definition links health explicitly with wellbeing, and conceptualises health as a human right requiring physical and social resources to achieve and maintain. Wellbeing refers to a positive rather than neutral state, framing health as a positive aspiration. Wellbeing can be defined as that of feeling good and functioning well.

Wellbeing is defined by the Oxford English Dictionary as the state of being comfortable, healthy, or happy. However, it is important to realise that wellbeing is a much broader concept than moment-to-moment happiness. While it does include happiness, it also includes other things, such as how satisfied people are with their life as whole, their sense of purpose, and how in control they feel. In this respect, the New Economics Foundation describes wellbeing as how people feel and how they function both on personal and social level, and how they evaluate their lives as a whole (New Economic Foundation, 2012). Most people would agree that wellbeing is something they strive towards and the subjective measure of people's wellbeing is deemed so important that it is included alongside with health.

Change is one of the six main workplace hazards that can cause or contribute to stress in school librarians and other library workers. Other hazard are demand, control, support, relationship and roles (Willis,2020) Life for those working in the retail, leisure and hospitality sectors has changed significantly over the last month. Control is another hazard, a healthy position being employees have some control over how they do their work, yet employees have had much of their control taken away from them by the restrictions. The New Economics Foundation (2012) identified five evidence-based actions people can take in their daily lives to improve their wellbeing, known as the five ways to Wellbeing. These are connect, be active, take notice, keep learning, and give. All these actions when put in use improves health and wellness of school librarians.

Step to Step of School Librarians Well Being in Post-COVID Era

A first step towards protecting the health and well-being of school librarians and users is preventing contact with those already sick. Health questionnaires can be introduced and temperature checks may be used to screen visitors before allowing admittance to the school library. Through collecting information about user's health and lives, this will help to isolate those at risk, and treat those infected.

Once inside the library, care must be taken to limit contact between school library staff and users. In addition to providing staff with masks and gloves, some institutions are taking extra precautions which include building plexiglass shields for

ticket desks, providing disinfectant for staff, taking credit cards instead of cash and regular cleaning of facilities.

Using of UV sanitizers to disinfect materials after return.

Returned items should be kept in bins where the materials remain for a three-day period before being handled. The French guidelines also recommend a three-day quarantine for paper or cardboard materials, but recommend a 10-day quarantine for those with plastic covers.

To reduce risk to staff and users alike, libraries should encourage users to borrow and return items through self-service kiosks where ever available, eliminating the need for unnecessary human interaction.

Hand sanitizer stations at library entrance can reduce contamination of library materials.

Bibliotheca selfChecks can easily be configured for a completely touchless experience. Additionally, users can borrow materials directly from their own mobile devices with cloud Library checkout, reducing fear or anxiety for library users.

Many libraries have restricted or stopped circulating physical materials, they have in parallel seen much greater demand for digital content. They are working hard to identify ways to support online learning for students of all ages, often overcoming barriers (see below). In their own work, even those who were previously most resistant to new tools and technologies are having to get used to remote working and communication.

Virtual exhibitions are taking place, some even looking back at how societies have dealt with pandemics in the past.

Ensuring access to soap and warm water for hand washing

Ensuring they have supply of hand sanitisers

Keeping surfaces clean, including toys and library computers with use of disinfectant.

Ensuring that staff and users are encouraged to take time to recover if they are feeling ill, rather than coming in to work

Providing pages with useful links to reliable information for users on their websites and promoting media literacy.

Considering whether to close down study spaces where people may spend a longer time in the company of others.

Preparing for potential further restrictions, for example by ensuring that all staff have the skills and tools to work remotely (if this is possible) and that services, as far as possible, can still be provided digitally.

Finalising and testing measures for all staff to work remotely and allowing those who can to do so.

Setting limits on numbers of people using the library at any time, and establishing how to enforce these (for example through advanced booking, ticketing, or using other means of counting numbers of users), as well as preventing situations where people may gather closely together, for example using one-way systems, limiting furniture, keeping reading rooms closed.

Implementing regular cleaning processes (including through short closures of the library), especially focused on surfaces where the virus appears to be able to last for longest (plastics, metals other than copper), or at least intensifying cleaning.

Developing click-and-collect or drive-through services in order to allow access to books without human contact

Developing protocols for how to respond if someone with symptoms is identified in the library

Ensuring that staff have the equipment and training necessary to stay safe, including consideration of screens if necessary, limiting contact as far as possible and enabling work from home for as long as possible, and provide regular updates

Making clear when it is impossible to open safely, and otherwise ensuring that those taking decisions understand the nature of library spaces, including through a gradual approach to resuming services only when each one is safe

Continuing to promote online services and resources in order to limit numbers looking to visit the library

Communicate clearly all any new rules to library users, both online and onsite, and provide regular updates

Ensuring that plans are in place for a potential return to lock-down in case of new peaks in infection rates is noticed.

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