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A Survey on Reading Habit of Library Users during COVID-19 Lockdown

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Abstract

E-Libraries has become more relevant in present situation of COVID-19 pandemic as it has caused an international lockdown in the world and India. Causing majority of the citizens to stay at home. The survey was conducted to study the reading habits of various library users (volunteers) during this situation. Besides the reading habit, the survey also collected the data for the various activities carried out by users at home. Main finding of the survey is that the users had taken keen interest to switch over to reading eBooks and 70% of student users and 53% of faculty users are reading more e-content especially books/magazines/research papers. Besides the extensive reading habit, the survey also discloses the greater involvement of users for learning/leisure/hobby activities at home. Student users have also reported spending more quality life with family members at home. Above all, the survey disclosed the reading of books as the main activity of the users during lockdown. This finding will inspire the organizations for establishing scalable and secure eLibrary Infrastructure and for focusing on acquiring more eBooks for the eLibrary and provide better services to their users during situations like that of COVID-19.

1. Introduction

In March 2020, Wuhan China reported the spread of COVID-19 from human to human. WHO raised the flag for a worldwide catastrophic spread of the virus. Countries across the globe were monitoring the situation in China with caution but the eyebrows were raised when within few weeks of the spread in Wuhan; thousands of people were infected by COVID-19 and the many mortality rate were reported. The spread of the virus was reported from Korea, Japan, European Union and USA. Suddenly in second week of March, Europe was in a lockdown followed by USA who had announced a partial lockdown to contain the spread of the virus. India with its huge population and weak medical infrastructure is the soft target for the spread of COVID-19 [1]. Visualizing the upcoming threat, the Government of India declared a National Lockdown for a period of 3 weeks. People were asked to stay home or stay at whichever place they are. The International Flights, trains and all public transport was suspended for 3 weeks. Except essential and medical services, the entire India went into a lockdown closing schools, colleges, offices, businesses, industries, shops, construction projects and libraries [2]. All of the sudden, life came to a standstill. Gradually as week after week passed the people were indoors for many days. The scenario was a best situation for the spread of psychological and mental health conditions among the

population. The country of India were awareness for maintaining good mental health is considered low in comparison to western countries, hence, the health and medical experts of the government started motivating the people to develop reading habit during lock down, which may be one of the effective measure to handle the depressing situation with positive interesting activities [3]. People of different age groups may have diverse reading habit. The school/college students may have an entire different preference than adults/seniors. Students may prefer mostly to read content given in eBooks/printed books whereas normally adults may prefer reading variety of content ranging from newspapers, magazines including books/eBooks. However besides reading various content, people may have many other activities to do which is ranging from:

- cooking,
- watching movies/TV shows,
- playing mobile games
- play mobile group games with friends/family remotely,
- cleaning the home to maintain health hygiene,
- play indoor games with family,
- learning a new skill,
- learning a MOOC course,
- developing a new hobby,
- spend time on social media and many more [4].

When many options are available during the lockdown to keep oneself engaged in various activities, it would be interesting for a librarian to analyze the time invested by library users for reading content. This survey conducted for collecting data for reading habits of library users during COVID-19 may help them to innovate new library services for their users during the lockdown. These services may help people to learn of various new activities that may help them to overcome psychological stress and boredom during the unprecedented situation. Looking to the need of the hour to provide eLibrary services to the members from home the first step is to learn their following reading habits during lockdown:

- Whether members are reading content during the lockdown?
- What type of content are they reading?
- How much hours are they reading?

- Are they reading more than before the lockdown days?
- What category of books are they interested to read?
- Are they reading online/printed content?

Second step is to prepare the survey questionnaire to collect the responses of the users. Thereafter, identify the users from whom to collect responses, and the process to collect the responses. This 3 steps are discussed in section-3 which follow section-2 that discusses the related research conducted across the globe. Finally section-4 discusses the analysis of the reading habit survey that may help to decide the need to design new library services that may help users to overcome the difficult times. Paper concludes with an observation and conclusion.

2. Related Research

Several survey studies for understanding reading habit were conducted in China, Canada and many other countries. Amazon-China reported that 70% of the readers who had been surveyed had read more books during COVID-19 lockdown at home [5]. @BookNet_Canada had surveyed Canadian readers about their reading habit during COVID-19 and found 58% readers are reading more during COVID-19 however Canadian readers are not reading digital books significantly as only 33% of the surveyed readers reported reading digital books [4]. Amy Watson also reported that adults in United States are reading more books due to coronavirus outbreak in the United States [6]. UNESCO suggested that books are major source of information, entertainment and comfort during the coronavirus pandemic-led lockdown and so parents should read good books along with their children to inculcate reading habit in their children [7]. International Publishers Association (IPA), the World Health Organization (WHO) and UNICEF launched the *Read the world* program recently. This program is launched to take care of mental health of young readers. For this program, worldwide authors read extracts of their books to millions of young people and children [8]. Inspired by many studies in the world, this paper discusses the survey findings of the reading habit of library users of Law and Technology college users during COVID-19 lockdown.

3. Survey Design and Collecting Responses

3.1 Survey Questionnaire

The survey was designed using an open source: *FormsApp* provided by *surveyheart* [9]. The survey contained 11 questions in addition to 3 fields related to Participant's Name, Email address and Institute name. The questions are mainly objective style and few questions allow selection of multiple choices. Table-1 displays the survey questions with its choices that were asked to the users.

TABLE 1 LIST OF SURVEY QUESTIONS WITH MULTIPLE CHOICES

Sr. No	Survey Questions	Question Type
1	During normal days, are you interested to read any books? Choices : Yes/No	Yes/No (Boolean)
2	How much time do you spend to read a book in a day? Choices: -less than an hour -1 to 2 hours -3 to 5 hours -5+ hours -I don't read books	MCQ (Single answer selection allowed)
3	Which type of books do you prefer to read during normal days? Choices: Science Fiction, Technology, Novel, Literature, History, Engineering, Arts And Commerce, Design, Cooking and Home Decoration, Fashion, Yoga and Fitness, Space Science, Computer Science, Astrology, Philosophical, Spiritual, Law, Political Science and Social Science.	MCQ (Multiple answer selection allowed)
4	Do prefer to read a printed book or eBook? - eBook - printed Book - both - I don't read books	MCQ (Single answer selection allowed)
5	During this extraordinary situation of Corona outbreak, how do you spend your time at home? Choices provided: -Read Book/Magazine -Take online MOOC course -Watch News and Talk Shows -Do Yoga and Fitness workout -Watch Movie and TV show on Netflix/ Hotstar/Amazon Prime/other channels -Clean Home -Cooking -Play computer games -Social media activity -Play mobile Games apps -Painting -Play instruments -Listening to Music -Online learning/Teaching -Writing Research Paper/Research -Spent time with family -Play board games with Family.	MCQ (Multiple answer selection allowed)
6	Do you spend time to read a book at	Yes/No

Sr. No	Survey Questions	Question Type
	home during lockdown days of Corona outbreak? Yes/No	(Boolean)
7	How many hours do you spend at home to read a book during lockdown days? -less than an hour -1 to 2 hours -3 to 5 hours -5+ hours -I avoid reading books	MCQ (Single answer selection allowed)
8	Which type of content do you like to read at home during lockdown days? -Books -Magazines -News Papers -Research Papers -I do not read any content	MCQ (Multiple answer selection allowed)
9	How many books have you read during lockdown days? 0, , 1, 2, 3, 4, 5+	MCQ (Single answer selection allowed)
10	Do you read more content during COVID-19 lockdown days than before? Choices: Yes/No	Yes/No (Boolean)
11	Please share the title of the books/eBooks/ any other content read during lockdown days.	Descriptive

3.2 Users of the Survey

University library may have various categories of users: undergrad and, grad students of diverse backgrounds, faculty and staff members, who access various in-library and online resources. The survey responses are collected from users of two main categories: students and faculty members. Total 105 library users had provided data for the survey. 86 are students and 19 are faculty members. 20 are grad students and 66 are undergrads. The age of student group ranges from 18 to 26 years and faculty members are between 25 to 50 years. 50 of the survey respondents are Male and 65 are Female. The students and faculty are from law and computer science departments of Law and Technology College respectively. The survey respondents had voluntarily provided the survey response and no remuneration was paid for the same. The link of online survey was shared with users by email and they voluntarily gave the feedback using their laptop/mobile from their home/place of residence during lockdown.

3.3 Collecting Survey Responses

The survey questions were presented to the users in the order as mentioned in Table-I. These questions were

presented one at a time. The survey was not time-bound as users were allowed to take this survey at their own pace. Question No: 1, 6 and 10 are questions that result in to Yes/No reply. Whereas questions: 2, 4, 7, and 9 are single choice questions wherein users have to select only one choice from the given choices and Questions 3, 5 and 8 are multiple choice questions wherein multiple choices were shown as check boxes and users were asked to select multiple applicable checkboxes but the selecting of choices was optional. The survey had only one descriptive question wherein users were asked to write the title of books/eBooks read during the lockdown. The survey was designed for web/mobile users. The survey responses from the users was collected during the 3rd week of lockdown during phase-1 and 1st week of lockdown during phase-2. The survey responses were exported to excel format for further analysis.

4. Analysis of Survey Responses

The survey responses are divided into two groups: student responses and faculty responses. The focus of the work is to analyze the interest of library users for reading content before and after the COVID-19 lockdown. The sole purpose is to design new library services for the users on basis of this study. The sample size used for the study is 105 users. Fig 1 displays the % of faculty users and student users interested in reading books during normal and lockdown days. Interestingly more faculty users are interested in reading books after lockdown whereas student users show no change in reading behavior even after lockdown. Fig 2 displays the % of faculty users investing varying amount of time for reading books before and after the lockdown. Prior to lockdown only 21% of the faculty readers were reading books for 3-5 hours whereas after lockdown the % of readers' reading for 3-5 hours increased to 38%. Fig 3 shows that student readers were also spending more time for reading books after lockdown. Prior to lockdown, students who were reading books for less than an hour where now investing more time in a day for reading books after lockdown. Fig-4 shows that 74% of the faculty users and 64% of student users have read up to 2 books during lockdown. Fig 4 shows that 15% of students had not read any book during lockdown which is 3 times that of faculty users.

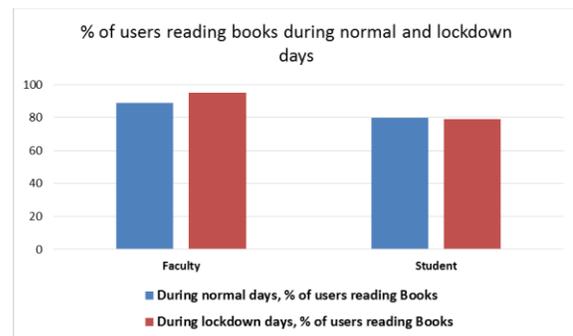


Fig 1: % of users reading books during normal and lockdown days

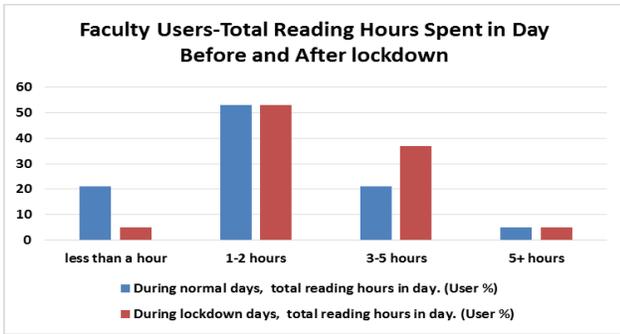


Fig 2: % Faculty users-total reading hours spent in a day before and after lockdown

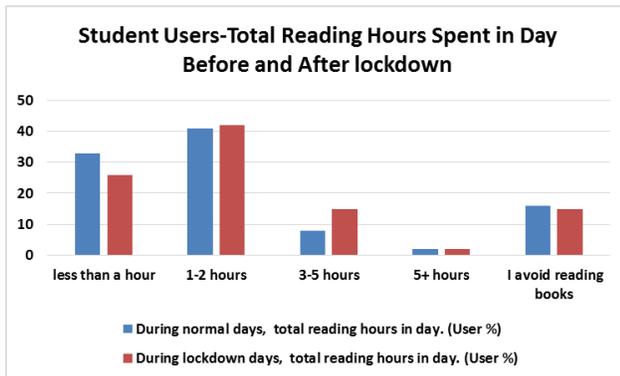


Fig 3: % student users-total reading hours spent in a day before and after lockdown

support of resources has inspired the users to read more content during lockdown days however still 50% of users prefer printed books. 70% of students and 53% of faculty users are reading more content during lockdown days as shown in Fig 6. The breakup of the more content read by faculty and student users is shown in Fig 7. Faculty and student users prefer to read more books. Apart from books, 60 % of faculty users also read research papers and 30% and 18% prefer reading newspapers and magazines. 50% of students also prefer to read newspapers besides books.

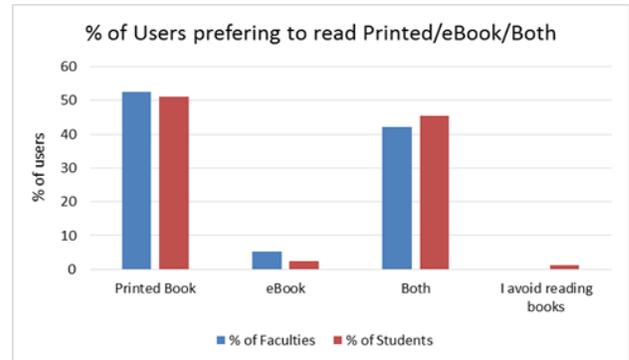


Fig 5: % of users preferring to read Printed book/eBook/Both

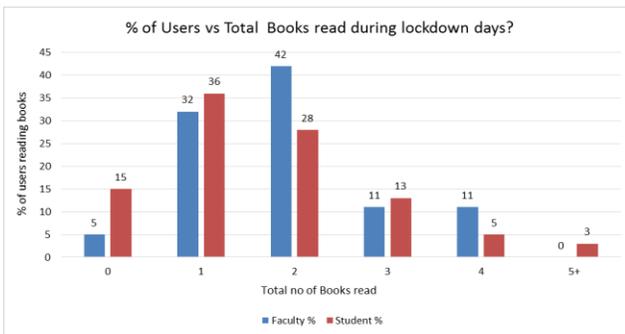


Fig 4: Total books read by Faculty and student users during lockdown

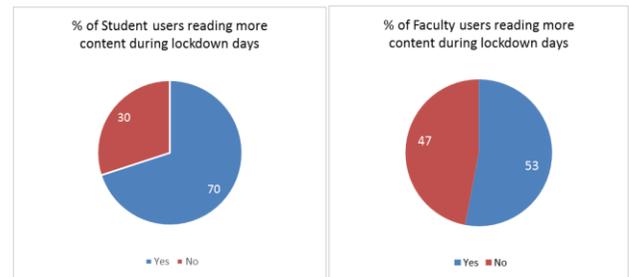


Fig 6: % of Faculty and Student users reading more content during lockdown days

The lockdown had resulted in making users isolated at home away from libraries and away from books. However many book libraries provides remote access to users for accessing eBooks or digital resources from home. Moreover many book publishers and ACM, IEEE, Springer, Oxford Press have made their selected digital resources like: journals/books/conference papers openly accessible during COVID-19 [10-13]. Thus providing a useful source of digital resources for the interested readers. As shown in Fig 5 about 50% of faculty and student users prefer to read eBook/both printed-book and eBook. Thus online free

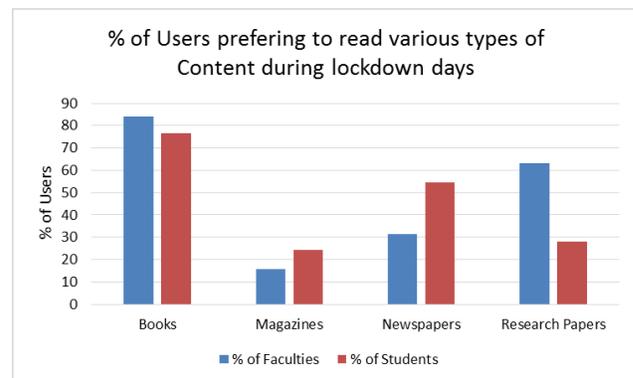


Fig 7: % of users preferring to read various types of content during lockdown days

The survey also collected data about the various activities carried out by faculty and student users during lockdown days at Home. The activities are broadly divided into 3 categories: (i) learning, (ii) entertainment (leisure) and, (iii) hobby. Fig 8 shows the breakup of various learning activities for both categories of users. Besides reading books, both category of users had been more engaged in online teaching/learning. Only 20% of the faculty users had invested time for writing research paper or taking online MOOC courses. In comparison to faculty, more students were taking online MOOC courses or were engaged in conducting research. Fig 9 shows the breakup of various leisure (entertainment) activities and Fig-10 shows the breakup of hobby activities for both categories of users. 50+ % of faculty and student users are watching movies/TV shows on movie channels like Netflix/Amazon-prime/Hotstar or on many other channels. Mostly faculty/student users are cleaning home/doing yoga or fitness exercises/cooking while at home. This demonstrates the user awareness for contributing at their home-work by cleaning/cooking at home. 25% of faculty reported that they spend more time with family but this count doubled for student users demonstrating that quality of family time is improved as 52 % of students have reported for spending more time with family. Entire survey uncovers the interesting fact that users are spending their lockdown days at home doing various activities however the users who are reading various types of content and spending more time for reading this content has risen to 70% for students and 53% for faculty users, who have reported for reading more content during lockdown days.

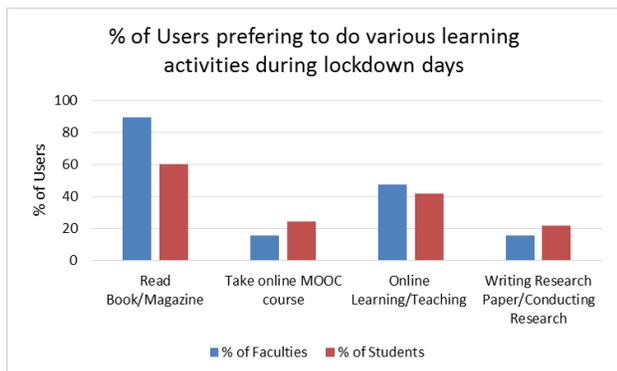


Fig 8: % of users preferring to do various learning activities during lockdown days.

Observation

COVID-19 lockdown at home has inspired library users to invest their time in reading more digital content and in particular eBooks, raising a debate for relooking at library policies for procuring more digital content and eBooks. Secondly during such kind of situations, library users are expecting to receive secure, fast, robust and reliable access

of the digital resources remotely from anywhere. To handle the scalability issue during pandemic kind of situations, libraries need to investigate the benefits of migrating to cloud for hosting their digital library infrastructure and services. Hence the need of the hour is that organizations need to focus on procuring more eBooks and exploring to setup cloud based digital library infrastructure, so that libraries will be prepared to offer better services to their users from anywhere to anywhere. The other part of the survey also discloses the need of making internet bandwidth available to users at home even at distant remote locations so that online learning and leisure can be enjoyed from within home and help users to maintain a good mental health during isolated times.

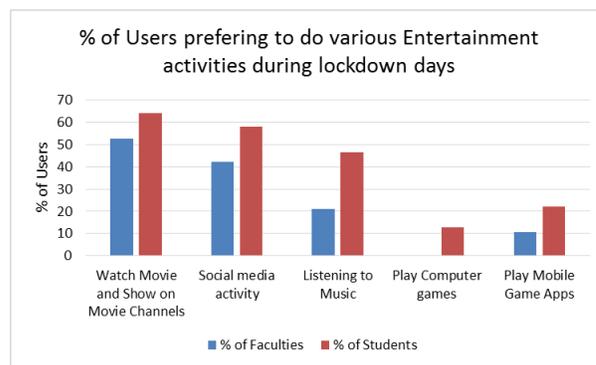


Fig 9: % of users preferring to do various leisure (entertainment) activities during lockdown days.

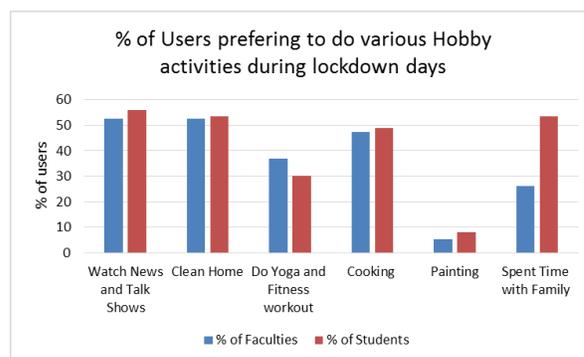


Fig 10: % of users preferring to do various leisure (entertainment) activities during lockdown days.

Conclusion

The survey results uncovered the interest of library users to read digital content and in particular eBooks. Apart from reading more content, users have found their unique ways to involve them in various learning, leisure and hobbies to maintain a good balanced mental health condition during isolated indoor lockdowns.

Acknowledgement

We are thankful to the library users, who have voluntarily spared their valuable time and for sharing their views regarding the survey.

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Author Biography

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