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Jovita Lobo Ms

St. Xavier's High School, Moira Bardez Goa (India), jovita0056@gmail.com

Keshav R. Dhuri Dr

Sant Sohrobanath Ambiyee Govt. College of Arts & Commerce, Pernem Goa (India), dhuri.keshav@gmail.com

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Positive Impact of Covid-19 Pandemic in Enhancing Digital Literacy Skills Among Library Professionals: A Study

Ms. Jovita Lobo
Librarian
St. Xavier's High School, Moira Bardez Goa (India)
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8768-1475>
jovita0056@gmail.com

Dr. Keshav Ramesh Dhuri
Librarian
Sant Sohrobanath Ambiyee Govt. College of Arts & Commerce, Pernem Goa (India)
ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2013-6090>
dhuri.keshav@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The Corona virus pandemic has dramatically remodeled and transformed the education sector into a digital learning hub due to the closure of educational institutions globally. Possessing adequate digital literacy skills and embracing web-based techniques are the only means to ensure continuity in the process of teaching and learning. The purpose of this paper is to show the positive influence of Covid-19 pandemic in molding librarians into tech savvy library professionals in enhancing their digital knowledge and in upliftment of their IT skills. A structured online questionnaire using Google Forms was used to collect data from the librarians working in academic colleges across Goa. From the study it was found that Covid-19 pandemic period has played a positive role in uplifting the digital and technical knowledge of the library professionals, it has widened the use of various social media platforms in disseminating information to the patrons. The study highlighted that 75% of the librarians acquired digital literacy skills by taking part in the webinars on various topics. This paper also throws light on the importance of having knowledge of E-databases and E-resources in satisfying the needs of the users in the Covid-19 pandemic period.

KEYWORDS: Covid-19 pandemic, Digital literacy, Digital knowledge, IT skills, Social networking, Academic colleges, library professionals, Goa, India

INTRODUCTION

Library is considered as the power house of knowledge and library professionals play a great role in attending to the information needs of the users. The intrusion of Covid-19 pandemic has completely turned the world upside-down disrupting the normal way of life. With the closing down of the educational institutions across the globe, the library patrons have been facing great hardships as they are unable to access the library for their information requirements. The pandemic has dramatically remodeled and transformed the education sector into a digital learning hub. Going digital and adapting the latest ICT applications was the only solution to contend with the pandemic situation. The pandemic has given a wide range of opportunities for the librarians to upgrade their digital literacy skills in order to provide the finest services to the library patrons during the Covid-19 pandemic era.

Embracing the advanced technologies and applications is the need of the hour to survive in this digital world. Possessing digital literacy skills is of utmost importance for the library professionals so as to help them to be more equipped for resource sharing, social networking, internet surfing, blogging, hosting webinars and organizing various other online activities in order to connect and interact with the library patrons. It is of vital importance that library professionals thrive to acquire digital knowledge and develop their IT skills in order to improve their overall job performance and fulfill the demands of the library users.

From providing traditional library services to going digital to provide e-services to the library clientele in the covid-19 pandemic and lockdown period, the librarians had to go through a lot of training in order to upgrade their digital literacy skills.

- ★ E-learning platforms such as MOOCs, Swayam, Swayam Prabha, NPTEL, Vidwan, Shodhganga, E-Shodhsindhu, National Digital Library, N-LIST Consortium have benefited the library professionals to learn and enhance their knowledge.
- ★ Increasing use of social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, WhatsApp, LinkedIn, YouTube, Telegram to connect and communicate with the patrons.
- ★ Apart from social networking sites, conducting webinars on various topics, blogging, updating library website, uploading YouTube videos were some of the approaches adopted in order to keep the users updated about the latest services, trends and practices.

- ★ Educating users about NDLI, Utilizing the library E-resources including N-LIST E-resources in satisfying the information needs of the users, there by leading to excessive use of library E-resources during the pandemic.

Digital literacy is a great tool for advancement especially in the Covid -19 pandemic era. Working, teaching and learning from home was forced upon the society to be safe and avoid the spread of the dangerous life-taking Corona virus. At this crucial period social networking sites created a pathway for communication. It helps the library professionals to develop a collaborative network with the library clientele. Social networking sites have made possible creating, connecting, conversing, contributing and sharing information a much simpler and quicker process. Numerous e-learning platforms , e-databases and e-resources aided in enhancing the knowledge of the librarians who in turn were more efficient in satisfying information seeking behavior of the library patrons. Upgrading digital literacy skills was mandatory for all the library professionals to work efficiently and provide the library services effectively at the time of Covid-19 pandemic where anything and everything was only possible on a digital platform.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Perrine, (2020) in his research paper mentioned the use of online databases has gone up by 75 percent due to closure of libraries due to COVID-19 pandemic. Furthermore, more than 3000 books were issued from Middletown Township Public Library (MTPL), NJ in a day before its closure that was considered ‘highly unusual’ due to pandemic.

Brown, (2020) stated in his research study that libraries in the United States of America have closed their physical library buildings and opened their digital doors for their patrons. Moreover, the American Library Association (ALA) has cancelled their annual conference for the first time in 75 years due to COVID-19 pandemic.

Adil, (2020) has emphasized on the new service models and technological implications for libraries during COVID-19 pandemic crisis. The author further suggested that Pakistani

librarians should support library users by compiling different list of online e-resources on library websites, delivering online information literacy programs through social media, and developing online institutional repositories and library guides. However, no conclusive research study is available so far pertaining to the university libraries response to COVID-19 pandemic physical closure of the libraries.

Ali & Gatiti, (2020) under their study “The COVID-19 (Corona virus) Pandemic: Reflections on the Roles of Librarians and Information Professionals” mentioned the major roles of the library professionals during COVID-19 pandemic in relation with Pakistan. The paper explored the role of health science librarians during the pandemic period. The major role of the library professionals was to create awareness through public health education and to provide researchers and students with library facilities. The main aim of the professionals was to create awareness on public health, to support the researchers, students and faculty of the university and to provide core services to the users in this crisis

Shaikh, (2019) in his article titled “Application of Information and Communication Technology in Libraries: Prospects and Challenges’ highlighted the important role of libraries while providing services provided to users in different forms. The role played by ICT in today’s world in disseminating quality information to its users. This research paper mentioned the various challenges and the current developments in the field of technology in libraries and also said to provide training opportunities to the library professionals.

Bhati & Kumar, (2020) in their research paper “Role of Library Professionals in a Pandemic Situation Like COVID-19’ described the different roles played by librarians during COVID 19 pandemic. The study identified various digital platforms available around the globe. The study also promoted the use of various social media networks available for librarians. It mentioned that librarians can help the entire community in quest for scholarly content. The main role of the library professionals is to map down the information as required by the patrons of the library and should act as disseminator of the knowledge. The librarians should show their expertise in using different ICT platforms. Librarians can make available different E-contents, information links,

their commitment to customer service. This paper helps the Library Professionals to improve their skill set as per the difficult conditions & serve the information like a dependable citizen of the country.

Patil & Chingath, (2020) in their paper “Use of Social Networking Sites by Karnatakites for Finding Information Regarding COVID-19 - An Investigation” focused on using the social networking sites for obtaining information regarding COVID-19 pandemic. A survey on web platform was carried out and data was collected from the targeted participants for the study. The research paper found out that most of the targeted participants were using social media platforms like WhatsApp, YouTube, and Facebook. Majority of the respondents (48.8%) agreed that the information available on SNSs regarding COVID-19 was very informative and up to date. The study also reported that the most of respondents found the use of social networking sites very helpful in finding important information regarding the COVID-19 pandemic. The research study is first of its kind to explore the use of SNSs among the Karnatakites for finding information regarding the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The study aims to understand the positive influence of Covid-19 pandemic on the library professionals in enhancing their digital literacy skills. It focuses on acknowledging the digital literacy skills acquired by the librarians during the pandemic and how it has aided it providing services to the library patrons. The study was limited to 16 academic college librarians across Goa.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To identify the types of digital literacy skills acquired by the librarians professionals.
2. To ascertain the importance of possessing digital literacy skills in the present Covid-19 era.
3. To find out the usefulness of various social media networking sites in enhancing service delivery during the pandemic.

4. To determine the positive impact of Covid-19 pandemic in the overall development of digital literacy skills among the librarians.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A structured online questionnaire prepared using Google Forms was used to collect the data from the library professionals working in academic college libraries in across Goa. The online questionnaire was sent to 16 librarians across the state of Goa in the month of January 2021. All the 16 college librarians actively contributed in providing the data. The data collected has been analyzed and presented using frequency tables and percentages.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Table No. 1: Digital Literacy Skills possessed prior to Covid-19 Pandemic:

Classification	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Social Networking	8	50%
Web Conferencing	02	12.5%
Internet Research Skills	16	100%
Electronic Mailing	16	100%
Creating Educative Videos	7	43.75%
Blogging	10	62.5%
Website designing	10	62.5%
Designing Web OPAC	6	37.5%
Computer Literacy	16	100%
Mobile Phone knowledge	13	81.25%

Table No. 1 depicts the digital literacy skills possessed by the librarians prior to Covid-19 Pandemic. Internet research skills, electronic mailing and computer literacy showed the majority i.e 100%, mobile phone literacy got 81.25% followed by Social networking which is 50% of responses while web conferencing showed the least i.e. 12.5%. From the table we can conclude that librarians had adequate knowledge about few digital literacy skills such as, conducting internet research, electronic mailing and computer literacy. social networking sites and web conferencing was not much preferred prior to Covid-19 pandemic and most of the librarians were unaware about the various web applications available to conduct web conferences.

Table No. 2: Digital literacy skills acquired during Covid-19 Pandemic period:

Classification	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Social Networking	16	100%
Web Conferencing	16	100%
Internet Research Skills	16	100%
Electronic Mailing	16	100%
Creating Educative Videos	14	87.5%
Blogging	13	81.25%
Website designing	14	87.5%
Designing Web OPAC	8	50%
Computer Literacy	16	100%
Mobile Phone Knowledge	16	100%

Table No. 2 indicates the various digital literacy skills acquired by the librarians during Covid-19 pandemic period. It is seen that social networking, web conferencing, internet research skills, electronic mailing, computer literacy and mobile phone literacy got 100% response, creating educative videos, website designing, 81.25% of the librarians acquired the knowledge about blogging and designing web OPAC shows 50% response. It clearly shows that all the librarians have upgraded and developed their digital literacy skills to adapt to the Covid-19 pandemic situation and to help and provide to the needs of the library clientele.

Table No. 3: Acquisition of Digital Literacy Skills during Covid-19 Pandemic.

Classification	No. of Respondents	Percentage
By trial and error	0	0%
Support from colleagues/friends	3	18.75%
Formal training	1	6.25%
By participating in webinars	12	75%

Acquiring digital literacy skills to survive and serve the library users in the digital world is of vital importance. Table No. 3 indicates the modes of acquisition of digital literacy skills during Covid-19 pandemic. It was learnt that webinars played a crucial role in educating the librarians. Majority i.e 75% of the librarians acquired digital literacy skills by taking part in the webinars on various topics. 18.75% of the librarians got support from colleagues and friends while the least i.e only 1 librarian (6.25%) said that formal training is the best to acquire digital literacy skills.

Table No. 4: Vital role of social media networking sites

Classification	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Marketing of library services	12	75%
Dissemination of information	14	87.5%
Virtual reference service	11	68.75%
Communicating with users	13	81.25%
Providing Library updates	12	75%

Social networking sites play a vital role in rendering information services especially during the Covid-19 pandemic era. The above table no. 4 depicts the vital role of social networking sites in the time of the pandemic. It is seen that majority i.e. 87.5 of the librarians say that social networking sites aid in dissemination of information to the library patrons, followed by 81.25% for communicating with the users, marketing of library services and providing library updates showed 75% response.

Table No. 5: Most preferred social networking site

Classification	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Facebook	9	56.25%
WhatsApp	16	100%
Instagram	3	18.75%
LinkedIn	4	25%
YouTube	11	68.75%
Twitter	2	12.5%
Telegram	2	12.5%

Table No. 5 shows the various social networking sites mostly preferred by the librarians in connecting with the library users during the Covid-19 pandemic. It is clearly seen that WhatsApp is used by all the 16 librarians, followed by 68.75% for YouTube and the least preferred are Twitter and Telegram by 12.5% of the librarians.

Table No. 6: Social media platforms have widely helped in the delivery of library services and in improving knowledge of the users-

Classification	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Completely Agree	10	62.5%
Mostly agree	4	25%
Somewhat agree	2	12.5%
Somewhat disagree	0	0%
Mostly disagree	0	0%
Completely disagree	0	0%

The above Table No.6 indicates the librarians' view on the statement which says "social media platforms have widely helped in the delivery of library services and in improving knowledge of the users". Majority of the librarian's i.e. 62.5% of the librarians completely agreed to the statement. Social media networking sites not only helped in connecting with the library users but it has played a great role in educating the users through virtual conferencing, uploading videos on YouTube, etc. Social networking sites help widely in dissemination of information in an orderly and speedy way thereby saving time and energy.

Table No. 7: Widely preferred e-learning platform during Covid-19 pandemic

Classification	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Swayam	4	25%
UG/PG MOOCs	1	6.25%
e-PG Pathshala	7	43.75%
Swayam Prabha	4	25%
National Digital Library	16	100%
N-LIST consortium	11	68.75%
Shodhganga	3	18.75%
E-shodh Sindhu	2	12.5%

Covid-19 pandemic induced most of the educational institutions to shutdown. Seminars, workshops, training programs could not be conducted for the library professionals during this period. At this crucial point of time e-learning platforms provided a helpful hand for the librarians to gain and provide knowledge to others. The above table No. 7 depicts the most widely preferred e-learning platforms during Covid-19 pandemic National Digital Library was preferred by all the librarians under the study as it offers a number of E-resources in various categories, followed by the N-LIST consortium 68.75%, the least preferred was the UG/PG MOOCs platforms.

Table No. 8: Knowledge about various virtual conferencing platforms

Classification	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Google Meet	16	100%
Go To Meeting	9	56.25%
Microsoft Team	14	87.5%
CISCO WebEx	11	68.75%
Zoom	15	93.75%
Google Hangouts	5	31.25%

Table No. 8 depicts the librarian's knowledge about various virtual conferencing platforms. From the study it was clear that 100% of the librarians had the knowledge of Google Meet and it was the most preferred platform to conduct webinars for the students, followed by 93.75% for Zoom. The least number of librarian's i.e 31.25 % had the knowledge about Google Hangouts.

Table No. 9: Influence of digital literacy skills in delivering library services during Covid-19 pandemic

Classification	No of Respondents	Percentage
Highly positive	11	68.75%
Positive	3	18.75%
Insignificant	2	12.5%
Negative	0	0%
Highly negative	0	0%

Table no. 9 indicates the influence of digital literacy skills in delivering library services during Covid-19 pandemic period. Most of the librarian's i.e. 68.75% showed highly positive response. This means that possessing digital literacy skills in the digital era especially during the Covid-19 pandemic time played a significant role in delivering library services to the library patrons. Having digital knowledge and adequate IT skills makes one capable to cope with any situation, connect and provide services there by satisfying the needs of the library patrons.

Table No. 10: Challenges/Problems faced during Covid-19 pandemic in delivering services to the users

Classification	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Inadequate training for using digital applications	9	56.25%
Poor IT skills	5	31.25%
Lack of ICT infrastructure	6	37.5%
Interrupted internet connectivity	14	87.5%
Lack of digital gadgets	6	37.5%

The above table No.10 indicates that interrupted internet connectivity (87.5%) and inadequate training for using digital applications (56.25%) are the two main problems faced by the librarians in delivering services to the users. Proper internet connectivity is very important for connecting with the users, dissemination of information is possible in a smooth and speedy manner without any disruption. The librarians should be well trained with the advanced web technologies and applications to provide adequate services to the library patrons.

Table No. 11: Positive influence of Covid-19 pandemic

Classification	No. of respondents	Percentage
Improved tech-savvy skills	16	100%
Upgraded digital knowledge	16	100%
Explosure to various e-resources	14	87.5%
Awareness about e-learning platforms	13	81.25%
Communicating through virtual conferencing applications	16	100%
Wider use of social networking sites	16	100%

Table no. 11 indicates the positive influence of Covid-19 pandemic on the librarians. It is noticed that Covid-19 pandemic situation has forced the librarians to upgrade their knowledge on various digital technologies and web applications so as to achieve their job goals. From the study it was learnt that due to Covid-19 pandemic 100% of the librarians improved their tech savvy skills, upgraded their digital knowledge, gaining knowledge about various virtual conferencing applications and communicating with the students via virtual conferencing applications was possible, the situation also led to wider use of social networking sites to interact with the users

Table No. 12: Covid-19 pandemic has benefitted in uplifting digital literacy skills

Classification	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Strongly Agree	11	68.75%
Agree	4	25%
Neutral	1	6.25%
Disagree	0	0%
Strongly Disagree	0	0%

In the above table no. 12 it is clearly seen that Majority i.e 68.75% of the librarians strongly agreed to the point that Covid-19 pandemic has benefitted in uplifting their digital literacy skills.

FINDINGS

1. Most of the library professionals have upgraded and procured several digital literacy skills such as social networking, web conferencing, internet research skills, electronic mailing, computer literacy and mobile phone literacy during the Covid-19 pandemic period.
2. Webinars played a significant role in intensifying education. It made Learning and communicating substantially more interesting.
3. Social networking sites widely benefitted to create, connect, converse, contribute and disseminate information to the library clientele.
4. National Digital Library and N-LIST consortium were the two widely used e-learning platforms at the time of Covid-19 pandemic.

5. From the study it was clear that 100% of the librarians had the knowledge of Google Meet and it was the most preferred platform to conduct webinars for the students, followed by 93.75% for Zoom.
6. The major problem faced by librarians was with internet connectivity. Improper internet connectivity was the major barrier for smooth flow of library services.
7. The pandemic era made possible for the librarians to enhance their digital knowledge and molded them into tech savvy library professionals.

SUGGESTIONS

1. The authorities should take instant initiatives to improve the internet connectivity as this is one of the main hurdles in accessing e-resources and providing it to the users.
2. The librarians also should recommend to the management to increase budget of the libraries to provide quality electronic resources to its users. Libraries should think of investing in new technological infrastructure so that they can serve users on online setup.
3. Webinars proved to be very beneficial to the education sector during Covid-19 pandemic period and it should be continued even after recuperating from the pandemic.
4. Library professionals should be proficient, possessing up-to-date knowledge of the newest advancement in technology and web-based applications to make the best use in providing quality services to the patrons.

CONCLUSION

The outbreak of Corona virus has completely transformed the education sector into a digital learning hub. Possessing adequate digital literacy skills and embracing web-based techniques were the only means to ensure continuity in the process of teaching and learning. Living in this digital era it is very important that the library professionals have adequate digital literacy skills to serve the user community efficiently. Social networking sites played a pivotal role in reaching

out to the library patrons and satisfying their information needs. It is clearly seen from the study that WhatsApp is used by all the 16 librarians to provide library services during this difficult period. . The research study made it very clear that most of the library professionals have upgraded and procured several digital literacy skills such as social networking, web conferencing, internet research skills, electronic mailing, computer literacy and mobile phone literacy during the Covid-19 pandemic period. 87.5% of the librarians say that social networking sites aid in dissemination of information to the library patrons. 100% of the librarian's preferred National Digital Library as the best e-learning platform, followed by NLIST consortium which is 68.75%. As per the study, webinars proved to be very beneficial to the librarians during Covid-19 pandemic period and it should be continued even after recuperating from the pandemic. Throughout the pandemic period librarians have enormously gained ample of digital literacy skills.

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