

CHAPTER SEVEN

PUBLIC LIBRARY GUIDANCE: A PANACEA TO SPREAD OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN SCHOOLS

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ABSTRACT

The paper investigated the role of public libraries in curbing the COVID-19 Pandemic in schools. The COVID-19 pandemic has created a new reality and upended the norm that we have become used to. Libraries, from time immemorial, have played crucial roles in making necessary information available about society and pandemics. The study explored the roles of public libraries and information dissemination by public libraries during the pandemic and the challenges within society. The paper proposed some key roles that public libraries, librarians, and information specialists can play to curb the pandemic, including: public awareness of preventive measures and management of the disease, where possible; supporting frontline researchers, clinicians, and faculty with the latest research and evidence available. The general public has been cautioned to take responsive care with the various strategies and measures, which include hand washing, wearing face masks, physical distancing, and avoiding mass gatherings and assemblies. One of the recommendations in this paper was that public library librarians should be proactive in updating schools and society with health information to enable them to cope with the fast development of ICT.

KEYWORDS: COVID-19 Pandemic, Public Library Guidance and Schools

INTRODUCTION

A public library is a library that is accessible to the general public that provides resources and services in a variety of media to meet the needs of individuals and groups for education, information, and personal development, including recreation and leisure. The global outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic has spread worldwide, affecting almost all countries and territories. The outbreak was first identified in December 2019 in Wuhan, China. Countries all over the world warned citizens to take good care of themselves. The public care strategies have included hand washing, wearing face masks, physical distancing, and avoiding mass gathering and assemblies. Lockdown and staying home strategies have been put in place as the needed action to flatten the curve and

control the transmission of the disease (Sintema, 2020). The library guide provided clear and actionable guidance towards the safe operation of library facilities through prevention, early detection, and control of COVID-19. SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, is thought to be spread primarily through aerosolized respiratory droplets at close range. Guidance is assistance made available by professionally qualified and adequately trained men and women to an individual of any age to help him manage his own life activities, develop his own decisions and carry his own. As the incidence of coronavirus is increasingly rising globally, affected countries are taking various preventive steps. Osborne (2012) says that health literacy involves two parts: patients, or anyone receiving health communication, and providers, or anyone giving health communication.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The COVID-19 pandemic has created the largest disruption of education systems in human history, affecting nearly 1.6 billion learners in more than 200 countries. Closures of schools, institutions and other learning spaces have impacted more than 94% of the world's student population. This has brought far-reaching changes in all aspects of our lives. Social distancing and restrictive movement policies have significantly disturbed traditional educational practices. Reopening of schools after relaxation of restrictions is another challenge, with many new standard operating procedures to be put in place. Public libraries were affected as well. For many public libraries, the only one that remained active and available to users was access to their digital content.

CONCEPT OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Coronavirus has become a great concern and challenge to lovers of good health. As it is well known, coronaviruses are a large family of viruses which may cause disease in animals or humans (WHO, 2020). Coronaviruses comprise a vast family of viruses, 7 of which are known to cause disease in humans: (SARS-CoV-2, 229E (HCoV-229E), OC43 (HCoV-OC43), NL63 (HCoV-NL63), HKU1 (HCoV-HKU1), SARS-CoV, and MERS-CoV). Covid-19 is the infectious disease caused by the most recently discovered coronavirus. This virus and disease were unknown before the outbreak began in Wuhan, China, in December 2019. Covid-19 is now a pandemic affecting many countries globally. Chen, Zhang, and Lu (2020) studied the stability of SARS-CoV-2 in different environmental conditions, using viral culture as a measure of infectivity (rather than PCR), indicating detection of replication-capable virus. They found that the virus was very susceptible to high heat (70°C). At room temperature and moderate (65%) humidity, no infectious virus could be recovered from printing and tissue papers after a 3-hour incubation period or from wood and cloth by day two. Being a novel disease that is highly contagious, spreading fast across the world, and the fact that there is yet to be an established cure for it, the COVID-19 pandemic has created a lot of panic in every part of the world. The COVID-19 pandemic has been likened to natural disasters (Morganstein & Ursano, 2020), mass disputes, and war outbreaks (Fiorillo & Gorwood, 2020). The current pandemic is, however, more devastating because, unlike during a natural disaster or war outbreak, whereby people can relocate or build a sophisticated defence system to minimize or escape any foreseeable negative impact, there is nowhere to run to escape the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic (Olapegba et al., 2020). The effect is far-reaching beyond a specific geographical location as the political and

socio-economic structure of the whole world is disrupted and crashing, thus putting people more at risk of experiencing psychological distress (Raviola et al., 2020). The ongoing global pandemic of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2). The COVID-19 pandemic has provided us with an opportunity to prepare the way for introducing digital learning (Dhawan, 2020).

CONCEPT OF LIBRARY

A library refers to a place in which literary, musical, artistic, or reference materials (such as books, manuscripts, recordings, or films) are kept for use but not for sale (Merriam-Webster 2020). A library is a collection of materials, books, or media that are easily accessible for use and not just for display purposes (Wikipedia 2021). It is responsible for housing updated information in order to meet the user's needs on a daily basis. A library is a collection of resources in various formats organized by information professionals or other experts; it provides convenient physical, digital, bibliographic, or intellectual access; and it offers targeted services and programs with the mission of educating, informing, or entertaining a wide range of audiences and the goal of stimulating individual learning and advancing society as a whole (American Library Association 2010). A library is a collection of books, periodicals, and/or other materials, primarily written and printed. The library provides physical (hard copy documents) or digital access (soft copies) materials, and may be a physical location or a virtual space, or both. The library's collection can include printed materials and other physical resources in many formats, such as DVDs, CDs, and cassettes, as well as access to information, music, or other content held in bibliographic databases (Wikipedia 2021). The library has become a centre for information access and distribution, learning and teaching activities, presentations and exhibitions, and social networking connections. The main purpose of a library is to disseminate books and information for free or close to free, to archive information, to provide a community space for people to interact around information. Therefore, give people the tools necessary to manage information in a sensible way. Access to the documents in the libraries is made possible and easier for users through the various catalogues in the libraries, which serve as indexes to the library's holdings (Akande 2013). A library is a collection of books, or is a room or building where collections of books are stored.

LIBRARY GUIDANCE

Library Guidance is a document that helps users of the library get easy access to their needed materials. This document has been developed to support libraries in reducing the risk of transmission of COVID-19 among attendees, including workers, volunteers, and the general public (Alberta 2021). Guidance for libraries is located in the Industry Guidance for Retail, including additional specific information related to curbside pick-up protocols, including quarantining items, for libraries. Though some of the Retail Guidance uses different language, "customers," "shopping hours," and "shopping days," the information is still applicable to library staff and patrons (California State Library 2020). The purpose of this guide is to provide clear and actionable guidance towards the safe operation of library facilities through prevention, early detection, and control of COVID-19. SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, is thought to be spread primarily through aerosolized respiratory droplets at close range. Guidance is assistance made available by professionally qualified and adequately

trained men and women to an individual of any age to help him manage his own life activities, develop his own decisions and carry his own. (Edwards et al., 2013) and his colleagues describe public libraries as a place where people get information and other services to sustain almost every aspect of life. Public libraries have responded to the above extraordinary situation by offering some of their services online through digital access. Library guidance helps to guide library users to high quality health information by relying on up to date, authoritative sources (Flaherty 2017). One major reason for library guidance is to support advocacy for the development and improvement of government libraries. It is used as a tool in developing countries to provide an outline of the organization and responsibilities of government libraries.

ROLES OF LIBRARY GUIDANCE IN HEALTH PROMOTION

Libraries have the role of collecting vital, quality, and relevant health information resources for combating non-communicable diseases. According to Obidike and Nkechi (2011), libraries should collect and compile health information and store it in suitable media that can be easily accessed by policy and decision-makers as well as other health information users. Librarians are advised to partner with community health workers, which include medical doctors, veterinary doctors, and other health personnel, in order to gain access to vital health information issues for health development and disease awareness (Obidike and Nkechi, 2011). Libraries have been noted to support community development in various areas, such as education, the economy, research, and health. Experience shows that libraries act as a bridge of information between people and information providers such as governments, organizations, and institutions. Libraries are known to be the centres of knowledge that collect various information resources, including health information resources for their users, local gateways to knowledge, and are capable of providing basic conditions for lifelong learning, independent decision-making, and cultural development of individuals as well as social groups (Ghosh, 2013). It is through libraries that some communities get informed on socio-economic matters. Promotion of health information resources is important in order to raise awareness of non-communicable diseases and how to combat them. It is the obligation of public libraries, academic libraries as well as hospital libraries to provide accessible and reliable health information sources and services to the community (Orban, 2005). According to Ghosh (2013), libraries and health centers can help in disseminating health care information to the unprivileged community, especially the rural community. It is the role of health librarians or health information officers to promote and enhance access to health information as they are capable of providing needed assistance through training and through the selection, repackaging, and dissemination of relevant materials (Chipungahelo et al., 2015). Libraries should disseminate health information about the causative agents of non-communicable diseases and preventive measures. Promotion of health information should be made by using brochures, leaflets, newspapers, magazines, and others which should be distributed to the public with the aim of increasing awareness about diseases and how to fight them.

SUMMARY

The paper summarized that the global outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic has spread worldwide, affecting almost all countries and territories. As a result, the general public has been advised to exercise caution when implementing various strategies and

measures, such as physical separation, hand washing, wearing face masks, and avoiding mass gatherings and assemblies. It is also the obligation of public libraries, academic libraries as well as hospital libraries to provide accessible and reliable health information sources and services to the community. Public libraries and health centers can help in disseminating health care information to the unprivileged community, especially the rural community. It is the role of health librarians or health information officers to promote and enhance access to health information as they are capable of providing needed assistance through training and through the selection, repackaging, and dissemination of relevant materials.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Public library librarians should be proactive in updating schools and society with health information to enable them to cope with the fast development of ICT.
2. Public libraries should collect and compile health information and store it in suitable media which can be easily accessed by policy and decision-makers as well as other health information users.
3. Libraries should also adopt relevant elements from the Industry Guidance for Office Workspaces and Industry Guidance for Museums, Galleries, Zoos, and Aquariums.
4. Library users or individuals should adhere effectively to the rules in public libraries while accessing their needed information.

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