Third Wave of Covid-19 (Coronavirus): Role of Private Sector University Librarians in Punjab, Pakistan

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Abstract

The outburst of coronavirus known as Covid-19 has thrown the world into terror and anxiety. The third wave of Covid-19 (coronavirus) is spreading badly all around the world including Pakistan as well. The roles of librarians are more critical and energetic. Fake news is creating confusion and becoming a greater challenge for the librarians. The main purpose of this study is to examine the role of private sector university librarians in Punjab, Pakistan during the 3rd wave of covid-19. The study was based on a quantitative approach, closed-ended questionnaires were used to collect the data. Librarians were selected through the convenience sampling technique. Total 62 questionnaires were received back from the population, male librarians were higher as compared to females, data was entered into SPSS-27 for analysis purposes. The majority of librarians viewed that they shared new library practices with other librarians for online duties librarians install different apps. "Zoom app" was found to be the most popular app for online job purposes.

Keyword: 3rd wave, Covid-19, Private sector, Librarian, University, Punjab, Pakistan

Introduction

The outburst of coronavirus known as Covid-19 has thrown the world into terror and anxiety. Covid-19 firstly appeared in the city of Wuhan (China) and spread vastly to more than70 countries across the world (Khadijah Abid et al, 2020). The symptoms of Covid-19 include runny nose, cough, fever, tiredness, shortness of breath, pains and aches, sore throat, very few patients reported diarrhea and nausea. The fast speed of the virus called the attention of the world to take all the necessary cautions and control the virus. Similarly, the first case of coronavirus in Pakistan was reported from Karachi on 26, February 2020. Now the 3rd wave ofCovid-19 (coronavirus) is spreading badly all around the world including Pakistan as well. Social media and other networking sites are informative platforms in which group of medical staff, researchers, and students share their ideas, information, and experiences about the 3rd wave of Covid-19. Except for this, researchers found fake news also a part of this situation (Abhay B Kadam and Sachin R Atre,2020). Fake news became a challenge for information providers (librarians).

The roles of librarians and library association (PLA) are more critical and energetic. Fake news is creating confusion and becoming a greater challenge for the librarians. In this regard, academic, special, public, and most important research libraries are generating and spreading information effectively and efficiently in response to the 3rd wave of COVID- 19 pandemic through their social media apps like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, library portal, and library blog. Librarians provide a platform for their users to gather and disseminate genuine information and also promote awareness of the current pandemic situation. Abubakar, Bala, and Augustine, (2020) also found librarians uploaded their online services to guide the user with the latest materials regarding their needs about Covid-19. Information providers are probable to play a chief role in information management now and in the post-COVID-19 pandemic time, to enhance the distribution of the latest and confirmed information to the users Yajun Guo, et al. (2020). Mayank Yuvaraj, (2020) examined health science librarians designed posters to aware library users regarding COVID-19. The purpose of these posters is to educate users on social distancing, the use of masks, and how to wash hands correctly. Librarians are also encouraging affected patients to share their experiences with others non-effected. Electronic resources have become more popular and helpful during Covid-19. Anna R Craft (2020) discovered electronic resources play an important role to enhance the information about coronavirus. Librarians are using electronic

resources to provide online library services 24/7 to users. Primary care is very important for the patients who show starting corona symptoms, Joanne and Cathy, (2020).

Rafique, et al. (2020) explored that University libraries in Pakistan are the most developed part. Most universities' academic semesters were in process when COVID-19 knockout the country and all educational institutions were required to close. Librarians played an important role during lockdown; they kept in check the spread of misrepresentation in the form of fake news about Covid-19 in society.

Problem Statemen

3rd wave ofCovid-19 (coronavirus) spread badly all around the world. Medical staff, researchers and specially librarians played a vital role to provide effective, efficient, and current information to their users. Many studies have been carried out on the importance of doctors/medical staff during covid-19, Soumya Sarkar et al, (2021); Lee S. Nguyen et al, (2021); Yaodong Zhou, (2021); Donatella, Raffaella and Simon (2020); Gholam Reza Zandi et al, (2020) are the examples of such studies. It is pertinent that there are very few studies that explored the role of librarians during Covid-19, M. Rafique et al, (2021), Ali and Gatiti, (2020), and Sehar and Shahid, (2020). Therefore, research was needed to determine the role of private sector university librarians in Punjab, Pakistan.This research study would be very helpful for the librarians who work in private sector university librarians and will be filling the literature gap.

Research Objectives

The study was focused on the following research objectives:

1. To find out the role of librarians during 3rd wave of Coronavirus "Covid-19" pandemic
2. To examine opinions and challenges they faced during the "3rd wave of Covid-19" pandemic
3. To determine public health awareness services, are these meeting the needs of researchers and users
4. To measure their views about fear, anxiety, and worrying at the beginning of the "3rd wave of Covid-19" pandemic

Research Questions

On the base of research objectives, research questions are based:

1. What are the role librarians during 3rd wave of Coronavirus "Covid-19" pandemic?
2. Which challenges faced by librarians and their opinions regarding "Covid-19"?
3. Is the public health awareness services meet the needs of researchers and users?
4. What are the views of librarians about fear, anxiety and worrying at the beginning of the "3rd wave of Covid-19" pandemic?

Literature Review

3rd Wave of COVID-19 (Coronavirus) pandemic

Rafiq, M et al., (2020) determined university libraries' response to COVID-19 pandemic and developing country perspective. The study was based on the qualitative method. Data was collected through interviews from selected seven heads of different universities. Results showed that library staff working online by 24/7 hours and give continuous responses to library users. Librarians pointed to a lack of online literary skills; the slow speed of the internet was a big barrier.

Adigun, G, O., et al., (2020) explored the role of libraries in curtailing the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic in Nigeria. The study was based quantitative approach; an enumerative sampling technique was used to select 139 librarians from different universities. Librarians viewed they provide 'Covid-19 awareness services, reliable data to their users via different social media. LIS researchers conducted different health awareness services and also engaged medical staff to join them for this purpose. Moreover, librarians pointed users gave positive feedback of 'Covid-19 awareness services.

Wang, T., and Lund, B. (2020) examined information provided by United States' public libraries during the COVID-19 pandemic. The study was based on a quantitative approach. Researchers used a stratified random sampling procedure to select the target population. Results presented mostly librarians who encouraged users to utilize online resources. Developed libraries also provided links to reliable health resources (CDC's website). Few libraries examined provided information about the COVID-19 virus or information about hygiene practices. Furthermore, the most unique role they may play in shortening the spread/impact of COVID-19 by fighting fake news/ misinformation and providing reliable information to users.

Ali and Gatiti (2020) explored that in the era of covid-19 the responsibilities of librarians and information managers were increased. They provided public health awareness, supported the researchers by providing the latest and needed information, and most necessary guided the users to maintain the social distance. Librarians supported medical staff, academics, researchers by drawing attention to the latest developments regarding vaccination, diagnosis kits, and relevant studies published in medical journals. All the well-known databases provided free access to articles relating to COVID-19 (Coronavirus).

Costantini, M., et al., (2020) found the response and role of comforting care during the COVID-19 pandemic through a national telephonic survey of hospices (clinics) in Italy. Survey studies rely on the qualitative method. A cross-sectional telephone survey was used to collect the required data from seven clinics heads. Findings showed hospices were changed their expertise in holistic care for patients with COVID-19, they also facilitating advanced care planning. These centres rapidly provide protective equipment and specific guidance about Covid-19.

Research Methodology

The study was based on a quantitative approach, self-administered and adopted questionnaire (Dr. Mark Griffiths, 2020) was used to collect the data from the librarians currently working in HEC recognized private sector university (20) libraries in Punjab, Pakistan. The questionnaire was distributed to the 15 HEC recognized private sector universities in Punjab, Pakistan. The questionnaire was based on two main sections, the first section relied on the demographic section, and the second was based on the role of university librarians during the 3rd wave of Covid-19. Convenience sampling technique was applied to select the librarians. A total of 70 questionnaires were distributed to the target population. Whereas, 65 questionnaires were returned, after removing the incomplete questionnaire 62 questionnaires were used for the data analysis procedure. The response rate was 88%.

Data Analysis

Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to measure the received data. After revising the data, questionnaires were entered into the software. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS-22) was used to analyze the received data. The researcher wisely checked the data; all the mistakes were modified.

Scope of the study

Very few studies have emphasized exploring the role of librarians during Covid-19 in Pakistan. No studies were found on the role of private sector university librarians in Punjab (Pakistan) till the time of writing this study. However, a strong positive role was found from the few published studies. This study will be filling the previous knowledge gap in the circle of library landscape, achieving the overall organization's educational objectives.

<div align="center">Results</div>

Gender of respondents

Figure 1.1 showed that 41 (66%) librarians were male, while 21 (33%) were female. It exposes that majority of male librarians are working in the private sector higher education institutions of Punjab, Pakistan.
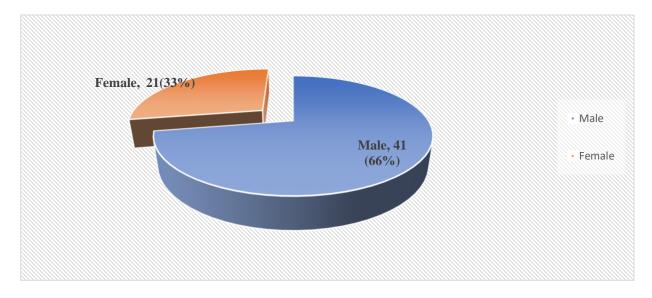

<div align="center">Figure: 1.1. Gender of Respondents</div>

Role of librarians during "3ʳᵈ wave of Covid-19".

This (role of librarians) is the first sub-section of the main construct of the study; librarians were asked to rate their opinions on statements of five points 'Likert scale' ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Table 1.2 presents the statement 'Librarians share new library practices with researchers and users' with the highest mean score of 3.97 (.849).

Table 1.2: Librarians' perceptions about their role during in "3ʳᵈ wave of Covid-19"

SN	Role of librarians about "Covid-19"	M	SD*
1	Librarians played an important role during the "3ʳᵈ wave of Covid-19"	3.61	1.25
2	Librarians shared only important cautions on "3ʳᵈ wave of Covid-19" matters with colleagues.	3.47	.882
3	Librarians shared new library practices with researchers and users.	3.97	.849
4	Other institutional librarians also shared information about the disease	3.27	.833
5	Most users were aware of "Covid-19"	3.60	.877

Scale: SD = strongly disagree (1); D = Disagree (2); N = Neutral (3); A = Agree (4); SA; strongly agree (5); M = Mean; SD* = Standard deviation.

Challenges faced by librarians. Librarians gave a response to the statement relating to challenges, 'Lack of face-to-face communication skills' got a high mean score of 3.76 (.803). Due to social distancing lack of face-to-face interaction proved to be a big knowledge-sharing barrier.

Table 1.3: Views about challenges they faced

SN	Challenges faced by librarians	M	SD*
1	Communication skills barriers	3.58	.897
2	Lack of face-to-face communication skills	3.76	.803
3	Lack of social networking skills	2.97	.958
4	Lack of time	3.16	.793
5	Social distance barriers	3.50	.671
6	Slow speed of networking	3.48	.901

Scale: SD = strongly disagree (1); D = Disagree (2); N = Neutral (3); A = Agree (4); SA; strongly agree (5); M = Mean; SD* = Standard deviation.

Health awareness services. The result shows that the statement 'Field of experts/medical staff shares safety information' obtained a high mean score of 3.51 (.865) respectively. Different health awareness online programs, sessions, meetings, and conferences played an important role to spread the information about "Covid-19", these activities positively affected both information providers and information seekers.

Table 1.4: Opinions about health awareness services

SN	Health awareness services	M	SD*
1	Libraries conduct online sessions about "3rd wave of Covid-19"	3.71	.611
2	Field of experts/medical staff share safety information	3.84	.632
3	Librarians provide the effective and latest information about the "3rd wave of Covid-19"	3.69	.801
4	Users joined sessions corporately	3.60	.664
5	Services meet the needs of users	3.74	.651

Scale: SD = strongly disagree (1); D = Disagree (2); N = Neutral (3); A = Agree (4); SA; strongly agree (5); M = Mean; SD* = Standard deviation.

Fear, anxiety, and worrying at the beginning stage.

Table 1.5 presents the statement 'When I watch news and stories about "3rd wave of Corona-19" on social media, I become nervous or anxious' with a high mean score of 3.39 (.797). While the statement 'My heart races or palpitates when I think about getting "3rd wave of Corona-19" got a low mean score of 2.76 (1.06). At the beginning of the "3rd wave of Covid-19," everyone becomes nervous and worried about their health. Does no one have any idea what will happen in the next phase? In this situation, the role of librarians, medical staff, and researchers was very curious.

Table 1.5: Perceptions about fear, anxiety, and worrying

SN	Fear, anxiety, and worrying at the beginning stage	M	SD*
1	I am most afraid of Corona	3.27	.944
2	It makes me uncomfortable to think about Corona	3.29	.797
3	My hands become clammy when I think about "3rd wave of Corona-19"	2.87	.966
4	I am afraid of losing my life because of the "3rd wave of Corona-19"	3.02	.859
5	When I watch news and stories about the "3rd wave of Corona-19" on social media, I become nervous or anxious	3.39	.797
6	I cannot sleep because I'm worried about getting "3rd wave of Corona-19"	2.76	1.06
7	My heart races or palpitates when I think about getting "3rd wave of Corona-19"	2.71	.948

Scale: SD = strongly disagree (1); D = Disagree (2); N = Neutral (3); A = Agree (4); SA; strongly agree (5); M = Mean; SD* = Standard deviation.

Independent samples *t*-test result (gender).

Independent samples t-test was used to find the gender-wise difference of perceptions about the role of librarians "3rd wave of Covid-19" with an alpha level of 0.05. Significant differences ($p <$ .05) were obtained between male and female librarians' perceptions (.049) of health awareness services, as included results of the two-tailed sample t-test in table 1.6.

Table 1.6: t-test with the Gender Group

SN	Role of librarians during "3rd wave of Covid-19"	Male		Female		t-test Sig
		Mean	SD*	Mean	SD*	(2-tailed)
1	Role of librarians about "3rd wave of Covid-19"	17.60	2.809	18.52	2.315	.178
2	Challenges faced by librarians	20.14	3.320	21.04	3.040	.290
3	Health awareness services	18.26	2.191	19.19	1.400	.049
4	Fear, anxiety, and worrying at the beginning stage	21.34	4.010	21.23	3.986	.942

Discussion

The findings showed a positive response about the role of librarians during the "3rd wave of Covid-19". Total 62 questionnaires were received back from the population, male librarians were higher as compared to female because male librarians were more in number than female in private sector university libraries in Punjab, Pakistan. The majority of librarians viewed that they shared new library practices with other librarians for online duties. Librarians install different apps. "Zoom app" was found to be the most popular app for online job purposes (Guntur Gunawan et al, 2021). At the beginning stage of Coronavirus everyone was getting worried and panicky as no one knew how to save their selves, information providers (medical staff, researchers, and most important pillar librarians gave authentic and reliable information to the users (Johnson and Butcher, 2021). Their 24/7 duties were so appreciated. Lack of face-to-face communication skills was found to be a big barrier during the spread of "3rd wave of Covid-19" information, because of social distance librarians had to performs their jobs on online systems. Sometimes shortage of electricity and slow speed of networks became a hurdle in their roles. Libraries conducted different health awareness sessions to literate library users about the disease. In this regard, librarians followed the SOPs provided by the Government of Pakistan and restricted their users to follow

these SOPs. These results are similar to the findings of Kanwal (2021) that the librarians of developing countries like Pakistan perform their duties as well as they can, as per the circumstances during the "3rd wave of Covid-19". Librarians also highlighted the barriers and difficulties that have to be resolved. Furthermore, fake news was also a part of this situation. Fake news was a great challenge for information providers but they faced them with patience and courage (Salman and Rubina 2021).

Conclusion

The role of private sector university librarians during "3rd Covid-19" was so admired. They combined the medical staff and researchers to share their ideas and experiences. University librarians provided a platform for their users to gather and disseminate genuine information and also promoted health awareness services of the current pandemic situation. University librarians shared important cautions about coronavirus with library users also shared new library practices with their colleagues. Many university libraries organized online health awareness programs and invited their users to join these programs. Shortage of electricity and slow speed of internet was found to be primary issues. There is a need for motivation from the administrations' side, they have to encourage librarians to highlights their problems. Librarians who performed their duties more than their duty hours must be awarded by higher authority.

Implications and Recommendations of the Study

1. LIS researchers must conduct more studies on the role of librarians during "Covid-19" among school and college librarians.
2. This study is limited to the Punjab province, researchers must conduct the studies to know the role of librarians during "Covid-19" from the other provinces of Pakistan.
3. University administration should understand the difficulties of librarians regarding their online sessions and should resolve them.
4. University administration should provide librarians different training and collaborative sessions such as workshops, seminars, and conferences.

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