

A Study of Innovative Activities and Best Practises Conducted in College Libraries during and after COVID-19 Pandemic Situation in Konkan Region Maharashtra

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ABSTRACT

The present article highlights the role of libraries and library professionals to be played during the emergency circumstances of the community spread of the COVID-19 worldwide. The study proposes that libraries cannot afford to close down their formal duties of providing information to users. During the situation of lockdown, the libraries were continuously provided library services to library users with the support of available recent information communication technology and e-resources.

The role of academic libraries changed according to the evolving paradigm shift in teaching methodologies as a result of the outbreak of COVID-19. The challenge to the libraries was the current global trends in online education and the significant roles libraries can play.

The purpose of this paper is to find out how technology became a saviour for the college libraries in the Konkan region during the COVID-19 pandemic. The study explores the types of services provided by college libraries in the Konkan region based on using a virtual platform. The study highlights the significant initiatives taken by the libraries which can be followed by others to meet post-lockdown needs.

KEYWORDS: COVID-19, Pandemic, Konkan region, FDP, MOOC Courses, Library Literacy, Precautionary Measure, Virtual book

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INTRODUCTION

The college libraries play a pivotal role in shaping and nurturing the academic fraternity among the students by providing the most specific, relevant and exhaustive information. Therefore, by proving their worth and existence and perhaps being rightly called the heart of the college. Before COVID-19 pandemic, academic libraries were enjoying working with their users.

The COVID-19 virus is having a significant impact on college library technical services. As a precautionary measure, the Union Government of India has declared the national level closed down after 22nd March 2020 to break the chain of COVID-19. These nationwide closures have impacted the student population. As educational institutes started working from home, libraries also planned to provide service from home. Digital library services have been developed and enhanced for years, but the recent COVID-19 pandemic has made many users aware of these services for the first time. Especially, because of the closure of libraries, during the pandemic, additional efforts have been made to promote digital libraries and their services, as clearly visible and active libraries. Moreover, traditional libraries or those without many digital services, have the challenge of keeping their services active for their users virtually during this emergency. Thus, libraries have been engaging in new work practices to achieve such objectives from their home/offices.

Libraries in the Konkan region are also affected by this COVID-19 situation. Konkan division comprises seven districts, namely Mumbai City, Mumbai Suburban, Thane, Palghar, Raigarh, Ratnagiri and Sindudurg. There are 400+ traditional colleges in the Konkan region. By working hard, they are providing access to collections and services remotely, often investing time and efforts in updating websites and computer systems to deal with users' demands. While many libraries already have a strong digital presence, other libraries have also started such efforts. Hence, library professionals should also prepare to reopen the libraries along with COVID-19. Therefore, libraries have a huge responsibility to protect their users, staff and library resources in a pandemic situation.

This research topic is a study of the use of recent technological advancements in library services, activities and best practises provided to users in challenging COVID-19 pandemic situations. Through the changing mode of traditional library services from offline to online.

THE OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

- ✓ To study how the COVID-19 pandemic changed the library operations
- ✓ To study the library services offered by the college libraries in the Konkan region during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- ✓ To study the various types of innovative activities and best practises conducted by college libraries in the Konkan region during and after the COVID-19 pandemic situation.

HYPOTHESIS

1. There is a significant change in college library services during and after the COVID-19 pandemic situation.
2. College libraries are offered online library services to users in the Konkan region during the COVID-19 pandemic.
3. College libraries have conducted various activities, innovative initiatives and best practises in the virtual mode in Konkan region during and after the COVID-19 pandemic situation.

METHODOLOGY

A descriptive research approach was utilised for this study. The present study is confined to a survey of traditional (Arts, Commerce and Science) aided undergraduate college libraries in the Konkan region. The study area of the Konkan division comprises seven districts, namely Mumbai City, Mumbai Suburban, Thane, Palghar, Raigarh, Ratnagiri and Sindudurg. A total of 150 + aided undergraduate colleges are in the Konkan region. The primary data

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for this study was collected through a structured questionnaire. A questionnaire was distributed to the study sample via Google Form to collect data for the study. The questionnaire was sent to all 150 college librarians and 105 responses were received. Primary data were descriptively analysed and presented according to the research objectives of the study.

DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Demographic Profile of the Respondents

According to the survey results, the survey questionnaire was circulated among 150 college librarians through a Google Form. A total of 105 responses were received. The rate of gender received in the sample size consisted of (73)69.5% males and (32)30.5% of females. Location-wise, the received data consisted of (55)52.4% from the urban area and (50)47.6% from the rural area. (102)97.1% of data was received from the Librarian, and (3)2.9% was received from Assistant Librarian.

Table 1. Age-wise respondents in total and percentage.

Age group	Total	Percentages
20-30	1	1%
31-40	28	26.7%
41-50	49	46.7%
51-60	27	25.7%

There was one (1%) respondent in the age group of 20-30 years, about 28 (26.7%) respondents in the age group of 31-40 years, about 49 (46.7%) respondents in the age group of 41- 50 years, and about 27 (25.7%) respondents in the age group of 51-60 years.

Data Analysis

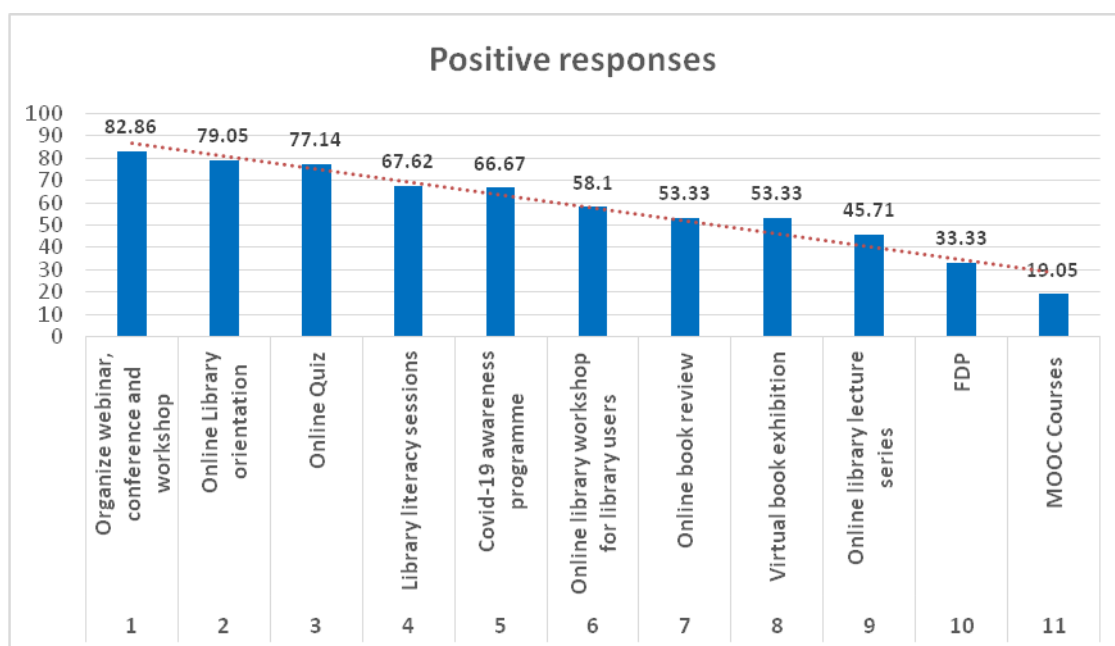
Table No. 2 shows the percentage-wise responses for library services, activities and best practices.

Sr. No.	Activity	Positive responses	%	Negative Responses	%
1	Online Quiz	81	77.14	24	22.85
2	Organize webinars, conferences and workshop	87	82.86	18	17.14
3	Online book review	56	53.33	49	46.67
4	Online Library Orientation	83	79.05	22	20.95
5	Library literacy sessions	71	67.62	34	32.38
6	Virtual book exhibition	56	53.33	49	46.67
7	Online library workshop for library users	61	58.10	44	41.90

8	Online library lecture series	48	45.71	57	54.29
9	FDP	35	33.33	70	66.67
10	MOOC Courses	20	19.05	85	80.95
11	COVID-19 awareness programme	70	66.67	35	33.33
	Total	668	57.84	487	42.16

Table no. 2 presents the percentage-wise responses given by library professionals to conducting library services, activities, and best practises during and after the COVID-19 pandemic situation in the Konkan region. The data found that a maximum of (87)82.86% of respondents responded positively to the Organize webinar, conference, and workshop. Whereas (81)79.05% of respondents gave a positive response to the online library orientation. (81)77.14% of respondents gave positive responses to the online quiz activity, (71)67.62 respondents gave a positive response to the library literacy session activity, and (70)66.67% of respondents gave a positive response to the COVID-19 awareness programme. (61)58.10% of college librarians conducted online library workshops for library users, (56)53.33% of college libraries organised online book exhibitions on different occasions during the COVID-19 pandemic situation, (56)53.33% of college libraries conducted online book reviews. (48)45.71% of respondents gave a positive response to the online lecture series, (35)33.33% of college libraries conducted faculty development programmes out of the total respondents, and (20)19.05% of respondents responded to MOOC courses. After analysing the data, it was found that during COVID-19, library professionals conducted mostly webinars, conferences, and workshops, as well as an online library orientation, an online quiz, a library literacy session, and a COVID-19 awareness programme. Whereas FDP, online lecture series, and virtual book exhibition activities are used rarely.

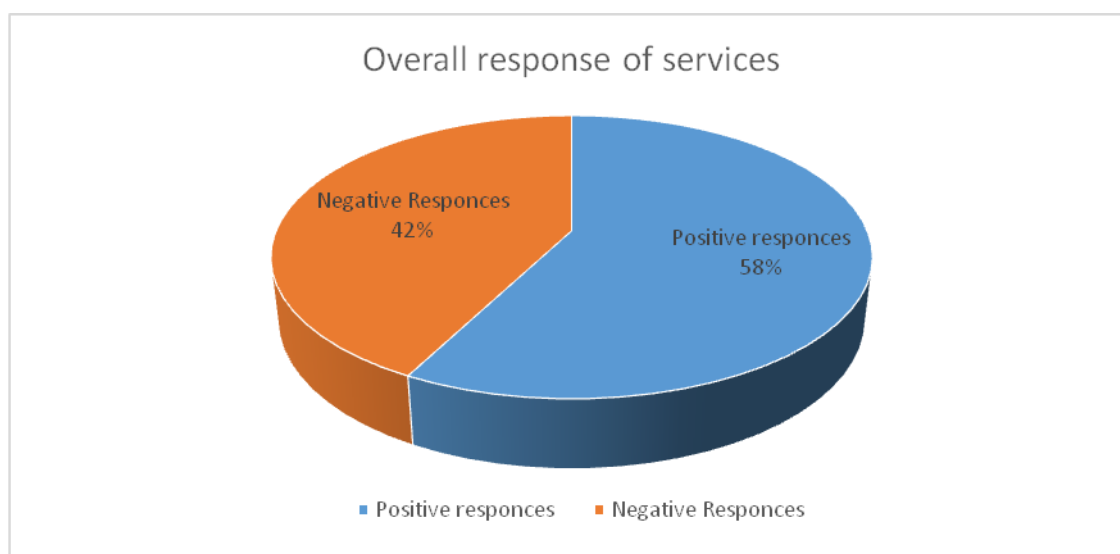
Below Graphs 1 shows the percentage-wise highest positive response to library services.



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Graph 1 It can be observed that organised webinars and conferences during COVID-19 have the highest positive response rate at 82.86% and online library orientation services have the second highest with 79.5%. The online quiz activities have the third highest positive of responses at 77.14%, library literacy session has the fourth rank at 67.62% and COVID-19 awareness programme has 66.67% in the fifth rank, online library workshop for library user's initiative has six ranks with 58.1% responses. Online book review activity and virtual book exhibition activity have the same highest rank, seventh with 53.33%. Online library lecture series activity has the ninth rank with 45.71%, FDP has the tenth rank with 33.33% and MOOC courses have the eleventh rank with 19.5%. These are the highest to lowest positive responses of users conducting library services, best practises and innovative initiatives taken by college libraries during the COVID-19 pandemic situation.

Graph 2 shows the percentage-wise overall responses of library services, activities, and best practises during and after COVID-19 pandemic situation.



Graph 2 provides a clear picture of all services covered in this study 58% of respondents gave a positive response, and 42% of users gave a negative response to the overall services selected for the study. It has been observed that almost all libraries participate in remote access as an alternate solution for providing online access. 58% of libraries provide various types of online services to the users during COVID-19 pandemic crisis.

CONCLUSION

Based on the survey findings, the study concluded that the college libraries that come under the Konkan region have played a significant role in providing information and disseminating knowledge during the COVID-19 pandemic. Survey results confirm the success of the initiatives taken by the library to offer a better library service that complied with the e-learning activities during the pandemic situation. 82.86% of college libraries organised online webinars, conferences, and workshops for their users. 79.5% of libraries offered online library orientation for students to make better use of library services. 77.14% of libraries conducted online quiz competitions on relevant subject areas on different occasions. 67.62% arranged library literacy sessions to extend library use. 66.67% of college libraries conducted an online COVID-19 awareness programme. 58.3% of libraries organised online workshops for their users on various topics. 53.33% of libraries organise online book reviews and virtual book exhibitions. 33.33% of

librarians conducted online faculty development programmes, and 19.5% of college libraries provided MOOC platforms to users.

After taking the opinion of the library professionals and as per the results of the data analysis, it is proven that college libraries have used communication technology and tools to bridge the gap between libraries and users during the lockdown period. Due to lockdown issues, library professionals mentioned organising webinars, conferences, and workshops, online library orientation, online quizzes, library literacy sessions and COVID-19 awareness programme activities as being the most useful and having the highest impact on library professionals during the lockdown period. As per the data, MOOC courses, FDP, online lecture series, virtual book exhibitions and online book review services and activities are used less in college libraries during the COVID-19 situation. According to the study, college libraries tried their level best to organise various online services, activities, and best practices during and after the COVID-19 pandemic situation to ensure the continuation of library services.

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