

IMPACT OF THE LOCKDOWN ON LIBRARY SERVICES IN COLLEGES OF MUMBAI REGION

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ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdowns significantly disrupted library services in colleges across Mumbai. This study examines the impact of the lockdown on library operations, user access, and the adoption of digital resources. Through a mixed-method approach, the research explores the challenges faced by libraries, the strategies implemented to ensure continuity of services, and the long-term implications for library management. The findings highlight the accelerated shift toward digitalization, the importance of remote access to resources, and the need for innovative solutions to sustain library services during crises. This study provides valuable insights for policymakers, librarians, and educational institutions to enhance the resilience of library services in the face of future disruptions.

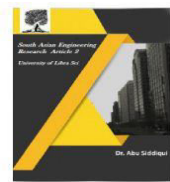
KEYWORDS

Lockdown, Library Services, COVID-19, Digital Resources, Remote Access, Mumbai Colleges, Library Management, User Engagement, Pandemic Impact

1. INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic brought unprecedented challenges to educational institutions worldwide, including colleges in Mumbai. Libraries, as essential components of academic ecosystems, faced significant disruptions due to the lockdown. This study investigates the impact of the lockdown on library services, focusing on the transition to digital platforms, user engagement, and the challenges of maintaining service continuity. The research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the adaptations made by libraries and their implications for future library management. The COVID-19 pandemic, declared by the World Health Organization (WHO) in March 2020, brought about unprecedented disruptions across all sectors of society, including education. In India, the nationwide lockdown imposed in late March 2020 forced educational institutions to shut down abruptly, leading to a sudden shift from traditional classroom-based learning to online education. This transition had a profound impact on all facets of academic life, including library services, which are an integral part of the educational ecosystem. Libraries, traditionally seen as physical spaces for accessing books, journals, and other resources, faced significant challenges in maintaining their operations and serving their users during the lockdown. This study focuses on the impact of the lockdown on library services in colleges across Mumbai, a city known for its dense network of higher education institutions and a vibrant academic culture.

College libraries in Mumbai, like their counterparts worldwide, play a critical role in supporting teaching, learning, and research. They provide access to a wide range of resources,



including textbooks, reference materials, journals, and digital databases, and offer services such as reference assistance, interlibrary loans, and user training programs. However, the lockdown disrupted these services, as physical access to libraries was completely halted. This posed a significant challenge for students, faculty, and researchers who relied on library resources for their academic work. In response, libraries had to rapidly adapt to the new reality by shifting their focus to digital resources and remote services.

The pandemic accelerated the digital transformation of library services, a trend that had been gradually gaining momentum in recent years. Libraries began to invest in e-books, e-journals, and online databases, and introduced new services such as virtual reference desks, online workshops, and remote access to digital collections. While these changes offered new opportunities for libraries to reach their users, they also exposed several challenges, including limited digital infrastructure, lack of user training, and issues related to copyright and licensing of digital resources. Additionally, the shift to digital services highlighted the digital divide among users, with some students facing difficulties in accessing online resources due to lack of internet connectivity or digital devices.

The impact of the lockdown on library services in Mumbai colleges is a topic of significant importance, as it sheds light on the resilience and adaptability of libraries in the face of a global crisis. It also provides valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities associated with the digital transformation of library services. This study aims to explore these issues in depth, focusing on the experiences of librarians, students, and faculty during the lockdown. By examining the strategies adopted by libraries to ensure continuity of services, the study seeks to identify best practices and lessons learned that can inform future library management.

Moreover, the study is situated within the broader context of the role of libraries in supporting education and research during times of crisis. The pandemic has underscored the importance of libraries as essential institutions that provide access to knowledge and information, even in the most challenging circumstances. As colleges in Mumbai and elsewhere continue to navigate the uncertainties of the post-pandemic world, it is crucial to understand how libraries can evolve to meet the changing needs of their users. This study contributes to this understanding by providing a detailed analysis of the impact of the lockdown on library services and offering recommendations for building more resilient and user-centric library systems.

2. OBJECTIVES:

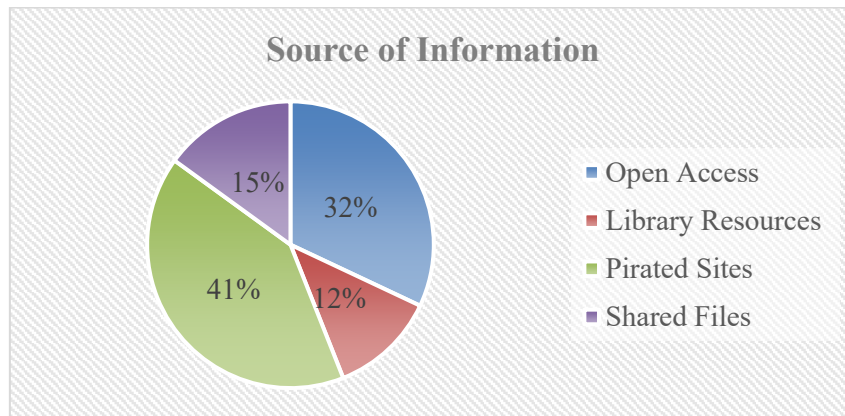
- ✓ To evaluate the challenges faced by libraries during the lockdown.
- ✓ To analyze the adoption of digital resources and remote access solutions.
- ✓ To explore user satisfaction and engagement with library services during the lockdown.
- ✓ To provide recommendations for enhancing library services in crisis situations.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Mixed-method approach combining quantitative and qualitative data was used for collecting data from librarians from colleges in Mumbai city. A Surveys was conducted to collect quantitative data and some interviews were undertaken to collect qualitative data. Data was analysed using statistical techniques.

4. DATA ANALYSIS

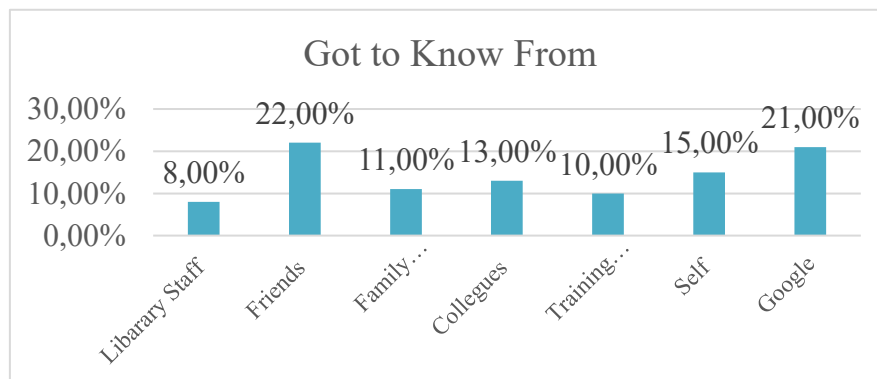
The data was analysed using statistical techniques such as percentage and data was presented using graphical presentations as bellow.



Graph 4.1 Sources of Information

The above pie chart illustrates the distribution of sources used for accessing information. Pirated Sites account for the largest share (41%), indicating that many users turn to unauthorized sources, likely due to cost or accessibility barriers. Open Access follows at 32%, showing a significant reliance on freely available content, which reflects the growing importance of open educational resources. Shared Files make up 15%, suggesting peer-to-peer sharing is a common practice, while Library Resources, at just 12%, are the least used, possibly due to limited awareness or accessibility challenges.

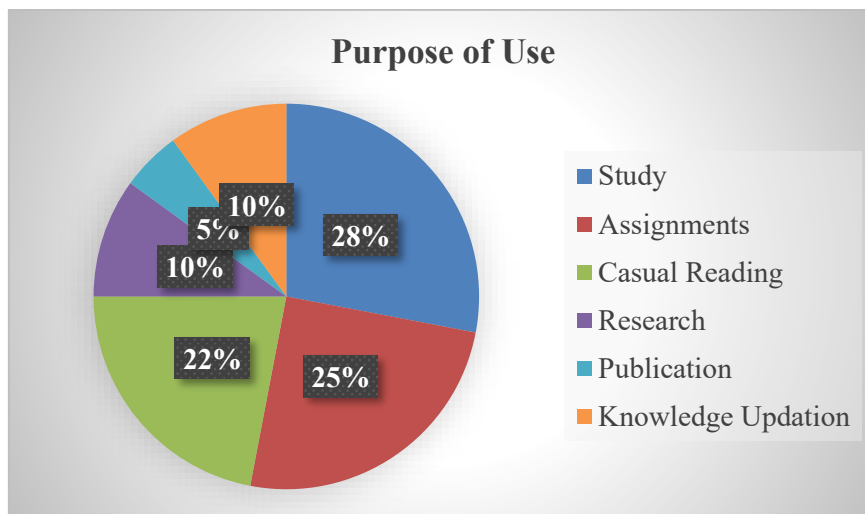
4.2 GOT TO KNOW FROM



Graph 4.2 Got to Know From

The above chart illustrates the different sources from which people learn about certain information. Friends are the most common source, accounting for 22%, followed closely by Google at 21%, highlighting the importance of both personal networks and online searches in information discovery. Self-learning plays a significant role at 15%, indicating that many individuals take the initiative to explore resources independently. Colleagues contribute to 13% of information dissemination, while family members account for 11%, showing that workplace and family discussions also play a role. Training programs contribute 10%, suggesting structured learning sessions have moderate influence. Library staff, at just 8%, are the least common source, indicating a potential gap in outreach or engagement efforts by libraries.

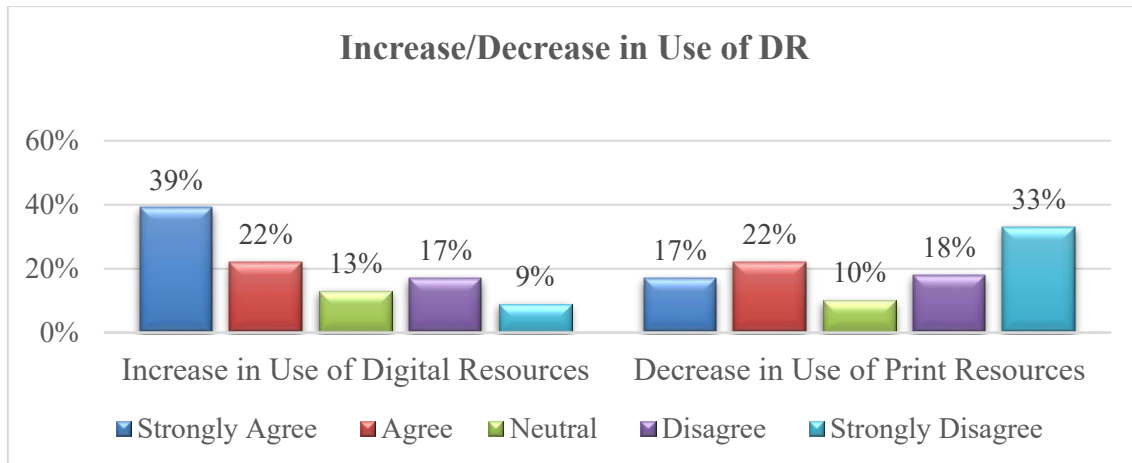
4.3 PURPOSE OF USE



Graph 4.3 Purpose of Use

The bar chart illustrates the different sources from which people learn about certain information. Friends are the most common source, accounting for 22%, followed closely by Google at 21%, highlighting the importance of both personal networks and online searches in information discovery. Self-learning plays a significant role at 15%, indicating that many individuals take the initiative to explore resources independently. Colleagues contribute to 13% of information dissemination, while family members account for 11%, showing that workplace and family discussions also play a role. Training programs contribute 10%, suggesting structured learning sessions have moderate influence. Library staff, at just 8%, are the least common source, indicating a potential gap in outreach or engagement efforts by libraries.

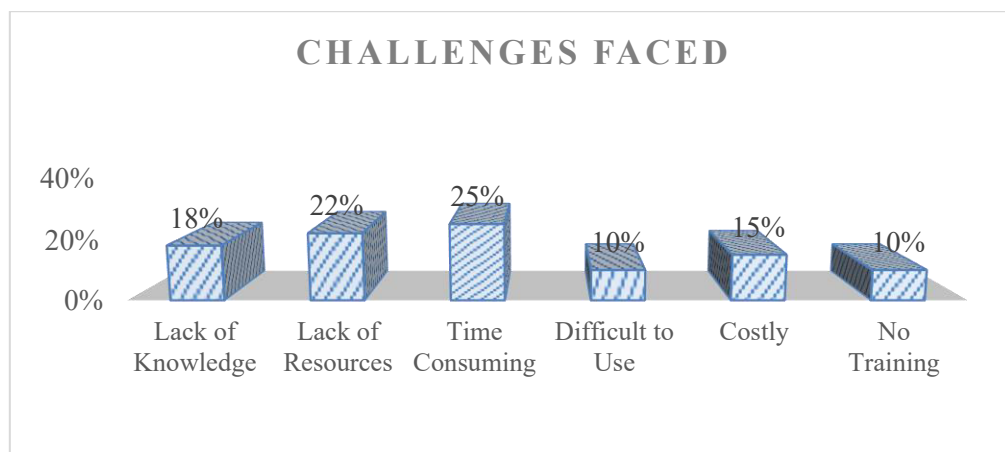
4.4 INCREASE & DECREASE IN USE OF DR FROM PANDEMIC



Graph 4.4 Increase / Decrease in Use of DR

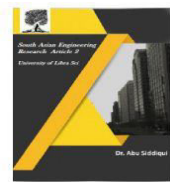
The graph above illustrates an increase in the use of digital resources, with 39% of participants agreeing, 22% agreeing, and 13% remaining neutral. In contrast, 17% disagree and 9% strongly disagree with the increase in digital resource usage. Similarly, the graph indicates a decrease in the use of print resources, as supported by 33% of participants, with 18% agreeing, while 10% hold a neutral opinion. Meanwhile, 22% disagree, and 17% strongly disagree with the decreased use of the print resource usage.

4.5 CHALLENGES FACED WHILE USING



Graph 4.5 Challenges Faced

The graph above illustrates the challenges faced when accessing digital resources. Specifically, 18% of participants reported a lack of knowledge, 22% experienced a scarcity of resources, 25% found the process time-consuming, 10% found the resources challenging to use, 15% indicated that the resources were not adequate, and 10% mentioned a need for proper training.



5. FINDINGS

The data suggests that personal networks and online searches are the most effective means of obtaining information, while institutions like libraries and training programs may need to enhance their visibility and accessibility. Additionally, there is an overall increase in the usage of digital resources; however, this does not confirm a decline in the use of print resources, emphasizing the need for libraries to maintain a balanced collection of both. Furthermore, the findings indicate that training programs should be organized to equip participants with the necessary knowledge to use these resources effectively, and adequate funding should be allocated for subscriptions to digital resources to ensure broader access and utilization.

6. CONCLUSION

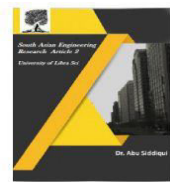
The study reveals that while the lockdown posed significant challenges, it also accelerated the adoption of digital resources and remote access solutions. Libraries faced issues such as limited digital infrastructure, user training needs, and budget constraints. However, innovative strategies, such as virtual reference services and online workshops, helped mitigate these challenges.

The lockdown had a profound impact on library services in Mumbai colleges, driving a rapid shift toward digitalization. While challenges remain, the pandemic has highlighted the importance of flexible and resilient library services. Libraries must continue to innovate and adapt to meet the evolving needs of users. Invest in digital infrastructure and resources, provide training for users and staff on digital tools, develop contingency plans for future crises, and foster collaboration between libraries for resource sharing can be done by the libraries and library professionals.

Further, future research could explore the long-term effects of the pandemic on library services, the role of artificial intelligence in library management, and the impact of hybrid learning models on library usage.

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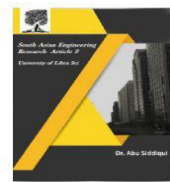
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