Academic Library Services in Nigeria during Covid-19 Pandemic: A Study

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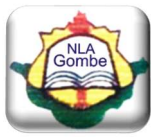Email: om.agwuna@coou.edu.ng

Abstract
This research paper seeks to investigate the role of university libraries in this outbreak situation. The novel virus COVID-19 was discovered as a global pandemic. This contagious virus changed working style from tradition to online because of the shutdown of all activities of life. The main objective of this study to find out those services, skills, instructional, and training programs being carried out during this period of the pandemic. This study equally examined how academic libraries provide the information needs of the patrons by disseminating and mobilizing information during this period of emergency. The study also made recommendations for the betterment of libraries' role in such pandemic situations.

Keywords: COVID-19, Academic Library, Information, Pandemic, Nigeria.

Introduction
In order to prevent the disease called COVID-19 from spreading further, laboratory scientists, medical doctors and other health professionals work around the clock, day and night, non-stop. COVID-19 has never occurred in human beings as a new form of coronavirus before. It is characterized by symptoms such as cough, trouble breathing, lack of sense of smell, pain in the muscles, weakness, fatigue, loss of appetite and, above all, fever. COVID-19 resulted in a severe pandemic that caused the entire universe to be locked up in general. In an attempt to limit or discourage the spread of the deadly virus called COVID-19, public places such as markets, stores, classrooms, government and non-governmental offices, funeral and wedding ceremonies, inter-state and foreign movements have all been put to a stop. People were required by legislation to stay at home to remain healthy, regardless of complexion and

geographical position. This is because the lethal airborne virus is not only deadly, but also extremely contagious. As of 24 April 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) had close to 3 million confirmed cases worldwide and is still counting. Data (both right and false) of different kinds and categories fly among human beings around the world.

Knowledge is power, but super power is access to reliable, timely, and authentic information. There is chaos of the highest order when unverified story is all over the place, as is the case with COVID-19. In the case of Nigeria, the masses rely on different information outlets, primarily social media, which are often not verifiable and confidential. In terms of the true protocols for the spread of the virus, most people are at a crossroads. There is ongoing social media propaganda that the virus treatment vaccines are designed to inject the virus into individuals, as well as that most people touch the virus during the testing.
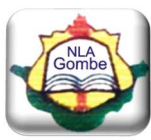
Recent unspecified social media post reported that China has supplied 2 million infected masks to Africa; the post further stated that this was why the WHO warned Africa to prepare for the worst. Another social media write up and short video clip had it that COVID-19 does not exist; rather people have been dying of 5G network. According to the story, the radiation effect of 5G network which is an innovative improvement over the already existing 4G is quite harmful to human health such that can result to deaths. Such lies and falsehoods are capable to confuse the people and jeopardize the government efforts towards preventing the virus from spreading further.

Presently, scientists and other health professionals search for solutions to COVID-19. The government battles with the task of providing the best protection to its citizens as they go about their normal businesses. The librarians on their own side have the important role of disseminating COVID-19 related information and resources to the public through various virtual media channels available to them, especially as most people may not come to the library or because the libraries, being a public place were closed during the world wide pandemic. Since people were advised to work from home, the librarians especially those working in academic libraries are faced with the task of meeting the information needs of their library users during the pandemic. It then becomes necessary to appraise the academic library services in Nigeria during COVID- 19 pandemic.

Concept of COVID-19
Coronavirus disease started in the city of Wuhan, in the Province of Hubei, China. The virus that causes coronavirus disease is known as "SARS-CoV-2". The new deadly disease is called "coronavirus disease 2019" it is abbreviated as COVID-19. Several authors have discussed the evolution of the virus. For example, Andersen, Rambaut, Lipkin, Holmes, & Garry, (2020), confirmed that, it was originated through natural process. Zhou as cited in Ladan, Haruna, &Madu, (2020) believe that some bats have SARSr-CoVs and they have the possibility to infect humans with it. Residents of Wuhan were linked to a large seafood plus live animal market, suggesting that transmission of coronavirus emanated from animals to people (Ozili, 2020).

According to World Health Organization (WHO) corona virus disease is an infectious disease caused by a newly discovered coronavirus which affect people in different ways. The common symptoms include fever, dry cough, tiredness, shortness of breath, pains and aches, sore throat, and very few people will report diarrhea, nausea or a runny noseWorld Health Organisation (2020).. The WHO report on 2nd April 2020, 00:15 GMT shows that there 827,419 confirmed cases of coronavirus in 206 countries. The fast spread of this virus has called the attention of the world to quickly take all the necessary measure fight and control
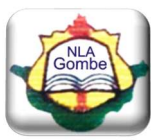
the spread of the virus. Presently, the global community is ravaged by the pandemic while the end to the COVID-19 pandemic is remains unknown due to variations of its spread among the countries. The first known patient of Coronavirus started experiencing symptoms in Wuhan, China on 1 December 2019. Since then, there has been a record of geometrical increase in the number of infected persons around the world.

To date, no specific antiviral treatment has been confirmed to be effective against COVID-19. Regarding patients infected with COVID-19, it has been recommended to apply appropriate symptomatic treatment and supportive care A series of measures have been suggested to reduce nosocomial infection, including knowledge training for prevention and control, isolation, disinfection, classified protections at different degrees in infection areas, and protection of confirmed cases. Concerning psychological health, some suggested psychological intervention for confirmed cases, suspected cases, and medical staff.

For the general population, at this moment there is no vaccine preventing COVID-19. The best prevention is to avoid being exposed to the virus(Muhammad, Syeda, Amna, & Midrar, 2020).Airborne precautions and other protective measures have been discussed and proposed for prevention. Infection preventive and control (IPC) measures that may reduce the risk of exposure include the following: use of face masks; covering coughs and sneezes with tissues that are then safely disposed of (or, if no tissues are available, use a flexed elbow to cover the cough or sneeze); regular hand washing with soap or disinfection with hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol (if soap and water are not available); avoidance of contact with infected people and maintaining an appropriate distance as much as possible; and refraining from touching eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.

Concept of Academic Library

Academic libraries are libraries found in institution of higher learning like colleges of education, polytechnics, universities and research institutions. Akinlade as cited in Anunobi, and Nwankwo, (2020), acknowledging that the library as the brain center of any academic institution on which all academic activities are linking to, defined academic library as the library established, maintained and administered by a university or any higher institution to meet the needs of its students, members of the academic, administrative and executive responsibilities. According to Jubb and Green (2007), academic libraries have for centuries played critically important roles in supporting research in all subjects and disciplines within their host universities or colleges. Furthermore, Opara (2008) posited that the library stands in the same relationship to the society as the memory of an individual by making available and accessible to its users information required for teaching and independent study. The main purpose of an academic library as stated by Ainaas cited in Perrine, (2020),is to support the objectives of an academic institution in the areas of learning, teaching, research, and service. In a similar vein, Aina (2004) broadly averred that, to the undergraduate students, the library is the learning centre because it provides materials that are needed for learning for all the courses that may be offered by the institution. To the postgraduate students, it provides all resources needed to "carry out effective learning and research activities. To the teaching staff, the library provides resources to support teaching and research. Above all, the library is also expected to provide information sources for extracurricular activities(Mandal, & Dasgupta, 2019).Based on the afore outlined definition, it can be seen that academic library is a place where academic information sources are acquired, organized, processed, stored and made available to meet the information needs of the students, teachers and the entire academic community. This explains that academic library is set up to serve its parent institution and

considered as an organ around which all academic activities revolve and therefore the library can aptly be described as the heart of the institution.
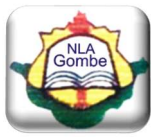
All accredited institutions of higher learning have academic libraries that are integral part of such institutions. Their primary responsibility is to satisfy the institutional research needs of the students and the faculty. These range of roles of library provides a "gateway" for students and researchers to access various resources, both print/physical and digital. Academic institutions are subscribing to electronic journals databases, providing research and scholarly writing software, and usually provide computer workstations or computer labs for students to access journals, library search databases and portals, institutional electronic resources, internet access, and course- or task-related software (i.e. word processing and spreadsheet software). They are increasingly acting as an electronic repository for institutional scholarly research and academic knowledge, such as the collection and citation of digital copies of students' theses and dissertations (Anunobi & Okoye, 2012).

Recent trend have made it a necessity for academic libraries to offer workshops and courses outside of formal, graded coursework, which are meant to provide students with the tools necessary to succeed in their programs (Herrera-Viedma & Lopez-Gijon, 2013). These workshops may include help with citations, effective search techniques, journal databases, and electronic citation software. These workshops provide students with skills that can help them achieve success in their academic careers (and often, in their future occupations), which they may not learn inside the classroom.

The Role of Academic Library during COVID-19
Academic libraries have a vital role to play in the provision and dissemination of genuine information to cure and fight coronavirus to their respective users through social media(Mandal, & Dasgupta, 2019). However, the closure of academic activities necessitates most of class to operate online. Libraries also can provide online services to assist students with access to materials for assignments, selection and dissemination of information resources on COVID-19 to researchers, virtual research help, virtual instruction, online reference services, access to e-books and e-journal, linking users to health institutions and organization on information relating to coronavirus, publish a pamphlet and handbills for safety measures against coronavirus (Litzenberger, 2016). Recently, Information Technology (IT) and internet companies such as Google, Microsoft have provided free teaching and learning tools to support students and teachers learning at home(Mandal, & Dasgupta, 2019). For example, Google lunched its "Teach from Home Hub" in aid to teachers and learners across the world unable to attend schools (https://memeburn.com/2020/03/google-teach-from-home-covid-19/). Libraries in Nigeria can facilitate access to those tools.

During this lockdown, educational institutes all over the world are adapting distance learning methods and shifting towards online courses. Nigeria being a developing country also trying to adapt distance learning methods to move all the work and educational system to an online system. In this Scenario, University libraries play a vital role and provide better services to their users and access to deliver to the online reliable information and educational guidance during this pandemic crisis (Mohammadi, & Yeghane 2019). According to Bello, and Aghadiuno (2019), In developing countries specially Nigeria library professionals known as traditional gatekeepers of knowledge are mostly not familiar with the latest information technology, they need to rebuild their profession, however by adopting ICT skills.

The Nigerian Situation
Globally, the COVID-19 pandemic negatively affected all sectors including the education system, forcing all the academic institutions and libraries all over the world Nigeria inclusive, to be closed for safety. Scholarly communities voiced that aftereffects of this pandemic situation are far wider than before. However, this emergency brought many opportunities and calls for a digital shift(Okike, 2020). During interviews, researchers investigated this aspect while asking question about the status of education in COVID-19 pandemic in their The LIS professional in Nigeria responded to the COVID-19 crisis and started planning to support online education and to get connected with faculty members and students. However, most academic libraries in Nigeria lack resources, facilities and information and communication technologies to operate in the prevailing situation(Medical Library Association. 2020).

The surge in demand of e-information resources and services mainly emerged from the shift of universities' education mode from traditional to online education. However, it has also created a challenge for the libraries to meet the information needs of the users. Several libraries in Nigeria were physically closed, however then switched to the provision of digital contents and services. Just a few libraries were partially open for campus resident faculty members only and offered services including "borrowing facility. When probed about the COVID-19 hazards and danger of transferability of virus, the interviewee opined that their university campus was vacated and closed down and only resident faculty and staff and their families were allowed to stay at campus colony. Campus almost closed like quarantine as "no campus-resident was allowed to go outside without prior permission of the university administration." Thus, they thought it was ok to offer borrowing facility to on-campus resident faculty.

The lockdown, forced educational institutes all over the world to suddenly adapt distance learning methods and a paradigm shift towards online courses (Ishtiaq, Sehar, & Shahid, 2020).Nigeria being a developing country also trying to adapt distance learning methods to move all the work and educational system to an online system. In this Scenario, University libraries play a vital role and provide better services to their users and access to deliver to the online reliable information and educational guidance during this pandemic crisis. In developing countries specially Nigeria library professionals known as traditional gatekeepers of knowledge are mostly not familiar with the latest information technology, they need to rebuild their profession, however by adopting ICT skills.
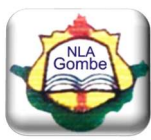
Conclusion
To say that the pandemic situation caused by the novel virus, Covid-19, reshapes all activities of life is an understatement. The lockdown situation has changed the style of working in the traditional system of education. The education system in universities has been forced to embrace online techniques. This calls for the new normal, where the normal things are compulsorily done in a new way. The library personnel and the library users need to improve their skills, expertise in electronic resources such as e-books, internet and so on. IT facilities, in the academic libraries should be improved. Therefore, the library has to redesign its services to facilitate its users satisfaction during the pandemic situation.
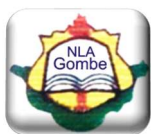
Recommendation
This study recommends as follows;
1. The library management should increase the funds allocated to academic libraries.
2. Improved IT facilities especially computers should be provided for the university libraries in Nigeria.

3. To encourage awareness of new emerging technology and changing concepts in the field of library and information science.
4. Library professionals should be sponsored to training, workshops and conferences.
5. The library users should also equip themselves with the necessary digital skills.

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