

Research Article

Examining the Attitude of Readers in Navsari Agricultural University Libraries after COVID-19

Kailash D Tandel

Assistant Librarian, Navsari Agricultural University, Navsari, Gujarat, India.

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I N F O

E-mail Id:

kailashagrilib@nau.in

Orcid Id:

<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6780-0617>

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A B S T R A C T

During the coming years, some pandemic trends may be expected to continue in academic libraries including an acceleration of the trend to phase out physical resources for electronic ones as well as trends in remote work options. This paper discusses the results of a study conducted post-COVID-19, examining the attitude of readers in Navsari Agricultural University Libraries in which readers shared their impressions of post-pandemic Navsari Agricultural University Libraries areas involved in resources, services, and facilities. Moreover, participants' responses shed light on the present status of readers' attitudes, changes faced by the readers in relation to information seeking, and changes felt by readers in their opinion, in relation to the library after post-COVID-19. In sum, the study provides insights into opportunities/ positive effects, soft skills for readers, virtual library service, and reappraisal of library environment aspects of digital devices and applications that are widely used by colleges.

Keywords: Attitude of Readers, COVID-19, Virtual Library Service, Blended Learning Design, Reappraisal of Library Environment, Navsari Agricultural University

Introduction

COVID-19 made a pedagogical shift from offline to online learning. Online learning or virtual classrooms, helped to bridge the distances that separate readers and teachers in distant areas and also during the pandemic COVID-19 lockdown period, a period in which it was difficult to conduct teaching in real classrooms. According to UNESCO, by the end of April 2020, 186 countries had implemented nationwide closures, affecting about 73.8% of the total enrolled learners. The online learning environment varies profoundly from the traditional classroom situation when it comes to learner motivation, satisfaction, and interaction.¹

Policy paralysis is a major issue for third-world countries, as they struggle to adapt their educational planning, management, and organisation to the shifting circumstances

of the pandemic. Their technical infrastructure is inadequate, there is a lack of academic competence, and resources are scarce. Low and middle-income countries will bear the brunt of these setbacks due to their existing financial constraints.² There is a serious need to invest a sizeable amount of money in the development of infrastructure and to frame national policy to overcome challenges faced during the stop-gap arrangement of the teaching-learning process and continue it as an additional mode of teaching and learning even after the pandemic ends.³

Opportunities/ Positive Effects

Al Rawashdeh et al. focused on the advantages and disadvantages of using e-learning in University Education.⁴ Research has determined that students favour utilising e-learning for its opportunities to improve learning and

enhance skills. However, the lack of support for e-learning does not ensure that students can effectively interact socially with their peers and mentors throughout the academic year. Specifically, a solid e-learning platform is required that both students and teachers can depend on. E-learning will gain more popularity by providing users with a sense of security and comfort through the support of instructors and mentors. Additional research is needed on a broader scope with more online courses, educators, and learners to effectively evaluate the benefits, drawbacks, and effective tactics of thriving students.

Positive effects that are benefits of online learning include a more comfortable environment, improved reader's technical skills, more interaction and greater ability to concentrate, self-discipline and responsibility, blended learning, Learning Management System, flexible schedule, and collaborative work. Global challenges of digital education in the emergency digitisation measures of the pandemic period 2020–2021 include various types: social and psychological-emotional burnout; stress, fatigue; health domestic difficulties/ limitations, and time restrictions in connection with the introduction of quarantine restrictions.

Soft Skills for Readers

Lack of skills like adaptation and self-organisation, situational learning and training skills, communication and cooperation skills; technical challenges and digital literacy - lack of stable internet connection, lack of necessary equipment, the capacity of household computer equipment, lack of digital literacy skills and experience in transforming the curriculum and training materials into an online format, digital communication experience with electronic learning management systems (Moodle, Google class, etc.), experience with auxiliary ICT tools for organising the learning process (video-conferencing, testing, surveys, online boards, etc.)

Remote Servicing

Dekhil et al. are confident that the market for outsourcing management services will keep expanding. Remote management services offer a versatile and ever-changing method for outsourcing and the ability to manage internet services and applications.⁵ Remote access has become a reality for libraries throughout the pandemic. Libraries in India, like libraries all over the world, faced a similar problem. During the crisis, Indian libraries took all precautionary measures to protect library assets and library staff and readers. In terms of community development, academics and governments have benefited from the involvement of libraries in outreach programs during the pandemic. Many consumers around the world are new to digital devices. Uninterrupted, continuous, and fast Internet connection is the main means of accessing online forums

and other ICT infrastructure such as computers, laptops, smartphones, iPods, and electronic devices.

Virtual Library Service

Sawant in her study opined that despite encountering infrastructural challenges, Indian librarians managed the situation fairly well throughout the pandemic.⁶ UGC's recent public notice on blended learning suggests that Indian higher education institutions should deliver 40% of each course's syllabus online, with the remaining content taught in person.⁷ If e-resources are required for online teaching, the demand will go up. In this evolving situation, the librarian's function as a facilitator will be further emphasised.

The various virtual library services offered are:

1. Chat/ email
2. Self-registration and book browsing
3. Browsing chapters from external users' books and journal articles
4. Lib-Guide catalogue of resources available in the library
5. Learn how to update content for library websites.

Online events programmes like webinars and other courses/ events are conducted online through the following online platforms/ applications/ software: These platforms are free/paid based on number of participants and duration of the online conference session. Adobe Connect; Air conference; each section; Cisco Webex; Click Meeting; Live Facebook; Google Meetings/ Classes/ Hangouts; GoToWebinar/ GoToMeeting; Jitsi meeting; Microsoft Teams (MS Teams); Moodle; Skype; Telephone; YouTube channel, Zoom, and more.

Planning for Successful Blended Learning Design

Pokorná et al. describe in their paper, a digital library (DL) model designed to substitute traditional library services during the lockdown due to COVID-19, within the framework of existing copyright legislation.⁸ During the lockdown, a server instance with Shibboleth authentication allowed students and academic staff to access copyrighted works remotely.

Foster a sense of belonging: Readers need to be part of the learning community. For this, it may be better to create a group to work on dedicated online activities. In addition to creating connections between readers of different abilities, this facilitates peer learning.

Teacher involvement: Teachers need to be involved in the learning process. This can include e-guides, event management, questions and answers, quizzes, etc. The virtual classroom allows teachers and readers to participate in teaching, interact with each other, and clarify doubts, thus making the learning process of the readers easier.

Building the teaching and learning process: Readers need access to be able to schedule time online, attend courses, submit assignments, and access a variety of resources. This need is particularly evident in areas where families only have one smartphone, which must be shared with other work members. A timeline should take these factors into account to help readers interact at times that are of interest to them.

Reappraisal of Library Environment

The library's environment and the education provided to customers significantly impact how much the library is used by different consumer groups, whether as a whole or individually. Having enough seating, modern data resources, good customer service, consistent power, and internet access will draw people to a library, while poor conditions inside and outside will deter them. Similarly, a properly structured user education program will instil confidence in users, leading to increased effectiveness in utilising the library, as per Ejiroghene.⁹

Libraries around the world face challenges in accessing collections and services. Libraries are promoting all kinds of digital services during the coronavirus pandemic. However physical resources are often requested by users when possible, in the scientific organisation where drug research and drug development are conducted for drug diagnosis and drug research. Virtual library services were provided even during the siege. Many libraries have published digital libraries. Highlights from virtual presentation services and content on the Lets Read Together website and online program. Much has also been done to improve internet access. Online and offline library resources, such as increasing the number of e-books/ e-journals/ CD-DVDs, etc. to reduce the risk of the spread of the epidemic of COVID-19, are not completely dismissed. Strategic planning is essential for libraries to overcome unexpected changes caused by disasters such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Libraries should provide all staff with adequate opportunities to learn new skills, understand the implications of various technologies and library practices, take a different approach to their communities, and communicate effectively to deal with emergency situations. In the library, the professional development of the staff is important to the growth of the collection and the design of the room. Social media platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter are important tools to help librarians reach out to users and information services.¹⁰

Research Questions

The following research questions were designed to examine the nature and factors affecting readers' attitudes toward agricultural libraries.

1. What is the present status of readers' attitudes for resources of Navsari Agricultural Library Surat?
2. What were changes faced by the readers in relation to information seeking?
3. What were changes felt by readers in their opinion, in relation to the library after COVID-19?

Methodology

For conducting the present study, the descriptive survey method was used. The study is limited to only 91 readers of Navsari Agriculture Libraries of Gujarat. With a view to catching the impression after the pandemic period, data was collected from October 2023 to March 2024. It was solely intended to explore the state of readers' attitudes. All of the readers had been using Google Meet and Zoom applications for learning, online mode for learning during the pandemic period. About Tools Used, Reading academic articles on the Study Of Readers' Attitudes Questionnaires and incorporating input from these questionnaires into self-development consisting of objective types related to different aspects of Post-COVID-19, Examining the Attitude of Readers in Navsari Agricultural University Libraries, different digital skills, and intended use of digital technologies in learning, summarisation in the questionnaire. Issues/ challenges/ problems related to the attitudes of the media generated by the researchers. The effectiveness of the tool was validated by evaluating expert opinion.

The sampling method was used to select the sample of this study. The selection was chosen from the Navsari Agricultural University Libraries. 200 questionnaires were distributed, but only 91 readers (59.3% men and 40.7% women) responded. Data were collected by distributing a questionnaire and reminders to complete the questionnaire. During data collection, readers were approached to collect reliable data from primary sources. After collecting the relevant data from the respondents, the data was analysed using frequency and simple percentages in MS Excel and were interpreted accordingly.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

As shown in Figure 1, out of 91 readers, 59.3% were male and 40.7% were female.

As shown in Figure 2, out of the total respondents, the majority (74.7%) belonged to the age group of 21–23 years, whereas 17.6% belonged to the age group of 24–26 years.

In Figure 3, we find the answer to the question 'Which following sources, do you turn to, for information now that the COVID-19 pandemic has passed. It was seen that 54.4% turned to college libraries, 13.3% to other libraries, 17.8% to personal collection, 27.8% to friends and collection and 74.4% to the internet.

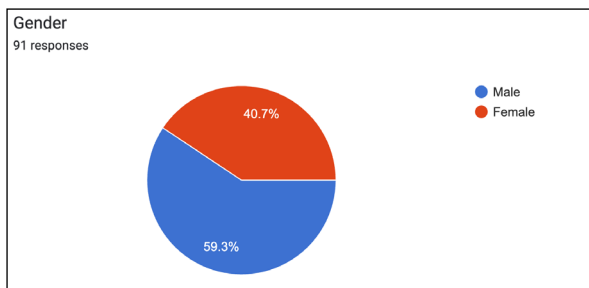


Figure 1. Distribution of Participants as per Their Gender

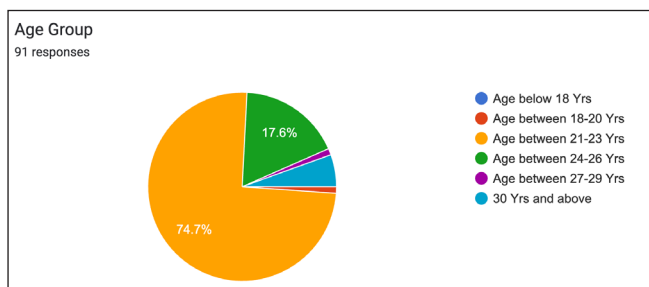


Figure 2. Distribution of Participants as per Their Age Group

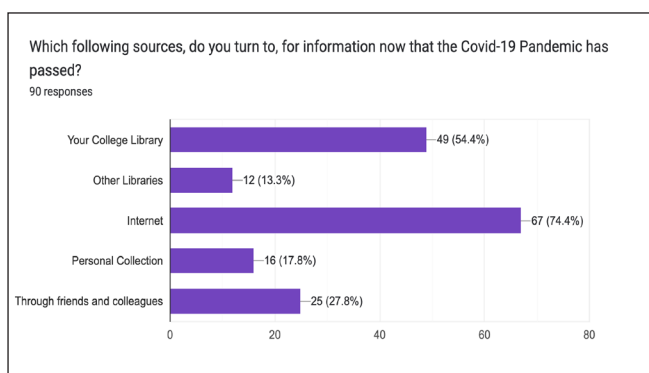


Figure 3. Responses Regarding Where Readers Could Turn to for Information

Figure 4 shows the goal of the reader's information search. The responses were: preparing lectures: 36%, for guidance: 14.6%, for participation in seminars: 23.6%, to keep updated information: 64%, and for entertainment: 12.4%. 71.9% of readers reported that they searched for information for the purpose of general awareness.

As shown in Figure 5, during COVID-19, 20% of readers spent more than 2 hours daily, 33.3% of readers spent between 1 and 2 hours, and 14.4% spent less than 1 hour, whereas 14.4% of readers did not visit the library daily.

Figure 6 shows the reaction of readers to the information available at the library. 55.6% of readers were satisfied with the library's information, 23.3% were extremely satisfied, and 17.8% were somewhat satisfied.

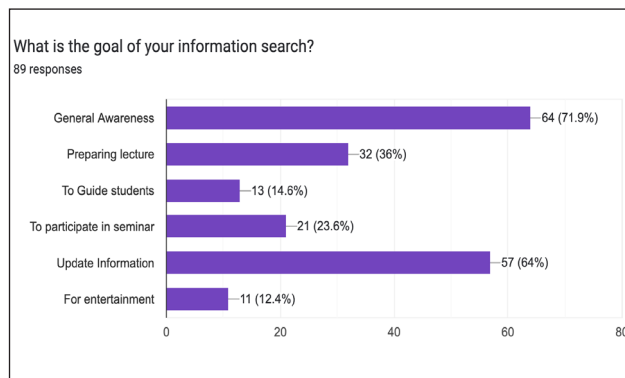


Figure 4. Responses Regarding the Objective of Searching for Information

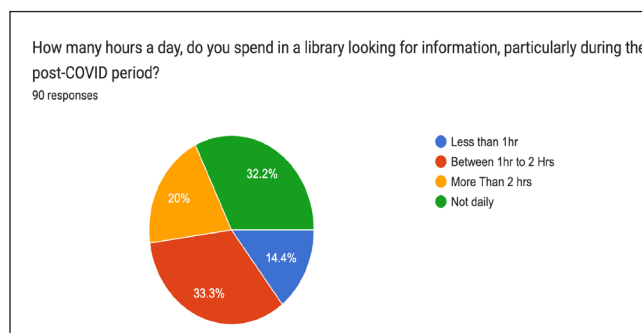


Figure 5. Responses Regarding Time Spent In the Library

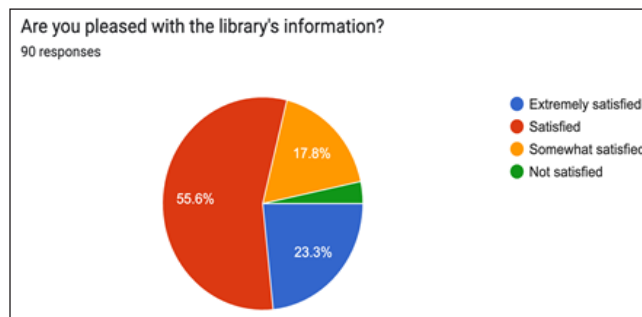


Figure 6. Reader's Feedback Regarding the Information Available at the Library

Figure 7 shows that in the post-COVID-19 scenario, 84.1% of readers revealed that ICT had fully altered their information-seeking and collecting behaviours, and 15.9% of readers felt that there was no change in their information-seeking and collecting behaviours.

Figure 8 shows that during the lockdown, 60.7% of readers used e-books, 41.6% used social networking sites, 38.2% used e-journals, 29.2% used print books, 22.5% used blogs, 20.2% used resources posted by teachers, 15.7% used resources posted by the librarian, and 12.4% used print journals. Most importantly, 82% of readers used YouTube as one important source of resources.

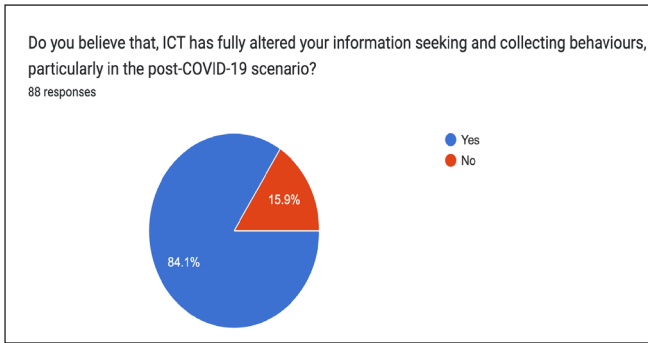


Figure 7. Responses Regarding How ICT Influences Behaviours Related to Seeking and Collecting Information

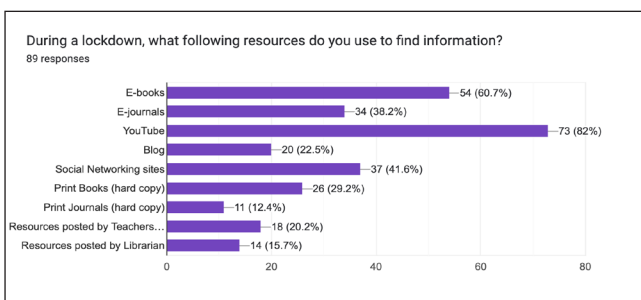


Figure 8. Responses Regarding the Utilisation of Resources

Figure 9 shows the problems readers had to face while looking for information during the pandemic: 48.9% of readers felt that information was scattered in too many sources and physical sources were located far away; 26.1% of readers had no knowledge of searching for the required information; 19.3% of readers had no information about databases; 43.2% of readers could not get the required material, and 34.1% of readers had a network connectivity issue.

Figure 10 shows that 62.9% of readers used books, 60.7% were using e-resources, 32.6% were making use of the best reading room, 27% used journals, 14.6% were using discussion room, and 12.4% were making use of the Learning Management System.

Figure 11 shows that 88.6% of readers were satisfied with the library services at their college library, and 11.4% of readers needed motivation to make use of library services because they were not satisfied.

As shown in Figure 12, readers expressed the changes in themselves, in terms of access to library resources: 15.9% of readers were not very clear about their change, and also 15.9% of readers strongly agreed that there were changes in themselves, whereas 65.9% felt changes in themselves.

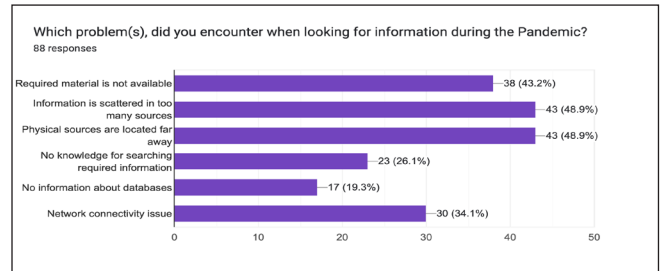


Figure 9. Responses Regarding the Problems Faced When Searching for Information

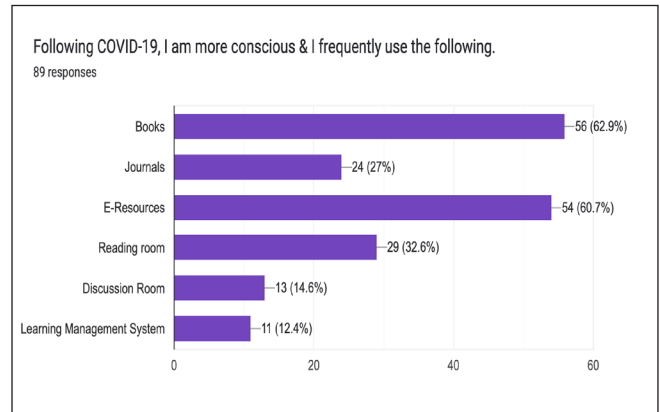


Figure 10. Responses Regarding Common Sources Used in the Library

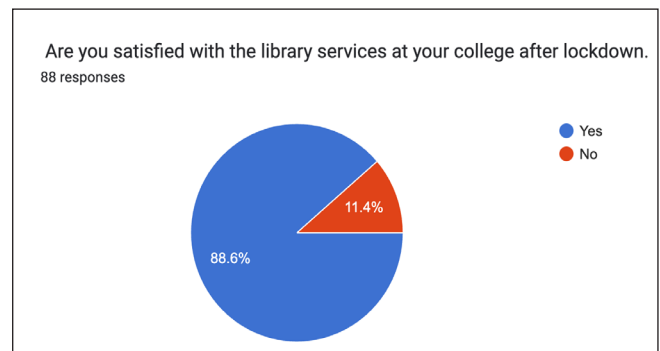


Figure 11. Responses Regarding Reader's Contentment with the Library Services

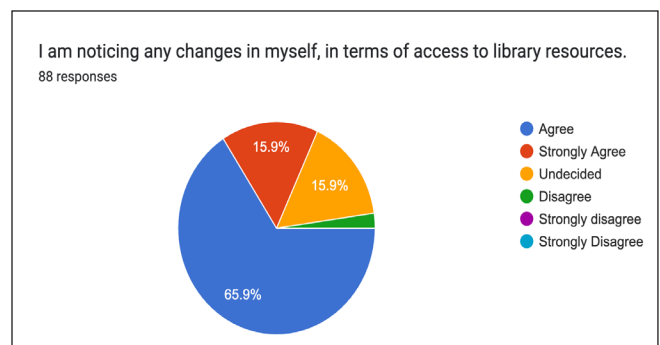


Figure 12. Responses Regarding Recognition of Personal Transformation

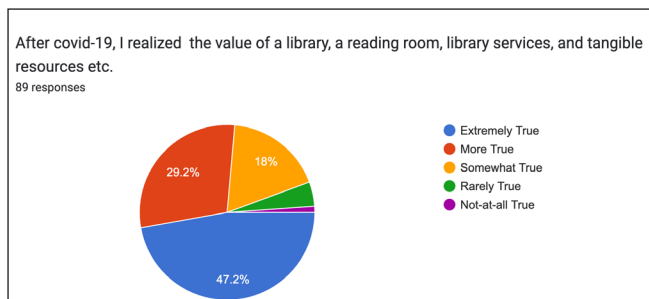


Figure 13. Responses Regarding the Significance of the Library as Perceived by the Reader

Figure 13 shows the responses of participants to the statement 'I realise the value of a library, a reading room, library services, and tangible resources, etc.'. 18% of readers acknowledged the statement to be 'somewhat true', 29.2% reported it to be more true, and 47.2% reported it to be 'extremely true'.

Conclusion

Following the outbreak of the pandemic, readers found themselves in the unenviable position of having to navigate a learning platform and juggle their academic studies with personal tasks, all from the confines of their homes. This situation was particularly challenging, especially when distractions were readily available. They had to learn to leverage technology effectively for educational purposes, rather than letting it become a hindrance. The pandemic prompted educators to reevaluate the relevance of certain subjects in their curriculum and their practical application. This led to a rethinking of teaching methods and the adaptation of content to better meet the needs of readers. Over the past two years, there has been a shift towards project-based learning (PBL), which allows readers to engage with real-world problems through sustained investigation, aiming for genuine outcomes.

Readers were given the opportunity and the duration to undertake projects that ignited their curiosity and interests, enabling them to apply knowledge gained outside the classroom to their academic growth. This approach kept readers motivated and involved in their virtual classes. Educators transformed into mentors, providing support, while readers evolved into independent learners with agency and decision-making power. Within this genuine setting that replicates real-world scenarios, readers acquire essential skills for the 21st century, including those related to life and career. These projects progress through different stages: reflection, revision, critique, and further revision, before being presented to their peers. Moreover, these projects demonstrate the readers' dedication and inventiveness.

It is clear that universities are widely embracing digital devices and apps. Several committees and commissions

have also emphasised the significance of digital literacy and the incorporation of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in the educational process. The Indian government has launched numerous initiatives like the Digital India campaign, e-pathshala, NROER, SWAYAM, SWAYAMPRVAN, NDL India, etc., to encourage ICT utilisation in education. This research demonstrates that most participants have proficiency in smartphone usage, yet their capacity to maximise the available resources is impeded due to a deficiency in training and guidance initiatives. Hence, it is essential for colleges and institutes to take action and tackle this problem by scheduling frequent in-service training sessions and offering colleges the required facilities. While the study centres on assessing readers' attitudes and resources for their studies, it proposes that conducting a comparative analysis of government & self-financing colleges with other universities might be advantageous.

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