# Impact and Assessment on Library Resources and Services during COVID-19 Pandemic: A study on Library of the Central University of Jharkhand and Mahatma Gandhi Central University, Motihari, Bihar

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## *Abstract*

*The burst of coronavirus, COVID-19 and proclaimed by the World Health Organization as a pandemic, created fear and nervousness among the world community. This was an extraordinary situation for libraries. All services of reader's activity were closed, and staffs were asked to stay at home or work from home as far as possible for the safety of library staff and its users. During the pandemic Library and its staff played an important role in supporting online teaching with its limited resources. This paper examines the COVID-19 impact on resources and services of the Central University of Jharkhand and Mahatma Gandhi Central University, Bihar, libraries. The results found that both the libraries rendered their services in their limited resources to the users and followed government guidelines. They adopted a quarantine policy for returned books, provided a remote access facility for e-resources, adopted alternate day working hours for library staff, used sanitization, added new e-resources and planned to adopt changes in collection development policy.*

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## 1. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic represents the most significant challenge that our academic library system has faced in generations. At this stage, a complete future trajectory is unknown. However, every aspect of our library system will inevitably be affected. But the more affected area would be the collection, infrastructure and services because these aspects of the library are directly related to the information-seeking behaviour of the library users, which is changing during the pandemic COVID-19. The pandemic is forcing rapid changes in institutional operations as well as instructional planning and delivery. Most of the sectors, including academia, are instating optional or mandatory work-from-home policies in efforts to reduce the spread of COVID -19 and protect faculty, research scholars and students. The library is at the core of teaching, learning and research. During the lockdown and even after unlock, Libraries close their physical facilities, concentrate on their digital services, and try their best to support the teaching and study remotely. Institutes are racing to shift their

courses online; students engage in mass with e-books and e-learning, and researchers draw chiefly on electronic journals.

Even after a significant shift in the last twenty years, the majority of libraries are hybrid libraries. Still, many services provided by the libraries are available under a structured library environment in Indian academic institutions. The same situation is with the universities and other higher education institutions. All the University Grants Commission (UGC), New Delhi affiliated universities are bounded to follow the guidelines of the UGC. Strategies vary widely from university to university. Some universities have announced fully online curricula for the fall term; some will resume full, in-person classes; and most will offer hybrid options of remote and face-to-face teaching as per their infrastructure, students and faculty demand. Each of these teaching modes has enormous implications for the support needed from the library. Academic libraries, particularly universities libraries, are struggling to develop processes aligned with the plans of their parent institutions. Changing classroom teaching to online teaching would be a tremendous hardship for everyone involved like faculty, students and librarians.

In the Indian scenario, most libraries are still not prepared to fulfil the suddenly arrived crisis because of their limited resources and poor Information Technology Infrastructure. However, they are trying to reach the users and provide access to digital resources and services through remote access. Still, they are unsure about the majority of services requiring the physical presence of the staff and users. As the pandemic situation this year 2019, only very few attempts have been made to carry out an evaluative study of the impact of this pandemic on library systems and services. This study will benefit librarians who don't have any documented policy regarding services and collection policy for such situations. The study aims to assess the impact of COVID-19 on the library collection, system and services.

## 2. Literature Review

Several documents show the impact of a pandemic on different areas of society and the education system. Still, fewer studies have examined the impact and assessment on library resources and services during the COVID-19 pandemic on the library. Some of the studies have been discussed related to the topic.

Craft (2020) found that remote work in Library is not a new practice. It was in force in Library as an application online from the 1990s. The author explains in detail that due to fear of Covid- 19 pandemic, work from home or remotely work, using social distancing and quarantine were in practice to fight with the Pandemic and work in a new unnatural environment. Mageto (2020) discussed the development of the e-library system and the problem faced during the stages of development. It expresses in brief how to achieve U.N. eight goals of sustainable development of education. It also describes the ground reality of partial automation of academic libraries and challenges encountered during the present COVID Pandemic. The present Pandemic situation forced us to rethink the established system of education. Because COVID is with us and has to live with it till treatment is not discovered. Jaegar & Blaabaek (2020) gives an overview of the impact of covid-19 the Pandemic on schooling going children in Denmark and expresses that the level of an economic gap has widened the gap in learning materials uneven income. A research study was carried out to know the family taking digital materials from libraries to see the impact. Analysis of the survey shows that Pandemic has extended the learning opportunity and gap; the family with a better income has more opportunities than the lower one.

Ladan, Haruna & Madu (2020) briefly discusses the origin of the virus corona and its spread throughout the globe and in Nigeria. He found that Nigeria has poor medical infrastructure, a lack of authentic information, the role of social media in circulating fake news, and irresponsible and conspiring behaviour of religious people, illiterate population. Even doctors also emerged a big challenge in front of the Nigerian Govt. to fight the Pandemic. Several fake infodemics were in the air that created a big challenge. In such a situation, the role of the Library Association of Nigeria in creating awareness to fight corona was a big challenge.

Yuvraj (2020) highlighted the role of librarians and libraries in keeping in touch with the latest development and trends regarding coronavirus information spread among medical staff, doctors and other frontline warriors. The study was carried out on the desktop analysis of the health science librarian's response to the covid-19 Pandemic. The analysis describes that more and more misinformation was floating in social media platforms and on e- gadgets. It was very difficult to provide reliable information to the right person at the right time in such a situation. Naeem & Bhatti (2020) discussed the importance of information literacy because floods of false information during the Pandemic created a mixture of fake information in the society what's true and false. IFLA suggested some guidelines to identify fake news following eight steps that are depicted in the paper. It also expresses how Health science Librarians (HSLs) gain experience and enlighten people to handle infodemic. Ali & Gatiti (2020) highlighted the role played by the librarian in educating and creating awareness among people and medical staff to keep themselves safe with the latest updates in the field. People were asked to follow social distancing, wear masks, and use sanitisation to follow other preventive measures and Government guidelines.

## 3. Scope

The paper reflects the role of Central Universities in providing library services during the Pandemic and examines the impact on resources and services. The study is confined to the libraries of Central University of Jharkhand (CUJ), Ranchi, Jharkhand and Mahatma Gandhi Central University (MGCU), Motihari, Bihar, only.

## 4. Objective

The study has been carried out with the following objectives:
- To know the initiatives taken by librarians and staff for providing services and preventive measures during the COVID-19.
- To identify the problem faced by the staff during the Pandemic in providing the services.
- Identify the new form of resources to fulfil users' requirements in the current situation and the sustainability of these resources once the normal situation returns.

## 5. Methodology

This research study has utilized a two-phase sequential transformative mixed-methods approach starting with a survey, followed by an in-depth search of websites, office records, and personal interactions with the library staff and observations. The questionnaire method was adopted to collect the data. A total of 12 people were consulted to respond to the questionnaire. The questionnaire was sent in the form of Google form, which contained

closed access questions. The researcher also visited both libraries to interact with the staff and library users to observe the changes.

## 6. Data Analysis and Results

The Central Library, Central University of Jharkhand library came into existence in 2009, and the Atal Bihari Vajpayee Central Library, Mahatama Gandhi Central University, came into existence in 2016. The Central University of Jharkhand has comparatively good infrastructure, e-resources and staffing in comparison to the Central Library, Mahatama Gandhi Central University. Tables 1 and 2 reflect the resources available and services rendered by both libraries.

Table - 1: Availability of e-Resources

| e- Resources | Central Library, CUJ, Ranchi, Jharkhand | Central Library,MGCU, Motihari, Bihar |
|---|---|---|
| **E-Journals** | | |
| American Chemical Society | Yes | No |
| American Institute of Physics | Yes | No |
| Economic and Political Weekly | Yes | No |
| Nature | Yes | No |
| Science Direct | Yes | No |
| Taylor & Francis | Yes | No |
| Annual Review | Yes | No |
| Oxford University Press | Yes | No |
| Springer Link | Yes | No |
| **E-Databases** | | |
| Web of Science | Yes | No |
| Scopus | Yes | No |
| SAA | Yes | No |
| MathSciNet | Yes | No |
| JSTOR | Yes | Yes |
| JGtae Plus | Yes | Yes |
| ISID | Yes | No |
| Socuth Asia Archive | Yes | Yes |
| **E-Books** | | |
| Bibliotex | Yes | No |
| Tritech | Yes | No |
| World Technologies E-Books | Yes | No |
| World e-Book Library | No | Yes |

Table - 2: Infrastructure available and services rendered

| Infrastructure/services | Central Library, CUJ, Ranchi, Jharkhand | Central Library,MGCU, Motihari, Bihar |
|---|---|---|
| **Infrastructure** | | |
| WLAN | Yes | Yes |
| Wi-fi | Yes | Yes |
| Desktop Computers | Yes | Yes |
| Air-conditioned Environment | Yes | Yes |
| Property Counter | Yes | Yes |

| Services | | |
|---|---|---|
| Library software | Yes | No |
| Reading Room Facility | Yes | Yes |
| Web OPAC | No | No |
| Remote Access facility | Yes | Yes |
| Open Access Book Stack | Yes | Yes |
| Magazine and Newspapers reading facility | Yes | Yes |
| Reference Service | Yes | Yes |
| Library website | Yes | Yes |
| Borrowing facility | Yes | Yes |

As table 1 shows, in comparison to the Central University of Jharkhand, the Mahatama Gandhi Central University, Bihar has fewer e-resources either subscribed by himself or provided through the E- Shodhsindhu. The Central University of Jharkhand Library has also added e-books in their Collection and got many databases and journals through E-ShodhSindhu. As far as the library's infrastructure is concerned, both library has not its permanent building and running on the transit campus. However, both libraries are networked and connected through wi-fi, but the housekeeping jobs are still not computerised. The web-OPAC of both the libraries was not in function. Library website is available for both the libraries in order to provide proper information about the resources.

To assess the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the Collection and services of both the libraries, a set of questions were distributed among librarians and library staff of the Central University of Jharkhand and Mahatma Gandhi Central University, Motihari, Bihar. Out of the 12 respondents, seven respondents reply to the questionnaire. The analysis of the questionnaire has been presented in the form of graphs and charts.

**Central Library of the Universities opened during the COVID-19 lockdown period**

In the first phase of the COVID-19 pandemic, both the libraries were closed as per the guideline of the Central Government, and only very essentials services like no dues of students and staffs and issue/return of books were allowed for during the lockdown period. The opening time was as per office timing 9.30 am to 6 pm and many times 9.30 am to 2 pm. The reading facility was totally suspended for the library users.

**Library followed COVID-19 appropriate behaviour related to resources and services**
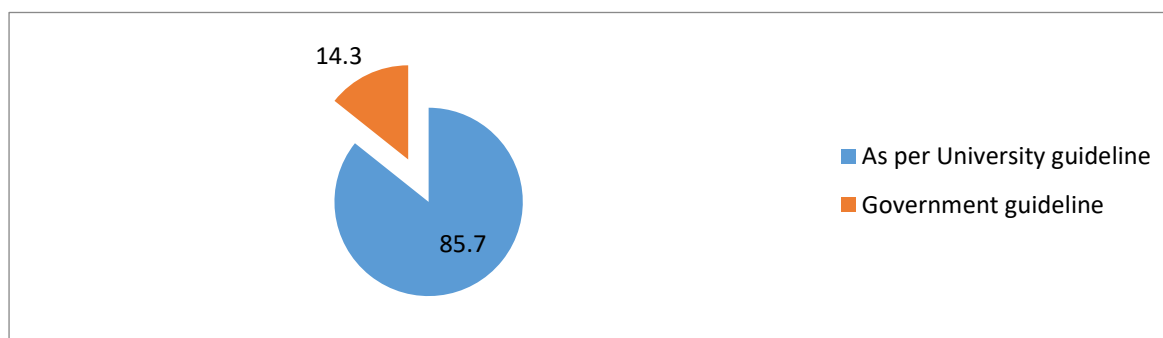


Figure - 1: COVID-19 appropriate behaviour related to resources and services. (n=7)

Analysis of the figure 1 shows that the majority, 85.7%, respondents answered that they followed appropriate behaviour related to services and resources issued by the university/library. Only 14.3% reply they followed simply government guidelines for providing services.

**Library staffs were allowed to perform their duty during the crisis**

In response to the question of whether Library staffs were allowed to perform their duty during the pandemic crisis, it was found that majority of library staffs were completed their task in an alternative mode of presence. They performed work from home and online way of duty and also they were physically offered the library services as per the essential requirements.

**Policy adopted for the handling of printed materials and other documents**

It was very much important to adopt proper policy for the handling of printed materials and other document. The major adopted policies are given in below table 3.

Table - 3: Policy adopted for the handling of printed materials and other documents

| S.N. | Adopted Policies | Central Library, CUJ, Ranchi, Jharkhand | Central Library, MGCU, Motihari, Bihar |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Sanitization of books | Yes | Yes |
| 2 | Keep books quarantine | Yes | Yes |
| 3 | UV treatment | No | No |
| 4 | Other treatments | No | No |

As per the research available, the virus's life on printed materials is not more than 60 to 72 hours. That's why it was asked to the libraries understudy whether they followed any guidelines or not? Both the libraries followed sanitization policy for printed materials with alcohol based sanitizer. Sometimes they also followed proper quarantine policy for time period of 24 hours to 48 hours for the printed materials. No one library is using UV and other treatments for disinfecting the documents after return by the patrons.

**Majors adopted for the proper safety of Library Staffs during the Pandemic**

Libraries were adopted several safety majors after the spread of Covid-19 pandemic. Table 4 contains the related data.

Table - 4: Majors adopted for the proper safety of Library Staffs during the Pandemic

| S.N. | Majors adopted in Library for the proper safety of Library Staffs | Central Library, CUJ, Ranchi, Jharkhand | Central Library, MGCU, Motihari, Bihar |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Sanitizer at every desk | Yes | Yes |
| 2 | Washing of hand at regular interval | Yes | Yes |
| 3 | Sanitization of library | Yes | Yes |
| 4 | Wearing mask | Yes | Yes |
| 5 | Wearing face shield | No | Yes |
| 6 | Limited entry | Yes | Yes |

The analysis of the table 4 shows that both university library staffs were followed safety measures in terms of sanitizer at every desk, washing of hand at regular interval, sanitization of library, wearing mask and limited entry of users. Wearing face shield was only adopted at CUJ, Jharkhand as an important safety measure for this present pandemic.

**New changes adopted due to the pandemic in the Library**

Both the library staffs were asked about the new changes adopted in the library due to the pandemic. The responses are presented in below figure 2.
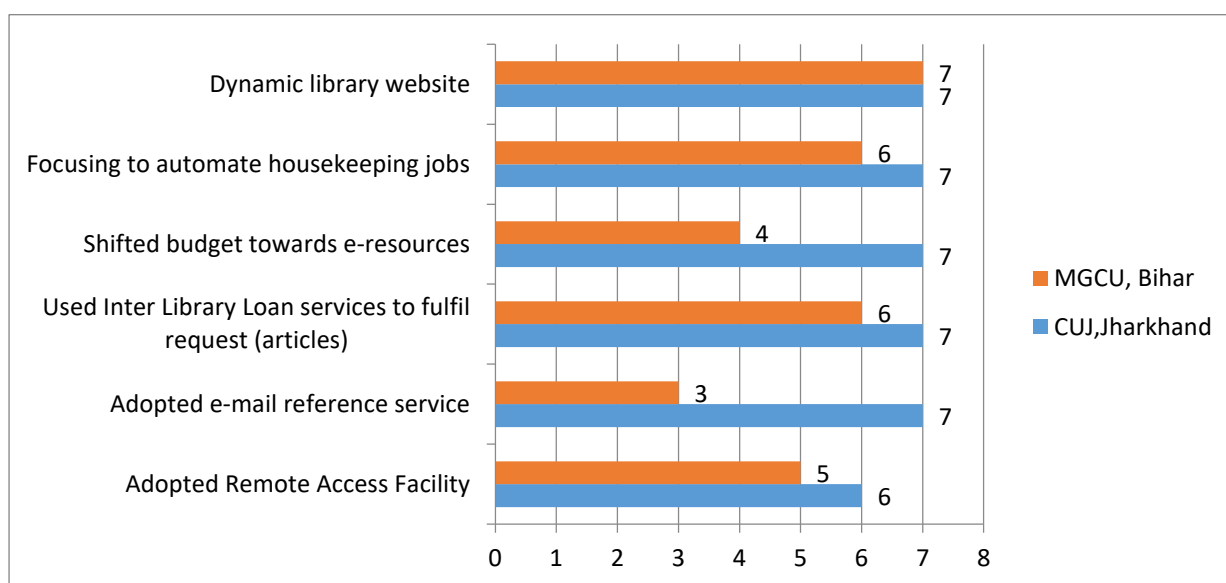


Figure - 2: New changes adopted due to the pandemic. (n=7)

During the pandemic, the library adopted many changes to support the users by adopting a new mode of services which was not very frequent before the pandemics. Both University libraries welcome new changes and adopted new services. Both the libraries worked towards the dynamic website. As figure 2 shows, the CUJ shifted their budget for digital resources and adopted an e-mail reference service and focused on ILL to fulfil the request of research scholars.

**Problems related to digital services observed during pandemic**

Data related to the problems observed by the library staffs of the both the libraries are given below in figure 3.
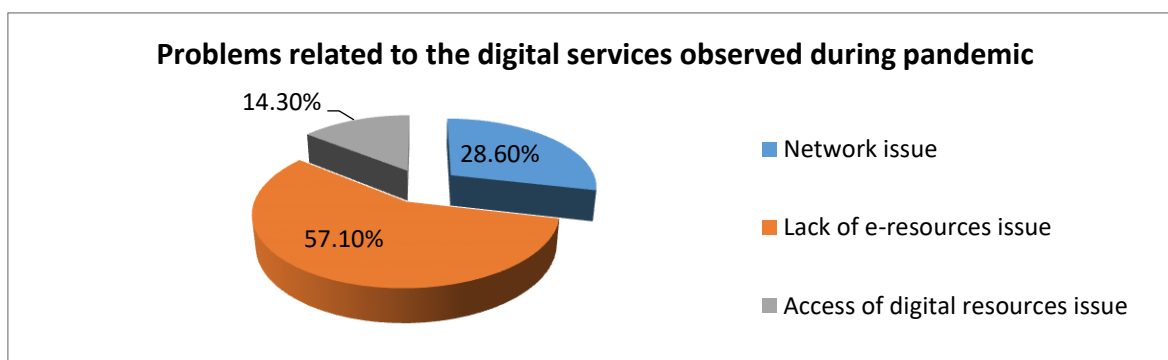


Figure - 3: Problems related to the digital services observed during pandemic. (n=7)

Figure 3 shows that both libraries faced common problems during the Pandemic related to the digital services offered by the library. Both the libraries are in the phase of developing library collections in terms of digital resources. Before the pandemic, the focus was on developing print collections. That's why the majority (57.1%) of the library staffs responded lack of e-resources and access to digital materials by 14.3%. The network-related issue was on the second rank as 28.6%) library staffs reported for this issue.

**Faced technical difficulties in providing Library services**

Below given table contains the technical difficulties faced by the library staffs during the pandemic.

Table - 5: Faced technical difficulties in providing Library services

| S.N. | Technical problems | Number | Percentage |
|------|--------------------|--------|------------|
| 1 | Friendly to handle digital resources | 4 | 57.14 |
| 2 | Not very much friendly but familiar | 1 | 14.29 |
| 3 | Encountered first time such situation | 2 | 28.57 |
| **Total** | | **7** | **100.0** |

The analysis of table 5 shows that staffs of both university libraries were friendly with technology as responded by 57.14% library staffs and very less number of library staffs 14.29% were not very much familiar with computer-based services. However, 28.6% responded that they encountered first time such a situation while proving services. During the visit to both the libraries, it was observed that enough number of staffs were familiar with the digital technologies and resources. They had never assumed that they would have to shift suddenly in a digital mode without time to prepare for it.

**Observed sudden increase in demand of e-resources during the COVID-19 period**

E-resources were the most important and useful during the Covid-19 lockdown period. It was observed by the many libraries the users were asked for more and more availability of such resources. Below figure 4 represents the related data.



**Sudden increase in demand of e-resources**

28.6

71.4

■ Query related to e-resources

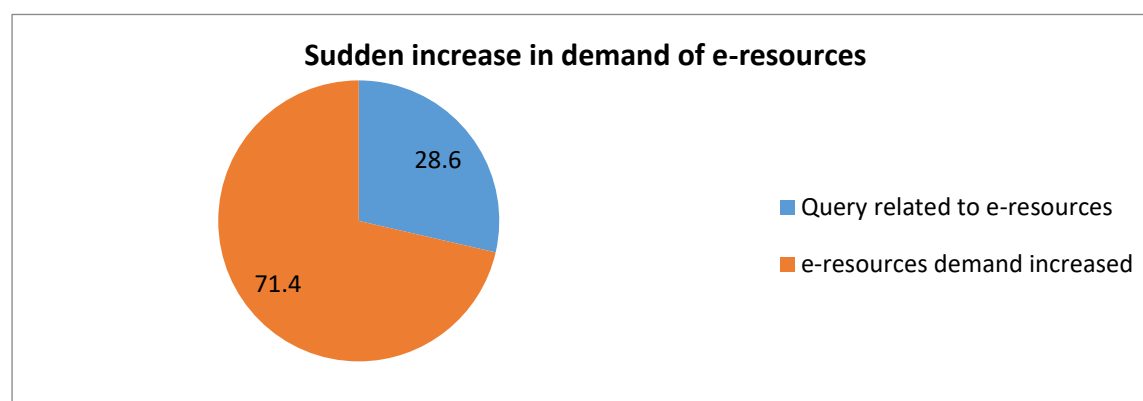■ e-resources demand increased

Figure - 4: Sudden increase in demand of e-resources. (n=7)

After closing the doors of the libraries for students and shifting teaching mode to online. It was seen unexpected increased the usage of e-resources during the lockdown period. Analysis of the figure 4, observed that during the crisis period, query related e-resources

increased 28.6% and downloading also increased. The majority, 71.4%, responded that e-resources demand increased.

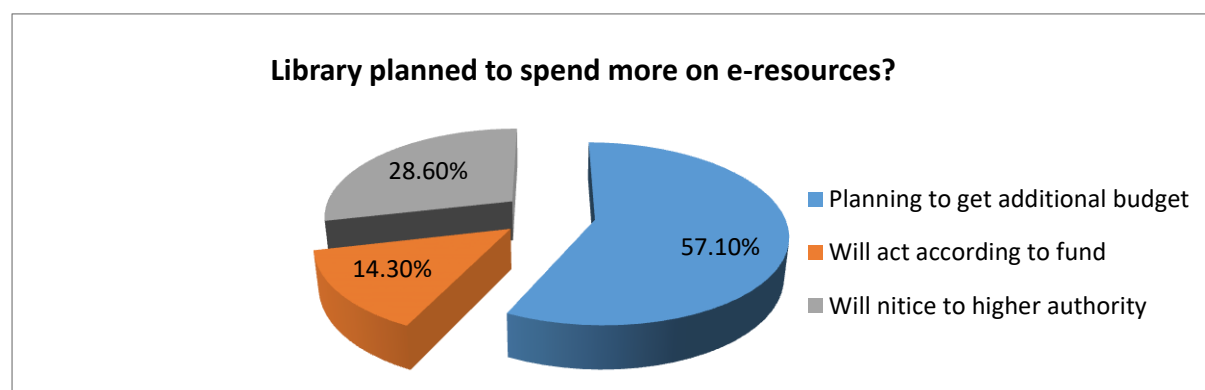**Library planned to spend more budgets on e-resources due to the pandemic**



Figure - 5: Library planned to spend more on e-resources. (n=7)

Increased demand put a marked line to plan more e-resources for the future and make more funds available. Analysis of the figure 5 shows a majority (57.1%) responded that they are planning to get additional budgetary provisions for e-resources. Some replied to act according to fund 14.3%, and those have no provision will notice to higher authority 28.6%. However, the ground reality is that there is at least a 20% budget cut for the financial year 2021-2022.

**Library planned to revised the acquisition policy in view of Pandemic**

Many of the libraries have revised their acquisition policy in view of the pandemic. Both the libraries have not yet revised their acquisition policy. Keeping in view of provision for e-resources in the library budget library is about to revise its acquisition policy in near future. The time of pandemic is not predictable. Even we don't know whether the information-seeking behaviour will change after normal conditions or not? These were the doubts among the library staff when discussing the above questions with them.

**Library planned to re-arrange the sitting and circulation area in the new normal COVID -19 crisis following SOP**
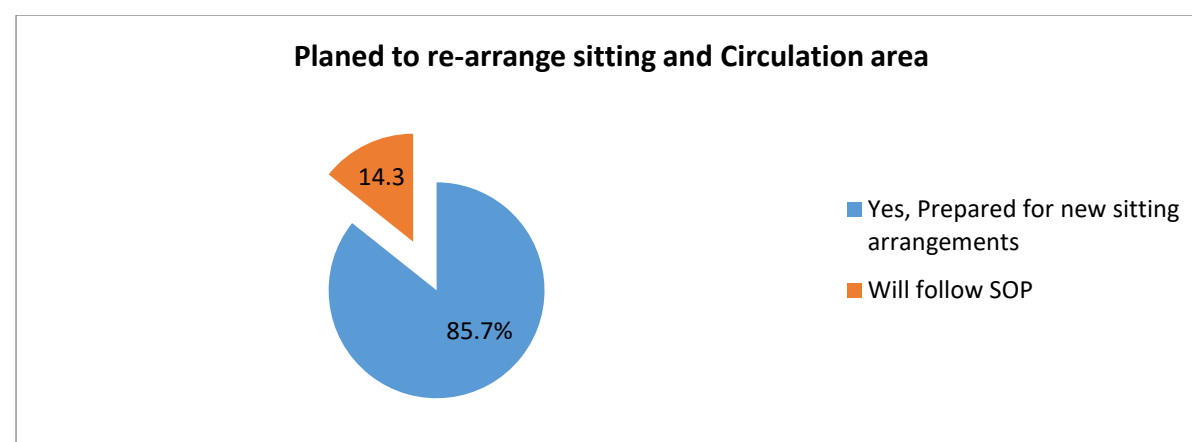


Figure - 6: Plan to re-arrange sitting and circulation area. (n=7)

As impact seen on Library, it is essential to re-arrange the sitting plan of Library if open and Pandemic is with us. Figure 6 shows that both libraries have prepared (85.7%) to re-arrange the sitting plan and circulation area. However, 14.3% responded that they would work according to the SOP of the Govt.

## 7. Findings

The above results found that the University library of Central University Jharkhand and Mahatma Gandhi Central University Motihari library and staff worked during the COVID-19 pandemic as per the UGC guideline with appropriate Covid-19 behaviour. Library staff worked on alternative modes as and when the Library opened. The Quarantine policy for documents and official work was followed and maintained (85.7%). Wearing of protective gears and new methods for library services also came into practice. The library staffs were friendly in handling the computer added technology dedicated to library services. A sudden increase in e-resources was observed 71.4%, and both libraries are planning to allocate an additional budget for e- resources. The library views that the existing acquisition policy should be revised. Libraries are in favour of re-arranging, sitting 85.7% and following SOP for the opening library. The findings strongly include that the most affected areas of the Library will be Collection and circulation (57.1%).

## 8. Conclusion

The effect of COVID-19 is witnessing as the library is coming into operations after the second wave. The future is still uncertain. Libraries have shown their efficiency in handling unexpected situations and managed their resources and services in limited budgets and manpower. Many questions are still unanswered. Whether the system services adopted would continue even after the normal situation? How will libraries continue promoting and providing access to a growing universe of on-demand or creator-generated information and content when there is a budget cut everywhere and expected to continue in coming years due to pandemic effect on the economy?

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