



Effects of COVID-19 on sub-Saharan African library associations

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Comfort AB Asare

Department of Library, Wisconsin International University College Ghana, Ghana

Samuel Bentil Aggrey

Department of Library, University of Ghana, Ghana

Abstract

Professional associations serve as a backbone for their members in Africa and globally. They promote the welfare of their members and have standards and principles that guide their activities. This is a quantitative study of 10 national library associations in sub-Saharan Africa. The study looks at some of the activities of the national library associations and how they were impacted by the outbreak of COVID-19. The findings show that the majority of the associations had to postpone their annual conferences and continuous professional education programmes. The study recommends that national library associations from sub-Saharan Africa take advantage of technological platforms to reach out to their members in the organization of conferences and training programmes. Also, national library associations should have a policy that can drive their activities in the future in the event of the occurrence of another pandemic.

Keywords

National library associations, professional associations, COVID-19, sub-Saharan Africa, Africa

Introduction

COVID-19 (coronavirus) is believed to have originated in Wuhan, a city in China, in 2019 (Ji et al., 2020). The world has witnessed several pandemics but COVID-19 is one that we can all attest to – it has sent shock waves around the world with devastating effects. The World Health Organization made the announcement that it was a pandemic and a Public Health Emergency of International Concern in March 2020. The pandemic has since been a huge blow to education (Bej, 2020), politics, the climate and environment, economics and culture with its worldwide health issues. According to a study by Kabir et al. (2020), experts have projected the impact of COVID-19 to be even worse than that of the financial crisis which the world faced in 2007–2008, and estimated the cost to be US\$1 trillion to world's economy for 2020. COVID-19 caused serious global socio-economic disruption as governments imposed increasingly severe shutdowns, quarantines, curfews, closures, cancellations and other restrictive controls on their countries, citizens, institutions, facilities and

general daily life in efforts to curb, contain and prevent its ongoing spread (Kosciejew, 2021).

According to Olden (2009), associations on the continent of Africa have evolved over the past seven decades with diverse political and historical underpinnings. Associations in sub-Saharan Africa have also gone through various stages of development, with both failures and successes. These associations include the South African Library Association, the Association for the Development of Public Libraries in Africa.

There are several activities that are organized by national library associations within the contexts they operate in. These include the organization of local and international conferences, library publicity and advocacy programmes, continuing professional development (CPD) programmes, cooperation with other

Corresponding author:

Comfort AB Asare, Wisconsin International University College Ghana, Box LG751, North Legon, Accra, Greater Accra Region, Ghana, West Africa.

Email: comfort.asare@wiuc-ghana.edu.gh

international organizations, and the publication of members' research findings, among others. However, with the outbreak of COVID-19, most of the activities that national library associations were organizing for their members had to be cancelled and rescheduled. This was due to the restrictions imposed by governments on movement, as well as on the organization of public events. It was against this backdrop that the researchers sought to find out the extent to which national library associations were affected in the organization of programmes for their members across sub-Saharan Africa.

Literature review

This study, as a way of focusing on the topic under consideration, took a look at various studies related to COVID-19 and national library associations generally.

During a pandemic, libraries suffer as their patrons are unable to access the collections housed in their physical structures. In the event where the use of technology is absent in a library, its users are unable to have access to its information resources as the physical libraries have been forced to close. The current outbreak of COVID-19 seriously impacted the operations of libraries as well as the activities of library associations in sub-Saharan Africa. There were a number of responses from library associations as they worked to support the activities of their members during these challenging times, with support at the regional as well as the international level.

Library associations are playing a critical role in the promotion of knowledge, despite the lingering impact of COVID-19 on the library profession (Akullo et al., 2021). Some of the world's leading library associations issued formal statements, recognizing the pandemic and spelling out their initial responses and some of the measures that could be implemented to overcome the challenges that libraries were likely to go through. These statements exhibited how proactive the international library community was. Again, the statements outlined some of the actions that the library community could initiate to minimize the effects of the pandemic on them (Kosciejew, 2021). Despite the fact that associations at the national and international levels with different memberships and agendas issued different statements, there was a common thematic response to COVID-19. The statements centred on libraries, information provision, effective service delivery and workplace measures during the pandemic (Kosciejew, 2021).

One key support that library associations were engaged in was educating their members on the best ways of managing their set-ups to enhance access to their collections virtually. Globally,

during the outbreak of the pandemic, some associations educated their members on the best ways of preparing for reopening following the shutdowns imposed by governments in an attempt to curb the spread of COVID-19.

Also, the creation of enhanced communication channels among library authorities was realized. This was intended to share relevant ideas on best practices geared towards planning for the future in the event of the outbreak of another pandemic. In addition, one major activity that most library associations undertook was ensuring that accurate information was made available to citizens at all times (European Bureau, 2020). Again, some associations provided information about the pandemic to people and enabled access to documents that educated citizens on the best ways of keeping safe (IFLA, 2020; Kosciejew, 2021).

Moreover, some professional associations instituted measures and distributed online training materials in the areas of health, technical, legal and financial aid free of charge for people who needed such materials. Also, links to key information resources online were made available to the public. These efforts by library associations need to be sustained in the post COVID-19 era (IFLA, 2020).

Furthermore, webinars were organized by some library associations on e-books and digital services, as well as preparations for the reopening of libraries. Webinars on how libraries could assist their staff were also organized. Library associations in Finland organized webinars to support libraries and facilitate reopening (European Bureau, 2020; IFLA, 2020).

Another response from library associations was to make health information available on their various websites and set up specific web pages to raise the awareness of information professionals as well as the general public. These pages included guides to clinical resources, education resources, article collections and research data. Some associations also instigated COVID-19 literature search initiatives through the collection of expert searches and policies on diverse COVID-19 topic areas, and developed COVID-19 search banks. Some web pages were devoted to breaking news and developments, and blogs were made available to both information professionals and the general public (Yuvaraj, 2020). The Medical Library Association in China was very instrumental in this regard (Buscher, 2020). The following are links to some of the search banks that were created:

- Australian Library and Information Association's COVID-19 Live Literature Searches initiative (<https://hla.alia.org.au/covid-19-live-literature-searches/>);

- Medical Library Association's (USA) COVID-19 Literature Searches initiative (<https://www.mla.net.org/page/covid-19-literature-searching>);
- National Health Service's (UK) COVID-19 search bank (<https://library.hee.nhs.uk/covid-19/covid-19-search-bank>).

At the international level, the IFLA (2020), during the outbreak of the pandemic, also joined the fight and used its website to publish information on the coronavirus pandemic for libraries and how best they could respond to it, especially during the lockdown period.

In a similar vein, the American Library Association published key information on its website on how to prepare for a pandemic, and the coronavirus in particular (Adigun et al., 2020). During the outbreak of COVID-19, the African Library and Information Associations and Institutions also embarked on a strong awareness drive on fake news on its website to curtail the spread of the virus. Several online resources were made available on its platforms for members of the association as well as the general public.

Furthermore, library associations responded by promoting information in their various publications, such as their newsletters and journals. Among these associations were the Cyprus Association of Librarians - Information Scientists (CALIS) and the French Library Association, which used their web pages to promote health-related information. The Portuguese Library Association also innovatively instituted a flip-board-based platform, which promoted newspaper sources on the pandemic and also exposed fake news (European Bureau, 2020).

In addition, most associations across the African continent leveraged the power of social media platforms to reach out to their members in a much more meaningful way. The NLA is still engaging its members even in post Covid-19 pandemic era (Ladan et al., 2020).

Some library associations initiated measures such as designing posters to educate people on the need to adhere to all the safety protocols, such as wearing face masks, hand sanitizing, social distancing and hand washing.

A major challenge following the onset of the pandemic was the cancellation of major library programmes such as conferences, seminars and CPD in Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Ghana and some countries in sub-Saharan Africa, to name a few (European Bureau, 2020; Roe, 2020). Most of these activities were moved online.

Others were engaged in advocacy programmes with the authorities in their countries to deliberate

on measures for preparing for future pandemics should they occur (Buscher, 2020). With the outbreak of COVID-19, there was a shift in terms of library governance to a model that involved extended collaboration with external agencies due to the need to enable access to online content, which had hitherto been unavailable for some institutions. Library associations stepped in and offered support services to their members in this area. Through the intervention of library associations, librarians have built their capacities in the use of digital technologies – skills that will continue to be relevant in the post COVID-19 era (Chisita, 2020).

One major consideration for all associations globally going forward is the sustainability of the telecommunications industry, as well as the provision of a constant power supply to support the smooth delivery of the services offered by libraries (Ortega-Martínez et al., 2021).

Background to national library associations

The mission of library associations is wide-ranging as they seek to promote the welfare of their members. Membership may comprise individuals and institutions, but most of their members are individuals. Most library associations have councils that have governmental support and an underlying interest in libraries and librarianship (Encyclopedia.com, 2019).

Library associations usually have standards and principles that guide their activities. They provide training for their members and also issue them with accreditation certificates (Association of College and Research Libraries, 1996–2021). A major source of funding for these professional bodies is membership fees, proceeds from conferences and seminars, and, in some instances, support from corporate bodies (Karisidappa, 2002).

Governments give attention to this role through financial and infrastructural support that libraries receive in various jurisdictions as libraries serve as learning centres for acquiring knowledge both at the community, regional and national levels.

Library associations, depending on the context within which they are operating, may have one section for elementary and secondary school librarians or other specialized bodies (Encyclopedia.com, 2019). They may also differ with regard to the composition and geographical location of their membership. The professional bodies within a library association are the force behind the professional development of its members in the areas of welfare, research, training and education needs. Library associations on the

African continent are professional bodies that aim to inspire and nurture library development in the face of the developments in emerging technologies, which are having a significant impact on professionals (Karisidappa, 2002).

Objectives of professional library associations

The following are some of the objectives for establishing national library associations in sub-Saharan Africa:

- To ensure the maintenance of a high standard of professional practice and conduct;
- To promote and safeguard the professional interests of librarians and information professionals;
- To promote and provide CPD activities for members;
- To produce regular publications on professional and industry issues;
- To provide a forum for networking among members (Ossai-Ugbah, 2013).

Programmes and activities of library associations

The nature of the programmes that are carried out by library associations differs from continent to continent. From time to time, these associations may engage with governmental agencies in the drafting of policies that affect the general operation of libraries (American Library Association, 2015). Some of the activities that are carried out by library associations are discussed below.

Conferences

Conferences, seminars and lectures are major activities that are carried out and geared towards establishing professional standards among members of library associations. During such programmes, members get the opportunity to share their ideas and also network with key professionals in the library community. Most of these conferences are organized annually in sub-Saharan Africa and globally to provide forums for new viewpoints in the area of librarianship (Baldwin, 1997). In sub-Saharan Africa, the Ghana Library Association collaborated with the Information Technology Section of the Nigerian Library Association in 2014 to organize an international workshop on Librarianship and the Demands for New Leadership Skills.

Library publicity and advocacy

Publicity and advocacy are key elements in librarianship. Publicity and advocacy are usually employed to gain economic, social, political and technological support (Chiwanza and Musingaf, 2013). Continual efforts are made to increase the visibility of libraries. Advocacy in the information profession promotes the value of members and well positioned them in terms of their identity formation (Hicks, 2016). Some activities that are used in this direction include the organization of library weeks, reading competitions, and collaboration with book publishers to organize book fairs. Librarians also carry out advocacy to promote the important role that libraries play among relevant stakeholders (Hicks, 2016; Ternenge, 2019). People usually advocate for issues so as to gain the attention needed. Advocacy is therefore considered to be a key measure, and it has been deployed as a powerful tool to protect vital library services in some African countries (Ternenge, 2019).

Education

CPD programmes are organized by library associations. These are intended to complement the curriculum taught in library and information science institutions. Librarians will only become relevant if they are able to undertake CPD programmes at either the local, regional or international levels to enhance their skills in the face of changing trends in technology (Ganaie, 2005; Moonasar and Underwood, 2018). According to Lamptey and Corletey (2011) and Genoni and Walton (2005), CPD programmes are key to the professional development of members, and library associations must therefore take the necessary steps to ensure that their members are equipped in this direction. CPD programmes will contribute to shaping the next generation of leaders (Ritchie and Walker, 2007), and it is important that library associations do not lose sight of this fact and put measures in place that will ensure that their members are able to take full advantage of the opportunities that CPD programmes offer. Hyams (1998) has also supported the idea of library associations raising awareness of CPD programmes among their members.

Publications

Professional journals and conference proceedings are published by library associations to promote the research output of their members. Other publications include newsletters and reference materials or manuals, which serve as guidelines for practising

professionals. The library associations in India publish reports as well as conference proceedings (Padhan, 2018). In addition, a survey carried out in California shows that 84% of the academic librarians who took part in the study, wanted to use publication of journals to project the image of librarians (Ossai-Ugbah, 2013).

Cooperation with other international associations

Library associations cooperate with their partner associations across borders to share ideas and promote networking among members (Kofi, 2012). Cooperation can take place on several levels, including resource sharing, networking among professionals or collaborating on dedicated projects (Kofi, 2012; Okeagu and Okeagu, 2008; Onifade and Bridges, 2016). Cooperation among library associations is important as it allows for library associations to spearhead common projects (Mark, 2007).

Formulation of ethics for members

Ethics in the information professions are concerned with the application of moral standards to the conduct of librarians and other individuals involved in information dissemination. Ethical standards are formulated to guide the operations of associations. The standards unify the members within the association (Hansson, 2016). This is a major activity that library associations institute to guide the operations of their information professionals.

There are several codes of ethics that guide some associations in the areas of medicine and law, for example. In the library field, local associations have codes of ethics. On the international scene, several codes of ethics have been formulated for librarianship and these guide the activities of library associations (Hansson, 2016). When members adhere to these standards or codes, it describes their professional status. According to Ferguson (1991), library associations, in most instances, have introduced professional codes that will strengthen the philosophy and behaviour of their members. According to Kofi (2012), ethics have recently been given the attention they deserve, as they facilitate the existence of a professional body.

Objectives of the study

The purpose of this study was to establish the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on the activities of national library associations from selected sub-Saharan African countries – namely, Botswana, Burundi, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea Bissau, Lesotho, Seychelles,

South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe. The specific objectives were as follows:

1. To find out the activities that national library associations organized for their members;
2. To identify the communication channels employed by national library associations during the COVID-19 outbreak;
3. To understand the extent to which COVID-19 has impacted the activities of the national library associations in the selected countries;
4. To uncover the plans for how to deal with future pandemics.

Methodology

The study used a descriptive and quantitative survey, which was conducted from April 2020 to May 2021. The study population comprised presidents/executive heads of library associations in sub-Saharan Africa under the umbrella of the African Library and Information Associations and Institutions. An online structured questionnaire using Google Forms was designed and used for data collection. It was pretested and emailed to 20 presidents/executive heads of library associations in sub-Saharan Africa. Ten promptly responded, giving a response rate of 50%. The final data was collected in Microsoft Excel and analysed using the SPSS statistical tool. The results are presented in charts and tables with text explanations.

Results and discussion

The national library associations that were involved in the study are presented in Table 1.

Categories of libraries in national library associations

The researchers sought to find out what types of libraries make up the membership of the library associations in these 10 sub-Saharan African countries (see Table 2). This was a multiple-choice question and the respondents had the option of selecting more than one answer. With the exception of Ghana, the majority of the library associations (nine) have national libraries as members. Considering the important role that national libraries play as repositories for a nation's publishing output, it is important for the library association in Ghana to liaise with key stakeholders in ensuring that such a structure is established. The library associations in all 10 countries had members that were academic libraries; nine of the associations had public libraries as members; and eight had school libraries. Private and community libraries were the least represented. According to Mark (2007), library associations may be

Table 1. Participating national library associations.

Country	Association	Website
Botswana	Botswana Library Association	Not available
Burundi	Association des Bibliothécaires, Archivistes et Documentalistes du Burundi	Not available
Côte d'Ivoire	L'Association pour la Promotion des Sciences de l'Information Documentaire en Côte d'Ivoire	Not available
Ghana	Ghana Library Association	http://www.gla.org.gh
Guinea Bissau	Guinean Association of Librarians, Archivists and Documentaries (AGDAB)	Not available
Lesotho	Lesotho Library Association	Not available
Seychelles	Seychelles Library Association	Not available
South Africa	Library and Information Association of South Africa	https://www.liasa.org.za
Zambia	Library and Information Association of Zambia	http://libraryassociationofzambia.org
Zimbabwe	Zimbabwe Library Association	Not available

Table 2. Categories of library that make up national library associations.

Country	Library type						
	National	Academic	Public	School	Special	Private	Community
Botswana	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	–	–
Burundi	✓	✓	–	–	–	✓	–
Côte d'Ivoire	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Ghana	–	✓	✓	–	✓	–	–
Guinea Bissau	✓	✓	✓	✓	–	–	–
Lesotho	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Seychelles	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	–
South Africa	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Zambia	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	–	✓
Zimbabwe	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Source. Researchers' field survey, December 2020.

established according to subject area or professional background. Such associations may comprise academic libraries, special libraries and school libraries, among others. The findings of the present study corroborate Mark's (2007) research, and it is clear that the library associations in the 10 sub-Saharan African countries have a clear representation of all the library types and will therefore be able to push forward programmes that affect these different categories of library. This is also in agreement with Webster's (2002) study, where it was established that regional associations in North America have a diverse group of libraries within their associations. Library associations serve as a unified voice for different library types in the event of having an input in legislation for government policy in their respective countries for the promotion of library services. Moreover, library associations are able to get necessary recognition when it comes to the publicity and advocacy of libraries.

Library associations' membership in sub-Saharan Africa

In December 2020, the researchers obtained the latest membership figures of the national library associations in the sub-Saharan African countries from the survey conducted (see Table 3). There were variations in the membership levels of the library associations that took part in the study. The Association des Bibliothécaires, Archivistes et Documentalistes du Burundi, Guinean Association of Documentalists, Archivists and Librarians, and Seychelles Library Association had membership levels of below 100. Such low membership numbers are not unique to the sub-Saharan Africa region but similar to those of the North American region (Webster, 2002). Other associations had membership levels from 100 to 500 – that is, the Botswana Library Association, L'Association pour la Promotion des Sciences de l'Information

Table 3. Membership numbers of library associations in sub-Saharan Africa.

Association	Number of members
Botswana Library Association	150
Association des Bibliothécaires, Archivistes et Documentalistes du Burundi	60
L'Association pour la Promotion des Sciences de l'Information Documentaire en Côte d'Ivoire	100
Ghana Library Association	300
Guinean Association of Documentalists, Archivists and Librarians	67
Lesotho Library Association	100
Seychelles Library Association	59
Library and Information Association of South Africa	1800
Library and Information Association of Zambia	500
Zimbabwe Library Association	200

Source. Researchers' field survey, December 2020.

Documentaire en Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana Library Association, Lesotho Library Association, Library and Information Association of Zambia and Zimbabwe Library Association. The Library and Information Association of South Africa had the highest number of members. This could be attributed to the numerous information centres that are currently in place in that country.

Communication channels during the COVID-19 pandemic

How library associations reached out to members. Communication is key during a pandemic. Effective communication allows library associations to interact with their members with regard to the best possible ways of working in their different environments. The majority of the associations (nine) used email to communicate with their members when COVID-19 broke out. It is evident from the literature that email was used extensively during the pandemic (see Chisita, 2020). This is a clear indication that the different library associations took advantage of technology and employed technological platforms to reach out to their members.

Apart from emails, the associations used phone calls, WhatsApp and their websites to communicate with members. Online meeting applications were the least used, with five. These findings are represented in Figure 1.

Organization of meetings. Library associations have different schedules with regard to when they interact

with their members. Whereas some meetings are organized virtually, others are carried out face-to-face. It was against this backdrop that the researchers sought to find out how the library associations engaged with their members. The findings show that the majority of the library associations (seven) organized council meetings for executives, whereas three did not. Koscieljew (2021) has stressed the importance of meetings for associations as they boost connectivity within the library profession. There was a question linked to the frequency of meetings. Four held a bimonthly meeting and three had quarterly meetings. The lowest level of engagement was the association that had a meeting every six weeks and arranged other meetings when the need arose. In the midst of the pandemic, although there were several disruptions that affected the engagement of members, library associations in sub-Saharan Africa did not waver and carried on engaging with their members. The findings are represented in Figure 2.

Activities organized for members. There are several types of activities that library associations organize for their members. The study sought to find out from the respondents the nature of the activities that they organized for their members. This was a multiple-choice question and the respondents could select more than one activity. The majority of the respondents (nine) organized CPD programmes for their members. This corresponds with the studies by Genoni and Walton (2005), Lamptey and Corletey (2011), and Moonasar and Underwood (2018). CPD programmes were followed by outreach programmes, with eight. The types of activities that were organized the least were social activities (see Figure 3).

Effect of COVID-19 on activities of library associations

The study also sought to find out whether the activities of the 10 library associations in the sub-Saharan Africa region were in any way affected by the outbreak of COVID-19. The majority of the library associations (nine) indicated that they were greatly impacted by the arrival of COVID-19, whereas one indicated that it was not affected by the outbreak of COVID-19. The effects of COVID-19 in this study are similar to those experienced by library associations in Bulgaria, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland and France, among others (European Bureau, 2020). The major area in which the library associations were negatively impacted was the organization of conferences or seminars (33.3%). This was followed by the organization of their biennial congress or annual general meeting (22%), and 11.1% indicated that they

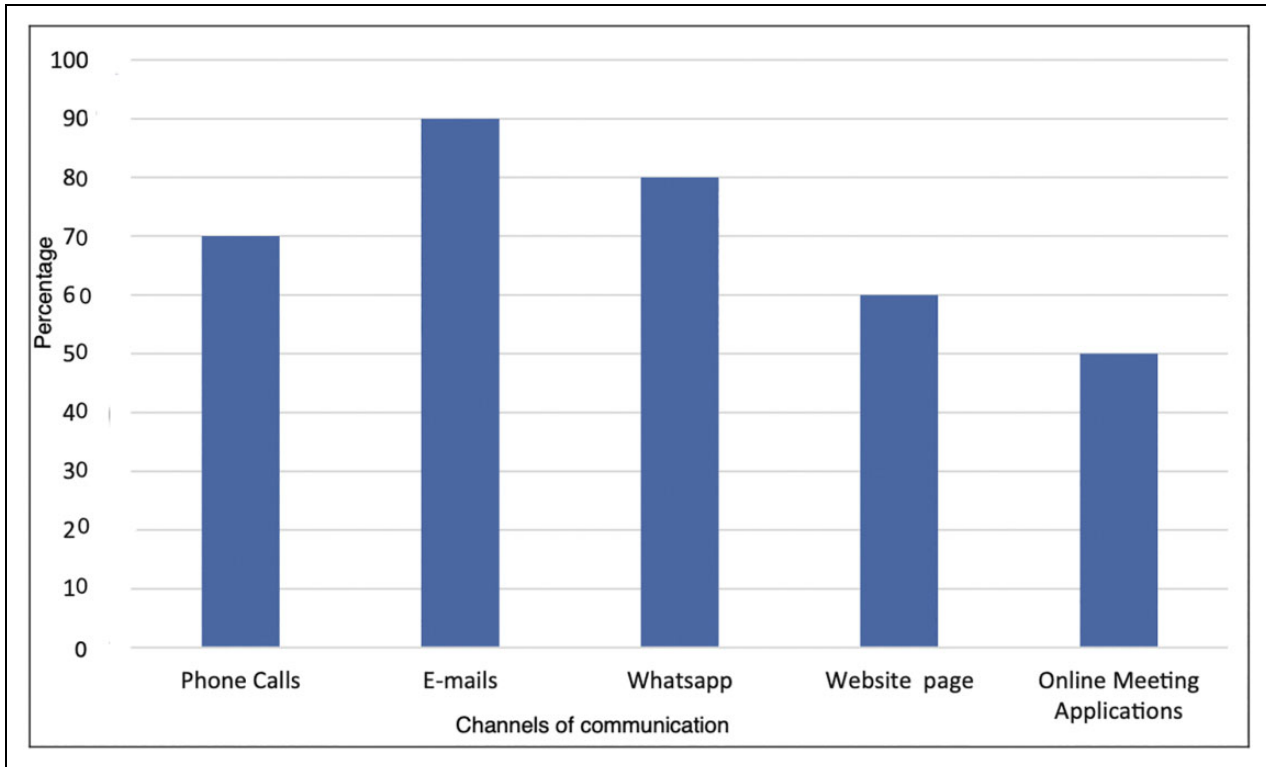


Figure 1. Channels of communication. Labeling effected and added as separate image to this document.

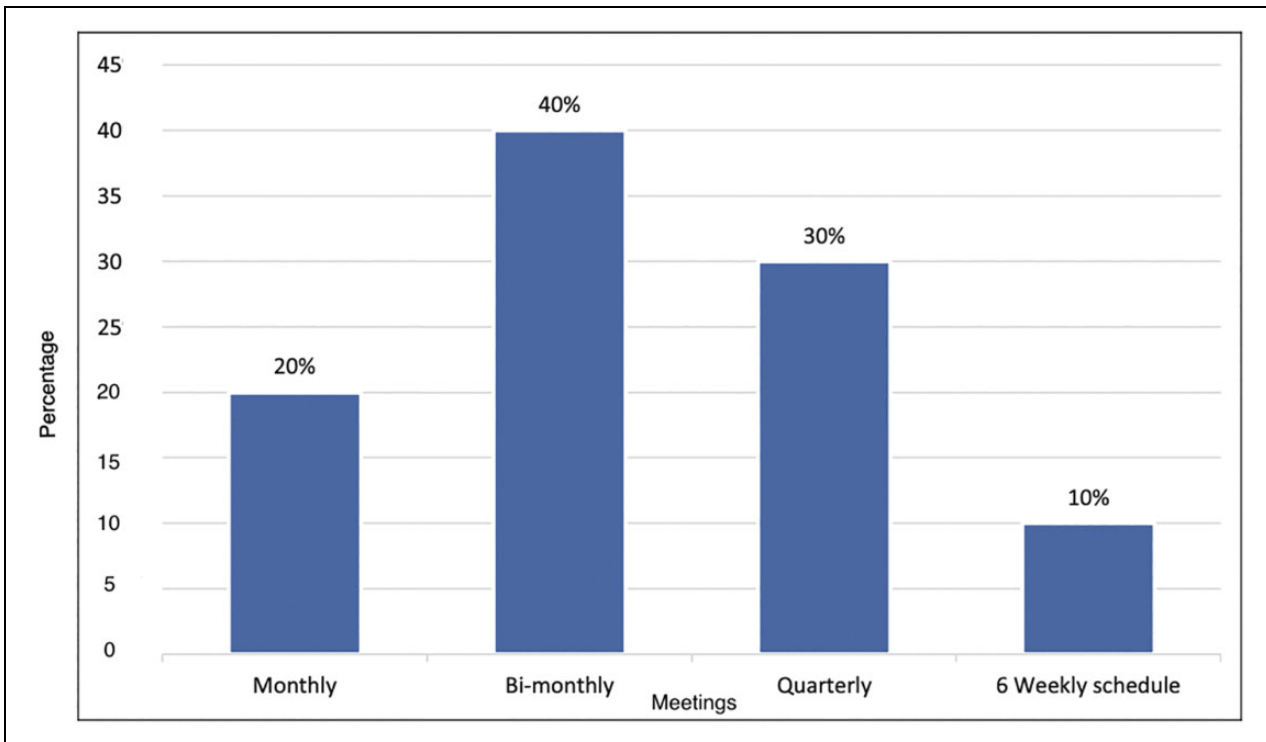


Figure 2. Frequency of meetings. Labeling effected and added as separate file to this document by mail.

were greatly impacted with regard to the organization of all their activities. The findings from this study clearly show the impact of COVID-19 on the activities of the library associations both at the national and

international levels. It is therefore prudent for library associations to explore the best options for implementing their key annual programmes even in the face of a pandemic.

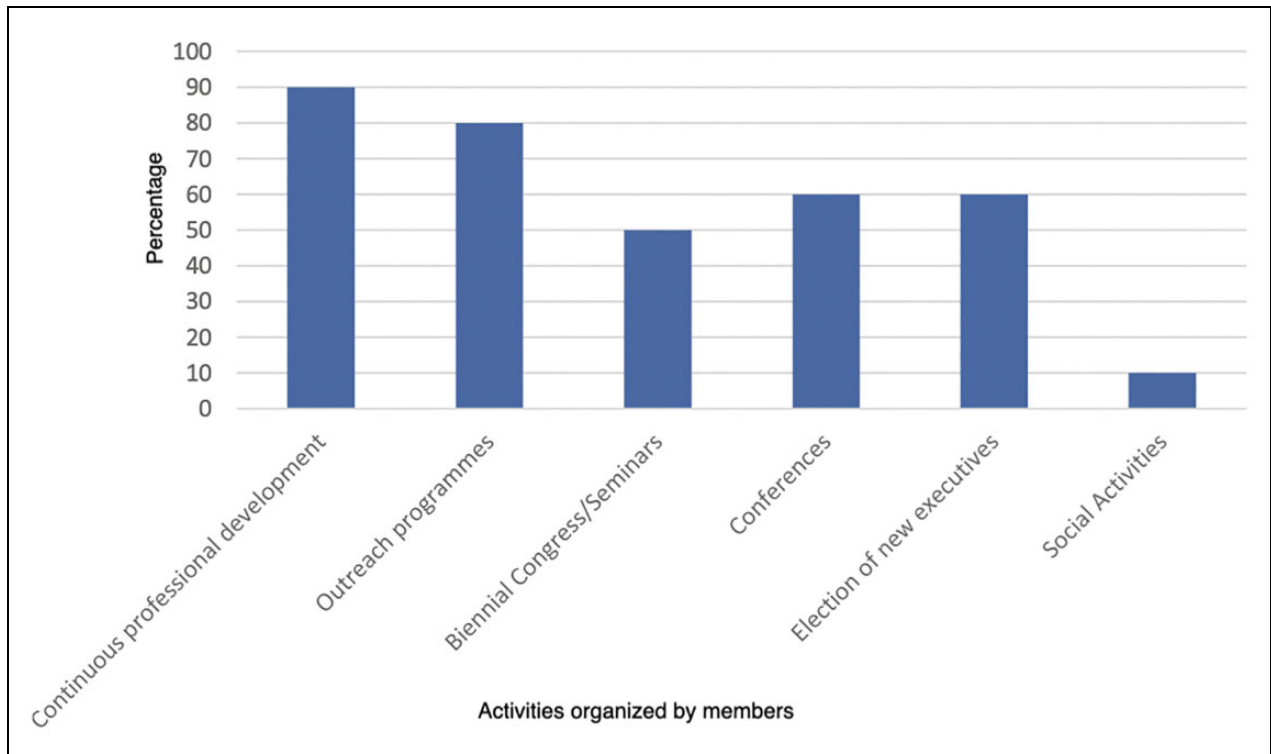


Figure 3. Activities organized for members.

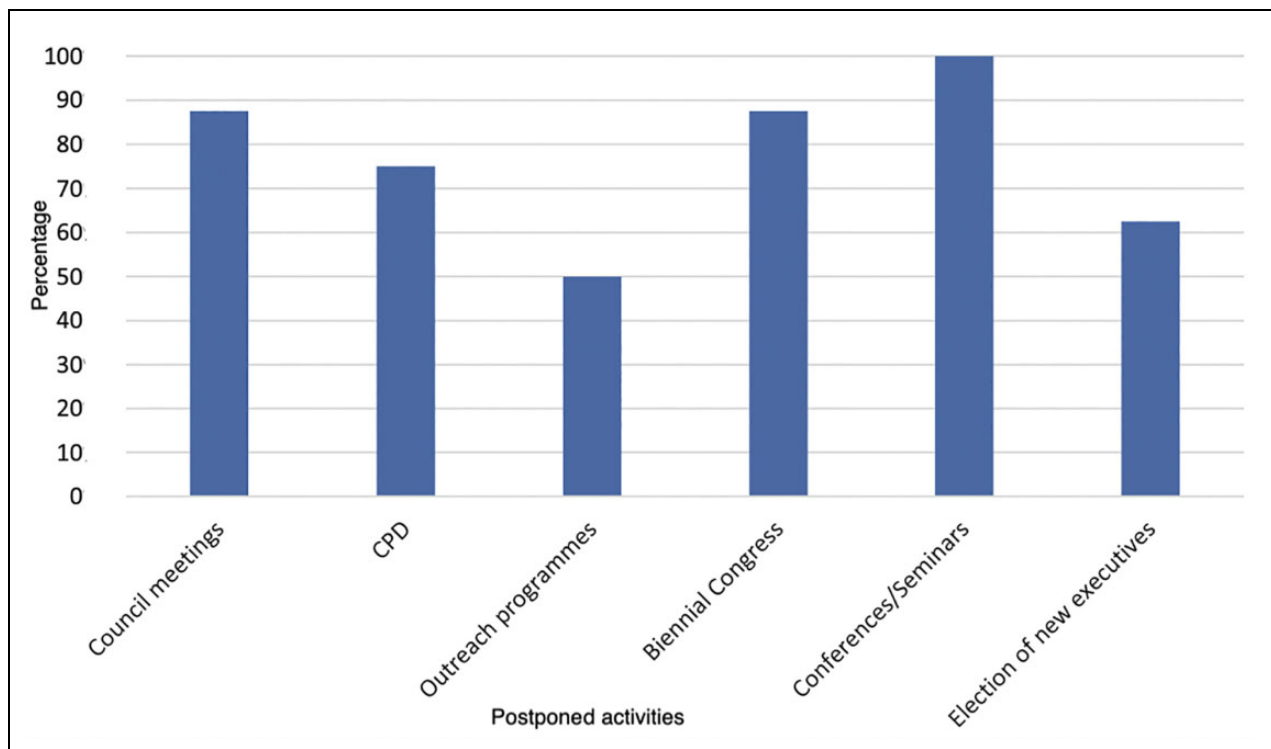


Figure 4. Postponed activities.

Postponement of activities. With the arrival of the pandemic, several library-related activities both at the local and international levels had to be postponed. The researchers therefore sought to find out from the

library associations that took part in the study whether they were obliged to postpone any of their activities. The majority of the library associations (eight) postponed their activities. One did not postpone any of its

activities and one was uncertain and indicated that maybe it did. Moreover, the respondents indicated the types of activities that had to be postponed. Their responses are represented in Figure 4.

For the question related to the activities that had to be postponed, there were only eight respondents. This was a multiple-choice question and the respondents could select more than one option. Seven indicated that their council meetings, biennial congress and annual general meeting, respectively, had to be postponed. Eight selected conferences. This corroborates Rafiq et al.'s (2021) study, which states that, for the first time in 75 years, the American Library Association had to cancel its annual conference. Also, Oyelude (2020) mentions some of the conferences that had to be cancelled, including the LD4 Conference and the International Association for Social Science Information Service and Technology Conference, among others. The same can be said of the world conferences of IFLA and the African Library and Information Associations and Institutions.

One major activity that the library associations organized for their members was CPD programmes, which are intended to complement the curriculum taught in library and information science institutions (Moonasar and Underwood, 2018). However, the findings show that six library associations could not organize any CPD for their members. Only four associations engaged in outreach programmes. The postponement of CPD is a clear indication that the members of library associations could not take advantage of programmes that were usually offered. It was hoped that the surge in the pandemic would lessen to allow the resumption of the key activities that the library associations offered to their members.

Future plans to organize programmes in the face of a pandemic

Considering the effects of the pandemic on the activities organized by library associations, the study sought to find out whether the associations had any future plans for the organization of activities in the face of a pandemic. All 10 library associations responded. The majority (eight) stated that they had future plans to carry out activities, whereas two indicated that they did not have any plans to organize future activities.

As a follow-up to this question, the respondents were asked to indicate the nature of the plans that they intended to implement in the face of a future pandemic. This was an open-ended question and the responses from the library associations can be summarized as relying mainly on technology to virtually

interact with their members via email, WhatsApp, Google Meet, Zoom, Google Classroom, virtual conferences and webinars.

According to the IFLA Marketing Communication Plan (2017–2021), there is the need for associations to leverage on technology so as to be able to communicate effectively. This corroborates the European Bureau of Library, Information and Documentation Associations' (2020) study, in which library associations have been urged to pay attention to digital services, as this will impact their policies for libraries.

Thus, for libraries to be able to reach out to their members in the face of future pandemics, they should make full use of the advantages that technology has to offer to sustain the communication links among their members. Again, in the absence of face-to-face meetings among librarians and associations, library associations must keep in touch with their members by using technological platforms. The importance of leveraging technology has also been emphasized by Chisita (2020).

Conclusion

National library associations are professional bodies that seek to promote the welfare of their members through the organization of programmes. The outbreak of COVID-19, which was declared a global pandemic, greatly impacted the activities of associations in sub-Saharan Africa, as it did to those associations beyond the African continent. Considering the enormous challenges that COVID-19 has presented, there is the need for library associations in sub-Saharan Africa and beyond to adopt measures that will enable them to take full advantage of technology in the event of the outbreak of another pandemic, and effectively serve the interests of their members.

Implications

This research will add to the existing literature on COVID-19 among libraries and library associations in sub-Saharan Africa and globally. National library associations serve as the mother bodies of libraries and, currently, there is limited research on the effects of COVID-19 and pandemics on library associations.

The findings from this study will, moreover, serve as a blueprint for national library associations on strategies to be adopted in the event of the outbreak of future pandemics. In addition, the research has raised some policy implications for countries that do not have national library associations, as such associations serve as a backbone for libraries.

Furthermore, the research has highlighted the activities that library associations organize for their members and those that are implementable in the event of the outbreak of a pandemic. Lastly, the research serves as a wake-up call for national library associations to gain new knowledge in the face of the effect of the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic on their activities.

Limitations

This study was purely quantitative and the findings cannot be generalized to other library associations on the African continent.

Recommendations

Although this study concentrated on 24 sub-Saharan countries with national library associations, only 10 library associations responded. Future research should include a study of the countries that did not participate in this study, as well as countries in sub-Saharan Africa without national library associations. Another future study could be carried out using a mixed-methods approach to provide an in-depth analysis of issues with future pandemics among national library associations.


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ORCID iDs

Comfort AB Asare  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9682-9678>

Samuel Bentil Aggrey  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7572-6963>

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Author biographies

Comfort AB Asare is the university librarian at Wisconsin International University College Ghana, president of the Ghana Library Association, and chair of the National Library Associations Section of the African Library and Information Associations and Institutions. She holds a Master of Arts degree in Library Studies from the University of Ghana, Legon, and a Master's in Information Technology from the University of Pretoria, South Africa. Her interest areas are electronic resources management, collection management and association issues.

Samuel Bentil Aggrey is past president of the Ghana Library Association (2020–2022) with over 20 years of professional experience. He holds a Master of Arts and Master of Philosophy in Library Studies from the University of Ghana. At the Association level, he has held

positions in the following capacities: member of the Education and Research Committee, Newsletter Editor, Vice President and President. He is currently senior librarian at the University of Ghana's City Campus Library. His research interests include information and media literacy.