

Pakistani School Libraries' Response to COVID-19

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In Pakistan, the first case of COVID-19 occurred on February 26, 2020. Due to COVID-19, the government of Pakistan imposed social distancing, shutdown, curfews, quarantine, cancellation, and other precautionary measurements to control the outbreak and its expansion from further destruction.

As of October 5, 2020, Pakistan had recorded 314,616 cases and 6,513 deaths (<https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/country/pakistan/>), with a second wave threatening and is increasing in the second layer.

At the school level, the library practitioners in Pakistan have devised numerous policy plans to tackle health crisis.

Schools, colleges, and universities were shut down in March 2020. Many remote study programs were initiated at academic institutions via Zoom and other applications.

People in urban areas were

educated to access online material via the internet. Digital Libraries were set up for online access to study material.

The Ministry of Education launched a TV Channel for kids in urban and suburban areas to engage children in learning during the pandemic.

Schools were opened in mid of September 2020, and the government formulated Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for all schools and academic institutions to follow. Failing to use them will lead to school being closed again.

Academics at college, school, and university level are using preventive and protective measures to avoid further spreading of COVID-19 - wearing masks, using sanitizer, washing hands, and social distancing are necessary.

Per the UNESCO report of 2010, there are more than 1, 63, 000 public primary schools in Pakistan and the total number of school

libraries is 7000 (IFLA world report, 2010). <https://readpakistan.org.pk/100000-school-libraries/>

Many schools at the government level are deprived of libraries; nevertheless, some urban schools have developed few libraries. Each school has a room for library and reading purposes, but none has spent even a small amount for library causes; they have always ignored the finding of literally decades of research that shows why school libraries and qualified teacher-librarians are an essential component in the academic programming of any school.

COVID-19 is spreading like waves, and controlling it is challenging. However, if the above precautionary measurements were adopted at schools and college libraries, it may control disease and prevent our children from further catastrophe. School libraries are an essential part of the intellectual growth of our children who may suffer from having no adequate reading resources in any pandemic.