



**The impact of the COVID-19 lockdown regulations on service delivery in South African
Public Libraries: A case study of eThekweni Municipality Libraries (EML)**

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**Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of
Information Studies (MIS) in the Information Studies Programme, School of Social
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2024

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My sincerest gratitude is directed to:

- The Almighty God, for giving me the strength, ability, wisdom, and knowledge, without which I would have not been able to complete this study.
- My supervisor, Dr Siyanda Kheswa, for the guidance, leadership and support he has given me during this study. It was a very tough journey, but his supervision and encouragement pushed me to complete this research project.
- Thekwini Municipal Libraries staff that availed themselves and sacrificed their time to participate in the questionnaire and contribute to this work, much appreciated.
- My Mother Sizakele Buyenzi Gumede, for all her prayers and reassurance, the assistance financially and emotionally, truly without her financial contributions this journey would have been near impossible.
- Most importantly, my Children Sengeziwe, Scebile and Sbanisomuzi Gumede for their understanding and acceptance of the fact that daddy needed space and time to complete his schoolwork, I have had to be away from you and all your activities for the past three years.
- Finally, my partner Zama Ngcobo for being my greatest support system throughout my academic journey, I was away for a great majority of the time, while at other times I felt overwhelmed, stressed and frustrated owing to my continuous attempts to ensure that I finish this body of work, in order to fulfil this goal, thank you for your endurance and understanding, your backing meant everything to me.

Velenkosini Sisanda Gumede

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the impact of the COVID-19 lockdown regulations on service delivery in South African Public Libraries, focusing on the eThekweni Municipality Libraries (EML). The study also explores how the EML responded to the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown restrictions in terms of the delivery of its services to the public and the extent to which such a response impacted access to a diverse category of library users during the COVID-19 lockdown restrictions. The underlying aim of the study is to provide approaches that could be employed to address the identified gaps in the EML responses to the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown as a way of improving the provision of services during such a pandemic in future. The positivism paradigm was used because not every member of the target population had an equal chance of taking part in the study. The study is based on a quantitative approach and guided by a descriptive design. The study's target population are the EML employees in KwaZulu-Natal province, with a sample size of 100, out of which 65% responded. The analysis of the data made use of SPSS statistical software. The findings indicate that COVID-19 impacted the EML in various ways, such that the EML had to embark on remote working and reduced working hours of its operations, besides popularising the use of the digital library to its users, and limiting physical access to some of its users too. The impact also includes the constraining of the EML resources, and the suspension of the EML services in certain areas. Recommendations made include the need for the EML to up skill and empower its employees, the standardisation of the EML processes and resources across all its facilities, and the need for the EML to have collaborations and partnerships with other role players and stakeholders as a way of enhancing the quality of its operations and approaches in dealing with challenges of a crisis.

Keywords: covid-19, lockdown, service delivery, public libraries, etc.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ACRONYM	DETAILS
WHO	World Health Organisation
SARS	Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome
KZN	KwaZulu-Natal
SERVQUAL	Service Quality
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
COVID	Coronavirus disease
EML	eThekweni Municipality Libraries
INK	The Inanda, Ntuzuma and KwaMashu area
IIT	India Institute of Technologies
KNLS	Kenya National Library Service
NDLI	National Digital Library of India
NLSA	National Library of South Africa
USA	United States of America
SARS-CoV-2	Severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2
UK	United Kingdom
Wi-Fi	Wireless Fidelity

CHAPTER ONE:

INTRODUCTION AND STUDY BACKGROUND

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This study investigated the impact of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) lockdown regulations on service delivery in South African Public Libraries by focusing on eThekweni Municipality Libraries (EML). This foundational chapter, among other aspects, introduces the background to the study and the research problem. It outlines the research objectives and research questions of the study. The chapter also provides an overview of the research design and methods applied in the study. The chapter ends with an outline of the structure of the dissertation and a summary of the chapter.

1.2 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The term “Pandemic” comes from the Greek word *pan* meaning “all” and *demos* “the people” and is commonly used to refer to a widespread epidemic of a contagious disease throughout an entire country or one or more continents at the same time (Tamaro, 2020). In the case of influenza, biologists also require that pandemic strains undergo key genomic mutations, known as antigenic shifts (Tamaro, 2020). For the World Health Organisation (WHO) to sound a level six pandemic alert, there must be sustained transmission in at least two regions at the same time (Honigsbaum, 2009). Clark (2016) opined that a pandemic is a serial killer that can have devastating consequences on humans and the global economy. For instance, the Spanish flu in 1918 killed 50 million people worldwide. In addition to fatalities, a pandemic can lead to economic and health crises. In addition to the geographic extension, most uses of the term pandemic imply disease movement or spread via a transmission that can be traced from place to place, as has been done historically for centuries (for example, the Black Death). Examples of disease movement include the widespread person-to-person spread of diseases caused by respiratory viruses, such as influenza and the severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS), or enteric organisms, such as *Vibrio cholera*, or the spread of dengue associated with the extension of the geographic range of vectors, such as *Aedes albopictus* (Morens, Folkers, and Fauci 2009).

Severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2), the seventh human coronavirus, was discovered in Wuhan, Hubei province, China, during the recent pneumonia epidemic in December 2019. Since then, the virus has spread worldwide, and as of 20 May 2020, it had infected 4,806,299 people and caused 318,599 deaths (Ciotti, Ciccozzi, Terrinoni, Jiang and Wang, 2020). SARS-CoV-2 was highly contagious, and it spread globally in a short period of time and was declared a global pandemic by WHO on 11 March 2020, and as of 18 April 2020, WHO (2022) reported more than 2.1 million confirmed cases of COVID-19, including 142,229 deaths in 213 countries, areas, or territories. The most-affected countries with more than 30,000 confirmed cases of SARS-CoV-2 were the United States of America, Spain, Italy, Germany, France, the United Kingdom, China, Iran, Turkey, Belgium, the Russian Federation, Canada and Brazil. However, the number of cases continued to rise throughout the globe and became a serious menace to public health (Lone and Ahmad, 2020).

COVID-19 affected many countries worldwide in a major way, whereas Africa was the last continent to be hit by the pandemic. Africa was expected to be the most vulnerable continent where the spread of COVID-19 was anticipated to have a disastrous impact. The continent confirmed its first case of COVID-19 in Egypt on the 14th of February 2020, and from sub-Saharan Africa, the first case was reported in Nigeria on the 27th of February 2020, from an Italian patient who flew to Nigeria from Italy on the 25th of February 2020 (Mzobe, 2021).

As of 18th April 2020, Africa Centres for Disease Control (CDC) reported 19,895 confirmed cases, including 1,017 deaths and 4,642 recoveries, from 52 African countries, while two countries (Comoros and Lesotho) were still virus-free. Interestingly, most of the identified cases of COVID-19 in Africa were imported from Europe and the United States rather than from the original COVID-19 epicentre China (Lone and Ahmad ,2020).

The continent's weak healthcare systems and large immune-compromised populations owing to the high prevalence of malnutrition, anaemia, malaria, HIV/AIDs, tuberculosis, and poor economic discipline, made it distinct from the other continents that-experienced COVID-19 to date. Experts also anticipated that under these circumstances, the pandemic in Africa could be difficult to control, and the consequences would be fatal (World Health Organisation 2023). On the other hand, there was no drug/vaccine readily available to treat and manage COVID-19; therefore, implementation of precautionary measures to contain the spread of this virus was being practised throughout the globe, which included social distancing, isolation

and quarantine, community containment, national lockdowns, and travel restrictions. For an extended period, those measures had been helping to control and reduce the spread of COVID-19; but subsequently negatively affecting the global economy and pushing the nations towards recession (Ocholla 2021). African economies were already struggling when COVID-19 hit the continent, which could further amplify the economic crisis. A unique COVID-19 response needed to be developed for Africa, where all these issues, that made the continent more vulnerable and different from the rest of the world, were considered.

At the beginning of March 2020, South Africa (approximately 59 million inhabitants) was hit by the COVID-19 pandemic and soon became the most affected country in Africa by the SARS-CoV-2 virus from one single case on March 5th, during 2020. The number of cases increased rapidly, forcing the South African Government to react swiftly and place the country under strict lockdown for six weeks (Steigler and Bouchard, 2020).

Kuhlthau, (2009: 82) states that a public library is created to provide free public access to reading material, with the altruistic goal of educational enlightenment and better welfare of the people. Public libraries offer a wide range of physical and virtual services, including print and digital lending material, reader development advice, internet access and support, information and reference resources and guidance, learning and e-learning activities, literacy support, cultural promotion and community development (LGNZ, 2012).

Since the COVID-19 pandemic started, EML were closed, and all services terminated, which meant that people were no longer able to borrow books or visit the library. Since there was no movement allowed, people couldn't visit the library to return and borrow books as libraries were considered high risk, while returning and re-issuing books would have been a hazard to both staff and library users. COVID-19 highlighted to EML, in particular, the importance of a digital service whereby users could access the library from home since we are in the 4th Industrial Revolution. This study gave birth to the scrutiny of public library services in general and emphasize the need to digitize public library services like e-books, online subscriptions to newspapers, online storytelling, and book club meetings will gain prominence in the digital era. By highlighting these online services, this research served as an eye-opener to library management and staff on the convenience of serving library users online.

1.3 BRIEF BACKGROUND OF ETHEKWINI MUNICIPALITY

eThekwini Municipal is located on the KwaZulu-Natal coast and serves an area of 2300 square kilometres (eThekwini Municipal, 2014). The Inanda, Ntuzuma and KwaMashu area (INK) is a Presidential Urban Renewal Project to the north of the Central Business District (CBD). Another major township, Umlazi, is located south of the CBD. eThekwini Municipality is a metropolitan municipality created in 2000 that includes the city of Durban and surrounding towns (eThekwini Municipal 2014). eThekwini is one of the 11 districts of the KwaZulu-Natal province of South Africa (eThekwini Municipal 2015). eThekwini Municipality was formed from seven formerly independent local councils and tribal lands. eThekwini Municipality is a Category ‘A’ municipality found in the South African province of KwaZulu-Natal (eThekwini Municipal, 2014). “eThekwini Municipal Library was established in 1853 as the Durban Mechanics Institute for the intellectual improvement of its members and others. It is one of the oldest institutions in KwaZulu-Natal” (eThekwini Municipal, 2015).

In 1911, the Durban Corporation took over the running of the service, and the library was moved to its current location in City Hall (eThekwini Municipality, 2017: 1). EML aims to provide library services to cater for the educational, informational, and recreational needs of the people of eThekwini. EML runs 95 branch libraries within the parameters of eThekwini and in the central substructures, as well as the central lending, central reference, and Don Africana libraries in the city centre. Further services include, housebound service, Ulwazi Indigenous Knowledge Programme, Cyber zones, rural community libraries, digital doorways, and departmental library services (eThekwini Municipal, 2015).

The Umgeni Road library serves as the headquarters for the departmental libraries, which runs the special libraries in the council departments, and technical services, which include the cataloguing, classification, processing, acquisitions and systems, and support section within the unit. Currently, EML’s aim, and vision are as follows: EML and Heritage Department aims to promote the quality of life, creativity and life-long learning of the citizens of eThekwini by providing integrated access to information and knowledge through developing, interpreting and preserving our culture and heritage in libraries, museums, art galleries, science centres and living culture and heritage. The vision for our Heritage and Information Services is to create a leading footprint and digital gateway in Africa that provides

knowledge, opportunity and experience of culture and heritage (eThekweni Municipality, 2022).

1.4 PROBLEM STATEMENT

This study must produce timely information about the COVID-19 virus in plain language and examine how libraries in eThekweni Municipality have responded to the pandemic by providing their services. The findings will serve as potential best practices for EML in keeping the public informed about the evolution and spread of the virus. Finding out the impact of COVID-19 on EML will help identify the challenges faced by the libraries in service delivery amidst the COVID-19 crisis. Interviewing staff will give a broader perspective on issues and obstacles they were faced with in doing their work.

In essence, just because the library is closed it does not mean that libraries should stop working (Adigun, Okuonghae, Mamudu, Suleiman, and Haliru, 2020). While still grappling with the COVID-19 pandemic, libraries began re-opening their buildings to the public (Aldrich, 2020). The coronavirus is shining a harsh light on the gaps in our social safety net, how essential libraries are as they try to fill more and more of those gaps, and the library's limitations as an overstretched catchall solution to enquiry (Schwartz, 2020). Rafiq *et al* (2021) advise that in the next stages of the pandemic response, libraries need to make sure they have policies to support front-line staff as they manage library users who argue with staff and amongst each other. Staff face numerous stressors and struggle with physical and mental health concerns (Freudenberger, 2020). The authors continue to say that it is important to have several plans in place and be ready to start implementing them at any moment's notice. McDonald, (2020), agrees that in response to the pandemic, libraries are shifting their acquisitions to digital content. Considering the above points, the time has come for libraries to digitise their collection and give library users access to online material as opposed to traditional print copies.

Library services can be adapted to ensure they remain available and accessible to user communities through the web or mobile platforms. This study saw this as a new door opening for library staff to learn new skills, and expertise with different conditions, and employees becoming more equipped to handle technological advancements, and be creative and collaborative (Durgannavar, 2020). This study made a proposition to find possible ways to bridge the digital divide so that community members can access online/virtual services.

Previous literature does not identify solutions to the unaffordability of devices and data required to access these services that libraries could provide as an alternative. Durgannavar, (2020) argues that in this difficult pandemic, the role of libraries and professionals would be appreciated because, in this uncertainty, all the libraries and professionals are struggling to provide timely information to categories of users, especially those sheltered in their homes, to engage them on the pandemic. Alvin (2021) consents that public libraries and other information services play a crucial role in sharing and providing reliable information and quality services.

Promoting access to official sources of information to combat fake news and straightening the library's role as a place of credible information and knowledge are essential. The study sought to encourage continued communication with users for providing library services, but what about the users in remote and/or difficult to reach areas? The literature does not clarify how we address this issue; therefore, it opens engagement and research opportunities. The current study seek to fill this gap in the literature. This study was limited as it will only focus on library staff, and their views may be somehow limited and biased without paying attention to library users.

1.5 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This section provided the aim and objectives of the study for: the impact of COVID-19 lockdown regulations on service delivery in South African Public Libraries: A case study of eThekweni Municipality Libraries

1.5.1 Aim of the study

The aim of the study is to investigate the impact of COVID-19 lockdown regulations on service delivery in South African Public Libraries: A case study of eThekweni Municipality Libraries (EML). This will be done by distributing questionnaires to professional library staff with EtheKwini Municipality Libraries, as they are the ones who experienced the circumstances around the COVID-19 lockdown.

1.5.2 Research objectives

The study was guided by the following objectives:

- I. To investigate how the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown restrictions impacted the provision of EML services to the public.
- II. To determine how EML responded to the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown restrictions regarding the delivery of its services to the public.
- III. To explore the extent to which such a response impacted access to a diverse category of library users during COVID-19 lockdown restrictions.
- IV. To suggest approaches that could be employed to address the identified gaps of EML responses to the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown as a way of improving the provision of services during such a pandemic in future.

1.5.3 Research questions

1. In what ways did the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown restrictions impact the provision of EML services to the public?
2. How did EML respond to the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown restrictions in terms of delivery of its services to the public?
3. To what extent did such responses impact access to a diverse category of library users during COVID-19 lockdown restrictions?
4. What are the suggested approaches that could be employed to address the identified gaps of EML responses to the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown as a way of improving the provision of services during such a pandemic in the future?

1.6 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The service Quality (SERVQUAL) measure was introduced by (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry, 1988) to assess customer perceptions of service quality in service and retailing organizations. It consisted of 22 statements, the first of which measures the expectations of a service provider's customers by asking each respondent to rate, on a 7-point scale, how essential each item is for the highest service provider to deliver.

The proposed study used the LibQUAL+ model. Cristobal (2018) states that based on the SERVQUAL, the LibQUAL+TM was formulated to cater to library service quality measurement. LibQUAL+TM, designed by Academic and Research Libraries (ARL) in partnership with Texas A and M University Libraries, is one measurement activity developed to solicit, track, understand, and act upon users' 6 opinions of service quality. It has emerged

as both a process and a tool that enables institutions to address service quality gaps between their expectations and their perceived service delivery program. It is an internationally recognized web-delivered survey that now includes hundreds of libraries of all sizes worldwide and pioneering the use of large-scale, web-based survey applications in a digital library environment. It is a tool that attempts to measure library users' perceptions of service quality along four dimensions such as access to artificial intelligence (AI), personal control (PC), library as place (LP), and effect of service (AS), and identifies gaps between desired, perceived, and minimum expectations of service. On the other hand, customer satisfaction is defined as the post-consumption evaluation of a product or service, which is essential to the successful marketing of services because satisfied customers are more likely to show loyalty and spread positive word-of-mouth recommendations (Yuksel and Rimmington, 1998).

Kachoka (2010) adds that the instrument is now perceived as a standard tool for measuring the quality of library service. She agreed with (Naidu 2009) when she said LibQUAL+TM has developed into a protocol consisting of "22 items and a box" (Naidu 2009). Kachoka (2010) further explained that this mechanism contains 22, core items which yield quantitative data from close ended questions, and it also yields qualitative data through user comments. The mechanism was upgraded to suit the local and public library environment in this study.

The 22 items are regarded as core and span three dimensions, namely:

- **Effect of service** – focuses on how well users are served and treated by library staff.
- **Information control** – focuses on the ability to access information regardless of the location of the user or the resource in question.
- **Library as a place** – focuses on the physical environment and how well the library meets the individual needs of users (ARL, 2004).

The "box" secures open-ended comments from users regarding their concerns and suggestions. These comments are an integral part of LibQUAL+TM (Naidu 2009).

The LibQUAL+TM survey is designed to measure library users' perceptions of the quality of collections, personal service, and facilities (LibQUAL+TM 2008). Bhim (2010) states that it

can assist libraries in accessing and improving services, changing organisational culture and informing strategies, Naidu (2009) makes the important point that instruments such as LibQual + TM can improve to be effective assessment tools, but their effectiveness is contingent on the library community making a committed (and sustained) effort to actively enhance service quality.

According to the ARL (2008), the goals of LibQUAL+TM are to:

- Foster a culture of excellence in providing library services
- Assist libraries in having a better understanding of user perceptions of library service quality
- Collect and interpret library user feedback systematically over time
- Provide libraries with comparable assessment information from peer institutions
- Identify best practices in library services and
- Enhance library staff members' analytical skills for interpreting and acting on data.

Given the above, it is evident that LibQUAL+TM has much to offer libraries in terms of surveying the services they provide, and it is perhaps not astonishing that many institutions have adopted the LibQUAL+TM protocol. However, the use of LibQUAL+TM is not without possible hiccups. Quinn (1997), for example, makes the point that libraries need to monitor customer expectations continuously to reduce any gap that may exist between expectations and perceptions. Thus, assessments must not be once-off events and provision needs to be made for assessments on a regular basis such as annually or bi-annually. Waller and Higgs (2002) point to the need to develop what they refer to as “a culture of assessment within libraries” and see this as a crucial step towards instituting the importance of assessment tools and projects such as LibQUAL+TM and changing paradigms of assessment measures. Naidu (2009) notes that the gaps between customer expectations and perceptions may stem from librarians inaccurately perceiving the expectations of library users, from library service standards not reflecting expectations, from the library over-promising on its services, or from the actual services falling short of customer expectations. She further notes that even with adequate customer feedback, it can sometimes be difficult to interpret data because customers' expectations and perceptions are inherently subjective and can be contradictory and naive (Naidu, 2009).

The LibQUAL+™ survey is designed to measure library users' perceptions of the quality of collections, personal service and facilities (LibQUAL+™ ,2008). Bhim (2010) states that it can assist libraries in assessing and improving services, changing organisational culture and informing marketing strategies. Naidu (2009) makes the important point that instruments such as LibQUAL+™ can prove to be effective assessment tools, but their effectiveness in consideration of satisfaction should be an important part of evaluating library services. Satisfaction depends, to some extent, on library users' expectations of services. Satisfaction appeared to be related to information accessibility, staff competence and helpfulness, computer usefulness and ease of use, as well as the skill level for using libraries Stamatoplos and Mackoy (1999). The study adopted LibQUAL+ to determine how the COVID-19 lockdown has affected service delivery in the South African Public Libraries. This study sought to assess customer satisfaction from the view of the staff at the libraries.

1.7 SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Du Plooy-Cillier, Davis and Bezuidenhout (2014) state that limitations can be described as constraints or restrictions in the research that are beyond the researcher's control, such as time, financial resources and access to information. Delimitations are the results of very specific and defined choices the researcher makes when deciding on the scope of the research, Du-Plooy-Cillier, Davis, and Bezuidenhout (2014). The limitations of the study were not listed here but will be discussed in Chapter Five as they arise. In terms of delimitations, while other stakeholders (such as library users) have a key influence on public library development, this study was delimited to surveying professional library staff only (Assistant Librarians, Librarians, and Senior Librarians). The reason for doing this is that professional library staff are the ones that have the qualifications to perform technical library duties and are at the fore front of dealing with library users' queries and conflict resolution. The researcher believed that the professional library staff were stakeholders in the best position to comment on the impact of COVID-19 lockdown regulations on service delivery in South African Public Libraries, particularly at EMLs. Professional library staff work and manage libraries which are situated in urban, suburban, and rural areas, directly serving the community. The study conducted a survey of all Assistant Librarians, Librarians and Senior Librarians in the 95 branch libraries which make up EML, which amounts to 200 individuals.

1.8 DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

The definitions of key terms used in the study are provided below.

Public library

The public library is an organisation that provides access to knowledge, information and works of imagination through a wide range of resources and services, making it available equally to all members of the community regardless of race, nationality, age, gender, religion, language, disability, economic and employment status (Mnkeni-Saurombe and Zimu, 2015: 42).

COVID-19

The current outbreak of the novel coronavirus SARS-CoV-2 (coronavirus disease 2019; previously 2019-nCoV), epi-centred in Hubei Province of the People's Republic of China, has spread to many other countries. In January 2020, the WHO Emergency Committee declared a global health emergency based on growing case notification rates at Chinese and international locations. Coronaviruses are enveloped, positive single-stranded large RNA viruses that infect humans but also a wide range of animals (Velavan, 2020).

Pandemic

Modern definitions include “extensively epidemic”, “epidemic over a wide area and usually affecting a large proportion of the population” and “distributed or occurring widely throughout a region, country, continent or globally (Morens, 2009). The author continues to state that although they convey the initiative idea that a pandemic is a very large epidemic, such definitions still seem vague.

Lockdown

The COVID-19 pandemic brought about a great rise in epidemiological and policy uncertainty. In response to the pandemic, governments worldwide implemented lockdown policies to limit the spread of infections. In numerous cases, these policies were first scheduled to end soon and then were extended. A lockdown imposes an upper bound on

labour supply, limiting disease spread at the cost of economic activity. Lockdowns induce both health benefits as well as output and consumption costs (Moser, 2021).

Library Building

A public library is a building where items such as books, newspapers, videos, and music are kept for people to read, use, or borrow (Collins, 2014: 879). It is also viewed as “The physical structure housing a library, or part of a library, as distinct from the collections and equipment it contains, and the personnel who operate and maintain it.” Furthermore, a library facility can be stand-alone or a multi-purpose structure of which the library is one or two or more components (Reitz, 2004).

Librarian

According to Reitz (2004: 376), a librarian is a professionally trained person responsible for the care of library contents, including the selection, processing, and organization of materials and the delivery of information, instruction, and loan services to meet the needs of its users. In the online environment, the role of the librarian is to manage and mediate access to information that may exist only in electronic form.

Information Communication Technologies

Asnafi (2005) defines ICT as the technologies that help us record, store, process, retrieve, transfer, and receive information. IT and ICT are dependent on each other. IT may refer to the machine and ICT to its products (Asnafi, 2005). The concept of IT has been expanded to include electronic communications, and the use of the term ICT reflects that (Information Technology, 2008).

Social Media

Lewis (2010) noted that “social media” simply serves as a “label for digital technologies that allow people to connect, interact, produce and share content.”

1.9 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Because COVID-19 is a newly discovered virus, no study has been conducted at EML on the impact of COVID-19 lockdown regulations on service delivery in these libraries. The libraries of eThekweni Municipality closed completely without offering any services, and the public had no access to libraries. This tells us that EML was not prepared for a disaster of this nature. This helps us identify a gap in libraries in general on how libraries can better prepare themselves for a pandemic to ensure that library services are still available to the people who need them, especially during a national lockdown. The COVID-19 pandemic should force EML to strengthen or create virtual and remote services. To identify the protocol for public library activities during the COVID-19 outbreak, it seems necessary to consider the solutions that have already been applied internationally. This study attempted to explore the challenges and actions of public libraries during the COVID-19 crisis for re-opening and providing services. It is on this premise that this study was conducted to determine the impact of the COVID-19 lockdown on South African Public Libraries focusing on the libraries in eThekweni Municipality.

1.10 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Research is a process for acquiring new knowledge in a systematic approach involving diligent planning and interventions to discover or interpret the new-gained knowledge (Creswell and Poth, 2018). The outcome of reliability and validity of the study would depend on a well-designed study with objective, reliable, repeatable methodology with appropriate conduct, data collection and analysis with logical interpretation (Garg, 2016).

In this section, the research paradigm, design, and approach was described and the sampling technique, the size of the sample and research instrument will be briefly highlighted and later discussed in detail in Chapter Three. The data analysis and ethical consideration was also briefly outlined and later discussed in Chapters Three and Four, respectively.

1.11 STRUCTURE OF DISSERTATION

This section provided the details pertaining to how the dissertation will be structured in terms of the chapters.

Chapter One: Introduction

This chapter provided the background information for the research that gives context to the study. Its purpose is to establish a framework for the research. It will also provide a detailed presentation of the theories underpinning the study.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Chapter Two reviews the empirical literature related to the study based on the study's objectives covering the impact of COVID-19 in public libraries.

Chapter Three: Research Methodology

This chapter will discuss the research methodology and methods used to achieve the study's objectives. The chapter includes paradigms, approaches, research design, research process, study area, the population of the study, data collection methods, research instruments, data quality control, ethical issues and data processing and analysis.

Chapter Four: Presentation of the results

The chapter provides the presentation and interpretation of refined and analysed data from the responses obtained from the case study.

Chapter Five: Discussions of the Findings

This chapter presents a discussion of the study's findings, resulting from both the quantitative data analysis of data. The discussion of the findings is based on the objectives of the study.

Chapter Six: Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations

This chapter summarises the findings, conclusions and recommendations based on the research questions investigated.

1.12 Summary of the chapter

This chapter introduced the study which had a focus on exploring the impact of COVID-19 lockdown regulations on service delivery in South African Public Libraries: a case study of EML. It provided a statement of the problem, the aims and objectives of the study, the research objective, significance of the study, research methodology and the key research questions asked as well as the theoretical framework underpinning the study. The main terms were defined to avoid ambiguity and confusion regarding meaning. Delimitations of the study were provided and, finally, the structure of the dissertation, which comprised six chapters, was outlined. Chapter two discusses the literature review and the context of the study as well as provide definitions of the different types of libraries. The chapter will continue by discussing the role of a library in society and the global trends and challenges facing libraries. The final discussion will be the challenges of COVID-19 and the COVID-19 pandemic and the future of libraries.

CHAPTER TWO:

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter was a foundational chapter, among other aspects, it introduced the background to the study and the research problem. It outlined the research objectives and research questions of the study. The chapter also provided an overview of the research design and methods applied in the study. The chapter ended with an outline of the structure of the dissertation and a summary of the chapter. According to Wilson (2016), the purpose of a literature review is to enlighten readers through a written report by supporting them in comprehending the most recent research and discussions that are pertinent to a certain topic or field of study. Creswell (2018) asserted that the objective of a literature review is to compile relevant, recent research on the topic of your choice and integrate it into a cohesive summary of what is already known in the field. This consequently gives you the tools you need to make your own case on the matter or to conduct an independent inquiry of your own, according to Creswell (2018). A literature review can assist a researcher grasp the topic or study, challenge more thoroughly, as well as identify any gaps in the research topic and the body of knowledge.

This chapter covers literature that relates to the goals and duties of libraries, including public, academic, and special libraries, in this context. Additionally, it analyses the numerous functions a library performs in society and how these functions affect the communities in which these libraries are found. The chapter offers information on worldwide trends, difficulties faced by libraries, and strategies employed by these libraries or the authorities to solve these issues. Discussed are the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on public libraries and the numerous tactics and techniques employed by them to continue operating throughout the epic COVID-19 pandemic period. The problems, potential, and future of libraries following the COVID-19 epidemic are discussed in the chapter's conclusion.

2.2 THE NATURE AND CONTEXT OF A LIBRARY

In the library sphere, there are many different types of libraries, therefore, this section will discuss and describe the different types of libraries in detail, i.e. public libraries, special libraries, and academic libraries.

2.2.1 Definition of a library

As observed by Ari (2017), the Latin phrase "*libraria*" which means "a place for books," is where the word "library" originated, whereas the word "*liber*" which means "book," is where it originated from. There are several ways to define a library, including:

- a location where books are kept.
- a collection of literary documents or materials that are kept for reference or borrowing and
- a repository built to house books and other things.

A library is defined as a building or area with a collection of books (Hadidi and Linscot, 2021) and it is the best place to learn using printed materials and digital media. A library's collection could include books, journals, daily newspapers, compositions, movies, maps, prints, archives, microforms, CDs, cassettes, videotapes, DVDs, Blu-beam Disks, e-books, book recordings, and databases. There might be a few book racks or a few million items in libraries. The library is essential for the advancement of learning. Since libraries are now locations that are dependent on the attainment, organization, conservation, stockpiling, recovery, and dissemination of data in any form, (Qayyum, Hina, and Abid,2017), libraries play a crucial function in the growth of nations.

2.2.2 Types of libraries

According to Cox and Felix (2021), libraries may fall into the following categories. This is just for information purposes but EML falls under the sphere of Public Libraries.

Public library:

Public libraries are ones that were built and are maintained using public funds. Regardless of their age, religion, sex, occupation, or other characteristics, they provide services to every resident in a particular region. Examples include The Kenya National Library Service (KNLS) and The National Library of South Africa (NLSA).

Academic Library:

A college, school, or university's academic library is one that serves the students, faculty, and staff of that institution by providing reading materials and other services. Typically, these libraries support educational institutions and assist students with their academic work and research.

Special Library:

Special libraries are those that cater to a particular user group and provide specialized information services. Documents on this subject can be found here. Examples include libraries for the disabled and libraries for agricultural research (Cox and Felix, 2021).

2.2.3 Purpose and functions of a library

The main objective of a library is to benefit society by making accessible to all people a record of human expressions, ideas, and thought. According to Majid and Rahmat (2013), the functions of libraries differ depending on their type and the community in which they are located. Establishing a collection, making books and other resources accessible to people in need, and assisting in the advancement and promotion of knowledge, education, and culture are all typical responsibilities of a library. A library's resources for formal and informal lifetime self-education, as well as its ability to preserve literature for future generations and provide a physical location or environment, can be advantageous to the community.

Ocholla (2021) asserts that a library's additional responsibilities, such as those of a public library, include imparting reliable knowledge to a variety of individuals regardless of their age, class, beliefs, religion, sex, or employment. Preserving literary works and cultural heritage for future generations, promoting community involvement by providing information about the neighbourhood, and providing access to information services such as business, economic, social, and other information to the less fortunate are all ways to support job seekers by enabling them to search for jobs and submit applications online. Public libraries also engage in community outreach activities, while supporting professors with course preparation, funding research and development, and fostering cultural advancement in the local community are also roles and responsibilities of academic libraries (Nasser and Al-Suqri, 2017; Dadhe and Dubey, 2020; Wheeler and Kyprianou-Chavda, 2021).

As suggested by Molepo and Shokane (2021), a library serves various purposes that may be grouped into the following categories. A library serves an educational role by providing

resources for lifelong learning and encouraging both formal and informal education. At various educational levels, it also supports the development of the self. In addition, (Dadhe and Dubey, 2020) note that libraries play a crucial role in the distribution of information since they provide the targeted readers with accurate, up-to-date material that corresponds to their areas of interest. They provide the functions of information centres or referral centres for a variety of information sources, including information on employment, social programs, public utility services, etc.

Molepo and Shokane (2021) refer to libraries as cultural centres that promote engagement in and appreciation of the arts, which is another purpose of a library. We may broaden our horizons and develop our creative skills via reading and reflection. It also advances culture by setting up extension services including lectures, seminars, and book displays. They are also leisurely since they contain fiction novels, magazines, newspapers, and other items that let you make the most of downtime. You can use the audio-visual materials in the library as well. Libraries are granaries of knowledge, according to Zhou (2021), since they conserve and guard collections of rare and ancient manuscripts, preserving the literary heritage for future generations. It keeps a variety of literary works that support the work of scholars.

Libraries assist scholars in their work in several ways, including by providing them with books, journals, and other study materials as well as by making it easy for them to find and use these resources. Additionally, they provide access to high-quality content that is necessary for research, workspace, assistance with information gathering, information and guidance on publication, copyright, open access, citation, and copyright (Maltez, 2020; Molepo and Shokane, 2021).

2.3 THE ROLE OF A LIBRARY IN A SOCIETY

The society and the library are interdependent. Libraries are necessary for civilization; hence they do exist. Given their enormous impact on our society, libraries can be viewed as well-known social agents. Books and other publications are used to convey and share the obtained knowledge. According to Maurya (2016), libraries have served as centres of learning from the dawn of civilisation. To provide both social and informational needs, it is a place where people and information interact. Libraries play a crucial role in preserving a country's cultural heritage. In the current era of plentiful information, libraries assist society by preserving and disseminating essential knowledge as and when required.

According to Mishra, Gupta, and Shree (2020), libraries are important social institutions that serve as access points to knowledge and culture. They offer materials and services that promote educational possibilities, support reading and education, and promote the generation of novel ideas and opinions, all of which are crucial for the growth of an imaginative and creative society. They also help to ensure that the knowledge created and accumulated by preceding generations is accurately recorded. It would be difficult to foster human knowledge and study, as well as to preserve collected information and cultural legacies for future generations, without libraries (Mishra, Gupta and Shree 2020). The history and progress of human civilization has followed this route from the Agrarian society to the information or knowledge society, where the development of society greatly depends on how much information has been made available to its members. Information is the sixth and most crucial factor in the production of materials, according to Tammara (2020). Information is understood to be an economic development and productivity driver. For national development, economic progress depends on modern and creative knowledge. Public libraries significantly contribute to the distribution of current and accurate knowledge through their services.

Additionally, Fasae, Adekoya, and Adegbilero-Iwari (2021) suggested that a library performs a significant cultural function in a community by preserving the cultural heritage of humanity as manifested in the books and other documents it houses. To further enrich the cultural life of the neighbourhood, it also conducts activities such as music concerts, dance performances, plays, children's painting competitions, art exhibitions, etc. The main beneficiaries of these schemes are public libraries. A library is a gathering place for individuals from different cultures, faiths, as well as social and religious traditions, to get to know one another and foster mutual understanding, according to studies by Dadhe and Dubey (2020) and Fasae, Adekoya, and Adegbilero-Iwari (2021). In the end, it leads to social harmony and national cohesion. To promote and publicize their services, public libraries hold plays, lecture series, debate competitions, book displays, and other activities. These events provide possibilities for cultural interaction in addition to their other advantages.

Through the books they hold, libraries act as society's information and knowledge storehouse. Every human activity that aims to advance civilization requires knowledge. Everyone, including researchers, instructors, students, administrators, commercial and industrial managers, craftsmen, farmers, and factory and field workers, requires information to be better

equipped to pursue their respective vocations (Majid and Rahmat, 2013). The authors continue and note that the primary informative role of a library is to compile reliable sources of information. In this sense, a library is commonly referred to as an information centre. However, a library also serves an informative purpose by disseminating information about the socioeconomic needs of library users. Finding healthy methods to occupy time is essential to preventing free time from being wasted on destructive pursuits. In this approach, libraries may satisfy the needs of their users by stocking books that are suitable for leisure reading. Every library should have books on travel, biographies, popular magazines, and other genres of literature because they are primarily works of enjoyment. Additionally, concerts, plays, and other performing arts activities are offered at libraries, especially public libraries, to encourage healthy pleasure and recreation (Rafiq et al., 2021; Zhou, 2021).

2.4 GLOBAL TRENDS AND CHALLENGES FACING LIBRARIES

Libraries face a variety of challenges, one of which stems from the fact that, while international copyright agreements grant authors and other right holders exclusive rights, the interpretation of the exclusions and limitations that apply to institutions like libraries is country-specific and optional, whereas the rights accruing to right holders are international and guaranteed Cowell (2020). This is a hurdle for their implementation because copyright agreements and regulations differ from one country to the next. However, copyright laws are designed to encourage innovation. They preserve the creators' investment in developing their work while ensuring that others may use that work in support of innovation, competition, and learning. Evidence suggests that private systems of law, particularly contract law, do not support this unique interaction between artists and customers, but rather represent a more static, one-sided relationship between content distributors and buyers, according to Hadidi and Linscot (2021).

According to Cox and Felix (2021), trends have an effect on how libraries run as well. More of a part of a librarian's job than merely giving out books is now getting the correct user the right information. Thanks to digitalisation, documents are now available in electronic versions. Thus, every library needs to automate its procedures. Another trend is the shift from traditional to digital libraries. In the era of information technology, digital documents coexist with printed books, as opposed to conventional libraries only having access to printed publications. Global efforts are being made to build digital libraries, and modern libraries

increasingly subscribe to a range of e-books and e-journals to better serve their customers online.

Cox and Felix (2021) note that cooperation and resource sharing are an unavoidable issue and trend that libraries all over the globe must deal with because it is obvious that no library is sufficiently self-sufficient to retain every document. A library is limited in its capacity to gather all the documents because of things like a lack of space, a lack of funds, growing document costs, etc. Libraries are gathering and producing content in this environment to be an active and resourceful participant in information sharing, since a good collection of papers must be established to fulfil user expectations. Maurya (2016) emphasizes that libraries must assess and determine the needs of their customers to develop collections that satisfy consumers. Because it makes education more accessible, public, academic, and speciality libraries are all leaping to web-based access. Along with that, it decreases the price of providing education and develops a new learning environment at academic institutions.

According to Ari (2017) who examined how libraries functioned before the advent of digitisation, it used to be challenging to apply the concept of interlibrary lending to digital publications. With the widespread availability of electronic platforms that easily control access to content, such as iTunes and Kindle, and the expansion of electronic interlibrary loans by some research libraries, this problem isn't as insurmountable as it might have seemed a few years ago - although there is still work to be done in negotiations with publishers.

According to Bray (2020), there are considerable regional variances in the legislation regulating library exceptions, according to the research findings on copyright limitations and exceptions for libraries and archives commissioned by WIPO in 2008. Furthermore, it was found that of the 149 countries analysed, 21 had no library exceptions in their copyright rules and 128 had, with some of them, most typically industrialised nations, having several of them. Even if library exceptions to copyright laws do exist, they frequently date from a time before the Internet and need to be updated and modified for the present digital era.

The condition of public libraries today is dire, as Majid and Rahmat (2013) point out. As the new century approached, there was much worry about whether public libraries would become obsolete, and there have been ongoing questions about how libraries might continue to be useful in the age of internet knowledge. Libraries have effectively transformed into

community hubs for formal and informal education, technology access, employment growth, and community involvement, even if their primary focus used to be on resources. However, even though public libraries have developed into a crucial component of social infrastructure, threats to the survival of the organisation continue to exist. The loss of faith in factual information is one of them. According to Guo et al. (2021), this is alarming since a large portion of the populace distrusts the news they get and is increasingly turning to biased sources of information. This might eventually extend to libraries, where library users would start to question the validity of the information, they learn there, undermining one of the fundamental ideas behind libraries' significance to society.

The prevalence of social media and the ease of access to a wide range of content and platforms on the internet has led to a decline in attention span and reading habits. According to Guo et al (2021), smart phones and other technologies also prevent us from benefiting from the very healthy state of boredom, in addition to hindering our ability to focus on longer chunks of information. According to research cited by Qayyum, Hina, and Abid (2017), letting our minds wander promotes innovative, ideation and problem-solving. They contend that people routinely use their cell phones to avoid these upsetting circumstances and that public libraries should consider the implications of this scenario to be grave and disturbing. They continued by saying that because of our need for constant and instant fulfilment, individuals may have forgotten the pleasure of strolling amid the stacks, which is frequently highlighted, when public libraries formerly placed more of an emphasis on patient thinking and broader inquiry. Even if they are aware of its importance, how much will people use libraries once they are unable to read intently and reflect?

2.5 PUBLIC LIBRARIES AND THE CHALLENGES OF COVID-19

At the end of 2019, the WHO declared the COVID-19 pandemic. Due to the infection's newness and the rareness of prior knowledge about it, researchers had to work nonstop to learn more about it. As a result, methods, and actions to halt its spread and control did develop and were widely used. However, these methods and recommendations for limiting the spread of COVID-19 have affected interpersonal relationships and regular daily life. Some of the techniques utilised by different nations throughout the world include staying at home to enhance social isolation and distance, as well as to maintain overall cleanliness, preventing oneself and others from catching an infection (Tammaro 2020; Rafiq et al. 2021).

The COVID-19 outbreak has inevitably had a big influence on public library services worldwide. The forced closure of library facilities for the majority of 2020 and 2021 created a new normal, leading library services to encourage the increasing use of substitute services like e-loans to satisfy community needs. According to the WHO and the relevant nations' public health legislation, libraries, and other places where people gather, they had to be closed. Rafiq et al. (2021) claims this was also influenced by the extent of COVID-19 infections and spread in particular nations. Prior to the COVID-19 epidemic, libraries carried out their customary tasks of compiling information sources and making them widely accessible to the public for use in education, information, or personal development. But because of the COVID-19 lockdown, with limits on physical contact and a focus on social distance, libraries had to change how they operated to keep offering their services. This necessitated the use or integration of digital technology into their business processes, among other tactics. Tammaro (2020) asserted that libraries in nations like Germany, France, Italy, and Canada were able to reach more people with their remote and virtual services through the aid of technology than when they functioned from a physical location.

Accurate and verified information about the COVID-19 epidemic was provided through remote access to library resources. The advantage of accessing library information during the lockdown time, according to Nasser and Al-Suqri (2017), was that its material had gone through many reviews before being made available to the broader public, making it more reliable. In addition, governments have asked everyone to aid in spreading knowledge of it due to the extent of this global pandemic. As a result, making it challenging to offer library services. In response to the COVID-19 lockdown restrictions, libraries were able to expand their offerings by providing links to websites that provide online services. After the work-from-home safety precautions, libraries apparently offered advice on how to use virtual platforms for meetings, which facilitated business operations (Rafiq et al. 2021). Additionally, libraries provided free COVID-19 resources and emphasized that sharing is one method of battling the pandemic.

Nasser and Al-Suqri (2017) claim that the COVID-19 epidemic gave libraries the opportunity to work with publishers to ensure that the public could access their work. In nations like Italy, Germany, and Canada, the area of collaboration involved library officials and publishers working together to change copyright laws so that libraries could access and distribute more electronic books. Libraries were involved in this project during the COVID-19 pandemic

because they provide the information resources needed by researchers and manage the production and distribution of information, both of which were essential during the lockdown constraints brought on by the epidemic.

Majid and Rahmat (2013) note that public libraries improved their social media presence during the pandemic lockdown limitations by employing outreach strategies to educate people about the epidemic and by providing locations to gather money for the affected. For example, the Orange County Public Library in the USA had received more mail-order book orders than before the epidemic. Cowell (2020) used the example of the Boston Public Library in the USA, which has virtual systems in place but had to increase their accessible online inventory due to the high demand for their services. This exemplifies the efforts made by libraries throughout the world to adapt different digital tactics to remain relevant to society and the users they serve. By giving affected individuals access to their preferred books or online learning resources, libraries also provided psychological alleviation. Many library websites included job listings, and others offered entrepreneurial education and work opportunities for people who had lost their jobs.

Libraries soon started to provide replacement services due to the lockdown limitations, such as home delivery, as well as means for users to visit the library's location and pick up already reserved goods without stepping inside the library building. This is because one of COVID-19's primary consequences on the core function of public library services was the shutting of library facilities. Despite the valiant attempts of library services in nations like the United Kingdom to offer options like curbside/click and collect, as well as home delivery, these closures unavoidably significantly impacted the physical loans that libraries performed.

It was clear that library services had to encourage and enhance the accessibility of electronic literature given the limited availability of physical library facilities. Early research on the pandemic by Dadhe and Dubey (2020); Molepo and Shokane (2021) revealed that the rapid increase in e-loan usage that followed was one of the most crucial signals in favour of supporting public libraries during lockdowns. According to research by Maltez (2020), 173 of the 201 UK library services that responded, or just over 86% of them, supplied comprehensive data to allow for a comparison of e-loan usage between 2018–19 and 2020–21. According to data on the percentage increase in e-loans at UK libraries, 25 library services had an increase in e-loan borrowing between 0% and 100% during this time, and 82 saw an increase between 101% and 200%.

Ocholla (2021), reflecting on the difficulties libraries encountered during the COVID-19 pandemic, proposed that libraries should provide equal opportunities to everyone, so it is crucial to let people know when new challenges appear, such as closures or the availability of internet services for the public. Libraries, especially public ones, must be given the opportunity to advertise digital information on their websites, through virtual exhibitions, and e-books to offer the services. Due to the government's low budget, most public libraries found this transfer or integration difficult. However, Nasser and Al-Suqri (2017) make the point that these digital services could improve the level of support that public libraries give to researchers, governments, and other public institutions while also ensuring that the information they provide is accessible to all and can be used for further research.

Cox and Felix (2021) also call attention to the possibility that libraries might increase the number of people who use them by becoming more well-known on social media, where individuals disseminate newly uploaded information. The increased invention, creativity, and teamwork among library staff members while debating and putting ideas into reality has also been credited with the effectiveness of the new approaches. According to research by Maltez (2020), Canadian libraries have recognized a useful opportunity to teach the public how to utilise online library services because of their experience with COVID-19 limitations. The library's initial action, according to the study's results, was to raise public awareness of the work they were undertaking to be able to provide virtual services. Since then, the use of libraries increased when they started providing online services.

2.6 COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND THE FUTURE OF LIBRARIES

The library attracts a sizable number of visitors every day since it serves as a hub for knowledge and information. Additionally, the social spaces found in libraries, such as stack rooms, reading rooms, multimedia laboratories, and circulation offices, are, situated adjacent to where library users use the computers. Therefore, the coronavirus and its spread were more likely to affect library users and personnel. Carbery et al. (2020) suggested that COVID-19's abrupt increase in 2020 and 2021 resulted in unanticipated events like lockdowns and closures at libraries and other institutions, which made it challenging for them to carry on as they had in the past. Students, the public, and institutions began to think of utilising technology as the only way to get out of their dangerous situation because of the suspension of in-person services and the lack of access to physical collections.

Libraries have Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) that users who desire to visit the library's physical location must go by to protect both the staff and the guests. It was discovered that SOP guidelines were prominently displayed on the website to draw the attention of its users and to make sure that visitors were aware of these SOPs beforehand, simplifying the adoption of preventative measures when offering library services. However, this depended on the nation, since some nations shut down all institutions, deemed to be providing additional services (Begum, Roknuzzaman, and Shobhanee 2022). Technology was the driving force for the operations in nations like the United Kingdom that had public libraries open and provided basic services, according to Carbery et al. (2020). The role of library professionals, especially those employed by public libraries, was vital in this particular and urgent scenario, to inform their library users of the amenities and services they offer.

Hoffert (2021) claims that during the lockout, library staff members showed their expertise, empathy, and capacity for rapid change. Although there were members who caught the illness, especially at libraries that remained open and provided only the most fundamental services to the public. This also had an impact on the staff and knowledge that was accessible at public libraries. In this way, it was like making the library virus-free by taking specific safeguards. Bows (2017) notes that when libraries reopened in various nations following a countrywide shutdown, many of them did so for a restricted amount of time each day and allowed employees to work with a minimum number in compliance with government regulations. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, most libraries worldwide changed their operating schedules. This was done to reduce the number of user-accessible areas of the library because using certain facilities could contaminate the workplace and increase the risk of the virus spreading to staff.

This had happened both in India and Canada, keeping a variety of locations (reading rooms, stack rooms) inaccessible for everyone's safety and security. Most public libraries in India prohibited the use of computers for searching the Online Public Access Catalogue and advised library users to utilise personal devices to do so by visiting the library's website, using the Single Window Search feature, downloading the library app, or using Remote Services Hadidi and Linscot (2021).

As the shortage of librarians with digital technology abilities became apparent, the problem of training and upskilling library staff did come to light. An essential component of providing

services online was observed to be the application of personnel training and abilities to content creation Hadidi and Linscot (2021). Begum, Roknuzzaman, and Shobhane (2022) assert that a shift to digitalization necessitates both the efficient provision of a digital service and the requirement that staff members be properly trained to do so. Depending on the infrastructure, certain libraries were able to respond quickly, Freudenberger 2021; Hoffert 2021; Begum, Roknuzzaman, and Shobhane (2022). Jones (2020), for instance, points out that the Plano Public Library in Dallas, Texas, found it simple to make the switch to digital distribution because Facebook Live video was already being used to offer information on social media.

Some libraries also offered users Wi-Fi hotspots, Drive-In Wi-Fi (extending Wi-Fi connectivity to outside of library buildings), device loans, and using mobile libraries for Wi-Fi connections, Jones (2020), while many library services kept Wi-Fi services on throughout lockdown or extended them to allow for a greater physical area to be covered (Cowell 2020). One library noted that they promoted some parking spots as Wi-Fi access locations (Tamaro 2020). In other cases, this was complemented with readily available power outlets and sitting arrangements offered by the library service outside the facility. Along with professional supervision and guidance, several libraries also offered pop-up laptop programs outside the library facilities Ocholla (2021). In an interesting finding, the Public Library Association discovered that 81% of respondents in a poll of US library services, maintained Wi-Fi before COVID-19, with 12% offering or expanding it in reaction to the pandemic (Public Library Association 2020). Given that 48.4% of respondents to a US library survey stated that their city/municipality does not provide free Wi-Fi in public locations, it is obvious how crucial these services are (Maltez 2020).

Wheeler and Kyprianou-Chavda (2021) note that access to published literature was necessary at a time when the scientific community around the world was battling against time to develop a permanent cure for the disease. Notably, a considerable number of commercial publishers and vendors made the effort to make COVID-19-related content available openly. Others had contributed to the process by making it simpler to log in and access resources from networks other than those used by the government. In one part titled “COVID-19 Research”, the National Digital Library of India (NDLI) made its services available to everyone. It offered literature and information specifically linked to COVID-19, including research works, projects, financing, start-ups, databases, and multimedia items. By

emphasizing the NDLI link on their homepage, almost all the India Institute of Technologies (IIT) libraries actively promoted and amplified the usage of these beneficial resources, Maltez (2020). During the COVID-19 crisis, it was, in fact, an attempt at “bibliotherapy” with the goal of converting adversity into opportunity. A list of the most important, open-access COVID-19 scholarly materials had been compiled by libraries.

As Jones (2020) noted, libraries themselves were doing a fantastic job of educating their members and supporting them through those tough times to reduce the stress level of users to obtain the necessary information. While some library web pages in the UK welcomed visitors with the slogan “We are always here for you.” others displayed the statement “We are open both physically and virtually.” All these slogans gave library visitors encouragement to act and significantly reduced their worries about COVID-19. In keeping with ongoing technological advancement, the virtual aspect of library services was strengthened during the COVID-19 health emergency. According to research by Nasser and Al-Suqri (2017), the COVID-19 requirements for delivering in-person physical services increased the effectiveness of libraries in providing virtual reference services in a new and improved way. There were several initiatives to provide interlibrary borrowing services virtually, from requisition through supply.

The library had a crucial role as a social hub and source of social services in many places. In the USA and India, libraries served as a community resource for technological support and assistance with online learning during lockdowns when schools were closed (Freudenberger 2021). According to Dadhe and Dubey (2020), social assistance programs like welfare payments were utilised to check on library users, with one Texas library service making around 300 calls in the first week or so. The library offered several significant social services, such as telephone assistance or printing several substantial forms for library users and members of the public who needed services completed but lacked the necessary ICT resources, Carbery et al 2020; Freudenberger (2021). The library also offered social assistance to help with employment and financial matters.

To provide services like outdoor activities Bray (2020), health services and information Carbery et al. 2020; Freudenberger (2021), e-service tax fills Hadidi and Linscot (2021), and food distribution, libraries collaborated with other local authorities and organisations. The importance of the library to the community was frequently emphasized, as well as the effective assistance libraries provided during the lockdown, via various platforms (online

book groups, social media, video call platforms, chat applications and gaming servers). The libraries were effective as both sources of information for the community and as a means for the community to connect with one another.

For a brief time during this epidemic, several publishers were offering increased access to e-resources (access to more items than the library subscribes to), including e-books, e-journals, e-databases, etc. in response to the unpredictable and challenging time. To help visitors see these possibilities, libraries in the USA and Germany highlighted the links to those free and extended materials on their portals. This increased the likelihood that users would use virtual services and, as a result, frequent library portal visits. Nearly all libraries in the USA, India, and other nations had access points that make it possible to read digital editions of newspapers and periodicals on a variety of practical, portable digital devices, Wheeler and Kyprianou-Chavda (2021); Willenborg and Withorn (2021). According to Rafiq et al (2021), applications like Zoom were perfect to keep around for the future and the hybrid delivery model may become a cornerstone for library services.

2.7 Summary of the chapter

This chapter has provided a discussion of the various studies related to the research problem of this study. It has provided a contextual analysis of a library, the types of libraries and the purpose and functions of a library. The chapter has also discussed the role of a library in society, the global trends and challenges facing libraries. Additionally, an overview of public libraries has been discussed, together with the challenges of COVID-19 and how they impacted public libraries. The last section of this chapter discusses COVID-19 and the future of libraries. The next chapter, chapter three aims to discuss the research philosophy, design and strategies utilised to look into the research questions and find answers. It further discusses the target population and sampling. It moves on to discuss the research instrument, pilot study, administration and collection of questionnaires, data analysis method used, validity and reliability, the limitations of the research and finally, the elimination of bias, as well as the ethical considerations made during the implementation of the study. The section ends with a conclusion that highlights the main issues of this section.

CHAPTER THREE:

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter, chapter two has provided a discussion of the various studies related to the research problem of this study. It has provided a contextual analysis of a library, the types of libraries and the purpose and functions of a library. The chapter has also discussed the role of a library in society, the global trends and challenges facing libraries. Additionally, an overview of public libraries has been discussed, together with the challenges of COVID-19 and how they impacted public libraries. The last section of this chapter discusses COVID-19 and the future of libraries. The next chapter aims to discuss the research philosophy, design and strategies utilised to look into the research questions and find answers. It further discusses the target population and sampling. It moves on to discuss the research instrument, pretesting, administration and collection of questionnaires, data analysis method used, validity and reliability, the limitations of the research and finally, the elimination of bias, as well as the ethical considerations made during the implementation of the study. The chapter ends with a conclusion that highlights the main issues of this chapter.

3.2 RESEARCH APPROACH

Research methodology, according to

Taherdoost (2016), is a methodical approach to addressing an issue based on the design of a study. Making crucial judgments on the actions and procedures used in a study to solve the research topic, as well as the underlying reasoning for those decisions, is required. The interpretations that might be drawn about a phenomenon are fundamentally impacted by the choice of a study methodology. Three common research methodologies/approaches are employed: qualitative research, quantitative research, and mixed techniques. The three research approaches are briefly explained as follows:

3.2.1 Qualitative Approach

With a qualitative method, data is gathered from the participants' lived experiences, as well as their perspectives, attitudes, opinions, and any meanings related to them, according to Taherdoost (2016) and Mejia-Perez (2020). It makes it possible for a researcher to gain a

deeper understanding of a phenomena or complicated ideas. This approach is perfect for research that aims to understand how or why things happen, interpret occurrences, and describe those events as they occur in the world.

3.2.2 Quantitative approach

The alternative strategy, as described by Kothari and Gaurav (2017), is quantitative. It is frequently employed to address relational queries about variables within a research framework. This method gathers quantifiable data through tests, observations, surveys, and questionnaires. The information is then displayed through graphs, diagrams, and even pie charts. The results of it can be applied to a bigger population.

3.2.3 Mixed Method approach

This strategy combines qualitative and quantitative methods. Its key idea is that a combination like this might provide a study topic with a better viewpoint, according to Aspers and Ugo (2019). Additionally, the approach enables a more synergetic use of data Bhandari (2020).

Rationale for choosing the quantitative approach

The study used a quantitative methodology with the aim of allowing for the inclusion of more respondents from various EML departments of the municipality public libraries. This improved how broadly the study's findings can be applied. Due to the limited number of variables and the close-ended nature of the information being gathered, this technique also offers impartiality and accuracy, Creswell and Creswell (2018); Sileyew (2019). As data can be collected concurrently through automation, it also quickens the speed of data collecting because it is easier and much faster. This enables respondents to complete surveys virtually at their own convenience and also in private as they will be at home or at their office.

3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

A research design, according to Polit and Hungler (2013), gives a framework and an overarching strategy to be used in performing a study. This is done by integrating various study components to achieve coherence and logic. It also enables a researcher to pinpoint the study techniques most suited to a given research issue. The type of study can be determined

by the research design that is chosen. It is a road plan that directs a researcher throughout a study, as suggested by Loet, Ismael, and Staa (2020).

3.3.1 Types of research designs

For a quantitative study, many different types of research designs may be employed, namely descriptive, correctional, casual-comparative/quasi-experimental and experimental. The design chosen for this particular topic: The impact of COVID-19 lockdown regulations on service delivery in South African Public Libraries with a focus on the EML is the descriptive design. Loet, Ismael, and Staa (2020).

3.3.2 Descriptive research design

This is the best way to comprehend a phenomenon, a population, or a specific circumstance, such as how lean management practices affect cost-cutting. In contrast to experimental research design, observational research design is more focused on making observations and measuring the variables with the intention of examining them Mejia-Perez (2020). The justification of using descriptive research design is because it is a strategy that has the potential to explore and provide a greater understanding of the present status of a variable that has been chosen for the investigation. A descriptive research design in accordance with Park, Irwan and Han (2020), enables a researcher to to analyse data and gain a greater understanding of a research topic. Specifically, a case study of the EML is used to examine how the COVID-19 lockdown requirements have affected service delivery in South African public libraries.

3.4 RESEARCH PARADIGM

Understanding and expressing thoughts about the nature of reality and how to go about learning it are central to research philosophy. The three primary research paradigms are positivism, interpretivism, and pragmatism, with positivism associated with quantitative research and interpretivism linked to qualitative research. Research paradigms perceive reality in different ways Picardi and Masick (2014). The three main research paradigms are as follows:

3.4.1 Positivist paradigm

Pratap (2019) claims that the fundamental tenet of positivism is that reality is unmediated by us and that our senses cannot mediate it. It adopts an ontological realist stance. An additional fundamental tenet of positivism is that every phenomenon, whether in the social or natural world, has a cause-and-effect link and can be anticipated once. In positivism, experiments based on theories are used.

3.4.2 Interpretivism paradigm

The interpretivist school of thought, which sees reality as having various dimensions and continually being mediated by people's worldviews, holds that reality is socially produced rather than naturally occurring. In that it seeks to explain how people perceive the social situations they encounter; it is a qualitative paradigm. According to interpretivists, knowledge is a predictable result of interpretation from various perspectives by different people, Swadener and Ndimande (2014).

3.4.3 Post-positivism paradigm

Post-positivism stepped forward as a reaction of educational researchers to the limitations of positivism as a paradigm. Educational researchers to the limitations of a positivism paradigm. Educational researchers discovered that positivism cannot fulfil the requirements for social sciences' research as it (positivism) bases itself on observable and empirical analytic facts. As a reaction to its orthodox nature towards quantitative empirical analytic based research, the researchers of social sciences and education came with the idea of mixed paradigm combining positivism and interpretivism and making a new paradigm named post-positivism(Petter and Gallivan, 2004)

3.4.4 Reasons for choosing the positivism paradigm

Because the positivist paradigm has a framework that is clearly specified during a study, it was used in this investigation. The positivist paradigm's predetermined laws and principles, which provide minimal space for deviation and potentially significant variable changes, are another factor that influenced this decision. Such characteristics increase the application accuracy of research by establishing clear guidelines that must be followed via the use of impartial scientific instruments. Post-positivism is 'a certain pluralism' which balances both positivist and interpretivist approaches. It focuses on research issues in the context of

involving appearances of the majority and announcing the results of what the majority says is acceptable (Wildemuth, 1993; Fischer, 1998; Philips and Burbules, 2000), whereas post-positivism, along with quantitative analysis includes the perspectives of historical, comparative and philosophical, and phenomenological analysis (Fischer, 1998).

3.5 SAMPLING AND TARGET POPULATION

The population in question is the segment of the study's target population from which the study's sample will be taken. When the word "population" was employed in this study, it meant a collection of people, a community or groups, or an organisation with reference to Du Plooy, 2009; O'Leary (2010). The EML, which operate 94 libraries and employ 200 people overall, including senior and assistant librarians, served as the study's target audience. The study's sample size was 100 including both management and junior-level employees. The criteria used for the selection was probability sampling, and thereby avoiding subjectivity in sample selection. The target population were people with responsibilities and obligations related to the EML.

3.6 Sampling methods

Methods of sampling can be classified as either probability or non-probability sampling. In probability sampling, each person in the research's target population has an equal chance of being chosen for inclusion in the study, Picardi and Masick (2014). It is appropriate for quantitative research as establishing impartiality in sample selection is the main goal. According to Picardi and Masick (2014), non-probability sampling strategies pick study samples based on the subjective judgment of a researcher, meaning that not every member of the target population has an equal chance of taking part in the study. However, this study employed probability sampling.

3.6.1 Probability sampling technique

Probability sampling, sometimes referred to as random sampling, which is utilised in quantitative research, was mentioned by Taherdoost (2016). Every unit in a possible research population has an equal chance of being chosen as a participant in the study, which is the difference between probability sampling and non-probability sampling. According to Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2016), there are several sampling techniques that fall within the probability sampling paradigm, as listed below:

3.6.1.1 Simple random sampling

Every item in the population has an equal chance of being included in the sample by simple random sampling; nevertheless, this technique has the drawbacks of requiring a list of every item in the population, expensive data acquisition costs, and high standard errors of estimators, Creswell and Poth (2018).

3.6.1.2 Systematic sampling

Systematic sampling, which varies from random sampling in that it chooses every *n*th item after a randomly chosen start point, allows for the reduction of the number of items in a random sample without sacrificing statistical regularity Cesswell and Poth (2018).

3.6.1.3 Stratified random sampling

In situations when there is variation within a population, stratified sampling is used. A random sample is taken from each of the strata or subgroups that make up the population. Stratified sampling is what is meant by Cresswell and Poth (2018). Based on variables like gender, company size, or employment, items may naturally fall into strata or subgroups, Creswell and Poth (2018).

3.6.1.4 Cluster sampling

When the population is dispersed over a wide geographic region, cluster sampling is utilised mostly to save expenses and time. According to Mejia-Perez and Park, Irwan and Han (2020), cluster sampling involves grouping the population into groups and randomly selecting samples from each cluster to make up the final sample.

3.7 Rationale for adopting a probability sampling technique

This study used a probability sampling approach, where the respondents were chosen at random from a broader population based on the probability theory. The justification for this method is that it increased the impartiality and correctness of the study results since every EML employee had an equal chance of becoming one of the survey's respondents. It also expedites a study, according to Kothari and Gag (2019), since it is an easy and uncomplicated method of collecting samples from the target population, while the time saved could be used for data analysis and conclusions.

3.8 SAMPLING AND SAMPLE SIZE

One hundred (100) staff members from the EML were included in the sample size of the main study, while ten (10) were included in the pilot study. Professional library employees employed by the EML made up this sample size. Ninety-four (94) public libraries in the EML, which has a target population of 200 staff, made up the study sample. Kovacs, Balas, Ravenzwaaij, and Aczel (2022) delineate six approaches for justifying the selection of a sample size, encompassing: a) exhaustive enumeration of the entire population, b) considerations of resource constraints, c) the desired level of precision, d) a priori power analysis, e) heuristic guidelines, and f) the absence of explicit justification. In the context of this study, the rationale for the chosen sample size primarily rests upon resource limitations. The sample size was by the desired level of precision, in terms of the collection of data and the source of such data. 100 questionnaires were distributed via e-mail and there were 65 respondents who participated.

3.9 RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

Data collection, according to Flick (2017), comprises of using an organised and methodical approach to obtain information that will help answer the study's research objectives. Depending on the type of research being undertaken, such as a desktop study that uses just the secondary data, the data collected may originate from primary, secondary, or both sources, Yin (2018). Apuke (2017) defines secondary data as information gathered from publications like books, scholarly journals, videos, and podcasts. They may be public or unpublished resources, but they are information from other scholars.

According to Asenahabi (2019) and Creswell and Creswell (2018), a research instrument is any equipment or tool that may be used to gather data. Quantitative research may involve various data-gathering techniques, including experiments, surveys, and questionnaires. An online questionnaire that participants self-administered served as the study's data-gathering tool. A self-administered questionnaire, according to Sileyew (2019), is organised and includes both closed-ended and open-ended items. A questionnaire with both open-ended and closed-ended questions was used for this study, they were distributed via e-mail and hand delivered to some members of staff. They were also collected using this system. The justification for using a questionnaire has been explained below as follows:

3.10 QUESTIONNAIRE CONSTRUCTION

In this study, a self-administered questionnaire was used, and was divided into four sections with 33 questions. Section A dealt with the demographics of the study, addressing gender, age, education, years of experience and the units/sections in which the respondents work at the EML, Section B to Section D of the questionnaire was based on a Likert scale survey questions using a 5 point scale, where the respondents were required to select their level of agreement to a set of questions, in 5 points, ranging from (1) Strongly Agree; (2) Agree; (3) Neutral (4) Disagree; (5) Strongly Disagree.

Further breakdown of the questionnaire was as follows:

- **Section A** - Demographic information
- **Section B** – Research Question 1
- **Section C** – Research Question 2
- **Section D** – Research Question 3
- **Section D** – Research Question 4

3.11 PRETESTING

The researcher decided to do pretesting of the questionnaire so as to get at the thinking behind the answers so that the auditing of the responses can be done accurately, also to assess whether the questionnaire is being filled out properly and whether the questions are actually understood by respondents. Pretesting was done to test the procedure to be followed in this study before its real commencement to guarantee that the study accomplishes its intended objectives. Finding any areas that required improvement was the goal. Using a random selection approach, the researcher gave ten (10) questionnaires to the library staff members of the Kwa-Dukuza Municipality, which served as the subject of the pilot study. Amendments were made after identifying the flaws and omissions discovered during the pilot research, Malmvist et al (2019). Such a test forecasts how a performance or behaviour will behave differently. It serves as an alternate method of interpreting test results.

3.12 ADMINISTRATION OF QUESTIONNAIRE

One hundred (100) copies of the questionnaires were randomly distributed electronically (using a simple random sampling technique) to the ninety-four (94) different public libraries within the EML.

3.13 COLLECTION OF QUESTIONNAIRES

The copies of the questionnaire were collected in person, and some copies were sent through emails as attachments. Sixty (65) questionnaires were returned, representing a 65% response rate. Some respondents delivered their answered questionnaire to the researcher's desk in person, while others emailed their responses.

3.14 DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis is the act of applying analytical or logical thinking to the gathered data in order to identify emergent patterns, connections, trends, and insights concerning the research topic, Creswell and Creswell (2018). Descriptive and inferential statistics are often utilised as data analysis techniques in quantitative studies (Creswell and Creswell 2018). Descriptive statistics are used in data analysis to describe, illustrate, or summarize data in a relevant way. However, because they cannot be used to draw inferences or extrapolate the results to a wider population, descriptive statistics is better suited for research focusing on a small sample and one variable. Invariable analysis is the term that best describes this process (Asenahabi 2019).

Quantitative research focuses on quantifying, evaluating and utilising numerical data. Compared to qualitative approaches, quantitative procedures employ real measurements and are more precise (Creswell 2018). Data of this kind can be separated via grouping, measurement, computation, or ranking. It can be used in statistical analytic techniques, conversations, or graphical presentations. Utilising questions in surveys is a key method of gathering numerical data. A Microsoft Excel program is frequently used for the analysis of quantitative data.

SPSS-IBM, a statistics data analysis software, was used in this study's data analysis. The analysed data by the software provided a meaningful description of the data.

3.15 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

In a qualitative study, it is about establishing trustworthiness, which refers to the degree of consistency in areas like data collection, data analysis, and the overall methodology of the study that would ensure quality in the study Cadete, 2017; Creswell and Creswell (2018). In a quantitative study, it is about establishing the validity and reliability of a study. This study used a quantitative method to solve the validity and reliability concerns.

McGregor and Murnane (2016) define validity as the degree to which a concept is reliably assessed in quantitative research, whereas reliability, or the correctness of an instrument, is the second quality indicator in a quantitative study. In other words, the degree to which a study tool consistently produces the same results when repeatedly used in the same circumstance. The four major categories of validity are listed below.

- Construct validity
- Content validity
- Face validity
- Criterion validity

3.15.1 Construct validity

Construct validity aids in evaluating and determining whether a particular measurement tool is a true representation of what a researcher wants to measure, as explained by Yin (2018), as a construct is a representation of a group of behaviours that are linked logically to create an idea invented for the purpose of a study. It serves the purpose of denoting the complete efficacy of a specific methodology. This study addressed construct validity by demonstrating how, in connection to the study problem, reality at the EML matches the study's theory. This was also accomplished by looking at the remarks that respondents made in the surveys.

3.15.2 Face Validity

Face validity, as defined by Kothari and Gaurav (2021), involves considering how acceptable the study's material seems to be. It is a more individualised form of evaluation. This was accomplished by making sure the research tool employed in the study was pertinent to the respondents. All the respondents in this case are employed by the EML.

3.15.3 Content validity

The research instruments content was sent to the research supervisor to ensure it relates to the research questions. The portions of the questionnaire were divided into categories that matched the goals of the study. To guarantee content validity, questions were developed around each study goal.

3.15.4 Criterion validity

A test for measuring the results of a survey using a questionnaire is called “criterion validity”, additionally known as actuality (Khotari and Gaurav 2021).

3.16 LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

Due to the large number of public libraries (94), which are dispersed around the eThekweni Municipality, conducting the study at the EML presented a problem. Another difficulty was that the study’s scope could not be expanded to include other localities throughout the nation or the possible use of focus groups for data collecting. This would have greatly expanded the study's scope. The purchase of materials like books, travel expenses to meet and recruit or communicate with possible responders, and the cost of using the internet to seek relevant literature were all constrained by a lack of money and the use of personal funds. These restrictions were lessened by employing electronic dissemination of the surveys, online academic publications, e-books, and personal savings.

3.17 ELIMINATION OF BIAS

According to Almalki (2016), bias can emerge in a study in various ways and stages, such as during data collecting, the improper choice of a study design, or the data analysis process. Bias can make the conclusions of a study appear unreliable. Adherence to the following criteria was used in this study to address bias removal.

- To preserve objectivity, neutral terms such as respondent, person, or an individual were used rather than stereotypes like “male”, “female” or “woman”.
- Respondents were not obliged to give information on their race, ethnicity, or even religion.

- Respondents were not addressed in a way that implied anything about their gender, age, or educational attainment. Stereotyping or generalisation of any type was also avoided by refraining from making any sort of implication or presumption about a respondent.

3.18 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

According to Creswell (2018), ethical considerations are research principles and practices, guiding a study to ensure its findings are reliable, credible, and trustworthy. In ensuring that ethical practices and principles are adhered to, the study addressed the following:

3.18.1 Ensuring participants have given informed consent

A consent form for participation was linked to the self-administered surveys delivered both electronically and in person. Prior to beginning the questionnaire, participants had to sign this form. The permission form essentially states that the participants agree that their participation is voluntary, won't negatively impact them, and that the answers they offer will stay anonymous. They were also free to choose whether to respond to queries if they didn't want to. (Creswell and Creswell, 2018; Cadete, 2017).

3.18.2 Ensuring no harm comes to participants

There were precautions made to ensure that the respondents wouldn't experience any pain, injury of any kind, or risk due to their involvement in the study. The following issues were prioritized to combat this:

Prior to completing the surveys, respondents were given all the information they needed on the purpose, scope, and context of the study. The respondents' identities were kept private during the entire study process since they were not required to provide any of their fundamental personal information, including names, addresses, and identity numbers. This was done to protect everyone's privacy. There was no deceit of any kind used in the research design that would have put participants in danger. For any questions or concerns that they might have had, respondents were allowed to ask for clarification (Cadete, 2017; Creswell and Creswell, 2018).

3.18.3 Ensuring confidentiality and anonymity

For certain research participants, anonymity and secrecy are essential because they provide them with the confidence to share information pertinent freely and fearlessly to the study

(Creswell 2018). No responder could be recognised as the source of the information or as having taken part in the study due to the method the data was collected. Only the researcher and their supervisor get access to the data they've gathered, and it's kept safe.

3.18.4 Ensuring that permission is obtained

Obtaining ethical permission came before data collection could begin. In addition to receiving approval from the institution's research and ethical committee and EML.

3.19 Summary of the chapter

This chapter has provided an in-depth presentation of the methodology used in this study. It has explained the choice of the research design, approach, strategies, and the philosophical paradigm underpinning this study. The population of the study and sample size have been defined, and the rationale for the selection of the participants has also been provided. Various sampling techniques have been discussed together with sampling methods, with motivation for the choice of probability sampling technique and purposive sampling method being explained. The issues of eliminating bias and ethics and how that was addressed and achieved have all been discussed. The next three chapters' deal with data analysis, discussions of the findings, conclusion and recommendations made in relation to the findings of the study.

CHAPTER FOUR:

PRESENTATION OF THE FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter has provided an in-depth presentation of the methodology used in this study. It has explained the choice of the research design, approach, strategies, and the philosophical paradigm underpinning this study. The population of the study and sample size have been defined, and the rationale for the selection of the participants has also been provided. Various sampling techniques have been discussed together with sampling methods, with motivation for the choice of probability sampling technique and purposive sampling method being explained. The issues of eliminating bias and ethics and how that was addressed and achieved have all been discussed. This chapter presents the findings of this study in terms of investigating the impact of COVID-19 lockdown regulations on service delivery in South African Public Libraries with particular focus on EML. The reporting of the findings focussed on the four research objectives. The chapter is divided into two sections, with the first section providing demographic characteristics while the second section presents the findings based on the analysis of the responses from the respondents.

SECTION1: Respondents' demographic characteristics

This section provides demographic information about the research respondents, such as academic qualification, length of service and employment positions.

SECTION 2: Analysis of the collected data.

This section provides the analysis of the collected data, based on the responses related to the research questions, as listed below.

- **RQ 1:** In what ways did the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown restrictions impact the provision of eThekweni Municipality Libraries (EML) services to the public?
- **RQ 2:** In what ways did the eThekweni Municipality Libraries (EML) respond to the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown restrictions in terms of delivery of its services to the public?
- **RQ 3:** What is the extent to which such a response impacted access to a diverse

category of library users during COVID-19 lockdown restrictions?

- **RQ 4:** Research Question 4: What are the suggested approaches that could be employed to the identified gaps of the eThekweni Municipality Libraries (EML) responses to the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown as a way of improving the provision of services during such a pandemic in future?

4.2 SECTION 1 – DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

Section one presents the demographic characteristics of the respondents, as presented below.

4.2.1 The educational level of the respondents

This demographic section presents a distribution of the qualifications possessed by those who responded to this study.

Table 4.1: The educational level of the respondents

N=65

	Qualification	Number of respondents	Valid %	Cumulative %
3.1	Grade 12	4	6	6
3.2	Certificate	9	14	20
3.3	Diploma	30	46	66
3.4	Degree	10	15	81
3.5	Honours Degree	7	11	92
3.6	Master's Degree	5	8	-
3.7	Doctorate Degree	0	0	0
	Total	65	100	100

Table 4. 1 above shows that 6% of the employees of the EML possess a Grade 12 certificate, with 14% having a certificate. Those in possession of diplomas stand at 46%, with 15% in possession of degrees. The data also shows that those with honours degrees are 11%, with those with master's degrees being 8%.

4.2.2 Name of the unit/section

Table 4.2 presents a distribution of the various units/sections in which respondents work at the EML.

Table 4.2: Name of the unit/section

N=65

Type/section of the library	Number of respondents	Valid %	Cumulative %
a. Public Library	20	31	31
b. Special Library	12	18	49
c. Cataloguing	8	12	61
d. Outreach/Promotion	10	15	76
e. Reference Services	15	24	-
Total	65	100	100

The results above show that 31% of the respondents work in the public library, with 18% in the special library and 12% in the cataloguing section. Those involved with the outreach/promotion are 15%, and the reference services section is 24%.

4.2.3 Length of service at the EML

This section presents a distribution of the respondents' length of service at the EML, as shown in Table 4.3

Table 4.3: Length of service at eThekweni Municipal Libraries

N=65

Years of service	No. of respondents	Valid %	Cumulative %
a. 1 -5 years	8	12	12
b. 6 – 10 years	25	38	50
c. 11-15 years	10	15	65
d. 16 – 20 years	10	15	80
e. Above 21 years	12	20	-
Total	65	100	100

The results show that 12% of the respondents have worked for the EML for less than five years, and 38% have worked for the EML for between 6-10 years. Those with between 11-15 years of service account for 15% of the respondents, and the ones who have worked between 16-20 years, account for 15% too, while above 21 years of service are 20% of the respondents.

4.3 SECTION 1 – RESEARCH QUESTIONS RESPONSE PRESENTATION

This section is a presentation and a discussion of the findings of the study based on the responses from the respondents. The responses are based on the aim of the study, which was to investigate the impact of COVID-19 lockdown regulations on service delivery in South African Public Libraries focusing on EML. The presentation and discussion of the findings are categorised as per the four research questions.

4.3.1 Research question one

The first research question explored *the different ways in which the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown restrictions impacted the provision of EML services to the public.*

4.3.1.1 The scaling down of the EML services to the library users

The analysis of the responses to the above research question is illustrated in Table 4. 4. The focus being the link between the scaling down of the EML survives to the library users (the public) and COVID-19 lockdown restrictions.

Table 4.4: It scaled down the services of the public libraries

N=65

Services of Public Libraries	No. of Respondents	Valid %	Cumulative
Strongly disagree	8	12	12
Disagree	13	20	32
Not sure	0	0	32
Agree	9	14	46
Strongly agree	35	54	-
Total	65	100	100

The analysis of the responses on the impact of COVID-19 on the EML in providing its services to its users, in terms of it scaling down its services, indicates that 12% of the respondents strongly disagree with the statement, with 20% further disagreeing. Those who agree account for 68% of the respondents, implying that COVID-19 lockdown restrictions had a significant impact on the provision of services by the EML. These findings collaborate with that of Carbery *et al* (2020), who pointed out that the restrictions on institutions and business organisations, as a form of curbing the spread of COVID-19, had a direct impact on businesses and other organisations, as it made it difficult for them to be fully operational in terms of providing their goods and services to their users or clients.

4.3.1.2 It influenced the use of the remote working model by the public libraries.

The table below provides a distribution of the responses from the respondents on the statement that the COVID-19 restrictions influenced the use of the remote working model by the EML.

Table 4.5: It influenced the use of remote working model by the public libraries

N=65

COVID-19 influenced the use of remote working model	No. of respondents	Valid %	Cumulative %
Strongly disagree	12	18	18
Disagree	7	11	29
Not sure	10	15	44
Agree	25	39	83
Strongly agree	11	17	-
Total	65	100	100

On whether COVID-19 lockdown restrictions had a link with the adoption of the remote working model by the EML, the findings show that 18% of the respondents strongly disagree with this assertion, with 11% disagreeing, while 55 of the respondents posting a neutral position on the matter. Those who agree with the assertion account for 59% of the respondents, with 17% strongly agreeing and 17% agreeing. This analysis suggests that COVID-19 lockdown restrictions had a significant impact on the operations of the EML, to the extent of influencing the adoption of the remote working model so that it (the EML) could continue providing its services to the public. In relation to these findings, Bray (2020) noted that COVID-19 restrictions created a challenge for businesses and institutions in terms of their need to continue to be fully operational, and this was a catalyst that brought about the concept of remote working, as it ensures continuity in operations.

4.3.1.3 Accelerated the use of digital platforms for public libraries' services.

This section provides responses to the statement that COVID-19's impact on the provision of EML services was the acceleration of the use of digital platforms for EML's services in South Africa.

Table 4.6: Accelerated the use of digital platforms for public libraries' services

N=65

COVID-19 accelerated the use of digital platforms for public libraries	No. of respondents	Valid %	Cumulative
Strongly disagree	9	14	14
Disagree	12	18	32
Not sure	9	14	46
Agree	15	23	69
Strongly agree	20	31	-
Total	65	100	100

Based on the analysis, as per Table 4.6 above, on the kind of impact COVID-19 lockdown restrictions had on the capacity of the EML to provide its services to the public, the findings show that 13% of the respondents strongly disagree with the statement that COVID-19 lockdown restrictions contributed to the use of digital platforms by the EML, in providing its services to the public, while 18% also disagreeing on such an assertion. However, 23% of the respondents agree, with 31% strongly agreeing. This implies that the pandemic restrictions had a significant impact on the operations of the EML, especially the use of digital platforms in providing its services to library users. This also happens to other institutions and business organisations. As Dadhe and Dubey (2020) point out, there was an increase in digital transformation and technology use during the COVID-19 lockdown period. The objective was to ensure that the provision of services to clients was not interrupted or suspended.

4.3.1.4 There was a suspension of physical access to public library services.

The discussion of the findings in this section is based on the statement that COVID-19 impacted EML's services by influencing the suspension of physical access to EML and its services. The discussion is based on the responses from the respondents.

Table 4.7: There was a suspension of physical access of users/employees to public library services

N=65

COVID-19 influenced the suspension of physical access to EML services	No. of respondents	Valid %	Cumulative
Strongly disagree	13	20	20
Disagree	12	18	39
Not sure	15	23	62
Agree	15	23	85
Strongly agree	10	15	-
Total	65	100	100

Table 4.7 shows a distribution of the responses on whether the COVID-19 lockdown restrictions impacted the EML regarding its physical access by employees and library users. The responses show that 20% of the respondents strongly disagree with such an impact being attributed to the lockdown restrictions, with 18% also disagreeing, while 23% positing a neutral position on the matter. Those who agree are 23%, and those who strongly agree account for 15% of the respondents. Based on the analysis, the findings indicate that although there could have been physical access to the libraries, such access was probably limited and inclusive since the number of those agreeing and those disagreeing were equal. According to Fasaie, Adekoya and Adegbilero-Iwari (2021), although COVID-19 restrictions had a negative impact on the operations of businesses and other institutions, such as public libraries, the physical access was restricted to a certain extent, depending on the category of the users permitted on the use of library services. This assertion could explain the inconclusive nature of this issue.

4.3.1.5 Fewer library users/employees accessed public libraries.

The statement above implies that COVID-19 restrictions had a negative impact on the EML, as it impacted the number of employees and users who frequented the library facilities. The discussion below is based on the responses to that statement.

Table 4.8: COVID-19 Fewer library users/employees accessed public libraries

N=65

Fewer library users/employees accessed the library	No. of respondents	Valid %	Cumulative %
Strongly disagree	8	12	12
Disagree	9	14	26
Not sure	8	12	38
Agree	25	39	77
Strongly agree	15	23	-
Total	65	100	100

Table 4.8, as above, indicates the different responses on the impact of COVID-19 lockdown restrictions on the EML regarding the different responses on the impact of COVID-19 lockdown restrictions on the EML, regarding its physical accessibility. There are 12% of the respondents who strongly disagree, with 14% disagreeing, while 8% of the respondents are not sure of such an impact. Of those who agree of there being a reduction in the number of those visiting the EML because of COVID-19 restrictions, 39%, with 23% strongly agreeing that there are challenges to the accessibility of the EML and due to COVID-19 lockdown impacting its operations. These findings suggest that although employees and users of the EML were allowed limited access to the libraries, the number of those visiting the EML had a significant reduction during COVID-19 in comparison to the period when there were no COVID-19 restrictions.

4.3.1.6 COVID-19 constrained public libraries' operational resources.

This section discusses responses to the above statement, implying that COVID-19 restrictions constrained the resources of the EML.

Table 4.9: COVID-19 constrained public libraries’ operational resources

N=65

COVID-19 constrained public libraries’ operational resources	No. of respondents	Valid %	Cumulative
Strongly disagree	2	3	3
Disagree	8	12	15
Not sure	10	15	30
Agree	20	30	61
Strongly agree	25	39	-
Total	65	100	100

On whether one of the impacts of COVID-19 lockdown restrictions is the constraining of the EML resources - referring to Table 4.9 above, the data show that 3% strongly disagree with the assertion, while 12% disagree with 10% being neutral on this matter. Those who agree that indeed COVID-19 impacted the resources of the EML, such as its human resources, equipment, and other facilities, stands at 69%. These findings indicate the huge impact that COVID-19 had on the operation of the EML. It also suggests that the EML was not able to conduct its operations fully as expected. Other studies on COVID-19 restrictions on business operations, specifically libraries, indicate that resources were a big challenge since they had to redefine their operational models to suit the restrictive conditions imposed by COVID-19. The redefining of operational models includes the adoption of remote working and the adoption and use of digital devices and platforms. This implied the use of existing resources, if any, or the acquisition of such resources.

4.3.2 Research question two

The second research question seeks answers to *the different ways in which the EML responded to the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown restrictions in terms of delivery of its services to the public.*

4.3.2.1 The introduction of reduced working hours

The analysis of the responses to the above research question is illustrated in Table 4.10. The focus is the strategies used by the EML (reduced working hours) to ensure continuity in providing its services to the public.

Table 4.10: The introduction of reduced working hours

N=65

The introduction of reduced working hours	No. of respondents	Valid %	Cumulative %
Strongly disagree	11	16	16
Disagree	6	9	25
Not sure	4	6	31
Agree	15	23	54
Strongly agree	30	46	-
Total	65	100	100

In relation to a research question on how the EML responded to the challenges of COVID-19 restrictions about the delivery of its services to library users, by the introduction of reduced working hours, 16% of the respondents strongly or disagreed with the adoption of such a strategy by the EML, with 9% of the respondents also disagreeing on this assertion. However, there are respondents, standing at 6%, who posted no position on the matter. Those agreeing that indeed one of the strategies employed was reduced working hours stand at 23%, with 46% strongly agreeing on the matter. This puts the number of respondents agreeing on EML having employed such a strategy at 69%. A significant response indicated that, indeed, the EML had a strategy in place, which, according to Rafiq *et al.* (2021), was the most commonly adopted strategy (reduced working hours) of ensuring that services to the public and customers are available, albeit minimal, and also as a strategy of avoiding the contraction of the COVID-19 virus by employees.

4.3.2.2 EML promoted the use of digital platforms.

This section provides findings on the responses from the respondents in relation to the statement that the EML promoted the use of digital platforms.

Table 4.11: EML popularised the use of digital platforms for its services.

N=65

EML promoted the use of digital platforms	No. of respondents	Valid %	Cumulative %
Strongly disagree	15	24	24
Disagree	18	27	51
Not sure	20	31	82
Agree	9	14	96
Strongly agree	3	4	-
Total	65	100	100

In reference to Table 4.11, above, on the responses on the statement on the EML responses to the challenges of the COVID-19 restrictions by the popularisation of digital platforms so as to continue delivery of its services, the analysis indicates that 24% strongly do not agree that the EML popularised digital platforms in the use of the EML services during COVID-19 restrictions, with a further 27% also disagreeing on the assertion, while 31% posting a neutral position. Those agreeing to such an initiative by the EML stands at 18%. The findings show that the popularisation of the use of digital platforms by the EML was not effective enough, based on the number of respondents disagreeing (54%) and those posting a neutral position (31%).

4.3.2.3 EML access is limited to only selected institutions.

The responses to the statement that the EML provided limited access to its services only to selected institutions, are illustrated below as per Table 4.13. A discussion of the responses is also presented below

Table 4.12: Access to library services was only provided to selected institutions

N=65

Access to libraries was only provided to selected institutions	No. of respondents	Valid %	Cumulative %
Strongly disagree	9	14	14
Disagree	7	11	25
Not sure	10	15	40
Agree	22	34	74
Strongly agree	17	26	-
Total	65	100	100

Table 4.12 above illustrates the distribution of responses on the EML strategy to COVID-19 restrictions, on whether it imposed restrictions on other library users and only allowed limited access to selected institutions and professional bodies. The analysis of the responses shows that 25% of those responding to the research question on this aspect are not in agreement on the EML having employed such a strategy, while 15% are neutral. Those agreeing that, indeed, there was such a strategy in place account for 60% of the respondents. The significant number of those whose responses agree suggests that the EML had a strategy on how to respond to the COVID-19 restrictions. According to Molepo and Shokane (2021), the limitations or accessibility of library services to specific sectors or institutions was based on whether such an institution was within the *essential services* category or not. This ensured that essential services such as medical services or those undertaking research on COVID-19 had access to library services.

4.3.2.4 The EML's introduction of remote working

This section provides a discussion of the responses to the statement that the EML had to introduce the concept of remote working as a strategy for ensuring the continuity of its services to the public during the pandemic.

Table 4.13: EML introduced remote working to ensure a continuation of operations

N=65

EML introduced remote working to ensure continuous operation	No. of respondents	Valid %	Cumulative %
Strongly disagree	6	9	9
Disagree	12	18	27
Not sure	-	-	27
Agree	22	34	61
Strongly agree	25	39	-
Total	65	100	100

Table 4.13 above are responses on whether the EML employed remote working as a strategy to ensure the continuity of its services to the library users during the COVID-19 restrictions. Those agreeing on the EML having uninitiated such a strategy through reduced working hours are 34%, with 39% strongly agreeing on the existence of such a policy. Those disagreeing represents 27% of the respondents. A significant number of those agreeing with the assertion (73%) indicate that the EML had put in place a strategy that ensured the continuity in the provision of its services to the library users.

4.3.2.5 EML adherence to COVID-19 restrictions and guidelines

In this section, an analysis of the responses is presented based on the statement that the EML's adherence to the COVID-19 restrictions and guidelines, contributed to the continuity of its operations.

Table 4.14: EML adhered to all COVID-19 restrictions and guidelines

N=65

EML adhered to all COVID-19 restrictions and guidelines	No. of respondents	Valid %	Cumulative %
Strongly disagree	5	8	8
Disagree	9	14	22
Not sure	7	10	32
Agree	20	30	62
Strongly agree	25	38	-
Total	65	100	100

Based on Table 4.14, as above, the findings show that 8% of the respondents strongly disagree with the EML's adherence to all COVID-19 restrictions and guidelines to ensure that its services are not impacted and that there was continuity. In comparison, 14% are also not in agreement with such a position by the EML. However, 10% of the respondents have a neutral position, with 68% agreeing that the EML strictly adhered to COVID-19 restrictions guidelines. The findings indicate that the EML had instituted measures that ensured adherence to COVID-19 restrictions to enable the EML to continue to provide its services to library users. These findings collaborate with Fasae, Adekoya and Adegbilero-Iwari (2021), who argued that the strict adherence to COVID-19 restrictions had a positive impact on the operations of those institutions and business organisations that were allowed to continue operating, under restrictions, during the COVID-19 pandemic.

4.3.3 Research question three

This research question *explored the extent to which such a response impacted access to a diverse category of library users during COVID-19 lockdown restrictions.*

4.3.3.1 EML's COVID-19 response impacted EML users' access to library services

This section presents the findings on the impact of the EML strategies on the users' access to EML services. The findings are based on the responses from the respondents.

Table 4.15: The users had limited access to the EML services

N=65

Users had limited access to the EML services	No. of respondents	Valid %	Cumulative
Strongly disagree	5	8	8
Disagree	10	15	23
Not sure	5	8	31
Agree	15	23	54
Strongly agree	30	46	-
Total	65	100	100

As per Table 4.15 responses to the statement that different categories of the EML users had limited access to its services due to strategies adopted by the EML show that 8% strongly do not agree with the statement, with 10% disagreeing with it too, while 8% took a neutral position on the matter. Those agreeing stand at 69%, indicating that the strategies adopted by EML in addressing COVID-19 restrictions, impacted the access of certain library users to the EML's services. According to Cowell (2020), limited access to public libraries was based on the category of users and only allowed specific library users access. It is reasonable to suggest that those given access to the library were among those categorised as offering essential services, such as researchers or medical doctors.

4.3.3.2 Reduction in the number of library users accessing

This section presents the findings on how EML strategies impacted the number of users accessing library services at the EML facilities.

Table 4.16: Reduction in the number of library users in need of their services.

N=65

Reduction in the number of library user's	No. of respondents	Valid %	Cumulative %
Strongly disagree	4	6	6
Disagree	11	17	23
Not sure	5	8	31
Agree	30	46	77
Strongly agree	15	23	-
Total	65	100	100

On the statement that the strategies of the EML in addressing COVID-19 restrictions resulted in the reduction in the number of library users at the EMLs, 23% of the respondents do not agree as this having been the case, with 8% being not sure of the kind of response to provide. Those who strongly agree with the statement stand at 69% of the respondents. The implication here is that the strategies adopted by the EML reduced the number of library users seeking EMLs services. As Dadhe and Dubey (2020) posited, this could be attributed to the need to adhere to COVID-19 restrictions by having only those providing essential services. Such a move had a significant impact on the number of library users having access to the EML facilities.

4.3.3.3 Library users' access to digital library services

The respondents' responses in this section are based on the statement that few library users accessed the EML digital library services during the COVID-19 restrictions.

Table 4.17: Only a few users could access EML digital library services

N=65

Only a few users could access EML digital library services	No. of respondents	Valid %	Cumulative %
Strongly disagree	5	8	8
Disagree	10	15	23
Not sure	-	-	23
Agree	15	23	46
Strongly agree	35	54	-
Total	65	100	100

According to the distribution of the responses as per Table 4.17 above, regarding the statement that the EML digital services could only be accessed by a few users, 8% of the respondents are in strong disagreement with the statement, with a further 15% disagreeing. Those agreeing that only a few users had access to the EML's digital libraries account for 77% of the respondents, indicating that access to certain types of EML's services was a challenge to some library users and that the digital library as a way of making sure the EML continues with its services was not successful. This could have several explanations, one being the availability of reliable internet access, data, and digital devices.

4.3.3.4 Strategies for increased use of library services

This section presents responses to the statement that the strategies employed by the EML during COVID-19 restrictions increased the use of library services.

Table 4.18: strategies used to increase the use/access of the library services.

N=65

Strategies used by EML increased use of library services	No. of respondents	Valid %	Cumulative %
Strongly disagree	10	15	15
Disagree	30	47	62
Not sure	10	15	77
Agree	10	15	92
Strongly agree	5	8	-
Total	65	100	100

On the statement that the strategies of addressing COVID-19 by the EML resulted in an increase in access to library services, the findings of the study show that 62% do not see this having been the case, with 15% not being categorical in their responses, while 22% agreeing with the statement. These findings show that the strategies employed by the EML did not have an impact in terms of increasing the number of users seeking EML's services. This could possibly be explained by the COVID-19 restrictions that may have prevented full access to the EML services.

4.3.3.5 Delays in providing EML services to its users

The analysis of this section is based on the responses to the statement that delays in providing services at the EML facilities were caused by the strategies employed by EML in adherence to COVID-19 restrictions.

Table 4.19: Delays were experienced in providing certain library services to the public

N=65

Delays were experienced in providing certain library services	No. of respondents	Valid %	Cumulative %
Strongly disagree	5	8	8
Disagree	9	14	22
Not sure	10	15	37
Agree	19	29	66
Strongly agree	22	34	-
Total	65	100	100

Table 4.19, illustrates the distribution of the responses regarding the statement implying that there were delays in providing certain library services to the public. According to the analysis of the above data, the findings show that 22% of those who responded to the statement disagree with it, with 15% of them taking no position on the matter, while those agreeing with the statement account for 63% of the respondents, suggesting that indeed the strategies by EML in addressing COVID-19 resulted in the delays in providing certain types of EML services to the public. This could be attributed to several factors; one being reduced working hours at EML facilities and having some EML employees working remotely (from their homes) as a precaution against contracting COVID-19. These findings collaborate with that of Carbery *et al.*(2020), who noted that COVID-19 restrictions impacted the manner in which business organisations and other institutions conducted their processes, as they had to adhere to the restrictions and guidelines.

4.3.3.6 Suspension of certain library services

This presentation of the findings is based on the responses to the statement that the strategies used by EML in addressing the COVID-19 restrictions resulted in suspending certain library services.

Table 4.20: Certain library services had to be suspended.

N=65

Certain library services had to be suspended	No. of respondents	Valid %	Cumulative %
Strongly disagree	9	14	40
Disagree	5	8	53
Not sure	10	15	68
Agree	26	40	82
Strongly agree	15	23	-
Total	65	100	100

On the statement that the strategies for addressing COVID-19 resulted in the suspension of certain services of the EML, 22% of the respondents disagree, with 10% taking a neutral position on the matter. In comparison, 63% agree with the statement. These findings show that the strategies employed by the EML in addressing the challenges of COVID-19 had a negative impact on the operations of the EML in terms of stopping some of its services to library users.

4.3.3.7 No access to EML facilities in certain communities

The strategies employed by the EML are linked to several impacts, with one being limiting access to the EML facilities for certain communities. The findings presented in this section are based on the respondents' responses regarding that assertion.

Table 4.21: No access to EML in certain communities

N=65

No access to EML in certain communities	No. of respondents	Valid %	Cumulative %
Strongly disagree	7	10	10
Disagree	10	15	25
Not sure	15	23	48
Agree	30	47	95
Strongly agree	3	5	-
Total	65	100	100

The strategies employed by the EML in addressing the challenges of COVID-19 restrictions indicate that they did have an impact on certain aspects of the operations of the EML, with 52 of the respondents noting that such strategies had a negative impact on the provision of EML services to certain communities, as the services of the EML were totally restricted in those communities. Among those responding on the impact of those strategies on the ability of the EML to provide its services to certain communities, were 23% who were not categorical on their position on this matter, while 25% of the respondents did not see such strategies as having resulted to a total restriction of the EML services to certain communities. Based on the number of those agreeing with the statement, it is reasonable to suggest that the strategies employed by the EML in addressing the challenges of the COVID-19 restrictions did indeed impose restrictions on certain communities having access to EML services. This could be attributed to the high infection rate in those communities.

4.3.4 Research question four

The fourth research question suggests approaches that could be employed to address the identified gaps in the EMLs' responses to the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown to improve *the provision of services during such a pandemic in future*.

4.3.4.1 Upgrading of EML facilities

The presentation of this section is based on the responses regarding the proposed recommendation for the EML to upgrade its standards to that of other international libraries.

Table 4.22: Upgrading of EML facilities

N=65

Upgrading of the EML facilities	No. of respondents	Valid %	Cumulative %
Strongly disagree	1	1	1
Disagree	9	14	15
Not sure	5	8	23
Agree	30	46	69
Strongly agree	20	31	-
Total	65	100	100

As per the response distribution in Table 4.22 above, the statement on upgrading the EML to international standards received mixed responses. The findings of the study show that 15% of those who responded do not agree with such a recommendation, with 8% taking a neutral position, while those agreeing with the recommendation account for 77% of the respondents. This indicates that there is a strong feeling among the respondents that upgrading the EML to an international standard could assist in addressing the challenges of a crisis such as that of the COVID-19 pandemic, should there be a crisis of that nature in the future.

4.3.4.2 Upskilling and empowerment of EML employees

In this section, respondents' responses are based on the proposition that the EML need to upskill and empower its employees on the latest use of technologies related to the use and operation of library services.

Table 4.23: Upskilling and empowerment of EML employees

N=65

Upskilling and empowerment of EML employees	Number of respondents	Valid %	Cumulative %
Strongly disagree	6	9	9
Disagree	8	12	21
Not sure	11	17	38
Agree	35	54	92
Strongly agree	5	8	-
Total	65	100	100

Upskilling of EML employees on the latest industry technology is being put forward as a recommendation. However, the response distribution as per Table 4:23 indicates that 9% of the respondents strongly disagree, with a further 12% disagreeing with such a recommendation. Those agreeing with the recommendation stand at 62% of the respondents. It is then reasonable to suggest that upskilling in the latest trend in technology relevant to the sector is critical for the EML. As stated by Begum, Roknuzzaman and Shobhane (2022), having employees proficient in the use of the latest technology places them in a better position to address challenges of any future situation through the use of digital technologies in public institutions such as the EMLs.

4.3.4.3 The standardisation of all EML

In this section the findings of this study, are based on the responses from the respondents on their position regarding a proposition for the EML to standardise their facilities and resources, across all its library facilities.

Table 4.24: The standardisation of all EML regarding facilities and resources.

N=65

Standardisation of all EML facilities and resources	No. of respondents	Valid %	Cumulative %
Strongly disagree	3	5	5
Disagree	7	11	17
Not sure	8	12	29
Agree	7	11	40
Strongly agree	40	60	-
Total	65	100	100

The statement on the standardisation of resources and facilities as a recommendation, as per the distribution of responses above (see Table 4.24), shows that 16% do not agree with the statement put forward as a recommendation, with 12% taking a neutral position. According to the study's findings, 71% agree with the statement as a recommendation to the EML on the need for equal distribution of resources across all EML facilities. This standardisation would ensure that there are no disparities among various facilities of the EML in terms of service provision.

4.3.4.4 EML's collaboration with other players

An improvement by EML could see it managing a crisis such as COVID-19 much better. The responses by respondents are based on their position regarding this statement. The findings of the analysis are presented below, as per Table 4.25.

Table 4.25: Improving EML’s collaboration with other stakeholders

N=65

Improving EML’s collaboration with other stakeholders	No. of respondents	Valid %	Cumulative %
Strongly disagree	3	4	4
Disagree	7	11	15
Not sure	8	12	27
Agree	32	50	77
Strongly agree	15	23	-
Total	65	100	100

Pertaining to the statement on the need for collaboration between the EML and other local and international players and stakeholders, the findings indicate that most of the respondents, specifically 73% agree on the need for collaboration between EML and other players. In comparison, 15% disagree, with 12% taking a neutral position on the recommendation. Based on the responses, it is reasonable to suggest that collaboration with other stakeholders could improve the performance of EMLs.

4.3.4.5 Improving the EMLs Human Resource (HR) Management

This section is based on responses to the need for the EML to improve its HR management.

Table 4.12: An improved HR management

N=65

An improved HR management	No. of respondents	Valid %	Cumulative %
Strongly disagree	9	14	14
Disagree	23	35	49
Not sure	-	-	49
Agree	22	34	83
Strongly agree	11	17	-
Total	65	100	100

A recommendation on the need of having improved HR management at the EML as a way of being able to manage any future crisis, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, has been supported by 51% of the respondents, while 49% of them disagree with such a proposition. The findings indicate that there is an insignificant difference between those in agreement and those in disagreement. This finding indicates that there is not much need to improve the HR of the EML. This is based on the insignificant margin between respondents who agree with the proposed recommendation and those who do not agree.

4.4 Summary of the chapter

This chapter has presented the findings of this study in terms of providing the answers on how COVID-19 pandemic lockdown restrictions impacted the provision of EML services to the public. It also discusses the different ways the EML responded to the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown restrictions in terms of delivery of its services to the public. The chapter has also shown the extent to which responses impacted access to a diverse category of library users during COVID-19 lockdown restrictions and propositions on how the EML could improve its approach to crisis management, such as the COVID-19 pandemic by pointing out some of the gaps that have been identified in this study. The next chapter presents a discussion of the research findings by providing an analysis of the results based on the four research questions of the study. The discussions are based on the extent to which the research objectives have been addressed by the answers to the research questions.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter presented the findings of this study in terms of providing the answers on how COVID-19 pandemic lockdown restrictions impacted the provision of EML services to the public. It also discussed the different ways the EML responded to the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown restrictions in terms of delivery of its services to the public. The chapter has also shown the extent to which responses impacted access to a diverse category of library users during COVID-19 lockdown restrictions and propositions on how the EML could improve its approach to crisis management, such as the COVID-19 pandemic by pointing out some of the gaps that have been identified in this study. This chapter, Chapter Five presents a discussion of the research findings by providing an analysis of the results based on the four research questions of the study. The discussions are based on the extent to which the research objectives have been addressed by the answers to the research questions.

5.2 DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

The discussion of the research findings, guided by the research questions, was categorised under the main headings, with each one of them representing the core of a research question/objective. They are listed below.

- COVID-19's impact on the EML's ability to provide its services.
- EML's response to COVID-19 pandemic lockdown restrictions
- Impact of EML's COVID-19 response on diverse library users
- Improving services in a period of a pandemic/crisis

5.2.1 COVID-19 impacts on the EML's ability to provide its services.

Research question 1: *In what ways did the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown restrictions impact the provision of EML services to the public?*

On the first research question, exploring the different ways in which the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown restrictions impacted the provision of EML services to the public, the

findings of the study show that the COVID-19 lockdown restrictions forced the EML to scale down its operations, in terms of reducing its range of services to the library users. It also influenced the use of the remote working model by public libraries. This was aimed at ensuring the continuity in the operations of the EML and in reducing the exposure of its employees to the COVID-19 viruses.

The findings also indicate that the EML accelerated the use of digital platforms for public libraries' services, and the objective was to ensure that the provision of services to clients was not interrupted or suspended due to the lockdown restrictions that had put limitations on the physical contacts of individuals. However, the impact of the lockdown restrictions forced the EML to suspend physical access to public library services by some of its employees and library users, although such a decision only applied to certain categories of people and institutions. The COVID-19 restrictions also saw fewer library users/employees access public libraries. These findings suggest that although employees and users of the EML were allowed limited access to the libraries, the number of those visiting the EMLs had a significant reduction during COVID-19 in comparison to the period when there were no COVID-19 restrictions. The EML also experienced constraints in terms of its operational resources, which include equipment and human resources. This suggests that the EML was not able to conduct its operations as expected. Other studies on COVID-19 restrictions on business operations, specifically libraries, indicate that resources were a big challenge since they had to redefine their operational models to suit the restrictive conditions imposed by COVID-19 restrictions.

5.2.2 EML's response to COVID-19 pandemic lockdown restrictions

Research question 2: *In what ways did the EML respond to the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown restrictions in terms of delivery of its services to the public?*

The summary of the findings based on the second research question addresses the different responses the EML adopted in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown restrictions regarding delivering its services to the public.

The study shows that the EML implemented the reduction of working hours, which according to Rafiq *et al.* (2021), was the most commonly adopted strategy (reduced working hours) of ensuring that services to the public and customers are available, although minimal, and also

as a strategy of avoiding the contraction of the COVID-19 virus by employees. However, the EML's promotion of the use of digital platforms was not effective enough, based on the number of respondents disagreeing (54%) and those posting a neutral position (31%).

The study also shows that access to library services was only provided to selected institutions and individuals. According to Molepo and Shokane (2021), the limitations or accessibility of library services to specific sectors or institutions was based on whether such an institution was within the *essential services* category or not. The strategy ensured continuity in the provision of its services to the library users. There was also strict adherence to COVID-19 restrictions and guidelines by instituting measures that enabled it to continue to provide its services to the library users. These findings collaborate with Fasae, Adekoya and Adegbilero-Iwari (2021), who argued that the strict adherence to COVID-19 restrictions had a positive impact on the operations of those institutions and business organisations that were allowed to continue operating, under restrictions, during the COVID-19 pandemic.

5.2.3 Impact of EML's COVID-19 response on diverse library users

Research question 3: *What is the extent to which such a response impacted access to a diverse category of library users during COVID-19 lockdown restrictions?*

This third research question focused on the EML's COVID-19 response impact on EML users' access to library services. The data analysis indicates that the strategies adopted by EML in addressing COVID-19 restrictions impacted the access of certain library users to the EML's services. According to (Cowell 2020), limited access to public libraries was based on the category of users and only allowed specific library users access. It is reasonable to suggest that those given access to the library were among those categorised as offering essential services, such as researchers or medical doctors. There was also a reduction in the number of library users accessing it. This could be attributed, as (Dadhe and Dubey 2020) posited, to the need to adhere to COVID-19 restrictions by having only those providing essential services. Such an occurrence had a significant impact on the number of library users having access to EML facilities.

The study also showed that only a few users could access EML digital library services during the COVID-19 lockdown, indicating that the popularisation of digital library services was unsuccessful. This could have several explanations, one being the availability of reliable

internet access, data, and digital devices. It is also noted that the strategies employed by the EML did not have an impact in terms of increasing the number of users seeking EML's services. This could possibly be explained by the COVID-19 restrictions that could have prevented full access to the EML services. The EML also experienced delays in providing certain library services to the public. This could be attributed to several factors, one being reduced working hours at EML facilities, and having some of EML employees working remotely (from their homes) as a precaution against contracting COVID-19. These findings collaborate with that of Carbery et al. (2020), who noted that COVID-19 restrictions impacted the manner in which business organisations and other institutions conducted their operations, as they had to adhere to the restrictions and guidelines.

It is also noted that certain library services had to be suspended. This finding shows that the strategies employed by the EML in addressing the challenges of COVID-19 had a negative impact on the operations of the EML, in terms of stopping some of its services to library users. The study also showed that the strategies employed by the EML in addressing the challenges of the COVID-19 restrictions did indeed impose restrictions on certain communities having access to EML services since the services were suspended in some areas.

5.2.4 Improving services in a period of a pandemic/crisis

Research question 4: *What are the suggested approaches that could be employed to address the identified gaps of the EML responses to the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown as a way of improving the provision of services during such a pandemic in future?*

The fourth research question sought suggestions on how the EML could improve its strategies during a crisis, such as COVID-19 lockdown restrictions. The study indicates that upgrading of the EML to international standards could assist in addressing the challenges of a crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic, should there be a crisis of that nature in the future. There is also a need for upskilling and empowering the EML, especially on the latest technology trends. As Begum, Roknuzzaman and Shobhane (2022), noted having employees proficient in the use of the latest technology positions them in a better position to address challenges of any future situation, through the use of digital technologies in public institutions such as EMLs. The standardisation of all EMLs is suggested as it could bring about uniformity in the quality of services being delivered. The collaboration of the EML with other role players is among the findings indicated by the respondents. According to the

study, there is not much need for improving HR of the EML. This is based on the insignificant margin between respondents who agree with the proposed recommendation and those who do not agree.

5.3 Summary of the Chapter

The chapter has provided a discussion of the findings in terms of how COVID-19 impacted the EML's ability to provide its services to its users by detailing various ways in which such an impact was felt, such as a reduction in the operational working hours of the EML and the suspension of its services in certain parts of the KZN province. The chapter also discussed the findings on the various approaches used by the EML in mitigating the negative impact of the COVID-19 lockdown on its service delivery to its users. Such approaches include remote working, adherence to lockdown restrictions and the use of digital library platforms by its users. The next chapter will be discussing the summary, conclusions, implications and recommendations.

6 CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter has provided a discussion of the findings in terms of how COVID-19 impacted the EML's ability to provide its services to its users by detailing various ways in which such an impact was felt, such as a reduction in the operational working hours of the EML and the suspension of its services in certain parts of the KZN province. The chapter also discussed the findings on the various approaches used by the EML in mitigating the negative impact of the COVID-19 lockdown on its service delivery to its users. Such approaches include remote working, adherence to lockdown restrictions and the use of digital library platforms by its users. The study aimed to investigate the impact of COVID-19 lockdown regulations on service delivery in South African Public Libraries, focusing on the EML. The previous chapter discussed and explained the findings of the study. This chapter provides the implications of the study findings to the stakeholders and other role players in the sector. The chapter ends with a conclusion that provides an overview of the findings, implications, and contributions this study is expected to make. The summary, conclusions, implications, and recommendations are guided by the study objectives which are:

1. To investigate how the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown restrictions impacted the provision of EML services to the public.
2. To determine how the EML responded to the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown restrictions regarding the delivery of its services to the public.
3. To explore the extent to which such a response impacted access to a diverse category of library users during COVID-19 lockdown restrictions.
4. To suggest approaches that could be employed to address the identified gaps of the EML responses to the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown as a way of improving the provision of services during such a pandemic in future.

6.2 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

Chapter One comprised of the introduction, the background to the study, problem statement, aims, research objectives and questions, the scope and delimitations, broader issues

investigated, as well as the significance of the study. The chapter also briefly outlined the theoretical framework underpinning the study and the research methodology adopted.

In Chapter Two literature that is relevant to the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on public libraries was reviewed. The chapter started with the nature and context of a library by defining a library and the various type of libraries that exist. A discussion on the purpose and function of a library followed, further going into the role of a library in society. Accordingly, this chapter looked at the global trends and challenges facing libraries, public libraries, as well as the challenges of COVID-19 and finally discussed the COVID-19 pandemic and the future of libraries.

The research methodology used in conducting this study and justifications for methodological choices were discussed in Chapter Three, including the research approach and the rationale for choosing this approach. Subsequently the research design was discussed, as well as the research paradigm, the sampling technique and the target population. The discussion also included the sample size and research instrument. Additionally, the chapter explained how data was collected to answer the research questions of the study. The chapter ends with a discussion of the ethical considerations of the study.

Chapter Four provided interpretation of the findings based on the analysis of the collected data. It was divided into two parts. The first part reported on the profile information of the respondents, whereas the second part comprised the results pertaining to the impact of COVID-19 lockdown regulations on service delivery in South African Public Libraries with focus on EML. It also discussed the findings concerning the relevant literature.

Chapter Five provided a discussion of the findings of the study presented in the previous chapter. The research objectives provided the basis for the discussion. The chapters' main topics included COVID-19's impact on the EML's ability to provide its services, EML's response to COVID-19 pandemic lockdown restrictions, impact of EML's COVID-19 response on diverse library users and finally improving services in a period of a pandemic/crisis.

6.3 STUDY IMPLICATIONS

The findings of this study have implications for the EML in terms of empowering its employees, through various suggested approaches. It also implies that the EML would have to start exploring ways of collaborating and partnering with local and international

stakeholders and role players in the sectors that could be relevant and beneficial to the EML. The EML would also have to conduct a situational analysis of its current processes, procedures, resources, and benchmarking with major role players in the sector as part of standardising its operations and establishing partnerships and collaborations. The findings of the study also have implications for other stakeholders and role players, such as educational institutions, which could use the findings to improve their operations. Researchers could also make use of this study by exploring other angles of the research problem that may not have been fully researched. In contrast, other stakeholders could use this study to develop guidelines and relevant policies.

6.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations of this research are provided in the section, below.

6.4.1 Upgrading of the EML's facilities

Recommendations are made on the need for the EML to upgrade its facilities and operations to meet international standards. This is expected to provide it with the ability to manage any potential future crisis promptly without adversely impacting its operations and the well-being of employees.

6.4.2 Empowering the employees of the EML

The empowerment of the EML's employees is suggested as an approach that could improve the operations of the EML in times of crisis. The proposition is on upskilling, offering mentorship programs and regular exchange programs with the SADC and library facilities abroad. Having skilled and knowledgeable employees places the EML in a better position to address the challenges of any future crisis.

6.4.3 Standardising the operations of the EML

A recommendation of standardisation would ensure that the EML's approach to customer services, crisis management and the working environment is conducive enough for the EML to fulfil its obligations in terms of service delivery to the public. The standardisation could include a fair distribution of resources across all EML facilities.

6.4.4 The EML's collaboration with other role players

Collaboration with other stakeholders and role players from various sectors and nations is recommended as an approach that could place the EML in a better position regarding issues such as the sharing and exchanging of information and resources. This is likely to put the EML in a much better position regarding its operations and management while dealing with any potential crisis or challenges.

6.5 CONCLUSION

This study brings to our attention the imperfections of the way the municipal libraries in eThekweni dealt with the COVID-19 crisis, EML was not ready to deal with a crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic. In no way was EML ready for the shutdown of the country thus not being able to provide any services to the public library users during the pandemic. On the bright side this is a window of opportunity for improving and being prepared should there be anything like the COVID-19 shutdown in the future. The findings show that it is important for an institution such as a public library to have partnerships and collaboration with other stakeholders and role players. It has also been noted that empowering employees is necessary to determine how an institution such as the EML could address a crisis or challenge such as the COVID-19 lockdown restrictions. For an institution to operate efficiently, especially during a global pandemic, its operations and management need to be standardised across all its facilities. As a proposition, this has been noted as having the potential to provide quality services to its users in all of its facilities. The introduction of remote working and the use of digital platforms as a form of continuity in service delivery brings to the fore the need for a flexible HR and operational model.

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6.7 APPENDIX A: Ethics approval letter



Protocol reference number : HSSREC/10006161/2023

Project title : The impact of COVID-19 lockdown regulations on service delivery in South African Public Libraries A case study of eThekweni Municipality Libraries (EML)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT: BREACH OF ETHICAL PROCESSES AT UKZN

I, the undersigned,

Staff/Student name (number) : Gumede, Velekosin Sisanda (217045066)

School : School Of Social Sciences

Campus :

as the Principal Investigator ("the Applicant") in the above stated project, do hereby acknowledge that:

1. The University of KwaZulu-Natal's (hereinafter 'UKZN') Research Ethics Policy (V) does not make provision for Retrospective Ethics Approval;
2. All researchers (both students and staff) at UKZN are obliged to be familiar with this policy;
3. I have been informed that research cannot be done without obtaining full ethical clearance as per the policy and guidelines of the University;
4. **Research for the above project was undertaken by myself without final ethical clearance being obtained;**
5. The University reserves its right to, at any stage and time, withdraw the relevant degree obtained by myself if:
 - 5.1 It becomes known to UKZN that there was an additional ethical breach during any field work or whilst collecting data for the above stated project, and / or
 - 5.2 I fail to apply for ethical clearance for any future research projects.
6. In addition to point 5 above, the appropriate disciplinary processes will follow should this occur again.

I further acknowledge that should there be any legal implications/actions emanating from the research in terms of any ethical violations, I will be personally liable and hereby indemnify UKZN against any legal action that may arise from my failure to adhere to the University Research Ethics Policy (V).

Signed at: Durban on the 19 day of OCTOBER 2023

Signature of applicant: _____

Signed at: _____ on the _____ day of _____ 2023

Signature of Chair (HSSREC): _____ Date: _____

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee
UKZN Research Ethics Office Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building
Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban 4000
Tel: +27 31 260 8380 / 4587 / 3587
Website: <http://research.ukzn.co.za/Research-Ethics/>

Founding Campuses: Edgewood Howard College Medical School Pietermaritzburg Pieterse

INSPIRING GREATNESS

6.8 APPENDIX A: Gatekeepers letter



University of KwaZulu-Natal

Pietermaritzburg

Private Bag X01,

Scottsville, 3209

15 August 2022

Dear Sir/Madam

RE: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO UNDERTAKE RESEARCH

My name is Sisanda Gumede (217045066), a **Research Masters (Information Studies) degree** student in the School of Social Sciences, College of Humanities at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg.

I am undertaking research on 'the impact of COVID-19 lockdown regulations on service delivery in South African Public Libraries: A case study of Ethekewini Municipality Libraries(EML). This study will give birth to the scrutiny of public library services in general and emphasize the need to digitize public libraries, and services like e-books, online subscriptions to newspapers, online storytelling and book club meetings will gain prominence in the digital error. My supervisor is Dr S. Kheswa.

The purpose of this letter is to request permission to conduct the study and the outcome will be beneficial to library and information services department and will produce ideas to library management and staff on the convenience of servicing patrons online and how any future pandemics or natural disasters can be approached so as not to close the library completely. I shall be very grateful for your assistance and I appreciate your cooperation in advance.

Yours sincerely,

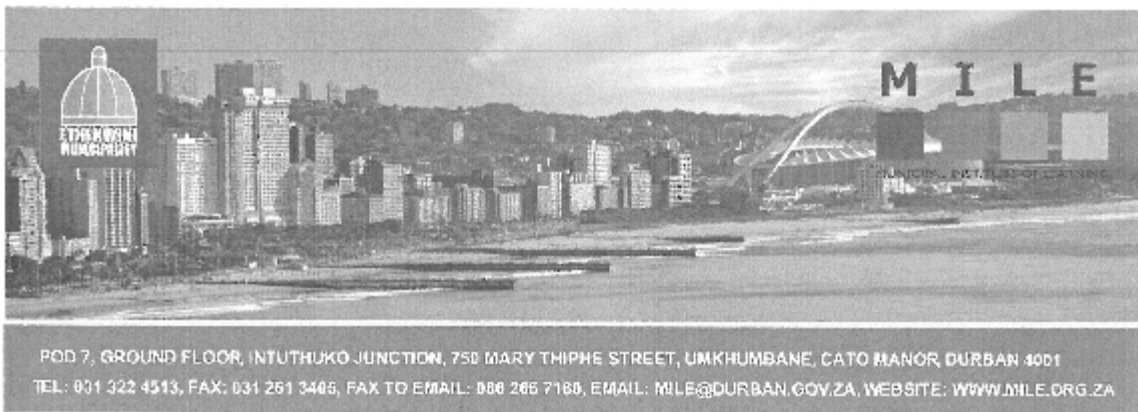
V.S. Gumede

Supervisor: Dr S. Kheswa

Email: kheswas1@ukzn.ac.za

Tel. no .: 033 2606987

6.9 APPENDIX B: Informed Consent



For attention:
Chair of Research Ethics Committee
College of Humanities
School of Social Sciences
University of Kwazulu Natal
Pietermaritzburg
Scottsville
3209

23 August 2022

RE: LETTER OF SUPPORT TO V.S GUMEDE, STUDENT NUMBER 217045066 - GRANTING PERMISSION TO USE ETHEKWINI MUNICIPALITY AS A STUDY SITE

The Libraries and Heritage Unit and Municipal Institute of Learning (MILE) in eThekweni Municipality, have considered a request from **Velenkosini Sisanda Gumede** to use eThekweni Municipality as a research study site for the purposes of undertaking a research study entitled: **"The impact of COVID-19 lockdown regulations on service delivery in South African Public Libraries: A case study of eThekweni Municipal Libraries (EML)"** in fulfillment of a **Master of Information Studies** degree.

We wish to inform you of the acceptance of this request and hereby assure the student of our utmost cooperation towards achieving his/her academic goals; the outcome which we believe may help eThekweni Municipality improve its service offerings. The student is reminded of the ethical considerations and the current health related regulations when conducting this research. The student must further take all necessary measures to ensure his/her personal safety during the research period as eThekweni Municipality indemnifies itself from any incidental claims that may arise. In return, we stipulate as mandatory that the student presents their research findings and recommendations as per the university ethics application. Please contact **Dr Collin Pillay**, collin.pillay3@durban.gov.za to present the preliminary results and recommendations of this study to the related unit/s.

Wishing the student all the best in his/her studies.

Supported

.....
Mr. Ernest Shazi
Dep.Head: Libraries and Heritage Unit
eThekweni Municipality

.....
Dr Collin Pillay
Program Manager: MILE
eThekweni Municipality

I, **Velenkosini Sisanda Gumede**..... hereby accept as conditional that I will comply fully as per the conditions stipulated above.

Signed: ... [REDACTED] Date: **23/08/2022**

QUESTIONNAIRE

RESEARCH TOPIC:

The impact of COVID-19 lockdown regulations on service delivery in South African Public Libraries: A case study of Ethekewini Municipality Libraries (EML)

INSTRUCTIONS

- Please choose your answers by putting an (X) in the appropriate box
- Please answer all questions in the questionnaire

SECTION A: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

1. What is your gender?

Gender	Select with (X)
a. Male	
b. Female	
c. Prefer not to say	

2. Please select your age

Age	Select with (X)
a. 18-25 years	
b. 26-35 years	
c. 36-45 years	
d. 46-55 years	
e. Older than 55 years	

3. What is your highest qualification?

Qualification	Select with (X)
a. Grade 12	
b. Certificate	
c. Diploma	
d. Degree	
e. Honours Degree	
f. Master's Degree	
g. Doctorate Degree	

4. Please indicate the name of your section at the eThekweni Municipal Libraries (EML)?

Type/section of the library	Select with (X)
f. Public Library	
g. Special Library	
h. Cataloguing	
i. Outreach/ Promotion	
j. Reference Services	

5. How long have you been employed at the eThekweni Municipality?

Years of service	Select with (X)
f. 1 -5 years	
g. 6 – 10 years	
h. 11-15 years	
i. 16 – 20 years	
j. Above 21 years	

Section B, C and D of the questionnaire will be presented in a 5-point Likert scale.

Please select your answer by ticking the relevant block:

1. Strongly Agree
2. Agree
3. Neutral
4. Disagree
5. Strongly Disagree

SECTION B: RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND QUESTIONS

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE 1: To investigate how the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown restrictions impacted the provision of eThekweni Municipality Libraries (EML) services to the public.

The section requires you to tick (√) in the relevant square where applicable					
RESEARCH QUESTION 1: <i>In what ways did the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown restrictions impacted the provision of eThekweni Municipality Libraries (EML) services to the public?</i>	Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Neutral (3)	Disagree (4)	Strongly Disagree (5)
1. The public libraries had to scale down their operations in terms of the services offered to the public, and the working hours					
2. The public libraries had to introduce remote working for some of their employees to continue their operations.					
3. Public library services had to be provided through digital platforms.					
4. Physical access to library services by the library users was completely stopped.					
5. The risk of contracting the COVID-19 virus by public library employees impacted access to library services by library users.					
6. There were fewer library users who visited/accessed public library services					
7. The COVID-19 pandemic restrictions constrained the Public libraries' resources in relation to their capacity to render its services to the public.					

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE 2: To determine how the eThekweni Municipality Libraries (EML) responded to the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown restrictions in terms of delivery of its services to the public.

The section requires you to tick (√) next to the relevant square where applicable					
RESEARCH QUESTION 2: <i>In what ways did the eThekweni Municipality Libraries (EML) respond to the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown restrictions in terms of delivery of its services to the public?</i>	Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Neutral (3)	Disagree (4)	Strongly Disagree (5)
1. The eThekweni Municipality Libraries (EML) introduced reduced operation working hours.					
2. The eThekweni Municipality Libraries (EML) popularised the use of digital platforms in terms of access to the library services during the COVID-19 lockdown, popularise restrictions.					
3. Access to library services was only provided to institutions and professional bodies providing essential services.					
4. Remote working was put in place to ensure a continuation in the provision of library services.					
5. The eThekweni Municipality Libraries (EML) ensured that all COVID-19 restrictions and guidelines were adhered to by all those providing and accessing library services.					

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE 3: To explore the extent to which such a response impacted access to a diverse category of library users during COVID-19 lockdown restrictions.

The section requires you to tick (√) next to the relevant square where applicable					
RESEARCH QUESTION 3: <i>What is the extent to which such a response impacted access to a diverse category of library users during COVID-19 lockdown restrictions?</i>	Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Neutral (3)	Disagree (4)	Strongly Disagree (5)
1. Library users had limited access to eThekweni Municipality Libraries (EML) services					
2. Some of the responses/strategies used, saw the reduction of the number of library users in need of their services.					
3. Certain areas/communities did not have any form of access to library services.					
4. Access to the eThekweni Municipality Libraries (EML) digital library services implied that only users with appropriate resources could access library services.					
5. The responses/strategies used increased the use/access of the library services.					
6. Delays were experienced in providing certain library services to the public					
7. Certain library services had to be suspended.					

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE 4:

To suggest approaches that could be employed to the identified gaps of the eThekweni Municipality Libraries (EML) responses to the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown as a way of improving the provision of services during such a pandemic in future.

The section requires you to tick (√) next to the relevant square where applicable					
RESEARCH QUESTION 4: <i>To suggest approaches that could be employed to the identified gaps of the eThekweni Municipality Libraries (EML) responses to the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown as a way of improving the provision of services during such a pandemic in future.</i>	Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Neutral (3)	Disagree (4)	Strongly Disagree (5)
1. Upgrading of the eThekweni Municipality Libraries (EML) facilities to international standards.					
2. Upskilling and empowerment of eThekweni Municipality Libraries (EM)L employees on the latest industry technology.					
3. The standardisation of all eThekweni Municipality Libraries (EML) in terms of facilities and resources.					
4. Improving the extent of eThekweni Municipality Libraries (EML) collaboration with other players/ stakeholders, both locally and internationally.					
5. Having an improved Human Resource Management					

Thank you for participating